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Neely, Cheryl L.

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION


8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 926.


13. Travis L. Dixon, Christina L. Azocar, and Michael Casas, “The Portrayal of Race and Crime on Television Network News,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 47, no. 4 (2003): 498–523; Dixon, Azocar, and Casas determined that when blacks appear in news stories about crime, they are more often portrayed as perpetrators of crime and far less as victims. Whites are more likely to be featured as victims of violent crimes, and largely white audiences identify with the victim as a result this biased coverage.

15. Daniel Romer, Kathleen H. Jamieson, and Nicole J. De Coteau, “The Treatment of Persons of Color in Local Television News: Ethnic Blame Discourse or Realistic Group Conflict?” *Communication Research* 25, no. 3 (1998): 286–305. Romer and his colleagues conducted a fourteen-week study of television news and noted a bias in the overrepresentation of minority groups (outgroups) as perpetrators of crime, while conversely, whites were portrayed more often as victims. As a result, ethnic groups were more likely to be blamed as perpetrators of violent crime, thereby increasing white outrage at crimes committed by minority groups and a demand for criminal prosecution.


**PROLOGUE**


3. Ibid.

CHAPTER 1. BLACK WOMEN AS HOMICIDE VICTIMS: REALITY VS. MEDIA REPRESENTATION

5. Chicago’s police superintendent, Garry McCarthy, confirmed to the press and public that in Chicago, particularly the areas of the Englewood and South Side communities, there had been an alarming 500 murders in 2012.
7. Anderson Cooper 360° Blog, Wikipedia, Encyclopedia Dramatica, and Free Thought Weekly Blog are among numerous Internet blogs that discuss biased media coverage of missing white females.
10. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. The Dateline NBC program aired in May 2012 and was titled “Secrets in the Suburbs.” Journalist Dennis Murphy provided details about the Jane Bashara homicide and interviewed both her husband and close family friends.
Notes


23. Angel, “Mourners.”


27. Pritchard and Hughes, “Patterns of Deviance in Crime News.”

28. Ibid.

CHAPTER 2. THE DESERVING VS. UNDESERVING VICTIM: CASE STUDIES OF BIASED MEDIA REPORTING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERVENTION


Notes


9. Sean Gardiner, “NYPD Inaction Over a Missing Black Woman Found Dead Sparks a Historic Racial-Bias Lawsuit,” *Village Voice*, May 6, 2008. Gardiner’s impressively thorough investigative report provides a significant amount of information on the kidnapping, torture, and rape of Romona Moore. There were no initial media reports about Moore’s disappearance, and the first article written about the case was when her body was found, two weeks after she went missing.

10. Romona Moore’s murder garnered a total ten articles in the *New York Times*—each article written after her decomposing body was found two weeks after her disappearance. None of the articles was written about her disappearance, as police did not notify the media until Moore’s corpse was found under an abandoned ice cream truck only blocks from her home. Two of the articles appeared as metro brief articles on the case, with one of the short articles written to correct the spelling of her name.


12. Ibid.


14. Ibid.


Notes


21. Ibid.

22. Gardiner, “NYPD Inaction.”

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.


26. Ibid.


31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Gardiner, “NYPD Inaction.”


36. The Amber Alert (America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response System) was initiated in 1996 as an early warning system to incite community efforts to locate missing, abducted, and endangered children. It was named for Amber Hagerman, a nine-year-old white girl who was kidnapped and murdered while riding her bicycle. The program began in 1996 in Arlington, Texas, and by 2005 all fifty states adopted the Amber Alert program to protect missing children.


40. Irving, “Decoding Black Women.”


43. “Man 33, Charged with Sexual Assault after He Runs Off with 14-Year-Old Girl Whose Family Had Taken Him In,” Daily Mail Newspaper Online, January 23, 2013.


49. In the Detroit Free Press alone, Tara Lynn Grant’s story yielded seventy-three articles between February 18 and April 4, 2007. In contrast, there were only
seventeen articles in the same paper during the same time frame in the Lizzie Mae Collier-Sweet case.

57. Ibid.
60. Gardiner, “NYPD Inaction.”

CHAPTER 3. AN UNEASY ALLIANCE: THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MEDIA AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

2011. The Crime Report website is described as the only “comprehensive news service” dedicated to investigative journalism. The news source publishes articles, blogs, commentary, and criminal justice analysis on a regular basis and is managed by the Center on Media, Crime and Justice at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City.

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
8. Pritchard and Hughes, “Patterns of Deviance.”
9. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
17. Lundman, “Newsworthiness and Selection Bias.”
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.

CHAPTER 4. LOOKING AT MEDIA BIAS IN THREE MAJOR CITY NEWSPAPERS: RESULTS OF AUTHOR’S RESEARCH

2. Quantitative data are data that are numerical, such as age, income, number of crimes, number of pages in an article, and so forth. Qualitative data are data
such as description of the murder of the victim as “brutal,” marital status of the victim being mentioned, descriptions of the victim’s personality (“she was well-liked”), the victim being described as a student, location of the article, and so forth. In short, quantitative data are data that can be readily described with numbers, while qualitative data describe qualities and context, data not easily described using numbers.


4. The first phase consisted of coding the articles for word count and location of the story in the newspaper (front page, front section, front of other section, and so forth) to generate data to test the mean (or average) between the two groups. These data would also be used to conduct a logistic regression analysis (a statistical method for prediction) to forecast race by word count, story location, number of photos, and marital status. Second, I attempted to assess the manner in which homicides of black and white victims were reported by enumerating (or counting) the number of story framing characteristics found in the articles across race.


6. The coding scheme of story framing characteristics I developed for the newspaper articles included the following: identification of where the article was found: *Front Page* (this section of the newspaper typically features stories that are considered important events that spark the reader’s attention and generate an interest to read and purchase the rest of the newspaper); *Feature/Full Article* (a feature article is one that reports about an issue, person, or event with added depth and more background details); *Brief News Article* (I categorized a brief news article as one that contains less than 200 words); *Other/Metro Section* (this section typically contains the citywide and countywide local news stories). Additionally, I noted whether the victim’s death included excessive brutality (most newspaper articles contain descriptions of the manner in which the person was killed when these details are made available by
the coroner’s office and police officials). A homicide that describes an injury to the victim that goes beyond what is necessary to end the person’s life will be coded as excessive brutality. More specifically, I have identified the following indicators as excessive brutality: the victim was dismembered; the victim’s body was burned or set on fire; or the victim suffered severe trauma as indicated by more than one method being used to cause harm (for example, stabbed and beaten, strangled and beaten, and so forth). Other story framing characteristics included: Race of the Victim: Coded as “White,” “Black,” “Latina,” or “Unable to Determine.” In assessing or determining the victim’s race, in some cases a photo of the victim (if included in the article) was used. In other cases, race was inferred based on other characteristics in the story (that is, photos of family members of the victim or the surname or last name of the victim, such as “Munoz,” which is associated with Hispanics). Additionally, a phone call was made to the reporter of the story to ascertain the victim’s race, and this information was provided without consequence. When all reasonable avenues were exhausted and the victim’s race could not be determined with any certainty, the victim’s race was coded as “unable to determine.” It should be noted that attempting to identify a victim’s race by photos and surnames is not completely reliable, but doing so served as a reasonable surrogate in the absence of speaking with the victim’s friends and family directly. Age of the Victim—the actual age of the victim in the article was coded as “under 30” (14–29), “30 and over,” or “unable to determine.” Marital Status—coded as “single,” “married,” “separated,” “divorced,” or “unable to determine.” The following framing characteristics were binary coded with the number 1 for “yes” and 2 for “no”: Whether the article mentioned the victim’s job or occupation (2). Whether the reporter interviewed friends, family, neighbors, or acquaintances of the victim. Whether there were references to personal characteristics that describe how others felt about the victim (that is, popular, well-liked, smart, nice, and so forth). Whether the article referred to the victim by first name. Whether the article indicated the victim’s education level (that is, college attended, degree, and so forth). Whether high-ranking police/city officials (chiefs, lieutenants, sergeants, county sheriffs, mayors, county prosecutors, and so forth) commented on the case (2). Whether descriptive (emotionally charged adjectives) were used to describe the crime (that is, “sad,”
“tragic,” “brutal,” “shocking,” “unfortunate,” and so forth). Whether the story was featured on the front page of the edition. Whether the story was featured in the front section of the paper. Whether the story was featured in “front of other” section. Whether the story was featured in the “other” (or local) section of the paper. The number of words contained within the story (word count)—coded as numeric scale variable—actual word count was entered in data spreadsheet.

Pritchard and Hughes argued in their content analysis of newspapers that the article length and number of items published on a particular victim indicate whether a story is newsworthy (David Pritchard and Karen Hughes, “Patterns of Deviance in Crime News,” Journal of Communication 47, no. 3 (1997): 49–67). Whether a photo of the victim was included in the article—coded as “yes” (1) or “no” (2). Whether the article featured other photos (that is, photos of family members, the accused perpetrator of the homicide, and so forth)—coded as “yes” (1) or “no” (2).


8. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010). Muhammad profoundly argues that white foreign-born criminals were removed from UCR reports by the 1940s; as a result, blacks as deviants stood in stark contrast to whites, who represented “normalcy” when the two groups became the only categories of race tracked in FBI crime reports.


The Free Press was ranked number 20 by Burelles Luce (a media relations and monitoring firm) in its top 100 daily newspapers for 2007 and had approximately 330,000 daily subscribers in contrast to the Detroit News, which ranked number 47 and had 202,000 daily subscribers. The Free Press has also been touted as being more liberal in its views and in the types of stories it covers compared to the more conservative Detroit News. One could reasonably assume that the Detroit Free Press, then, would have less racial bias in its framing of news stories and would thereby be a better source to collect the data for this study.
Correspondingly, the *Washington Post* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* also ranked high on Burelles Luce’s 2007 list—number 7 and 16, respectively. In 2007, the *Washington Post* had a daily circulation of close to 700,000 and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* had a daily circulation of 357,000. Both the *Washington Post* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* are among the leading newspapers and are more widely distributed than other newspapers in their respective cities, such as the *Washington Times* (ranked 97) and the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, which focuses primarily on local business news (and did not rank among the 100 top daily newspapers on the list).

10. However, none of the stories on white victims were featured on the front page, but they did appear within the front section of the newspaper. Articles on black victims were located in the “other” section more than 80 percent of the time.


4. Cheryl Devall, “Women March in Boston, Protest Roxbury Killings,” *Harvard Crimson*, April 30, 1979. The *Harvard Crimson* is a college newspaper published by Harvard University. It and the *Bay State Banner* were the only two newspapers that covered the series of murders of the twelve black female victims and the angry protests that followed. Neither paper enjoyed wide readership, such as the *Boston Globe*; thus the murders remained largely unknown to the general Boston public.


Notes

11. Pelisek, “Grim Sleeper’s Sole Survivor.”
16. Ibid.
CONCLUSION
