

Title	Reporting Obesity: how ethical is news coverage of this global health problem? Using reflective practice and journalism ethics to inform new approaches to obesity news
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Abstract (100 words)	<p>Intro Investigations of suicide news have enhanced journalism education. This paper aims to analyse the ethics of reporting obesity.</p> <p>Theory Reflective practice and journalism ethics.</p> <p>Method Journalistic codes of ethics provide a framework to analyse media coverage, journalists' views and audience reception to evaluate how well coverage of obesity meets journalistic ethical responsibilities.</p> <p>Results Many aspects of news coverage of obesity meet the needs of audiences, but coverage patterns suggest ethical codes of conduct could be more closely followed.</p> <p>Conclusions Increased reflection on the part of journalists, producers, publishers and researchers could improve the value of reporting to the community.</p>

Title

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Reporting Obesity: how ethical is news coverage of this global health problem? Using reflective practice and journalism ethics to inform new approaches to obesity news

Introduction

This paper presents a reflective practice and journalism ethics approach to answering the question: how ethical is news coverage of this global health problem? Dramatic rises in the prevalence of overweight and obesity have been accompanied by dramatic rises in the quantity of news media coverage of overweight and obesity (International Food Information Council 2005; Chau, Bonfiglioli et al. 2009; Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2011), the development of a variety of reality television programs exploring the lived experience of being of larger size and of trying to lose weight through changes to nutrition and physical activity, for example *The Biggest Loser*, *Honey We're Killing the Kids*, and notable fictional explorations such as *Wall-E*. The science of weight gain and loss is complex but the dominant discourse is not: analyses of news media coverage find that individuals are widely held to be personally responsible for their size (Lawrence 2004; Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2007; Atanasova, Koteyko et al. 2012; Brun, McCarthy et al. 2012) reflecting the widespread assumption that if people just ate less and moved more the problem would fade away. Interventions aimed at communicating this simple message of "Eat less, move more" are not effective as can be seen by the continued growth in overweight and obesity. There is a growing body of evidence that the biology of obesity is far more complex than is assumed and that different types of the same categories foods and drinks have very different impacts on health, for example high fructose corn syrup (Moss 2013). Effective interventions at both the individual and the societal level have been demonstrated (Phongsavan, Rissel et al. 2012) but many societal and environmental interventions are fiercely opposed by the food and beverage industry (for example, soda taxes, supersized soft drinks, traffic light labels) in ways which bring to mind the tobacco industry's many well-funded and researched oppositions to tobacco control (Oreskes 2010; Chaloupka 2011). Recent reporting of overweight and obesity has included a greater emphasis on physical activity and solutions but, as I will argue, a sustained journalistic investigation of the role of industry and government in re-shaping the environment to be less obesogenic is the ethical approach.

Reporting obesity raises many challenges to the general and specialist journalist some of which are discussed in *Reporting Obesity: A Resource for Journalists* (Bonfiglioli 2007) written during a period of research with the New South Wales Centre for Overweight and Obesity, University of Sydney. This monograph drew on the first Australian analysis of television news media coverage of overweight and obesity (Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2007). The current project aims to use the Australian Responseability journalism initiative as a model to develop resources designed to assist the ever-more-pressured journalist to recognise existing patterns of reporting and to consider alternative news angles, sources and illustration (Skehan, Burns et al. 2009). Underpinning this initiative is a growing body of recent research investigating the role of the media in the "obesity epidemic" including the Australian Research Council Discovery Project 1096251 (Bonfiglioli, Chapman, Smith 2010-2012) which is investigating the life cycle of messages about overweight, obesity, physical activity and sedentary behaviours from journalists and editors, through news media coverage to news media audiences. This ARC project is premised on the expert understanding that individual decisions are made within a highly obesogenic environment (Swinburn, Egger et al. 1999) and that environment includes advertising (Kelly, Miller et al.

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2012) and news media (Swinburn and Egger 2002) two very influential communication media which saturate our environment, communicate often strikingly unhealthy or conflicting messages but are often taken for granted. The success of the Responseability project (Skehan, Burns et al. 2009) and the key role of public health media advocacy in international advances in the reduction of public health risks such as tobacco, seat belts, pool fences, and gun control (Chapman 2007) serve as models for both driving the research design of this project and informing the development of resources for journalists and health professionals.

Significant scholarship investigating news coverage of suicide has informed innovative journalism education approaches designed to maximise the benefits of coverage and minimise the risks, which include copycat suicides. Drawing on this valuable Australian model, this paper investigates how journalism education might evolve to reflect on the ethics of covering chronic disease such as overweight and obesity. While overweight may not have the dramatic and deadly qualities which make suicide compelling news, new research suggests that public knowledge of and attitudes to chronic conditions are arguably being shaped by media coverage in ways which may not be conducive to health or well-being. Building on findings that news coverage of overweight and obesity is dominated by causes, solutions and attributions of blame focused on the individual, new Australian studies show that these discourses of personal responsibility are also firmly ensconced in the minds of members of the public. Contrary to "common sense" notions that if people only ate less and moved more the problem of obesity would go away, the scientific evidence shows both that urging people to change their personal behaviour has not solved the problem and that major drivers of obesity are far beyond the control of the individual (Swinburn and Egger 2002; Gebel, King et al. 2005). These "common sense" beliefs are reflected in news coverage which may contribute to the widespread stigmatisation and discrimination inflicted on people of size. While the news media are not a health-promotion service, scholars have argued that covering health and medicine demands greater responsibility because of the evidence that news coverage influences health behaviours for better or worse. Therefore, this study seeks to employ frameworks from bioethics and journalism ethics as analytical tools to investigate the ethics of current coverage of overweight and obesity.

Theoretical Framework

This paper presents a reflective practice and journalism ethics approach to answering the question: how ethical is news coverage of this global health problem?

Reflective practice

Reflective practice involves professionals and other practitioners reflecting on their occupational actions after the event to refine their practice (reflection on action) and reflecting on actions and decisions during practice (reflection in action) to improve outcomes on the spot (Schön 1991). Sheridan Burns argues that reflective practice is essential in journalism practice and effective in journalism education (Sheridan Burns 2004). Practising journalists can employ reflection to recognize their own assumptions and consider their role in society (Sheridan Burns 2004) while student journalists can learn how professional practice and journalism norms inform decisions about story research and writing. For

example, reflecting on the relative importance of news values and their power to shape what to include in a story and what to leave out (Sheridan Burns 2004). Sheridan Burns designs such exercises to create ill-structured problems leaving room for the students to investigate how to solve the problem. The potential for conflict between students' career advancement, the commercial interests of the media outlet and the ethical consideration of potential for good and harm are made explicit in Sheridan Burns's approach so students cannot avoid confronting these conflicts (Sheridan Burns 2004). Journalism education ideally links journalism theory to practice (Bacon 1999) and reflecting on journalism practice employing key theoretical or conceptual lenses such as news values and journalism ethics allows practitioners and academics to work together to identify patterns in coverage and practice and relate them to principles and research findings published in fields including journalism studies, education, science, sociology and, in the case of the present paper, health and medicine and the sociology of health and media.

Ethical frameworks

The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance journalism code of ethics commits journalists to reporting with honesty, fairness, independence and respect for the rights of others (Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance 2005-2013). The code of ethics includes 12 points of which seven appear most relevant to this research (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11) and six of which will be used to consider the reporting of obesity. According to Rosenstiel and Kovach (Rosenstiel and Kovach 2001) there are nine elements of journalism: Journalism's first obligation is to the truth; Its first loyalty is to citizens; Its essence is a discipline of verification; Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover; It must serve as an independent monitor of power; It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise; It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant; It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional; Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.

Research Methodology

The Australian Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (National Union of Journalists) code of ethics (Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance 2005-2013), supplemented where relevant with bioethics, will be used as a framework to analyse how well news coverage of overweight and obesity meets our ethical responsibilities as journalists. Using research findings on the patterns of reporting, dominant news angles, sources and framings in news coverage, interviews about news coverage with members of the public and interviews with media practitioners who have reported on obesity, this study aims to identify ways coverage could be changed to enhance their contribution to health and wellbeing and perhaps reduce the stigma and discrimination. The analysis draws on previous analyses of media coverage and ongoing Australian Research Council funded research exploring the views of media audiences and media producers.

Results

When asked what they thought of media coverage of overweight and obesity, many people interviewed for the ARC project (DP1096251) said that highlighting the problem was a 'good idea', that if there was no coverage people would think overweight is 'the norm', and it was good to see what could be done.

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Some said coverage was good when done nicely without ridiculing people, that coverage was sometimes responsible, and that media professionals tried to make it fair and unbiased. One person said the coverage was normally 'fairly factual'. Less positive comments suggested that media coverage was a mixture of 'sympathetic' and 'scathing', that the news used 'scare tactics' and tried to make "you feel guilty" and "strike fear into you", and that coverage promoted a 'nanny state' and portrayed obesity as Australia's biggest health problem. Media used the 'obese' word more than 'overweight' and tended to focus on extremes. Some said there was not enough coverage and there should be more, other said there was plenty, especially celebrity weight stories in magazines. Some said the media did not cover overweight and obesity properly, coverage points out obesity is a problem but lacked solutions, and they did not report enough on causes. For some the media oversimplified the issue and took a "‘Why can’t they change the way they are?’ attitude. While coverage had become more respectful and reasonable, it was sometimes judgmental and not terribly sympathetic. Some coverage did not take the problem seriously and some media programs were freakshows aimed at people who liked to see people suffer. Some current affairs shows made big and fat people 'laughing stocks'. One participant said the coverage focused on the size of problem and how much it's going to cost but "you’re not actually talking to the people who have actually got the problem". Participants also noted there was too much focus on low income people and not enough focus on the impact on families. One person questioned whether obesity was picked on because it was 'visual' and another said the media often show "news grabs of big bottoms and fat men and women rolling along the street with rolls of fat which is not always respectful but it’s reality". He added: "So you can’t avoid it, it’s the real world – do you hide from it or do you use it to advantage. I think on balance it’s good that it’s being reported on." (NB: some participants did not clearly distinguish between news media and other media).

Analyses of news angles in Australian newspapers found that in 2000, the size of the problem of obesity, solutions and causes of obesity dominated news angles. In 2005, health effects and regulation became more prominent but the focus was still mainly on size of the problem, solutions and causes. In 2006, solutions became more prominent while causes and size the problem were still key and health effects and regulation fell from prominence. In 2009, size of the problem, solutions and causes dominated but regulation overtook causes as a key news angle. In all four years studied, certain news angles were consistently neglected as topics: discrimination, access to services and environmental impacts. While health effects received good coverage in 2005, far less coverage focused on these in 2000, 2006 and 2009. Regulation, a key type of population level intervention encompassing taxes on unhealthy ingredients and unhealthy advertising, rose in 2005 but fell away to almost no coverage in 2006 and rose again in 2009 (Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2011).

Code of ethics

The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance journalism code of ethics commits journalists to reporting with honesty, fairness, independence and respect for the rights of others (Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance 2005-2013). The 12-point code will be discussed in the light of issues arising from the reporting of overweight and obesity.

1. Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.

Our interviews with journalists confirm that they are committed to **accuracy** but comments on preferred sources suggest their approach is focused strongly on obesity as a medical problem. This focus on the medical element and the professional pressures to personalise news stories may contribute to the dominant discourse of individual responsibility and blame (Major 2009). Our analyses of news angles show that news outlets focus on the size of the problem, causes, solutions, wonders of science, individual success stories, quirky news and the latest diet (Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2007; Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2011). While there is some coverage of socioeconomic drivers such as fast food and the lack of public transport (Robotham and Nixon 2006), the solutions tend to focus on individuals improving their diet and PA, perhaps reflecting the mantra widespread in the community: "Eat less, move more". Few stories focus on industry or government; campaigns for restrictions on sugar, fat, soft drink and advertising to children gain only sporadic coverage; and, discrimination receives between one and three per cent of coverage (Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2011). Even when population level causes are more widely reported, when it comes to solutions the focus is back to the individual (Lawrence 2002). Public health research demonstrates that forces beyond individual control are key drivers of obesity (Swinburn and Egger 2002). Is it **fair** to focus so strongly on obesity statistics, medical research and individual stories? Are the key industries and responsible ministries being held to account? Interviewed for stories? Are people with a weight issue being asked for their opinion? Does news coverage objectify people with a weight issue as a problematic "other" and a burden on society? Yes, it does. There is evidence that the routine use of 'faceless fatties' (Bonfiglioli 2007; Cooper 2007; Heuer, Puhl et al. 2011) dehumanises people of size (Pearl, Puhl et al. 2012; Puhl, Peterson et al. 2013), encourages audiences to view very large people as a source of disease and health care costs and, vitally, visualises the problem of overweight and obesity as morbidly obese, thus allowing audiences to compare their overweight or obese body favourably with what we "know" from television and newspapers to be "obese". The routine use of morbidly obese bodies to illustrate overweight and obesity stories is arguably contributing to the epidemic of denial (Donath 2000; Kuchler and Variyam 2003; Jeffery, Voss et al. 2005; Pfizer Australia 2005; Coulson, Ypinazar et al. 2006) and to stigmatisation and discrimination (McClure, Puhl et al. 2011). Most people recognise obesity as a problem but they do not see it as their own problem, with individuals and parents routinely misappraising their own bodies and their children's as not obese or even overweight (Donath 2000; Wake, Salmon et al. 2002). I would argue that pictures used to illustrate obesity news **give distorting emphasis** because they visually locate the weight issue in the morbidly obese weight range (Bonfiglioli and Mills 2011) and, by excluding people's faces, prevent obese people from "meeting the gaze" of the news viewer thus turning the viewer into a voyeuristic 'us' and offering obese people up as 'them', generic examples of the problem of obesity rather than as individuals like everyone else (Cooper 2007; van Leeuwen 2008; Bonfiglioli, Mills et al. 2010) (van Leeuwen, 2008 p.140-141). During our investigations of this issue, colleagues and journalists have strongly argued that one cannot show the faces of obese people or indeed smokers, drinkers, or gamblers, because that would invade their privacy (Bonfiglioli 2012). Our interviews with journalists and producers have confirmed that journalistic professionalism demands protecting privacy and indeed item 11 of the code of ethics urges journalists to respect **personal privacy**. Overweight is so stigmatised that it is socially and professionally problematic to ask a large adult or child to be filmed or photographed for a story about large people, Australian researchers are perceived by journalists as reluctant to allow the media in to film research participants, and parental consent rules apply to photographing/filming children (unpublished ARC data). The journalists we interviewed made the vital professional point that identifying adults or children as 'obese' carries with it a significant hazard of bullying, stigmatisation, *Full papers, submitted by the deadline, will be published on www.wjec.be.*

ridicule and discrimination. They also made the important observation that picture choice was not usually handled by journalists. However, online discussions and a growing body of scholarship suggest that people of size are mobilising to critique the "faceless fatties" approach to television reportage, point out that such symbolic decapitations are in themselves stigmatising and dehumanising (Cooper 2007; Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity 2011; Brooker undated) and that stills and video footage of people of size are increasingly available, copyright free, from online resource sites (Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity 2011; Bonfiglioli 2012).

The code of ethics commits journalists to ***Disclosure of all essential facts*** - While I am not suggesting journalists are "***suppressing relevant available facts***", and there are clearly problems with accessing scholarly research and individuals willing to be interviewed as representative of the obese community, there is scope for a more enterprising approach to the question of what aspects of obesity, and the drivers of obesity, are not yet in the public domain. What facts are missing? Is industry hiding data about the addictiveness of food from us? (Moss 2013). Are politicians being lobbied by industry? How has industry managed to be so successful in preventing the introduction of traffic light labels which evidence shows facilitates healthy choices (Kelly, Hughes et al. 2009; Roberto, Bragg et al. 2012). The analyses of news angles suggests that obesity is mostly reported within certain fields (causes, size of the problem, solutions, risks of obesity), and there is likely to be a close relationship between the types of news angles employed and the types of sources: so, for example, if obesity is considered a health issue then a health professional or health researcher is the logical 'expert' to interview. While about one third of people interviewed in television news are people with a weight issue, newspaper news appears to include a much smaller proportion (9% of sources in leading Australian newspapers' coverage in 2000) of the affected community (Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2011). News stories generated by this approach are not problematic in themselves but the approach may lead to a pattern of neglect which may be very convenient for industries implicated in the widespread sale and marketing of high-density, nutrient-poor foods and drinks. Audiences are struck by the contradictory news on nutrition (Holland, Blood et al. 2013) and a recent Australian study found exactly this type of contradiction in the coverage of sweet, non-alcohol beverages (Bonfiglioli, Hattersley et al. 2011). Fruit juice was the most widely covered sweet drink, closely followed by carbonated, sugar-sweetened soft drinks. Coverage was positively oriented towards sweet drinks, with fruit juice primarily portrayed as having health benefits while some articles mentioned risks of sweet drinks, such as obesity, tooth decay, metabolic syndrome and heart attack. As Holland and colleagues note journalists are not necessarily in a position to judge the harms or benefits of a particular food or drink (Holland, Blood et al. 2013), but this kind of coverage may confuse audiences about whether it is safe and/or healthy to consume sweet non-alcoholic drinks even at a time when there is a growing scientific evidence that sugary drinks are clearly bad for teeth and implicated in weight gain (Vartanian, Schwartz et al. 2007). The question of whether journalists do their ***utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply*** does not trigger specific criticisms of obesity coverage as the journalists we interviewed made it clear that it is a struggle to find people affected by weight to interview. However, one could ask whether routinely using images of obese people (often the same person repeatedly) as wallpaper for television news and current affairs and using them more often as visuals than as interviewees counts as a fair opportunity for reply? If two thirds of Australians are overweight or obese, can it really be so hard to find one person willing to be interviewed? Or are news media organisations focused on finding the most extreme body to add drama and shock value to the story? Again the choice of images is likely to be beyond the control of the journalists and handled by someone who is not bound by the code of ethics.

2. Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or

intellectual disability. While it may be argued that obesity is neither a disease nor a physical disability, consensus is growing that it should be declared a disease (Allison, Downey et al. 2008), overweight and obesity are associated with increased risk of disease, obesity is more common in disabled people [REF] and governments and scholars are discussing how anti-disability discrimination laws could and should be applied to obesity (McVey 2013). However, overweight and obesity are patently "**personal characteristics**" and the images used to illustrate stories about overweight often focus on bellies, behinds and thighs, often show people eating fast food, and appearing disheveled (Bonfiglioli, Mills et al. 2010; McClure, Puhl et al. 2011; Puhl, Peterson et al. 2013). This is arguably unnecessary emphasis, especially when you consider that most of these images are of people who are morbidly obese and the greater number of people affected by excess weight are either overweight or obese, not morbidly obese. In the text of news, source strategies mean that probably too few people of size are being sought out for their opinion on obesity events and issues. This creates a tension: obesity is reported as a problem for the nation using population statistics which don't instantly demand an interview with an ordinary member of the public but the problem is framed as being caused by many individuals of size who are considered responsible for their own weight and therefore are so stigmatised that media professionals feel awkward about approaching them for interview and video footage with faces showing. Meanwhile, in real life individuals of size are grouping together to critique the use of de-personalised fat bodies, to out themselves as the "faceless fatties" of television by posting their names and faces on the internet, and to contribute to websites offering stills and video footage of people of size doing things other than sitting around and eating and drinking. As long as the picture sourcing is handled separately from the news writing, journalists may absolve themselves of responsibility but an alternative pathway would be to build a list of contacts of people of size interested in commenting on the latest research, budget estimates and prevalence data and willing to have their photographs used. While people of size may not enjoy confronting our size in photographs, we are mostly aware that we are not fashionably or photogenically thin.

4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence. Does believing that obese people are responsible for their weight count as '**any belief**'? Even if this belief is so widespread as to be taken for granted? While some of the journalists we interviewed clearly articulated their knowledge that social, economic and environmental factors influences the risk of obesity, others subscribed to the belief that obesity is an individual or a parental responsibility. This is not surprising as this belief is widespread, documented (Oliver and Lee 2005) and clearly reproduced in patterns of news coverage (Lawrence 2004; Bonfiglioli, Smith et al. 2007; Kim and Willis 2007). That does not make it right. Thus we can ask the questions: are beliefs about responsibility for weight hindering the accurate, fair and independent reporting of obesity?; and: Is it ethical to allow this belief to go unchallenged and to fail to reflect on the impact of current patterns of coverage? Patterns of coverage of obesity may be: failing to alert individuals at risk (people who are not morbidly obese and thus do not recognise themselves as at risk because of the news illustrations); contributing to the stigmatising of people of size by reproducing individual responsibility framing and the high cost of obesity to the health budget; and, failing to hold government to account for stalling on effective policies and powerful vested interests in industry to account for their systematic pushing of unhealthy food and drink products onto an ill-informed public, resisting effective

labelling and stalling on the re-formulation of foods towards more healthy compositions; marketing high-fat, high-salt, high-sugar foods heavily to children (Moss 2013). Does being a motorist or a Sydneysider make you biased against cyclists? Investigations of news media coverage show a distinct anti-cyclist sentiment in Sydney newspapers compared with Melbourne papers (Rissel, Bonfiglioli et al. 2010). Cycling has benefits for health, weight loss and the environment, a concern for the greater good amongst journalists might lead to more supportive news about cycling. However, Sydney's planning and geography and business structures may place journalists under pressure to represent the interests of motorists and small businesses who may also be considered members of their audience. Town planning may be at least as important as news media coverage to the development of cycling but is demonising cyclists as irresponsible lawbreakers, brave but pariahs who are a danger to others perhaps reflect a motorists' view of the world? One year cycle paths are boosting house prices (Sydney Morning Herald 2008), the next there is a war between motorists and cyclists (Browne 2009). Of course, journalists can't resist conflict -- it is a key news value (Conley and Lambie 2006). Reflection on where we are coming from as individuals and members of society while researching and reporting news and features may not only lead to more ethical practice but generate novel news angles (Bonfiglioli 2007).

6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.

While advertising is recognised as a key element of the obesogenic environment, it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate advertising pressures on journalistic coverage (or non-coverage) of overweight and obesity.

8. Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify yourself and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person's vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.

The legal and perceived barriers to asking people of size to be photographed or filmed appear to be leading to footage and stills being obtained without consent followed by virtual decapitation, blurring or masking people so depicted to avoid identification. The use of telephoto or zoom lens also allows for the capture of falsely intimate close-ups of people's bellies, behinds and their eating and drinking. Is this using **fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material?** Of course these shots are taken in the public domain but the paparazzi approach leaves the individual unaware until they see that T-shirt on their tummy on the television. Does it **exploit a person's vulnerability** to take pictures and film the parts of their bodies which it is impossible to hide without being confined to one's home? Is it responsible to show repeatedly the same footage of one morbidly obese person because this practice is cheaper, more convenient and absolves the media of issues of consent, privacy and defamation, even when free stills and video are increasingly available on the internet? (Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity 2011; Yale Rudd Center Undated)

9. Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed. It may be stretching a point to argue that pictures used to illustrate obesity news are not true and accurate because the pictures are taken from real life. However, when you consider the

mismatch between the body weights shown and the distribution of body weights in the Australian population the pattern of coverage loses its claim to truth and accuracy. Research funded by a UTS ECR grant has found that healthy weight and obese and morbidly obese individuals are over-represented in television news coverage and overweight individuals (who make up the largest proportion of society) are under-represented (Bonfiglioli, Mills et al. 2010).

11. Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude. Does taking falsely intimate film or stills of people's bellies and behinds show respect for **personal privacy?** Can one be private in a public space? Does anonymising the images remove all harm?

Reflecting on the above through the framework of Rosenstiel and Kovach (Rosenstiel and Kovach 2001), one can ask whether the truth about overweight and obesity is wider than currently covered in the news, to which citizens are reporters demonstrating their loyalty? The one third of Australians who are neither overweight or obese or the third who are overweight and in denial? What practices of verification of the issues, events and people deeply connected to these news topics are being employed? Are practitioners who feel under time pressure, editorial pressure and public relations pressure empowered to maintain their independence from those they cover? If industry and government are routinely left unchallenged, is journalism serving as independent monitors of power? Who and which institutions are the legitimate targets of public criticism? Are all the significant aspects of weight enjoying the skills of journalists to be made interesting and relevant? Can news which neglects discrimination, access to services and health effects of overweight and over-emphasizes extremes of obesity be considered comprehensive and proportional? Are journalists exercising their personal conscience in an ethical way on this issue or are they unduly influenced by dominant ideologies of individual responsibility, free for all markets and minimal government interventions?

Journalists' coverage of obesity and overweight is a key element of the obesogenic environment, journalism ethics can point to the ways in which news coverage can adhere to journalistic principles as well as to provide news which no longer takes for granted the idea, underpinned by neoliberal concepts of individual responsibility, that overweight and obesity are solely the responsibility of the individual. Journalists can investigate where governments are reducing the obesogenic aspects of the environment (for example the embattled Clover Moore in Sydney, and challenged Michael Bloomberg in New York] and where they are refusing to accept their role as stewards of population health with a responsibility to invest in policies which support healthier lifestyles (Magnusson 2012). Journalists can review their list of sources and reflect on whether key categories of sources are missing (Bonfiglioli 2007). Framing overweight and obesity as an individual responsibility makes it logical not to bother investigating industries and not to try calling on them to speak in defence of their resistance to policies which improve the food and drink environment. Journalists can investigate which industry players are fighting health-enhancing laws and resisting re-formulating their foods and drinks to reduce fat, sugar and salt and eliminate trans fats (Moss 2013). Editors and producers too have a responsibility to consider the ethics of the story angle and camera angle.

Journalism education - this research provides an example of the value of journalism studies for journalism education. In a reporting unit (module/subject), students are expected to research a topic

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and obtain quotes from sources. Inspiration may come from their own life experiences, the task set by the lecturer, such as visiting a suburb unknown to the student, or from something a friend told them (Bacon 2006). Many excellent stories begin in these ways. However, reporting can be underpinned by journalism studies research which identifies patterns of coverage and critiques them in terms of current scientific knowledge or other information which can point up gaps or slants. For example, one UTS student hypothesized war coverage depended on a narrow range of authorised sources, used news analysis to demonstrate that this was so by identifying a lack of interviews with soldiers and their families and used this research to inform a portfolio of articles featuring soldiers and their families (O'Brien 2012).

It is vital to recognise that media portrayals of overweight and obesity are by no means controlled by journalists. Journalists may have no control over the choice and (repeated) use of images of people of size; journalists are likely to be under significant time pressure; they may have little access to primary research publications; they are the target of saturating public relations activities; and efforts to reach people of size for interview may be hampered by legal constraints, considerations of privacy and sensitivity, institutional privacy policies; and, reluctance of researchers to engage with media and build media dissemination into the ground-floor of research design. Opportunities to pursue enterprise journalism, unconventional news angles, industry-focused or socioeconomic environmentally-focused story lines are likely to be curtailed significantly by lack of time, lack of research resources, editorial pressure and community bias towards blaming individuals for their weight. Further research and resource development is required to investigate the limits of researcher and public health practitioners' understandings of current media practice and pressures and provide resources to facilitate increased excellence in reporting overweight and obesity, physical activity and inactivity.

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