

WK4: Media vs. Reality

Media Reports

Fox News (2015) reports that a workshop on how to cover gun violence, held by Columbia University, is "far from objective". However, if one clicks the source links within the article, it is almost laughable how biased and irresponsible this reporting is - except that people *believe* it.

The following are excerpts taken directly from the Fox News article, followed by factually sound corrections.

1. *"A 2013 nationwide survey of PoliceOne's 450,000 members found that 91% of law enforcement support concealed carry laws. Eighty percent believe that a concealed carry permit holder could have reduced casualties from such recent tragedies as Newtown and Aurora. Ninety-two percent think that Obama's proposed assault weapon ban would either increase or have no effect on violent crime"*

The nationwide survey of "450,000" PoliceOne members received about 15,600 responses (with the rate per question varying from 13,774 to 16,113). So this "research" had less than a 5% response rate. An article by Kelley, Clark, Brown, and Sitzia (2003) cites that to be accepted as credible, a 65%-75% response rate is the minimum required. Further, this excerpt tries to generalize findings from a very targeted group (PoliceOne members) to the overall law enforcement community.

2. *"Last fall, the Crime Prevention Research Center, where I serve as president, conducted a survey of economists who have published refereed empirical journal articles on firearms, with 88% of those from North America saying that guns are used more often in self-defense than in crime and 91% saying that gun-free zones attract criminals."*

The common sense point here would be that it is only fair to ask why they are surveying *economists* about their *views* on guns and taking this to be *fact*. And despite the nice name, the "Crime Prevention Research Center" is an extremely partisan, biased, pro-gun group. View their website; it could not be more evident that this group has an agenda.

3. *"Similarly, the claim that the U.S. has a firearm murder "rate 20 times higher than other developed countries" is absurd with several developed countries having much higher firearm murder rates than the U.S. (Brazil, Mexico, and Russia)."*

Fact check: according to the United Nations (2011), Brazil and Mexico classify as "developing economies" and Russia is an "economy in transition". Here are some additional facts, as presented by Vernick (2013) who cites the CDC and the FBI:

- "In 2010, there were 11,078 firearm-related homicides in the U.S."
- For those in which the type of gun is known, "88% were committed with a handgun."

- "53,738 non-fatal firearm assaultive injuries [were] treated in emergency departments in 2010."

4. "Columbia also relies on Bloomberg for the claim that "nearly 100 school shootings have occurred since the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary only two years ago." Even liberal-leaning PolitiFact described this claim as "mostly false," as Bloomberg's number is five times larger than the actual number. CNN and Fox have also disputed the Bloomberg claim."

The link provided for the "mostly false" claim was outrageous. There is nothing "mostly" anything about a shooting. It occurred, or it didn't. Everytown created a definition of school shooting, although Carroll and O'Connor (2014) present their opinion that it is "relatively broad" as a fact. The reality is that Everytown's figure defined school shootings as those shootings "...when a firearm was discharged inside a school building or on school or campus grounds, as documented in publicly reported news accounts." They provided the specific 74 incidents: "date, city and school location" (Carroll & O'Connor, 2014).

Conclusion

Media reporters want a sensational story. It sickens me that they will stoop this low to get it. Calling a shooting that occurs at a school a school shooting is the truth. A fact. Carroll and O'Connor (2014) call this "quite disingenuous". A shooting that has one victim instead of twenty has no less significance to that victim. The fact that shootings with fewer victims don't make the media cut tells you something is terribly wrong in society. Clearly, certain news sources place no value on individual life, let alone integrity in reporting.

References

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