

CONNECTIONS

An Annual Journal of the Kettering Foundation | 2021

To Work Together, Learn Together

By David Mathews p. 2

Libraries as Islands of Trust

By Ellen Knutson p. 30

**Getting to We: Bridging the Gap
between Communities and Local
Law Enforcement Agencies
in Virginia**

By Brian N. Williams p. 53



THE PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONS:
Fractured or United?

The Kettering Foundation is a nonprofit, operating foundation rooted in the American tradition of cooperative research. Kettering's primary research question is, what does it take to make democracy work as it should? Kettering's research is distinctive because it is conducted from the perspective of citizens and focuses on what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation. The foundation seeks to identify and address the challenges to making democracy work as it should through interrelated program areas that focus on citizens, communities, and institutions. The foundation collaborates with an extensive network of community groups, professional associations, researchers, scholars, and citizens around the world. Established in 1927 by inventor Charles F. Kettering, the foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that does not make grants but engages in joint research with others. For more information about KF research and publications, see the Kettering Foundation's website at www.kettering.org.

Connections is published by the Kettering Foundation, 200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459. The articles in *Connections* reflect the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its directors, or its officers.

© Copyright 2021 by the Kettering Foundation
ISSN 2470-8003

Executive Editor
Melinda Gilmore

Editor
Maura Casey

Copy Editors
Laura Carlson
Amy Dragga

Design and Production
Long's Graphic Design, Inc.

Illustrations
Long's Graphic Design, Inc.



CONTENTS

- 2 **To Work Together, Learn Together**
David Mathews
- 11 **Citizen Space and the Power of Associations:
An Interview with John McKnight**
Scott London
- 17 **How Participatory Journalism Created
Collaborations between Law Enforcement,
Assault Survivors, and Community
Advocates**
Sammy Caiola with jesikah maria ross
- 25 **Community Building in an Old-Fashioned Way**
Maura Casey
- 30 **Libraries as Islands of Trust**
Ellen Knutson
- 38 **Rural Life: What Keeps People from
Getting Involved?**
Lorie Higgins
- 46 **Redefining Public Safety:
Professionals and the Public**
Valerie Lemmie
- 53 **Getting to We: Bridging the Gap
between Communities and Local Law
Enforcement Agencies in Virginia**
Brian N. Williams
- 59 **Democracy Is a Snowball Rolling Down a Hill:
The 2021 Kettering Multinational Symposium**
Wendy Willis
- 66 **Catalyzing Change: Unleashing the Potential
of Communities**
Richard C. Harwood



How Participatory Journalism Created Collaborations between Law Enforcement, Assault Survivors, and Community Advocates

By Sammy Caiola with jesikah maria ross

Kettering's research examines how institutions of all kinds, including journalism, can better align their work with the democratic work of citizens. We look for journalists willing to experiment and share what they are learning. In 2019, we assembled

a group of journalists from four newsrooms in Alabama, California, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Each team of journalists focused on a complex, persistent, or “wicked” public problem facing their local community. We encouraged them to identify problems with no clear solution that would require people from throughout the community to work with different institutional actors. We asked them to experiment with reporting the issue in ways that would encourage democratic community problem solving. What follows is a reflection from the journalism team in Sacramento.

My identity as a journalist is based on a few basic principles. I'm committed to accuracy and balance. It's my duty to hold those in power accountable, to amplify the voices of the marginalized, and to arm readers and listeners with information that helps them make decisions. Impartiality is key. But in 2019, a workshop at the Kettering Foundation made me see my job just a bit differently. It asked a question: How might journalists “alter their professional routines to support the work of citizens as they coproduce solutions with institutions and among themselves?”

Journalistic routines include monitoring city hall, attending board meetings, reading press releases, and



What if journalists cocreated stories with community members? What if the process were more transparent? What if journalism made historically neglected residents feel heard, and enabled those on all sides of an issue to work together to solve problems?

attending community events. When reporting a story, I interview those involved in an issue and then do my best to write an informative, balanced, and accurate article.

Often this involves talking to a politician, an analyst, or an academic about the big picture of a “wicked problem” like poverty, racism, or homelessness. It rarely means going out and finding the people who live those issues every day. And normally, the words of those I interview reach the airwaves through my filter. I decide what stays and what goes into a story and which voices to elevate.

But what if there were another way? What if journalists cocreated

stories with community members? What if the process were more transparent? What if journalism made historically neglected residents feel heard, and enabled those on all sides of an issue to work together to solve problems?

ENGAGING WITH PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

There’s a whole movement of “community-engaged” media professionals trying to achieve those goals. In an era plagued with misinformation, building trust among audiences is more important than ever. But the idea of including sources in editorial decision-making runs counter to the closed-door reporting rules that most journalists live by.

In the current financially stressed media climate, many outlets are striving to reach “aspirational audiences,” or people who don’t ordinarily engage with their news product. But when people don’t see themselves in the headlines—or worse, when they see negative or inaccurate representations of their communities—they’re unlikely to tune in. When journalists work in silos, we’re blind to what’s happening in the communities we strive to serve. We visit certain neighborhoods only when there’s a problem we deem newsworthy.

So why don’t journalists spend more time in communities? Why

don't we listen to people's concerns and publish their perspectives? A few reasons. For one, journalists choose topics based on their urgency, universal nature, and newsworthiness. Reporters fear that "cocreating" stories with sources they interview—those with a vested interest in telling the story from one point of view—will violate their commitment to report accurately and without bias. Finally, journalists are trained to frame stories around a problem and to use conflict to drive a story forward, which inadvertently pits each side against another. Could journalism instead help people on all sides build bridges and solve problems?

PARTICIPATORY JOURNALISM AND CAPRADIO

CapRadio, the National Public Radio affiliate in Sacramento, California, has a track record of approaching professional routines differently. Over the past eight years, we've developed a set of participatory journalism principles that guide how we involve people at the center of the issue in our reporting in naming and framing both the problems and solutions.

Recently, we applied these principles in covering a story about sexual assault in Sacramento County. We worked closely with survivors to shape our reporting on law

enforcement investigations of sexual violence, with a focus on how criminal justice outcomes affect victim trauma and healing. Along the way, we shared survivors' viewpoints and experiences with members of area police departments and the county's Sexual Assault Response Team. In the end, we had a story about journalism itself: how a problem can be approached in a way that can encourage both reporters and those they cover to work together to produce news that meets the information needs of diverse stakeholders. Here is the story of how it unfolded.

BRIDGING THE GAP

The choice of our topic was deliberate. Sexual assault is an obvious "wicked problem." As we at CapRadio began to collect stories from women who had reported their assaults, clear patterns emerged around the ways they felt law enforcement had ignored, dismissed, or mistreated them.

Some of their stories are in the July 2020 miniseries on this topic, available at <https://tinyurl.com/cf4mwv45>.

Many more are in a seven-part podcast, available at <https://www.capradio.org/aftertheassault>.

THE PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATORY JOURNALISM



INCLUSION—*who is involved and represented*

Ensure that reporting processes and content involve and reflect the diverse perspectives of our region as a whole, prioritizing those most affected by the issue and whose voices our coverage often leaves out.



COCREATION—*how we involve others to inform reporting*

Involve community partners in developing our editorial vision through listening sessions and project partnerships. When possible, equip people with tools, training, and resources so they can participate in the reporting process.



FACE-TO-FACE EVENTS—*how we increase empathy and understanding*

Design face-to-face opportunities where people can speak for themselves and develop relationships with our journalists and each other. Include activities where participants can explore different experiences, envision solutions, and consider how they can play a part.



PUBLIC SERVICE—*how we support our communities to navigate life with deeper understanding and connection*

Provide reliable, accurate information that people need, that comes from multiple perspectives, corrects myths and stereotypes, and holds power accountable. Produce stories that cover solutions as well as issues.



CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE—*how we support democratic self-governance and a better life for all*

Attend to relationships and processes (in addition to content) in order to generate benefits beyond the newsroom. Use the project to create relationships, culture, networks, and capacities that build community resilience beyond the project.

Developed by jesikah maria ross and Yve Susskind, 2020

The law enforcement agencies and community stakeholders we spoke with early on agreed that there was room for improvement in the process. They named several problematic

factors, including uncooperative victims, the lack of evidence or eyewitnesses, the high threshold for proof, and delays in survivors reporting the crime. All agreed that a project that

better informed survivors and the public about the criminal justice process would be beneficial to all parties involved.

To execute a project to meet those goals, we had to build trust with survivors, which takes time, attention to detail, and acknowledging that the traditional journalism process does not work well for those who have been repeatedly betrayed by people they thought had their best interests in mind. Learning this while reporting on survivors of sexual assault has completely changed the way I do my job.

The project began with an email from a CapRadio listener who said her attempts to report a rape to Sacramento police yielded no justice. It left her feeling powerless, lost, and enraged. When I met her for a first interview, she was clear: this was her story. She wanted some agency in its telling.

This is not how things typically go. Usually, reporters conduct interviews, spend time with subjects, and publish the story later, often with little to no input from the people at the center of the narrative.

Our team at CapRadio shifted that dynamic. We made a decision early on to believe survivors, knowing from research and expert interviews that false rape reporting is rare. And we decided that due to the sensitivity

of the topic, we needed help from people with firsthand experience to get the story right.

I reached out to as many survivors as I could find, with a special ear for those who had reported their crimes to police and hit a dead end. I wound up meeting with eight women. I explained our goal—to publish explanatory journalism that helps bridge the gap between law enforcement and rape survivors—and asked them whether they'd be interested in joining a cohort of survivors to help shape the project. They all agreed.

We started to meet biweekly, and then monthly. Over time the cohort members developed a rapport among themselves. They naturally moderated the conversations and supported one another. For many months, most of these women had been dealing with their trauma alone. We offered them a place to find community.

We invited participants to weigh in on every aspect of the project—what to name it, what should be in it, which questions we should ask experts—and this gave them a sense of agency and ownership, not just of their own stories but of the whole reporting project. Several of them told us that being part of the CapRadio project gave them a sense of purpose they were struggling to find.

We started with the miniseries on assault survivors and police reform.

As social justice demonstrations erupted in Sacramento's streets after the murder of George Floyd, I asked the cohort members a question: "What does 'defund the police' mean to you as a survivor?"

Their answers were varied and fascinating. They rehashed some of their critiques of law enforcement, but then they started to drum up solutions. What if trauma-informed counselors were the first to meet a survivor in the aftermath of an assault instead of uniformed officers? What if law enforcement agencies were to acknowledge that distrust of police in Black and brown communities keeps reporting rates among survivors of color extremely low? What if money currently used on police equipment were shifted toward safe houses? Or helped to fund faster rape kit processing?

At the same time, survivors all over the country, especially Black survivors, were catapulting from George Floyd's killing into a much bigger question about not just how police should be handling rape cases, but whether they should be handling them at all. Survivors' voices made up the backbone of this work. At every step, we continued this practice—asking survivors for their perspective—as we reported through the podcast.

Which brings us to our central

question: How can loved ones, law enforcement, health professionals, and other stakeholders create a more trauma-informed system that better supports survivors in the aftermath of an assault?

WORKING TOWARD COMMON GROUND

We are starting to envision the ways in which the reporting we've gathered can be incorporated into law enforcement processes to achieve the shared goals identified by both survivors and health professionals. Our sources pointed out that survivors are afraid to report due to shame, self-blame, and distrust of the police. When they do report, they are often interviewed by a patrol officer with little training on sensitive issues; survivors often feel dismissed as a result. Frequently, police follow-up is uneven or non-existent. Communication is spotty, and survivors are often not informed about the progress of their cases, including whether an arrest has been made or the case has been dismissed.

The survivors envisioned a responsive system that would allow them to report in person, online, or by phone. They said that police officers who arrive first should be part of a team trained to help victims of trauma, and law enforcement employees should get specialized education on trauma's effect on

the brain, such as memory issues and sequential thinking. They also thought police should communicate clearly about investigations, including giving survivors time estimates on how long such an investigation could take, a way to track progress of cases online, and wrap-up conversations with a detective concerning what's happening with their case. Survivors also suggested that departments provide oversight of investigators, conducting reviews to ensure that cases are handled according to protocol.

We took these ideas to a group of representatives from four police departments in the Sacramento region, and members of the county's Sexual Assault Response Team. During our initial reporting, we met with this group three times. Several of these agencies were initially reluctant to work with CapRadio, particularly the Sacramento Police Department. The Elk Grove Police Department had been cooperative from the get-go, but hesitated about working with us after we had published a three-part series on survivor calls to defund the police because they felt its premise had put their department in a negative light. Multiple detectives and sergeants worried that our portrayal of the law enforcement system would deter future survivors from reporting. Those tensions continued at our



As a journalist who is relatively new to the field of community engagement in journalism, I have been fascinated by this process. I can now recognize the gradual steps of the strategy: trust-building, information gathering, group brainstorming, and reflecting ideas back.

meetings with the police, particularly after we played the group a trio of audio clips: two from survivors and one from a now-retired detective at the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office. The detective talked about the need for law enforcement to put emotional distance between themselves and the survivors. It isn't the job of the officer to believe the victim, she said.

The group generally agreed with this sentiment but expressed a need to give survivors emotional support with the help of a trained advocate. After hearing the survivors' audio

clips which described poor experiences with law enforcement, the group was surprised and dismayed. They urged us to look at the system on a higher level and give credit to what is currently working. I did so in my reporting and encouraged them to provide as much information as they could about what they feel they're doing well, plus any data that would illustrate improvements in case outcomes for sexual assault survivors.

The group made several goals for themselves: encourage more survivors to report sexual assault, collaborate with the local rape crisis center to ensure necessary support for survivors, better educate employees on sexual trauma and trauma-informed interviewing, and reduce instances in which law enforcement retraumatizes survivors.

We shifted the conversation toward finding common ground and introduced the idea of a “third space” for sharing ideas and achieving common goals. Suggestions included a law enforcement summit or series of panels where survivors could ask questions of officers in a safe and moderated setting, working with advocates and stakeholders to help create new training using CapRadio-gathered survivor audio, and bringing survivors and law enforcement together to break bread and make

casual conversation. In another suggestion, stakeholders and survivors could work with law enforcement to create a toolkit that gives survivors a road map for navigating the system. Some of these ideas are already moving forward in at least one police department.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF JOURNALISM

As a journalist who is relatively new to the field of community engagement in journalism (what we call participatory journalism at CapRadio), I have been fascinated by this process. I can now recognize the gradual steps of the strategy: trust-building, information gathering, group brainstorming, and reflecting ideas back. Being the liaisons between survivors and law enforcement has allowed us to transition from what started as an adversarial relationship to a potentially productive one. Ultimately, the project makes me a different kind of journalist: one who not only exposes what problems need to be addressed, but who also helps all sides find a shared space so that together, they can find solutions. ■

Sammy Caiola, former health-care reporter at CapRadio, can be reached at sammy.caiola@gmail.com. Jesikah Maria Ross is a senior community engagement strategist at CapRadio. She can be reached at jmross@capradio.org.



200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459; (937) 434-7300
444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 434, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 393-4478
www.kettering.org

Kettering Foundation
200 Commons Road
Dayton, OH 45459