

Case Study: Media Portrayal of Fort Hood Shooters

A recent spike in mass killings has generated a vivid, public discussion concerning the underlying motives of perpetrators and prevention strategies to help avoid future incidents. As an informed public, it is our duty to properly understand the truth behind these terrible, violent actions and decide for ourselves how to craft policy and institute change. With this in mind, it is imperative that the pertinent information is presented with a high degree of accuracy, consistency, and overall faithfulness to the truth. Major media outlets have great autonomy when determining what is seen by the public eye, which can be very problematic in some cases. While radical Islamic groups commit some of the most dramatic and shocking acts of violence, the media must be careful not to misrepresent the circumstances or overdraw the realm of blame for attacks on American soil. 9/11's historically violent and terrifying attacks appear to have influenced the media and public mindset towards harboring inclinations that Muslims are more likely to carry out such attacks. Group blame and an inclination to declare 'terrorist motives' appear to be far more frequent when it concerns perpetrators with known Islamic ties. In contrast, the coverage of non-Muslim perpetrators illustrates how the media commonly attributes motive to an individual's psychological disorder and dismisses it as an isolated incident. The prevailing trend in media coverage leads the public to assume Muslim perpetrators of violent actions have terrorist ties while assuming non-Muslim perpetrators have a psychological disorder. A shooting at Fort Hood, Texas committed by Nidal Hasan in 2009 shares eerie similarities with a shooting by a non-Muslim Ivan Lopez in 2014. The quest to find the truth behind such attacks is very

important to curbing future violence, but it must be done with a careful eye. The fact-finding process is destructive when we allow ourselves to view biased information through a jaded perspective. . A shooting at Fort Hood, Texas committed by Nidal Hasan in 2009 shares eerie similarities with a shooting by a non-Muslim Ivan Lopez in 2014. Through comparison of these two attacks at Fort Hood, I hope to shed some light on existing asymmetries found within media coverage and contribute to discussion on how to fix this issue.

My decision to investigate this topic was mainly driven by an asymmetry in media coverage that I noticed over the course of several years. In the years since 9/11, I felt that I had observed that the media was much more willing to associate 'terrorism' and group affiliation with Muslim perpetrators than non-Muslims perpetrators who were guilty of similar actions. These undertones have become an increasingly noticeable trend that is starting to be recognized. Media bias within coverage of mass-killings has been investigated in many different ways and scholars have different theories about how it manifests. Research has begun to look into how ideology, race, and religion affect the scope of the media's portrayal of the perpetrator.

Jasper Williams authored a 2010 article that argued the existence of an innate media bias that resonates within politically motivated violence (Williams 2010). While the media leads us to believe that right-wing violence is ever increasing, Jasper contends that violent actions are equally prevalent on both ends of the ideological spectrum. Jasper argues that the media suppresses the coverage of left-wing extremists, while dramatizing right-wing violence. He uses the cases of Dr.

Amy Bishop and Joseph Stack to illustrate the contrast in the media coverage of perpetrators. On February 12, 2010, Bishop opened fire at a faculty meeting of her peers at the University of Alabama in Huntsville killing 3 people. A family source indicated that Bishop was a 'far left political extremist' who was 'obsessed with President Obama'. Jasper contends there was little attention given to this fact because she was a liberal extremist (not conservative). Joseph Stack killed one Internal Revenue Service employee when he intentionally crashed his plane into an IRS building on February 18, 2010. The incident resulted in a major criticism of the far-right as leftist groups used it to call out conservatives and the growing Tea-Party movement. As Jasper notes, allegations of Stack being the 'first tea-party terrorist' seem unwarranted since Stack could more properly be described as a Marxist. Sharing in Jasper's sentiment, Peder Jensen represents a far-right perspective on the coverage of Islamist extremism. Jensen asserts that an overwhelming percentage of reporters are liberal, but they are not biased through their writing itself. Jensen believes a liberal bias in terrorism coverage is manifested in an ulterior form. Rather than directly infuse their liberal beliefs in their media reports, members of the media are unintentionally prone to chastise and alienate colleagues and public figures that exhibit elements of a right-wing sentiment (Jensen 2014). As Jensen explains it, the threat of being known as racist or anti-Islamic has led reporters to tread lightly when reporting stories that could support the right-wing platform. The careers of conservative journalists are allegedly ruined for defending their views and suffer the effects of damaging labels for writing what they believe.

A newfound attention to respecting religious and ethnic identities has led to an increased sensitivity in how the media portrays the perpetrators according to their characteristics and backgrounds. Ray Hanania has sought to expose an incongruity he perceives among how the media reports Israeli and Palestinian violence. Hanania suggests that 'peer censorship' and 'pressures' have led the American journalists to unduly frame Arab roles in violent situations negatively, while tending to absolve or justify Israelis for otherwise comparable acts of violence. (Hanania 2001). He specifically notes an example where Arab perpetrators are labeled "barbaric terrorists" and "bloodthirsty Arab killers", while Israeli-perpetrators garners labels such as "Israeli underground" and "Settler vigilantes" (Hanania 2001). This article is especially fascinating when considering that it was written before 9/11, which is widely considered a crucial escalation point for anti-Islamist tensions. Hanania's analysis suggests that this anti-Islamist sentiment predates what many people see as the exposition of anti-Muslim discrimination. Hanania's article is an attempt to show the American media's failure to fairly cover the existence of radical violence from both sides of this long-standing conflict. The question that remains is: Does American media coverage of mass killings embody such incongruity?

The previous research in the media coverage of perpetrators is very intriguing claims but lack the common metrics to best compare media reaction. When the Fort Hood military post suffered two different violent incidents less than five years apart, a very interesting chance for comparison arose. Sara Kamali wrote a thoughtful article questioning how we characterized each shooter differently and

why this may expose a serious innate bias within the American media. In the article, Kamali notes Nidal Hasan's immediate implication in terrorist activities while Ivan Lopez was quickly denounced as 'mentally-ill' (Kamali 2014). This disparity seems unwarranted given the similar mental states of the men involved, and is something that I will seek to expand on in my work. While Kamali writes a short analysis on the subject, I will seek to more fully explore the media coverage of the two perpetrators. Much like Kamali, I believe the perpetrator's appearance and alleged ties to Islam leads to a chronic difference in the way the media covers violent acts.

There are limits to what general conclusions can be drawn from a single comparison of two incidents; there are unique factors in both cases. However, two separate shootings at Fort Hood, Texas provide a remarkably high level of similarity that allows for better comparative analysis to be made. Both attacks took place at the same military base in Texas less than five years apart from each other. Both gunmen were serving in the Army and each man even used a handgun purchased from the same gun store in Killeen, Texas (Lyman 2014). A sister of a soldier injured by Lopez in the attack reported that Lopez stopped by the personnel office to pick up a form requesting leave. In Hasan's case, he was seeking an escape from his upcoming tour in Afghanistan for religious reasons. Hasan's attack had religious undertones, but that does not necessarily change the equation. Forensic psychologist J. Reid Meloy describes two types of mass murderers, "One type is predatory, premeditated and emotionless. The other acts out from anger, fear, or response to a perceived imminent threat or trigger" (Cox 2009). Both Hasan and Lopez are men that acted out their feelings of fear and anxiety through

inconceivably horrible actions. Additionally, each of these men had well-known dispositions that perhaps could have been preemptively treated more aggressively. Hasan made known that he felt stressed about the Muslims' role in the military and had anxiety over his upcoming deployment. Multiple specialists theorize that Hasan suffers from mental illness which caused him to act. (Cox 2009) Lopez was being treated for depression and anxiety, in addition to undergoing evaluation for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder at the time of the attack (Zarembo, Zucchini, and Hennessy-Fiske 2014). In light of the substantial similarities between them, the two Ft. Hood shootings provide an opportunity for critiquing the media response and framing of domestic acts of mass violence in the United States.

First and Second Attacks at Fort Hood

In the early afternoon of November 5th, 2009, United States military personnel were filtering through the Ft. Hood readiness center when a lone gunman entered the building and opened fire with two pistols (CNN 2009). Multiple attempts to charge the gunman were in vain, as the shooter quickly reloaded and continued firing (Zwerdling 2009). Police reports indicate that the gunman, Major Nadal Hasan, was specifically targeting unarmed military personnel, allegedly passing over equally vulnerable civilian targets. (Zucchini 2010). Hasan was shot after a short confrontation with police and paralyzed from the abdomen down as a result (Zucchini 2010). Hasan, an Army psychiatrist and Virginia Tech graduate, was soon after named the suspect in the case. The attack on Fort Hood in 2009 resulted in 13 military personnel dead and left 31 others wounded (CNN 2009).

In 2014, Specialist Ivan Lopez would commit a similar act of violence at the same exact military base after an alleged confrontation with his peers. Lopez walked into an administrative building on the Ft. Hood military post with a pistol at around 4 p.m. and began opening fire on the building's occupants (Brumfield, Shiochet, and Rubin 2014). He later exited the building and climbed into his car where he committed suicide upon confrontation by a military police officer. Lopez murdered 3 people and wounding 16 others before taking his own life (Ford 2014). While these two tragic events were in many ways strikingly similar, the two incidents received significantly different media coverage.

Public Reaction to Hasan

The public reaction was severe as citizens were understandably distraught by Hasan's actions. Almost immediately, people started to dig to try to find out and understand why he would possibly commit such a violent action. One of the first details made public in media reporting was Hasan's Muslim faith (CNN b 2009). Perhaps influenced by the tenor of early reporting, American Muslim groups quickly rushed to publicly denounce the attack before a motive was made clear. The Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Congress of Arab American Organizations were just a few of the many organizations that acted swiftly to distance themselves from the attack (The Arab American News 2009). Muslim communities moved quickly to distance themselves from such heinous acts in hopes to limit retribution and reactionary hate crimes such as the ones seen after 9/11. The rise in violent activities by radical Islamic groups has made an individual's Islamic faith (rightly or wrongly) a more salient characteristic for media coverage.

Post-9/11, the American public makes a second-natured connection when 'terrorism' is associated with a Muslim's actions. The perception of group affiliations is damaging to a community, even if it is later diffused or discredited. If the media is unduly contributing to this problem, then it is important to recognize this issue. Hasan was known to be a "ticking time-bomb" by his peers, yet this sort of crazed persona was never portrayed mainstream media circuit. (Doyle, Retter, and Olshan 2009) Hasan spent his days listening to the dark war stories suffered by US veterans. Hasan's car had recently been keyed and he felt like an outsider in the military (CNN b 2009). Certainly these details could have pointed to a deeper investigation into psychosis. Despite a belief that these pressures in his life could have brought about a mental illness, this possibility was left largely unexplored by the media. Overall, Hasan's psychological instability garnered minimal attention in comparison to his Muslim faith. Hasan's every connection to the Muslim faith was publicly scrutinized, which only served to jade public perception on the true scope of threat.

There was much confusion and controversy over Hasan's actions and what they meant for the United States. His motivations were hotly debated as people argued that Hasan was everything from a deranged killer to a manifestation of growing Islamic extremism. The United States Government labeled the incident "workplace violence" in a controversial move that shed further controversy on this ambiguity. (Mount 2012) While the diction used to describe this attack can be debated, the scope of the threat appears to be retrospectively clear. Hasan acted

alone and without meaningful ties to a larger Islamic extremist group, despite allusions to the contrary.

Hasan's personal history and fervent belief in the Muslim faith provided a tantalizing link to terrorism that the media emphasized early in the coverage. Hasan's prior email contact with known terrorist and Al-Qaeda recruiter Anwar al-Awlaki was revisited and scrutinized after the attack. This brief relationship became the focal point of hundreds of news stories across the country. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had fully investigated the series of emails the previous year and deemed them to be consistent with his work (Johnston and Shane 2009). Among the coverage, both the New York Times and ABC news released articles concerning the emails with al-Awlaki soon after the attack. While an attack of this nature and magnitude obviously warrants study of the perpetrator's past, in Hasan's case this scrutiny further built the façade that he was a terrorist connected to an organized radical Islamic group. These emails had repeatedly been deemed irrelevant, so the story should have likely garnered far less attention from the media. At least in the New York Times article, they included an official FBI quote that there wasn't any information to indicate that Hasan was involved in a "broader terrorist plot" (Johnston and Shane 2009).

The ABC news article was written 10 days after the New York Times piece, and it did not even include this critical piece of information. Instead, the ABC news article included outside quotes that remarked that the emails "sound like code words" and analysis that Hasan was "almost a member of al-Qaeda". (Ross and Schwartz 2009) ABC news neglected to effectively communicate that investigations

into the matter had already been conducted and US officials concluded that there was no evidence to support ties to any radical Islamic groups at all. The ABC news article was published 10 days after the New York Times article, and by this time these details were widely available. The article's failure to place Hasan's communication with al-Awlaki in context is a disheartening and potentially significantly misleading mistake to see made by the media. There is a single mention that the FBI task forces previously investigating the e-mails had "deemed them innocent". (Ross and Schwartz 2009) According to a recent study by Nielsen Norman Group, the average reader reads roughly 20% of an article. (Nielsen 2008) Given the implications of making this connection publicly, the authors fail to properly place the communications in a context the reader will fully comprehend. Readers cannot be reasonably expected to understand that there are no deeper group affiliations, when only one allusion to that fact is made in a tucked away caveat in the article. The authors should have explicitly stated the results of the investigation in the early parts of the article so that any reader would be made aware of this fact. A piece like this that loads off-base speculation concerning a connection between Hasan and an Al-Qaeda recruiter can easily lead people to incorrectly believing his actions were tied to a terrorist network.

Similarly, many media sources such as Fox News and the New York Post were quick to include stories that noted Hasan worshipped at the same mosque as two of the 9/11 hijackers. (Fox News, 2009; Doyle, Retter, and Olshan 2009) This notorious fact alone is not intrinsically valuable to the case, especially when the attack just happened and not much is known about the incident yet. The story

serves only to disparage those associated with the mosque and the Islamic faith before deeper research was done. The mosque referenced happens to be one of the more popular mosques in the country, so it should come as no surprise that two separate attacks have ties to a common source. The media dug to find polarizing and provocative information and published this without any warranted reason. This story contributed to the perception that the mosque was radicalizing Muslims and shows a clear disregard for the blowback for that religious community. This was not necessarily done malicious intent but nevertheless does appear to be an unhelpful connection. The media seems to want to draw larger connections to help bring the story to life. In this instance, it is an extremely damaging and misleading connection to attempt to make.

The prevailing coverage of the Hasan case in American media suggests that news coverage tended to track and feed off of public fear and suspicion of Muslim extremism in the wake of 9/11. A study conducted by McPheters & Co. revealed that “31% percent of American adults spent more time watching television and reading newspapers than they did prior to 9/11”. (Liebeskind 2002) The advertisement benefits of increased media coverage are obvious and even noted by the group conducting the study. Providing in-depth stories about Hasan’s background in the aftermath of the 2009 attack could predictably generate a similar uptick in audience size. Possibly hoping to chase ratings and revenue, media outlets are too often incentivized to cover the most provocative trajectory of the case at the expense of the story’s true nature. The greatest strength of media in the free world is that it can cover stories without government interference as long as they avoid the relatively

lax legal code regarding libel, defamation, and threats. This great strength can also be a weakness if left unchecked by the public. The public must demand a certain level of integrity and value out of the stories they follow, otherwise they run the risk of consuming sensationalized stories. Inaccuracies aren't the prevailing issue, but rather a contributing factor of the current problems associated with our media.

Lopez Public Reaction

In contrast to media portrayals of Hasan as a calculated ideological extremist with ties to radical Islam, Ivan Lopez was painted as an unnerved mentally-ill suspect from the outset of the incident. In the immediate aftermath, it was made very clear that Lopez was a man facing a battery of conditions that was set off by an altercation. “[Lopez] was being treated for depression and anxiety, and had been prescribed Ambien to help him sleep. He was being evaluated for possible post-traumatic stress disorder.” (Lyman 2014) Lopez’s actions seemed to be almost dismissed in a long list of mental health issues and personal ailments throughout the first paragraph of a next-day story published by CNN. From the outset, the portrait presented was that of a man that presented red flags, but was thought to lack the dangerousness and capacity to commit such acts. Most significantly, it was never seriously suggested that Lopez was acting on behalf of a terrorist group, despite the chilling parallels between his attack and Hasan’s.

The New York Times published several stories on Ivan Lopez during the aftermath of his attack that conveyed a very different tone to coverage of Hasan. (Lyman 2014;Montgomery, Fernandez, and Williams 2014) Lopez’s actions were characterized as those of a mad man going on an isolated and violent rampage.

Lopez was repeatedly identified as a mentally ill man that was being evaluated for post-traumatic stress disorder. One New York Times report goes on to include the base commander's assessment that Lopez had an "unstable psychiatric and psychological condition". (Lyman 2014) Early reports indicated that the incident was just a troubled man being set off by an altercation with another soldier.

An important consideration in comparing the two incidents is to question if both men had evidence that could contribute to the perception of group blame. As in most cases, it depends how far we look into them. Lopez's cover photo on Facebook was a Puerto Rican flag with superimposed profanity in Spanish. (Lyman 2014) The media could have taken this image as a indicator of many different intentions and ran amok with speculation. After all, there is a historic precedent of Puerto Rican nationalists targeting the United States in acts of terrorism. Puerto Rican terrorist groups were responsible for over 100 bombings in the late 20th century and even attempted an assassination of President Truman. (finding Dulcinea, 2011) While there are a number of explanations as to why Lopez chose this picture, this photo never came to the public eye. Lopez was also in the Puerto Rican National Guard so it is not as if his ties with Puerto Rico were a loose affiliation. Its obvious that he felt a level of pride in his Puerto Rican ancestry, yet there is no meaningful coverage dedicated to exploring these ends. There was a portrayal of Ivan Lopez as a mentally ill man and no major alternative portraits in circulation. In fact, it is 1,271 words into a 1,471-word article before mentioning the Puerto Rican flag superimposed with profanity in Spanish. (Lyman 2014) Ivan Lopez was statically portrayed as a troubled man whose stressors overcame him in a tragic isolated

event. The media seemed to make no major inquiries into his past that even approach those made in Hasan's case.

Discussion

In both cases, the men appeared to show warning signs that could have been interpreted to predict their actions. Neither man was necessarily believed to have ever been on the brink of their violent actions despite their personal issues. From a research standpoint, the differences between the two men's portrayals is a fascinating aspect of their media coverage. It is important to question; to what extent are the variances in coverage justified and what are the implications of how the events are covered? The media explored Hasan's every possible Muslim connection as they took facts and misrepresented them in a way that fueled hype and group-blame. On the other hand, Lopez was portrayed as a mentally ill lone wolf that incited violence through a personification of his mental illness. The two portraits are very different and some of that can be attributed to the underlying driving forces for each man. On the other hand, the media sought to emphasize group identity and expose deeper extremist ties for Hasan, while accepting and publicizing individual blame for Lopez.

Despite substantial similarities, Hasan and Lopez appear to have been handled very differently by the media. In these two cases, it might have come down to what was the easiest narrative to create with the details that were readily available to the media. Perhaps, it was decided that Hasan could be more easily portrayed as a Muslim driven by the growing tide of radical Islamic groups seeking to inflict violence on the West. Likewise, it could have been easier to accept that

Lopez, a non-Muslim, was simply a troubled and tragically mentally-ill soldier who committed an act of violence in a strictly isolated incident. Aurora, Washington Navy Yard, and Newtown are just a few of the devastating shootings that represent the mold seen here. Regardless of motive, the asymmetry in coverage is visibly evident upon reviewing the media coverage. Hasan's labeling as a terrorist is debated to this day, while Lopez's portrayal went largely unquestioned. Instead, Lopez's actions were written off as those of a mentally-ill man, while Hasan's mental state was questioned far less in public forums.

Whether intentional or not, the media shapes public opinion by what it chooses to report. The public will take a view contrary to the facts, if exposed to irrelevant connections in the early stages of learning about the incident. Hasan's links were in fact 100% true, so why does this matter? Pundits may argue that the public can hear all the facts and sort out for themselves what is important. However, this can be a poor strategy for fostering public understanding and Hasan's media portrayal shows a great example of this. When the media reported the old email links to al-Qaeda and the coincidental connection to Hasan's mosque, they inadvertently gave readers a misguided impression of the incident. Psychological research indicates that, "initial impressions of anything new are profoundly influenced by a person's preexisting attitudes and expectations" (Paletz & Entman, 1989). Perhaps Hasan's Muslim faith made the media's jump to exploring terrorist connections an easier process than in Lopez's case. Everybody is susceptible to bias, whether it's a reader scanning the piece or a writer creating it. New information provided risks affirming what our preexisting notions and impressions have already

led us to infer. This tendency, known as confirmation bias, is a tangible quality that people experience and holds particularly high relevance in hot button cases. Covering such events is a delicate process, and it can snowball a problem (i.e., stereotypes) if not carefully monitored. While the reader's preexisting biases can jade her own perspective on an incident, imagine how damaging such biases would be within a writer for a major media outlet. Done consciously or unconsciously, writers are susceptible to implying a degree of untruths and misconceptions at even the highest levels of journalism. When the average person reads around 20% of the information, they will not have accurate takeaways when some of the most important details are buried towards the end of the story or left out entirely. This problem is further exacerbated among individuals who only receive news from a single source. They trust their entire understanding of the world to a single entity and increase the risk of being misinformed.

The public must challenge major media outlets to provide an accurate picture of major news events. The public has the ultimate say in free and capitalist societies such as our own. They decide with their patronage what stories are perpetuated and what is not covered on a daily-basis. The freedom of press is among the United States' greatest features, but they must work to keep it in check. It's in their best interest to do so. If the public is better informed, they will have a more accurate concept of the current issues and events. Nobody wants to feel as though the news was misrepresented to him or her. The media coverage will adapt if there are incentives behind it. If we demand that news stories represent the true trajectory of the story, then they will be more interested in doing so.

Emotional fallout tends to be a big part of the aftermath of these kinds of incidents. People driven by fear, anger, or hate may act out in a backlash against a group of people they blame for a recent event. When the media tried to tie Hasan to a terrorist group, the scope of the blame increased. Additionally, it leads to a fear that there are more people like Hasan looking to commit similar acts. This conclusion is grounded in evidence from the most famous terrorist attack in U.S. history, 9/11. A study indicated that Muslim Americans were trusted less in certain situations such as boarding a plane or selling a used car after 9/11 (Khan and Ecklund 2012). There is almost always a perception of blame that follows attacks and the media must do its part not to expand it unnecessarily. In the event that we know the scope is individual, we should do everything in our power to promulgate this view so the public will be fully aware. Media bias against the Muslim diaspora has had a direct impact on the social stigmatization and discrimination in the West (Cesari 2010). This bias is a current problem that can elevate tensions and aggressions in the future. By casting blame or doubting the intentions of Muslims, there is a great risk that we alienate them and create cultural divides. It's invaluable to reiterate that the wave of violent Muslim extremism is only a very small fraction of Muslims. The perception that Muslims are inherently violent is a factor of labeling due in no small part to the media.

Issues with the major media coverage can result from a number of factors, not all of which are intentional or malicious. Gottshalk and Greenberg argue that stereotypes are a product of our own society rather than an experience with that group. (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2010) Additionally, negatively stereotyping other

cultures serves to unwittingly make us feel better about our culture by distancing ourselves from their perceived traits. The media could be playing off an underlying desire to feel pride about living in a superior culture. If this is the case, then the issue at hand is more about breaking down cultural misconceptions and realizing any untruths that help perpetuate stereotypes.

The next step in investigating this topic lies in understanding why exactly the media bias exists on some level. Each of these theories about why the media reflects a certain culture has some merit. As a group, researchers must continue to investigate the underlying rationale so we can set out to solve the problem. The media is capable of improving the quality of its coverage, and will in time if the public shows it will boost its popularity and finances.

Accurate and timely media coverage is a balancing act. Major media outlets are in constant competition with each other to provide relevant and polarizing news quickly. If either man had been a well-connected terrorist, then it would be important to know as soon as possible. The implications of a deadly terrorist attack on U.S. soil are huge and the public should immediately be made aware in the event that reasonable suspicion arises. However, impressions of media reports can be both long-lasting and far-reaching. It can be easy to see how they would rather run with a sensationalized story than to wait to see the value of the information. Media outlets are successful when they have exciting coverage that draws in viewers, readers, or listeners.

Conclusion

Nidal Hasan and Ivan Lopez engaged in similarly violent acts at Fort Hood, yet their media portrayals were very different. Though variances between the two cases can explain some of the differences, there is still a distinct asymmetry in the way the media covered the two perpetrators. Any media-driven perception that Hasan was group-affiliated was a product of poor representation of the facts and an overall incongruity in concern to what a relevant detail is. A misrepresentation of group blame can contribute to damaging stereotypes in our communities and an ill-informed public. These are not desirable characteristics of our society which prides itself on democracy and inclusion. An attempt to more equitably cover violent incidents in the future would need to include equal concern for the details and careful consideration of the public message sent. The innate bias between these two cases is fairly troubling, but by no means unfixable.

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