

**Assessing the Newsworthiness of Homicide Events:  
An Analysis of Coverage in the *Houston Chronicle***

**By**

**Kevin Buckler  
University of Texas at Brownsville**

**Lawrence Travis  
University of Cincinnati**

**ABSTRACT**

This research examined media depiction of homicide in a large metropolitan area from the market-driven journalism perspective (McManus, 1994). From this perspective, news organization decisions are based on journalist and news editor perceptions of what type of stories resonate with the general public. Accordingly, the news production process becomes characterized as an exercise in market strategy rather than a presentation of an accurate summary of local, national, and world events. We examined effects of victim, offender, and situational characteristics of homicides investigated by the Houston Police Department on a variety of media outcome measures for homicide stories appearing in the *Houston Chronicle*. The findings suggested that situational aspects of the homicide were the most important measures in predicting media outcomes.

**INTRODUCTION**

Until the 1960s, criminologists and mass media scholars had been relatively unconcerned with analyzing the content, selection processes, and presentation of crime news by mass media to the general public (Marsh, 1991). However, the unique social and political context that emerged in the 1960's and 1970's in America (Cullen & Gilbert, 1982; Kaiser, 1980; Sykes, 1974) began to alter this cultural trend by increasing skepticism within academic circles about the information that was being presented to the public by the media. As a result, published scholarly examinations of media content that related to a variety of social issues, including crime, rather dramatically increased in number. Published research that examined mass media coverage of crime between 1960 and 1989 was double that of published research which explored media treatment of crime between 1893 and 1959 (Marsh, 1991).

When the critical focus on media originally developed in the 1960s, the authors who engaged in this type of research largely placed their findings and conclusions within a deeply entrenched radical conflict perspective in criminology (Lilly, Cullen, & Ball, 1995), which contended that "conceptions of crime are constructed and diffused in the segments of society by various means of communication," (Quinney, 1970, p. 22), which

included the mass media. Moreover, adherents of this perspective maintained that news organizations constructed images of crime in a manner that promoted a specific understanding of crime (Reiman, 2000) and social issues in general (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1980; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978). According to this perspective, the manner in which media constructed crime news emphasized the interests of the most powerful political and economic groups in society by focusing public attention on crime committed by the underclass, while downplaying the harms associated with crime committed within domestic contexts, crime committed by the affluent and powerful, and crime that involved corporate malfeasance (Reiman, 2000).

More recently, however, other theoretical explanations have emerged from the journalism and communication disciplines that emphasized more practical and organizational aspects of mass media in terms of attempts to explain media coverage of crime. One aspect of this framework maintained that the content of crime coverage resulted from organizational pressures within news organizations to sell their product. This perspective contended that news executives and journalists perceive the public as interested in crime and therefore, news agencies worked to deliver this type of news item to the public for consumption (Lipschultz & Hilt, 2002; Prichard & Hughes, 1997). In this regard, news organization personnel made assessments of what they deemed to be newsworthy (Chermak, 1995) based on perceptions of the types of news the public preferred and embraced. This focus on delivering to the public that which the public was judged to be most interested in occurred largely as a result of the intense profit motives of news organizations (Beckett & Sasson, 2000); McManus (1994) has referred to this process as “market-driven journalism.”

Communication scholars and criminologists have provided theoretical commentary about the particular factors that influenced journalist and news editor assessment of the newsworthiness of crime stories based on market-driven criteria. Chermak (1995) argued that the staff of news organizations assessed newsworthiness of a crime occurrence on the basis of five criteria: a) the violent or heinous nature of the offense, b) demographic factors of the victim and offender (age, race, gender, income, and socioeconomic status), c) characteristics of the incident producers (the news agency), d) the uniqueness of the event, and e) event salience (e.g., is the offense a local event?). Prichard and Hughes (1997) similarly argued that the important determinants of news organization assessment of newsworthiness included such factors as how unusual the criminal event was relative to characteristics of more typically occurring offenses, the qualities of the parties involved, and the extent to which the behavior violated formally and informally established cultural norms and expectations.

Practicing journalists have also acknowledged that there are certain criteria that are used to judge the marketability of crime news events. One such set of criteria was recognized by Pat Doyle in 1976 and has been referred to as the “Doyle criteria<sup>1</sup>,” (Johnstone, Hawkins, & Michener, 1994). The pursuit of stories that are marketable is best conceptualized as an organizational pressure that is placed upon journalists and news editors that influence their decisions in how they cover the news. In this regard, journalists and news editors, in making their news coverage decisions, act as agents of the

news organization and vicariously make day-to-day decisions that support the market-driven approach of the news organization.

The present study examined the factors that news organizations (and their agents) use in making assessments of newsworthiness based on the principles of market-driven journalism by considering coverage of homicide in a large print media organization located in an urban jurisdiction in the southwest section of the United States. This examination of media decision-making was intended to advance the current literature in two discernable ways. First, it expanded on prior research by examining the effects of a more theoretically pertinent array of situational (or circumstantial) characteristics that were characteristic of the homicide in addition to the traditional measures of victim and offender characteristics that have been examined in the prior research. Second, the current analysis considered media coverage of crime through a variety of different media outcome measures that take differing aspects of media decision-making into account, including the decision to cover the homicide, decisions to cover the homicide during the trial or sentencing stage of the criminal justice process, the length of the coverage (in average words per news item), and an overall media attention score that incorporated length of coverage, page placement, and the use of photographs that accompany news items.

### ***Homicide in print media***

The vast majority of research that concerned mass media depiction of crime used the technique of content analysis to draw conclusions about the content of media output. Content analytical methods have been used to explore such issues as how much crime coverage was presented in the mass media (Barkan, 1997; Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1995; R. Ericson, Baranek, & Chen, 1989; R. V. Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991; Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Graber, 1980; Jerin & Fields, 1994; Lichter & Edmundson, 1992; Lichter, Lichter, & Rothman, 1994; Lotz, 1991; Surette, 1998) and to compare media coverage over time with the amount of crime that actually occurred in society using official measures of crime on a comparative basis (Abbott & Calónico, 1974; Beckett & Sasson, 2000; Cohen, 1975; Combs & Slovic, 1979; Doob, 1985; Einstadter, 1979; Fedler & Jordan, 1982; Graber, 1980; Humphries, 1981; Jaehnig, Weaver, & Fico, 1981; Marsh, 1991; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981). Content analyses have also been used by researchers to explore the characteristics of crimes covered in order to determine how various forms of media framed the social context of these offenses presented to the general public (Beckett & Sasson, 2000; Chermak, 1995; Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Durham, Elrod, & Kinkade, 1995; Elias, 1993; Romer, Jamieson, & DeCoteau, 1998; Rude, 1999).

While these content analyses have provided useful descriptive information concerning the content of media in a general sense, the usefulness of many of these studies in understanding media process, production, and decision-making was limited. Simple content analytical techniques that reported descriptive information based on thematic concepts developed by researchers could not provide insight as to the link between what is presented by news organizations and the news production process

(Chermak, 1995). Moreover, content analysis, by itself, has only provided a partial explanation of media behavior in their presentation of crime because the technique fails to consider how the production process eliminated various crimes from news presentation (Chermak, 1995). Furthermore, the technique of content analysis cannot address issues of why homicides with certain characteristics and social contexts are covered more extensively than other homicides.

Recent research recognized the difficulty in understanding news media processes and production through simple content analysis (Chermak, 1998; Johnstone et al., 1994; Peelo, Francis, Soothill, Pearson, & Ackerley, 2004; Prichard & Hughes, 1997; Sorenson, Manz, & Berk, 1998; Taylor & Sorenson, 2002; Weiss & Chermak, 1998). This research examined coverage of homicide in print media by combining content analytical techniques with multivariate techniques to examine the effects of victim and offender characteristics and situational factors on various media outcome measures of interest. Media outcome measures that were examined included whether the homicide was reported at all in the media, the average story length, the column inches devoted to the incident, the number of news items published, the proportion of news items that appeared on the front page, whether a photograph was produced with the news item, and the attention scores that were based on numerous criteria.

The approach of this research is similar to the content analytical approach in that it analyzed media content in the development of the measures examined by the research. In addition, the multivariate research also simultaneously collected and analyzed information on all of the homicides committed within the jurisdiction(s) under study over a specified period of time. Incorporating data that concerned all of the homicides committed during a certain time frame in a particular jurisdiction with media data gathered from news organizations within the jurisdiction has allowed researchers to compare media outcome measures between cases that were covered by the press and those that received no coverage. This technique also allowed researchers to compare cases that received little or no media attention with those cases that received substantial attention from the print media source.

This prior research suggested that victim characteristic variables and the number of victims involved in the homicide incident were the most important measures that predicted media outcome variables. Research consistently found that homicides that involved female victims received significantly more print media coverage than when males were victims (Prichard & Hughes, 1997). Examinations of the effect of victim age have produced mixed results, but when effects have been observed, the findings generally suggested that cases that involved young victims (under the age of eighteen), and older victims (over the age of sixty) received more intense coverage in print media (Johnstone et al., 1994; Peelo et al., 2004; Sorenson et al., 1998).

The findings of prior research indicated cases that involved African-American victims (Johnstone et al., 1994; Peelo et al., 2004; Sorenson et al., 1998) and Hispanic victims (Johnstone et al., 1994; Sorenson et al., 1998) were less likely than others to receive any coverage at all. Numerous researchers have found that homicides involving

White victims received significantly more coverage (Prichard & Hughes, 1997; Weiss & Chermak, 1998), whereas other research reported no significant effects of victim race or ethnicity (Johnstone et al., 1994; Taylor & Sorenson, 2002). Some research examined the influence of victim social status, occupational status, and educational status on media outcome measures (Peelo et al., 2004; Sorenson et al., 1998) and reported that higher status victims received significantly more coverage.

Prior research has also examined the effects of similar offender-based measures on media outcomes. The findings reported by these analyses found that factors concerning the offender were not as important as victim-based measures in explaining variation in media outcomes. Gender of the suspect produced mixed results. Two studies found that female offenders received significantly more coverage (Chermak, 1998; Peelo et al., 2004), one found that male offenders received more coverage (Prichard & Hughes, 1997), and one found no significant effects (Sorenson et al., 1998). With respect to offender age, studies found that both older (Chermak, 1998; Sorenson et al., 1998) and younger offenders (Peelo et al., 2004) received significantly more coverage. Likewise, examinations of offender ethnicity have produced conflicting findings. Some results suggested that White offenders received more coverage (Prichard & Hughes, 1997), whereas other research suggested that African-American offenders received more coverage (Sorenson et al., 1998). Two separate studies examined the effects of offender education level and social status, respectively, and both examinations produced non-significant results (Chermak, 1998; Sorenson et al., 1998).

Of the situational (circumstance) measures that have been examined in prior research, the one measure that consistently produced significant positive regression coefficients was the number of victims involved in the incident. Every study that has included this measure produced significant results in a positive direction (Chermak, 1998; Johnstone et al., 1994; Peelo et al., 2004). However, the effect of the number of offenders on whether an article was published has produced inconsistent results (Peelo et al., 2004). Studies have found that certain types of homicides with more sensational motives or methods of killing received significantly more coverage (Johnstone et al., 1994; Peelo et al., 2004). Some studies have also suggested that stranger homicides, gang homicides, those that involved police officers as victims, prostitute-client relationships, husband-wife relationships, and offspring-parent relationships resulted in more intensive print media coverage (Peelo et al., 2004; Sorenson et al., 1998; Taylor & Sorenson, 2002).

## **METHOD**

### ***Data***

This study closely followed the methods and logic of the prior research that examined homicide coverage in print media, especially the methods of Weiss and Chermak (1998). The current study reports results from an analysis of media and homicide data collected from the *Houston Chronicle* and the Houston Police Department (HPD), respectively. All homicides investigated by the HPD in 2001 are included in the analysis ( $n = 249$ ). The media data collected included all news items published which

referenced these homicides ( $n = 493$ ). The collection of homicide stories published in the *Houston Chronicle* included searches of two distinct databases (Lexis/Nexis and the *Houston Chronicle* online database) and used victim and offender names collected from the HPD in conducting the article searches<sup>2</sup>. Two different databases were used to be reasonably certain that all news items published that concerned the homicides were collected. News items from these two data sources were searched from the date of the homicide occurrence through January 31, 2004. Using multiple databases and an extended period of time from the date of the homicide (i.e., the passage of two years), allowed confidence that all of the news items published were included in the database used in this study.

Data collected from the HPD included victim and offender demographic information (gender, race/ethnicity, and age), victim-offender relationship information, the number of victims and offenders involved in the incident, and information that concerned the type of weapon used in the offense. Additionally, press releases issued by the HPD for all homicides committed in 2001 were referred to so that information concerning the situation and social circumstances of the offense could be obtained<sup>3</sup>.

### ***Independent variables***

The analysis incorporated victim and offender demographic variables and measures of social circumstance as predictors of four different media outcome measures. A complete list of independent and dependent measures is provided in Table 1. Victim and offender gender in the analysis were measured as dichotomous variables with female victims and offenders represented by the value of one (1), respectively. Victim race was coded based on whether the victim was a non-minority (majority) where victim majority status was represented in the measure by the value of one (1). The measure of non-minority victim was taken to include Whites/Latinos (due to the population characteristics of the city of Houston). Similarly, the measure of minority suspect was a dichotomous measure where homicides that involved a minority suspect were coded as a value of one (1) (defined in the study as African-American and Asian offenders). Victim age was coded as an interval-level measure. Offender age, due to missing information, was coded not as an interval-level measure, but instead, as two separate dichotomous measures where offenders under the age of 21 and offenders over the age of 40 were represented with a value of one (1), respectively.

The number of victims involved in the homicide was recorded as an interval-level variable. The measure of multiple offenders was coded as a dichotomous variable and the value of one (1) represented instances in which the news organization had knowledge that the crime involved multiple offenders<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, cases that involved stranger homicides and robbery-related homicides were coded as dichotomous variables, respectively. An interaction measure based on the race of the victim and offender was created using a dichotomous measure whereby a value of one (1) was assigned to cases that involved a minority offender (defined here as African-American or Asian) and a non-minority victim (defined by the analysis as either White, non-Hispanic or Hispanic). Additionally, a measure of whether the homicide remained unsolved by the police was

coded as a dichotomous control variable for the analysis with the value of one (1) representing cases that remained unsolved by the police department. In situations where a homicide remains unsolved, media simply do not have the opportunities to present as much information about a case, therefore whether the police solved the case can impact the intensity of media coverage.

The development of certain independent measures used in the analysis calls for some additional justification. First, the measures of victim and offender race/ethnicity were coded as dichotomous measures, using a minority, non-minority coding scheme as previously presented. Collapsing these race/ethnicity terms in this way was necessary for several reasons. First of all, many of the categories of the data provided by the HPD had small or non-existent numbers relative to the categories of White, non-Hispanic and Hispanic/Latino individuals, and thus, limited their usefulness in the analysis.

More importantly, the population characteristics of the city of Houston justified the manipulation of the data in this way. The Hispanic/Latino population in the city of Houston<sup>5</sup> was considered to be large compared to many other urban metropolitan areas in the United States. Indeed, the Hispanic/Latino population of the city of Houston is considerably larger than the most of the other U.S. cities that have been the subject of this type of media research<sup>6</sup>. Because of these population characteristics, Hispanics/Latinos in Houston do not constitute the same type of definitive minority group that Latinos would constitute in some of the other major metropolitan areas of the United States, especially given that in Houston persons identifying themselves as White roughly only constitute 50% of the population. Therefore, based on the population characteristics of Houston, an argument could be made that if newspapers focus differentially on certain stories based on the race/ethnicity of participants in the homicide event, then differences between media attention devoted to homicides that involved White, non-Hispanic and Hispanic/Latino individuals are not likely to be as pronounced in the city of Houston as in other major metropolitan areas where the Hispanic/Latino population proportion more closely resembles the population of African-Americans and other minority groups than the population of White, non-Hispanic individuals. Therefore, for analysis purposes, it made sense to collapse the measures of minority and non-minority status and the race interaction term in this manner because doing so conformed to the reality of the population characteristics in the city of Houston.

### ***Dependent variables***

Four different media outcome measures were used as dependent variables in the analysis, two dichotomous measures and two interval measures. The two dichotomous measures were whether the homicide received any coverage at all and whether the homicide received coverage at the trial or sentencing stage of the proceedings. Third, the average number of words published per news item was employed as a quantitative measure of the intensity of coverage. Because the average number of words published measure was highly skewed in the positive direction due to more intense coverage of particular homicides, the measure was logged to the base of 10 to create a dependent measure that was more normally distributed for purposes of the multivariate analysis<sup>7</sup>.

The final dependent measure was an overall media intensity score developed on the basis of length of coverage, page placement of coverage, and the use of photographs that accompanied the news items. This final dependent measure ranged between the value of zero and six and was normally distributed, thus requiring no manipulation of the data.

This latter overall media attention score was an additive measure. It was created primarily through the use of story length, page placement and photograph measures. A value of one (1) was added to the score if: a) an article was published concerning the homicide; b) the value of the number of words published exceeded the value of the number of words published falling at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the distribution of scores; c) if the value of the number of words published exceeded the value of the number of words published falling at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the distribution of scores; d) the value of the number of words published exceeded the value of the number of words published falling at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the distribution of scores; e) the paper published any of the articles on either the front page of the front section or the front page of the Metro section of the paper; and f) if the homicide had photographs or other graphical depictions published. The measure considered front-page stories published on the front page of the Metro section of the paper in the attention score because of the international, national, and regional reach of the *Houston Chronicle*. Because of this quality, important local instances of homicide were often reported on the front page of the Metro section.

The effects of victim and offender characteristics and situational aspects of the homicide on the two dichotomous measures were examined through logistical regression analyses and the effects of the independent variables on the interval measures of average words per homicide were assessed through OLS regression analysis. These four dependent measures were selected because of their ability to tap into a variety of aspects of media decision-making. The measure of whether a homicide was covered by the paper reflected an aspect of media decision-making that related to the specific importance of the characteristics of the homicide. Because of the relatively small number of cases that received no coverage at all ( $n = 44$ ) in the paper, the multivariate analysis of the predictors of this measure tapped into the factors that generally demanded some type of coverage relative to those factors that did not.

The remaining dependent variables were implemented as a way of assessing specific aspects of the intensity of print media coverage. Whereas the variable that recorded whether the homicide case received any coverage at all in the paper measured a more general assessment of the newsworthiness of the homicide case, the remaining three dependent measures were designed to tap more specifically into the intensity of the print media coverage after the initial decision to cover the homicide case had been made. This distinction was important because prior research has placed too much attention on simple dependent measures of coverage versus no coverage while not placing enough emphasis on developing measures of the intensity of coverage once the initial decision to cover the case had been made. Development of measures of coverage versus no coverage and measures of intensity of coverage once the initial decision to report on the case has been made allowed this research to compare homicide cases that received coverage against



those cases that received no coverage and compare cases that received higher levels of coverage against those cases that received less attention in the media.

## RESULTS

This section reports the findings of regression analyses that predict the media outcome dependent measures described in the method section. First, descriptive statistics that describe the independent and dependent variables are presented. Next, logistic regression analyses are used to predict whether a story concerning the homicide appeared in print, first by excluding a control measure concerning whether the case was cleared by the police and then including the measure in the analysis. Logistic regression analysis is then used to predict whether the homicide case received coverage at the trial or sentencing stage of the criminal justice process. Lastly, OLS regression analyses are used to predict the average number of words published per article and the media attention score, respectively.

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent measures utilized in the analysis. Most of the 249 homicide incidents investigated by the HPD involved a minority male offender and a minority male victim. Only 20.9% ( $n = 52$ ) of the homicides included in the analysis involved a female victim and an even smaller proportion (10%,  $n = 25$ ) involved a female suspect. The average age of the victim was 32.33 ( $SD = 14.41$ ). Only a small proportion of the cases included in the analysis involved an offender who was either younger than the age of 21 (19.3%,  $n = 48$ ) or was 40 and over (8.4%,  $n = 21$ ). In terms of race and ethnicity of the victim and offender, the majority of the homicides involved either a White/non-Hispanic or a Hispanic victim (56.2%,  $n = 140$ ), although homicides committed against White/non-Hispanic victims accounted for only 14.1% ( $n = 35$ ) of the total homicides, thus meaning that most of the homicides in the minority victim classification involved Hispanic/Latino victims. Minority offenders (African-American and Asian) accounted for a disproportionate number of homicides (46.6%,  $n = 116$ ) relative to their composition of the population of Houston.

In terms of situational aspects of the homicide that were considered in the analysis, most of the homicides were characterized by a single victim and offender. Twenty-two percent ( $n = 55$ ) of the homicides involved a stranger perpetrator and 18.8% ( $n = 47$ ) were robbery-related. Fourteen percent of the homicides involved a minority status offender and a non-minority victim ( $n = 34$ ). Nineteen percent of the cases involved an unusual weapon other than a firearm or a knife or other cutting instrument ( $n = 47$ ). With regard to the control variable that measured the police success in making an arrest in the case, only 16.9% ( $n = 44$ ) of the cases had not been cleared.

The media outcome measures suggested that most of the homicides that were investigated by the HPD received some form of media attention from the *Houston Chronicle*, as 82.3% ( $n = 205$ ) of the homicides had at least one news item appear in print. The descriptive statistics further suggested that decisions to cover homicides at the trial or sentencing stages of the criminal justice process are much more selective, as only

14.5% ( $n = 36$ ) of the cases received coverage during either of these two stages. Additionally, decision-making with respect to the length of the coverage and the length of coverage in conjunction with page placement and the use of photographs varied widely.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics: Victim/Offender Demographics, Situation/Social Context, and Dependent Variables*

	<i>n</i>	%/Mean
<b><u>Independent Measures</u></b>		
Female victim	52	20.9
Majority victim (White or Hispanic)	140	56.2
Victim age	249	32.33 SD 14.41
Female suspect	25	10.0
Suspect under age of 21	48	19.3
Suspect age 40 or over	21	8.4
Minority suspect (other than White or Hispanic)	116	46.6
Number of victims	249	1.16 SD .56
Multiple suspects	81	32.5
Stranger homicide	55	22.1
Robbery homicide	47	18.8
Minority suspect / Non-minority victim	34	13.7
Unusual weapon (other than firearm or cutting instrument)	47	18.9
Cases unsolved by arrest	44	16.9
<b><u>Dependent Measures</u></b>		
Homicide received some coverage	205	82.3
Covered at the trial/sentencing phase	36	14.5
Average words published per news item	249	125.14 SD 136.13
Overall media attention score	249	2.53 SD 1.68

**Table 2**

*Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Article Appearance and Coverage at the Trial or Sentencing Stage*

	Article Appear?*** (N = 249)						Coverage at the Trial or Sentencing Stage?*** (N = 205)	
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3	
	b	(SE b)	Odds Ratio	b	(SE b)	Odds Ratio	b	(SE b) Odds Ratio
Female victim	.827	(.543)	2.324	.819	(.547)	2.246	.756	(.502) 2.268
Victim age	-.008	(.014)	.349	-.007	(.014)	.263	-.007	(.014) .213
Majority victim	.114	(.432)	.069	.035	(.441)	.006	.731	(.553) 1.884
Female suspect	.734	(.815)	.881	.735	(.817)	.789	-.217	(.693) .098
Offender < 21	.100	(.514)	.038	.016	(.526)	.001	-.178	(.541) .108
Offender > 39	.272	(.657)	.171	-.387	(.671)	.333	.125	(.721) .031
Minority suspect	.981	(.446)	4.845**	.802	(.499)	2.584^	.429	(.516) .691
Number of victims	.615	(.590)	1.085	.591	(.587)	1.012	-.141	(.369) .146
Multiple offenders	-.021	(.446)	.002	-.100	(.459)	.048	.027	(.476) .003
Stranger homicide	.492	(.521)	.892	.453	(.526)	.683	.634	(.472) 1.808
Robbery homicide	1.180	(.669)	3.115^	1.203	(.671)	3.212^	1.570	(.531) 8.750*
Unusual weapon	-1.026	(.432)	5.636**	-1.032	(.433)	5.684**	1.248	(.461) 7.736*
Case not solved				-.451	(.513)	.653		
Intercept	.505			.764			-2.850	
-2 log likelihood	204.291			203.640			159.622	
Model Chi-Square	24.090**			24.471**			30.892*	
Degrees of freedom	12			12			12	
Cox and Snell R <sup>2</sup>	.090			.095			.140	
Cox and Snell R <sup>2</sup>	.154			.158			.231	

\*  $p < .01$     \*\*  $p < .05$     ^  $p < .10$

\*\*\* Models for each of the dependent variables were estimated including the race interaction measure and excluding the measure of minority suspect (due to collinearity). Each of the models were similar in their substantive findings with one exception: the race interaction term was not significant in any of the models

The results of the logistic regression analyses that predicted whether a homicide received any coverage and whether the homicide was covered at the trial or sentencing stage of the criminal justice process are reported in Table 2. Findings from the logistic regression analysis that predicted whether an article was published in the paper suggested that, whereas the entire model was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(12) = 24.090, p < .05$ ) in model 1, only three of the independent measures used in the analysis, minority suspect ( $p < .05$ ), robbery-related homicide ( $p < .10$ ), and unusual weapon other than a firearm or a knife/cutting instrument ( $p < .05$ ) had significant independent effects on whether a news item was published. The data from model 1 suggested that the odds of homicides which involved minority suspects (African-American and Asian) having a story published in the paper was 4.8 times higher than the odds of a homicide that involved a non-minority suspect. The odds that a robbery-related homicide appeared in the paper were 3.1 times greater than the odds for non robbery-related homicide. The odds of a story appearing for those homicides that involved an unusual weapon was 5.6 times lower than the odds for those homicides involving firearms or cutting instruments.

These findings suggest that these three factors represent threshold criteria that journalists and news editors used to formulate their judgments when deciding that a particular homicide was newsworthy enough for coverage. When the measure of whether the homicide case remained unsolved by the police was entered into a separate regression analysis in model 2 that predicted whether an article appeared, the findings indicated that the measure reduced the predictive power of the minority suspect measure ( $p < .10$ ), but the measure remained statistically significant.

The overall model (model 3) that predicted whether the paper covered the homicide during the trial or sentencing stage of the criminal justice proceedings was also statistically significant ( $\chi^2(12) = 30.892, p < .01$ ). This model only included the 205 cases that were cleared by the HPD as a built in control. This approach was taken because it was impossible for a case to advance to the trial or sentencing stage where a suspect had not been identified. Similar to the findings of the logistic regression analysis that concerned whether the homicide was covered, the measures of robbery-related homicide ( $p < .01$ ) and weapon other than a firearm or a knife/cutting instrument ( $p < .10$ ) had statistically higher odds of the homicide receiving coverage during the trial or sentencing stages of the criminal justice system.

The findings of the OLS analyses that predicted the average number of words published per article are reported in Table 3. The analysis was conducted in successive stages due to the problems that increased numbers of dichotomous independent variables present to the stability of the OLS regression. In model 1, the measures of victim and offender characteristics were entered. Model 2 entered the situational and circumstantial factors into a regression analysis. Model 3 entered the variables that maintained a statistically significant relationship with average words published per article from model 1 and model 2, as well as the measure of unsolved case, into a separate regression analysis. Model 3 entered the measure of minority status, but not the measure of the race interaction term into the analysis. The measures of minority offender and the race interaction term were not entered into the same analysis because preliminary analysis

indicated that doing so would present collinearity problems within the analysis. Model 4 took the same basic approach as model 3, but instead of entering the minority suspect term, the race interaction term was entered.

The overall model (model 1) was statistically significant ( $F(7, 196) = 2.40, p < .05$ ). However, it also suggested that offender-related demographic measures were of little substantive value in explaining the length of the articles published about the homicide. When victim and offender characteristics were entered into the model simultaneously, it was predominately the victim measures that emerged as important predictors of average story length. More specifically, the victim measures that were important predictors of story length included the female victim ( $t(202) = 2.56, p < .05$ ) and White/Latino victim ( $t(202) = 2.28, p < .05$ ) measures. The only offender-related measure that emerged as significant in the analysis was the measure of minority status suspect ( $t(202) = 2.544, p < .05$ ). Controlling for the other variables in the analysis, homicides that involved female victims, White/Latino victims, and minority suspects had significantly more words published about them.

The overall model 2 that predicted the average number of words published was also statistically significant ( $F(6, 198) = 11.87, p < .01$ ). All of the measures entered in the analysis had significant independent effects on number of words published, with the exception of the multiple offender measure. All of the beta weight values were in the positive direction. Homicide cases that involved higher numbers of victims ( $t(203) = 5.68, p < .001$ ), stranger homicide ( $t(203) = 2.60, p < .05$ ), robbery-related homicide ( $t(203) = 1.96, p < .10$ ), minority suspects who murdered non-minority victims ( $t(203) = 3.04, p < .01$ ), and weapons other than firearms or cutting instruments ( $t(203) = 3.44, p < .01$ ) received significantly more coverage. The value of the adjusted  $R^2$  for model 2 (.242) indicated that the situational measures accounted for considerably more of the variation in words published per article than was accounted for by the victim and offender characteristics acting together (.046). This finding is especially meaningful given that more variables were entered into model 1 (seven) than model 2 (six).

The overall model 3 that combined the significant measures from models 1 and 2 was also statistically significant ( $F(8, 196) = 10.25, p < .01$ ). The analysis indicated that the female victim ( $t(203) = 2.24, p < .05$ ) remained significant even after controlling for the effects of the situational considerations that were incorporated from model 2. In addition, the measure of minority status suspect (African-American or Asian suspect) remained statistically significant in model 3 ( $t(203) = 1.75, p < .10$ ). All of the situational measures from model 2 maintained their significant effects controlling for female victim, White/Latino victim, and minority suspect. Homicides that involved higher numbers of victims ( $t(203) = 5.37, p < .01$ ), those that were characterized by a stranger relationship between the victim and offender ( $t(203) = 2.59, p < .05$ ), those that were robbery-related homicide ( $t(203) = 2.02, p < .05$ ), and those that involved the use of an unusual weapon other than a firearm or a cutting instrument ( $t(203) = 3.10, p < .01$ ) had more words published about them. The difference in the adjusted  $R^2$  value from model 2 (.242) to model 3 (.266) suggested that the victim and offender measures from

model 1 added little to the explanatory capability of the situational measures included in the analysis.

Model 4 that predicted the average number of words published per news article substituted the race interaction term (homicides that involved a minority offender and a non-minority victim) into the analysis in the place of the minority suspect measure. The overall model was statistically significant ( $F(8, 196) = 10.60, p < .01$ ). Substantively, with respect to the other measures that were not related to offender race or the race interaction term, there were no differences from model 3 to model 4. The victim-offender race interaction term was significant ( $t(203) = 2.26, p < .05$ ) in the positive direction, therefore suggesting that homicides that involved minority suspects who kill White/Latino suspects received significantly more coverage in average words published per article.

The models in Table 4 that utilized the overall media attention score as the dependent variable were substantively very similar to the models reported in Table 3. Model 1 was statistically significant ( $F(7, 239) = 3.34, p < .01$ ) and the female victim ( $t(245) = 2.46, p < .05$ ), White/Latino victim ( $t(245) = 1.92, p < .10$ ), and minority suspect (African-American and Asian suspects) measure ( $t(245) = 3.72, p < .01$ ) all had significant independent effects on the attention score. The measures of the homicide circumstances produced an overall model that was statistically significant ( $F(6, 242) = 8.61, p < .01$ ) and indicated that homicides with more victims ( $t(247) = 4.39, p < .01$ ), that are committed by strangers to the victim ( $t(247) = 2.30, p < .05$ ), that took place in a robbery-related context ( $t(247) = 3.14, p < .05$ ), and that involved a minority offender who murdered a non-minority victim ( $t(247) = 2.32, p < .05$ ) received significantly higher media attention scores. The notable difference from the current analysis and the analysis that predicted average number of words per article was the absence of unusual weapon as a significant predictor of the media attention score. The adjusted  $R^2$  value from models one and two, .063 and .155, respectively, suggested that the situational variables accounted for more of the variation in the dependent measure than did the victim and offender demographic measures.

**Table 3***Summary of OLS Regression Analysis Predicting Average Number of Words (Per News Item) Published (N = 205)*

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b (Standard Error)	$\beta$	b (Standard Error)	$\beta$	b (Standard Error)	$\beta$	b (Standard Error)	$\beta$
Female victim	.118 (.059)	.191**			8.838E-02 (.039)	.143**	8.436E-02 (.039)	.137**
Victim age	-8.39E-04 (.046)	-.047						
Majority victim	9.693E-02 (.001)	.186**			5.758E-02 (.038)	.111	-9.83E-03 (.035)	-.019
Female suspect	-2.71E-02 (.043)	-.033						
Offender < 21	4.089E-02 (.059)	.063						
Offender > 39	4.195E-02 (.047)	.045						
Minority suspect	.110 (.068)	.212**			7.231E-02 (.041)	.140^		
Number of victims			.150 (.026)	.352*	.140 (.026)	.329*	.412 (.026)	.333*
Multiple offenders			-2.46E-02 (.036)	-.045				
Stranger homicide			.105 (.040)	.173**	.101 (.039)	.167**	9.541E-02 (.039)	.158**
Robbery homicide			8.636E-02 (.044)	.126^	8.841E-02 (.044)	.129**	8.807E-02 (.043)	.129**
Minority suspect and Non-minority victim			.138 (.045)	.189*			.110 (.049)	.151**
Unusual weapon			.148 (.043)	.211*	.136 (.044)	.194*	.130 (.043)	.185*
Case not solved					-8.97E-02 (.051)	-.121^	-.106 (.046)	-.143**
Intercept	1.257		1.834		1.785		1.846	
Model F statistic	2.396**		11.871*		10.254*		10.607*	
Degrees of freedom	204		204		204		204	
Model R	.281		.514		.543		.550	
Model R <sup>2</sup>	.046		.242		.266		.274	

\*  $p < .01$  \*\*  $p < .05$  ^  $p < .10$

**Table 4***Summary of OLS Regression Analysis Predicting Media Attention Score (N = 249)*

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b (Standard Error)	$\beta$	b (Standard Error)	$\beta$	b (Standard Error)	$\beta$	b (Standard Error)	$\beta$
Female victim	.665 (.2719)	.162**			.610 (.237)	.148**	.599 (.239)	.145**
Victim age	-2.94E-04 (.008)	-.025						
Majority victim	.469 (.245)	.139^			.162 (.230)	.048	-.281 (.210)	-.083
Female suspect	9.63E-02 (.360)	.017						
Offender < 21	.333 (.275)	.078						
Offender > 39	-.154 (.388)	.026						
Minority suspect	.918 (.246)	.273*			.591 (.251)	.176**		
Number of victims			.783 (.178)	.261*	.728 (.171)	.243*	.737 (.172)	.245*
Multiple offenders			6.388E-02 (.224)	.018				
Stranger homicide			.587 (.255)	.145**	.635 (.242)	.157*	.603 (.243)	.149**
Robbery homicide			.897 (.286)	.192*	.952 (.276)	.204*	.938 (.276)	.201*
Minority suspect and Non-minority victim			.672 (.291)	.138**			.604 (.303)	.124**
Unusual weapon			-4.41E-02 (.010)	-.010				
Case not solved					-.594 (.292)	-.133**	-.825 (.262)	-.184*
Intercept	1.748		1.254		1.009		1.492	
Model F statistic	3.347*		8.606*		11.169*		10.880*	
Degrees of freedom	248		248		248		248	
Model R	.299		.419		.495		.490	
Model R <sup>2</sup>	.063		.155		.223		.218	

\*  $p < .01$  \*\*  $p < .05$  ^  $p < .10$



Similarly to the previous analysis of average words per article as the dependent variable, models 3 and 4 reported in Table 4 entered the significant measures from models 1 and 2, and included the minority suspect and race interaction terms separately because of collinearity problems. Model 3 was statistically significant ( $F(7, 241) = 11.17, p < .01$ ) and all of the measures that comprised the model, with the exception of the White/Latino victim term, were significant. Female victim ( $t(247) = 2.57, p < .05$ ), minority suspect ( $t(247) = 2.36, p < .01$ ), the number of victims ( $t(247) = 4.26, p < .01$ ), stranger homicide ( $t(247) = 2.62, p < .01$ ), and robbery-related homicide ( $t(247) = 3.46, p < .01$ ) all maintained their significant independent effects on the media attention score in the same direction as in models 1 and 2 even when controlling for whether the case remained unsolved. In model 4 ( $F(7, 241) = 10.88, p < .01$ ), all of the measures were statistically significant, with the exception of the measure of White/Latino victim variable. The race interaction term ( $t(247) = 1.99, p < .05$ ) suggested that homicides that involved minority offenders who murdered non-minority suspects received significantly higher media attention scores.

## DISCUSSION

The stated purpose of this paper was to assess the factors that news organizations use in their judgments concerning the newsworthiness of local homicide occurrences for publication. In this regard, we considered the factors that are related to the publication of a story that concern the homicide: whether a story was published, whether the homicide was covered at the trial or sentencing phase of the criminal process, the average number of words published per article, and a media attention score derived from various aspects of print media coverage. This analysis was based on the notion that journalists and news editors use two important market-driven criteria in generating assessments as whether a homicide story will resonate with the general public: a) the characteristics of who committed the crime and against whom the crime was committed; and b) situation and circumstance factors of the homicide. Both of these sets of factors were conceptualized as having an impact on the judgments of news organization staff in terms of either inflating or deflating the importance of the homicide.

The results of the analysis suggest that particular measures from both of these sets of factors are important, but with respect to the length of the coverage in words and the media attention score, situational and circumstance factors were more important in explaining variation in these two sets of outcome measures. Even though situational and circumstance measures seemed more important than victim and offender characteristics, no predictor emerged from the analysis as definitively the most important factor in predicting media outcome variables. The only independent variable that was a significant predictor of all four media outcome measures was robbery-related homicide, but even this measure was only significant at the .10 level for the dependent measure of whether a news item appeared in print. The data suggest that two measures in particular – minority suspect and homicide with an unusual weapon (other than a knife or a firearm) – are important predictors for three of the four media outcome measures that were examined,

although for two of these measures (whether an article was published and average words per article), minority suspect was significant only at the .10 level of probability.

Contrary to much of the published research, many of the measures included in the analysis only emerge as significant predictors of media outcome variables when intensity of the coverage is considered in terms of the length of the news items published and the overall attention score. For instance, the measures of female victim, number of victims, and stranger homicide, all of which have been found to be important factors in prior research, are only important in the current analysis when decisions were made as to story length in average words per article considered by itself and story length, page placement and the use of photos considered in conjunction with one another. In this regard, the findings of the current analysis imply that there are separate processes at work in decisions that concern whether, and at what stage, to cover the homicide than in decisions relating to the intensity of the coverage in terms of number of words, page placement and the use of photographs.

Most importantly, from a theoretical standpoint, the findings of the current analyses are consistent with the theoretical positions of prior research. We contend that our findings support the position of McManus (1994) with regard to market-driven journalism as well as the positions of other scholars that concern the factors that lead a story to be perceived by journalists and news editors as potentially marketable to the general public (Chermak, 1995; Duwe, 2000; Prichard & Hughes, 1997). News organizations tend to focus their attention on homicides that are statistically deviant (e.g., involved female victims, multiple victims, unusual weapons, and were committed by strangers), involve a violation of strong cultural norms of behavior (e.g., robbery-related and stranger-related homicides), and command strong emotional reactions from the general public (e.g., those that involved multiple victims, minority offenders, strangers, and involve minority offenders who murdered non-minority victims).

While our data are limited in that we do not employ qualitative techniques to gauge the motives of journalists and news editors in their decisions to cover certain homicide cases more extensively than others, the work of other scholars has suggested that this focus on certain characteristics of the homicides is likely motivated by profit concerns (Beckett & Sasson, 2000; Duwe, 2000) that exist in market-driven journalism (McManus, 1994). The news media organization is an entity that has been characterized as an autonomous collective unit that is free to pursue its financial interests (Albarran, 1997; Chermak, 1995; Welch, Fenwick, & Roberts, 1998) and is therefore, dominated largely by the concern to minimize costs and complications (Chermak, 1995). Because news organizations place such an emphasis on appealing to what the organization perceives the general public as interested in reading or hearing about, a logical conclusion is that the decision-making of the organization (with respect to the content of the news that it produces) is constrained by organizational pressures to sell their product and by news organization perceptions of social and cultural expectations of the general public.

Therefore, what has resulted is media decision-making predicated upon capitalist criteria, such as the "Doyle criteria," (Johnstone et al., 1994) that serves as the underlying

rationale for the more intensive delivery of crime news that can be judged by the public to be irrational and barbaric and, in this regard, can be used to strike emotional chords with the audience (Beckett & Sasson, 2000; Duwe, 2000; Surette, 1994). The research of Prichard and Hughes (1997) that interviewed newspaper journalists employed by newspaper organizations in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, provided qualitative evidence that journalists indeed look for stories that will resonate with the audience. One journalist explained the necessity to respond to consumer interest by commenting that "If the reader could say 'that could have been me that was killed,' then that has more news value" (Prichard & Hughes, 1997, p. 63). Furthermore, some news editors at top news organizations have expressed very little concern over the market-driven approach to journalism. Consider the comments of Marc Kalech, Managing Editor of the New York Post, who during an interview with A & E stated that "... the bottom line of it is that we are here to sell newspapers. There is nothing wrong with that. It is the American way" ("Tabloid!: Inside the New York Post," 1999).

Although news producers and journalists have defended their choices to focus heavily on crime news in general, and violent crime news in particular, on the basis of market-driven rationales, some data suggests that this rationale is misguided. Deborah Potter (2002) of NewsLab suggested that network news organizations that have staunchly defended the rationale behind the "if it bleeds, it leads" philosophy have lost viewers because this philosophy is outdated. She cited evidence from a 2000 national survey by NewsLab that found that almost one-third of the respondents surveyed indicated that "a major reason that they did not watch more local TV news is that it covers too much crime" (Potter, 2002, p. xii). But regardless of the scientific findings that have given insight into what people expect from news organizations, journalism is still driven by a capitalist, market-based approach that emphasizes crime in a general sense and specific types of crime committed in certain contexts in particular.

The market-driven approach to journalism may not only be an outdated concept, but may also have negative implications for the general public. Recently, Bonnie Anderson (2004), a journalist commentator writing on the current state of network news coverage used the term "infotainment," in reference to the movement from a concern with the production of quality and accurate news to a concern for coverage that sells. The basic point of the Anderson's argument is that news organizations are moving more to a type of news coverage that has inherent entertainment elements and, in doing so, have sacrificed quality news programming for programming that does little to increase the public's understanding of the social issues that are covered.

In this regard, the pursuit of profits by the news organization is also very much in line with one key element of capitalistic hegemony – the notion that a necessary social good is withheld unless a seller can profit from presenting it to the general public. Capitalistic hegemony generally refers to the process by which ideas and arguments are continually manufactured and reproduced in society that are supportive of, and nurtures, the existing system of capitalism. If, prior to generating the news, staff of the news organization ask themselves, "will this news item sell to the general public?" then notions of capitalism are entering the equation in the news selection process. The implication is

that not only are news items that can potentially (according to the perception of the journalist and news editors) sell nearly exclusively presented to the public, news items that are perceived as having little market value are withheld from the public.

There are several limitations to this research and the existing published research that future research should attempt to address. Scholars have suggested that the organizational constraints that influence media decision-making go well beyond profit-based considerations to include informational constraints, both in terms of how much information was available to the journalist (Barak, 1994; Chermak, 1995) and the sources of information that were used by journalists (Welch et al., 1998). Future research should therefore begin to use both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to better understand these informational constraints and how they influence crime coverage. Additionally, research that continues to examine media coverage of crime should work toward the development of quantitative measures of the concept of news themes, as developed by Fishman (1978, 1980). The necessity of efficient packaging of news events into common themes and the effect that such packaging of isolated occurrences into coherent themes potentially has on audiences is an important research issue that has not been widely addressed.

Scholarship in this area of study should also broaden the approach in examinations of media attention to crime by applying the methods used to examine homicide coverage in print media to coverage by local television network news organizations. With the exception of Duwe (2000), who found that sensationalistic characteristics of mass murders are related to more intense coverage in national network television news programs and newspapers, most of the prior research has focused on applying multivariate methods of analysis to print media. This approach needs to be expanded to other types of crimes and to local news coverage, which may arguably be more important in terms of affecting public perception. Future analyses of news coverage should also endeavor to address the issue of how competing news items that compete with crime news for newspaper space or network news time influences coverage. The presentation of crime is likely tied directly to the content and variety of other news that has occurred.

## NOTES

1. In a 1976 interview of Pat Doyle of the *New York Daily News*, he described four elements of a human interest story that Johnstone et al. (1994) have referred to as the "Doyle criteria". According to Doyle, a human interest story is one that either a) involves a socially "prominent" or "respectable" citizen who is involved as either an offender or as a victim; b) the victim is an innocent or an overmatched target; c) the murder was either shocking or brutal, involved multiple victims and/or offenders, or in which a particularly brutal method of killing was employed; or d) the narrative generates mystery suspense, or drama.
2. Different variations of the victim and offender names for each homicide were searched. For example, if the data provided by the HPD included a first name, middle name, and last name, (for example John David Smith), all variations of the first, middle, and last name were searched. These variations included "John Smith", "John David", "David Smith", "John David Smith", and "John D. Smith". Searches were not stopped once one variation of the victim or offender name returned news items. The variations were continued until each variation of the name had been

fully searched. Different variations of the name were searched because the individual could have been referenced in more than one way in different articles. This method proved fruitful as there were several occasions in which the victim or offender were referenced in different ways in different news items.

3. HPD press releases were content analyzed to determine the social circumstances and context involved. Circumstance information was provided directly by the HPD, but the information provided was limited to the categories used by the FBI in the Supplemental Homicide Reports. SHR circumstance categories are less than ideal for determining the social context of the offense due to the vague nature of some categories and the omission of many theoretically relevant circumstances. The narrative nature of the press releases issued by the HPD were judged to be more appropriate indicators of situational factors that were characteristic of the homicide.
4. The “multiple offenders” variable was measured as a dichotomous measure and not as an interval-level variable because of missing offender information in the cases that were not cleared by the police. Instead of proceeding with the analysis with the number of offenders as an interval-level measure in its original form and thus reducing the number of cases in the analysis, this approach was taken because it preserved the number of cases and does nothing to damage the validity of the analysis. The validity of the analysis is not damaged because the measure still represents cases in which the media were aware that the case involved more than one offender and were able to utilize this information in assessing the newsworthiness of the homicide.
5. The proportion of citizens reporting to be White for the U.S., the state of Texas, and the city of Houston, respectively, was 75.1%, 71%, and 49.3%, as reported by the 2000 U.S. Census. The proportion of the population reporting to be Latino/Hispanic for these three aggregate units was 12.5%, 32%, and 37.4%, respectively, according to U.S. Census data.
6. Similar media-based research has been undertaken concerning media coverage of homicide in Chicago, Illinois, Indianapolis, Indiana, Los Angeles, California, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. According to U.S. Census data, the percentage of the population comprised of Hispanics/Latinos in Chicago, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee in 2000 was 26%, 3.9%, 46.5%, and 12%, respectively.
7. The OLS regression analysis for the dependent measure average number of word published included only 205 cases instead of the original 249 cases of homicide in the analysis. The 44 homicides that were not covered at all by the paper had to be dropped from the analysis at this point because the value of the average number of words was zero for these cases. The base 10 log cannot be calculated for the value of zero. The decision to drop the 44 cases from the analysis instead of removing the outlying values that resulted in the skewed distribution was made because of the importance of retaining the cases that received much coverage in terms of the number of words published. Furthermore, the distribution of the number of words in the analysis was such that once cases with outlying values were removed, other cases emerged as problematic cases with respect to normalizing the distribution. In other words, removing the extreme outlying values only meant that different cases in the analysis emerged as outlying values that resulted in a skewed distribution of scores.

## ENDNOTE

**Kevin Buckler, Ph. D.**, University of Cincinnati, M.S., Eastern Kentucky University, B.S., Sullivan University. Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, University of Texas at Brownsville, College of Liberal Arts, Department of Criminal Justice, 80 Fort Brown, Brownsville, TX 78520. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent electronically to [KBuckler@utb.edu](mailto:KBuckler@utb.edu).

**Lawrence Travis, Ph.D.**, Professor of Criminal Justice, College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Cincinnati, 600 Dyer Hall, P.O. Box 210389, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0389

## REFERENCES

- Abbott, D. J., & Calónico, J. M. (1974). Black man, white woman - The maintenance of a myth: Rape and the press in New Orleans. In M. Riedel & T. P. Thornberry (Eds.), *Crime and delinquency: Dimensions of deviance* (pp. 141-153). New York: Praeger.
- Abercrombie, N., Hill, S., & Turner, B. S. (1980). *The dominant ideology thesis*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Albarran, A. B. (1997). *Management of electronic media*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Anderson, B. (2004). *News flash: Journalism, infotainment, and the bottom-line business of broadcast news*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Barak, G. (1994). Media, society, and criminology. In G. Barak (Ed.), *Media, process, and the social construction of crime* (pp. 3-45). New York: Garland Publishing.
- Barkan, S. F. (1997). *Criminology: A sociological understanding*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Beckett, K., & Sasson, T. (2000). *The politics of injustice: Crime and punishment in America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Beirne, P., & Messerschmidt, J. (1995). *Criminology* (2nd Ed.). Ft. Worth, IN: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Chermak, S. (1995). *Victims in the news: Crime and the American news media*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Chermak, S. (1998). Predicting crime story salience: The effects of crime, victim, and defendant characteristics. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 26, 61-70.
- Chiricos, T., & Eschholz, S. (2002). The racial and ethnic typification of crime and the criminal typification of race and ethnicity in local television news. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 39, 400-420.
- Cohen, D. (1975). A comparison of crime coverage in Detroit and Atlanta newspapers. *Journalism Quarterly*, 52, 726-730.

- Combs, R., & Slovic, P. (1979). Newspaper coverage of causes of death. *Journalism Quarterly*, 56, 837-843.
- Cullen, F. T., & Gilbert, K. E. (1982). *Reaffirming rehabilitation*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing.
- Dixon, T. L., & Linz, D. (2000a). Overrepresentation and underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos as lawbreakers on television news. *Journal of Communication*, (Spring), 131-154.
- Dixon, T. L., & Linz, D. (2000b). Race and the misrepresentation of victimization on local television news. *Communication Research*, 27, 547-573.
- Doob, A. N. (1985). The many realities of crime. In E. Greenspan & A. Doob (Eds.), *Perspectives in criminal law*. Aurora: Canada Law Book.
- Durham, A. M., III, Elrod, H. P., & Kinkade, P. T. (1995). Images of crime and justice: Murder and the "true crime" genre. *Journal of Criminal and Justice*, 23, 143-152.
- Duwe, G. (2000). Body count journalism: The presentation of mass murder in the news media. *Homicide Studies*, 4, 364-399.
- Einstadter, W. J. (1979). Crime news in the old west: Social control in a northwestern town, 1887-1888. *Urban Life*, 8, 317-334.
- Elias, R. (1993). *Victims still: The political manipulation of crime victims*. London: Sage.
- Ericson, R., Baranek, P., & Chen, J. (1989). *Negotiating control: A study of news sources*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M., & Chan, J. B. L. (1991). *Representing order: Crime, law, and justice in the news media*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Fedler, F., & Jordan, D. (1982). How emphasis on people affects coverage of crime. *Journalism Quarterly*, (Autumn), 474-478.
- Fishman, M. (1978). Crime waves as ideology. *Social Problems*, 25, 531-543.
- Fishman, M. (1980). *Manufacturing the news*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Gilliam, J., F. D., Iyengar, S., Simon, A., & Wright, O. (1996). Crime in black and white, the violent, scary world of local news. *Press/Politics*, 1, 6-23.
- Graber, D. (1980). *Crime news and the public*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, K., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state, and law and order*. London: MacMillan.

- Humphries, D. (1981). Serious crime, news coverage, and ideology: A content analysis of crime coverage in a metropolitan paper. *Crime and Delinquency*, 27, 191-205.
- Jaehnig, W. B., Weaver, D. H., & Fico, F. (1981). Crime reporting and fearing crime in three communities. *Journal of Communication*, 31, 88-96.
- Jerin, R., & Fields, C. (1994). Murder and mayhem in USA Today: A quantitative analysis of the national reporting of states' news. In G. Barak (Ed.), *Media, process, and the social construction of crime* (pp. 187-202). New York: Garland.
- Johnstone, J. W. C., Hawkins, D. F., & Michener, A. (1994). Homicide reporting in Chicago dailies. *Journalism Quarterly*, 71, 860-872.
- Kaiser, C. (1980). *1968 in America: Music, politics, chaos, counterculture, and the shaping of a generation*. New York: Grove Press.
- Lichter, R., & Edmundson, E. (1992). *A day in the life of television violence*. Washington DC: Center for Media and Public Affairs.
- Lichter, R., Lichter, L. S., & Rothman, S. (1994). *Prime time: How TV portrays American culture*. Washington, DC: Regnery.
- Lilly, J. R., Cullen, F. T., & Ball, R. A. (1995). *Criminological theory: Context and consequences* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lipschultz, J. H., & Hilt, M. L. (2002). *Crime and local television news: Dramatic, breaking, and live from the scene*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Lotz, R. (1991). *Crime and the American press*. New York: Praeger.
- Marsh, H. L. (1991). A comparative analysis of crime coverage in newspapers in the United States and other countries from 1960-1989: A review of the literature. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 19, 67-80.
- McManus, J. H. (1994). *Market-driven journalism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers.
- Peelo, M., Francis, B., Soothill, K., Pearson, J., & Ackerley, E. (2004). Newspaper reporting and the public construction of homicide. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44, 256-275.
- Potter, D. (2002). Foreword. In J. H. Lipschultz & M. L. Hilt (Eds.), *Crime and local television news: Dramatic, breaking, and live from the scene* (pp. xi-xii). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.



- Prichard, D., & Hughes, K. (1997). Patterns of deviance in crime news. *Journal of Communication, 47*, 49-67.
- Quinney, R. (1970). *The social reality of crime*. Boston: Little, Brown Publishers.
- Reiman, J. (2000). *The rich get richer and the poor get prison*. New York: Macmillan.
- Romer, D., Jamieson, K. H., & DeCoteau, N. J. (1998). The treatment of persons of color in local television news: Ethnic blame discourse or realistic group conflict. *Communication Research, 25*, 286-305.
- Rude, D. (1999). Reasonable men and provocative women: An analysis of gendered domestic homicide in Zambia. *Journal of Southern African Studies, 25*, 7-27.
- Sheley, J., & Ashkins, C. (1981). Crime, crime news, and crime views. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 45*, 492-506.
- Sorenson, S. B., Manz, J. G. P., & Berk, R. A. (1998). News media coverage and the epidemiology of homicide. *American Journal of Public Health, 88*, 1510-1514.
- Surette, R. (1994). Predator criminals and cultural icons. In G. Barak (Ed.), *Media, process and the social construction of crime: Studies in Newsmaking Criminology*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Sykes, G. M. (1974). The rise of critical criminology. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 65*, 206-213.
- Tabloid!: Inside the New York Post (1999). *Investigative reports*. New York: A & E Home Video.
- Taylor, C. A., & Sorenson, S. B. (2002). The nature of newspaper coverage of homicide. *Injury Prevention, 8*, 121-127.
- Weiss, A., & Chermak, S. (1998). The news value of African-American victims: An examination of the media's presentation of homicide. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 21*, 71-88.
- Welch, M., Fenwick, M., & Roberts, M. (1998). State managers, intellectuals, and the media: A content analysis of ideology in experts' quotes in feature newspaper articles on crime. In G. W. Potter & V. E. Kappeler (Eds.), *Constructing crime: Perspectives on making news and social problems* (Vol. 15). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.