Would You Say You Did the Right Thing?
Recollections on Witnessing a Suicide
from the Perspectives of Two Security Officers

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Abstract:

This paper adds to the under-researched topic of the work practices of private security officers with analyses of narratives that two security officers produce while discussing the same tragic event: a suicide that took place at the mall where both were employed. The narratives are distinctive not only because of the topic they recount, but also because of the perspective each deploys and the space in which the respective officers operate, one from his seat in the mall's security dispatch centre and the other on the ground as part of her mall patrol duties. The analytic approach here is that of ethnomethodology, which prioritizes, first and foremost, the lived experiences of research subjects as against the theoretical and conceptual priorities (especially "governance," the overwhelmingly most common focus in Canadian security studies) of the researcher. This paper offers insights into the work of security officers as well as a completely unique comparison between the viewpoints of one person who observes an unanticipated emergency via video monitor versus another who engages it firsthand, visually and corporeally. As such, it is a novel study of the role we can accord to "space" in a case study of private security in situ.

Introduction

This paper encompasses analyses of narratives that two security officers produce while discussing the same tragic event: a suicide that took place at the mall where both were employed. The narratives are distinctive not only because of the topic they recount, but also because of the perspective each deploys. One officer saw the event from his seat in the mall's security dispatch centre; the other

responded to it as part of her mall patrol duties.

This piece also and unavoidably examines how narratives created by two parties to an event can be compared and contrasted. This is, of course, relevant to the study of narrative as a social form but it can also motivate further study into how space, and particularly one's proximity (and lack thereof) to a "directly" observed incident, can inform one's stated understanding and narrative recasting of that incident. This has obvious ramifications for phenomena like, of course, other dispatch operations but also for things as varied as distance learning, Skype-based news interviews, and all manner of web-based social encounters. How do we "see" events from the ground versus on a video monitor? How do persons whose job entails viewing video monitors recount what they have seen? How is space consequential for the provision of security? These questions are among those I wish to begin to address in this investigation.

Research on Private Security, and An Ethnomethodological Alternative

Due perhaps to the increasing ubiquity of private security around the world, research concerning it is vast as well, including a great deal of scholarship around what can be categorized as "theoretical" issues surrounding matters of governance and legitimacy and how private parapolicing might be relevant to or imperil those phenomena (cf. Johnston and Shearing, 2003; Rigakos, 2002; Shearing, 1996; Shearing and Stenning, 1987; Wood and Shearing, 2007). What is missing in much of this critically oriented research is what these security officers—however problematic their status in societies where policing has otherwise evolved as public and publically accountable—are *doing,* and even when officers' work activities are examined, researchers' analytic priorities are with respect to these broader issues of governance and not to delineate those work practices themselves (cf. Hutchinson and O'Connor, 2005; O'Connor et al., 2008). The experiences, perspectives, and discourses of officers themselves have rarely been brought to problem focus, with some exceptions, including the works of Button (2003, 2007), who has

surveyed security guards concerning their work-related understandings and the physical threats with which they contend, and Hobbs et al. (2005), Monaghan (2002), and Rigakos (2008) on the work of nightclub bouncers. However, a focus on the situated work practices and, in particular, the discourse of security officers is still under-researched given the huge presence of private security in daily life. This lack of emphasis is especially notable since there is a long history of work on police and policing that has made this topic of situated work practices its focus. Among this research are classic and provocative ethnographies of "police on the street" from Manning (1997), Rubenstein (1973), Skolnick (1966), and Westley (1971).

There is, then, a paucity of research on what might be termed the "accomplishment" of private security with a focus on the practices of those persons who conduct it. The analytic goal in this piece is not to interpret officers' discourse in light of any innovative theoretical perspective but rather to attempt to uncover the officers' *own* interpretations of their work experiences. These foci on the talk and demonstrations of knowledge of research subjects as topics in their own right are hallmarks of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984), an area of sociology that provides the theoretical and conceptual underpinning for this investigation. Ethnomethodology focuses on the means through which the "sense" that social life appears to have—its order, understandability, predictability, accountability, and so forth—are accomplished in the concrete activities and efforts of the persons living it. Ethnomethodological studies pertaining to the broadly defined sociologies of law and of criminal justice, which this piece adds to, have a long history, comprising the life- and work-worlds of police officers (Bailey and Bittner, 1984; Bittner, 1967), prisoners (Wieder, 1974), jurors (Manzo, 1996; Maynard and Manzo, 1993), attorneys (Matoesian, 1994; Maynard, 1984), and practitioners in criminal justice and courtroom work groups more generally (Travers and Manzo, 1997; Gilsinan, 1982).

In all cases, the focus of ethnomethodological inquiry is, first and foremost, what persons *do* in settings under study, and this paper brings precisely this grounded concern into focus. I examine security officers' work, which has been explicitly and implicitly problematized in other investigations but which has rarely been taken up as a topic in its own right. Ethnomethodologists accomplish this concerted focus by not beginning with sensitizing concepts like the almost univocal obsession, in Canadian security studies, on "governance" and its related concerns. Ethnomethodology deploys a rigidly inductive approach to data that entails setting aside *a priori* assumptions, priorities, theoretical concepts, hypotheses, and other among traditional foci that inform most social scientific investigations. Ethnomethodology is indifferent to such concerns and instead entails the observation of practical activities (or as Garfinkel and Sacks [1970] famously articulated, "members' practices") to uncover how activities in social interaction are experienced as objectively extant—and mutually understandable and meaningful— for the persons participating in that interaction. It is the research subjects' theorizing that matters, not that of the investigator.

With respect to security officers, part of the way in which their tasks are made understandable and meaningful includes the ways in which they collaboratively and individually construct a vision of themselves. They do this, of course, through their lived work practices generally, and through their talk about their work. The goal in this paper is to uncover the officers' understandings of their work, instead of imposing an interpretive judgment that may obscure lessons surrounding their work as comprising its own order and its own set of definitions.

Emergency Dispatch

Policing or private security would be impossible without dispatchers. However, dispatch has been under-researched in private security environments. While there is a relatively long history of studies of language use in emergency services dispatch, this is not the case for parapolicing. With respect to the lifeworld of employees in the

dispatch centre, there is a significant pool of existing research including work from within the traditions of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis in, for example, calls to the police (cf. Drew and Walker, 2010; Whalen and Zimmerman, 1990). This research, however, predominately concerns only one context of dispatch and this is 911-based (in the US and Canada; 112 in most of Europe; 000 in Australia, etc.) "emergency dispatch," which encompasses (in North America) all of public police, ambulance, and fire services, and it entails request calls coming in from members of the public. This is a research strain that has comprised sequential analysis of turns of talk in telephone calls to 911 and how, for example, 911 dispatchers manage "hysteria" (Whalen and Zimmerman, 1998) and how callers and dispatchers manage "rudeness" and other perceivedly face-threatening behaviours on the part of the dispatchers (Tracy and Tracy, 1998; Tracy, 2002).

Security dispatch is very different. There would be no way to study—as conversation analysts have focused on—service telephone calls and the conversations that they comprise, because members of the public do not make calls to this form of dispatch. Instead, dispatchers in the shopping centre (and office tower, amusement park, and every other private property location) dispatch oversee CCTV feeds from around the property and inform officers about trouble, and if necessary, call municipal emergency services themselves. In other words, private security dispatchers call 911 dispatchers. This is obviously a completely different version of dispatch and one that can be only marginally informed by the 911-related research corpus. Because private security dispatchers almost never receive calls for service as 911 dispatchers do, any investigation into their work practices must entail observation at their work places, as did Walby (2005), or, as this study has attempted to do, interviews containing questions about their activities in those work places or some other technique for gathering their experiences at the dispatch work site.

There are two additional areas of previous research relevant to this investigation. One concerns the relatively under-researched

phenomenon of public, or of otherwise witnessed, suicides and the related experiences of the eyewitnesses; the second concerns emergency-related first responders. Because this investigation focuses on security personnel who have the rare experience of having seen a suicide take place and having been the first non-civilian persons on the scene, both of these research topics are informative here. With respect to the former topic, available findings suggest that suicide is an overwhelmingly private act (McDowell, Rothberg, and Koshes, 1994), and as such, the phenomenon of witnessed suicide is rare. Perhaps because of this rarity, it is an under-researched topic. No study has ever concerned management or narratives around a public suicide such as this paper attends; research on witnessed suicide has always concerned that which takes place in total institutional environments, such as McDowell et al.'s (1994) study of suicides on military bases, and more recent works on the trauma evinced by both adolescent (Hales, Misch, and Taylor, 2003) and adult (Hales, Freeman, Edmonson and Taylor, 2014) male prisoners. This paper, despite the highly idiosyncratic nature of the event that its narrators discuss, thus adds to this small body of research on the experiences of persons who witness suicide. With regard to the latter research focus, there is a robust collection of research on the "first responder" topic; however, its overwhelming focus concerns what might collectively be referred to as "disaster" response: 9/11, natural disasters, fires, explosions, and the like (cf. Freedman, 2004, on 9/11; Bass, 2013, on Hurricane Katrina). This paper also engages the narratives of "first responders" but ones whose response is to a relatively "small" non-disaster that is nonetheless an impactful, disturbing, and unanticipated event that was witnessed from two very different viewpoints.

Data and Method

Data for this report were gleaned from a study which entailed the interviews of shopping mall and office tower based security officers in several cities across Canada. Research subjects were twenty-nine Canadian private security officers (twenty-one male, eight female) at malls and office buildings in cities in British Columbia (five

interviews), Alberta (eleven), and Ontario (thirteen). All of the persons interviewed for this project had been employed for at least a year at the interview sites.

The interviews were conducted at the work places and comprised questions about officers' training, typical and atypical work experiences, and how that training helped, hindered, or was irrelevant to those work experiences. While the larger study encompassed more than twenty research subjects, this report, because of the topic it engages, only analyzes excerpts from two of these. That said, those excerpts, like all of the interviews, were recorded using a digital video camera to attempt to recover both linguistic and paralinguistic content of the interviews, although this paper only attends to the verbal content of the narratives. Interviewees were ensured anonymity via a process for the procurement of informed consent; as one aspect of that guarantee, details concerning the mall's features that would identify it and possibly the officers themselves are deleted from the excerpts that follow.

Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by the author and research assistants, who have attempted to reproduce in those transcripts, as much as possible, speakers' actual utterances. The goal in this study was to capture and report officers' perspectives on their training and the utility of that training in both typical and atypical events at work. This aim is achieved with data that reflects those subjects' experiences in their own words.

Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour, and comprised questions concerning the experiences of the officers with regard to their training, a typical work day, challenges, responses to emergencies, use of discretion, and other issues that could provide insight about what security officers do. One question and its sequelae concerned interviewees' recollections of a recent event at work that was not typical for them, with probes designed to uncover how interviewees would describe the utility of their training in managing such emergent events, and the data for this report come from

responses to that question.

The excerpts discussed here are not chosen because they represent the entire range of responses, but because they exemplify this paper's analytic insights and because they emerged as discoveries when the interview transcripts were inspected. No claim is made here with regard to generalizability of specific officers' experience to security officers overall, but there are notable features in speakers' responses and narratives that constitute the findings that follow.

Interview Excerpts

Interviews comprised, among other topics, questions concerning the average workday for security staff, and to glean reflections on "typicality," questions sought after reflections about both typical and atypical encounters with customers as well as other details of the officers' work worlds. In both interviews, "DM" represents the interviewer.

For both of these excerpts, I've parsed the interaction into more or less naturally delimited sections that reflect stages of the narrative; the topic introduction by the interviewer, for example, and the parts where the interviewee returned the narrative from an interviewer-introduced tangent, among other elements. This division is a technique to lend readability for data presentation and to clarify the analysis that follows; it is important to note that these sections and the way I introduce them in the following subheadings are not "findings" as such.

In Excerpt 1, "LR" is a female patrol office who, in response to a query about something "that wasn't typical," proceeds to describe an extremely unique event, namely, a suicide at the mall.

Excerpt 1, from interview with "LR"

1.1 DM inquires about "something atypical" and LR references a suicide

DM- Was there something happened recently that wasn't typical? Like a medical emergency, or some, some sort of emergency happened?

LR- Oh yes, yes ah, I remember this day…

DM- Um hum.

LR- On January 11th, 2005.

DM- Um hum.

LR- There was one who committed suicide in the mall.

DM- Oh my god.

LR- Yeah, and I was dispatched as the main responder, the first one to get there.

DM- Oh my gosh.

1.2 LR relates dispatching and how the suicide occurred

LR- Oh my dispatcher asked me specifically to. He said on the radio, attend this location, there is a report somebody just jumped over the railing and landed on the, you know, level one in front of [jewelry store]. Yeah, you know, there.

DM- Yeah.

LR- Right there. That's where, that's where the…

DM- The WWE, uh huh.

LR- …wrestlers, yeah, where…

DM- So they jumped off the…

LR- …they jumped, yeah…

DM- By [restaurant]? They jumped off the, over the barricade.

LR- No, one floor down where the stage was.

DM- Okay**.** Did they die?

LR- Oh, he died.

DM- He, oh my god.

LR- The next day, yeah. Just it took a while before I could do…

1.3 LR responds to "What was that like?"

DM- You've been here five years, have you seen anyone else commit

suicide at this mall?
LR- That's the first time. That's the first time.
DM- What was that like?
LR- It…I don't know how I managed to ah, you know, I was, I guess I was focused at the time, thank god I was, um, my composure was okay.
DM- Um hum.
LR- I got there, blood all over the place.
DM- Oh my god.
LR- And this fellow on the ground.
DM- mm hm.
LR- I, I noticed his left face was, you know, crushed.
DM- mm hm?
LR- And…blood coming out the nose.
DM- mm hm.
LR- It was quite scary.
DM- mm hm.
LR- Ears, mouth, and he was breathing like [makes a choking noise].
DM- mm hm.

1.4 LR details her medical response

LR- You know. So I called for um…'cause my dispatcher said, um, emergency ah, was on, on the way. So I told my co-worker, I said to please bring the medical kit bag, you know.
DM- mm hm.
LR- ASAP.
DM- Um hum.
LR- And they know what to bring defibrillation…
DM- mm hm.
LR- …the defibrillator and oxygen, but…
DM- Um hum.
LR- I couldn't do anything, actually.
DM- Um hum.
LR- 'Cause you know he broke everything. And when it comes to medical, when somebody broke

DM- mm hm.
LR- a bone or two or, but that guy broke everything already.
DM- mm hm.
LR- So, I…there's no way I could touch him, or…
DM- mm hm.
LR- So, my co-worker came with the medical kit I…ah, all I did was ah, I guess there was a big, um, bunch of, ah, paper towels in a bag. So I just grabbed some um, put some all over the place.
DM- mm hm.
LR- Um…
DM- Did you have gloves on?
LR- And, oh yes, yes.
DM- Okay.
LR- Always, we're always ready, for that.
DM- mm hm
LR- Yeah. And I was touching his head, I said, "Sir, hang on there. Help is coming."
DM- Um hum.

1.5 LR describes "the crowd"

LR- And people got in our way taking photographs of me and, "Do something," and…
DM- How, how did you know he committed suicide?
LR- Well, a lot of people come… [speech overlaps the following]
DM- As opposed to just falling? Oh… [speech overlaps the previous]
LR- People come to me and, "He just jumped over the railing…"
DM- Oh, he jumped, okay.
LR- From level three, yeah. You know how people are, it's five o'clock,
DM- mm hm.
LR- …in the afternoon.
DM- mm hm.
LR- That was a Tuesday, I believe. So, people from the office towers, we have three office towers.
DM- mm hm.

LR- Two [south entrance], and [north entrance].
DM- mm hm.
LR- Sometimes they go through the mall to get to the subway.
DM- mm hm.
LR- And sometimes they do a bit of shopping before they go home.
DM- mm hm.
LR- So the crowd was thick, like, and…
DM- So a lot of people saw him?
LR- Oh yes.
DM- Yeah.

1.6 LR references 911 and aftermath

LR- Yes, and thank god, I guess, paramedics arrived and rescue for 911.
DM- mm hm.
LR- From the fire department, they came,
DM- mm hm.
LR- …and yeah, they, they put him in on a stretcher and put oxygen on him and took him to, ah, to the hospital. And he died the following day, ten o'clock in the morning.
DM- mm hm.
LR- But…
DM- Did he leave behind anything saying why he chose [mall] to commit suicide?
LR- I wasn't informed.
DM- Okay.
LR- But the police officer who took care of that report, um, talked to me the next day and he said he committed suicide.
DM- uh huh. Amazing.
LR- Yeah.
DM- That's an amazing story.

In the second data excerpt, "PJ" is the dispatcher who witnessed the suicide per se on one of his CCTV video monitors and who apprised the patrolling officer, LR, about it.

Excerpt 2, from interview with "PJ"

2.1 DM asks about recent "trouble" and PJ mentions suicide

DM- Okay. Um, is there a recent incident you can describe to me where there was trouble? That you, that you were, you know, party to?
PJ- From my end?
DM- Yeah.
PJ- Like working up here?
DM- Yeah, something that, you, you witnessed, or something like that.
PJ- Something thatssss…we had a couple days where we had a suicide. Something like that? Or…?
DM- You had a suicide?
PJ- Yeah.
DM- Okay.
PJ- It was, it was, there was a suicide here a few months...a few months ago.

2.2 PJ describes his work setting and how he observed the suicide

DM- Were you working?
PJ- I was working by myself, my partner was on break at that time.
DM- mm hm.
PJ- I saw the actual incident on the monitor.
DM- You saw it?!
PJ- Yeah.
DM- You saw this person…what happened? What did they do?
PJ- I saw him fall, at the time I didn't know it was a suicide.
DM- uh huh
PJ- I saw him fall. I caught it out of the corner of my eye.
DM- mm hm.
PJ- 'Cause it was on the far plasma on the far right.
DM- mm hm, mm hm.

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PJ- And ah, I just caught it out of the corner of my eye, then I see people kinda stare, turning around staring. I could hear screams from up here.

DM- uh huh.

PJ- It was all the way down, if you're familiar… Are you familiar with our mall now?

DM- Yeah, absolutely.

PJ- You know where The Gap is?

DM- mm hm.

PJ- It was right there.

DM- mm hm.

PJ- And I could hear screams. So I panned a camera around and I see a guy just lying there twitching.

DM- Wow.

2.3 PJ describes his dispatching

PJ- Yeah, so…I dispatched one of the officers and...

DM- What did you say?

PJ- At the time, what did I say? I said, ah, someone had fallen.

DM- mm hm.

PJ- 'Cause I had no idea he had jumped.

DM- Right.

PJ- As far as I know he fell.

DM- uh huh.

PJ- He fell and he's not moving.

DM- mm hm.

2.4 PJ describes 911 contact and agency of "witnesses"

PJ- You know and I called 911. Meanwhile, by that time they've already received calls…

DM- mm hm.

PJ- …about this.

DM- mm hm, from whom?

PJ- From witnesses in the mall…

DM- Oh, people were calling on their cell phones?

PJ- Yeah.

DM- Okay.

PJ- And ah, yeah.

DM- Does it bother you that they called 911 instead of, instead of

PJ- For something like that…

DM- …instead of security?

PJ- No.

DM- Okay.

PJ- For something like that, because at the same time, an incident like that happens…

DM- mm hm.

PJ- …this room gets activated.

DM- mm hm.

PJ- Where all the management come in.

DM- uh huh.

PJ- And then we, we have to notify a special emergency alarm system…

DM- mm hm.

PJ- …to get information. So that kind of helped me there.

DM- mm hm.

PJ- By those people calling, they already had details. There was already paramedics on the way.

DM- mm hm.

PJ- But ah, yeah, there was that situation.

2.5 DM asks whether the event was unique in PJ's work history

DM- Well, that's pretty extreme. Is that, that…I'm assuming that's the only suicide that you've witnessed while…

PJ- Five years here that's…

DM- …since you've been here.

PJ- …the only one I've witnessed.

DM- Yeah.

PJ- I've been here, there've been two…two actuals.

3rd Party- Nope the one in the parkade someone had a heart attack.

PJ- Oh yeah, that's the actual one…

DM- Someone had a heart attack in the parkade?

PJ- In the parkade, and died.

DM- Just one?

PJ- As far as I can remember.

DM- Yeah, 'cause that seems fairly, you know. I remember my, my ah, one of my teachers in high school had a heart attack and died before classes started, and um, it just, it seems like that happens pretty often [laughs].

PJ- Yeah.

2.6 DM asks about victim and his choice of setting for suicide

DM- But, why would somebody, I just, I mean I don't know if you know anything about… Was it a gentleman who committed suicide?

PJ- Yes.

DM- A man?

PJ- Yeah.

DM- Did you guys find out…

PJ- We…

DM- …what the circumstances were or why he chose [mall]…

PJ- We ah…

DM- …to commit suicide?

PJ- We talked to the police. He apparently had a, was he…? I, I can't remember if he was depressed.

DM- uh huh

PJ- And I don't know why he chose our mall.

DM- uh huh.

PJ- But people…

DM- Was it during a busy time?

PJ- Yeah.

DM- mm hm.

PJ- He luckily missed people as he came down. At that particular minute, second, for whatever reason, that area was clear of people.

2.7 DM asks about training for this sort of event

DM- mm hm. So, you, you catch a suicide out of the corner of your eye, or you hear someone bawling. You call, you call 911.
PJ- Yep.
DM- You call-
PJ- I call dispatch.
DM- You call dispatch on the phone.
PJ- Call other officers over.
DM- Were you trained to handle that situation?
PJ- A suicide?
DM- Yeah.
PJ- Um, our courses don't teach us how to handle a suicide, no.
DM- Yeah.
PJ- It's just something that…they teach you… They teach you how to deal with emergency kinda situations…
DM- uh huh.
PJ- …and that kind of falls into that category.
DM- Would you say you did the right thing?
PJ- Oh yeah.

Analysis

There are several broad themes of confluence between these two excerpts and the interviewees' narratives that they comprise. In addition to the obvious fact that they both immediately proffered the suicide in response to the request to recount something "like an emergency" (1.1 and 2.1), both acknowledge the role that other played in what followed: RL referenced her dispatcher in 1.2, saying that "I was dispatched as the main responder, the first one to get there… *my dispatcher asked me specifically to*. He said on the radio, attend this location, there is a report somebody just jumped over the railing and landed on the, you know, level one in front of [jewelry store]. Yeah, you know, there." PJ echoes this from his own perspective (2.2 to 2.3): "I panned a camera around and I see a guy just lying there twitching…so…*I dispatched one of the officers*."

Thus, both narrators explicate that one officer and one dispatcher were co-present here.

Now, because it was uncovered as a factual matter that the interviewees had, amazingly, both witnessed the same suicide or its immediate aftermath and had in fact spoken over their walkie-talkie radio system, we might anticipate that that conversation and the "success" with which they collaboratively managed this suicide would be prominent in these interviews. This was, however, not the case. In fact, both stories more insistently reference the tellers as working alone: LR was "specifically" called by dispatch to get to the victim, which implies that she and only she was dispatched, and "PJ" mentions how he was alone in the dispatch centre (in 2.2), which is apparently anomalous since his "partner" was on break at the time. This rendering is significant not only as much as it can be called into question as a factual matter, since at this time there would have been thousands of patrons and mall employees present, but also as a way of framing, for both interviewees, an emergency for which each had unique responsibilities for resolution. LR was called first and was first on the scene (among security and emergency services staff at least); PJ was alone at the controls and manipulated his video equipment to facilitate a view—initially "out of the corner of (his) eye" and he subsequently aimed the camera at the victim—that nobody else in the mall could have had. There is in fact very little reference to "we" as a security team in these interviews. Both acknowledge the co-presence of dozens of members of the public as bystanders (1.5 and 2.6), of management, of other security officers, of paramedics, and so on, but both stories are also related from the first-person perspective.

Perhaps related to this first-person perspective is PJ's focus (in 2.4) is on what occurred, and what constitutes standard procedure in emergencies like this, in the dispatch control centre, that is, in the room in which he works. This might seem to be an odd focus since he was in fact party to the suicide—he saw it happen—in a way in which the patrolling officer was not. However, this isn't really

different from the recollection of the patrolling officer as both relate the narrative as a work-related event and concentrate on their work-related management of it. Neither dwells, except to the extent provoked by the interviewer, on the details of the suicide per se except to the extent that it intersects with the jobs. This might be very different from lay descriptions of the same event which would presumably include more emotionally laden language. Therefore, a summary that one can make about both of these narratives is that neither is, strictly speaking, "about" a suicide. Both narratives are occasioned by questions concerning their work, and it is their own actions, and not a play-by-play of the event, that constitute the stuff of both recollections. Thus, while neither acknowledges, not unexpectedly, that their training did not prepare them for a suicide per se, we can glean that their training, the workplace culture and its expectations, and the immediate local interactional context of an interview about their work (among other things, of course) have resulted in an orientation to these stories as stories about work and not stories "about a suicide."

Unpacking this observation a bit more, it is evident that the narratives, while they relate the same event and clearly support and, if one wishes to vet them for accuracy, confirm most of the general outline of the suicide, comprise the built and social contexts of each interviewee's work spaces. In 1.4 and 1.5, RL discusses running along corridors, deploying objects such as gloves and towels, and having to manage the challenge of the work space crowds as well as the girth of the mall, which extends from one major street to another with office tower anchors at both ends. This is her work space, and the narrative recounts her engagement with that space and with the customers who occupy it. PJ engages a video panel, walkie-talkies, and telephones. He refers to the positioning of the suicide and does mention the existence of mall patrons (those the jumper managed not to land on, for example), but other details concerning the drama of crowds, the condition of the jumper's body, and so forth are lacking not only because he was not "on the ground" but also because he is, as a dispatcher, never on the ground. The narrative partakes thus not

only of the details concerning this suicide, but also PJ's own built and social work space. This is not inevitable despite how obvious this may sound, because in his position he could absolutely relate stories about what he sees on his screens and embroider and amplify them; he, as a factual matter, "sees" more than any patrol officer could dream of seeing. But his narrative focuses not on what is occurring on the screen but on the screen itself. This might, of course, be idiomatic with respect to this dispatch officer, and he was, in fact, the only dispatcher interviewed for this study in any of the malls where data were gathered. But as one concrete comparison between two officers reacting to the same event with extremely different work environments, the differences between them do imply a great deal about not only how their work patterns differ but also about how they describe and reference emergencies and non-emergencies that take place on their property.

Finally, it is necessary—as analysis of the interviews as topics themselves and not only as resources to uncover workers' orientations to the suicide and their work practices surrounding it—to consider how these "narratives" are brought about as social and interactional co-constructions by the interviewer and the interviewee acting in concert. It is tempting to "clean up" the transcripts above to lend to greater readability, but to do so would not only erase the role of the interviewer in the accomplishment of this narrative, but would also promote a mistaken view of narratives generically as individual-level phenomena and even as socially decontextualized. Narratives *are* social phenomena, which means not only that they relate occurrences that took place in social environments or that they are told to audiences comprising other persons, but that they, in conversational contexts at least, are produced with the participation of co-conversationalists. Sometimes, as in semi-structured interviews, the narratives are invoked by those co-conversationalists. Put more bluntly, the stories under scrutiny here are occasioned: they never would have taken place if the interviewer had not asked about them. This might appear to be almost absurdly self-evident, but it is a fact that is recurrently ignored in qualitative interview-based research

including too many research products that elide the speech turns of the interviewer entirely. As this paper follows the percepts and, to a degree, the methodological provisos of conversation analysis, the most basic of which demands that transcription attempts to recover the talk that takes place as it is heard and as speakers produce it in detail, the interviewer's turns of talk and his "mm hm" and the like are shown here.

It is thus evident that not only is this topic introduced by the interviewer but that he repeatedly and consistently encourages and enables the narratives with words and speech fragments that facilitate the narratives' expansions. This is the case for all narrative and indeed for all conversation, but this co-participation and facilitation begs the question as to whether the interviewer is "putting words in the mouths of the interviewees" to collect the sorts of stories that he wants to obtain. This was at least arguably not the case in these excerpts. The topics engaged in the interview were invariably, due to the inherently unbalanced distribution of topic introduction endemic to all qualitative interviews, brought about because of prepared questions posed by the interviewer. Nonetheless, the participation of the interviewer was almost solely around his use of continuers such as "mm hm" to encourage further talk from the interviewees and similarly pre-scripted deployment of probes, including those concerning whether the officers' training prepared them for whatever "atypical" event they would recount (as in 2.7) and to verify that what was posed as atypical really was atypical (as when DM asks if this was the first suicide RL had witnessed in 1.3). Most importantly, even though the second interview took place more than a week following the first one, the interview did not suggest that the dispatcher discuss the suicide but deployed the same open-ended "tell me about something that happened that wasn't typical" question that every interviewee was asked. It is always important to ask whether a qualitative interview's "findings" actually recount the interviewee's lifeworld or if the "finding" is an artifact of the interview as a situated conversation. The answer to that question appears to be that these narratives are both sited in the sequential, conversational context in

which the officers produce them, but also that they reflect an impactful event and expose how officers relate to the event, their jobs, their work with respect to the roles of other officers, and their orientations to the local features of the event as they describe it.

Discussion

The interviewees' narratives tell us not only about the aim of the interview, which was to uncover how their training is deployed and relevant for unforeseen events on the job, but also about how they orient to phenomena such as the event itself, their colleagues, and the space in which they work and invoke those as features of their narratives. In the introduction to this piece I suggested that the fact that one of the interviewees observed the suicide and its aftermath from the standpoint of a video control centre might have relevance for understanding other venues where live interaction takes place via video connection of some sort, and the analysis here does recommend further research on the extent to which interactants party to such technology "interact" with that equipment per se as against, and in addition to, their interaction with the non-present person at the other end of the conversation. This has implications for work inside and outside of security-related and justice-related topics, and is relevant to modern public life in many, many settings.

But there are two stories here and they concern *both* interactants' engagement with local space, persons, and artifacts within their narratives. The dispatcher discusses the dispatchee, LR, only briefly and obliquely, but LR focuses far more on her tasks and on the various layers of context, built and social, than on that (very, very important) interaction with PJ. Thus, while we might have ammunition here for decrying video-mediated social interaction as promoting the opposite of lived, face-to-face sociability ("they interact with their video equipment and not with one another!"), we have additional evidence that interactants' orientations to the local, to the spaces that their bodies occupy, and the persons near to whom those bodies are, will always be treated as more relevant to their narratives than will the disembodied voices or images on the other

end. This finding is not only relevant for video-mediated social interaction in and outside of work environments but also to *all* work environments because humans engage far more with other humans while they do their jobs. This reflects the work of ethnomethodologists who have taken on the study of situated, detailed work practices of persons in a wide range of "work" environments (cf. Rawls, 2008), and we can see how the role of objects and other non-human actors can loom large in the ways in which workers discuss their work lives even in situations where attention to human actors, including one who had just committed suicide, would seem to be at the forefront of the witnesses' recollections.

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