Crisis Communication-What is Your Emergency

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Abstract

This study is a rhetorical analysis of 911 active shooter calls. Working from frame theory it examines the types of communication that occur during crisis situations. This study reviews the actual audio tapes of the Columbine Colorado School shooting, the Trolley Square Salt Lake City UT shooting and the Arizona shooting of Congresswoman Gabby Gifford. This study provides a method for investigating the communication between caller to 911 and the telecommunicators that answer 911 calls. It provides a baseline of the communication activities that are occurring and this method of communication is rapidly changing with pending text-mediated communication scheduled to take effect in 911 centers in 2014.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Every minute of every day in the United States, someone dials 911 in an emergency expecting to gain quick and immediate assistance. Those individuals making the calls are in some cases facing the most horrific incident of their life. They call because they need police, medical, search and rescue, or fire assistance. The callers are expected, unrehearsed unfamiliar moments of their lives, to communicate exactly what they are experiencing. They are often unable to express exactly what they have seen, what is happening or even where the event is occurring it is in those critical first seconds of an emergency that vital often lifesaving information can be provided and acted upon. Their stories deserve to be reviewed and studied.

At the same time, trained 911 dispatchers across the United States are answering those calls and are expected under time constraints to get a full and complete story, while being supportive and sympathetic. The dispatchers who question those callers are expected to be communication experts. They are expected to be able to gain trust quickly and professionally and then be able to calmly gain the needed information from the callers under extreme conditions. The dispatchers must then distill this information into a brief but complete story and communicate it to the police, fire, medical or search and rescue units.

The Importance of the Study

While significant study has been done in crisis communication within hostage negotiation, little to no study has been done into the crisis communication at the 911 level. This study reviews 911 calls for active shooter events to create a snapshot of the work done daily by
the 195,791 full-time public safety dispatchers. Utilizing frame theory developed by both Gamson (1989) and Kuypers (2009), this study provides a method for capturing the communication that currently occurs in active shooter calls.

There has always been a need to call for help. In the early 1930’s as telephones became more accessible individuals would dial “0” to get public safety assistance. The telephone company operators, usually AT&T, would then connect the phone to the nearest police or fire department. As telephones became more common and people were assigned unique numbers, AT&T assigned specific phone numbers to police and fire. One could dial the 4-letter word for FIRE (3473) or COPS (2677) to receive assistance. The desk officer would answer the phones and then turn the light on the callbox so that the officers on foot beat would know to pick up the call box phone and find out who needed what type of assistance (911 Dispatch, 2013). Some jurisdictions still maintain these numbers for older members of the community who still remember and dial them for help although callboxes have been replaced by radios, cellphones and digital messages for the responders. In 1968, 911 was first assigned as the number to call for assistance (911 Dispatch, 2012). This number soon spread across the country as the primary number to be utilized in an emergency. In October 1999, President Clinton signed Senate Bill 800, which designated 911 as a nationwide emergency number. In 1999 the Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act was passed and in 2004 the Enhanced 911 Act was signed into law. These last two acts created cell 911 and required the location of the cell caller to be sent to the 911 centers. Today there are 195,791 full-time public safety dispatchers who answer this number in the United States. Each jurisdiction is free to create their own rules and guidelines for training and managing the call taking process (Dispatch 911, 2013).
The FCC recently ruled that all 911 centers must accept text messaging for 911 by 2014. From its humble beginning to today’s technology-dominated communication methods, the human element has not changed. The entire process is once again on the brink of a major shift as the FCC looks to approve text and video messaging into 911 centers. From its inception, this process has been verbal communication-based. With the shift of technology to allowing text and video messaging, there will be a corresponding shift in the protocol used to answer 911 calls via this new technology. There are companies poised to provide 911 centers across the county with interactive programs that follow their specific protocols. Some of these programs remove the human element and much like taking a survey online, would ask the caller to push 1 for yes and 2 for no to provide the needed information to the dispatcher.

Before adoption of an automated protocol system for text messaging, it is important to understand what occurs in the 911 call. The best method to do this is via the use of the communication frames that occur within each 911 call. As the new technology becomes more commonplace, there may be a shift in the frames utilized for emergency communication. It is critical to view the current frames before constructing and implementing the next level of mediated communication. Without understanding the importance of the framing of the story within the process, the next wave of technology may not be ready to communicate it. Failure to understand that the process is a rhetorical process—rather than a technological process—may cause the loss of vital information and adversely impact critical life safety issues.

**Statement of the Problem**

In 911 centers across the country the process of crisis communication takes one of two forms. In small agencies, with very limited resources, a caller will speak to a 911 dispatcher. This dispatcher will attempt to gain the needed information while typing the information into a
computer assisted dispatch program or even recording via pen and paper what the caller is saying. This same dispatcher will then distill the information into a few words and notify the correct public safety unit to respond, updating them as the dispatcher gains more information from the caller. In larger agencies, the functions of call taker and radio are split between multiple dispatchers. One person takes the call and attempts to gain the critical information that is placed in a computer-assisted dispatch program (CAD). The majority of agencies have two separate methods of tracking the events, the audiotapes of the phone and radio calls into the dispatch center and the CAD loggings of the events done by the dispatcher. The purpose of this study is to look specifically at the audiotapes—to utilize the spoken word for the rhetorical analysis.

This area of the emergency services has had little study other than by companies wishing to sell their particular protocols to 911 centers. These companies provide pre-scripted questions and offer to go to court to support the questions if the agency is sued for not providing the correct response. The majority of these companies grew out of the area of 911 medical dispatching. Priority dispatching from these companies have a limited amount of types of incident classification. The dispatcher must choose one classification that closely matches the type of incident the caller is reporting. These protocols provide basic questions to ask to get to the type of medical incident and then provide first aid instructions for the callers to follow until the first responders arrive at the scene of the medical incident. The studies that have been done on these protocols are very limited, generated by the companies that stand to profit from selling their products, and have been focused on the appropriate instructions and compliance to the protocol rather than the communication process. Within the last two years, these companies have
branched into police dispatching but the protocols are so new that no definitive studies of the efficacy of the protocols have been completed.

While pre-scripted questions may have their place in the communication process, these pre-scripted questions may miss the critical issues of the crisis. They may incorrectly frame the incident without properly understanding the human communication element via the rhetorical processes utilized. It is only the human element, the active listening, questioning and fleshing out the complete story that gains understanding. It is critical that we examine the verbal stories before this process changes and the opportunity to study this type of story is lost to computer-mediated technology.

This study reviews the audio tapes of the 911 callers in active shooter incidents to the call takers to view the types of communication techniques utilized to gain compliance and identify the frames utilized in 911 communication. The communication techniques used during this type of call are not unique to this specific type of event, but have a wider scope of influence in the 911 process. The review of the Columbine High School Shooting, the Trolley Square shootings and the Gabby Gifford shooting calls allows the basic frames of a 911 critical call to be viewed. The rhetorical review of the audiotapes provides insight into the methods utilized to frame the rhetorical process during crisis 911 communication.

**Definitions of Terms**

911 - A pre-determined phone number that was established by Presidential Order to be inclusive off all areas of the United States.

911 Calltaker - Trained and certified professional telecommunicators who answer the 911 phones, classify the incident, provide pre-arrival instruction.
911 PSAP- 911 Public Safety Answering Points are dispatch centers that have been licensed by the Federal Communication Commission to answer 911 calls within the United States.

Active Shooter Call- This is a classification of a public safety event that includes police, emergency medical and possibly fire department response, in which an individual is actively shooting at other individuals. This type of classification typically has multiple victims and the shooter is mobile. They have not been isolated to secured location and their actions continue to threaten the life and/or the safety of the public and responding units.

POST Training- Police Officers Standard Training- Basic train in dispatcher skills are required by some states for all dispatchers. This training is certified by the POST of that state.

Protocol Based Dispatching- A purchased or created method for asking specific questions in a specific order to gain needed information in a formalized and uniform manner. These protocols may include pre-arrival instructions and may allow the dispatcher to classify the severity of the incident to commit the right amount of resources to the event.

Radio Dispatchers- Trained and certified professional tele-communicators who take the information provided by the 911Calltakers and transmit it to the Public Safety Response units. They track the on-scene events via radio transmissions.

Organization of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature that is the underpinning for this study. The philosophy of the use of frame theory is explored as well as the current literature on crisis communication. Chapter two also includes a review of crisis communication theory with respect to rhetorical analysis. This study closely examines the research done on each of the four frames to date. For the emotional support frame this study will draw from the studies done in hostage
negotiation. For the informational frame, this study looks at research done into the priority
dispatch protocols. For the tactical frame and the directional frame, research that has been done
with the FBI and police after incident will be examined.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology that is utilized for this study.
The issue of ethical considerations is addressed as it pertains to the use of the audio tapes utilized
in this study.

Chapter Four provides the results of study. The three incidents, the Columbine shooting,
the Trolley Square Shooting and the Gabby Gifford Shooting tapes are reviewed and evaluated.
The audio records were coded utilizing the four frames: emotional, tactical, informational and
directional. The use of each frame within each call is explored and evaluated.

Chapter Five provides the limitations of this study and future areas for consideration.
The need for ongoing research into the basic frame is explained as well as the need for further
study to discover other possible frames. The need for this type of study before and after the
adoption of mediated technology and the deployment of mediated technology as an answering
protocol is examined.
Chapter Two – Literature Review

The Literature:

There have been three separate levels of scholarly study of emergency communication: hostage or crisis negotiation, public affair post crisis communication, and a limited study of protocol effectiveness done by 911 protocol vendors. There have been no studies that look at the communication process between the 911 caller and the 911 dispatcher that evaluates the actual calls.

Crisis negotiation research provides a starting point for emergency communication study. While it is not a direct match to the skills and processes that occur during a 911 call, there is significant overlap within the process. Like negotiation events, 911 events have the purpose of quickly gaining information, gaining compliance of the caller/suspect, and providing for safety of all stakeholders. A significant amount of study has been done in the field of negotiation that is directly applicable to the 911 call center situation. Some of the skills used in negotiation are the same skills utilized with callers in crisis.

Theoretical Foundation:

Gamson (1989) suggested that frame theory is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue. He argued that events take on their meaning by being embedded in a frame or story line that organizes them and give them coherence selecting certain sections to emphasize while ignoring others. One of the duties that dispatchers are tasked with is making sense of the event, quickly and accurately getting to the core concern. Kuypers (2009) suggests that “framing is the process whereby communicators act- consciously or not-to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given
situation to be viewed in a particular manner, with some fact made more or less noticeable than others” (Kuypers 2009 p.182). According to Kuypers, framing is a normal part of the communication process. Because of this framing analysis is particularly useful way to understand the impact of rhetoric. “At its heart, this is a rhetorical process, and this is why I believe framing theory can be especially fruitful when adapted to a rhetorical perspective” (Kuypers, 2009).

Multiple theories or frameworks of the crisis communication process have emerged during the past thirty years. Beardsley, Quinn, Biswas, and Wilenfeld suggest that an effective framework includes a form of mediated style according (Beardsley, Quinn, Biswas, and Wilenfeld, 2006.) The authors believe the analytic framework of mediated styles provides an appropriate mechanism for negotiation and they contend that zones of agreement (ZOA) should be used to further the process. They looked at three mediation styles and the likelihood of crisis termination in various outcomes. They suggest that facilitation will be useful in securing a more lasting resolution of crisis. The need for zones of agreement within each call is the basis of understanding within a crisis call. The power to create these zones via questioning and answering cannot be overstated. It is via the use of zones of agreement or areas of concern that information can flow freely from caller to call taker. If zones are not defined the call circles and critical information may be missed or overlooked. The use of zones of agreements may decrease rebound and re-freak of callers within the call process. Rebound is returning to the same point over and over that occurs as a coping mechanism to the event. A re-freak occurs when a caller is unable to move forward in the process because they return to the shock of the event. They become so emotional, that they are not able to provide information. Both of these events can be mitigated via the use of zones of agreement.
Adair and Brett (2005) suggest that reciprocal sequences of affective persuasion occur in
the first stage of negotiation, followed by structural sequences of priority information and finally
the third stage is the generation of appropriate solutions. This provides a partial framework to
view the crisis communication event. The use of frames to construct or view an emergency call
is directly applicable to the crisis communication within the 911 center between caller and call
taker. The critical need to move the call forward while gaining the required tactical information
in a timely manner cannot be overstated. From the beginning of a call, the attempt to visualize
what is occurring by the dispatcher via the use of narration and the attempt to convey horrific life
altering information by the caller can be chaotic and frustrating. The use of a structural sequence
of information—specific questions asked in a specific order for example—could improve the call
taking process. The reciprocal sequencing may improve communication during the initial call
phase of an active shooter call. The majority of vendor-provided protocols advocate the use of
structural sequences to obtain information. They advocate the use of a standardized list of
questions for all event types. The classification can be problematic as each event is unique to the
real world event.

Hammer (2010) suggests that negotiators in crisis communication should adopt the
S.A.F.E. frame to effectively negotiate a peaceful outcome. The S.A.F.E. framework includes:
substantive demands, attunement (relational closeness) face (self-image) and emotional distress.
Hammer (2010) believes that the negotiator can utilize communication skills to facilitate a
S.A.F.E. end to the crisis. The primary substantive demand in the 911 crisis situation is the
request for immediate assistance. The issues of attunement, face and emotional distress are
critical. Within a 911 call, there is an essential need for critical information in order to meet the
substantive request for assistance. The type of information gained will determine the type of resources and response to the event.

Without establishing attunement between the dispatcher and caller, no effective communication can occur. Without attunement dispatchers can be perceived as cold and uncaring. Because of these perceptions dispatchers may not gain the needed information and compliance. It is via attunement or the establishment of a relationship that the dispatcher is able to gain compliance to the directive frame. This attunement allows for the basis of trust, which furthers the effectiveness for the directive frame.

If callers are not respected, their words treated with respect and validated the process is stunted. Often in a crisis situation the victim’s worldview has been shattered. They are unable to articulate the real concern because of the life-altering events that have happened. The concept of power at this stage is critical. The final step is emotional distress. Call takers and dispatchers who do not acknowledge and deal with emotional distress both on the caller level and on a personal level, fail in the communication process. Hammer’s use of framework provides structure to the call taking process.

Giebels and Taylor (2010) continue with the need for improved communication with their argument for improved use of influence. They believe that it is important to use messages with influence. They argue for content tactics to move the negotiation along. These tactics feature the use of kindness, equality, credibility, and authority. They suggest the use of these tactics will improve the communication process. Fitch (2010) provides additional guidance when he suggests negotiators bring their own worldview to the table and need to be cognizant of the implication of this view. He suggests that frameworks can minimize this bias and prevent
bad decisions. The use of protocol based dispatching would enhance the process. The framework would provide a lens to filter one’s own view.

The need to filter the situation is furthered by Fuselier (1986) when he argues that negotiations must be done by trained negotiators rather than using command staff, family or non-police negotiators. He suggests that a trained crisis negotiator will provide a tactical advantage to the tactical team. This need for tactical crisis communication training carries over to the 911 dispatcher both at the call taker and radio dispatcher levels.

Inbau (2003) argues that the interview process must include fact analysis. This may include the evaluation of the information being provided to the interviewer. It is critical that the information being provided be factual and complete.

The proper use of frames to reduce risk to all stakeholders is explained by McMains (1996) when he contends that communicators can increase risk by attending to different “frames” than the subject. He contends that if a communicator develops a positive relationship with those in crisis, and thereby develops the proper frame one can reduce risk overall. He believes that communicators should be asking themselves what they are doing to reduce risk and communicate within that frame.

Finally, the application of high-reliability organizational theory to crisis negotiation is suggested by Hare and Roberts (2010). They argue that process auditing, rewards systems, quality checks, perception of risk and command and control all play a role while doing quality assurance post incident. They believe these factors will provide a framework to evaluate the process.
The second major group of studies has come from within the study of after incident communication. These studies are based on the principal of turning around public opinion after a major negative public incident.

Coombs and Holladay (2002) argue that a frame could be constructed in advance and then selected during the crisis. They believe that a crisis manager identifies the type of crisis and then interprets the event. This evaluation provides the attributions of personal control and crisis responsibility. Coombs (1998) argues for a symbolic approach that has the underlying assumption that crises are threats to an organization’s image and that the characteristics of the crisis situation influence the communicative choices for the communication crisis manager. He contends that as crisis responsibility increases so threat to image damage also increases. Horsely and Randolf (2002) suggested a synthesis of models which included ongoing public relations efforts, identification and preparation for potential crisis, the actual crisis event and the evaluation and revision of public relation efforts. Garnet and Kouzmin (2007) contend that this is what happened during Hurricane Katrina. They examined the communication failures in Katrina utilizing both competing and complementary conceptual lenses. They looked at communication both at the interpersonal level and the public affairs level. They also looked at the role of technology in the communication failures. As technology expands, this view will no doubt become more valued. Drake and Donahue (1996) looked at communication frame theory in the negotiation process. They suggest that negotiation refers to proposing, accepting and rejecting interaction modes. Each move or communication effort structures the negotiation effort. Finally Sturges (1994) suggests that crisis communication skills can be utilized to further long-term benefits for any organization. He argues organizations should utilize these models to further the organizations even when there is no crisis.
This study looks at four communication frames that have been identified in the three major active shooter calls. Those frames, Supportive, Informational, Tactical and Directional, allow for improved communication in an emergency crisis situation.

Supportive Frame

The first studies in emergency communication came from the field of Crisis Negotiation out of a very real need to understand the way crisis communication worked in real time, real life situations. In the early 1970’s hostage negotiation teams were born out of the need to prevent the use of deadly force within a tactical law enforcement situation. The early teams were given little in the way of guidelines or training, simply given the mission to “talk them out”. With limited means, training and technology these pioneers began to attempt to communicate with people in crisis at the worst moments of their lives. The negotiators were very aware that the failure of communication could mean the use of deadly force. Louden (2010) contends that police are called on to take action in a situation where something must be done. While it is acknowledged that some type of action is required, the type of action and who takes that action are in question. He provides a historical view of negotiation in the United States and the development of the first negotiation teams with New York City leading this effort. Early research focused on the need for such a team not the methods utilized by established teams.

One of the first published negotiations occurred during the Ruby Ridge Idaho incident. The lead F.B.I. negotiator during that crisis was Frederick Lanceley. There were both failures and successes at the Rudy Ridge incident. Ultimately the incident was a failure due to the use of deadly force prior to the arrival of the negotiator. During the initial days of Rudy Ridge Special Agent Lanceley attempted to negotiate with Vickie Weaver. He did not have the intelligence that she had been killed by an FBI sniper’s bullet prior to his arrival. He continually addressed
his requests to her, begging her to convince her husband to surrender. Her husband, Randy Weaver, thought the negotiation team was mocking him and the death of his wife. He felt that these requests were done to drive home the point that his family was not safe. The negotiation team eventually had to bring in outside assistance to end the standoff. At the conclusion of Ruby Ridge Special Agent Lanceley and his team were barely debriefed before they were sent to Waco and the Branch Davidian standoff (Lanceley, 2003).

Based on his experiences at Waco and Ruby Ridge, Special Agent Lanceley, became one of the first to study the role of communication in crisis situations. His studies provide one of the first guidelines or methods of communicating with people in crisis. Rather than limiting his response to active police action or tactical response his studies have mirrored communication studies. He indicates that the negotiator should use active listening skills, which include minimal encouragers, open-ended questions, reflecting, emotional labeling, paraphrasing, “I” messages and empathy. The use of these empathetic listening skills, he argues will provide the basis for all negotiation and crisis communication. He advocates that a negotiator must spend more time listening and less time talking. He encourages the listener to actively seek trust and rapport (Lanceley, 2003).

Noesner and Webster (1977) continued Lanceley’s work on the role of emergency communication. They agree that active listening skills will further negotiations. They contend that by utilizing active listening skills the subject’s need to ventilate emotions will be met and progress can be made in the negotiation. They believe that the negotiator must meet the subject’s critical emotional needs before progress can be made and the best method to address these needs is with the use of active listening. Dispatchers who acknowledge the emotions and allow the caller to ventilate his or her emotions using the support frame should gain better
By using active listening skills to facilitate the support frame, dispatchers should be able to improve overall communication.

Most communication centers include limited basic negotiation techniques within their training. The need for dispatchers to utilize active listening skills is vital to a successful call taking process. The question, “Tell me exactly what is going on there”, followed by active listening skills can flesh out the event for the call taker/dispatcher. By allowing the caller to explain the complete event information gathering is enhanced. Details about the event are clearer and in the long run officer safety and public safety can be improved. It is the important first step in a crisis call. Failure to listen actively can lead to miscoded events, decreases safety for responding units and increases the potential for the loss of additional lives. The failure to gain and share critical information in the briefing period at Rudy Ridge demonstrates the critical need for active listening as the first frame in crisis communication.

Informational Frame

To meet the need for a standardization of protocols, many agencies have purchased privately written protocols. Companies such as PowerPhone, APCO and NAED provide a systematic way to gain information. They provide a prewritten script that will allow the dispatcher to gain the basic call taking information. This standardized questioning answers the basic questions of who is calling, what is happening, where is it happening, when did it occur, who is involved, are there weapons involved, are the vehicles involved, and what is the direction of travel. These protocols also provide limited directional information for the directional frame. This information is gained by reading word for word from either a flip chart or computer screen. The questions are short and are designed to gain the information quickly for the information frame. These companies typically review the effectiveness of their specific protocol based how
closely dispatcher follow the exact wording of their protocols. They view effectiveness based on
the dispatcher word for word reading the question to the caller, and providing word for word the
instructions as written on the protocol. They do not view the event as a communication process,
but rather success is measured on the exact reading of wording of their protocol. It is felt that
standardization of wording will improve information

One of the largest companies worldwide that provides this type of training and research is
Priority Dispatch and the International Academy of Emergency dispatch. Originally this
company provided emergency medical dispatching, but recently has expanded to include fire and
law enforcement dispatching. The vast majority of their research has been geared to the medical
questions being accurate to provide accurate pre-arrival instructions. For example, the recent
change in the American Red Cross standard for CPR warranted a change in protocol from the
teaching of CPR with five chest compressions to one breath ratio to a 300 chest compressions.
The manual for their product advises the dispatcher that “tact consists of knowing how far to go
too far” as a communication axiom. It continues to exhort the dispatcher that extreme terror
takes us back to the gestures of our childhood. They argue that applying their rigorously defined
questions during a 911 call will improve interaction. Their solutions are event-based series of
questions. Call takers then classify the incident based on the initial answers to these pre-defined
questions; an incident determinate will be established and then pre-arrival instructions are given
based on the incident determinate. Their solution to callers in crisis is to repeat the same
question over and over until the dispatcher gains the needed response. This technique is called
repetitive persistence. When doing quality assurance with these prewritten protocols, any verbal
deviation from the wording given is considered a failure to comply with the protocol.
Dispatchers who skip a question or rephrase a question are found to be out of compliance. These
questions and standards are created from a board of surgeons, not communication experts (Clausen, 2005).

A second major company, PowerPhone, claims that 911 calls are best handled with one of three techniques. The first is the journalistic investigative approach which includes gathering basic information by asking why, when, what, where, who, weapons, hazards and injuries (5 W’s and a Hi). The initial questions are simple and informational. Why are you calling? When did this happen? Where did it happen? Who is doing it? Are there weapons involved? What hazards will we find there? Are there injuries? The second technique suggests that the 911 dispatcher should break a hysteria threshold by using repetitive questioning and voice modulation. The final technique suggests the dispatcher use inverted communication to eliminate confusion (Salafia, 2004). It is interesting to note that neither company has done any studies into the concept of breaking the hysteria threshold by using repetitive questioning.

Narration is not the goal in obtaining information; instead the strict use of specific language in every call to improve uniformity is viewed as the best method to gain compliance. This process ignores active listening skills and depends on the call taker to correctly select the right scripts or pages from the flip chart within the first several questions. Scott (2003) indicates that standardization of protocols provides consistent answers to pre-determined questions and improves the way dispatchers communicate to the field units. Scott argues that standardization can save lives. Scott suggests that the use of card sets gives the customers a better response by providing a list of questions that are relevant, pertinent and that maintain consistency. Scott continues that this procedure is easier because the set questions allow for a set answer. Scott believes that a protocol based informational frame is critical because it requires the dispatcher to handle all calls in a consistent manner. Uniformity of information is the goal.
Scott does acknowledge that protocol scripts are tools, and can take away from the natural flow of conversation. The dispatcher may not be able to bond or relate with the caller. The information gained by the use of strict protocols can lock a dispatcher into an inappropriate or inaccurate view of the situation because the protocol leads them down the wrong road. For example a dispatcher may code the event as a robbery when the event is actually a robbery with a shooting. The dispatcher having locked on the protocol for the robbery may not know that a shooting has occurred because that question is not asked. Scott also acknowledges that this informational frame does not serve a caller who is unable to answer the questions due to emotions. Scott argues that dispatchers should divert from standard protocol to gain compliance when a caller is hysterical.

Tactical Frame

One of the primary responsibilities of the 911 dispatcher is to provide for both public and officer safety. Smith (2003) indicates that officer survival is the central focus of most training programs, but survival is minimalistic, we want the officers to win. Values such as duty, strength, and courage are what we strive for in public safety. Dispatchers are part of that warrior culture and have a duty to provide the best information to improve officer safety. Scofield (2012) indicates that the emergency dispatcher is the police office’s lifeline out in the field: coordinating resources, and getting the officer when and where it is needed. Dispatchers are responsible for getting key information and sending the correct resources that are needed for the dead and wounded. They are a significant contributing factor for life safety. Scofield continues that the stress level for these unsung heroes is tremendously high and that even minor mistakes can have deadly consequences.
As a result of after incident reviews, the tactical response to active shooter calls is changing rapidly. This response is dependent on the tactical information provided by the call taker. Fraiser (2013) indicates prior to the mass shooting at Columbine, the traditional law enforcement response favored an attempt to cordon off the area and await the arrival of SWAT or other special teams. This type of response created lost time and more opportunity for the active shooter to engage innocent victims and raise the level of pandemonium. As a result of the after incident reviews of active shooter calls, the response has been to limit the number of deaths with a “movement to contact and fix” type response. With this type of approach the first units on scene respond to meet the shooter. The tactical information gained by the dispatcher protects both officer and public safety. This requires the dispatcher to move beyond the passive questions that look at informational responses to using tactical questions to gain real time tactical information for responding units. These questions include such details as weapons, ammunitions, direction of travel, number of assailters, are they wearing bullet proof vests, threats made, and other verbalizations made by the attackers. This tactical information varies from event to event but must occur in real time to be of benefit to the responding units.

Martin (2013), a 911 dispatcher, requests that you imagine you are in a situation where co-workers and friend’s lives are being threatened and you have no weapons, no physical or visual contact and can only listen as the events unfold. She wonders if you would feel helpless finding yourself in the dark in this type of event. She believes tactical information would shed light on this situation. She indicates that the information is only as good as what is provided by the caller but dispatchers can improve the type of information by asking the right questions. She warns against getting bogged down in the “why” questions. “Why is a person doing something?” can put lives at risk. The officers need to know the tactical information. While the officers are
the “eyes” of the event Martin argues the dispatchers are the “ears” of it. Dispatchers cannot see what the officers are seeing but they can provide the needed tactical information by listening actively and questioning properly.

Directional Frame

The directional frame allows the dispatcher to give pre-arrival instructions (PAI) and during the event instructions to the caller to help prevent the loss of life and the risk of injury. The use of PAI can increase the safety of all responders and callers by providing a flexible range of instructions for action. Some organizations have preplans in place that include PAI’s. For example, Kent State University (2013) suggests the use of ALICE, Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate. Alert requests that the caller be alert for gunfire, text messages, and announcements anything that can “alert” the person that there is a crisis. Lockdown includes locking the doors, covering the windows, looking for alternate escape routes, not opening the door for anyone, gathering weapons and mentally preparing to defend oneself. Inform means passing on real time information and can include flash alerts, PA announcements, or reading text messages. Counter is the use of proactive techniques should the person be confronted by an active shooter. Anything can be a weapon, create as much noise as possible, attack or swarm the person as a group, fight dirty, and create chaos. Evacuate includes deciding if the person can evacuate safely, run in a zigzag pattern, consider if the fall from a window will kill the person, and improvise ropes to shorten fall distances if necessary.

Dispatcher PAI’s are often included in commercially available protocols. For example NAEMD active shooter PAI includes the following two options: Evacuation and Lockdown. In evacuation the caller is instructed to get out of the building/area even if others won’t follow. Help others escape, if possible. Take an evacuation path that’s away from the suspect. Warn
others of the situation as you escape. Do not attempt to move wounded people. Do not rush towards officers, keep your hands visible at all times and follow their command. The lockdown instructions include: gather those around you and go to the nearest room with a locking door. Do not leave your current location if you think the suspect will see or find you. Once you’re inside, lock the door and barricade it with heavy objects. Try to prevent being seen. Turn off the lights and close the drapes or blinds to cover any windows. Sit or lie on the floor next to the wall with the door and be as quiet as possible. Do not open the door for anyone. If you are found and unable to get away, be aggressive and prepared to fight for your life by using any items you can as weapons. Throw objects, yell and continue to defend yourself. National Academy of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) (2013).

As both of these directional protocols are fairly new there has been no research into the efficacy of the instructions given. However, the NAED protocol was written with the assistance of the National Tactical Officers Association.

The lack of standardized PAI’s can create incomplete and inconsistent pre-arrival instructions that are ad-libbed or non-existent. The standard of care is increased through the use of PAI. Patterson suggests that lawsuits are commonplace in emergency incidents and that standardized PAI will allow for a proper defense of the 911 process (Patterson, 2011).

Philosophy and Ethical Assumptions:

This study is based on the philosophy that emergency communication is a communication process that occurs between people. Each individual brings the total of his or her life experiences to the call. Both the caller and the call taker in these events are facing horrific events that are active and dangerous. 911 calls are by their nature brief. These interactions may take only minutes, but the information conveyed may save lives. Dispatchers are able to use
communication skills and techniques to gain compliance and facilitate those in crisis in providing needed information. Rhetorical communication training in active listening skills creates a communication moment that can be evaluated for efficacy. The callers have witnessed one of the most horrific events of their lives. They are reaching out for human contact, reassurance and assistance in coping with events that are occurring around them and the communication process provides that contact.

**Rational and Research Questions**

While there a multiple types of 911 calls for study for the purposes of this paper, three 911 calls for active shooters are evaluated to provide a framework to view all calls. An active shooter call is one in which the caller has witnessed an individual shoot one or multiple individuals. The shooter is still in the area and the shooting may be continuing during the actual calls. It is a sad fact of our society, that these types of calls are becoming more prevalent.

The question of what occurs during a 911 call is a vital area of concern and deserves ongoing research. There has been little if any research done into the rhetorical emergency communication process within 911 calls. The need for this baseline research is critical as the paradigm is changing due to technology changes. The addition of 911NG (text and video) will change the way 911 calls are answered. This study offers an initial baseline view of three active shooter events. While extreme, Active Shooter calls are not unique to the emergency communication process. This paper reviews the underlying frameworks discovered within three active shooter calls and the emergency 911 communication that addresses the human rhetorical communication process. If one accepts that a primary goal of the 911 communication process is to quickly obtain accurate and complete information from a caller under extreme stress, then a framework for obtaining that information is appropriate. People in crisis use narration to explain
the events and the framework should allow for narration. Utilization of frames of information rather than strictly worded questions allows for the narrative process that is natural of all human communication.

- Research Question 1: What rhetorical frames appear in the examination of the three active shooter calls?
- Research Question 2: How are these located rhetorical frames utilized during active shooter calls?
- Research Question 3: Is there a need for all of the rhetorical frames in active shooter calls?
Chapter 3-Scope and Methodology

Scope of the Study

This thesis examines crisis communications through the rhetorical lens of framing theory. “Framing is a process whereby communicators act to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed in a particular manner, with some fact made more or less important” (Kuypers. 2009, p.182). People highlight some aspect of reality over other aspects. In crisis, the perceptions of the callers need to be clarified and grounded. By examining the event via the rhetorical method of frames we should be able to see the communication process more clearly. Frames act to define problems diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies (Kuypers, 2009). Frames are the central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). When viewing a crisis call, frame theory allows a rhetorical view of the communication process. A major premise of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and can have implications for multiple values or considerations (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Thus the use of frames with emergency communication in an active shooter situation will have implications for all types of 911 calls.

People highlight some aspect of reality over other aspects. In crisis, the perceptions of the callers need to be clarified and grounded. For example, a mother in crisis because her baby is not breathing may not be able to give a clear address to the 911 operator or may revert to a previous well known phone number rather than the correct phone number. A caller in a shooting incident may need to be persuaded to lock a door to prevent the shooter from entering their offices. A caller in a sinking vehicle may need to be convinced that leaving that vehicle provides the best
chance for life. By examining the event via the rhetorical method of frames we should be able to see the communication process more clearly.

**Methodology**

Using three major active shooter call incidents as the units of analysis, the Colombine High School shooting, the Trolley Square shooting and the Senator Gabby Gifford shooting, this study utilizes the actual 9-1-1 calls placed to the respective 911 centers. An active shooter event is one in which the criminal is still present during the call taking process and there is still an active threat to life safety. By utilizing the actual words and emotions, active listening skills used by the 911 dispatchers and expressed in each 911 call the appropriate framework will then be applied to the calls as a group to provide insight as to the rhetorical process. As this is the first such study, it is important to limit the scope of the events studied to provide a baseline view of this type of communication. The effectiveness and methods of persuasion within crisis should form a basis for the frames within this type of communication.

For this study, audiotapes of the event were used and transcripts of the audio recordings were made for review. While listening to the audiotapes, four separate frames became apparent: the informational frame, tactical frame emotional frame, and directional frame. Each line of text was coded for the type of frame it exhibited. The audiotapes were then reviewed again to verify the text coding, listening closely for each frame as the tapes were reviewed. A final review of all the text was performed to verify that no additional frames were present in the text or audio recording.

**Data Analysis**

The transcripts of the audiotapes were coded for the different frames utilizing the audio tapes to provide tone and emotion. Each type of frames were identified and coded within each
caller’s turn to communicate. This coding allowed for the examination of the different frames that occur within the calls. The audiotapes were used to provide the intent behind the words as well as to find the pacing of the communication. No verbal pauses and voice changes were noted within the text.

**Ethical considerations**

This study utilized only those 911 call tapes that are available to the public. The only redaction that occurred from these publically available tapes was the use of callers’ names to protect privacy. Dispatchers and callers are numbered rather than named. Originally several other 911 tapes were considered for use in this study, but were pulled from this project as the Courts and State government have requested that the tapes not be available to the public until after the court cases are completed. Although tapes of these events are available, the ethical issues of utilizing them caused these specific tapes to be dropped from this study. It is important to note that although the tapes utilized for this study are of the actual 911 calls, they may have been redacted by the individual agencies before they were released to the public for study.

It is also important to note that not all 911 tapes for a given event have been released for study. Thus, for example, the tapes from the Gabby Gifford shooting do not contain vital known information. The fact that the shooter had been contained is not within the 911 calls released. Critical information may be missing from the other examples as well. It is the decision of the agencies involved as to what tapes or portions of the tapes are released. The Trolley Square shooting tapes have the lines going dead: it is unknown if the caller hung up or edited at that point. Further study utilizing tapes that have not been redacted may provide additional frameworks for consideration.
Specifically the communication frames utilized in this study are: information frame, tactical frame, support frame, and directive frame. The information frame includes the basic information that is asked on every 911 call: location of the event, location of the caller, what is happening or event classification, suspect descriptions, suspect vehicle, and direction of travel. The tactical frame includes information that would enhance responder safety and provide the necessary information to make tactical decisions regarding the event. This information includes weapons available, ammunition available, hostages taken, direction of travel, attitude of the attacker, language of the shooter, messages from the shooter, and layout of the area for cover. The first two frames are fact gathering frames and may involve questioning by the dispatcher to the caller with the purpose of fleshing out the incident to give the responding units a true picture of the event. They may set the stage for the final two frames that are supportive and command oriented. The next frame is directive information: this frame provides for caller and bystander safety. This includes any specific directions given by the dispatcher to the caller. It may also include directions given by the caller to others in the event. The final frame is supportive communication. This frame allows the dispatcher to provide emotional support for the caller. It allows the dispatchers to utilize active listening skills to improve rapport with the caller. The language is no longer questioning but rather a reassuring of the caller that the appropriate response is coming. The purpose of this final step is to calm and reassure the caller, to help maintain their safety and to monitor the event. It is important to note that not all four frames may exist in every call. Some callers may not need the supportive frame; other callers may not have tactical information. The information available to the caller and the needs of the caller should drive the frame selection.
Chapter 4: The Study

Introduction

Active shooter situations develop and change quickly. First responders need continuously updated information. This information may start as a mobile crisis and develop into a fleeing subject, a hostage situation, a homicide investigation, a suicide threat or actual suicide, a trauma response or any combination of these events. The key to safety is accurate and complete information on the event prior to the arrival of the responding units. In the case of a mobile suspect, who is actively shooting, there may be multiple callers with different views of the event. It is the role of the dispatcher to provide accurate and as complete information as possible to the responding units. For the purposes of this study, three separate active shooter calls will be examined, the 1999 Columbine High School Shooting, the Trolley Square Shooting, Salt Lake City UT 2007, and the Gabby Gifford Shooting AZ. In each incident a brief historical view of what happened will be provided before the actual events within the audio tapes are examined.

Columbine High School 1999

On April 20, 1999 two high school seniors entered the Columbine High School with a detailed plan of killing hundreds of their peers and bombing the building. The disgruntled students came loaded with knifes, guns, ammunition, and multiple bombs. This was a well thought out plan complete with detailed drawings. The boys were students of the school and knew their “hunting ground.” Columbine became the first widely known and discussed active shooter call. The boys walked down the halls and into classrooms, they shot and killed anyone in their path. At the end of the active shooter call, twelve students and one teacher were killed.
and the two murderers were dead. Twenty one others were wounded. Jefferson County has released one 911 call from this event.

The caller is a teacher in the school who is in shock having witnessed the beginning of the event as a hall monitor. The caller is shaken and continues to revisit the initial contact. As this is one of the first such events, the dispatcher stays initially in the informational frame, attempting to understand what is happening at the school. The caller initially provides information for the informational frame—the caller is a teacher at Columbine High School. Tactical information is given—there is a student here with a gun who has shot out a window. He then falters and stammers, “I believe one student—um um I’ve been.” The dispatcher speaking to someone at the center tells that person she is on with Columbine. The caller continues to stammer and ask for the support frame. “I don’t know if it’s. I don’t know what’s in my shoulder, if it was just some glass he threw” The caller has been shot but is unaware of the true nature of his injury. The dispatcher then continues in the informational frame asking if anyone has been injured. It appears that the dispatcher was distracted by others in the dispatch center when the caller was asking for the support frame and missed the fact that the caller himself had been shot. The teacher responds that people have been injured and are in a panic. The teacher provides his location as the library. The teacher then switches to the directional frame and addresses the students in the library with him, ordering them to go down under the tables several times. The teacher demands the police. The dispatcher indicates that the police are coming following the informational frame. The dispatcher attempts to identify the shooter by name which the teacher is unable to provide. The caller provides tactical information that the shooting is continuing. The teacher then moves back to informational mode and starts a narrative from the beginning—he was on hall duty, saw the gun, he thought it was for a class movie. The shooter
pointed the gun at them and shot hitting the window. The kid standing there with him was hit. This chronological narration provided both informational frame and tactical frame to the event. The dispatcher allowed her to provide the narrative of the events as they are occurring. The dispatcher does not interrupt to clarify. In allowing the narrative, the caller was able to both flesh out the events that had transpired in the witnesses own words and provide an informational frame and a tactical frame. The dispatcher utilized the supportive frame, making small agreement noises to indicate the dispatcher was listening to the caller utilizing one of the active listening techniques. The dispatcher assures the caller that help is on the way. More shots are fired and the caller becomes emotional. The dispatcher urges the caller to stay on the line. More gunshots are heard and the caller uses the directional frame to order the kids to just stay down. The dispatcher attempts to gain tactical information of shooter exact location and the caller indicates that he is right outside the hall, or inside the hall. At this point, the caller provides tactical information: alarms and smoke begin to fill the building. The caller also indicates that someone else in the building should also be calling 911. The dispatcher attempts to move to the support frame; telling the caller that they have a lot of people responding and requests that the caller stay on the line with her. The dispatcher verifies that there are children with him. The caller confirms this, the children are on the floor and there is smoke coming into the room. The caller then screams: “multiple gunshots and the gun is right outside the door.” The caller indicates that the shooter just shot towards the door and there are kids in the library with him. The dispatcher attempts the support frame with the fact that they have paramedics coming. The caller continues in the tactical mode. The caller shouts: “the shooter is not out of bullets. He just keeps shooting and shooting.” The dispatcher continues in the support frame—“we have police officers on the scene” and requests that the caller “just stay in the library and keep the children calm. “The
dispatcher moves to the directional mode and inquires if the teacher can block to the door to prevent the shooter from accessing the room. When the teacher indicates that they are afraid to try to lock the door; the dispatcher moves back to the supportive frame indicating that it is okay to be afraid. The dispatcher assures the teacher that keeping the kids down and safe is important. The teacher provides tactical information that he can hear people shouting. The caller then indicates that alarms are going off. The dispatcher gives this information about the alarms and the smoke to someone in the center. The caller then returns to repeat his initial narrative and interrupts himself with a scream and an explosion is heard. The caller goes back to his initial narrative. The dispatcher provides the emotional frame during this narrative. During the repeating of the initial narrative the caller continues to interrupt himself as gunshots are heard outside the library door with sounds of gunshots being heard on the tape. The dispatcher allows him to vent using the support frame. There is background shouting and the caller indicates that there are more gunshots being fired. The caller then indicates that the shooter is now in the library. The caller tells the dispatcher that the shooter is demanding that everyone get up—more gunshots and the line goes dead.

Informational Frame:

This event initially begins in the informational frame. The caller is clear with location and type of call. There is a student with a gun shooting people at Columbine High School. I am in the library. Kids are screaming. The teachers at the school are trying to control things. The caller doesn’t know the students who are shooting. There are students injured. The caller is injured. There are alarms going off. As the event progresses the caller drives the communication with a narrative of events.
Tactical Frame:

The caller’s information is tactical. The student pointed a gun directly at me and shot and the window went out. The shooter is upstairs at this time. There is smoke in the hallways that is limiting vision. There are alarms going off because of the smoke. This information provides responding units a location and safety information about the scene. The police will be entering the building and going to the second story near the library. The halls are filled with smoke and there are alarms that will limit their ability to communicate with each other. The tactical frame information was both requested and volunteered by the caller. The caller shouting “multiple guns shots” allowed the dispatch to know that the shooter was still active in his progress. The dispatcher was able to timestamp these shots so the officers were aware that the scene was still dangerous. The caller was able to provide that the person was now at the library door and shooting at the door. The information that the shooter still had bullets provided more tactical information. The final statement about the shooter being in the library and ordering the caller and the students to their feet and the line cutting off provides the final tactical information from this caller.

Directional Frame:

The majority of directional frame in this call comes from the caller and not the dispatcher. The caller directs the children behind tables, urges them to remain under cover, to stay down. The dispatcher does ask if there is any way that the library door could be locked to prevent the shooter from entering the library. The caller does not appear to hear the question and is concerned about the smoke and multiple gunshots. The dispatcher attempts to ask if the door could be blocked. The caller in a hesitant voice indicates, “I think, I do not” and trails off. The
caller then indicates that the shooter is right outside the door and he is afraid to go to the door. The caller indicates the kids are on the floor keeping quiet. There is a give and take in the conversation with respect to directional frame. While the dispatcher does attempt to provide some guidance and direction, the majority of directional language is from the caller in this event.

Emotional Frame:

There is a significant use of active listening skills utilized by this dispatcher. The dispatcher mirrors back phrases. The dispatcher effectively uses encouraging words like “okay” and “umhnn” to indicate that the dispatcher is hearing the caller’s concerns. The dispatcher supports the caller with agreement when the caller indicates that he is too frightened to go to the door.

Columbine is one the first active shooter calls to provide the release of the 911 tapes for review. These tapes were used extensively for training that followed as an example of an active shooter call. The fact that all four types of frames exist in this call is important as we review the other calls that have followed Columbine. It is interesting to note that the frames are present without the specific dispatcher training. The use of the tactical, informational and directional frames all lead to better information. The dispatcher was very skilled at the use of the support frame. The fact, that she did not interrupt the narrative, allowed for the full story to be given. The use of emotional listening as a support frame tool was excellent in this call.

**Trolley Square UT 2007**

On February 12, 2007, at 6:45 PM, an 18 year old man wielding a pump-action shotgun carrying a backpack full of ammunition walked into Trolley Square Mall in Salt Lake City, Utah and began to shoot innocent shoppers. The first person killed, while still in the parking lot of the mall, was an eight-year-old boy who was a refugee from Somalia. Also killed were two 28-year
old women, a 52 year-old-man, and a 24-year-old man. The gunman also shot and injured four other people. Witnesses would later recount that he looked like an average Joe and his expression was totally calm.

An off-duty Ogden police officer on a date with his wife was at Trolley Square that evening. They saw the gunman shoot and kill two people. The off-duty officer took his wife into the closest restaurant and made certain of her safety. He quickly attempted to locate the shooter and eventually used deadly force to stop him. It is interesting to note that is was one of the first active shooter calls that occurred after the widespread use of cellphones.

During the time that the officer was searching for the killer, multiple cellular 911 calls came into the Salt Lake Police Department. The shooter continued to wander the mall shooting at people. In contrast to the Columbine shooting which released only one tape, Salt Lake City released multiple 911 calls including a call from the off duty Ogden Police officer’s wife.

The first call is from the off duty police officer’s wife whose initial information was tactical in nature. Motivated to both stop the shooter and protect her husband, her tone and vocal demeanor is generally professional and to the point. This call is limited on the support frame but is also an excellent example of the tactical frame.

Tactical frame for caller one:

The caller’s initial information is completely tactical. “At Trolley Square, there’s a man shooting with a rifle. There are at least two people shot”. The dispatcher interrupts the caller to clarify if it is a long rifle. The caller continues to attempt to inform the dispatcher that her husband is actively seeking the gunman. She is interrupted multiple times. The dispatcher attempts to move to both the informational frame and directional frame. Finally the caller is able to move the conversation back to the tactical frame with the statement that the shooter is still
shooting and there are more shots being fired. The dispatcher ignores this attempt and again moves to the directional frame. The caller rejects this move and returns to the tactical frame by insisting to the dispatcher that her husband is an off duty officer with badge and gun who has gone after the shooter. The caller continues in the tactical frame to insist that her husband is following the shooter. The caller continues to indicate that more shots are being fired. The dispatcher does not acknowledge this information, rather moves again to the directional frame. The caller returns to the tactical frame and gives the dispatcher detailed information on what her husband is wearing. On the surface this might appear to be coded within the informational frame, however, there is a tactical reason for this information. The caller provided information about her husband to prevent him from being mistaken for the actual shooter. As he was armed, off duty, and in plain civilian clothing, it would be easy to mistake him for the shooter. This is vital tactical information for the responding units to have as they enter the mall. The dispatcher finally acknowledges the tactical information that the off-duty-officer is looking for the guy.

Informational Frame

The informational frame is present in the call to a limited extent. This call was not driven by protocol-based questions. The dispatcher did not follow a checklist to obtain vital information. The dispatcher asks where this was occurring, what side of the mall. The caller is unable to provide the side of the mall, but does indicate she is in the kitchen at a specific restaurant. The caller indicates that she is in the kitchen of that restaurant. Without being asked, the caller provides a chronological narration including the fact they were walking and saw the person shoot two people. The dispatcher clarifies that they were actual witnesses to the shooting. As this caller had seen the shooter personally the basic informational questions about the shooter, height, weight, race, hair color, and clothing would have been appropriate. Questions about the
size of the backpack or color of the backpack, point of entry, better information on the type of weapon and possible vehicle could have been asked. As this caller was calm and clear with the information she was providing, there was opportunity to gain additional information.

Directional Information Frame

The dispatcher utilizes the directional frame in the conversation. The dispatcher instructs her to get into the restaurant and to lock the door. The dispatcher then asks her to get as many people into the restaurant and then to lock the door. The dispatcher repeats this same direction. The dispatcher inquires if the door has been locked and then suggests that she get someone to lock the door when she says she has no control over the door. The dispatcher stresses the need to lock the door and to not let the shooter inside the restaurant. The directions continue with the dispatcher urging her to get everyone to a safe place.

Supportive Frame

The supportive frame was absent during this call. At one point the caller breaks and gasps “Oh my god, I’ve got to”. She then takes a very deep breath and calms herself before continuing to provide information. The dispatcher does not acknowledge the break with any type of emotional framing.

Overall this call is provides an example of two people working in different frames of communication, the dispatcher in directional frame, the caller in tactical frame. The use of two different frames by these individuals created some delay in the information flow and hindered communication.

Second Caller-Trolley Square

The second call to the 911 center on the Trolley Square incident is an example of the use of the informational frame and the tactical frame. The caller is relatively calm and clear with the
information requested during the call. The caller initially says the “people” are shooting shotguns here. The dispatcher clarifies the location of the caller, Sharper Image, and the side of the mall, west. During this call, the sound of gunshots continues behind the caller. The dispatcher switches from the information frame as the first shot is heard on the line. Having heard the caller say people, the dispatcher inquires as to the number of shooters. The caller indicates that he only saw one person with a shotgun. This gives the responding units real time location of the shooter as well as the type of weapon being used. The caller then asks others in his group if they saw additional shooters and verifies with the dispatcher that there was only one shooter. The dispatcher moves back to informational frame to determine the location—Trolley Square NOT Trolley Corners by the Sharper Image. There is a long pause while the dispatcher processes the information and then asks if anyone has been shot. The caller is unaware of anyone having actually been shot but adds that the shooter is randomly shooting his weapon. The dispatcher moves back to tactical frame and verifies the weapon as a shotgun. The caller indicates he hears a shotgun and that the shooter is moving east. The dispatcher goes back to the informational frame to ask about sex and race. The caller provides race, hair color, clothing, and adds tactical information about the shooter carrying a backpack and shotgun. The dispatcher continues in the informational frame gaining the name of the caller. The caller asks for support with the phrase “we need, we need” and is interrupted by the dispatcher who assures the caller that the police are on their way. This line cuts off at this point.

Informational Frame Caller Two Trolley Square

The caller provides the basic call type (active shooter) and location. The dispatcher requests clarification of the location Sharper Image Trolley Square. The dispatcher attempts to get a clothing description and again clarifies the exact location of the caller. The dispatcher
attempts to get the race of the suspect: white black Hispanic or Indian? The caller provides the requested information including a clothing description. This additional information will allow the responding units a better picture of their suspect.

Tactical Frame-Caller Two Trolley Square

The dispatcher asks the number of shooters to provide the responding units tactical information. The type of weapon is given and the fact that there is only one person that was seen with a gun is provided by the caller. The location of the shooter is verified providing additional tactical information. The fact that the individual is still shooting is tactical information that allows the responding units know he is still an active threat.

Trolley Square Third Caller

The third 911 call into the Salt Lake Center provides the use of the supportive frame to gain tactical information from a caller who was unable to communicate because her emotions had overrun her ability to speak and think clearly. The caller was crying and barely understandable. The caller initially sounds like a young girl. The dispatcher does not use repetitive techniques to gain information, rather uses emotional listening skills and specific tactical questions. The dispatcher lowers the tone of their voice and slows the pacing of the questions for location, this time adding the phrase “honey”. Her stuttering response is “in a store.” The dispatcher uses a calm soothing voice to acknowledge the caller and ask again if she knows what store. The caller responds well to the use of these two frames together. The dispatcher interrupts the caller after determining that this is a call from Trolley Square to ask if the shooter is still on the eastside. The caller does not know. The dispatcher attempts to locate the caller within the mall. The person is unable to tell the dispatcher in which store she is hiding. The dispatcher attempts to ask if the caller is upstairs or down but the crying increases. It would
have been easy to assume that this caller had no tactical or event information and remain in the support frame. The dispatcher does not do this and switches to the tactical frame. The dispatcher uses the tactical frame to ask if the shooter was still outside and near where the caller is located. The caller tells the dispatcher that the shooter is right below her. This piece of tactical information is critical. It tells the responding units in real time that the shooter has not gone upstairs so they do not need to split their response units into two teams. The dispatcher moves to support frame to assure the caller that the police are there and then moves to the directional frame to assure the safety of the caller. The dispatcher continues to use a soothing unhurried tone with the caller to gain compliance with the directional frame. Even though in extreme emotional distress, when the shooter continues to shoot the caller provides that tactical information. The dispatcher uses the emotional frame to indicate that they know he is still shooting and follows in the support frame with indicating that the caller will be okay. Following this use of support frame the dispatcher moves back to the directional frame to indicate that that the caller is to call back if additional help is needed.

**U.S. Representative Gabrielle Gifford shooting, 2011**

On January 8, 2011, U.S Representative Gabrielle Gifford was at a Safeway grocery store as part of the Congress on Your Corner event. Security was light. The purpose was a meet and greet with people in her jurisdiction. As she was speaking, a lone gunman shot her in the head. He opened fire on the crowd and at the end of his shooting rampage six people were killed and 13 wounded. The lone gunman was hit from behind with a chair by a wounded bystander and was tackled to the ground by people in the crowd prior to the arrival of the police. The gun was kicked away from the shooter prior to the arrival of the police. Four of the 911 calls were from people who called after units had been dispatched and the dispatcher cuts them off after
determining that they were calling 911 about the Safeway shooting. No attempt was made on these calls to gain any type of information beyond the basic location and event reported.

**Gabby Gifford first caller**

The initial call to the 911 Center starts in the information frame. The dispatcher attempts to get the location of the event and the classification of the event. The caller tells the dispatcher that Gabby Gifford was shot. The dispatcher begins to move into the tactical frame with the question was somebody shot then sir? The caller gives the only tactical information—“yes. It looks like a guy had a semi-automatic pistol and he went in and just started firing and then he ran.” The dispatcher asks for direction of travel and is told that he ran past Walgreens. The caller did not volunteer that the shooter had been detain by this time and was under citizen’s arrest. The dispatcher then follows the informational frame gaining a description of the shooter. A significant amount of questioning occurs about the hoodie he was wearing and if the shooter was wearing beanie or a hoodie. The color of his clothing was obtained. The dispatcher continues to ask if anyone was injured and to confirm that Gabby Gifford was hit. The fact that she is still breathing and has a pulse is conveyed. The caller also indicates that they have two people and then one person dead and eight people were injured. Multiple people shot. The dispatcher breaks with a soft “oh my god” and then goes back to the information frame. She obtains his race, age, and attempts to obtain his hair color but the discussion about hoodies and beanies occurs. The caller’s name and occupation is obtained. The dispatcher ends the call at this point as the police have the person in custody.

**Informational Frame**

The dispatcher stays almost completely within the informational frame and appears to be going down a check list of questions rather than allowing the narrative of the event to occur. The
questions included direction of travel, description of the shooter, whether he was wearing a hoodie or a beanie, and the color of his pants and sweater. The dispatcher asks if anyone has been hit and the caller indicates that Gabrielle Gifford was hit. The caller believes she is breathing and has a pulse. The dispatcher returns to the basic information, race, hair color, name of the caller, employer of the caller, and what the caller was doing at Safeway. While the basic information of where, what, who, and direction of travel was obtained, bigger questions went unasked.

Tactical Frame

Although this is the most recent of all the calls, very limited tactical information was gained for the responding units. The fact that eight people were shot was obtained. The caller volunteers that the shooter was shooting a semi-automatic pistol. There was no other tactical information obtained. The response to this event was quick so the dispatcher disconnects with the caller as soon as the units arrive on scene.

Directional and Emotional Frame

There was no use of either the directional or emotional frame in this call. Although the dispatcher does appear to break with an “oh my god” and a deep breath, no supportive language is given between the caller and the dispatcher.

Results of the study

A review of three major active shooter incidents revealed basic frameworks for communication. The review of the incidents indicates the need for all frames to be utilized to gain the maximum understanding of the active shooter event. While there was significant
information exchanged in all calls, the quality of the information would have been enhanced with the inclusion of missing frames.

Informational Frame

The dispatchers involved were able to obtain some basic information under extreme circumstances. The myth that callers do not have good information is proven incorrect in all of these calls. The callers were able to provide extremely detailed and accurate information about each event. However in all of the calls, basic information from the information frame was missing. This is probably due to the active crisis nature of the event. Basic questions went unasked because other frames took priority. It is important to note that this basic information can justifiably take a backseat to other frames. However in some cases this basic information would have enhanced the ability of the responding units to locate and identify the suspect. The utilization of prewritten protocols would serve to direct the dispatchers down a checklist of answers and meet this need. The basic questions of who is calling, description of the suspect, and vehicles involved need to be asked in order to begin filling-in the picture of the scene of the crime. Other than the Gabby Gifford shooting, limited information about the actual shooter was obtained. The use of preformatted easy answer questions for all types of calls may have allowed for a more complete picture of the event. This basic information can provide the basis to rule out bystanders from suspects, provide a starting place to being operational plans and provide for investigation after the fact to be more complete.

Tactical Information

In the interest of officer and bystander safety, dispatchers should be trained to think and to question actively about tactical information. As the dispatcher is the only link to this information before the officers arrive on scene it is critical that they understand the basis of a
tactical response and the information needed for this type of action. The better the tactical information the safer the responding units will be once they arrive on scene. The call takers and callers provided excellent tactical information in all three calls. The first caller in the Trolley Square shooting had critical tactical information—she had seen him shoot two people. She knew direction of travel and type of weapon. The dispatcher in the third Trolley Square shooting did an outstanding job of locating the shooter with a hysterical caller. The caller in the Gabby Gifford shooting provided limited tactical information.

Basic tactical information such as type of weapon and the presence of additional ammunition can give the responding units an idea of the type of firepower. If the shooter is shouting or saying anything, this information can give the responding units a hook by which to start negotiations with the shooter. Location and direction of travel can give the responding units a place to begin their assault. In the Gabby Gifford Shooting, the fact the shooter had been subdued by people in the crowd was not asked nor conveyed to the dispatcher. This information likely would have changed the response method for incoming units. The type of weapon and the fact that the shooter was no longer in possession of the weapon would be critical tactical information. The caller in the Columbine Shooting also had unasked for tactical information—what the shooter was shouting would have given the responding officers the needed information that this was a determined shooter with the goal of killing as many people as possible. Although limited in nature, callers in all the calls provided some tactical information. The potential for additional information was not forgotten by the dispatcher in this type of call. The use of the tactical frame can save lives and prevents injuries and is critical to crisis communication.

Support Frame
The use of the support frame to gain compliance or information is critical in crisis communication. It is best used with a caller who has experience such trauma during the event to render them incapable of providing concise and clear communication. By relating to the caller in a supportive manner, utilizing active listening skills the dispatchers in the Columbine and Trolley Square shootings were able to gain compliance and the critical information needed to improve life safety concerns. Techniques such as slowing the pace of speech, using mirroring language, encouraging and naming emotions, all helped the callers overcome emotional blocks to communication. This frame is very a powerful way to gain compliance. It builds trust and allows for the acknowledgment of the events on an emotional human level. It builds the concept of teamwork, we are in this situation together and we can make it out the other side. It paves the way for the directional frame and allows for the tactical and informational frames.

The dispatcher in the third call rather than utilizing the technique of repeating the question over and over, used supportive language and active listening skills to gain compliance and provide the emotional support callers needed to be able to convey accurate and complete information. The use of parroting and paraphrasing to clarify, for example, would let the caller know the dispatcher is listening and attempting to understand what the caller is seeing. It would also allow the dispatcher to clarify the exact information being given about the event. When utilized as with the third caller in the Trolley Square shooting, the caller became calmer and was able to explain the event.

Directional Frame

This frame is designed to provide for the safety of the caller and bystanders. It was utilized with varying degrees of success by the dispatchers in the Trolley Square and Columbine
incidents. The failure or success in compliance does not lay with the frame, but rather the situation.

The shooter and not those in harm’s way often dictate this type of incident. In the Trolley Square shooting, the first dispatcher attempted to provide excellent directional information, lock the doors so he can’t get in, pull bystanders in the hall into safety and lock the doors. The clash between the directional frame and the tactical frame came down to ownership. The caller had ownership of critical tactical information but was powerless to lock the doors as she did not have a key. The dispatcher had ownership of public safety and wanted to provide for that safety by locking out the shooter. Active listening skills by both would have settled the ownership issues.

In the Columbine incident, the caller was injured and frightened. The caller knew the shooter was right outside the library door and was unwilling to move to the door for fear of attracting the shooter’s attention. The dispatcher directing the action was not aware of the location of the shooter and gave the directions without asking or prefacing the direction with a simple—“if it is safe to do so, lock the doors.” On the other hand, the same caller was extremely proactive in protecting the students in the library. The caller utilized directive language to them, “keep down, be quiet, stay down”. This frame can improve the safety of the individuals responding into harm’s way if utilized in an appropriate manner.

It may be possible to pre-script the basic information to give the caller. While each situation is unique, the concept of shelter in place, or escape if possible, is uniform with all active shooter calls. There is a need to provide this information early in the call.

Discussion
The discovery of these four basic frames provides a starting point to view the crisis communication process between emergency 911 dispatchers and callers in crisis. The existence of these frames and their use provide a basic underpinning for all emergency crisis communication events. By utilizing these frames, we can begin to view the crisis situations that occur and provide for improved flow of information in the emotional crisis situations.

It is important to note that the frames are not independent and static. Communication in crisis is by its nature messy and convoluted. Events are occurring at a rapid pace, and the narrative that is the event changes quickly and completely. The basic information given is old as soon as it is uttered. Tactical information may change as the shooter’s motivation changes during the event. The directions given may be incorrect in the next instant. Individuals in crisis react differently to different stressors. There is no “one correct” method. Instead the use and understanding of the four basic frames provide a solid support underpinning crisis communication.

The concept of prewritten scripts that take a dispatcher from the informational frame, to the tactical frame, to the directional frame and finally to the support frame, while tempting is not viable. Callers and dispatchers flow back and forth among the frames as needed among a crisis. For example, dispatchers who are unable to gain information because of an emotional caller can utilize the support frame. By validating the caller’s emotional feelings, and responding to their fears, better information may be gained. The use of listening language; go ahead, yes I hear you, can reduce stress and allow the caller to return to a state in which they can provide the dispatcher with better information. The use of pacing and tone by a dispatcher to slow the conversation and allow the caller to take a breath may provide a means to gain better compliance to the directive frame. Dispatchers who gain good information should move into the tactical
frame if possible. Those dispatchers who use the support frame coupled with tactical questioning may gain better compliance and information. The use of the directional frame to provide for the safety of the caller and others is equally important. Those dispatchers who utilize the directional frame need to be aware of the caller’s safety through the use of tactical information.

The use of all four frames can improve officer, caller and bystander safety. It is with the use of all four frames interwoven that crisis communication is most effective. While it is possible to script the informational questions, some callers may be so emotional that the communication of these facts may not be possible. To hold dispatchers to a standard, which only allows them to read the questions as written, ignores the other frames.

One major concern is that as the technology moves to a more mediated event, frames may not be included within the mediated scripts. Questions and pre-arrival instructions being mediated via strict protocols ignore the power of the emotional frame in gaining compliance. As dispatch centers have been mandated to move to 911NG, which includes text messaging, pictures and video messages the issue of providing for all frames becomes vital. Flexibility of the mediated communication scripts provided becomes more critical. Some frames may be ignored in the mediation of the text. While some may argue that a person texting 911 during an active shooter event would be less noticeable to a shooter than someone whispering into a phone, the question of efficacy providing specific tactical or directional information via a text to a caller in crisis becomes critical.
Chapter 5-Summary and Conclusions

There is a very vital need to study crisis communication as a separate entity from hostage negotiation and other types of emergency communication. The skills and methods used may include techniques utilized in crisis negotiation that may be helpful in an active shooter call. However time frames and the fast moving pace of an active shooter call demand a far broader view of communication. The use of frames to structure 911 calls should help the dispatcher in gaining the needed information to provide for public safety. This type of study has only become possible with the changes in law to allow for the public release of the 911 tapes. A review of the communication that occurred at Columbine, Trolley Square and the Gabby Gifford shooting shows dispatchers dealing with crisis situations in a professional manner. The callers provided necessary information while dealing with the horror that they had witnessed. Communication is possible in crisis. It is more direct and very specific. Great communication with better safety would be possible if all four frames of communication are utilized.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to three events to provide an initial exploration. There is a need to look at more than three active shooter events. It would be interesting to see what additional frames occur in other active shooter calls. The frames discovered need to be tested against other active shooter events. The calls that were viewed were also limited in that they may have been redacted before they were released. Complete calls should be viewed in the future as these types of tapes become available. The small scope of the number of events and the limitation as to the type of event needs to be expanded to be more inclusive to all types of crisis communication events.

Further Study and Recommendations
There is a vital need to examine other 911 call tapes to discover the full extent of the frames that exist within crisis 911 communication. Are these frames applicable to other types of crisis calls? Can frames be utilized to improve communication in other types of events? For example, could the support frame be of value in a Sudden Infant Death call. Could the information coming out of the hostage negotiation studies done by the FBI be translated to support language to prevent the freak-refreak situations in major medical 911 incidents. Is there a need for the tactical frame in a 911 arson fire response?

It is also important to note, that verbal communication in crisis needs to be studied before the mediated protocols occur with the advent of 911 next generation. If frames of communication are not addressed in mediated communication then those frames of information will be lost and safety will likely be compromised. The scenario of a push one for yes, push two for no within mediated communication limits the frames of support and tactical information.

**Conclusions**

A review of the three active shooter calls has revealed the basic rhetorical frames by which other calls can be evaluated. The interaction between caller and dispatcher remains within the realm of human communication. The advent of mediated communication should take into consideration all frames discovered to this point. Protocols need to be adapted to fit the basic frames so that all are available for use by dispatchers. Further study is needed to determine if there are unseen frames that exist within active shooter calls and other calls for service. The three calls evaluated are cautionary tales that have much value to the crisis communication field.
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Appendix 1: Trolley Square Caller 1

Dispatcher 1 (D1)  Caller 1 (C1)

D1  911 what is your emergency

C1  At trolley square there’s a guy shooting with a rifle, he’s shot a couple of people

D1  K can you see him?

C1  Yeah I saw him, he has a big long black gun, I know there is at least two people shot

D1  Did he have a long rifle?

C1  Yes, My husband is

D1  (Interrupting) Where is he at? What side of the mall is he at?

C1  I don’t know I am at XXXX restaurant, and I just heard the shots from here

D1  Okay, can you

C1  (Interrupting) My husbands an off

D1  (Interrupting) can you get in there and lock the doors and keep all the customers
   in there, ma’m?

C1  There is people running everywhere

D1  Okay Mam can you get as many people as possible into the restaurant and lock the doors

C1  He still shooting, there’s more shots fired

D1  Yeah we have officers, we have officers in the area but I need you to get as many people
   Ma’m?

C1  Can you let them know that my husband is off duty Odgen City cop, he is off duty armed
   He is out there somewhere.

D1  Your husband does?
Yes he has his badge and gun, but he is off duty Odgen City, there is more shots fired,

There is more shots fired

Have you locked the doors?

I am in the kitchen area of the restaurant, I have no control over that

Okay can you get somebody to lock the doors to the restaurant or the store? We need

People to lock the doors to the restaurant and not let him in and get to a safe place

(talking over her—unable to tell what she is saying) get away from him now

However you can. Do you know what your husband is wearing?

My husband has jeans and a green shirt with a blue stripe on it. He’s got black hair

Is he white black or Hispanic?

He’s half white/half Hispanic, there are is a lot of shots being fired right now

I know he’s got a green shirt?

(Voice breaking for first time) Oh my god, I’ve got to (deep breath) green long sleeve

With a blue stripe in it.

You say he’s looking for the guy with the gun?

He saw, we were out there walking and he saw him, we saw two people down, they

Were shot

You saw two people shot?

Yes I did, hold on talk to this guy

What side of the mall are the on ma’m?

Line goes dead
Appendix 2: Trolley Square 2nd Caller

C2  We are in the trolley square and people are shooting shotguns here

D2  Okay trolley square?

C2  Sharpie Image

D2  Okay Where is he at?

C2  Westside (Shot heard on the recording)

D2  Okay how many of them are there?

C2  I can only see one shotgun (two shots heard on the recording)

D2  Alrighty what kind of clothes is he wearing?

C2  I can’t see, he’s walking with a backpack

D2  Okay the shooter is one person?

C2  Just one person? Is there just one person?

D2  And this is trolley square not trolley corners correct?

C2  Trolley Square

D2  By Sharpie Image?

C2  Yes, he’s walking through, walking through just shooting

D2  Okay (long pause)

D2  Has anybody been shot?

C2  What’s that?

D2  Has anybody been shot?

C2  I don’t, I don’t, we are just walking behind, he is just walking through shooting

D2  Okay

C2  I didn’t see anybody, I just saw the shots and saw people coming in,
C3 There are people next to us, that saw him

D2 And he had a shot gun?

C2 What’s that?

D2 He has a shot gun?

C2 I hear a shot gun, and he is moving east?

D2 He is moving east?

C2 He is moving east, he is walking through (female c3 in background unable to understand)

D2 Is he white, black, Hispanic, indian?

C2 Is he white, black Hispanic? (female voice C3 unable to understand)

He is white with dark hair, like a green, like a green army, greenish tan’ish coat, I saw a

Backpack on his too, yeah it looks like a shot gun

D2 Okay what is your name?

C2 My name is (redacted). He is still shooting. (Female in background crying) He’s still

Shooting, we need we need

D2 Yeah we are on the way (interrupting)

Line cuts off
Appendix 3-Trolley Square 3rd Caller

D3  911 what is your emergency
C4  We are in trolley square mall
D3  (Interrupting) Is the suspect still on the east side ma’am?
C4  I don’t know (voice wobbling)
D3  Where are you honey? Where are you at?
C4  In a sto store?
D3  Okay Do you know what store?
C4  No (crying)
D3  Okay hummm are you down
C4  (high pitched crying)
D3  Is he still inside?
C4  Yes (sighing)
D3  Okay are you near where he’s at?
C4  He is right below us
D3  Below you? Okay
C4  Are the policeman? (Crying)
D3  The police, we are there okay, but I need you to, are you in a store that can be locked?
C4  He locked it but it has glass
D3  Okay does they have a back?
C4  Let me ask, do you guys have a back of the store? I don’t know
D3  Okay hum, the best thing to do is to, is ta go ahead and get behind the counter where
They can’t see you, okay
C4 I am behind a couch and I have a little boy
D3 Okay just keep them down okay, everything is going to be okay
C4 Are you guys getting them?
D3 We are! Okay? We are going to get him but
C4 (Crying and children crying)
D3 Stay in there okay?
C4 Okay
D3 And are you away from the window?
C4 Yeah I am behind the couch,
D3 Okay just stay behind the couch, and, and and okay?
C4 Lots of gunshots..(crying and wimpering)
D3 I..I know..is he still shooting?
C4 I don’t know (sobbing)
D3 You are going to be okay, just stay right there okay? Okay we are there Okay
C4 (crying) okay
D3 And if you need to call back, call us back but I need to go to a different call
C4 Okay what number do I call 911?
D3 That’s okay, that’s okay, if you need us just call us okay?
Appendix 4- Columbine High School

D1: Jefferson County 911

C1: Yes, I am a teacher at Columbine High School. There is a student here with a gun. He has shot out a window. I believe one student ....Uh, um, um ...I’ve been...

D1: I’m on with Columbine High School

C1: Um...I don’t know if it’s...I don’t know what’s in my shoulder...if it was just some glass he threw or what

D1: Okay

C1: I am...

D1: Has anyone been injured mam?

C1: Yes, yes

D1: Okay

C1: ...And the school is in a panic and I am in the library. I’ve got students down, UNDER THE TABLES KIDS, KIDS UNDER THE TABLES! Um kids are screaming, and the teachers, um, are you know, trying to get control of things. We need police her now...

D1: Okay, we’re getting them there.

C1: Can you get them here in a hurry?

D1: Who is the student mam?

C1: I do not know who the student is.

D1: Okay

C1: I saw a student outside, I was in the hall...GUNSHOTS... Oh dear God! Okay, I was on hall duty; I saw a gun. I said what is going on out there? And the kid that was following me said it was a film production, probably a joke, and I said “Well I don’t think that is a good idea.”
I went running outside to see what was going on. He pointed the gun straight at us and shot, and MY GOD, the window went out and the kid standing there with me, I think he got hit.

D1: Okay

C1: There is something in my shoulder.

D1: Okay, okay. We got help on the way mam.

C1: Okay…GUNSHOTS… Oh God!

D1: Stay on the line with me.

C1: GUNSHOTS…Oh God, kids just stay down!

D1: Do we now where he is at?

C1: I’m sorry

D1: Do we know where he is at?

C1: Okay, I’m in the library. He’s upstairs. He is right outside of here.

D1: He’s outside?

C1: He’s outside of this hall.

D1: Outside of the hall? Outside…

C1: He is in the hall. I’m sorry. There are alarms and things going off…There’s smoke…My God, smoke is like, coming into this room.

D1: Okay

C1: I’ve got the kids under the tables here. I don’t know what is happening in the rest of the building.

D1: Okay

C1: I don’t know. I am sure someone else is calling 911 besides me.
D1: Yes, we’ve got a lot of people on. Okay, I just want you to stay on the line with me. I, uh, we need to know what is going on, okay.

C1: Okay, I am on the floor.

D1: Okay, you’ve got the kids there?

C1: Okay, we’re in the library, and I’ve got every student on the floor. **YOU GUYS STAY ON THE FLOOR!**

D1: Is there any way you can look the doors?

C1: Um, smoke is coming in from out there and I, um, a little…**MULTIPLE GUNSHOTS**…the gun is right outside the library door okay. I don’t think I am going to go out there, okay.

D1: Okay, were at Columbine High School. Okay, we’ve got…

C1: Okay, um, I’m not going to the door. He just shot toward the door, okay. I’ve got the kids on the floor, um, I’ve got all the kids in my room…

D1: We’ve got paramedics, we have fire and rescue is on route, okay sir.

C1: Okay, okay

D1: Yes, bye.

C1: Yes, I mean…He’s…I can’t believe he’s not out of bullets. He just keeps shooting and shooting and shooting. I thought…

D1: Okay, yeah, we’ve got a police officer on scene.

C1: I talked to him. I thought it was…

D1: Okay just try and keep the kids in the library calm.

C1: Yeah

D1: Is there any way you can block the door so no one can get in?

C1: I think, I do not…
D1: Okay

C1: I, uh, yeah, I guess I can try and go…but, I mean…like, he is right outside that door, I am afraid to go the door.

D1: That is okay.

C1: That is where he is.

D1: Okay

C1: …I am afraid to go there.

D1: That’s okay.

C1: Okay, I told the kids to get on the floor. I told them to get under the tables. All of the children are on the floor under the tables, um, um, yeah they are all under the tables.

D1: Okay, as long as they try and keep…

C1: And I am just trying to keep calm. No one is saying a word.

D1: Okay, as long as we can keep everyone in there as calm as we can.

C1: I hear some yelling out there going on right now.

*Background male...alarms are going off*

C1: Alarms are going off.

D1: Yes, we’ve got alarms going off now as well.

C1: Yeah, there are alarms. The room is filled with smoke.

D1: Okay

C1: Okay

D1: Keep everyone low to the floor.

C1: Yeah, yeah everyone is on the...Everyone stay on the floor, stay on floor, stay under the tables. Um, I uh, I don’t know. I...
D1: Okay, I know just…

C1: I don’t know, I didn’t, I said what has that kid got? He was outside at the time and, and, and um. I was on hall duty. EXPLOSION… Oh God! He told me, he’s like, “Woo Hoo Hoo!”

D1: Mmhmm, I know.

C1: …are getting shots off. I do not know who this student is, I don’t even…GUNSHOT…I saw him. He was wearing black. He looked very large, um, male student. Um, he was out there shooting. GUNSHOTS…He looks like he was planning on shooting at someone. I said, “What is that?”…GUNSHOTS

D1: MmHmm

C1: I said, “What’s going on out there?” Well it’s probably a cap gun. Probably a video production, you know, they do these videos…

D1: Right

C1: And the kids, well I said “That’s not you know, a play gun, a real gun.” I was going out there to say “No!” and I went…GUNSHOTS…Oh my God! That was really close, that just rattled me.

D1: Okay

*Background yelling*

C1: GUNSHOTS…Oh my God! I’m really…frightened. GUNSHOTS…I think he is in the library.

D1: What’s your name mam?

C1: GUNSHOTS…My name is (redacted). Whispering

D1: (redacted) calling the callers name?

*Background yelling*
C1: Whispering…He’s yelling “Everybody get up, right now!”…GUNSHOTS…He’s in the library, he’s shooting at everybody.
Appendix 5-Gabielle Gifford Call 1

D1: 911 Where is the emergency?

C1: It’s Gifford’s…

D1: Hello, Hello…

C1: 911 There was a shooting at Safeway.

D1: Okay, what do you mean?

C1: I-9 and Oracle, where a Gabrielle Gifford was. And I do believe Gabby Gifford was hit.

D1: Safeway sir?

C1: Yes, Safeway.

D1: Alright, was somebody shot then sir?

C1: Yes. It looks like the guy had a semi-automatic pistol and he went in and he just started firing and then he ran.

D1: Okay, which way did he run?

C1: Um, he ran North past the Walgreens that is right next to the Safeway.

D1: Can you describe him…Can you describe him sir, what was he wearing?

C1: He was wearing a hoodie.

D1: What color was the hoodie?

C1: It was black.

D1: Okay…what color were his pants?

C1: It looked like he was wearing blue jeans and he was wearing a black sweater.

D1: Okay, is anybody injured? Did you say Garbrille Giffords was hit?

C1: Um…she is hit, I believe she is breathing…

*Background male says “She is breathing.”*
C1: She is breathing and is still has a pulse and we got two people and we got, we got one dead.

D1: Okay

C1: And 8 are injured.

D1: Okay, and there are other people injured?

C1: Yes, there was multiple people shot.

D1: Oh my God!

D1: Is he White, Black, Hispanic?

C1: He was White.

D1: Okay. How old did he appear to be?

C1: He appeared to be in his probably 20s to late probably 30s…20s

D1: What color hair did he have, sir what color hair did he have?

C1: Um, I couldn’t see it because he, he had a, he had a hood, he had a…

D1: He had the hood over his head.

C1: It was more like a beanie actually.

D1: Okay

C1: So I could not see his hair color. Like I said he shot and ran… you okay sir, we got help coming…

D1: Okay, what is your name sir?

C1: My name is (redaced).

D1: Are you an employee sir?

C1: Yeah, I work for a separate company. I’m a merchandiser.

D1: Okay
C1: And I was outside putting some products up and I was looking out the window when all the shots…

D1: You a merchandiser for Safeway?

C1: No, I Kalil Bottling. Hello, sorry I am trying to help and talk at the same time.

D1: Thank you sir, we believe we have somebody detained outside. I am going to answer other 911 calls, thank you so much for your help. Bye.
Appendix 6-Gabrielle Gifford: Caller 2,3,4

Caller 2

D1: 911 Where is your emergency?

C2: Hi, I work at Wells Fargo and there is a customer that came in and said there is a shooting at the Safeway.

D1: Okay, yes, we have reports of that. Thank you.

C2: Thank you

D1: Goodbye

Caller 3

D1: 911 Where is your emergency?

C4: Yeah it’s at Safeway on, um Oracle and I-9.

D1: Okay, we have reports of that, thank you.

C4: You have the report of that? Okay, thank you, bye.

D1: Yes, I do…bye.

Caller 4

D1: 911 Where is your emergency?

C5: I-9 and Oracle, the Safeway. There’s been shots fired.

D1: Yes, we have reports of that. Deputies are on the way, thank you.

C5: Bye