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METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

The research reported herein was conducted without financial support from any institution. It was conducted as an act of love. In the spring of 2000, my wife, in anticipation of her own retirement as a New York City English teacher and conflict mediator, asked me what I would like to do in the near future. I responded by saying, "I want to study the Columbine shootings." Because I had no academic position, I realized that I had only my own resources at hand. However, those resources were considerable: an abiding interest in adolescent social development, my skills as a research sociologist, and an understanding and supportive wife and family.

However, I could conduct a study without academic credentials. I approached David Brotherton at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York and asked him if the sociology department would sponsor me with an unpaid research position that would allow me legitimacy as a university-based academic researcher. The department granted me the position and provided me with department letterhead stationery. The department has been very supportive of my research efforts, with various members reading over drafts of my work, inviting me to colloquia, and asking me to make presentations in faculty members' classes. Department members in addition to David Brotherton who have been supportive of my work are Michael Flynn, Maria Volpe, and Barry Spunt.

I began reading media accounts of the Columbine shootings and ordering books that had been written about them in preparation for developing a research grant proposal. Because of the recency of the shootings, explorations of the relevant databases, including ERIC, Psychinfo, and SocSciSearch revealed no original research on the shootings. I was surprised to find that by the end of 2001, the only books published on the Columbine shootings were from the evangelical community, interpreting the shootings in distinctly Manichean terms of the struggle between good and evil, with Harris and Klebold cast in the role of Satan and the evangelical community as the defenders of virtue. In addition, there were numerous hagiographies of two of the victims, Rachel Scott and Cassie Bernall.

Perhaps even more disturbing were the subsequent publication of numerous books and magazine articles that had used media reports about the Columbine shootings as a jumping off point for their own authors' agendas. Two such examples blamed the Columbine shootings on lax and indulgent parenting within the middle class with absolutely no knowledge of how Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris were raised (Coleman 2002; Shaw 2003).

In 2000, after collaborating with my colleagues at John Jay, I submitted a research proposal to the Spencer Foundation, which was not funded. About that time, the economic bubble of the 1990s collapsed, and foundations found themselves having to cut back grant monies severely. At that point, I figured I was wasting my time attempting to obtain research funds and began to execute a research plan based on a shoestring budget. From a variety of sources, I began compiling a list of possible interviewees in anticipation of a data collection trip to southern Jefferson County in the fall of 2000. Prospective interviewees were primarily Columbine High School students but also included reporters, investigators from the attorney general's office, scholars and colleagues in the Denver area, and police investigators. In addition, I included educators, including Frank DeAngelis, principal of Columbine High School, and Jane Harman, the Superintendent of Jefferson County School District.

The responses from those most closely involved with the shootings were resoundingly negative. Prior to calling the high school, I wrote the principal a letter introducing myself and the nature of my study; I informed him that I would be calling within a few days. When I called the high school, I was referred to the public information officer who scolded me and told me that the school community was still in the process of healing and that my investigation would interfere with that process. He inferred that my investigation was part of a ghoulish fascination with the shootings, and he informed me that the high school was constantly being visited by tour buses filled with picture-snapping curiosity seekers.

My attempts to interview the students also met a dead end. Columbine residents who were closely associated with the shootings had learned from their negative experiences to screen their calls. Nearly all telephone inquiries ended with my leaving messages on answering machines, messages that were never returned. In some cases, parents would answer the phone and would refuse access to their children. A common response was, "We've had enough of that Columbine crap," and they would hang up.

Nevertheless, my wife Debbie, and I traveled to Denver in November 2000 for our first data collection trip. We interviewed several reporters for the *Rocky Mountain News*, an investigator at the state Attorney General's Office, a representative of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence in Boulder, and drove around the Columbine High School catchment area in southern Jefferson County. We also scheduled an interview with Kate Battan, the lead investigator for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department. She canceled, citing overwhelming job responsibilities. Although Battan seemed sympathetic to the investigation and almost always returned my calls, I was never able to interview her for the study.

From the Attorney General's office and at the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, we received valuable information on the investigations relating to high school violence. We were given the recent report on bullying from the assistant attorney general and were provided several monographs on school violence produced by the Center for the Study of Violence and Violence Prevention.

The data collected from the trip provided two benefits: first, we were able to talk to people who had a close-up view of the shootings and their aftermath; second, we were provided with contacts inside the Columbine community from cooperative reporters. One of the major sources of information about the Columbine shootings was the Brown family. Their son, Brooks, was a close friend of Dylan Klebold and had an on-again-off-again relationship with Eric Harris. The Brown family was victimized by the Columbine shootings on several levels. First, because Brooks was linked to Harris and Klebold, he was suspected of having participated in the shootings or having foreknowledge of them. Second, because Brooks was close to

both shooters and victims, he was in the unenviable position of mourning for both his friends who were killers and his friends who were their victims. Because of his position as an outcast student, he had a visceral understanding of why Klebold and Harris perpetrated their horrendous act. This put him at odds with the vast majority of Columbine residents who viewed the shootings as causeless or as pure evil, further isolating him. Third, the Brown family had repeatedly attempted to alert the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department of the danger of Eric Harris's actions prior to the shootings. When the Brown family went to the media to complain about the in action of the Sheriff's Department, the sheriff engaged in a personal vendetta against the Brown family. He tried to frame Brooks Brown as a coconspirator in the shootings. The sheriff also engaged in personal attacks against the Brown family, calling them liars. It was only later that the ignored complaints were discovered in the department's files.

Because of the closeness of Brooks to Eric and Dylan and because of the viciousness of the attacks on their family, the Browns became deeply involved in the shooting investigations. They served as witnesses and as information sources. Brooks (Brown and Merritt 2002) wrote *No Easy Answers* with Rob Merritt, a book about his experiences, which was published in 2002. I attempted to contact him through his publisher. I was given his email address but never received a response to my inquiries. I was provided the Brown's phone number by a reporter. I called the number and left a message explaining to the Browns the purpose of my investigation. I received a call back from Judy Brown, who gave me a great deal of inside information and names to contact for possible interviews. She also gave me Brooks's cell phone number. Any time a significant event occurred relative to the shootings, such as the release of the Sheriff's Department's report, I would receive a call from Judy that would last minimally an hour during which she would update me on what was happening and provide me with leads to follow up.

In the meantime, I had to devise a strategy to get access to Columbine students. I used several strategies. By that time, the 11,000-page report on the shootings had been released by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department. I began to scour the report for names of students who had been interviewed by the police. I was able to identify several members of the Trenchcoat Mafia whom I subsequently interviewed. In addition, a colleague at John Jay indicated that he had a student who was a former Columbine High School student who was in attendance on the day of the shootings. She agreed to an interview and became a resource for other interviewees. I began searching the Internet for names of and contact information for former Columbine High School students. By far the best source was alumni.com, which lists high school graduates from high schools across United States. I tapped into the Columbine High School alumni list and was able to recruit six or seven students who had listed their names on the web site and who were in attendance on April 20, 1999. I interviewed them by telephone and asked if they could recommend any other students for interviews. I was unable to recruit any other students from this pool. Interviews were about an hour long and covered their experiences as Columbine High School students: what their typical days were like; whether they had experienced or observed any harassment; if so, a description of it. I asked them about the social structure of the high school and where they fit into it. What was their knowledge of the Trenchcoat Mafia, Eric Harris, and Dylan Klebold? What were their experiences on the day of the shootings? None of the students from this source knew Klebold or Harris personally, but all could identify the Trenchcoat Mafia. All were in the school the morning of the shootings, and none was injured. They all knew at least one of the victims.

On my second visit to southern Jefferson County in May, 2003, I visited the Brown's house, interviewed Judy Brown and a friend of hers who was a district employee. The Browns had an entire room filled with records and documentation of investigations of the shootings. I also met Brooks for the first time, who introduced me to some of his friends, whom I was able to interview. In one case, a female friend of his arranged an interview with her and three of her friends who had returned to the area from college. All four had been in school on the day of the shootings.

During this data collection trip, I interviewed Principal Frank DeAngelis for the first time. I also visited the West Bowles Community Church, where Cassie Bernall and her family were parishioners. I attended services and interviewed the youth minister and six members of the youth congregation, most of whom attended Columbine High School. It was during this trip that I began collaring students on the run for interviews. I was also able to interview football team members. I attempted to interview the new superintendent of schools for Jefferson County, Dr. Cindy Stevenson, and was thrown out of her office when I made inquiries about antiviolence programs instituted by the school district. During this trip, I made a second visit to the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence to interview Del Elliott, the center's director, a world-renowned expert on high school violence and violence prevention.

During this time, I had been writing the book. In addition to the interviews, I used census and economic data to develop a demographic profile of the area served by Columbine High School. Interviews were transcribed, read over, and were reorganized by topics. I read newspaper and journal articles and read about rampage shootings as they occurred. All books on the topic were purchased and read. I conducted periodic searches of academic databases to see if other studies have been conducted. I also contacted other scholars working in related areas. I viewed television shows and movies related to Columbine, adolescent violence, and bullying. Friends and colleagues alerted me to materials that they had seen. I received envelopes with clippings about Columbine and related issues from my friend and colleague, Peter Freund. My wife, Debbie, would also inform me when she came across any information that she thought would be relevant to the study. Meanwhile, I began writing the book, chapter by chapter, although not in the order they would eventually appear in the book. My first and most critical reader, Debbie Larkin, would read over the manuscript, focusing on style, syntax, and grammar, but also keeping an eye to the cogency of the argument. She would discuss with me issues relating to my argument and supporting materials and the direction in which the study was going. After making corrections, I would send the chapter off to my sociologist colleagues, Peter Freund, Ray Calluori, Stanley Aronowitz, and Glenn Mushert. Peter would always provide me detailed feedback, usually in a restaurant with Asian cuisine. Ray would call me on the telephone and discuss conceptual issues and point me in directions related to adolescent subcultures, the music scene, and criminological perspectives. Emails from Stanley would say something like "Keep going." I sent Glenn Mushert copies of papers written from the study and he would provide detailed and trenchant critiques. He and Peter Freund were always raising issues about the relationship between the data and my analyses and corrected my tendencies toward arguing beyond the data.

In April 2004, Debbie and I again visited Columbine. This last trip to the Denver area was for the purpose of plugging holes in the data. Interviews were conducted with Principal DeAngelis, the Reverend Don Marxhausen, Brooks Brown, a former Columbine High School teacher and coach, and several other students. The interviews focused on issues related to harassment by elite students. After returning from the third trip, I concluded that I had sufficient data to complete the study. By that time, I had interviewed approximately thirty students from all strata of the student body, religious leaders, community members, scholars, investigators, educators, and reporters. I sat down and completed writing the book.

As I wrote and revised according to the feedback of my professional colleagues, I began sending chapters to interested friends and family members. Because I viewed the book of interest to what professionals referred to as the "lay community," I gave my friends Harvey Markowitz and Richard Breier copies of the documents to read. Their responses provided several hours of spirited dialogue. In addition, my son, Tom Larkin, and my brother-in-law, Gerald Douglass read the completed manuscript and provided comments. The chapter on Eric and Dylan was read and critiqued by my friends and clinical psychologist, Elliot Selighan. Early drafts of the manuscript were read by Vioki Sudhalter. The completed manuscript was also sent to Ray Calluori, David Brotherton, and Glenn Mushert. Ray provided suggestions for several important

improvements, and Glenn went over the manuscript and provided a much-needed close reading. David Brotherton provided me with valuable insights derived from a newly emerging cultural criminology paradigm among British sociologists. I also sent copies to the Brown family. Randy, Judy, and Brooks all separately read the manuscript, primarily checking it for factual errors, but also commenting on the overall direction of the argument. Prepublication copies were also sent to the Center on the Study and Prevention of Violence and to Frank DeAngelis, Principal of Columbine High School. No responses were returned from them.

Although this has been a cooperative venture and I have used the help of the numerous individuals named above, I made the final decisions about what to include and exclude; therefore the responsibility for errors and biases are my own. I would like to thank all those persons who contributed to the writing of this book including the reporters who were generous with their time, Randy and Judy Brown for their help in the research and editing, Brooks Brown, who introduced me to numerous friends who were willing to talk about Columbine, Mr. DeAngelis, who granted the time for two interviews, knowing that he would be the subject of criticism, and the staff at the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence. I would also like to thank Stanley Aronowitz, who is like an intellectual godfather to me, providing encouragement, guiding me to a publisher, and supporting me behind the scenes. I would particularly like to thank the faculty of the Sociology Department at John Jay College of Criminal Justice who were so supportive and provided me an intellectual home. I especially would like to thank David Brotherton for his support in this endeavor.

Finally, I wish to express my enduring gratitude to and love for my wife Debbie, without whom this project would have been impossible. It was through her that I met David Brotherton, developed an interest in techniques of violence reduction, and observed firsthand how a top-flight conflict mediation program could permanently change the lives of adolescents. She has been a steadfast and supportive partner through this entire process. She helped collect the data and conducted interviews with a skill and sensitivity beyond my capacities. She reviewed every word of this book. Material had to pass muster with her before I would send it out to anybody else. Family time and financial resources were invested in this project. I greatly appreciate her acceptance of these sacrifices.

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