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Analyzing Television News: Pro-Social & Anti-Social Effects of Criminal Depictions & Information Processing on Race Perceptions

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ANALYZING TELEVISION NEWS: PRO-SOCIAL & ANTI-SOCIAL EFFECTS OF
CRIMINAL DEPICTIONS & INFORMATION PROCESSING
ON RACE PERCEPTIONS

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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May 2015

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entitled

**Analyzing Television News: Pro-Social & Anti-Social Effects of Criminal Depictions
& Information Processing on Race Perceptions**

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ABSTRACT

Analyzing Television News: Pro-Social & Anti-Social Effects of Criminal Depictions & Information Processing on Race Perceptions

By

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This quantitative research is a content analysis of network affiliate crime reporting statistics in Las Vegas. As part of this study, six months of news content in Las Vegas was recorded in order to gather pertinent sociological information about crime reporting techniques and its potential effects on public perceptions of crime and race. Pertinent issues such as media-image affect on viewers, biases within reporting information, and gatekeeping within the media are analyzed. This study adds substantive knowledge through empirical research to existing literature that asserts media depictions do shape and/or affect perceptions and attitudes about crime and race. Data sources consist of NBC, CBS, and ABC Las Vegas area newscasts. The results show there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables Suspect Image Shown and Race (among Hispanics and Blacks). This study has both local and national implications connected to ongoing top news story reports involving the killing of unarmed Black men – such as Michael Brown and Eric Garner – at the hands of police. Results of this analysis suggest its findings can be used to begat change in the manner in which journalists report details of crimes and alleged criminals. Suggestions for future research are also considered.

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DEDICATION

My research is dedicated to the memories of Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis,
D'Andre Berghardt, Jr., and all others who have struggled against
perceptions of what a “criminal” looks like.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Minorities and members of racialized ethnic groups are often depicted within the media as dangerous criminals and/or violent aggressors. Louis Wirth (1945) defines a minority/ethnic group in terms of its subordinate position – “A group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination” (p. 347). In light of this, Janis Faye Hutchinson (1997) asks how images of minorities (non-Whites) and ethnic groups should be presented to the public, and who should control the presentation of these images. Hutchinson answers these questions by investigating portrayals of African Americans in various arenas. Key points addressed within Hutchinson’s work are:

1. There have been negative portrayals of ethnic minorities by non-minorities [specifically within the media].
2. These negative portrayals have been internalized by ethnic minorities and non-minorities, and are perceived as true or correct representations.
3. Such negative portrayals are usually myth or the product of historical racism [– unfavorable attitudes and/or actions towards members of racial or ethnic groups].
4. There may be sociopolitical, economic, and academic motivations for negative portrayals of ethnic minorities.
5. Negative portrayals affect race relations.
6. Negative cultural portrayals influence the [White] in-group perception of racial/ethnic identity among African Americans. (p. 2)

Hutchinson (1997) also states that the media has always been a conveyer of identities that impact readers', listeners', and viewers' perceptions of social phenomenon. Among the people being portrayed, mass media can even act as a confirmation of ethnic identity or a negative "stereotype" – a shared but not necessarily correct belief concerning the characteristics of members of different minority / racial / ethnic groups (McLemore, Romo, & Baker, 2001) – associated with the group. For individuals outside the represented group, mass media may provide the only characterization of ethnic and/or minority groups that these individuals will experience. For an outsider, these portrayals can often come to falsely represent the behavior and culture of the depicted minority group. For example, media enforced stereotypes of Blacks as pimps/prostitutes and violent criminals, and Mexicans as "illegal immigrants" and gardeners, have made a negative and erroneous impact on the way society often views these ethnic groups. It is of utmost importance to note however, that the path from constantly viewing or even cognitively subscribing to (whether consciously or subconsciously) media reinforced stereotypical notions about and/or implicit biases against racial/ethnic minorities, to taking deliberate discriminatory and/or harmful action against such out-groups, is not *always* inevitable (Dasgupta, 2004). Therefore this independent researcher takes care to point out presumably racialized social occurrences and news events, without making specific behavioral genesis and/or motivational claims. Nevertheless, just as the many researchers cited within this work – such as Dixon (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011); Dixon & Azocar (2007); T. L. Dixon, Azocar, & Casas (2003); Dixon & Linz (2000); Dixon & Linz (2002); Johnson & Dixon (2008); and, Josey, Hurley, Hefner, & Dixon

(2009) – have done prior to this work, throughout this independent research I also extensively explore mass media depictions and its potential social influence and effects – with heavy emphasis on television news depictions’ potential effects.

Among African Americans, mass media has specifically focused on a subset of that minority groups’ problems – broken families, teenage pregnancy, drug use, and other forms of criminality. All are problems present among all other racial groups in our society; but, the media seems to consistently frame those specific social ills predominately around the African American community. Hutchinson (1997) says this approach is superficial, and often unfairly points blame at the entire minority group without controlling for social factors associated with those problems begat by institutional racism and systemic discrimination. For instance, there is still a huge wealth gap between Whites and Blacks (and other minorities) rooted in decades of job, wage, and housing discrimination (Kurtz, 2013). Directly connected to those social ills, and perhaps most important is a persistent gap between Black and White student achievement – which points to an education system that fails to provide an equally rung ladder of opportunity – that is supported in part by apparent ongoing redlining of certain housing and school districts, serving to effectively highlight protected, predominantly White, social spaces in higher income areas, typically with fewer racial minorities and more desirable school districts, which is a prime example of the White majority’s use of public space to outline and exercise social dominance over minorities (Lefebvre, 1996). Systematic voting restrictions – many of which are dubiously connected to the disproportionate arrest of minorities – also continue to disproportionately affect the poor, Blacks, and Hispanics with far-reaching legal repercussions (Brame, Bushway,

Paternoster, & Turner, 2014). Furthermore, Brame et al. (2014) assert that African-American communities are being decimated by a criminal justice system that over-polices, over-arrests, and over-incarcerates Black males; because, the researchers found that nearly half (49%) of Black males in the U.S. are arrested by age 23 – compared to 44 percent of Hispanic males and 38 percent of White males by the same age. Researchers also find that police disproportionately take the lives of unarmed Black people, due in part to Blackness conjuring the myth of hyper-violence and/or innate criminality, thusly serving as the basis of a general illegitimate fear that is often perpetuated by news reports and other forms of mass media (Dixon, 2007, 2008; Staples, 2011).

That is why there is no better time than now, to address the most notable and most recent examples of the social problem of deadly “police confrontations” – a term coined by this independent researcher and discussed in depth throughout this work, defined as targeting specific individuals with excessive verbal or physical aggression and/or extreme, often fatal force, typically initiated by White officers, carried out against unarmed African American citizens. Many such police confrontation incidents were publicized within local and national media in a highly dramatic, emotionally gripping, fashion during the late summer and fall of 2014, including: the shooting death of 18 year old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; and, the fatal choking of 43 year old Eric Garner in New York City’s Staten Island – which was caught on video by an eyewitness and broadcast nationwide by news and other media outlets, yet no formal punitive action was taken against the officer who killed the unarmed Black man as he repeatedly pleaded for his life by stating “I can’t breathe” (Sakuma, 2014). Although Brown and Garner’s recent killings are timely, high profile, shocking, news stories, the tragic deaths of those

unarmed Black men at the hands of police – who often go unpunished and/or minimally reprimanded for their actions against minorities – unfortunately echoes throughout America’s recent past, dating back to Oscar Grant’s widely reported 2009 tragic shooting, and far beyond.

While it is important to recognize and acknowledge the incremental progress made in American race relations throughout the past few decades, and acknowledge the fact that of course not all White people are racist, or even subscribe to the subconscious tenants of symbolic racism – a modern form of racism encompassing negative views about minorities that are not directly linked to race and/or overt racism and discrimination, but are indirectly linked through socio-political issues, and is perhaps currently the most prevalent form of racism (Henry & Sears, 2008) – it is painfully clear that we are still far from realizing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Dream” of equality and justice for all of America’s citizens: Whites, Blacks, and other minorities alike. Although the practice of enslaving people of African descent in the United States ended nearly 150 years ago, the most egregious elements of Jim Crow – a social structure spawned from slavery – were only deemed illegal roughly 50 years ago due to persistent Civil Rights Movement pressures coupled with the vital aid of news media acting in a pro-social manner by broadcasting the ongoing social injustices in the South and various parts of the U.S. However, despite the past five decades of gradual progress, the social problems of institutional racism, systemic discrimination, and the typically disproportionate overrepresentation of Blacks as criminals in news media are ongoing phenomenon (Dixon, 2006, 2007, 2008; Dixon & Linz, 2000).

Consequently, also echoing throughout America's recent past is the apparent permanent social demonization of culpable Black criminals in news media (Dixon, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011; T. L. Dixon et al., 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman, 1992; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Hutchinson, 1997; Poindexter et al., 2003; Romer et al., 1998; Staples, 2011). As a recent example and in an unfortunate, unpredictable twist – because of course, not all Black suspects are unarmed and innocent, even though the deck is still stacked against them, with the seemingly biased criminal justice system apparently structured to disproportionately pile-on any due punishment (Brown, 2013; Mays, Johnson, Coles, Gellene, & Cochran, 2013; Staples 2011) – an equally tragic event connected to Michael Brown and Eric Garner's unwarranted deaths at the hands of police emerged nationally as top story breaking news when a Black man randomly targeted, shot, and killed two uniformed New York City police officers during an ambush-style assassination in Brooklyn, as the policemen sat in their patrol car. On December, 20, 2014, Officer Rafael Ramos (who was Hispanic) and Officer Wenjian Liu (who was Asian) were killed by Ismaaiyl Brinsley allegedly in retaliation for lack of officer indictments for the killings of Brown and Garner – separate, tragic, fatal police confrontations that officers Ramos and Liu were not connected to (Berlinger, Sanchez, & Prokupecz, 2014). According to Berlinger et al. (2014), the triggerman was found dead in a nearby subway station from a self-inflicted gunshot wound; nevertheless, Brinsley's fatally retaliatory actions against police has placed officers nationwide on high alert regarding potential violence aimed at them from alleged Black criminal suspects and ironically, protesters of ongoing police brutality – thus potentially continuing the cycle of suspicion and use of excessive and/or deadly force. Berlinger et al. (2014) importantly

note that both Brown and Garner’s families have publicly condemned the New York officers’ slayings and have rejected the notion of any kind of violence directed toward any law enforcement officials. Unfortunately, Brinsley’s lone-wolf actions (he was not connected to any terrorist groups or organized entity) served to reinforce the sweeping stereotype regarding many Black males as violent alleged threats to police (and other citizens) as opposed to the reality of many Black males being undeserving victims of police brutality; and, the former, rather than the latter, is a general message that is seemingly broadcast daily, in various forms, during news media reports (T. L. Dixon et al., 2003; Romer et al., 1998). This biased form of reporting often widely persists, despite the recent emergence of some grassroots social movement campaigns aimed at ending use of excessive force and police brutality, such as the #BlackLivesMatter, #StolenLives, and #BlackoutForChange campaigns on social media, which began to be widely used in late 2014 as pro-social media tools to more broadly communicate and encourage social change regarding the ongoing mistreatment of, and unchecked social injustices suffered by, many minorities after Brown and Garner’s deaths warranted no indictment for the officers who killed them – just as in literally *countless* other similar news stories; because, (as further addressed in Chapter 2 of this research) according to Geoff Alpert – a University of South Carolina criminologist who studies and academically addresses police use of deadly force –

“There is no [mandatory] national database for this type of information”... “We’ve been trying for years, but nobody wanted to fund it and the (police) departments didn’t want it. They were concerned with their image and liability. They don’t want to bother with it.” (K. Johnson, Hoyer, & Heath, 2014, para. 7).

Although the body of this research cites news events happening throughout 2014, and prior, it is important to note that the social unrest and protests in Ferguson (and sporadically in various other parts of the country) are currently continuing – well into 2015 – with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) publicly issuing an official report on March 4, 2015, documenting a pattern of racial discrimination in both the Ferguson police department and the city government of Ferguson, Missouri (Perez, 2015).

According to Perez:

The probe is the result of an investigation ordered by [outgoing] Attorney General Eric Holder after the police shooting that killed Michael Brown last summer.

Among the findings...: from 2012 to 2014, 85% of people subject to vehicle stops by Ferguson police were African-American; 90% of those who received citations were Black; and 93% of people arrested were Black. This while [only] 67% of the Ferguson population is Black.

In 88% of the cases in which...the Ferguson police reported using force, it was against African-Americans....

Blacks were disproportionately more likely to be cited for minor infractions: 95% of tickets for “manner of walking in roadway,” essentially jaywalking, were against African Americans.... (para. 2-5)

Coincidentally, that is the same type of violation Brown was reportedly guilty of before he was shot to death by Ferguson police – “walking in the middle of the street” (which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2). America’s first Black President, Commander in Chief Barak Obama, nationally addressed both the DOJ’s findings and the subsequent non-fatal shooting a week later, of two Ferguson area police officers (from different neighboring

departments), on March 11, 2015. According to McDonald (2015), President Obama remarked about seemingly “economic motivations” – as also noted in Hutchinson’s 1997 research – fueling discrimination against African American residents in Ferguson:

“What was happening in Ferguson was you had city government telling the police department ‘Stop more people. We need to raise more money.’ Folks would get stopped. They’d get tickets. Then, they’d have to wait in line to pay it, take a day off work, folks would lose their jobs. In some cases, they were thrown in jail because they didn’t have enough money for the fines, and then, they’d get fined for that.

There was a whole structure there, according to the Justice Department report, that indicated both racism and just a disregard for what law enforcement is supposed to do”...

“Whoever fired those shots shouldn’t detract from the issue,” Obama said. “They’re criminals. They need to be arrested. And then, what we need to do is to make sure that like-minded, good-spirited people on both sides – law enforcement, who have a terrifically tough job, and people who understandably don’t want to be stopped and harassed just because of their race – that we’re able to work together to try come up with some good answers.”

...“I think what was happening in Ferguson was oppressive and objectionable and was worthy of protest but there was no excuse for criminal acts.” (para. 8, 9, 2 & 6) That was President Obama’s first public statement about the Ferguson area officers being shot; and, McDonald also notes that as both officers left the hospital the day after they were injured to recover at home, an intense manhunt for the alleged triggerman was already well underway. According to Fernandez and Eligon (2015), on Sunday, March

15, 2015, while in police custody, 20 year old suspect, Jeffrey L. Williams, “claimed to have been targeting someone other than the officers and shot them by accident from inside a car” (para. 1); and afterward, “demonstrators...denounced the shooting, but vowed to continue marching and protesting, saying they would not be distracted from seeking justice for Mr. Brown’s killing and for systemic change in Ferguson’s police and court system” (para. 17).

Moreover, in addition to Brown’s killing, in Madison, Wisconsin, another police confrontation has already repeatedly made national news in 2015, due to yet another White officer – Matt Kenny – fatally shooting an unarmed African American teen – 19 year old Tony “Terrell” Robinson – on March 6, 2015 (Farhang, 2015). Farhang notes the circumstances surrounding this latest fatal police confrontation garnering national news media attention:

Only about 7 percent of [Madison’s] 240,000 population are Black and demonstrators have complained about unequal policing of poor, Black neighborhoods.

Police said they responded to a call...that Robinson was running in traffic on the street and had assaulted someone. According to police, Kenny heard a disturbance inside an apartment and pushed open the door, where he encountered the unarmed Robinson.

Madison police tried initially to strike a more conciliatory tone than their counterparts in Ferguson... Police Chief Mike Koval rushed to the home of Robinson’s family on the night of the killing and prayed with [the teen’s] grandmother in the driveway. [Koval] said he understood the community’s anger and emphasized the right of protesters to march peacefully.

[Still,] some people at [Robinson's] funeral said they thought the shooting was an overreaction by police.

“What I personally don't understand is why [police] have to resort to shooting first”... (para. 10-14)

Additionally, in the very latest tragically similar fatal police confrontation currently unfolding during broadcasts on news stations across the country, on April 4, 2015, in North Charleston, South Carolina, yet another unarmed Black man – 50 year old Walter L. Scott – was shot and killed by a White police officer – 33 year old Michael T. Slager – who fired at Scott's back a total of eight times (and struck him five times), after using a Taser gun on Scott, as he tried to flee on foot after a routine traffic stop about a broken taillight, possibly because there was a bench warrant for Scott's arrest due to unpaid child support (Apuzzo & Williams, 2015; Sandoval & Almas, 2015). The tragedy was caught on cellphone video by an eyewitness – who according to CNN, was later thanked by Scott's family for his bravery for deciding to come forward with the video. Slager's dashboard camera (dash cam) video and audio has been released to national news outlets; but, there are still doubts about the validity of all involved and/or responding police officers' accounts of the killing – because according to CNN, and Sandoval and Almas, based on the witness' cellphone video that was released to news media (and is similar to some video in the Eric Garner killing) there are concerns about whether or not police administered CPR to Scott, as they claim; and there is speculation about whether or not Scott grabbed at, or took, now former officer Slager's Taser during an alleged physical struggle, as Slager has claimed, due to video showing Slager suspiciously dropping a black item (possibly a Taser) next to Scott's body. Apuzzo and Williams point out eerie

similarities and important facts surrounding this latest fatal police confrontation breaking news story:

Nothing has done more to fuel the national debate over police tactics than the dramatic, sometimes grisly videos: A man gasping “I can’t breathe” through a police chokehold on Staten Island, a 12-year-old boy shot dead in a park in Cleveland. And now, perhaps the starkest video yet, showing a South Carolina police officer shooting a fleeing man in the back.

The videos have spurred calls from statehouses to the White House for more officers to attach cameras to their uniforms. While cameras frequently exonerate officers in shootings, the recent spate of videos has raised uncomfortable questions about how much the American criminal justice system can rely on the accounts of police officers when the cameras are not rolling.

“Everyone in this business knows that cops have been given the benefit of the doubt,” said...a Connecticut lawyer who has defended several police officers accused of misconduct. “They’re always assumed to be telling the truth, unless there’s tangible evidence otherwise.”

A criminal defense lawyer in Charlotte, N.C., said that while the ubiquity of video had changed the dynamic between the police and citizens, jurors still viewed police officers as credible, even when faced with incriminating video.

Many cities have installed cameras in their police cruisers for years, and some – an estimated 25 percent of departments that responded to a 2013 survey – require so-called body cameras. Those numbers are dwarfed by the millions of Americans who carry camera-equipped cellphones. As cameras become ubiquitous, the digital video

is likely to become a go-to source of impartial evidence in much the same way that DNA did in the 1990s.

But cellphone videos taken by bystanders tend to make many police officers uncomfortable, because they have no control over the setting and often are not even aware they are being filmed until later. Though the courts have held that people have a constitutional right to record the police, those who do are frequently challenged by officers.

Cellphone videos have captured police officers pushing and slapping a homeless man in Florida and shooting a man who threw rocks at officers in Washington State. In February [2015], two Pelham, N.Y., officers retired after a video contradicted their account of an arrest of a Black man.

Data is still spotty, but an early study in Rialto, Calif., suggests that when officers carry body cameras, they are less likely to use force. Similar studies in Mesa, Ariz., and in Britain showed that citizen complaints also decreased.

North Charleston, a city of about 100,000 people [– and is one of hundreds of cities across the U.S. with a police department that has forces with a percentage of White officers that is disproportionately higher than the actual population numbers of the diverse communities they serve –] has ordered about 100 body cameras, but its officers are not yet using them. [North Charleston’s] mayor... said... that he had ordered 150 more “so that every officer that’s on the street in uniform will have a body camera.”

A South Carolina state senator who represents North Charleston and helped push for financing for the cameras, said he hoped they would help calm tensions between

residents and officers. He said he believed a body camera would have prevented [Scott's] shooting. "I don't believe the officer would have behaved the way he did had he been wearing a body camera"... (para. 1-3, 20, 6, 9, 12, 16-18)

Sandoval and Almasly note an official commenting: "Nothing in this video demonstrates that the officer's life or the life of another was threatened [by Scott],... 'The question here is whether the use of force was excessive'" (New evidence, para. 4). Slager was arrested, charged with murder, is facing life in prison or the death penalty, and has been fired from the police force according to Sandoval and Almasly; but, whether or not Slager will actually be convicted of murdering Scott remains to be seen.

When will this fatal news cycle end? Moreover, does it begin with, or is it perpetuated by, biasedly reported images of African Americans being disproportionately depicted as criminals in news media? The body of this research addresses those and other related inquiries throughout a thorough review of literature and empirical research compiled by analyzing television news and its frequently observed seemingly hegemonic practices – like repeatedly airing highly offensive song lyrics captured on video of the now disbanded chapter members of University of Oklahoma's Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity (which has historical ties to the confederacy) song that proudly revels about discriminating against, and lynching "nigger(s)" although members involved in this incident have since apologized (New, 2015; Svrluga, 2015); and other similarly offensive nationally televised arguably racist declarations, including a Hispanic television network host on Univision, Rodner Figueroa, who was fired after reportedly remarking on air that First Lady Michelle Obama looks like a character from the "Planet of the Apes" (NBC News Latino, 2015). NBC News Latino reveals that like the aforementioned members of

SAE, Figueroa has also apologized; nevertheless, both verbal citizen confrontation incidents have been widely reported throughout early March 2015, and have been repeatedly broadcasted, on local and national television news outlets.

Furthermore, also being repeatedly broadcasted throughout this first quarter of 2015, are news stories that seem to highlight the apparent fact that we are currently stuck in a repetitive news cycle known as the “confrontation phase” – outlined by Wilson, Gutiérrez, and Chao (2003) as one of the five developmental phases and patterns of news reporting that have been experienced by all minority groups (and each phase is discussed in depth throughout this work’s review of literature) – with more and more news reports everyday about physical, verbal, and non-verbal confrontations between police officers and/or various citizens, and minorities. For instance, on March 19, 2015, news reports widely surfaced about video captured (the day before) by witnesses who saw unarmed Black University of Virginia Honor Student (who is double-majoring in Italian and media studies) – 20 year old Martese Johnson – being battered, bloodied, and pinned to the ground by police in Charlottesville, VA, over claims about an alleged fake I.D. being used at an area bar, and the governor of Virginia calling for an independent investigation by Virginia State Police to see whether the involved alcohol control agents – who were restricted to administrative duties, pending results of the investigation – used excessive force, after UVA’s President said she was disturbed by the jarring, bloody, images of Johnson’s arrest and was compelled to contact the governor’s office to ask for an investigation after students began protesting (Yan & Ford, 2015), including the university’s Black Student Alliance issuing a statement denouncing the incident. According to Yan and Ford, the group declared:

“Today, we are reminded of the gruesome reality that we are not immune to injustice; as University students, we are not impervious to the brutality that has reeled on news cycles around the country,”...

“We have marched and shouted that we are Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, but the proximity of [the recent] brutality to a member of our community has deepened that wound.” (Governor demands investigation, para. 6-7)

This incident is a classic example of a non-fatal police confrontation with an unarmed African American male – one of the most notorious in American history being the Rodney King beating which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Additionally, on March 18, 2015, news reports also began to surface widely about alleged on-going verbal assaults (confrontations) waged by various members of the U.S. Army against minorities. According to NBC News.com (2015), an Alaskan Army base is under command investigation for reportedly encouraging “Racial Thursdays” – days on which racial slurs were allowed to be used without consequences. NBC News.com states the Army Times reported the allegations from two anonymous soldiers at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, in an article posted online; and, the soldiers say the “Racial Thursdays” practice was considered a “tradition” that although was forbidden, still goes on. The platoon allegedly involved in recent “Racial Thursdays” news reports is part of a unit that comprises the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division; and, NBC News.com also reports that:

Chinese-American Danny Chen was also assigned to [that Combat Team] before he apparently committed suicide while deployed with that unit in Afghanistan in 2011... Chen’s family has said he was subjected to hazing and abuse by other soldiers...

Eight soldiers were court martialed. Two received prison sentences, two were discharged, and others were demoted and docked pay.

[A U.S. Army Alaska spokesman] said the recent inquiry “is in no way connected” with Chen, and that there have been several leadership changes in the years since his death. (para. 6-8)

“Racial Thursdays” exemplifies encouragement of verbal confrontations known as “micro-aggressions” – (in this particular instance) verbal and/or social forms of discrimination that are usually racial assaults on a personal level, aimed at specific individuals (Romero, 2006).

Then, on March 19, 2015, news reports emerged both locally and nationally about at least six businesses in Austin, TX, that had just been plastered with stickers featuring an unauthorized official City of Austin logo reading “Exclusively For White People. Maximum of 5 colored customers. Colored BOH staff accepted. Sponsored by the City of Austin Contemporary Partition and Restoration Program” (Workneh, 2015). “BOH staff” refers to “back of house” workers – employees who do not usually interact with customers. Workneh notes:

[A] Facebook user...posted a photo that went viral...of [the] circular sticker on the outside of a display window at...an Austin clothing boutique in a historically Black neighborhood....

The same sticker has reportedly been found on at least five other local businesses, including a bakeshop and a bicycle store. Austin police [began] investigating the situation.

[Since then,] a man has come forward claiming to be responsible for distributing

the “Whites only” stickers in Austin, according to a video posted to YouTube...

In the video, Adam Reposa, an Austin area-based attorney – whose identity was confirmed by The Huffington Post – admitted he distributed the seals and published a video defending his actions.

“Why I did it is pretty clear,” a shirtless Reposa says in the video, “because it would be obvious that even though people know the real problem – and the problem is people without money are getting f*****d – they’re getting pushed out, and pretty quick, this area of town is turning into Whites only, not by law like it used to be.”

(Previously, para. 2 & 11; Update, para. 1-3)

Regardless of Reposa’s claimed motives or his feelings about Austin area Gentrification, his postings were offensive to many; and, the stickers can be considered as a form of a non-verbal citizen confrontation (a term solely conceptualized by this independent researcher that is defined and discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this work). Other varied newsworthy confrontations, including various televised allegedly racist rants, and related non-verbal citizen confrontation reports on various individuals throwing bananas at Black athletes – similar to one being thrown on March 30, 2015, at African American comedian and race commentator Dave Chappelle while he was on stage performing in New Mexico; and according to NBC News Pop Culture, 2015, Chappelle believes the arrested White suspect’s use of a banana was “racially-motivated” – happening prior to all the aforementioned confrontations are also discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this research.

A majority of top-down journalistic decisions seemingly conflating a particular race with criminality, being repeated over time, is also an example of news media hegemony – the process by which those in power (Whites) secure the consent of the socially

subordinated (minorities) to the system that suppresses and/or subordinates them; and, rather than requiring overt force (as used by police), the elite, through their control of various social institutions (including television news media) attempt to convince the populace that the hierarchical social and economic system is fixed and natural, therefore unchangeable (Gramsci, 2000).

Coinciding with Hutchinson's (1997) aforementioned perception theory, Yuki Fujioka's (1999) research states that television often serves as a basis for social judgments, such as racist attitudes and ethnic / minority group stereotypes, when direct contact is lacking and/or unwanted. Fujioka also asserts that since television shares similar characteristics of real life events, vicarious experiences via television – especially those presented through the lens of news media – can indeed easily become part of our overall social experience and world view.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to add substantive knowledge through empirical research to the existing literature that asserts that media depictions shape and/or affect perceptions and attitudes about crime and race. This research is of significance because its findings can be used to begat change in the manner in which journalists report the details of crimes and alleged criminals.

Primary Research Question and Primary Hypothesis

The primary research question that sparks the purpose of this study is: Do media portrayals/depictions of minorities (non-Whites) differ from those of Whites, regarding issues of crime and alleged criminality? Moreover, this study's primary hypothesis relating to the proposed primary research question is: There is a statistically significant

difference between the depiction of minority (non-White) criminal/suspect images, and White criminal/suspect images on local news programs.

Sociological and Historical Research Framework

The issue fueling this study's primary research question and primary hypothesis is: One can not fully understand current social complexities of race and ethnic relations in America, and how minorities are affected, without understanding America's often racist and oppressive past. America has historically dealt with race by making social and economic divisions based on assumptions of racial and/or ethnic inferiority rooted in "prejudice" – negative attitudes regarding members of specific minority / racial / ethnic groups (McLemore et al., 2001). However, the existence of any pure race with special endowments is a myth, as is the belief that there are races whose members are foredoomed to eternal inferiority. Racial categories are constructed and defined socially and politically, not scientifically (Martinot, 2010). Nevertheless, for the purpose of this research, the distinctions drawn between the social constructs of each prominent minority / racial / ethnic group in America – Blacks/African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics – will be addressed from a socio-historical vantage point, in order to address the symbiotic social relationship between minority group perceptions and their media depictions.

Unfortunately, colonial Americans began to rationalize the validity of the racially inferior myth, as it relates to African Americans (and other minorities), until it became for them and many of their descendants, a form of social "truth" that would permanently divide the nation with a racially, economically, and socially motivated line – which became known as the American institution of slavery. The lasting effects of the development of slavery in America still cast a shameful, dark, shadow on modern race

relations. Slavery sprang forth from the colonial system of indentured servitude – a system of working for one’s freedom requiring typically poor workers seeking a new life in America to pay for their voyage by agreeing to work and serve in the colony in which they settled, for a limited number of years (C. Johnson, Smith, & WGBH Series Research Team, 1998). Once the debt was repaid, the servant would be granted their freedom and would be integrated into colonial society as a full citizen. Initially, Black and White indentured servants worked and were freed equally, without race being a defining factor (McLemore et al., 2001). However, sometime during the mid-seventeenth century, that changed (C. Johnson et al., 1998). After several Africans were freed over the years, White colonists rejected the notion of free Africans living, working and owning land in America just as they did. As a result, workers of African descent who had reached the end of their indentured servitude period found that their contracts were not being honored (C. Johnson et al., 1998). Africans were being forced into another, far crueler, and more permanent, form of “free labor” servitude based on false perceptions of their social inferiority.

The advent of colonial slavery begat lasting, definitive, racial category distinctions in America, and beyond (Martinot, 2010). According to C. Johnson et al. (1998), “The first Virginia colonists thought of themselves as Christians or Englishmen, not White people. The word White was not yet used to refer to a type of person” (p. 39). Nevertheless, as slavery spread throughout colonial America, supporters of the oppressive social institution adopted divisive racial constructs and myths. Consequently, racial categories grew harsher; and, the English gradually chose to describe themselves not as Christians, but as “White” people (Brown, 2013; Feagin & Feagin, 1999; C. Johnson et al., 1998;

Martinot, 2010). The social consequence of that distinction was permanently dire; because, distinguishing race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance. As a result of many believing in the social myths stemming from attitudes of superiority passed from Europeans to early American colonists, a predominating attitude towards all Africans – and all persons of African descent – developed that allowed them to be seen as intellectually, socially, and morally inferior, savage foreigners, who could only be tamed by being ruled over. In the eyes of many early American colonists, it was their social and moral duty to tame the so-called savage, beastly, foreigners (C. Johnson et al., 1998). However, it was not a coincidence that this “dutiful” social dominance over Africans, and nearly all other minorities, would be of great socio-economic benefit to America’s development.

Because of these benefits, slavery did not end until after the American Civil War; and, contrary to popular belief, the purpose of the Civil War was not the abolition of slavery. President Lincoln, himself “stated clearly that his main purpose in fighting it was to save the Union rather than to affect the status of slavery” (McLemore et al., 2001, p. 262). Being granted freedom in America was in name only for former slaves. Black Americans were not completely free; because, they were forced to live as second class citizens in the very country that their forefathers helped build. The granting of true justice and acceptance within an equal, integrated, society was still being denied Black Americans by the White ruling social class. This was evident through the passing of “Jim Crow Laws” – unwritten, yet mortally enforced laws governing racial and ethnic relations in the post-slavery American era (Hampton, Fayer, & Flynn, 1990). Hampton et al. (1990) note that in place of slavery, Jim Crow laws governed almost every aspect of social life for Black

Americans living below the Mason-Dixon Line. In fact, according to Hampton et al., the insidious Jim Crow caricature of the Negro became a powerful media-image tool and barrier to legal and social equality.

The cancer of social injustice affecting African Americans remains malignant and continues to spread. Despite valiant efforts and social victories won during the mid-twentieth century Civil Rights Movement, one of the greatest ills that slavery conceived is one that still exists today: a people who have been here almost as long as the first White settlers, who still find themselves discriminated against – socio-economically and within the media – and unwelcomed in a nation built on the sweat and blood of their displaced African ancestors. Moreover, currently, even with gained strides toward social advancement, ironically, “higher education and employment status [are] positively related to increased likelihood of perceived discrimination among African Americans” (Perez, Fortuna, & Alegria, 2008, p. 427).

For centuries in America, just as surely as you were born and died a “Negro” (Black/African American), you were born and died a slave and/or were deemed socially inferior. Following that same oppressive thought, for centuries other minorities – including Asians and Hispanics – have also suffered various forms of subjugation and discrimination under the boot of America’s White, ruling, social majority. Orientalism – anti-Asian racism and hostility (Feagin & Feagin, 1999) – also has a long history in America. Many Asian Americans are often mistakenly socially categorized as foreigners by other Americans, because of their non-Western/non-Anglo appearance, and often distinct facial features. The media further helps to perpetuate racist attitudes toward Asians; because, according to Feagin and Feagin:

Films and television programs have sometimes portrayed Asians as faceless, fanatic, maniacal, or willing to die to die because they do not value life. Stereotyped images such as the ‘evil Jap’ of World War II and the ‘Communist gook’ in China, Korea, and Vietnam, were created primarily by White Americans and have been recycled as U.S. foreign policy... This uninformed and stereotypical way of thinking, sometimes called Orientalism, is common among non-Asian Americans and probably shapes most discrimination directed at Asian Americans. (p. 422)

With growth in the U.S. of Asian-Pacific; Asian-Indian – those who immigrated from India; and, Asian-Middle Eastern – a group of Semitic people who according to Reich, Thangaraj, Patterson, Price, and Singh (2009) are genetically close to “Central Asians” and “Ancestral North Indians” – populations came racist restrictions upon each group. Two prominent Asian-Pacific nationalities – the Chinese and Japanese – are among the oldest Asian American immigrant groups. Feagin and Feagin state:

Early Chinese immigrants came to Hawaii, where U.S. planters were becoming influential by the mid-1800’s. Later on, from the 1860’s to the early 1880’s, the Chinese migrated in large numbers to the West Coast to do low-wage work in construction and other industries. After racist agitation and exclusionary legislation stopped most Chinese immigration to the U.S. mainland in the 1880’s, Japanese workers were aggressively recruited to fill the demand for labor on farms and in construction and mining projects. (p. 382)

Then, attempts to cut off Japanese immigration due to a rise in xenophobic fear of that particular foreign “other” followed. As a result, White American employers ironically recruited even more Asians – including Filipinos, then Koreans, and Asian-Indians – to

fill the U.S.' continuing labor needs. Among the first Asian-Indian immigrants in America were Sikhs from India who came during the mid-1800's to work on the railroads or in agriculture on the West Coast. Asian-Indian's populations have steadily grown in the U.S., along with other Asian immigrants. Feagin and Feagin say three distinct waves of Asian-Indians have migrated to America since the 1960's; and, the latter group, compared to earlier Asian-Indian immigrants, "tend to be less well educated and more likely to move into service work such as taxi driving or family-owned businesses such as groceries and motels" (p. 421). This social "truth" regarding Asian-Indians is often twisted into an over-arching stereotype which is unfairly used to represent that minority group in the media – especially on popular television shows and in movies.

According to Feagin and Feagin (1999), public opinion surveys in the 1920's and 1930's indicated that anti-Asian prejudices were accepted by most White Americans. Chinese laborers fell under social suspicion, were derided, and insultingly called heathens, mice-eaters, and Chinks. Some of those racial slurs – often aimed at any Asian – have persisted for more than a century. State and federal laws prohibited Japanese and many other Asian immigrants from becoming citizens, directly owning land, and marrying Whites. Racist agitation aimed at suppressing further waves of Japanese and other Asian immigrants resulted in passing of the 1924 Immigration Act. Feagin and Feagin say that law, "established racist quotas based on a formula giving preference to 'Nordic' nations and excluded Japanese immigration with a provision prohibiting all 'aliens ineligible for citizenship' from entry into the United States" (p. 383-384). Subsequent to that repressive legislation, and despite other Asian minority groups also being discriminated against, Japanese Americans later became the only U.S. minority

group in modern history to have large numbers of its men, women, and children imprisoned on American soil, behind barbed wire in Concentration Camps. Spurring the development of those Concentration Camps were White members of Congress and the mass media – who continued to spread anti-Asian sentiments. Many White business people also suggested and supported the evacuation and imprisonment of Americans of Japanese ancestry, because they feared healthy business competition with Asian merchants. Those flames of fear were also fanned by military victories of the Japanese government in the 1930's and 1940's. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, there were several police raids on Japanese American immigrants; and, thousands of Japanese immigrants were arrested on suspicion of espionage. In addition, many Japanese American businesses were forced to close; and, scores of Japanese American citizens were fired by employers and evicted by landlords.

Paralleling the once intensely harsh treatment of Japanese Americans, currently, many Asian-Middle Easterners in the U.S. are bearing much of the social burden of Asian minority group discrimination. This is in part due to the fact that in recent years, Japanese Americans and some other Asian Americans have sometimes benefited from positive social and/or media stereotyping – such as generically being labeled as intelligent or scientifically and/or technologically inclined; and, have often been viewed as “model minorities” – groups who are said to be successful in moving up in U.S. society (Feagin & Feagin, 1999). Yip, Gee and Takeuchi (2008) assert some Asian groups' success in American society could be attributed in part to Social Identity Theory. The researchers state:

According to this theory, individuals choose from an array of possible social identity

groups; and, once those groups are chosen, individuals focus on the positive aspects of their [social] group, which helps to bolster their own esteem. More importantly, the more an individual identifies with a particular social group, the more invested he or she is in stressing the positive attributes of that group. Applied to ethnic identity, it then follows that individuals who report that ethnic identity is more important to their overall identity would be more committed to feeling good about their group membership [and succeed socially] even in the face of discrimination. (p. 788)

Currently major prejudicial factors preventing Asian-Middle Easterners from largely being considered part of the Asian “model minority” group are the “violent,” “anti-American” stereotypes unfairly associated with many Middle Easterners due to the involvement of some in the September 11th terrorist attacks, and other terrorist attacks, on American soil – which are also connected to various wars fought by U.S. troops in the Middle East. According to Giger and Davidhizar (2002):

Since the attacks in New York and Washington, DC, in September 2001, increased racial and religious animosity has left Arabs, other Middle Easterners, Muslims, and those who bear physical resemblance to members of these groups who live in the United States and throughout the world, fearful of potential hatred and hostility from persons of other cultures. (p. 79)

Relational Frame Theory (M. R. Dixon, Dymond, Rehfeldt, Roche, & Zlomke, 2003; Sullivan, Scott, & Nocks, 2011) illustrates how prejudiced associations – like those against Middle Easterners – form seemingly logically, although often unfairly, in the context of specific experiences. Sullivan et al. (2011) explain:

The logic is as follows: The World Trade Center terrorists were Muslims. The World

Trade Center terrorists were threatening. Therefore, Muslims are threatening. Using this theory, we can begin to understand how Americans came to stereotype Muslims in general as threatening. (p. 158)

Sullivan et al. assert due to the aforementioned, and other related stereotypes – such as Muslims being deemed violent threats – following 9/11, “Muslims experienced workplace discrimination, excessive searches at airports, and even direct threats to their lives because of their ethnicity” (p. 157). Timberlake and Williams (2012) say we may even observe increasing sentiment that Middle Eastern Americans and immigrants are a threat, and therefore undesirable minorities. This is particularly true in the post-9/11 period following military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The government in Afghanistan has been particularly turbulent; and, the U.S. media has been vigilant in depicting that phenomenon – which then reflects back on Americans’ perceptions of Middle Easterners. On September 27, 1996, the ruling members of the Afghan government were displaced by members of the Islamic Taliban movement – who declared themselves the legitimate government of Afghanistan (Giger & Davidhizar, 2002). As a result, for decades, armed conflict and violations of international human rights have devastated the Afghan people. This socio-political devastation further plagues the very poor, underdeveloped country which is highly dependent on farming and raising livestock. According to Giger & Davidhizar, only about 31.5% of Afghanistan’s population over the age of 15 can read and write; and, a total of 47.2% of males are literate, while only 15% of females are literate. The U.S. media often points to those and other social facts to perpetuate stereotypes of Afghani, and Middle Easterners’ supposed intellectual inferiority and overly brutish, misogynistic societies. Furthermore,

Timberlake and Williams (2012) argue that notions of Middle Easterners' perceived stereotypically violent "threat" likely derives at least in part from the framing activities of the news media reporting on terrorist attacks. As a result, Middle Easterners face discriminatory acts such as stereotypically being labeled as a terrorist or a menacing threat in movies and on television.

Many Middle Eastern Americans and people of Middle Eastern descent are constant targets of both social and/or religious discrimination with typically anti-Muslim sentiments, and "racial profiling" – a policing practice that targets people for suspicion of crime based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin (Apuzzo, 2014). Staples (2011) points out:

The Patriot Act, enacted October 2001, [was] the latest incarnation of legally encouraged racial profiling. The statute [lifted] court limitations on spying on religious and political organizations; it [permitted] wire tapping, seizure of financial records and correspondence, and unannounced searches of people's property without having to prove reasonable suspicion in court. (p. 32)

However, according to Apuzzo, the U.S. Justice Department will soon "expand its definition of racial profiling to prohibit federal agents from considering religion, national origin, gender and sexual orientation in their investigations..." (para. 1). Apuzzo says this pending change in racial profiling practices is in response to Muslim groups suing the New York Police Department over "surveillance programs that mapped Muslim neighborhoods photographed their businesses and built files on where they eat shop and pray" (para. 19). The federal move to reshape problematic racial profiling practices also addresses decades of criticism from various civil rights groups that say authorities have

disproportionately and often inaccurately singled out not only Muslims for counterterrorism investigations – but also Blacks for drug investigations, and Hispanics for immigration investigations.

Another smaller subset of minorities who can be genetically classified as Asian, are Native Americans (Lemonick, 2014). Native Americans’ ancestors were actually the first people to discover North America when, many scholars believe, they migrated across the land bridge from Asia to Alaska, at least twenty thousand years earlier than the fifteenth-century explorers who happened upon the continent (Feagin & Feagin, 1999). In fact, when Christopher Columbus and other White explorers claimed to have discovered parts of America, it was already peopled and populated by several million inhabitants. Feagin and Feagin put the number of Native Americans in North America at around 15 million at the time of their conquest by Anglo-Americans.

Although they are a diverse group, nearly all Native Americans suffered the effects of White’s “colonization migration” – the conquest and social domination of a preexisting geographical, ethnic, or racial group by outsiders – from Europe to the new world of America (Feagin & Feagin, 1999). Native Americans were the first victims of European/White colonization and domination in America – even before African enslavement. This colonization migration took place despite the fact that according to Feagin and Feagin, when Whites moved into the territories of Native American groups between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the cultures of the Native American societies were often more highly developed than the European settlers’; therefore, the White invaders borrowed heavily from Native American agriculture, pharmacology, and numerical/calendar systems.

Many people distinguish Native Americans as a single social group category. They were collectively and erroneously called Indians, by their White conquerors. However, for centuries, Native Americans have been a diverse collection of tribal nations and societies – like the Choctaw, Creek, Navajo and Paiute peoples – many with major differences in population, language, economy, polity, and customs. Historically, some tribes ranged from very small nomadic hunting and gathering bands, to complex, hierarchically organized nations with large territories in North America – that is, until formal Indian removal efforts were spurred in the 1800’s, following genocidal wars against various tribes waged by the U.S. government (Perdue, 2012). Perdue points out that federal U.S. officials plotted to transport remnants of dispossessed Native American nations to government designated Indian Territory; meanwhile, both state governments and individuals sought to usurp land and possessions from other remaining Native American communities. Perdue says the South in particular benefited from Indian removal; because, “removal served to solidify a biracial South and reinforce White power” (p. 4). Perdue notes that although the wholesale enslavement of any Native Americans remaining in the South after tribal removal did not happen, hundreds were in fact enslaved by southern Whites. According to Perdue, “with little tolerance for racial anomalies, these planters had converted previously free Indians into slaves and driven home the message that leading southerners aspired to create a region populated only by free Whites and enslaved people of color” (p. 5).

That form of social segregation and discrimination against Native Americans has left behind far more social ills than just a Trail of Tears. Isolation, poverty, disenfranchisement, intimidation, and racism compounded Native Americans’ terror and

threatened to render them powerless (Perdue, 2012). In the aftermath of removal, the United States did not officially acknowledge any of these remnants as tribes; and, Perdue asserts “before World War II, only the Cherokees had a government-to-government relationship with Washington, D.C.” (p. 4). According to Weston (1996), the U.S. began to turn somewhat favorable attention toward Native Americans in the years during and after World War II; because, Ira Hayes, a Pima, found himself in the national media spotlight as part of one of the war's most famous images – a group of Marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima's Mount Suribachi. Native American “code talkers” – who helped U.S. troops successfully transmit covert communications – also subsequently became the subject of American media praise. However, Weston says that praise seemed backhanded because the press stereotypically portrayed Hayes and other Indian soldiers as innate “warriors” who excelled instinctively at combat. According to Perdue, the war area absence of formal governments, commonly held land, and federal relations made remnants of Native American tribes vulnerable to exploitation by Whites. Perdue also notes that scattered and decimated Native American tribes – like the Seminoles and Miccosukees – did not officially politically regroup until the mid-twentieth century, under the Indian Reorganization Act.

Native American resistance to dispossession and segregation helped loosen the hold of Jim Crow in the South; and, some Native Americans in the South spurred a struggle that coincided with the Civil Rights Movement – the “Red Power” movement (Weston, 1996) – because generally southern states categorized Indians as “colored” along with Blacks, and made few separate provisions for them (Perdue, 2012). Even after Whites later

conceded a separate racial category identity for Native Americans, they still faced social discrimination. Feagin and Feagin (1999) state:

Native Americans have suffered from a variety of stereotypes, from the wooden cigar-store [totem pole caricature] figure to the bloodthirsty savage of the movies to the noble primitive of novels. Distorted images of bloody tomahawks, scalping, feathered headdresses, and warriors on wild ponies have been impressed on the Euro-American mind by sensationalism in magazines, newspapers, movies and on television. (p. 198)

Currently, many Native Americans still struggle against social disparities and harsh media stereotypes rooted in their history of oppression in America. According to Perdue (2012), “[such] historical trauma helps explain why Native [American] people have high rates of depression, suicide, alcoholism, violence, and a host of antisocial behaviors” (p. 29). Those plights facing Native Americans continue to play out within their media depictions. They are displayed in media images ranging from: reruns of TV westerns depicting “bad Indians” as retaliatory, murderous, savages attacking cowboys; the menacing sports team mascot (Weston, 1996) threatening to tomahawk their opponents down to size; and, most recently, according to Tallent (2011), the poor, uneducated, dark-skinned, forbidden, savage, beastly, bloodthirsty, mystical “other” of the Quileute Nation within the “Twilight” series. Due to several million dollars paid to various Native American tribal nations in state and federal reparations, gaming has provided some Native Americans with substantial capital as well as funding for education, housing, and social services – to help alleviate effects of the historical and social traumas they suffer. However, Native Americans’ struggle for social inclusion, rather than seeming collective omission, persists.

Another multi-faceted group of minorities and minority immigrants includes the Hispanic population in the United States. The term Hispanic has been widely used to designate persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, and Central and South American heritage. However, the term Latino is also used to describe those and other similar groups of Spanish speaking minorities. The terms are often used interchangeably; however, many people socially categorized as belonging to those groups say the term Hispanic emphasizes the Spanish heritage of those groups, but the term Latino recognizes the Latin American origins of those groups and socially incorporates the African and Native American components of their heritage. Individuals using either term are typically alluding to various attitudes toward incorporation into, or separation from, the dominant White culture. Within this research, I primarily employ the term Hispanic; although, the term Latino is also referenced.

The largest and most prominent group of Hispanics in the U.S. is Mexican Americans. Conquest of the Southwest subliminally grafted Mexicans, and Mexican Americans, to the American psyche as a squatting foreigner, even though that land usurped by the U.S. had once belonged to Mexico. Romero (2006) points out that after the Mexican-American War, special law enforcement agencies, like the Texas and Arizona Rangers, were established to patrol the newly formed border; and, to police both Mexican Americans remaining in occupied territories, and migrant immigrant workers from Mexico. The intent was to exercise social control and domination, all while keeping undesirable Mexican immigrants out of the U.S. Importantly, Romero points out the hypocrisy of U.S. border policies that manage to allow enough undocumented immigrant labor in to meet American employers' demands, while at the same time, increasing INS

(Immigration and Naturalization Service) and Border Patrol budgets and efforts – to pay for the illusion of “controlled borders” so politicians can appease the public’s perceptions of “security” regarding immigration enforcement. When access to citizenship is racially and/or ethnically threatened by discriminatory practices of law enforcement agencies that target Mexican Americans’ communities and places of employment, it denies them their right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, and to habitat and to inhabit (Lefebvre, 1996). According to Feagin and Feagin (1999), among many White Americans’ stereotypical views of Mexicans include: lazy farmers under big sombreros; “wetbacks” – often willing to perform difficult menial labor for low wages; and, mustache wearing vatos and sensual señoritas with a diet of tortillas and folk Catholicism. Feagin and Feagin also note:

Such popular images are often supplemented by negative treatments of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in schoolbooks that distort the history of the Southwest, as in the myths that glorify freedom-loving, heroic White Texans confronting a backward Mexican people. In addition, both popular and scholarly accounts of life in the Southwest frequently omit significant references to Mexican American contributions to the development of the United States. (p. 292-293)

Puerto Ricans, the second largest U.S. Hispanic group, like Mexican Americans, represent a fusion of Native American, Spanish, and African heritages. Puerto Ricans are an important and distinctive group because for nearly a century the island of Puerto Rico has been a commonwealth of the United States. Therefore, all Puerto Ricans are American citizens even though Puerto Rico is not a state. Though they are citizens, Puerto Ricans can not vote in U.S. federal elections – a much debated socio-political

issue seen by some as a form of subjugation and discrimination. Despite Puerto Ricans' citizenship status, Perez et al. (2008) assert that Cuban Americans – the third largest Hispanic group in the U.S. – are relatively better off than other Hispanics; because, on average Cubans often have higher levels of education and income, are least likely to report discrimination, and arguably have the best infrastructure for transition into the U.S. Despite that phenomenon, in general, Hispanics have varied experiences in American society – many peppered with cultural and social discrimination, and racism.

Perez et al. (2008) found in their research that variations in “perceived discrimination” – self-reported everyday experiences of unfair treatment – are related to sociodemographic and cultural differences across [Hispanic] ethnic subgroups. The researchers note:

Different Latino subgroups have different levels of exposure to U.S. culture and human capital and therefore may vary on degree of perceived discrimination, level of acculturation, ethnic identity, and cultural factors that may be important for influencing variations in perceived discrimination. (p. 422)

Along that vein, Perez et al. also point out the irony in the finding that “more acculturated Mexican immigrants (as defined by more time in the United States, English language ability, and higher education) reported higher rates of discrimination compared to less-aculturated immigrants” (p. 422). The researchers say this is because:

Linguistic isolation may reduce the perception of discrimination. The more English Latinos speak, the more likely they will interpret any intercultural interactions as discriminatory and understand it when someone discriminates against them. For all subethnic groups, speaking English was associated with twice the rate of reporting

everyday discrimination compared to Spanish-speaking Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos who may be more socially isolated from U.S. culture and institutions. (p. 430)

America is primarily a nation of immigrants; however, within that lofty ideal lies the paradox that whenever faced with waves of new immigrants, “nativism” – actions and policies based on the hostility of White “natives” toward foreigners and/or immigrants (McLemore et al., 2001) – often rears its ugly head. Nativism goes far back in American history as a reaction to many immigrant groups, even ethnic Whites – such as Italians and Greeks. Feagin and Feagin (1999) highlight three main themes of nativism in reaction to Hispanic immigrants in America: anti-Catholicism; “xenophobia” – a fear of foreigners; and, Anglo-Saxonism – social and/or legal enforcement of a White, Anglican (English) based dominant culture. Based upon these three tenants, the current nativist sentiments of many White Americans toward Mexican and other Hispanic immigrants could not be more apparent – since many Hispanics in America are Catholic and speak a foreign language (Spanish, Portuguese, etc.).

Anti-Catholic sentiment has been part of the core of much nativist agitation in America since the nineteenth century. A variety of secret societies – the most prominent of which was the Know-Nothings – sought to fight both immigration and Catholicism. Founded in 1849, The Know-Nothing party was the first national political party in the U.S. to use nativism in its platform (Carlson, 1989). According to Carlson (1989), the organization had three goals: to prevent non-native born citizens from holding public office; to deny Catholics from those rights as well, because of their allegiance to the Pope; and, to uphold and defend the Union without regard to sectional issues. Carlson

also states the Know-Nothings effectively used patriotism to glorify America and “native” White Americans; and, to severely criticize the Catholic faith and Catholic immigrants in rally-crying rhetoric such as, “‘Liberty, sir’... ‘dwells here, under the protection of the stars and stripes of a Protestant flag, in the warm embrace of a Protestant faith’” (p. 16). To further their cause, employing ethnocentrism – belief that one’s own society is superior to all others (McLemore et al., 2001) – the Know-Nothings precipitated numerous violent attacks against new immigrants and Roman Catholics. During the 1850’s, many Know-Nothings were also elected to state legislatures, executive offices, and Congress, to help push their anti-immigrant agenda (Feagin & Feagin, 1999). These historic anti-Catholic/anti-immigrant movement events directly parallel struggles that many Hispanics – namely Mexicans and Mexican Americans – are currently facing. One such example is Mexicans seeking U.S. citizenship who are struggling against anti-immigration legislation and nativist rhetoric from conservative legislators vowing to “secure our borders” – seemingly specifically our southern borders, from Mexicans. Many White Americans’ current xenophobia in relation to Hispanics is typified in the findings of Timberlake and Williams’ (2012) research: Hispanic/Latin American immigrants were viewed as less intelligent, substantially poorer, and more dangerous than the other minority groups researched – Middle Eastern & Asian. In addition, many xenophobic nativists currently tout official-language and English-speaking only government policies as a means to homogenize diverse groups like Hispanics within the U.S., and further promote both Anglo-Protestant and Anglo-Saxonist cultural values. Moreover, when addressing Anglo-Saxonism as it relates to Hispanics, Feagin and Feagin say:

Latino civil rights leaders have pointed out the discriminatory nature of several actions advocated by pro-English groups, in particular the prohibition of Spanish usage in government agencies, and the elimination of bilingual ballots in states with numerous Latino voters. A number of research studies have shown that children who are denied the right to view the world through their language and culture are made to feel inferior and may react in such negative ways as dropping out of school or engaging in drugs or crime – outcomes that cost not only themselves but the greater society dearly. (p. 89)

Timberlake and Williams (2012) discuss their notion of “Group Threat Theory” and “media framing effects” as a mechanism for communicating Hispanics’ alleged social threats to viewers. The researchers state, “There may be main effects of media attention to immigration, irrespective of actual increases in the foreign-based population” (p. 871). The American public’s anti-immigrant sentiment has been shown to depend crucially on whether the immigrants in question are unauthorized and/or undocumented. Timberlake and Williams note that certain TV programs and publications present a particularly harsh view of growth in the immigrant population in general, and of Hispanic immigration – principally Mexicans – in particular. Following stereotypical thought of Mexicans as poor, sleepy farmers, Timberlake and Williams also note, “Attitudes toward immigrants suggests that economically vulnerable citizens face direct labor market competition with low-skill immigrants. Therefore, poor [American] citizens ought to feel more threatened by immigration, especially low-skill immigrants from Latin America” (p. 872).

According to Timberlake and Williams:

Much recent anti-immigration rhetoric has stressed the undesirability of unauthorized

immigration, and this rhetoric – in the form of advocacy group material, news stories, and video images – has been centered in areas experiencing high levels of Mexican immigrants. For example, the Minutemen, an immigration control group, operates its “patrols” along the Arizona-Mexico border. And one has little trouble going to YouTube.com to find viral videos of Mexican nationals running across the border at Tijuana, El Paso, Texas, or Nogales, Arizona. (p. 875)

Given that mass media coverage of both the issue of Mexican immigration, and of political actors and social movement groups concerned about immigration, has tended to focus on the large number of unauthorized Mexicans within our borders, Timberlake and Williams’ findings strongly suggest that media images do affect viewers’ attitudes regarding immigration – especially in U.S. states without much direct experience with immigration. The researchers’ work also “demonstrates that public stereotypes of immigrants depend profoundly on both the content of the stereotypes and, crucially, on the [national] origin of the immigrants in question” (p. 886).

Another factor that can determine the degree of discrimination that Hispanics might encounter is their skin color (Romero, 2006; Roth, 2010). Roth points out that it is very important to note that in America Hispanic/Latino minorities are not officially considered as a “race” of people; instead, Frank, Akresh, and Lu (2010) note they have been “set apart as an ethnic group” (p. 380). Therefore, the U.S. does not have a universally recognized racial category designation for Hispanics/Latinos. They are typically categorized on most U.S. government forms, including the Census, as an ethnic category choice that one can select – only after the individual has been prompted to select/identify their race (Frank et al., 2010). Therefore, according to many U.S. categorical

designations an individual of Hispanic ethnicity can be a member of any race – including being a “White-Hispanic” or a “Black-Hispanic.” The paradox lies, however, within the fact that Hispanics/Latinos – just as the Black race and/or African Americans – are a diversely colorful group, with many individuals ranging from very dark brown skin tones (often with tightly curled hair), to many others with milky pale flesh (sometimes with icy blue eyes), and a multitude of other shades of brown and tan “phenotypes” – physical appearances related to characteristics that are socially understood as relevant to racial classification (Roth, 2010) – in between.

Frank et al. (2010) observe that, “today’s Latino immigrants, who display a wide range of racial phenotypes, complicate the Black/White portrait of America and raise the question of whether the historic color line will be changed” (p. 378). Frank et al. (2010) theorize that the dichotomous Black/White color line that has been seen as problematic by many social scientists, like W.E.B. DuBois (1899), could shift by definitively and permanently expanding the categorical notion of Whiteness to include non-Black Latinos. However, many non-Hispanic Whites seeking to retain their socially elite status would predictably resist that inclusion. In addition, the non-White phenotypic appearance of many Hispanics/Latinos raises further doubts regarding White inclusion. According to Frank et al., most Latino immigrants recognize the social advantages of classifying themselves as White when asked to self-identify. However, that would only work on paper and sight-unseen for some Hispanics; because, social discrimination often occurs based on individuals’ phenotypic appearance. Within their research Frank et al. found that relatively darker-skinned Latino immigrants experience skin-color based discrimination both in the workplace in general, and in the realm of annual income more

specifically. According to Roth (2010), “in the workplace many migrants observe how European phenotypes provide advantages among Hispanics” (p. 1301) – often serving as a deciding factor as to whether or not an interview will even be granted. Within Roth’s research sample, “39 percent of [respondents] with dark skin reported workplace discrimination, compared with 32 percent with medium skin, and 24 percent with light skin” (p. 1302). Roth says that pattern of discrimination in her findings was particularly pronounced among professionals – with 75 percent of those with dark skin reporting workplace discrimination, compared with 63 percent with medium skin, and 50 percent with light skin. Roth also notes that “light Hispanics also have more residential options and can move into White neighborhoods” (p. 1302) with fewer obstacles. However, Frank et al. say “Latino immigrants, regardless of how many may self-identify as White, are not immune from penalties associated with darker skin in the United States” (p. 395). That is because, as Roth states, when you get to the U.S., you are Hispanic, and are therefore a minority; but, if you are a dark Hispanic, you will typically be doubly stereotyped. According to Roth, “‘Racial’ discrimination against Hispanics, then, occurs in at least two forms: discrimination based on Hispanic origin, and discrimination based on phenotype” (p. 1290). Being Hispanic in America might affect one’s socio-economic opportunities; but, that individual’s color – especially how brown they are – certainly adds an extra layer of barriers to potentially confront.

Without a distinct Hispanic/Latino racial category designation in the U.S., light-skinned Hispanics/Latinos (and those who are less integrated) are likely to continue to test the flexibility of the White racial boundary. Perhaps this is because many might self-reflect upon the question – If given a choice, who wants to be Black? (considering what it

means in American society). Frank et al. (2010) note, “Stepping outside of the Black/White dichotomy may offer a degree of protection, distancing [Hispanics/Latinos and related] immigrants from the discrimination reserved for racialized minorities in the United States” (p. 381). That is why many Hispanics/Latinos are choosing to opt out of what’s viewed as America’s antiquated racial category system. During recent previous Census surveys, Frank et al. say higher numbers of Hispanic/Latino respondents marked “some other race.” The researchers also found that, “Latinos who are most integrated into the United States are the most likely to opt out of the existing U.S. racial categorization scheme” (p. 378). This blurring of existing racial boundaries, and rejection of the federal distinction between race and ethnicity, allows for the assertion and/or potential inclusion of a distinct Hispanic/Latino racial classification in America.

Yet another undermining challenge to America’s current racial, ethnic, classification system of Hispanics/Latinos is the seeming impossibility of socially correct, universal, self-identification. As previously mentioned, there are known social advantages of Hispanics/Latinos identifying as White. According to Roth (2010), on paper, many immigrants “check ‘White’ if they were considered White in their country of origin, even though they know this standard does not apply in the United States” (p. 1299). Although Hispanics/Latinos experience discrimination on the basis of phenotype, their racial self-identification is sometimes a poor proxy for measuring their actual racial appearance. According to Roth, the appropriateness of self-identification depends on an unproven assumption – that Hispanics who identify as White are actually seen as White by others. Additionally, Roth says individuals “from the Hispanic Caribbean are particularly likely to be classified by others in ways they may not classify themselves. U.S. observers often

classify those with darker skin as Black, an identity many Dominicans and Puerto Ricans reject” (p. 1295). Roth states:

The concept of race is far from the static, self-evident reality it has long been assumed to be. Scholars have come to see race as a fluid and multifaceted concept. In fact, there are numerous aspects to what we currently think of as race, including self-identification, racial appearance, how we are classified by others, how we believe we are classified by others, and how we present ourselves to conform to other people’s expectations. For many [minority] populations, such as Hispanics, multiracial individuals, Native Americans, and Asians, these aspects of race frequently do not correspond. (p. 1289)

This is because as Roth notes, “A person’s phenotype influences most of the other aspects of race, but is not synonymous with any” (p. 1294). The researcher concludes this observation by stating, there is considerable phenotypic variation across each socially constructed racial group; nevertheless, how one’s appearance leads to designation within racial categories still remains, often arbitrarily, socially and culturally determined.

Another less subtle form of discrimination than the phenotypic type, that Hispanics also face, is that of social “macro-aggressions” – affronts not directed toward a particular person, but at minorities in general, and may be made by a private individual or official authority (Romero, 2006; Russell, 1998). According to Russell, macro-aggressions reinforce stereotypes of minority groups as either criminals, illiterates, or intellectual inferiors. Along those lines, two examples of macro-aggressions currently plaguing the Hispanic community are racial profiling and immigration raids. Romero explains that:

Macro-aggressions are group affronts because they are directed towards

“Mexicanness” in general. Macro-aggressions target dark complexions and physical characteristics characterized as “Mexican” or “Latino;” speaking Spanish, listening to Spanish music, shopping at Mexican-owned businesses, or any other cultural practices [might] bring on racially motivated stops. (p. 453)

Both racial profiling and immigration raids help to protect Whites’ public and social space. Although many African Americans are also high priority targets of racial profiling, for some Hispanic immigrants such scrutiny from law enforcement could lead to even more dire consequences than being arrested – potential deportation. Georges-Abeyie’s (1990) theoretical paradigm discussing “petit apartheid” – small scale denials of access to urban public space, freedom of movement, the processes of capital investment, and political decision making, enforced by policing – is linked to current practices surrounding the racial profiling of Hispanics. According to Romero (2006), petit apartheid – as it relates to Hispanics – can also be used to explain: racial profiling in the war on drugs; regulation and policing of public space; under-representation of persons of color interested in law enforcement; and, negative social factors and discretionary decision making by both criminal justice agents and criminal justice agencies. During her research, Romero identified five common patterns of immigration law enforcement that put Hispanics at risk:

- (1) Discretionary stops based on ethnicity and class;
- (2) Use of intimidation to demean and subordinate persons stopped;
- (3) Restricting the freedom of movement of Mexicans but not others in the same vicinity;
- (4) Reinforced stereotypes of Mexican as “alien,” “foreign,” inferior and criminal; and

(5) Limited access to fair and impartial treatment before the law. (p. 463)

Police surveillance stops and searches maintain a landscape of fear and reinforce many White citizens' suspicions of Hispanics (and minorities in general); and, protect White access to public space by literally physically removing and/or deterring any minority presence or "threat" from frequenting desirable areas.

Conceptualizing racial profiling practices in immigration law enforcement as macro-aggressions and petit apartheid helps recognize the discriminatory functions and effects that immigration raids have on citizenship participation, and the rights of Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and other Hispanics – particularly the poor and working class. Citing border patrol operations in 1997 in Chandler, Arizona – known as the Chandler Roundup – Romero (2006) says that immigration raid fits into a larger pattern of immigration law enforcement practices that produce "harms of reduction" – which occur when offended parties experience restriction or a loss in their standing, preventing them from achieving a desired social position – and repression. Romero also asserts that ongoing immigration raids continually place Mexican Americans at risk before the law and designates them as second class citizens with inferior rights. During immigration raids and inspections – especially stops and searches conducted without cause – individuals are typically demeaned and intimidated, all while being subjected to a surveillance of their citizenship. Romero says a social consequence of such raids is that in urban barrios, the costly enterprise of selected stops and searches, race-related police abuse, and harassment, often results in deterring Hispanics' political participation; and, increases the likelihood of discrimination against Hispanics in the realms of employment, housing and education.

In sum, presumed citizenship for many Mexicans and other Hispanics is often embodied in skin color and/or appearance – which often unfairly serves as a trigger for suspicion and postulating one’s legal and/or “illegal” status. According to Romero (2006), The 1975 Supreme Court decision that “Mexican appearance” constitutes a legitimate consideration under the Fourth Amendment for making an immigration stop, essentially begat legalized macro-aggressions inflicted upon Mexican Americans. Romero also says, “Racialized immigration law enforcement not only places darker Mexican Americans at risk, but threatens members of the community who are bilingual speakers, have friends or family members who are immigrants, or who engage in certain cultural practices” (p. 451). Romero asserts even legal Hispanic residents become subjects of immigration stops and searches, and pay the cost of increased racism – sometimes in the form of violence, increased area profiling, or the decrease of government funding and services to their communities. Many citizens sharing ethnic and/or cultural similarities with Hispanics targeted by immigration law enforcement agents have been, and continue to be, treated as foreigners and denied equal protection under the law.

That denial of equal legal protection is undoubtedly unfortunate for both Hispanic/Latino, and Black minorities. Mbuba (2009) says this is because statistically Latinos and Blacks have higher arrest rates than other minority groups and Whites. In his research, Mbuba reports “Blacks were found to be arrested at a rate 4.5 times higher than Whites while Latinos arrest rate was 2.6 times higher than that of Whites” (p. 126). The researcher even says that pattern did not change much when crimes were disaggregated according to their severity. According to Mbuba, the reason for this existence of zeal in

discretionary arrests of Blacks and Latinos and their overrepresentation in regard to incarceration rates can be summarized in two possible schools of thought and social observation:

The first school supports existence of a possibility that the criminal justice system is biased against racial minority groups. Such bias could either be suspect-directed or victim-directed. ...With respect to the more common suspect-directed type, bias has to be construed to mean not only the individual officer's deliberate intention to treat citizens differently along racial lines, but also the department's practices in deployment, which are sometimes said to be based on the "common sense" that certain neighborhoods need more policing than others. ...The second school that has been advanced to explain the overrepresentation of minorities in the arrest statistics is differential involvement in crime. (p. 122-123)

Mbuba points out that "a strong argument has been advanced that Blacks and Latinos commit more felonies due to their socioeconomic situation" (p. 123); but, those minority groups' involvement in crime could be reduced if their social circumstances were improved to the level of many Whites. Mbuba also highlights the possibility that, "Whites may be committing the same amount of crime but going unnoticed, and the erroneous impression will be that minorities engage in crime more than Whites" (p. 123).

The existence of disproportionality in arrest rates between, and subsequent news coverage of, members of racial and/or ethnic minority groups and Whites is not disputable; however, the reasons for that social phenomenon are multifaceted and are not always solely linked to racism and discrimination. Nevertheless, social scientists and other scholars ponder the possibility of a decline in disproportionality in arrests and news

coverage of minorities – especially since according to Kurtz (2013), minority populations are steadily increasing in the presence of America’s decreasing White population. Kurtz points out:

The demographics of the USA are on the fast track to dramatic change. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2050 under a constant net migration scenario, Asians will make up 6.1% of the U.S. population (up from 4.4% in 2010); Hispanics (of any race) will comprise 27.8% (up from 15.8%); Black people will make up 13.2% of the population (up from 12.9%); American Indian, Alaskan and Pacific Islanders combined will comprise 1.6% (up from 1.2%); and non-Hispanic Whites 49.9% (down from 65.2%). (p. 250)

Staples (2011) highlights the social implications of such a population paradigm shift, by pointing out that:

A columnist for the *New York Times*, Frank Rich, has asserted that the inevitable changeover from an America where Whites are a majority to one where they will be a minority – in three more decades – has caused anxiety in the White establishment. What he does not say is that, among [many] Whites over age forty, it is the fear that they will lose their racial privileges and the new majority, people of color, will treat them as badly as they were treated. (p. 40)

America’s least wanted: Blackness at the bottom of the minority caste system construct.

After addressing the sociological and historical aspect of racism and minority group discrimination in America, and how those social ills can blur the lens of media depictions of minorities, it is important to note that not all racial / ethnic / minority group

discrimination is top-down. According to Levine and Campbell's (1972) "Group Conflict Theory" – the existence of social, economic and/or political tensions between members of various racial and/or ethnic groups who are seen at least in part as having distinctive interests that engender conflict – most individuals have strong identification with their own racial or ethnic group; and, this identification includes a tendency to create a hierarchy in which the social status of various groups is both fixed and competitive. Racism is seen as being mediated by the seeming caste system-like and hierarchical nature of those ethnic group relationships and/or conflicts. The most prevalent form of group conflict is the top-down dynamic – White/majority vs. minority social discrimination; and, "when Whites view other ethnic groups as in competition with them for societal resources, racially motivated violence can occur" (Mays et al., 2013, p. 16). Moreover, many scholars argue that the most note-worthy violent and pervasive form of group conflict in America is the White vs. Black racism/discrimination dynamic (Brown, 2013; Kurtz, 2013; Mays et al, 2013; West, 1993).

The socio-historiography of Black people in America is fraught with vast multitudes of instances where both equality and justice have consistently proven themselves elusive (Brown, 2013; West, 1993). As previously mentioned, the White Anglo-Protestant elite developed the notion of an advantaged "White race" (Brown, 2013; Feagin & Feagin, 1999; C. Johnson et al., 1998; Martinot, 2010) as a way to provide racial privileges for propertyless European American immigrants and prevent them from bonding with Blacks (and other minorities of color) in America. According to Brown, "initially, before the invention of Whiteness, race was defined in terms of geography, history, and culture" (p. 264). Early European immigrants who did not initially define themselves as White – but

rather as Italian, German, or Irish – decided to reap the advantages laid before them and came to construct themselves as White as they moved up in American society (Martinot, 2010). Feagin and Feagin note that by the late nineteenth century immigrants from Scotland, Scandinavia, and other parts of Western Europe followed suit; and, had come to accept a place in the socially constructed White race – whose racial privileges included the right to personal liberty, the right to travel and immigrate, and the right to vote. All such inalienable rights were being denied Blacks in America. In return for acceptance of their newly ascribed socioeconomic positions, Whites were encouraged to be a part of a racial hierarchy in which they enforced deference from Blacks. Remnants of that early American hierarchal social order construct still exist today in the form of “institutional racism” – accumulating social practices that ensure discrimination against minority groups in such arenas as education, health care, and employment (McLemore et al., 2001), and “systemic discrimination” – patterns of discrimination cutting across political, economic, and social organizations (Feagin & Feagin, 1999). Kurtz (2013) highlights the pervasive struggles of Blacks versus other minorities in America:

While dark-skinned ‘new immigrants’ from southern and eastern Europe were eventually able to negotiate their way into Whiteness, African Americans remained the racial other, and were increasingly corralled into urban areas that were being systematically bled of material and financial resources. To the problems of overcrowding, disinvestment and blight enabled by systemic racial discrimination, add sectoral changes in the American economy, and...ensuing joblessness [wreaking] havoc on the families and the social fabric of [many] urban Blacks, and [contributing] to rising crime rates in structurally stripped-down districts. (p. 248)

Those social ills rooted in institutional racism and systemic discrimination are a testament to the fact that the presence of an individual's racist attitude or discriminatory act does not always have to exist for racism to persist and prevail throughout society – because the “machine” feeds itself (Martinot, 2010). Mays et al. (2013) say, “Embedded in the minds of individuals, even apart from whether or not they endorse beliefs of racial prejudice, is the perceived relationship among race, crime, and dangerousness;” because, “when individuals grow up in a culture that endorses racial and ethnic stereotypes, these stereotypes can become ingrained despite conscious beliefs to the contrary” (p. 20). Such is often the case within the realm of mass media. Mays et al. assert that if society is to help end systemic discrimination against African Americans scholars must broaden focus from simply understanding instances of victimization, to a larger concern with determining how laws and societal norms – as characterized within the media – serve as a foundation for maintaining “implicit biases”, which are *implied* notions though not plainly expressed, and are at the root of racial prejudice, discrimination, and inequality. That is the focus of this current research.

The practice of demonizing African Americans – and Black males in particular – dates back to the period before the slave trade and has endured despite the reelection of America's first African American president (Brown, 2013). White Americans' fear of unknown, foreign Africans and other minorities has carried over from indentured servitude, through slavery, the post-slavery American era of Reconstruction, and beyond. The social climate of the Reconstruction Era was tempered with a strong resentment of freed slaves, based on historically racist notions of Blacks' ascribed “proper place” in society – which was to serve Whites and ensure their economic gain. That notion has

spilled over into nearly all facets of society, including the media. The theory of institutionalized racism within news media practices is deeply rooted historically and also applies to print news media; because, according to Domke (1997), this notion is evident within:

the public addresses, correspondence and writings of five [particular] journalists [who] likely contributed to [poor] race relations between Black and White Americans in the late 19th century. ...[Among them,] New York Tribune editor Whitelaw Reid, Louisville Courier Journal editor Henry Watterson and Atlanta Constitution editor Henry Grady helped reinforce Whites' superior attitudes toward Blacks and contributed to the indifference among Whites toward African American concerns.

(p. 1)

The attitudes and values present in the discourse of these leading newspaper editors during this period, shows that the mass media of that time helped shape and reinforce the White majority's notions about African Americans' presumed inferiority, by printing racist ideals within the context of the "news" – thereby transforming that type of prose into eternal racist "social facts" and points of view.

Modern-day lynchings based on false perceptions & ethnic blame discourse?

Minority men, especially Black men and boys, are more vulnerable to encounters with both institutionalized racism and systemic social discrimination (Kurtz, 2013; Mays et al., 2013; Nyborg & Curry, 2003; Perez et al., 2008). Following that notion, Brown (2013) says, "Far too many Whites' perceptions/assumptions about race and crime have effectively criminalized Blacks, in general, and Black males, in particular" (p. 259). Many researchers and especially many African Americans, feel the mass media focuses

more on murders committed by African Americans, and are less empathetic toward African American victims (Troph, 1999). According to Troph, African American victims do not get much support from the media; and, journalists deny accusations of prejudice and maintain that they treat murder stories objectively and fairly. Journalists also deny allegations of intentionally tainting African Americans' reputations while framing crime news stories.

Despite news media entities' denials, researchers have found that the media uses discourse-based explanations of minority and ethnic group tension, rooted in ethnocentrism. According to Feagin & Feagin (1999):

Individuals who develop positive ethnocentrism are characterized by a loyalty to the values, beliefs, and members of their own group. Ethnocentrism often prompts negative views of out-groups [(socially inferior and/or divergent groups, i.e., minority groups)] through a constant evaluation of out-groups in terms of in-group [(a socially dominant and/or accepted group, i.e., the White majority)] values and ways. Such negative views are manifested in prejudices and stereotypes that influence the social, economic, and political interaction among [social] groups. (p. 16)

Moreover, Ethnic Blame Discourse unfairly frames problem behavior committed by ethnic "others" as intergroup conflict and accentuates the harmful effects of the behavior for the White majority (Romer, Jamieson, & de Coteau, 1998). Upon investigating their hypothesis that the news media engages in a discourse of ethnic blame, Romer et al. (1998) found that White actors were over-presented as victims of violence compared to their roles as perpetrators; and, persons of color were over-presented as perpetrators of violence against White actors. Romer et al. also say that in news stories minorities are

more likely to be presented as perpetrators of crime than as persons reacting to or suffering from it. By focusing on social problems associated with minority group members, the researchers assert that the journalistic discourse perpetuates the belief that minorities have interests and values that conflict with the majority; therefore, minorities deserve to be blamed for those problems. This is a tautological argument that must end, in order to help stop the cycle of prejudice and racism within both the mass media and society at large.

Modern examples of possible victims of false racial perceptions of criminality and Ethnic Blame Discourse, ripped from top story news headlines are: Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, and Jordan Davis. Each of these young men seemingly came face-to-face with their White aggressor's perceptions of Black criminality tragically reflected upon them. Unfair, sweepingly stereotypical, associations between African Americans and crimes – such as robbery and murder – have long permeated public consciousness. Therefore, “if individuals conflate criminal activity with race, their views of crime [and criminals] are likely to be based, in some part, on their judgments of Blacks” (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997, p. 376). Further arguments about the regrettable association between race and crime are leveled by Hurwitz and Peffley with them stating:

The media [is] more likely to contribute to, than detract from, the conflation of race and crime. When audiences see African Americans in televised news stories, it is usually in the context of crime. Law-abiding Blacks (who, of course, comprise the overwhelming majority of African Americans) are less likely to be portrayed than Blacks who have broken the law. (p. 394)

One exception to that typical rule however, encompasses news coverage in recent decades of high profile “hate crimes” – acts of personal harassment and/or violence, or property vandalism, typically directed against members of minority / racial / ethnic groups, and are usually generated by fear or other emotions (Feagin & Feagin, 1999). Contemporary social science scholars, such as D’Ancona (2013), assert the key fact that, “Modern day social pressures may have driven traditional forms of racism underground, particularly in Western nations, but that does not mean that racism is dead” (p. 2). Hate crimes against members of various minority / racial / ethnic groups have spiraled upward since the early 1990’s. Toporek (2013) states:

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Annual Report on Hate Crimes, there were 6,222 hate crimes reported in 2011. Of those reported, the FBI classified the crimes as motivated by perpetrator bias as follows: 46.9% racial bias, 20.8% sexual orientation bias, 19.8% religious bias, 11.6% ethnicity/national origin bias, and 0.9% disability bias. Of those classified as motivated by racial bias, 71.9% were victims of a perpetrator’s anti-Black bias. (p. 3)

As noted, in the U.S., the majority of hate crimes are fueled by racism and racial bias – with many of those incidents involving White majority group members attacking minorities, primarily Blacks. However, Saucier, Hockett, Zanotti, and Heffel (2010) say the mass media and law enforcement is often hesitant to call certain violent incidents hate crimes (even if they generally fit the definition). Saucier et al. warn that, “legal factors such as the perpetrators’ motivations, the races of the victims and perpetrators, and the presence or absence of hate symbols or slurs often result in ambiguity in the classification of crimes as hate crimes” (p. 1767). According to Toporek, “hate crimes are

underreported for a variety of different reasons” – four of the main being: first, “not all police jurisdictions participate in the FBI’s hate crime reporting program”; second, “many victims do not report hate crimes to the police for fear of retribution”; third, “the victim must consider the crime to be motivated by hate in order to be classified as such;” and, finally and perhaps most noteworthy, “in cases where police action is taken and the [police] targets are [minorities], the reporting of that action most likely does not include an examination of the role that race bias may have played in the [officers’] choices” (p.

3). Mays et al. (2013) point out that:

White police officers may be biased in their decisions about which individuals they stop and their sense of dangerousness and threat of those individuals. While this is often attributed to a schemata of dangerous characters created through experiences, these decisions may be influenced as well by unrecognized bias. (p. 14)

Toporek continues along that line by stating unfortunately, “race bias is unlikely to be factored into examining the extent of force used [by police] unless community uprisings occur such as in the case of Trayvon Martin or the 2009 murder of Oscar Grant” (p. 3).

Another possible lack of vigilance in classifying fatal interracial crimes as hate crimes is the likelihood of stiffer sentencing, due to federal regulations, for the perpetrators/aggressors – who are often White. When Blacks are subjected to violence by Whites, the White aggressors are rarely punished to the full extent of the law (Brown, 2013). Moreover, Staples (2011) concludes, “When cops are forced to stand trial, juries are mostly reluctant to convict them” (p. 35).

Social Science, Media, and Race Studies scholars alike contend that, “Many ambiguous situations in everyday life raise questions of whether racism has influenced a

person's behavior in an interracial encounter" (Marino, Negy, Hammons, McKinney, & Asberg, 2007, p. 637). Such is the case involving the fatal interaction between a White San Francisco metropolitan area BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) police officer and the late Oscar Grant. Now former officer, Johannes Mehserle, fired the shot that killed 22 year old Grant – who was an unarmed train passenger – on January 1, 2009 (Egelko, 2013). Grant, an African American, was pulled off the train by police onto a platform near Oakland's Fruitvale Station, after officers responded to reports of an alleged fight on the train. According to Egelko (2013), courts say the lead officer at the scene, Anthony Pirone – who is also White – “had no legal justification for forcing Grant and a friend off of a train and onto the platform, where the fatal encounter occurred” (para. 3). Egelko points out that an appeals court also said, “Pirone had no reason to believe the men had committed any crimes, had no reason to hold them for investigation, and ‘had no lawful basis to detain [Grant's] group’...[because,] Pirone, by his own admission, never entered the train himself or looked for evidence of any crimes...” (Training failed, officer says, para.7-8). Furthermore, that lead investigating officer reportedly never asked the train operator if anyone was injured, if any weapons were used, if anyone came forward to talk about the alleged fight, or if the operator could identify Grant or his four friends as alleged participants. Instead, Egelko says Pirone: pulled his Taser on the group of young Black men; yanked Grant's friend by the hair, knocking him down; and, “later slugged Grant in the head, saying he had seen Grant place a hand on the officer's partner...” (Detention called unlawful, para. 9). Pirone also reportedly yelled a racist remark at Grant. Then, the lead officer ordered Mehserle to arrest Grant and another man.

Unfortunately, Mehserle met Pirone's brutally violent acts with even more violence; because, according to Egelko:

Mehserle then pulled Grant down, and Pirone and Mehserle pinned him to the platform, facedown.

As Grant struggled – to breathe, civilian onlookers said, or to resist, the officers testified – Mehserle arose, told Pirone to step aside, pulled out his gun and shot Grant in the back. Mehserle then handcuffed and searched Grant... (Detention called unlawful, para. 9 & Training failed, officer says, para. 1)

Grant was later taken to a hospital, where he died. Mehserle testified that he mistook his dark gun – a 9mm semi-automatic pistol – for his brightly colored Taser (Egelko, 2013; Staples, 2011; Toporek, 2013) and resigned just days after the victim's death. Pirone was fired the next year. Mehserle was found guilty but served only 11 months in prison for involuntary manslaughter. There were political rallies, and riots, in Oakland on the night of the case's verdict. Powell (2010) sums up her, and many others', feelings about the killing of Oscar Grant:

did you know before today
a bullet fired in disdain,
callous indifference
into a young father's back
as he lies face down on harsh cement...
leaving no room for compromise,
explanation or forgiveness
and no time to say goodbye

to his beautiful baby daughter? (p. 50)

Oscar Grant's killing did not initially receive nearly as much national media or scholarly attention as the racial profiling and subsequent death of Trayvon Martin. Kurtz (2013) states:

The February [26,] 2012 shooting death in Florida of 17 year old Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager, by George Zimmerman, a [White-]Hispanic neighborhood watch captain – and the police's immediate release of the shooter – drew widespread outrage at racial disparities in law enforcement of violent crimes in the United States. (p. 248)

Martin was feared, followed, and fatally shot by Zimmerman in a gated community in Sanford, Florida – a diverse suburb of Orlando. After purchasing a Snapple and a bag of Skittles at a nearby store, Martin was walking home to his father's house – whom he was visiting – when he was spotted by Zimmerman. Zimmerman was acting as a neighborhood watchman, seeking to protect residents of the gated community from possible intruders. According to Mays et al. (2013), Zimmerman was aware that there had been several burglaries in Sanford in the 14 months before the shooting; and, residents were on edge because of the numerous break-ins. Due to that fear, Zimmerman called 911 and proceeded to follow Martin – even though 911 dispatch officers told Zimmerman not to follow the teen (Brown, 2013; Mother Jones, 2012). Next came a confrontation that left Zimmerman with only cuts and a bloody nose (CNN Library, 2014; Mays et al., 2013) and the unarmed Martin shot dead. According to Brown (2013):

Initially, the Sanford Police Chief, Bill Lee, refused to arrest Zimmerman, because of the lack of evidence to disprove his account of the events resulting in Trayvon's death.

However, after nationwide protests and a reexamination of the evidence, Zimmerman was eventually arrested. (p. 260)

During his first television interview after the fatal shooting, Zimmerman said on FOX News show “Hannity” that he would not have done anything differently (CNN Library, 2014). Zimmerman was later acquitted and found not guilty in connection to the second-degree murder and manslaughter charges he was facing for shooting and killing Martin. Mays et al. (2013) say Zimmerman’s self-defense argument was loosely and indirectly based on Florida’s 2011 statute of the “Stand Your Ground” law – “[it] permits residents to use deadly force if they ‘reasonably believe it is necessary to do so to prevent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself or another or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony’” (p.20). That legal reasoning allowed Zimmerman to remain free both initially after Martin’s shooting, and after the trial – which further undercut public perceptions of fairness surrounding the case.

Overall, the perception of Martin’s death, and Zimmerman’s actions surrounding it, as racially based incidents was discrepant between some Whites and members of minority communities (Toporek, 2013). However, Toporek asserts that Martin’s death clearly “represents and echoes a pattern of violence against individuals and communities perpetuated within the context of racial, ethnic and religious fear, bias, and hatred” (p. 3). Moreover, Brown (2013) addresses Martin’s killing by placing emphasis on challenging the spurious links between race and crime, by asserting:

The Zimmerman verdict is the latest in a long line of reminders that far too many Whites believe that Blacks, in general, and Black males, in particular, are dangerous, thus constituting the faces of crime in contemporary America. Given this perception,

discriminatory anticrime policies that routinely violate, in particular, mostly poor Blacks' legal and constitutional rights are rarely questioned. (p. 260)

Brown follows in the footsteps of DuBois – one of the first American sociologists to put forth an in-depth analysis of race and crime. DuBois' (1899) findings laid the foundation for highlighting the inconvenient social truth that historically the American justice system has been (and remains) consistently biased against Blacks.

Additionally, Mays et al. (2013) contend implicit bias can be seen in the media frenzy that followed Martin's death. As it relates to the young teen's killing, Toporek (2013) says the media's focus on the hoodie (hooded sweatshirt) Trayvon was wearing – with the implication conflating crime, hoodies, and African American men – is another reminder of the bias and oppression that many minorities, especially Black men, face connected to their stereotyped criminal images both on-screen, and in the real world. For example, according to Mays et al., Geraldo Rivera – a White-Hispanic FOX News host – asserted that Martin died because he was wearing a hoodie at the time he was shot, by making the following on-air statements: “I am urging the parents of Black and Latino youngsters particularly to not let their children go out wearing hoodies;” and, “I think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin's death as George Zimmerman was” (p. 19-20). Rivera later apologized for his remarks, which drew criticism for asserting that dark-skinned minorities in hoodies are seen as gangsters; and, that perception of criminality somehow justifiably explains why Zimmerman shot Martin.

Although Zimmerman does tell 911 that Martin is wearing “a dark hoodie, like a grey hoodie” (Mother Jones, 2012, p. 1), whether or not Martin's attire had any implicit meaning for Zimmerman isn't really known. However, Zimmerman does indirectly

confirm that Martin's race did play an important factor in the teen's profiling. According to Mother Jones, in his 911 call before the shooting Zimmerman identified Martin as "Black" in his "late teens" and "a real suspicious guy" who "looks like he's up to no good" (p. 1). The armed Zimmerman – who was constantly following and repeatedly staring at the unarmed, essentially defenseless, teen – also seemingly projects his perceptions of Black criminality and gun violence onto Martin by stating, "Now he's coming towards me" and "he's got his hand in his waistband. And he's a Black male" (p. 1). Moreover, during that same 911 call, Zimmerman also said – out of the blue and unprompted – "These assholes they always get away" (Mother Jones, p. 2).

In another analysis of this fatal shooting, Kurtz (2013) addresses Zimmerman profiling Martin from two intersecting sociological perspectives: Lefebvre's notion of space, and racially stereotypical points of view. As previously addressed (in the case of Hispanics and Hispanic Americans), the history of ghettoization of minorities in American cities is a classic example of the White majority's use of public space to outline and exercise social dominance (Lefebvre, 1996). According to Kurtz, "Without the systematic social production of the spaces of ghettos over decades, the stereotyping of Black men and youth would not have the durability that it does" (p. 249). Spaces become coded over time, both formally and informally, for the inclusion and exclusion of certain kinds of people; and, according to Kurtz, "Black and other non-White boys and men bear the ugliest brunt of such socio-spatial judgments" (p. 250). Thus, the researcher asserts that Black men and boys are stereotypically linked in many of the White majority's consciousness with ghettos and criminal behavior; and, "can unwittingly and without warrant provoke fear and consternation when encountered in

spaces in which they are viewed by others as not belonging” (p. 248) – such as affluent, gated communities in predominately White neighborhoods. That might have been the case for Zimmerman in his gated community, because he said of Martin, “he’s just walking around, looking about” and “looking at all the houses” (Mother Jones, 2012, p. 1). Kurtz says “gatedness is a clear example of the social production of spaces of belonging and exclusion, of *us*, not them; *here*, not out there” (p. 249). The researcher elaborates by stating:

The Stand Your Ground law used to justify the initial release of the boy’s killer adds a frightening new twist to how we should understand the play of power in spaces, and the way that space can be used to reproduce overtly violent social dominance. (p. 248)

Therefore, from a sociological perspective, “Stand Your Ground” seemingly represents a fundamental, active, shift in the doctrine of self-defense as it relates to perceived White space; because, it is legislated not only in Florida, but in 24 other states – totaling half of the country. Thus, Brown (2013) says “the legal murder of Trayvon Martin” (p. 258) illustrates how “America, at the local level, continues to utilize legal measures to perpetuate the subjugation of Black males” (p. 258).

Another headline making news top story involving the seeming modern day lynching of a young Black man is the tragic “loud music” killing of Jordan Davis – which ironically happened in the same year, and same state as Trayvon Martin’s shooting death. Also unfortunately like Martin, the unarmed Davis was only 17 years old when he was shot to death – November 23, 2012, in Jacksonville, Florida. Additionally similar to the Martin killing, Davis’ triggerman is a White Florida man – Michael Dunn – who like George Zimmerman, did not pay any *major* legal penalty directly connected to taking the

life of a young Black man (at least *initially*), because of self-defense claims also loosely and indirectly connected to Florida's Stand Your Ground law. While this research was being written, Dunn was awaiting a scheduled retrial for first degree murder in connection to Davis' death. That charge resulted in a deadlocked, hung jury during the first trial. Then, on October 1, 2014, jurors finally found Michael Dunn guilty of first degree murder in the 2012 shooting death of Jordan Davis (McLaughlin & Couwels, 2014).

According to Botelho, Almasy, and Hostin (2014), initially in February 2014, Dunn was only convicted of three counts of attempted second degree murder, and one count of firing into an occupied vehicle – with four unarmed Black teens inside – which resulted in Jordan Davis' death. Botelho et al. (2014) say it happened at a gas station after Dunn parked next to the teens' SUV. The teens reportedly went into the convenience store for gum and other items; meanwhile, Dunn reportedly had just left his son's wedding, which he was in town for, with his fiancé – who'd gone inside for wine and snacks. Dunn's "fiancé testified that he [said], 'I hate that thug music,' as they pulled into the parking lot where the shooting occurred" (Edney, 2014, p. 2). Botelho et al. say "Dunn didn't like the loud music – 'rap crap,' as he called it" (Confrontation at a gas station, para. 3) – playing on the teens' car radio; so, he told them to turn it down. Dunn claims Davis threatened him; so, Dunn decided to take matters into his own hands. Prosecutors say Dunn lost control and recklessly fired 10 shots at the SUV, resulting in three bullets fatally striking Davis. According to Botelho et al., next Dunn: drove to his nearby hotel; casually walked his dog; ordered a pizza; drank rum and cola; "[learned] almost six hours later that he had killed Davis" (Confrontation at a gas station, para. 7); then, took a nap –

all without calling the police. Dunn never called the police himself. Botelho et al. say, “The first contact he had with them was at his home in Satellite Beach” (Confrontation at a gas station, para. 11). As many await Dunn’s sentencing for his conviction in the first degree murder of Davis, and the finale of this controversial, socially painful, yet hauntingly familiar news story, Dunn was facing 60 years or more in prison for the three attempted murder charges; but, according to McLaughlin and Couwels (2014), prosecutor, Angela Corey, says Dunn faces a life term along with a minimum of 25 to life for using a firearm. Finally, on October 17, 2014, 47 year old Michael Dunn was sentenced to life in prison without parole; and, Dunn’s life sentence was mandatory since prosecutors did not seek the death penalty for Dunn taking unarmed Davis’ life (Kinner, 2014). Notably, the judge cited Florida’s Stand Your Ground law during the sentencing – saying it has been misunderstood.

Many following this tragic news story wonder – Did Dunn see Black and think “threat”? Dunn testified that Davis threatened him and that he thought he saw a gun sticking out of the teens’ SUV; but, there was no gun (Botelho et al., 2014; Edney, 2014). In fact, Botelho et al. say Dunn’s fiancé testified that Dunn never mentioned to her about any weapon the teens might have had; however, Dunn’s defense attorney claims Dunn thought the teens were armed and that his life was in danger. Allegedly feeling threatened, Dunn testified, “My intent was to stop the attack, not necessarily end a life”; then, Botelho et al. say Dunn continued with a very interesting choice of words – “It just worked out that way” (Confrontation at a gas station, p. 8). Botelho et al. assert Davis’ killing is another reminder that, in Florida (and across America), racial profiling and stereotypes of Black criminality may serve as the basis for “illegitimate fear” and the

shooting and killing of Black teens and men. According to Edney (2014), many civic and community leaders are urging (outgoing) Attorney General Eric Holder to “investigate how ‘Shoot First’ laws shield those who commit hate crimes,” because “all too often, young Black men across this country are the targets of [racial] violence, a tragic fact fueled by stereotypical media portrayals that create inaccurate perceptions of Black men and boys” (p. 2).

Given the evidence, during the first trial, why couldn’t the jury decide on Dunn’s most serious charge – murder? Inequity in the application of the law based on race has been a dominant element in the African American experience (Brown, 2013). Kurtz (2013) says:

The Stand Your Ground law first enacted in Florida in 2005, and since then, in 24 other states in a legislative sweep sponsored by the NRA, alters the spatiality of self-defense claims in two important ways. First, it extends the protection of the Castle Doctrine [– which allows you to use deadly force to protect yourself in your home (Lithwick, 2014) –] into other social spaces, such as the street, the sidewalk or the bar. ...People can now carry their invisible castle along with them virtually anywhere they go, as long as they have a lawful right to be there. Second, it eliminates the requirement to attempt to retreat from attack before responding with deadly force. It steers away from the relatively conservative self-defense doctrine which imposed a duty to retreat in order to protect the sanctity of life, and replaces it with a ‘stand your ground wherever you have a right to be’ doctrine. (p. 249-250)

Lithwick says Stand Your Ground, in sum, allows you to shoot first if you feel your life is in danger, just like you can do at home – even if you are at a public gas station facing

unarmed teens, such as in Dunn’s case. To the horror of many, laws such as Stand Your Ground allow private citizens considerably more leeway in the use of deadly force in the face of a perceived “threat”. It is important to note however, that neither Zimmerman nor Dunn formally invoked Florida’s Stand Your Ground defense in their cases; and, both defendants argued basic self-defense law (Botelho et al., 2014; CNN Library, 2014; Lithwick, 2014). Nevertheless, Lithwick and other legal and political pundits – such as “Nicole Flatow at *ThinkProgress*” – say the Stand Your Ground law “had everything to do with both cases” (p. 1) because:

“Dunn’s lawyer Cory Strolla cited Florida’s Stand Your Ground law in his closing argument: ‘His honor will further tell you that if Michael Dunn was in a public space where he had a legal right to be, he had no duty to retreat and had the right to stand his ground and meet force with force, including deadly force.’” Moreover, in both the Zimmerman and Dunn trials, the provision was included in the jury instructions....

It’s clear that at least some of the jurors in both cases took the principle of “stand your ground” into account to some degree during deliberations. (p. 1)

Lithwick also points out the relevant language in Florida’s self-defense statute which states:

“A person is justified in the use of deadly force and does not have a duty to retreat if: He or she reasonably believes that such force is necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself.” (p. 1)

As a social scientist it is reasonable to ponder – What would have happened if Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis used the same, and arguably rightfully applied, self-defense argument against their White aggressors? Would the outcome have been the same in

each case? For instance, given the exact same circumstances – Would Trayvon Martin be set free for fatally shooting George Zimmerman?; Would Jordan Davis have had a hung jury in his trial for the murder of Michael Dunn? Based upon Brown and Lithwick’s research, those answers would likely be no, in such cases with Black defendants – based on America’s long history of inequities in the application of the law based on racism and stereotypically unfair perceptions of Black criminality.

Granted, there are indeed factors that influence an individual’s and/or TV viewer’s perception of racism and discrimination – such as “anxiety, depression, self-esteem, attribution style, ethnic identity, cynicism, and attitudes about the general prevalence of racism” (Marino et al., 2007, p. 638). Marino et al. also say, “Irrespective of the ethnicities involved in an ambiguously unpleasant interracial interaction, people who identify more strongly with their ethnic group tend to perceive the interaction as more racist” (p. 659). Regardless, top story headline making news tragedies like Grant’s, Martin’s and Davis’ do seem racist to many – from initiation of contact, to media coverage, and ruling within the judicial system. That’s why the outcome of those three shocking incidents is hauntingly similar to that of Emmett Till – a 14 year old African American boy from Chicago – who was killed while visiting Mississippi in 1955, for daring to violate southern Jim Crow laws, by speaking to a White woman (Hampton et al., 1990). Despite Till’s uncle testifying as a key witness – saying he saw and was questioned by the person who took Emmett from his house in the middle of the night – the teenager’s lynching went unchecked. According to Hampton et al., after only one hour of deliberation, an all-White jury found Roy Bryant and his brother, J.W. Milam, not guilty of the murder of Emmett Till. The researchers also highlight an unfortunate

precedence for such racially motivated violence, which allows its perpetrators to feel they can act with impunity:

Just a week before Emmett's arrival [in Money, Mississippi], Lamar Smith, a Black man who had [exercised his right to] vote in the state's Democratic primary earlier that month, was shot to death at high noon in front of the courthouse in Brookhaven, [Mississippi]. Again, there were no arrests. (p. 2)

“Since 1859, approximately 5,000 Black individuals have been lynched in America for alleged or real acts against White supremacy” (Thompson, 2006, p. 150). Despite being aware of the long history of violence against African Americans and other minorities in the U.S., the shock of tragedies such as the killings of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis still provoke important questions about: how attacks like those can continue to happen; how attackers such as theirs can remain relatively unpunished; and more profoundly, how such attacks can be prevented. Though Black men are seemingly targeted more often, unfortunately also among the fatal citizen confrontation counts are African American women like unarmed 19 year old Renisha McBride – who was shot in the face and killed in 2013, after simply knocking on a Detroit area White man's door. Often the perpetrators try to explain away such senseless violence by claiming they felt threatened.

Nevertheless, feeling threatened – whether physically or socially – is not the same as actually being threatened. Kurtz (2013) asks, “What kind of dystopian future do we face when so-called Stand Your Ground laws sanction addressing socio-spatial discomfort and perceived threat with deadly violence?” (p. 250). One possible answer – each person encountering an ethnic other and/or minority must realize, before acting out, that social aggression and/or violence is not an appropriate response. Such realizations could also

help individuals engaging minorities avoid committing a “racial micro-aggression” – a brief and typically common verbal, behavioral, environmental and/or social form of discrimination that is usually a racial assault on a personal level (Romero, 2006; Sue et al., 2007; Sullivan et al., 2011). Whether intentional or unintentional, these racial micro-aggressions communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights. Romero (2006) asserts both micro- and macro-aggressions work as a cycle which sustains hierarchy, harms of reduction, and repression. Romero explains that harms of reduction and repression are socially detrimental because they belittle, demean, ridicule or subordinate on the one hand; and, on the other, they limit access to equal opportunities and fair dealings before the law.

Certain kinds of racial micro-aggressions have become more common in U.S. culture and within mainstream media, than more blatant and explicitly violent forms. Racial micro-aggressions – such as telling a minority ‘You’re not like the others (in your minority group)’, or asking a person seemingly of mixed race, ‘What are you?’ – are even perpetrated by individuals who do not even claim to be racist or have racial prejudices. Likewise, Mainstream mass media must realize that not every micro-aggression confrontation between a White man and a Black man is simply a racial issue that must be reported by citing the Black man with the blame or label of aggressor. However, nearly everything regarding minority groups in general takes place against an underlying premise that they are symbols or the embodiments of a social problem. Adkins-Covert, Ferguson, Phillips, and Wasburn (2000) say unfortunately that is the state of public opinion as perceived by news editors; and, that is what tends to influence professional news judgment. Moreover, media quality and content is shaped by the White majority

audiences' preferences and ideals – with little social regard for minorities (Adkins-Covert et al., 2000).

Television's pro-social effects & the "hair of the dog" theory: Self-containing the cure for what ails.

Although it is a commonly held belief that television does more harm than good – especially to the young and/or those lacking sufficiently developed cognitive processing skills – television by no means is inherently bad. In fact, it can often do much that is good by begetting some important pro-social effects; and, as Stossel (1997) exclaims:

For many people who would otherwise be just plain bored, television represents an enrichment of cultural horizons. It has gone a long way toward diminishing isolation and parochialism and has given us cultural capital to hold in common. No modern state can govern without television. (p. 104)

Also touting some of television's pro-social effects, Mares and Woodard (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of the positive effects of television on children's social interactions and found:

Consistent moderate positive effects for those who watched pro-social content in experimental settings compared to control groups or those who watched anti-social content. Moreover, the positive effect of self-selected exposure to pro-social content was as strong as the negative effect of self-selected exposure to violent content....

The argument goes, pro-social effects of positive media content will be at least as powerful as anti-social effects of anti-social media content, other things (such as amount of exposure or attractiveness of the models) being equal [but] how equal are these "other things," and which line of reasoning is supported by prior research?

(p. 301-303)

Mastro and Tropp (2004) agree that the media has long been deservingly criticized for the anti-social and unfavorable nature of Black representations on television. That's why the researchers examined the influence of stereotypical television portrayals on attitudes toward Blacks – using the medium of Black television sitcom characterizations.

According to their findings, positive intergroup contact effects can generalize beyond an immediate contact situation and serve to curb racial stereotypes (Mastro & Tropp, 2004).

Moreover, Slater, Rouner and Long (2006) theorize that fictional entertainment narratives communicated through mass media, such as television sitcoms, melodramas, and films, can influence viewers' beliefs about the social world. In their study, the researchers test how television programming can impact opinions regarding controversial public policy issues such as support for the death penalty, and gay marriage/legal rights. The authors also explore psychological mechanisms for such effects. They found that narratives such as television dramas suppress counter-arguing with people of varying opinions who're present – regardless of the individual's political stance – liberal or conservative (Slater et al., 2006). Therefore, television's pro-social effects can sometimes be so powerful that it could give pause to, or silence – even if only temporarily – some of the most opinionated and/or biased individuals. Following that research supposition, ironically, watching even more television – but with positive, accurate, fair, and unbiased representations of minorities – could help serve to counteract television's potential anti-social affect on viewers. Therefore, if all news media can make concerted efforts to present fair, accurate, equitable and unbiased depictions of minorities, and/or present them universally in the same manner as the White majority –

that could indeed be part of the cure for what ails society's perceptions of minorities. However before further exploring that notion, first, the exact ways in which minorities are depicted within mass media – with major focus on news media – and how those depictions potentially affect society, must be addressed empirically.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Academics are vocal in expressing their concerns about the role of mass media in contemporary society. After decades of interdisciplinary scholastic observations regarding mass media, broadcast news, and journalism, sociological studies continue to bring to light new aspects regarding media effects on society. Exploring the sociological perspective as it relates to media is a way to delve into the nature of news and other media entities as a potential form of influence over society. The impulse to study media effects comes out of an increasingly urgent sense that social science can no longer dismiss mass media as external forces acting upon society, but rather that those forces are inextricably embedded in social culture, reflecting and reshaping it (Bird, 2010).

Galician and Merskin (2007) agree that the mass media is a powerful socialization agent that relies on simplifications, distortions of reality, dramatic symbols, and stereotypes to communicate messages from which viewers/consumers learn and model many behaviors – both healthy and unhealthy. Galician and Merskin focus on bringing a media literacy perspective to the examination of unrealistic media portrayals across all forms of mass media: television, newspapers, film, recorded music, magazines, books, and the internet. Their study encompasses media portrayals in all three primary media functions: news/information, entertainment, and advertising/promotion. Galician and Merskin state that media portrayals can often negatively affect how viewers relate to one another. Moreover, Bird (2010) supports that notion and elaborates on news' current specific role:

Today we live in a mediated world; much of what cultures 'know' about each other is

learned from media, with news being a key conduit. News is unique among media forms in that it purports to be (and is often received as) an accurate reflection of reality, even though we know that news is a cultural construction that draws on narrative conventions and routine practices. (p. 5)

Weston (1996) states that the limitations of news gathering and reporting processes contribute to the media's perpetuation of inaccurate stereotypes – which by virtue of their inclusion in news stories, are typically lent the weight of “fact”.

Empirical Research Framework

Although all the aforementioned minority groups outlined in Chapter 1 of this research – Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics – contributed to the social and historical development of Anglo American society, Wilson et al. (2003) recount that neither was initially included, or subsequently fairly covered, in the general reporting of news. Wilson et al. note, “The forces of technology, public education, and the political rise of the ‘common man’ made the penny press in the 1830’s the first truly ‘mass’ [media] medium in the United States” (p. 116). The researchers posit that since then, news about people of color and/or racial and ethnic minorities in White mainstream news media has been characterized by five developmental phases and patterns of reporting that have been experienced by all minority groups:

- (1) The exclusionary phase,
- (2) The threatening issue phase,
- (3) The confrontation phase,
- (4) The stereotypical news selection phase, and
- (5) The multiracial coverage phase.

These ways of treating non-White groups in news reports are not mutually exclusive and each is evident in contemporary journalism depending on which [minority] group and topical issue is being addressed at a given time. In fact, the first four patterns have been so uniformly practiced by news media as to have become virtually established as covert policy. (p. 116-117)

This review of literature details both social actions, and news media actions, theorized as lying within the tenants of each of the aforementioned phases and patterns of minority news coverage by citing pertinent research studies and analyzing concepts correlating with applicable corresponding news stories; then, related research analyses regarding media-image affect on viewers, biases within reporting information, and gatekeeping, are subsequently discussed within this chapter.

The Exclusionary Phase

The policy of virtual exclusion of people of color might seem benign; but, lack of minority coverage and minority points of view in mainstream television news has had the effect of asserting minorities' lack of status – a powerful social psychological message broadcast to Whites and racial and ethnic minorities alike (Wilson et al., 2003).

Poindexter, Smith, and Heider's 2003 research analyzing local television news in a dozen markets across the U.S. found that, "Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans were virtually non-existent as anchors, reporters, subjects, and sources" (p. 533) of local news content. In fact, researchers like Weston (1996) seeking to highlight Native Americans' presence (or lack thereof) in the news turned to other forms of media – newspapers and magazines – partly because Native American presence and coverage of issues concerning those communities on television news is scant at best. Heider (2000)

has suggested that the absence of people of color in news programming might be the result of the process of “incognizant racism” – whereby the news production processes as well as the attitudes of the majority of White news gatherers work together to influence the news product being aired. According to Perkins and Starosta (2001), media consumers “learn to view an ethnic group not historically and in context, but rather as they are reduced in the language of the media” (p. 74). So, what is Native Americans’ – and other often overlooked minority groups’ – virtual absence really saying to television news viewers about those minorities’ “place” in society? Perkins and Starosta say part of the answer lies in the fact that when Native Americans and other under-reported and/or inaccurately covered minority groups are in the news, a typical journalistic “form” is used and “language occurs that reinforces ‘certain choices of interpretation,’ in turn fostering stereotypic rhetorical visions of Native Americans and other [minorities]”(p. 75). Moreover, news media’s routine practice of excluding minorities and minority points of view has had a significant impact on the historical development of race relations in America; and, according to Wilson et al., established a legacy that has permeated all forms of American news far into the 21st century.

The Threatening Issue Phase

Subsequent to the initial exclusionary phase, racial and ethnic minorities first began to routinely appear as subjects of American news media reports because they were perceived as a “threat” to the existing White ruling majority’s social well-being (Wilson et al., 2003). Gonzalez and Torres (2011) affirm that notion; and, in their review of American news media the researchers argue that newspapers, radio, and television play a pivotal role in perpetuating racist ideals to the viewing public by routinely portraying

minorities as threats and reinforcing racial ignorance, group hatred, and discriminatory government policies. The notion of those perceived threats was grounded in fear; and, Wilson et al. say the journalistic construct of a Native American “threat” was the first to be highlighted by American news media. The researchers note:

Although the [White] settlers were intruders on the Native Americans’ soil, the colonial and early national press began to characterize their Native American hosts in the role of adversary with heavy use of the term “savages.” Newspapers, therefore, made it easy to justify the displacement of Native Americans by focusing coverage on acts of Native American violence that reinforced the savagery theme. The “civilized” [White settlers] were made to seem heroic for any actions, however extreme, that resulted in the overthrow of “uncivilized” savages. (p. 118)

Other minorities of Asian descent have also been targeted as “threats” by American news media. According to Wilson et al., the *San Francisco Chronicle* led the attack against Chinese immigrant workers and Chinese Americans in the western U.S. during the 1870’s, because they became the focus of fears that they would displace Whites from the labor market. The researchers also cite: “A 1990 article in New York’s *Downtown Express* newspaper characterized the expansion of the Lower East Side Chinatown with a headline reading ‘There Goes the Neighborhood’”; and, “In 1991, in *The Daily Breeze* in Torrance, California, the headline of a front-page story about the changing demographics in its circulation area read ‘Asian Invasion’ and rekindled White fears of a ‘Yellow Peril’” (p. 118).

Blaming the “believable”: The Black “threat” on television news.

When Whites turned their attention away from deemed “savage Indians” toward so-

called “African savages,” next came the notion of the Black “threat” to American society, as perpetuated by news media. Historically, Blacks were the subject of fears that flooded the press with articles speculating what would happen to White society in the aftermath of emancipation (Domke, 1997; Wilson et al., 2003). Furthermore, Staples (2011) recounts that:

Since the end of segregation, there has been a political movement, reflected in the media, that feeds the public a steady diet of images and platitudes that perpetuate the idea that Blacks pose a threat to Whites, even if race is not directly mentioned. (p. 33)

Dixon (2011) offers two main claims about television news media, racial stereotypes, and depictions of African Americans – typically Black men – as social “threats”:

First, the news media misrepresent Black men as criminal suspects; second, exposure to this misrepresentation perpetuates the stereotypical belief that African Americans comprise the bulk of threatening criminal suspects and therefore need to be incarcerated in order to protect White society. I argue, therefore, that watching television news leads to implicit racism, and that unconscious racism underpins support for a punishing democracy that treats Black men as criminals rather than as citizens. In short, television news is teaching us to love fear. (p. 108)

Sometimes race and the idea regarding fear a Black “threat” is intentionally mentioned as a deceptively misleading tool in matters of race and crime. For instance, in top stories that made national news headlines several White people have falsely made criminal claims against imaginary Black “threats” so *they* could attempt to evade the law. For example: In 2009 Bonnie Sweeten of Pennsylvania, was caught at Disney World spending money she stole from her family and the law firm where she worked, after she

lied claiming she and her daughter were kidnapped by two Black men; In 2003 Pizza deliveryman Brian Wells came in a Pennsylvania bank with a bomb locked around his neck and got nearly nine thousand dollars after he claimed a group of Black men took him hostage and strapped the bomb on him, all before Wells was blown up by the device and police later found out that Wells was in on the plot with a few of his White friends; In 1994 Susan Smith of South Carolina, received lots of media attention for claiming a Black guy hijacked her car with her kids in it, and scores of Black men were rounded up by police before Smith later admitted to rolling her own car into a lake and killing her children so she could start her life over by marrying a wealthy man without having the burden of her old family; and, Charles Stuart of Massachusetts, killed his pregnant wife in 1989 for insurance money and blamed it on a Black man – resulting in police arresting several Black men, all before Stuart’s own brother admitted that he was involved his brother’s wife’s killing, which resulted in Charles Stuart’s suicide (Gane-McCalla, 2009). While Black men are usually the object of these imaginary Black “threat” claims, Black women have also been targeted. In one shocking story that also played out at the center of national news and other media attention, according to NBC News’ MSNBC.com staff and news service (2010), Bethanny Storro of Washington state, threw acid in her own face in 2010 and blamed a Black woman for the crime. Before admitting to self-mutilation, NBC News says Storro falsely claimed, “her attacker said ‘Hey pretty girl, do you want to drink this?’ before splashing the acid that burned her face” (Woman with ponytail, para. 5). Storro reportedly wanted media attention and ironically, to meet Oprah Winfrey – the most powerful Black woman in mass media. It was Winfrey’s producers who discovered the gaping holes in Storro’s story and alerted police.

According to NBC News, Storro later publicly claimed she walked away from a scheduled “Oprah” show interview for reasons other than the show’s discovery of her false claim. These examples of the framing of Black people as a “threat” not only reflects the racist notions of those individuals, but also the willingness of a majority-White public, the news media, and the criminal justice system to go along with such false allegations instead of exercising logic – or examining evidence.

Whether falsely accused or culpable, perpetuating the notion of the Black threat is one that many social scientists and media researchers argue still exists within current television news practices, especially as it relates to criminality (Dixon, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011; T. L. Dixon et al., 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman, 1992; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Hutchinson, 1997; Poindexter et al., 2003; Romer et al., 1998; Staples, 2011). In their study conducted on the treatment of persons of color in local television news Romer et al. (1998) asked one major question about the alleged minority criminal “threat”: Does crime reporting present persons of color primarily as the source of problems – with White actors serving primarily as bystanders affected by crime? Romer et al.’s findings suggest the affirmative; and, the researchers’ results replicate findings from previous research – that persons of color are featured to a greater extent in the crime-news category within news media. Those findings typically hold true for African Americans, in terms of correlations with criminality, more than any other ethnic group; because, according to Staples (2011):

Studies show that when asked to picture the image of a criminal, White people are more likely to envision a “Black” drug addict or violent criminal than a White one, and that both Black and White test subjects will select pictures of people with darker

skin and more African features over other portraits when asked to guess which are “criminals.” Harvard’s own Implicit Association Test on the Web has shown that every population group except Blacks unconsciously associates Blacks with crime. (p. 36)

Perhaps this is because whether based on culpability, officer discretion in making arrests, and/or suspect-directed bias, Mbuba (2009) – who tested the claim that minorities are arrested at a higher rate than Whites (as mentioned in Chapter 1) by using data from a mid-western police department – found when arrests were weighted against the total population for each of the racial/ethnic groups analyzed:

For felony offenses, Blacks were arrested 6.9 times more than Whites while Latinos were arrested 2.2 times more than Whites[;]...

Blacks were found to be arrested for misdemeanor offenses 4.1 times more than Whites while Latinos were arrested 2.3 times more than Whites. Other racial groups combined had 1.2 times the chance of being arrested for misdemeanor compared to Whites [and;]...

The arrest rate for Blacks was found to be 7.8 times higher than the arrest rate for Whites for infractions and local ordinance violations combined. The arrest rate for Latinos was even more remarkable at 12.2 times higher than the arrest rate for the Whites. All other racial and ethnic groups were arrested 2.3 times more than Whites for these two categories of offenses. (p. 128-129)

Of course many minority arrests such as these, especially felony arrests deemed “newsworthy”, are likely to be aired on television news and/or covered by other news

media due in part to press releases derived from police department arrest reports – which are made available to news media either automatically, or upon request.

In his study of local television news broadcasts, Entman (1992) found that violent crimes committed by Blacks comprised a substantial portion of the coverage of all analyzed news stories centrally featuring African Americans. In related research which built on Romer et al.'s (1998) previously discussed (Chapter 1) findings of overrepresentation of Blacks as criminals, Dixon and Linz (2000) found that African Americans were twice as likely as Whites to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime on local television news. Moreover, Hurwitz & Peffley (1997) state, “Not only are African-Americans more likely than Whites to be portrayed as criminal suspects in news stories about violent crime, but they are also more likely to be depicted as physically threatening” (p. 376) – which was also noted by Jamieson (1992) in crime portrayals on national network news. In addition, T. L. Dixon et al. (2003) found that African Americans are underrepresented as victims of violent crime.

In keeping with the Blacks presented as criminal threats versus victims news theme, Dixon and Linz (2000) also note that African Americans were overrepresented as perpetrators on television news in comparison to actual police crime reports. The researchers' statistical analyses found that Blacks only represented 21% of individuals arrested for crimes, but were 37% of the perpetrators featured in crime news stories aired on Los Angeles news stations. Dixon (2007) pushes forward the observation that Blacks on television news are generally depicted as criminals, by exploring the extent to which crime news is “racialized”; and, notes the juxtaposition that Whites are typically presented as officers, heroes, or non-violent victims. Within Dixon's 2007 research,

participants were exposed to a crime story embedded in a newscast, then asked the likelihood that the depicted officer and perpetrator were either White or Black.

Participants were also asked how positively they viewed the officer featured in the story.

Those findings were three-fold:

First, ...news viewers exposed to unidentified criminality will associate what they see with African Americans. Second, unidentified officers will be perceived as being both White and positive figures among heavy news viewers. Third, chronic activation via news exposure can maintain and reinforce stereotypes. (p. 287-288)

In addition, Dixon's 2008 investigation of local news viewing and perceptions of African Americans and crime directly assesses the relationship between news viewing and race and crime perceptions in three ways: First, that study "includes a measure of the racialized content participants are...likely to encounter on news programs. [Second], the survey includes controls for various kinds of news exposure and orientation. Finally, the...survey uses controls for neighborhood racial composition and preexisting racial attitudes" (p. 109). Findings of Dixon's 2008 research are as follows:

News viewers exposed to the regular overrepresentation of Blacks with criminality were particularly likely to link Blacks with the trait of violence, and attention to crime news was associated with viewing crime as serious, viewing Blacks as culpable criminals, and perceiving unidentified criminality as Black criminality. (p. 121)

The bulk of Dixon's television news research – including his 2006 research on psychological reactions to crime news portrayals of Black criminals (which is discussed in detail regarding cognitive explanations of media-image affect on viewers) – purports that African Americans are most likely to be linked with criminality; and,

overrepresentation of African American law breaking is likely to affect viewers' notions regarding Blacks as a social threat. This previous research offers empirical support for the notion that African Americans are often unduly associated with criminality and are typically presented as a "threat" on local news programs.

Group threat theory: Influx of the "Brown" threat to White social dominance.

Besides Blacks, arguably the second most allegedly "threatening" minority group targeted by White mainstream news is Hispanics/Latinos because of the threats they pose to America's workforce and population. Wilson et al. (2003) point out that during the 1950's the same California news media that had attacked Chinese immigrant workers, Chinese Americans, and other Asian laborers similarly labeled Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans as a threat to the White labor force. According to Wilson et al., news headlines blared against Mexican immigrant workers journalists routinely labeled as "wetbacks." The perceived threat that Mexican immigrant workers pose is directly linked to "Group Threat Theory" – proposes that large groups of immigrants threaten the social position and control over valued resources of the native born, White, ruling majority (Blumer, 1958). As it relates to Mexicans and Mexican Americans (the largest group of Hispanics in the U.S.) and as originally theorized by Blumer, Group Threat Theory points out that large and growing representations of out-group members threaten the dominant social group's position and proprietary claim to valued resources such as jobs, housing, and political power. Blumer explains how these social threats generate interests among the dominant group both to exclude the encroaching and/or immigrant group from access to those resources, and generate negative images of the targeted group – as framed within the media – in order to justify efforts supporting that subordinate

group's exclusion. One such example of how media framing affects exclusionary attitudes about Hispanics – especially Mexicans and Mexican Americans – is how the “problem” of immigration, whether authorized or unauthorized, is presented on the news. Dunaway, Branton, and Abrajano (2010), found that media attention to immigration was higher in states on the U.S.-Mexico border, leading to a greater propensity for residents of those states to identify immigration as a “most important problem.” In a study on immigration attitudes in two counties in North Carolina, O’Neil and Tienda (2010) found that watching “Lou Dobbs Tonight” on CNN was associated with negative views on immigration. Moreover, Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008) used an experimental design to show that news accounts of the costs of Latino immigration triggered more negative attitudes toward immigration policy compared to equivalent accounts of European immigration. Similarly, in a subsequent study with the same two lead researchers Valentino, Brader, and Jardina (2013) found that mentions of Latinos regarding immigration news coverage began to outnumber mentions of other immigrant groups beginning in 1994, the year when Proposition 187 – a proposal in California to end most social welfare and educational assistance to unauthorized immigrants – garnered significant national news and media attention. Perhaps this is because when given the facts, one can conclude that Hispanics in America do pose a real social threat to Whites in terms of population; because, many researchers argue that steadily increasing Hispanic/Latino immigration and populations in the U.S. are direct threats to Whites’ already dwindling majority population status (Eitzen & Zinn, 2004; Kurtz, 2013; Romero, 2006; Staples, 2011) – thus prompting some Whites to fight even harder to

protect their majority interests and keep the current status quo with regards to allocation of socio-economic and socio-political resources.

Seemingly in response to that real population threat, Hispanics/Latinos (like Blacks) are often singled out as perpetrators in crime news coverage as a means of justification for their social control and exclusion – another major tenant of Group Threat Theory. Despite previously mentioned journalistic assertions regarding many Mexicans’ willingness to work hard often for low wages, on the seemingly contradictory opposite end of the Hispanic/Latino social threat spectrum are notions of criminality and violence. However, Mbuba (2009) found that “Latinos did not exceed Blacks or Whites in any one serious crime, but they were fairly conspicuous in drug violations, burglary, and theft” (p. 128). Latino criminals are portrayed similarly to Black criminals on television news; but, Dixon and Linz (2000) say there are some key differences. For example, the researchers say similar to Blacks, Latinos are also more likely than Whites to be portrayed as criminals on news programs; however, Latinos are simultaneously more invisible than Blacks on television news. Dixon and Linz 2000 research found that Latino adults were slightly underrepresented as perpetrators on television news (29%) compared to actual crime reports (47%). A number of scholars have suggested this might be the case because Latinos may in fact be associated with other crimes and/or “problems” in news media such as illegal immigration and subsequent criminal enforcement in the form of immigration raids (Romero, 2006; Timberlake & Williams, 2012; Wilson et al., 2003). Unfortunately, overall though, crime and race are inextricably linked in the U.S., fueled by many Whites’ fears of violence and street crimes committed by racial/ethnic minorities – even though race itself is not always explicitly mentioned in the public

discourse; and, as the news media continues to disproportionately identify crimes committed by Blacks and Hispanics as threatening to Whites and society at large, such news coverage seems less egregious, even somewhat justifiable, because it points out the “threat.”

The Confrontation Phase

After news media brings the alleged threat to society’s attention, next comes the multifaceted confrontation phase of minority news coverage – which involves broadcasting legislative action against, and the often violent responses to, racial and ethnic minorities. News thrives on conflict and confrontation – the antithesis of order (Smith, 1994). The news media often reduces complex social conflicts into simple framing of one side versus another – “us versus them” – serving to further exacerbate racial polarization (Wilson et al., 2003). Regarding the confrontation phase, Wilson et al. note:

This is a natural progression from the exclusionary phase: News people think of non-Whites [(minorities)] as outside the American system, thus, their actions must be reported as adversarial because they are seen as threats to the social order. Until the late 1960’s, news headlines and text were filled with racial epithets in reporting on these social confrontations, thereby encouraging conflict instead of conciliation.

(p. 119)

The researchers cite violent historical examples of such conflicts including: the “Indian” Wars of the westward expansion; the Mexican-American War over desired southwestern territories; and, the lynchings of Blacks (primarily) in the South, Mexicans in the Southwest, and Asians in the West. Additionally cited, confrontations in the form of

legislative actions such as: “Jim Crow” (anti-Black) and “Jap Crow” (anti-Japanese) segregationist laws; the passing of various anti-immigration laws aimed at various racial and/or ethnic groups; and, the creation of federal agencies like the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Macro-aggressions in television news: Targeting Blackness & Mexicanness in general.

Examples of top-down minority confrontations currently, and constantly, being aired on television news include macro-aggressions such as racial profiling, the War on Drugs, and immigration raids; and, an examination of each helps explain why Blacks and Hispanics have such disproportionately high arrest rates and are typically depicted as criminals on television news. Those macro-aggression confrontations – aimed at minority groups in general – are partly rooted in Levine and Campbell’s (1972) notion of “Group Conflict Theory”; because, they are top-down efforts to maintain control of the allocation of socio-economic and socio-political resources such as desirable jobs and housing, voting privileges and political power, and control of land and choice (White) social space. Thus, “a system of ethnic domination-subordination (or stratification) [is] born” (McLemore et al., 2001, p. 133) – which is supported and reinforced by the news media.

Racial profiling.

Racial profiling has been a consistent news topic and source of debate within the media for the past few decades. Although some tenants of racial profiling will soon be changing federally, local, state, and federal officials will still continue to target people for suspicion of crime based on their race and ethnicity. Racial profiling has its roots in

White slave-owners' desires to control their so-called property, since Black people were once deemed property, not citizens – due to a Supreme Court ruling in the Dred Scott decision of 1857 (Staples, 2011). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 reduced the possibility that entire racial and ethnic groups could be sanctioned for mistreatment; but, in reality law enforcement can target whomever they like – based on their race or ethnicity.

Therefore, Staples contends that racial profiling should be viewed as:

The systemic, historic, and lived experiences of Blacks being controlled and punished by the police and a criminal justice system that exercises incredible latitude and bias, as a result of implicit bias among a majority-White public that condones and rationalizes this treatment....

Racial profiling, then, has endured as a tool of White power, systematically activated and codified into law, and not merely a collection of individual offenses.

(p. 31-32)

To justify supporting various forms of racial profiling, Brown (2013) says a decades old, flawed, tautological argument has informed criminal justice practices based on:

[Behavioralist] assumptions that race and crime are intimately linked and reflected by [a] large number Black males who consciously choose crime as a viable career pathway. This choice stems from their defective subculture–i.e., culture of poverty–that glorifies violence and irresponsible behaviors. The deficient value system that arises from many Blacks' adherence to a culture of poverty and violence inevitably leads them to make irresponsible decisions and transforms Black males, in particular, into a dangerous class of criminals. To legitimize this view, conservative think tanks, political leaders, and members of the law enforcement special interest groups

turned to governmental statistics. (p. 265)

However, Brown purports that:

Scholarship linking race and crime are usually based on specious assumptions.

Therefore, these arguments usually reflect the prejudices of their authors paraded and [disguisedly] presented in the respected language of scholarly research.

Consequently, there is no sound scientific proof linking [a particular] race and crime....[because] in the urban centers of America in the mid 19th century, the faces of crime were poor Irish immigrants. (p. 266)

Brown also asserts that, usage of crime data to justify the continuation of various forms of racial profiling without situating these statistics within the social structures that produced them is an example of what esteemed sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) called “abstracted empiricism” – the bureaucratic practices of gathering statistical data by the usage of ahistorical variables, that end up denying the significance of inequality and race-based biases, that can give inaccurate meanings to empirical data. Due in part to abstract empiricism in relation to minority criminality, Brown posits that many Whites “unconsciously see all Black and Latino men as criminal when less than 20 percent of them are” (p. 40). While viewing the news, Dixon (2009) notes consternation regarding the media’s activating role in perpetuating such notions – which can lead to racial profiling:

If the news revealed [a criminal] perpetrator was Black, it would reinforce the stereotype that many Blacks are criminals. Others, particularly those outside of the Black community, would then use that stereotype to unfairly judge other African Americans, the vast majority of whom are not criminals. (p. 24)

Not even law abiding Black scholars and intellectuals are safe or exempt from being targeted. One example of racial profiling noted nationally in news and other media for nearly two weeks is that of professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., of Harvard. According to Staples (2011), Dr. Gates was arrested in the afternoon of July 16, 2009, at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, after: returning from a trip to China; unsuccessfully attempting to open his damaged front door; entering the back door with his key and turning off his alarm; then, finally successfully attempting to force his front door open, with the assistance of his limo driver – also a Black male – who carried Gates’ luggage into his house, then left empty handed. In the midst of the homeowner’s actions, Staples says Gates – who has restricted mobility and walks with a cane – was racially profiled and deemed a possible robbery “threat” by: an elderly White female neighbor who said she believed the men were burglarizing the house; another White (“olive-skinned and of Portuguese descent” – Drash, 2009, para. 11) woman – Lucia Whalen – who called 911 after being told by the first woman about the incident; and, various involved members of the Cambridge police department – including arresting officer, Sgt. James Crowley, a White male. Staples posits:

There is a high probability that, to the first witness, the presence of a Latino or Black Male in a White neighborhood was contrary to her assumptions in a highly consequential way: the men did not belong there, and therefore were criminals who wished to burglarize the house....

[However,] Whalen indicated she was well aware that she was uncertain whether it was a burglary: While she had not seen a key and had seen the men “barging in” by using their shoulders to force the door open, she had also seen luggage beside them,

had only seen one of the men somewhat clearly...and considered the possibility that the men lived there. (p. 37 & 36)

In the case of the first witness, police agencies are expected to screen for such bias – but the 911 call suggests the Cambridge police interpreted and steered witness information about the suspects to support a thesis of minority criminality; because, Whalen did not voluntarily mention the races of the two men but the dispatcher inquired specifically if the men were “Black or Latino,” to which Whalen replied they were “two larger men, one looked kind of Hispanic, but I’m not really sure, and the other one entered, and I didn’t see what he looked like at all” (Drash, 2009, para. 2). After Whalen gave only that vague information to police, subsequent investigation communication changed into symbolic racial profiling codes. Staples recounts:

Whalen’s doubt caused by seeing Gates’ luggage was lost by the time it reached Crowley: according to the radio communications released by Cambridge police, he heard only, “Possible B&E, two men, one possibly a Latino male, they have suitcases.” Even stranger, Crowley’s police report, written after the arrest, says that Whalen told him on the scene that she had witnessed two Black men with backpacks entering the house. Whalen denies not only making the backpacks allegation, she denies ever speaking to Crowley after her initial 911 call. (p. 37)

In fact, according to Drash, Whalen’s attorney says Whalen never described the men as Black; and, “Let me be clear: She never had a conversation with Sgt. Crowley at the scene” (para. 5). Furthermore, with regard to Crowley and other police officers’ and citizens’ perceptions of Black criminality and gun violence Staples asks, “Where did these ‘backpacks’ come from? Were they similar to the phantom guns police [and other

confronters] claim to have seen following heinous shootings of unarmed Black men?” (p. 37) the host of which includes victims such as Jordan Davis – as testified by Michael Dunn, and Trayvon Martin – as alluded-to by George Zimmerman.

When Officer Crowley arrived on scene he: did not observe Professor Gates acting criminally suspicious by fleeing or ransacking the house; was able to speak to Gates through the glass front door; demanded proof that Gates was the lawful resident; and, was shown Gates’ driver’s license and Harvard University ID card (Staples, 2011). It became evident that Gates had committed no apparent crime; nevertheless, the professor felt the officer still did not seem to believe that he lived in the home, so Gates asked for Crowley’s name and badge number (Khan, McPhee, & Goldman, 2009; Staples, 2011). Crowley asked Gates to step outside; then, the officer says the professor started yelling loudly at him (Khan et al., 2009). Staples says it’s important to note that the officer radioed in to police dispatch that he believed Gates was the house’s resident, but simply “uncooperative”; and, asked that the patrol cars en route to back him up still “keep coming.” Gates told CNN that he complied with the officer’s requests, but Crowley didn’t say anything or reply to questions, then arrested him for disorderly conduct without any explanation. According to Khan et al., as he was being taken into custody in handcuffs Gates allegedly “called Crowley a racist and shouted, ‘This is what happens to Black men in America!’” (p. 3). Following his arrest, Gates’ charges were quickly dropped. Staples asserts:

No matter what Crowley or Gates said, Gates’ arrest punctuated the episode in the same way so many...police brutality and profiling cases...ended: with police power and excessive force controlling and suppressing not an actual crime or threat, but a

Black man's resistance to being profiled and his questioning the judgment of the police. (p. 37-38)

As all these events aired on local and national news, it stirred a media frenzy and caught the attention of many, including one of Dr. Gates' personal friends – President Barack Obama. During a press conference on healthcare reform, President Obama responded to an off-topic question about Gates' arrest; and, Staples (2011) says:

[President Obama] alluded to the problem of racial profiling in the U.S. and then stated that “the Cambridge police acted ‘stupidly’ in arresting Gates once they found out that he was in his own home.” Chances are that his honest answer about the arrest of Dr. Gates was due to his own experience with racial profiling. (p. 38)

Nevertheless, the president's response sparked a media storm of criticism for his allegedly harsh, “poor choice of words,” (Khan et al., 2009; Staples, 2011) and for not supporting the police. A press conference was held by the Cambridge police unions and Massachusetts Municipal Police Officers Association to both show public support for Officer Crowley, and decry President Obama and other government officials' implications of racial profiling (Khan et al., 2009). Moreover, as part of the backlash against President Obama, even when the facts were presented, national news outlet, ABC, led a story with an apparently biased slant in favor of Gates' arresting officer, over the professor and even President Obama. Khan et al. state in their opening line, which also aired on ABC News' “Nightline”:

President Obama called the Cambridge police officer who arrested his friend, prominent Harvard University Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., but did not go so far as to say he apologized to the sergeant for saying the police acted “stupidly” during

the incident. (p. 1)

In response to such seemingly biased, intentionally distracting, shoddy journalism tactics, Staples points out that:

The frenzied debate over the president's choice of words, an extension of this issue of whether or not Gates himself "over-reacted" to being stopped and arrested in his own home, shifted the focus from racial profiling to racial "decorum," a terrain much safer for Whites and which virtually silences justified Black outrage over racial profiling.

Few Whites in the media, with notable exceptions including Tim Wise in a panel discussion on CNN, were willing to entertain the possibility that no matter how well-meaning any of the three White people involved may have been, this was still a case of racial profiling. (p. 38)

Next came yet another media distraction – the "Beer Summit" – to draw the public's attention even further away from Gates' profiling and the often deadly consequences that racial profiling has for many minorities. President Obama said he wanted to frame the incident as a "teachable moment" (Khan et al., 2009; Staples, 2011); but, most news media seemingly wanted to frame what happened not as the actual problem of racial profiling, but as an isolated incident based on misunderstanding and overreaction (with emphasis on Gates) that could simply be solved with a cold brew. During the previously mentioned telephone call President Obama made to Officer Crowley, he said he had a cordial conversation with the policeman – who had complained about the president's criticism; and, they discussed having beer at the White House (Khan et al., 2009). Khan et al. reported, "The president's spokesman said it was Crowley's idea for the three to get together for a beer. According to Gates' attorney, Gates doesn't drink beer" (p. 1) but he

showed-up for the meeting. Prior to their arranged talk, both Gates and Crowley had each threatened filing their own lawsuit against the other (Khan et al., 2009; Staples, 2011). After that now famous “Beer Summit,” Gates (2009) published an article on the Black news website “The Root,” stating that the men had amicably “agreed to move forward.” In that poignantly reflective article Gates also said:

It is incumbent upon Sergeant Crowley and me to utilize the great opportunity that fate has given us to foster greater sympathy among the American public for the daily perils of policing on the one hand, and for the genuine fears of racial profiling on the other hand....

Thank God we live in a country where speech is protected, a country which guarantees and defends my right to speak out when I believe my rights have been violated; a country that protects us from arrest when we do express our views, no matter how unpopular. (para. 2 & 4)

Yet another esteemed African American professor, Cornel West (1993), has also documented his experiences as the target of racial profiling. Dr. West addressed the profiling phenomenon of “Driving While Black” or DWB, by highlighting several unwarranted incidents in which he’s been involved:

Years ago, while driving from New York to teach at Williams College, I was stopped on fake charges of trafficking cocaine. When I told the police officer I was a professor of religion, he replied, “Yeh, and I’m the Flying Nun. Let’s go, nigger!” I was stopped three times in my first ten days in Princeton for driving too slowly on a residential street with a speed limit of twenty-five miles per hour. (And my son, Clifton, already has similar memories at the tender age of fifteen.) Needless to say,

these incidents are dwarfed by those like Rodney King's beating... Yet the memories cut like a merciless knife at my soul... (p. XV)

Similar to West's DWB racial profiling experiences, Elmo Randolph, an African American dentist, has been pulled over by state troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike more than fifty times since 1991, yet has never been issued a ticket; but, each time he was questioned by police about having any drugs or weapons in his car (Hosenball, 1999).

In addition to DWB, the highly contested "Stop and Frisk" laws are also an extension of racial profiling. The Stop and Frisk policy – in which police stop, question, and frisk people they deem suspicious, even if they've committed no crime (Boyette & Martinez, 2013; Brown, 2013; Staples, 2011) – has been one of the most controversial policing techniques in recent history. Widespread use of the New York City Stop and Frisk program, began under former New York City mayor, Rudy Giuliani; and, its governances are based on a Supreme Court ruling (Brown, 2013). City officials' support for Stop and Frisk stems from their beliefs that it is an effective mechanism for fighting crime by reducing the number of guns and illegal drugs on New York streets. However, opponents counter with the argument that Stop and Frisk provides law enforcement with legal tools for terrorizing and criminalizing Black and Hispanic youth. Additionally, it creates antagonism between law enforcement and the people in the communities they are charged with policing. According to Rucke (2014), "Of the 191,558 times people were stopped and frisked and New York City in 2013, the person stopped was White only 11 percent of the time" (para. 3). Brown says during that previous year, "87 percent of the people stopped under stop-and-frisk in 2012 were Blacks or Latinos and...[only] 9 percent were Whites" (p. 262). According to Staples (2011), "whenever [Blacks and Latinos] were

[previously] stopped, 45 percent were searched compared to 29 percent of Whites despite the fact that White suspects were 70 more likely than Black suspects to have a weapon” (p. 35). The fate of Stop and Frisk is currently pending, since a federal appeals court blocked its ruling of unconstitutionality by a lower court; but, the newly elected mayor of New York – Bill de Blasio – is an opponent of the policy (Boyette & Martinez, 2013). According to CNN’s Boyette and Martinez, the judge in that lower court found that “police made at least 200,000 stops from 2004 to June 2012 without reasonable suspicion. She also found evidence of racial profiling, violating plaintiffs’ 14th Amendment rights guaranteeing equal protection” (New York City appealing stop-and-frisk ruling, para. 5).

The war on drugs.

Increasing minority arrests in The War on Drugs – another top-down macro-aggression minority confrontation prominently featured on television news – is apparently one of the desired effects of racial profiling, with the ultimate goal seemingly being depriving offending minorities of their socio-political power.

The Reagan Revolution marked the end of the Civil Rights era and the beginning of a new form of sustained assault on the Black community under the twin canons of welfare and the War-on-Drugs. Ultimately, the effectiveness of this project was/is inextricably linked to its success in [the media and public] labeling [of] Blacks as undeserving and dangerous. (Brown, 2013, p. 266)

In 1982, President Ronald Reagan announced declaration of a “War on Drugs”; ironically, a few short years later, crack cocaine distribution, sales, and use spread rapidly

in poor African American neighborhoods (Alexander, 2012). Hurwitz and Peffley (1997) note that:

Once the mass media were enlisted into the War on Drugs, racial differences emerged in the way drug offenders were portrayed. One study of network news coverage of the drug war from 1981 to 1988 found that as the focus of drug enforcement efforts shifted from powder to crack cocaine, the media frame shifted dramatically from White, suburban drug users in need of therapy to riveting images of violent Black drug offenders in the inner city who were beyond the point of rehabilitation. (p. 395)

A multitude of television news stories aired locally and nationwide about crack cocaine – in which African American “crack whores,” “crack babies,” and “gangbangers” were prominently featured. Alexander says those images served to reinforce already existing stereotypes of African American women as irresponsible “welfare queens,” and African American men as criminals and violent individuals. Alexander also notes that in the mist of that media campaign, was the enactment of increasingly punitive anti-drug legislation; because, the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988, included harsh, mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenses – setting the penalty for the distribution of crack cocaine (associated with Blacks) at 100 times the penalty for the distribution of powder cocaine (associated with middle-class Whites). Brown (2013) points out that in 2002, Blacks constituted more than 80 percent of the people sentenced under the federal crack cocaine laws despite the fact that more than two-thirds of crack cocaine users were Whites and Hispanics. Alexander also points out that the 1980’s drug laws imposed new, far-reaching, civil penalties to be paid by drug offenders including the elimination of several federal benefits – like student loans – which could further impact a drug

offender's social mobility and socio-economic status, based on employment options. Furthermore, in most states it was a common practice to take away voting privileges once imprisoned – which impeded individuals' political power in American society. Staples (2011) says nearly 1.46 million Black men have lost their right to vote due to a felony conviction – such as for drug related arrests.

Although there are some White casualties in the War on Drugs – including many for “meth” busts – drug busts in general are still largely aimed at minorities, namely Hispanic (South American and Mexican cartels) and Black (illegal sales in urban areas) drug offenders. The disproportionate targeting of minorities for drug violations and other various crimes reflects a pattern of stereotyping by police that results in a self-fulfilling prophecy – when the police specifically look for minorities, it's minorities they will arrest, and it's minorities who will be the focus of crime news. The racial bias inherent since the War on Drugs began accounts for why three-fourths of all people imprisoned for drug offenses have been Black or Hispanic, and why Black men have been admitted to state prison on drug charges at a rate more than thirteen times higher than that of White men (Alexander, 2012).

Alexander (2012) also points to stats alleging that racial bias, whether intentional or unconscious, is a major reason for the imprisonment of one in every 15 African American men in 2006, compared to one in 106 White men. Thus, while the African American population in the U.S. is just under 13 percent (Kurtz, 2013), African Americans comprise half of the prison population; and, ironically these statistics are also used to justify profiling strategies (Alexander, 2012; Eitzen & Zinn, 2004; Staples, 2011). Staples addresses the disproportionately high minority prison population by pointing out

that about two-thirds of the people in state prisons and municipal jails are Black and Hispanic – who tend to be poor and less educated, with few economic opportunities. Staples also highlights that Black defendants are typically given longer sentences than Whites for the same crime – saying some claim many Blacks can only afford less competent attorneys who are not as able to finesse the legal system. Shockingly, Staples says one judge even went so far as to claim it’s “easier to send Black males to jail because it carried no social stigma for them” (p. 41). Staples also asserts:

The imprisonment of people has become a very lucrative enterprise. Many states have outsourced their prisoners to private prisons, which are profit-making businesses listed on the stock exchange with more than a billion dollars annual revenue. Many economically distressed counties compete to have prisons built in their area to supply jobs and aid local businesses. They encourage politicians to stiffen sentences and even create new statutes to increase the prison population. (p. 33)

Fortunately, drug sentencing policies for crack versus cocaine that were once much stiffer for Blacks than Whites were revised and reduced in 2010 thanks to President Obama; although, the penalties still aren’t equal – because that reduction was from 100 to 1, to 18 to 1 (Staples, 2011). Nevertheless, with a rap-sheet for a non-violent drug offense, federal college funding denied due to that conviction, employers reluctant to hire minorities with arrest records, and with voting privileges suspended, Brown (2013) says such unfortunate “sinister sociological synergies” not only criminalize but pigeonhole African Americans:

Thereby denying them legal gateways to the American dream. Thus, by expanding the criminal justice industry and the prison industrial complex, many Whites found

employment as police officers, correctional officers, judges, lawyers, district attorneys, and special interest lobbyists while many Black men spent their most productive years in prison. (p. 269)

While of course, not all White people are racists – just as not all the White people who took the aforementioned jobs in criminal justice and the prison industrial system are racists – it is clear that an individual does not have to uphold racist sentiments in order to benefit from institutional racism and the racially biased social system set up by many of “The Power Elite” (as posited by Mills) to ensure White socio-political and socio-economic dominance in American society (Martinot, 2010).

Immigration raids.

Moving now to confrontations typically plaguing Hispanics/Latinos, U.S. Immigration Raids – yet another top-down macro-aggression minority confrontation prominently featured on television news – continue the cycle of “harms of reduction” and repression by reinforcing a system of “petit apartheid” through law enforcement agencies profiling, detaining, and possibly deporting Hispanics. Most anti-immigration emphasis, especially in news media, appears to be placed on Mexicans in general – which dates back to the mid-1950’s during immigration raids such as “Operation Wetback”; and, such militarized sweeps of Mexicans kept the community in “a state of permanent insecurity” (Romero, 2006, p.450). However, depending on U.S. locale, other Hispanics including Cubans, Dominicans, and people from Central and South America are also at risk – seemingly more so than any other group of immigrants. In response to many of the White majority’s anti-immigration sentiments, Romero theorizes that immigration raids function as a policing practice to maintain and reinforce subordinated status among both working-

class, legal, U.S. citizens of Hispanic and/or Mexican ancestry, and those who are undocumented. When immigration raids are shown on television news, it is important to note the commonplace demonizing of the “illegal immigrant” as a dominant media frame in the immigration debate (Timberlake & Williams, 2012). Along that line, Wilson et al. (2003) point out that:

The 1980’s and 1990’s saw the [news media] indiscriminately use the terms “illegals” and “aliens” to depict Latinos, who have argued that when used as nouns, the labels are dehumanizing and inaccurate. A 1994 report by San Francisco State University’s Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism explained that “individuals can commit illegal acts...but how can a human being be deemed an ‘illegal’ person?” The report further noted that the term “alien” conjures up images of creatures who are invaders from another planet. (p. 118)

Timberlake and Williams say these media frames of immigrants have gained wide currency in American political talk – fueled by Tea-Party like activism, conservative talk radio news, and most notably on various television news programs. During such television programming, the researchers say Americans have been fed a steady diet of anti-immigration sentiments:

From the grassroots activism that first brought Proposition 187 to the California ballot in 1994, to the recent Minutemen activism on the southern Arizona border,...a number of images have coalesced around a perceived threat of unauthorized immigrants to American security and national identity. (p. 887)

It is no wonder then, that immigration raids seem a logical answer to that “threat” and a natural progression in steps for the dwindling White majority population (Kurtz, 2013) to “Take back America.”

Moreover, Romero (2006) asserts there is an additional social function accomplished by immigration raids, sweeps, and citizenship inspections which is driven by employer exploitation of the undocumented labor force. Remembering the original policing functions of the Texas and Arizona Rangers (discussed in Chapter 1), migrant immigrant workers from Mexico – even undocumented ones – were allowed in America as needed; and, Romero points out that the INS rarely raided the fields during harvest time and only scheduled massive immigration raids and roundups during periods of economic recession. U.S. employers continue to have access to a vulnerable, cheap labor force created by assigning workers an “illegal” status; but, Romero says the worst social cost of that is the increasing loss of human lives – as undocumented Hispanic migrants seeking work here are forced to cross the border in the most desolate areas of the desert. Unfortunately, even if migrants survive the difficult journey, and are hired illegally – a system within which Romero says many U.S. employers operate with complete impunity – once their services are no longer needed and/or wanted, they are typically faced with immigration raids aimed at displacing that workforce population. Therefore, when television news coverage of many such immigration raids is aired, anchors/reporters rarely broadcast full details regarding the labor force that’s driving the featured Hispanic population out of the area. In news coverage of immigration raids, most of America – especially middle America with small Hispanic populations – only sees images of

“illegals” (i.e., criminals) being forced back to their native lands (Timberlake & Williams, 2012). That is why Timberlake and Williams state:

It is hard to imagine how Ohioans, who live in a state with fewer than 1 percent foreign-born Latin American immigrants, could have developed substantially more negative views of Latin American immigrants absent some general effect of national-level [media] discourse. (p. 887)

Romero (2006) also examines policing citizenship, the use of urban space, and movement, citing the “Chandler Roundup” immigration raid as a major example. Romero says the main focus of that immigration raid was to remove the chronically poor, and undesirable low-income Hispanics from the socially constructed “petit apartheid” majority Hispanic area of Chandler, Arizona, that was targeted for urban renewal and major redevelopment. The researcher states the policing of citizenship during the Chandler Roundup immigration raid exemplifies procedures used to determine social status; because, suspicion was embodied in a particular appearance and behavior. Specific activities are significant when class-based racial profiling is occurring. For example, setting typical Hispanic phenotypes aside, and analyzing behavior during immigration raids, police in Chandler rounded-up many pedestrians and people who were using public phones in Hispanic areas. Romero says this is because in most urban areas being a pedestrian is a sign of poverty – especially in the Arizona desert heat; and, using a public telephone is a similar sign of poverty – in the absence of a home phone or mobile device. Romero also points out the pitfalls of movement and DWB – “Driving While *Brown*” – as it relates to profiling Hispanics:

The phrase “Driving While Black” became familiar in debates over racial profiling,

similarly the experience of “walking/driving/biking/standing while Brown” is common for Mexican Americans in the vicinity of an immigration raid... The activities recorded in the complaints are accurately captured in the [news] media’s initial reporting of Mexican Americans’ experience during the five-day immigration raid: “As they walked down sidewalks, drove cars or walked outside homes” they were stopped by the police. Based primarily on interviews with police officers assigned to the target areas during the operation...independent investigators found that illegal aliens were arrested in residential areas, in front of stores (especially the local Circle K), in trailer courts, and driving between 4:00 and 6:00 a.m. (the time many [Hispanic] workers are traveling to construction sites during the summer). (p. 462)

Thus, as indicated by Romero, the Chandler Roundup fits into a larger pattern of immigration law enforcement practices that produce harms of reduction and repression, and place Hispanics, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans at risk before the law by committing affronts generally targeting their “Mexicanness” – not any specific criminal act – as typically indicated by skin color, bilingual speaking abilities, or shopping in, and/or frequenting neighborhoods highly populated by Hispanics.

Media micro-aggressions: Presenting the good guys in black & white.

Another major facet of the confrontation phase of minority news coverage includes micro-aggressions such as: police confrontations – targeting specific individuals with excessive verbal or physical aggression and/or extreme, often fatal, force; and, citizen confrontations – which recently have typically been White-on-Black physical or verbal attacks against minority individuals. Note that the terms and definitions of each of the

two aforementioned types of confrontations (police confrontations and citizen confrontations) have been uniquely conceptualized and coined by this independent researcher. All such confrontations are usually top story news features upon occurrence. Unfortunately, those portrayals are also typically reduced to an “us versus them” frame when depicted by White mainstream news media. According to Stossel (1997):

One of the basic premises of [George] Gerbner’s cultivation analysis [– which tries to measure how much television contributes to viewers’ conceptions of reality –] is that television violence is not simple acts but rather “a complex social scenario of power and victimization.” What matters is not so much the raw fact that a violent act is committed but who does what to whom. Gerbner is as insistent about this as he is about anything, repeating it in all his writings and speeches[:] “What is the message of violence?”...“Who can get away with what against whom?” (p. 90)

Police confrontations.

Brutal police confrontations with minority individuals – especially Black or Hispanic men – are unfortunately not uncommon. Mainly, Whites see the law, in general, and police specifically, as a force to “serve and protect” their rights and their property (Dixon, 2007); however, minorities have been more likely to experience the law, and police, as agents that deny their rights. Blacks and Hispanics endure unfair practices resulting from over-policing of their neighborhoods; meanwhile, relatively few Whites are impacted by crimes that Blacks and Hispanics actually commit (Staples, 2011). According to Staples:

Many Whites...see the police force, which is also [typically] predominately White, as being their frontline of defense in keeping crime “confined” to Black ghettos and Latino barrios. As a result, the police remain the main source of racial

tension in the U.S. The government has given them the responsibility for handling the problems of poverty and racism in America, and they are endowed with great powers to enforce the law however they see fit. Many of their ranks are drawn from the most racist and authoritarian segments of the White population. They can discriminate against and brutalize people of color with impunity because White society does not [typically] punish rogue cops. (p. 35)

As previously stated, just as not all White people are racist, not all police officers uphold racist sentiments or bigoted ideals; however, the police do work within and act as an enforcing strong-arm for, a criminal justice system that has historically discriminated against and often disproportionately targeted minorities (Brown, 2013; Mays et al., 2013; Staples 2011). Furthermore, Staples contends that when profiling minority criminality, “the Supreme Court upholds the legitimacy of potentially racist assumptions on the part of cops that are otherwise difficult to detect” (p. 32).

Unfortunately, there are many racists among police ranks in word, and deed – even though they deny being such, and make efforts to explain away the excessive force used against some minority individuals. For instance, as part of the Professor Henry Gates news story, Staples (2011) highlights that after Gates’ incident with Officer Crowley, “another White Cambridge police officer sent emails to his colleagues calling Dr. Gates a ‘banana-eating jungle monkey’ but denied that he was a racist” (p. 38). Despite many similar instances of police micro-aggressions involving derogatory name-calling of minority individuals (many, as mentioned, with even harsher racist tones) and evidence of police bias, Whites are still historically more likely to have confidence in police judgment and actions (Dixon, 2007; Staples, 2011); and, many citizens – including

members of the majority-White news media – overwhelmingly support this attitude. This is evident in that Dixon’s 2007 research revealed two fairly consistent findings: first, African Americans are typically relegated to depictions as perpetrators on television news, while being underrepresented as officers and victims; and, secondly, Whites are usually overrepresented as officers and victims on local television news. Moreover, Dixon and Linz (2000) found that Whites were underrepresented as perpetrators on television news compared to crime reports, while being overrepresented as officers (69%) on local television news programs compared to employment records (59%) of the Los Angeles area. In light of such representations conflating White authority with police action, Staples also points out that:

Gates’ arrest revealed a sharp racial division over what police can do to innocent Black citizens in the privacy of their own home. About 40 percent of White Americans believed the police were right in requiring Professor Gates to prove that he was the legal resident and to arrest him when he challenged their authority. (p. 31)

In a shocking example of a heinous police confrontation that also aired as top story headline news, Staples (2011) notes “a particularly repulsive case of police brutality was the Abner Louima case in New York, where one officer held him down while another shoved a toilet plunger up his rectum, damaging his bladder and intestines” (p.35).

According to Parascandola, Burke, Paddock and McShane (2012), Justin Volpe – a White second generation policeman (his dad was an NYPD detective) – sodomized Louima, a Black immigrant from Haiti, inside a Brooklyn police station on August 9, 1997. Volpe mistakenly thought Louima punched him while outside a Brooklyn nightclub; but, according to Hinojosa (1997), Louima was one of two men who police claim interfered

with officers trying to break up a fight between two females – that Louima was not involved in. Louima and the other man were arrested on charges of assault, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct and obstructing justice. Hinojosa says in a news interview Louima gave from the hospital, the innocent victim recalled of police, “They said, ‘Take this, nigger,’” (para. 2) then put Louima in a patrol car, and beat him several times before taking him to the station house where he was sodomized. Volpe reportedly also damaged Louima’s teeth from shoving the filthy plunger handle into the man’s mouth after sodomizing him. According to Parascandola et al., Volpe excitedly exclaimed to fellow cops, “‘I broke a man down’” (para. 19), after emerging from a precinct bathroom with Louima’s blood all over a pair of leather gloves. Hinojosa asserts that:

Louima’s attorney, Brian Figeroux, says the...abuse should not have occurred considering the number of officers in the station house at the time.

“There were four police officers beating, and there were two officers in the bathroom, and many police officers at the precinct seeing what was going on. Someone should have known and stopped this from happening”... (‘Someone should have known,’ para. 2-3)

Thompson (2006) analyzes this horrific case of White male police brutality resulting in a Black man’s sodomy and posits:

In America, White masculinity has often been culturally and psychologically defined as the beating, lynch-burning, castrating, and overall killing of Black men, and by the sexual conquest (rape) of Black women. The lynching of Black men by White men suggests that White men fear Black men; however, the [sexual conquest or] rape of Black women by White men suggests that White men do not fear Black women.

Accordingly, Justin Volpe had a fiancée, an attractive dark-skinned African American woman named Susan Lawson, his live-in lover who worked as a clerk in Volpe's precinct.... [She once said,] "We [were] planning on getting married and having children."... [However,] through his transgression of emasculation... Volpe briefly makes a Black man, Louima, into his Black "woman." (p. 150)

Therefore according to Thompson's theory, when Volpe proudly said he "broke [Louima] down," perhaps he was also – in an extremely dysfunctional way – breaking down his own subconscious fear of that particular Black man, and possibly by extension, Black men in general.

Volpe received a 30 year sentence; although, he still escaped the maximum sentence he could have received for his crime – life without parole. Parascandola et al. (2012) say:

A second cop, Charles Schwarz, was convicted of perjury in the case and served five years while maintaining his innocence.

Prosecutors said he lied about his role in the attack, joining in the failed attempt to hide what happened to Louima.

Two other officers, including Volpe's partner that night, were convicted of obstruction of justice – but their convictions were overturned on appeal. (para. 34-36)

Nelson (2002) says it's important to point out that:

Volpe's incarceration offers citizens cold comfort and not even a vestige of redemption for a criminal justice system that remains almost incapable of convicting police officers accused of brutalizing or killing citizens. The system did not convict Justin Volpe: mid-trial, he pled guilty and was sentenced by the judge. No doubt Volpe is cursing his decision now that the sentences of his cronies in blue have been

overturned. [Their 2002 rulings] suggest he would have been better off if he'd kept silent, risked conviction, and gambled on the Court of Appeals making it all go away a few years later. (para. 2)

Another highly controversial police brutality confrontation that received top story national news coverage is the now infamous Rodney King beating. In a DWB incident on March 3, 1991: CHP (California Highway Patrol) officers spotted King – who was on parole after serving six months of a two year sentence for second-degree robbery – driving at a high rate of speed in the Los Angeles area; a police chase ensued through residential streets; King eventually stopped; LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department) joined CHP at the scene; King got down on all fours, instead of lying on the ground as ordered; Sgt. Stacey Koon fired a Taser gun twice at King while he was on the ground; George Holiday – a White resident who lived nearby – began recording the excessively violent police activities on his video camera; someone, reportedly Koon, yelled “that’s enough” and King rose to his knees, but Officer Laurence Powell and another officer continued to strike the man; King received a total of 56 baton blows and six kicks by LAPD officers; finally, King was handcuffed and swarmed by six LAPD officers who hog-tied him and dragged him on his stomach to the side of the road to await an ambulance (Mays et al., 2013). According to Staples (2011):

Despite the video of their actions, an all-White jury in Los Angeles county found four White police officers not guilty.... A second trial was held of the same four officers, with a more racially diverse jury on the federal charge of violating King’s civil rights and ended in the conviction of [only] two of the police officers. (p. 35)

Koon and Powell were sentenced to only 30 months in federal prison (Mays et al.). In light of the videotape of the brutal beating, the initial acquittal of the LAPD officers was seen in the context of a long history of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination and injustice at the hands of police – which is why many minority communities reacted by protesting – igniting one of the largest race riots in American history (Mays et al., 2013; Staples, 2011). According to Mays et al.:

Fifty-three people died during the riots, including 10 killed by police or [the] National Guard. An estimated 2,000 people were injured, and the city suffered property losses estimated between \$800 million and \$1 billion. Approximately 3,600 fires were set and over 1,100 buildings burned. (p. 18)

The King arrest contains a number of points of evaluation that offer some insights into the behavior of police during confrontations with minorities – especially Blacks – who are typically perceived as menacing. Mays et al. (2013) say implicit bias may play a role, citing:

Though police outnumbered King and were well-equipped with guns, Tasers and batons, Koon reported that he “felt threatened” when King stepped out of the car. He described King as big [(Black)] and muscular and said he believed King was disoriented, unbalanced and under the influence of PCP (Phencyclidine, street name is “angel dust”). Rodney King said he had been drinking but toxicological tests indicated King had not taken PCP. (p. 19)

Moreover, Mays et al. point out that when using the “Police Officer’s Dilemma paradigm” – a videogame set in realistic surroundings in which players shoot all armed game characters while avoiding the unarmed, and the targets are equally divided between

Blacks and Whites to allow researchers to examine how race might play a role in the shooting of targets – research findings have shown that, “police officers are more likely to see weapons that are not present when they hold racial bias and stereotypic beliefs about African Americans” (p. 19). Staples (2011) also addresses that theory and states:

In simulation games, test-takers are much more likely to shoot Black “felons” in ambivalent settings or when they are holding objects other than guns. Police officers and judges perform the same way on these types of tests as the civilian population. (p. 36)

Mays et al. also observe that:

The consequence of all these “automatic” responses to race is the making of a world particularly dangerous for young African American men and boys.... We often see courts mandating anger-management training. Will a day come when based on the psychological [and social] science of racism and prejudice that [police and other] individuals will be required to take training to make their implicit biases known and [be] held accountable for monitoring those biases? (p. 19)

Oscar Grant and countless other unarmed individuals have unfortunately paid the ultimate price during police shooting confrontations. Such unwarranted shooting deaths are unfortunately not uncommon regarding police confrontations with African Americans – especially Black men. In the case of Grant’s police confrontation, initially after hearing reports of an alleged fight, the first responding BART officer simply saw two Black individuals. Then, the confrontation narrowed to that between the officer who “slugged Grant in the head” (Detention called unlawful, para. 9), and the other officer who fatally shot Grant (Egelko, 2013). According to Egelko, Former BART officer “Pirone

encountered a group of Black men who were doing nothing but talking when he arrived' at...Fruitvale Station, were not committing any crimes, and posed no apparent threat that would justify his pulling a weapon and holding them..." ('No apparent threat,' para. 2).

Although unfortunately there are far too many nationwide to elaborate upon, many similar tragic fatalities involving police fatally using excessive force and/or shooting innocent and/or unarmed African Americans have been national news stories and can be immediately recalled – such as unarmed 23 year old Sean Bell who was shot and killed in a hail of 50 bullets from police on November 25, 2006, after he was celebrating at a New York area gentlemen's club the night before his wedding (Schoetz, 2008). Schoetz points out that:

Officers Michael Oliver, 36, and Gescard Isnora, 29, were cleared of manslaughter charges while Officer Marc Cooper, 40, was cleared of reckless endangerment.

Oliver fired 31 shots, Isnora fired 11 rounds and Cooper shot four times. A manslaughter conviction could have carried a maximum of 25 years in prison.

Judge Arthur Cooperman ruled in the nonjury trial that the officers' account of what happened outside a Queens strip club in November 2006 was more credible than the story told by witnesses and wounded friends of the dead man. (p. 1)

Another such tragic story is that of Amadaou Diallo – a 22 year old African immigrant who was shot and killed February 4, 1999, when four White NYPD officers, all in street clothes, approached Diallo while he was on the stoop of his Bronx building and fired 41 shots, striking him 19 times, as he retreated inside (Fritsch, 2000). The policemen claimed they thought Diallo had a gun; but, it turned out to be a wallet – defining a classic example of the Police Officer's Dilemma paradigm in the officers' false claim

regarding the unarmed Diallo's phantom gun. According to Fritsch, all four New York City police officers were acquitted of *all* charges. According to Schoetz, hundreds of protestors were arrested after a jury found the officers "not guilty" in the killing of Diallo.

In Las Vegas, one of the most recent fatal law enforcement confrontations with an African American individual that garnered top story Breaking News, and even national news coverage is that of 20 year old D'Andre Berghardt, Jr. – who was shot and killed after walking through the desert on February 14, 2014. Most of the incident was filmed by witnesses, and has been aired during news coverage. The young Black male who had previously lived in Las Vegas and reportedly knew the area: was seen walking near the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area during the late morning carrying a rolling suitcase, a backpack and a bedroll; was reportedly hailing cyclists as he walked along state Route 159 near Calico Basin, prompting two cyclists to report him to officials at the Red Rock visitor center; was approached by two federal BLM rangers who held Berghardt at gunpoint for several minutes; was not reportedly threatening the rangers and did not appear to have a weapon, but remained on his feet, apparently disobeying their orders; was sprayed by one ranger with pepper spray then stumbled and walked away, but was not arrested; was kicked by one of the rangers who again tried to detain him, but Berghardt threw a punch fighting him off; was chased by an arriving NHP (Nevada Highway Patrol) trooper, escaped the rangers' grasps again, bolted for the trooper's SUV and climbed inside with the trooper slamming the door on him; and, was finally shot by a BLM ranger who fired eight or nine rounds from his handgun into the trooper's car (Blasky, 2014). According to Blasky, one of the witnesses videotaping the police

confrontation acknowledges a perceived potential threat if Berghardt had gained access to the car:

“Well, there’s a gun in that Highway Patrol car,” one of the men [recording] is heard saying, “and they probably thought he was gonna get it.”

“They had him on the ground,” the other says. “I don’t know why they didn’t just jump on him and pin him!”

“You know, unless they thought he had something on him, but it didn’t look like it to me.”

“It’s redneck justice.” (para. 26-29)

In addition, Blasky says a Highway Patrol spokesman said the officers “felt their lives were in danger,” but he never specified a reason. Moreover, the officers saying they felt as though they were in danger in the presence of that unarmed young man is another example of what Mays et al. (2013) refer to as apparent implicit bias playing a role in officers’ interactions with, and responses to, minorities. Furthermore, the aforementioned assertion – however vague – of Berghardt being a potential “threat” presented here by journalist, Blasky, falls in line with Wilson et al.’s (2003) theory regarding phases and patterns of reporting in the treatment of minorities in news media. The cyclists who initially saw the young Black man walking also likely saw him as a “threat” for seeming out of place at a protected leisure area predominantly frequented by Whites – thereby making them feel uneasy (Kurtz, 2013; Lefebvre, 1996). In fact, according to Blasky, after the incident, one of the last cyclists to pass Berghardt even said he was trying to flag his group of cyclists down, somberly recalling – “he was walking in a straight line and was coherent,” “maybe he just wanted some water” (para. 46 & 48). The witness who

released his video recording of the fatal incident to local news media is also sharing it with Las Vegas Metro police – who are currently leading the investigation with assistance from NHP and the FBI; and, said he felt the park rangers allowed the incident to escalate:

“I think one of the rules of law enforcement is to stop a situation from escalating,”...

“It felt, to me, like they were allowing the situation to continue and not ending it by detaining this pedestrian. It seemed like they had multiple opportunities to do that.

“I came away from this with a disturbed feeling that a guy is dead that shouldn’t be.” (Blasky, para. 35-36)

New video has since been released to the media showing four different angles of the incident – including dash cam video; and, on March 2, 2015, a fact-finding hearing into Berghardt’s shooting death was opened by District Attorney Steve Wolfson’s office – which has made a preliminary determination that the officers’ actions were justified (Bartels, 2015; Castelan & O’Neal, 2015). Then, on April 10, 2015, KLAS Channel 8, and other local news stations reported that the fatal shooting of Berghardt has officially been ruled as justified.

Also in Las Vegas, another example of an unnecessary fatal police shooting confrontation involved African American Veteran, Stanley Gibson. In the early morning hours of December 12, 2011, Gibson: was headed back to the apartment where he had recently moved; but he got lost and ended up at another apartment complex – prompting suspicious residents to call police due to a very recently reported robbery there; then, Metro officers confronted Gibson in his car – which police pinned between two patrol cars, leaving Gibson spinning his wheels, unable to back out – and police fatally shot the

unarmed man (Mower, Planas, Haynes, Rogers, & Blasky, 2011). According to Mower et al. (2011) the shooting is attributed to miscommunication between Metro officers:

Two [Metro] supervisors decided to use a beanbag shotgun – a weapon designed to subdue but not kill – to shoot out at least one window of Gibson’s vehicle. But their decision might not have been understood by the firing officer, and when one of the supervisors fired the shotgun, [another] officer fired [real rounds] multiple times in a reaction to that blast. (para. 6)

“To them he’s just another dead soldier or a dead Black man,” (Mower et al., ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATION, para. 2) Rondha Gibson – Stanley’s widow, who is White – said of police. Gibson’s family said he was never a “threat” to police because he was unarmed; and, they believe the police department painted him as a criminal in the media by calling him a “suspect” (Mower et al., ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATION, para. 1) – which feeds into Dixon’s (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011) theories about projected Black criminality in news media, and specifically in the face of White officers (Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Linz, 2000). In addition, the way the news story is framed by Mower et al. could be understood to be leading and slightly biased by basically stating in the story opening that Gibson was off his off his meds, paranoid, and confused – alluding to possibly erratic behavior toward police, which could somehow warrant shooting and killing the troubled Black man (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997). In their opening statement, Mower et al. say:

Stanley Gibson was trying to find his way home.

The 43-year-old disabled war veteran was off his anti-anxiety medication and stricken with paranoia as he headed back to the apartment where he and his wife

recently had moved.

In his confusion, Gibson ended up at an apartment complex a few blocks away...

(para. 1-3)

It's important to point that out because in the past few years during the ever-increasing importance of online news (which is further explored during an examination of Wilson et al.'s "multiracial coverage phase" of news regarding minorities), many television news stations often pull their facts from, and/or supplement their stories with, information from other reliable forms of news media. Furthermore, if that news source is online – as it typically is – it is often even more permanent and accessible than what has aired on television news; because, those words online can ring-out long after television news has signed-off (Vesperi, 2010).

According to Mower et al. (2011), prior to Gibson's death, there had not been a coroner's inquest of an officer involved shooting (OIS) since October 2010. The Clark County coroner's inquest was the fact-finding process in which details of OIS incidents were released to the public; and, that process had repeatedly come under scrutiny – which was aired on local television news – for explaining away alleged excessive deadly force used by police throughout the Las Vegas Valley and surrounding areas. According to additional research conducted exclusively by Mower (2011):

Clark County's inquest system dates to 1969, when a White North Las Vegas police officer shot and killed a Black teenager. Calls for a formal review of the shooting from Black community leaders were ignored by then-District Attorney George Franklin, who declared the incident justified homicide.

But Dr. Otto Ravenholt, the county's chief medical officer and coroner, was

suspicious. Inquests were infrequently used in accidental death cases, but he decided to call for one in the North Las Vegas case, which was ruled justified on a 2-1 vote.

After that, officer-involved deaths were routinely sent to inquest. (para. 1-2)

Inquests were a quasi-judicial process, not a trial; and, until recent sets of reforms, Mower says a majority of people acting as “jurors” decided if an officer’s actions fit one of three categories:

A killing was justified if an officer felt his or her life or the life of another was in danger.

A death was excusable if the officer killed while “doing a lawful act, without any intention of killing, yet unfortunately kills another.”

Anything else was criminal homicide, but that didn’t mean the officer would be charged with a crime[; because,] only the prosecutor has that power. (para. 4-6)

In a five-part series on OIS, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* found that the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department uses deadly force at a higher rate than many other urban police agencies (Maimon, Mower, & Haines, 2011). To determine if Las Vegas police use their guns more than those in other cities, the *Review-Journal* collected statistics for a decade, 2001 to 2010, from 16 cities; and, Metro ranked third in shootings by police per capita and per reported violent crime among those cities (Maimon et al., 2011). As part of the *Review-Journal*’s study series, Maimon (2011) also conducted solo OIS research involving minorities – specifically African Americans – and found that:

Las Vegas police were involved in 17 shootings in 2003. Ten subjects were Black, an unusually high number even for a department that historically shoots a dis-proportionate number of minorities. None of the officers were Black.

That year, Clark County Sheriff Bill Young and Undersheriff Doug Gillespie formed a task force aimed at improving relations between the Metropolitan Police Department and minorities. One goal of the Multi-Cultural Advisory Council has been to increase officers' racial sensitivity so they can more effectively police minority neighborhoods and reduce violent confrontations. (para. 1-2)

In addition to that solo research, Maimon et al. (2011) also cite pertinent OIS statistics for unarmed suspects, and OIS demographic population information – including specific stats on Las Vegas area African Americans and Hispanics:

At least 33 times since 1990 Las Vegas police have shot at an unarmed person. Seven, including one fatality, occurred in one recent 16-month period, September 2009 to January 2011.

In some of the 33 incidents, officers later said they felt the person was armed with a gun and was going to harm them or others....

When it comes to officer-involved shootings, race and location matter.

Since 1990, 39 percent of Las Vegas shooting subjects were White, 32 percent Black, and 26 percent Hispanic, as noted in the 92 percent of cases listing a race.

Hispanics are 29 percent of Clark County's population, so shootings for that group roughly followed local demo-graphics. But Blacks, at less than 10 percent, were dramatically overrepresented in several ways.

Of the 33 unarmed subjects shot at by Las Vegas police, about half were Black, including five of the seven in those 16 months [analyzed] from September 2009 to January 2011. (PERCEPTION FAILS, para. 1-2 & BLACK AND WHITE, para. 1-4)

The *Review-Journal* also found that systems used by the Metropolitan Police Department fail to rein in problem cops even after they kill under dubious circumstances; because, police records show that the department's Use of Force Review Board – which is designed to weed out problem cops and spotlight deficiencies in training and tactics – finds no errors in 97 percent of all shootings it reviews, and has never faulted a Metro officer in a fatal incident. Moreover, each time a Metro OIS occurs, it is almost always covered as top story Breaking News on each Las Vegas area television news affiliate – typically with White officers framed as heroes and/or noble defenders against the local minority crime “threat” element – which correlates with Dixon's (2007) theory regarding television news depictions of White officers.

In light of several acknowledged problems with the flawed system, the Clark County Commission voted near the beginning of January 2013, to do away with the controversial coroner's inquest process, instead introducing a new “police fatality review process” (Shine, 2013, para.2). According to Shine, the fact-finding process “will be triggered whenever the District Attorney's Office makes a preliminary ruling that a fatal officer involved shooting was not criminal” (para. 9). However, Shine says there are several outspoken critics of this new OIS review process:

Allen Lichtenstein, general counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada, criticized the new review process as nothing more than a “glorified press conference.”

“We all lost today,” he said. “Instead of having a process that would hold police accountable, what we have is more obfuscation.”

Lichtenstein worries the new process will leave out testimony from witnesses of the shooting and rely only on input from members of the police department who put

together reports on the incident. (para. 17-19)

The most recent and one of the most prominent police confrontations making national headline news involves similar problems with police transparency and accountability, and alleged police brutality fueled by racial bias – the shooting death of unarmed 18 year old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri – which tragically echoes numerous other violent and/or fatal police confrontations with African Americans, including those of Rodney King and Amadaou Diallo (due to post confrontation public protests) and Sean Bell and Oscar Grant (due to seemingly reckless use of police force and officer acquittals and/or minimal punishment as in Grant’s shooter’s case). According to MSNBC’s Michele Richinick (2014), on August 9, 2014, in the predominately African American suburb located just outside St. Louis, Missouri, Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, was shot to death by White policeman and six-year veteran officer, 28 year old Darren Wilson, as the teen was walking down the street. According to CNN’s Elliott McLaughlin (2014) an eyewitness involved in the police confrontation, Dorian Johnson, recounts that:

He and Brown were walking in the middle of the street when a White male officer pulled up and told them, “Get the f*** on the sidewalk.” The young men replied that they were “not but a minute away from our destination, and we would shortly be out of the street,” Johnson said.

The officer drove forward but stopped and backed up, almost hitting the pair, Johnson said.

“We were so close, almost inches away, that when he tried to open his door aggressively, the door ricocheted both off me and Big Mike’s body and closed back on the officer,” Johnson said.

Still in his car, the officer then grabbed Brown by his neck, Johnson said. Brown tried to pull away, but the officer kept pulling Brown toward him, he said.

The officer drew his weapon, and “he said, ‘I’ll shoot you’ or ‘I’m going to shoot’” and almost instantaneously fired his weapon, hitting Brown, Johnson said.

Johnson and a bloodied Brown took off running, and Johnson hid behind the first car he saw, he said. The officer got out of his car.

“I saw the officer proceeding after my friend Big Mike with his gun drawn, and he fired a second shot and that struck my friend Big Mike,” ...“And at that time, he turned around with his hands up, beginning to tell the officer that he was unarmed and to tell him to stop shooting. But at that time, the officer [fired] several more shots into my friend, and he hit the ground and died.” (para. 14-20)

In contrast to eyewitness accounts, McLaughlin (2014) points out that authorities claim Brown attacked the officer in his car and tried to take his gun. Next, according to Richinick’s (2014) detailed timeline following Brown’s fatal shooting:

Sunday, Aug. 10 – Riots break out following a night vigil: protesters smash car windows and break into stores, and at least 32 people are arrested.

Monday, Aug. 11 – A few hundred protesters peacefully march along the streets in Ferguson. Demonstrations turn violent and authorities detain at least 15 people. Police use tear gas against protesters. [Missouri’s] governor Jay Nixon asks the Department of Justice to conduct a transparent investigation.

Tuesday, Aug. 12 – Local police hand over the investigation to St. Louis County police. President Barack Obama weighs in on the controversial shooting, calling Brown’s death “heartbreaking”. Civil Rights leaders visit Ferguson, urging the

community to remain peaceful. Ferguson police withhold the identity of the officer who is responsible for Brown's death, amid social media threats. Michael Brown Sr. speaks out: "I need justice for my son...no violence"....

Wednesday, Aug. 13 – Ferguson Police Department releases its first press notice since Brown's death. U.S. attorney's office launches a Civil Rights investigation into the circumstances surrounding Brown's killing.... Protests turn violent once again – police in paramilitary fatigues and riot gear tear-gas dozens of demonstrators, firing stun grenades and rubber bullets into a crowd and detaining two reporters and a St. Louis politician. Police arrest at least 16 people.

Thursday, Aug. 14 – Nixon places security and crowd control under the leadership of the Missouri State Highway Patrol.... A new witness to the killing of Brown emerges, corroborating major details offered by the earlier witness, Dorian Johnson....

Friday, Aug. 15 – Police [finally] identify Darren Wilson as the veteran officer who shot Brown, and release a report and surveillance footage alleging that Brown and a friend stole cigars from a convenience store shortly before the shooting. Ferguson Police Chief Thomas Jackson changes his story, saying that while Wilson initially stopped Brown for walking in the street and blocking traffic, "at some point" during the encounter the officer saw cigars in Brown's hands and thought he might be a suspect in the robbery. Jackson later says that Wilson didn't know Brown was a suspect before the shooting. Brown's family releases a statement in response to police report; his parents say they are "beyond outraged". Peaceful protests give way to tear gas and sporadic bouts of looting. This day, Brown would have finished his first week in college [at Vatterott College, where McLaughlin states Brown was set to begin

studies].

Saturday, Aug. 16 – Nixon declares a state of emergency and imposes a curfew in Ferguson. Police in riot gear crack down on crowds of protesters, who defy a midnight curfew. Officers fire rounds of smoke and tear gas even after assuring the public earlier in the day that they would not take such extreme measures.

Sunday, Aug. 17 – Results of autopsy requested by the Brown family are made public, revealing that the teen was shot at least six times, including twice in the head.... Attorney General Eric Holder orders an autopsy of Brown to be performed by a federal medical examiner. Peaceful protests again turn violent. At least two individuals are injured as police fire on the crowd with tear gas and rubber bullets.

Monday, Aug. 18 – An attorney for the Brown family says the independent, family-commissioned autopsy results show the teen was surrendering before his death. Missouri National Guard deploys to Ferguson. Nixon lifts midnight curfew. Obama says he will send Holder to Ferguson on Wednesday. Grand jury plans to hear Brown case. Police fire tear gas at protesters amid the sound of explosions, shots ring out, and armored police trucks speed down [a main Ferguson street]. Police shoot at least two people, both males.

Tuesday, Aug. 19 – The federal autopsy is completed, and the public awaits details... Two St. Louis police officers fatally shoot a [Black] man just three miles south of Ferguson. [Capt. Ron] Johnson, [leader] of the highway patrol, says it “may be weeks or months” before any action is taken against Wilson.... Nixon calls for “vigorous prosecution” in pursuing Brown’s case. A small group of people protesting throw plastic bottles, but peacemakers [who are also protesting Brown’s death]

form a line around the instigators and police refrain from firing bullets and tear gas, marking a turning point in Ferguson. Officers arrest 47 people and seize two handguns. Wilson's narrative of the fatal shooting differs from eyewitnesses whose previous accounts depict Brown raising his hands in surrender before his death...

Wednesday, Aug. 20 – Holder arrives in Ferguson to receive a briefing on the federal civil rights investigation and to meet with community leaders, elected officials, federal prosecutors, and Brown's family. Holder says: "I am the attorney general of the United States. But I am also a Black man". Protesters demand prosecutor Robert McCulloch step aside from the Brown case. Two individuals file separate federal lawsuits against the Ferguson Police Department, both stemming from the death of [an unarmed Black] man who was allegedly tasered by police in 2011.... Police arrest six people, a drop from the 47 individuals detained on Tuesday.

Thursday, Aug. 21 – Holder speaks at a morning press conference: "I want the people of Ferguson to know – this Department of Justice stands with the people of Ferguson". African American leaders in Missouri call for the resignation of Ferguson mayor, James Knowles, and Chief Jackson. Protesters continue to demand authorities fire Wilson from his police duty, charge him with murder, and "vigorously prosecute" him for the killing of Brown.... Nixon orders the Missouri National Guard to begin withdrawing from Ferguson... (para. 4-15)

Funeral services were held for Michael Brown on Monday, August 25, 2014, and were covered by both local and national news outlets; but, public protests surrounding Brown's death continue. In fact, noted professor, Cornel West, was arrested on October 13, 2014, along with several clergy members while taking part in the planned "Moral Monday" /

“Ferguson October” protests in Missouri (St. Louis Post-Dispatch staff reports, 2014). According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, more than five-hundred people took part in one protest outside an area police station; and, Dr. West’s group marched to the station chanting, “Hands up, don’t shoot.” Like Oscar Grant, the defenseless Brown was unarmed, had reportedly surrendered to police authority, and had essentially physically submitted to police custody by reportedly raising his hands; but was still inexplicably gunned down by police – apparently simply for not obeying police orders to walk on the sidewalk. Therefore, like mass public response to the Rodney King beating, the community of Ferguson (and others) reacted by protesting – one of the largest and most widely broadcast mass decries of police brutality in the U.S. since the King verdict protests. Sakuma (2014) notes of the Ferguson police confrontation protests:

The images of armored vehicles and plumes of tear gas in the air seemed like a snapshot out of a [foreign] war zone. But for the residents here...such occupation has gone on for generations, downplayed and swept under the rug. This is just the first time anyone is paying attention.

Michael Brown’s death became that final straw on top of injustices building up and festering over time. Residents in the [economically challenged and racially segregated] neighborhood where Brown was shot watched in horror as investigators left his body out in the middle of the street for more than four hours. The slow dribble of information being released in the days to come, and with his shooter still out on paid leave, only exacerbated the anguish.

The [Brown killing] scene comes just weeks after [New York City] police held Eric Garner in a chokehold, killing him as he pleaded that he could not breathe. [Just]

before that, it was a woman in Los Angeles who was seen beaten horrifically by police on the side of the street. It was all caught on camera. (para. 1 & 14-15)

It should be noted that other African American women have also suffered such abuse at the hands of police, with some even losing their lives – like 23 year old Shantel Davis (an unarmed woman shot and killed by an NYPD officer in 2012) – to extreme force that the officers often try to explain away. However, the number of Black men who lose their lives due to such apparent targeted violence and brutality at the hands of police is much higher.

As publicly addressed and scrutinized by Brown's parents, notably, a seeming character assassination attempt against Brown (several days after public protests of Brown's killing were met with militarized and often excessive police force) deliberately overshadowed the police's coordinated release of the name of the firing officer – because the information was seemingly intentionally released simultaneously. This tactic mirrors some officials' and media outlet's seeming deliberate character assassination attempt by mentioning Trayvon Martin's school suspension. In addition, Ferguson police and media outlets such as FOX News deliberately airing a term with negative connotations such as "strong-arm robbery" (FOX News Nation, 2014) instead of shoplifting or stealing, to describe Brown's alleged actions – taking cigars – in a nearby store prior to his shooting death, is transparently unscrupulous to many. This, as if somehow Brown's possible shoplifting guilt, warranted the unarmed teen's death at the hands of police. As Richinick (2014) mentions, initial reports say the officer was unaware of the robbery or Brown's alleged connection to it; but, that story has been changing due to police recants – which further calls into question the credibility of police accounts and how the judicial system is

often more apt to side with police (whether officers are truthful or not), as in the case of Sean Bell.

It is also importantly noted in an Associated Press (AP) article posted on the website of St. Louis' CBS news affiliate, KMOV, submitted by Jesse Washington (2014), that from a movement for social change standpoint Brown's death at the hands of police and the tragedy's subsequent public protests is unfortunately part of a cyclical societal ritual, because the Missouri teen's killing was:

The most recent enactment of "the ritual" – the script of death, outrage, [media] spin and mourning that America follows when an unarmed Black male is killed by police.

With a few variations, the ritual has followed its familiar course...since the 18-year-old Brown was shot by White police officer Darren Wilson... It continues as we await the judgment of a grand jury considering whether or not Wilson should be charged with a crime.

Will the ritual ever change, and is it even possible that Ferguson could be part of that? This time, can recognition of the well-known patterns help heal the poisonous mistrust between police and many Black people? Is the ritual already helping, in small gains buried beneath the predictable explosions of anger and media attention?...

The ritual began to take shape in the 1960s, when instances of police mistreatment of Black people led to organized resistance in many places across America – and sometimes to violence [(as previously noted and addressed by the Kerner Commission)]. As the decades passed, a blueprint developed for how Black advocates confronted cases of alleged police brutality: protest marches, news conferences, demands for federal intervention, public pressure by sympathetic elected officials.

Sometimes this led to charges or even convictions of police officers. Sometimes there were riots: Miami in 1980 after police were acquitted in the death of a Black motorist; Los Angeles' Rodney King rebellion in 1992; Cincinnati in 2001 when a 19-year-old was fatally shot by an officer; Oakland's uprising in 2009 after Oscar Grant was shot in the back while face-down...

The 2012 killing of Trayvon Martin by a neighborhood watchman...added the transformative element of social media. The public was now participating much more intimately in the ritual.

...Still, the unarmed Black males kept dying. The chants of "No Justice, No Peace" kept rising.

So what happened after Brown was shot on Aug. 9 was predictable: First, protests and outrage. A narrative forms in favor of the deceased: According to accounts of several witnesses from Brown's neighborhood, he was shot with his hands up. He was a "gentle giant" headed to college. Pictures of Brown circulate that show him smiling, baby-faced – reminiscent of the childlike photos that first introduced us to Trayvon Martin.

The day after Brown's shooting, protesters are met with a militarized police response....

Michael Brown's death goes viral. Ferguson trends on Twitter. A horde of media descends....

A backlash builds against the protesters. There are complaints that the liberal media skew the facts to create a false narrative about racist White police. As with Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant, a narrative forms against the deceased: Based on a

video released by police, Brown is characterized as a weed-smoking [(publicly presumed because of the cigars Brown allegedly stole)] thug...

[Then,] the media reports new versions of the old stories: White flight has created poor Black neighborhoods policed by White cops. Black people don't trust the police. Black males are stereotyped as violent.

The main sermon at Brown's service was delivered by [Rev. Al] Sharpton, who is as much a part of the ritual as police tape. He began by issuing a collective call of responsibility: "All of us are required to respond to this. And all of us must solve this."

Sharpton's solution is twofold: Change the nation's policies on policing, and repair the Black community from within....

Can it actually happen? In Michael Brown's case, can the ritual be remembered for more than riots?...

Phillip Atiba Goff, a UCLA psychology professor and president of the Center for Policing Equity, does believe Ferguson has brought us into a different moment, "but with a small window."

"While I think there will be a push for stronger accountability and data collection that comes from this, I worry that we will repeat the amnesia that followed Los Angeles, Newark, Watts, and so many other urban centers for the past 50-plus years," Goff said...

"Whatever the immediate good that may come in the wake of the events of Ferguson," he [continued], "we fail to honor the legacy of Mr. Brown if our collective attention to these issues and collective memory lasts no longer than the month or two

after peace returns to the streets of his hometown.” (para. 2-4, 6-12, 14, 16, 19, 21-22, 25 & 28-30)

Then, on November 24, 2014 – despite Missouri Governor, Jay Nixon, and protesters alike, calling for “vigorous prosecution” in pursuing Brown’s case and asking the Department of Justice to conduct a transparent investigation – it was announced that a Missouri grand jury failed to indict officer Darren Wilson for shooting and killing the unarmed Michael Brown; and, Wilson resigned from the police department that same month (Sanchez, 2014). Despite, potential federal action that could be taken against Wilson, further local and national protests ensued, and was spotlighted by news media. Subsequently adding further insult to (fatal) injury, just nine days later, on December 3, 2014, a New York grand jury also failed to indict White NYPD officer, 29 year old Daniel Pantaleo, for the July 17, 2014, choking death on Staten Island of unarmed African American, 43 year old husband and father Eric Garner – who was only presumed to be selling loose cigarettes illegally (Sanchez & Prokupecz, 2014). Sanchez & Prokupecz also point out that Garner’s death was ruled a homicide, and that outgoing U.S. Attorney General, Eric Holder, has announced that federal officials are moving forward with a civil rights investigation into Garner’s killing. Nevertheless, the current local lack of officer indictment(s) in Garner’s death came despite undisputed video of the entire incident being submitted as evidence – in which several White officers can be seen swarming, tackling, and choking the unarmed Garner, followed by the officers and other White EMT personnel apparently doing little to nothing to try to save Garner’s life as he laid on the sidewalk dying. Importantly, that video evidence gives little hope to those who support President Obama’s call for body cameras on police; because, that

video seemingly only served as a cold witness to police brutality and injustice in Garner's case – rather than preventing it. That is part of the larger reason why the Garner verdict added fuel to the flames of decries of injustice burning in the hearts of many Americans – minorities and Whites alike – already shocked and saddened by the outcome of the Brown case. Consequently, on Saturday, December 13, 2014, sporadic ongoing protests across the country connected to Brown and Garner's deaths converged into even more organized demands for social change, and collectively sounded-out loudly and in unison nationwide during various "Justice for All" marches also highlighted by news media outlets. According to CNN's Sanchez:

Thongs...took to the streets in major cities, including New York, Washington, Boston, San Francisco and Oakland, California. In Washington, a crowd of thousands snaked up Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol in a protest that evoked memories of past civil rights marches.

"I stand here as a Black man who is afraid of the police," said marcher Ahmad Greene-Hayes, "who is afraid of never knowing when my life might end, never knowing when I might be ... gunned down by a vigilante or a security guard or a police officer."

In Washington, many carried signs with now familiar messages: "Black lives matter," "Hold cops accountable" and "I can't breathe."

"It's systematic racism that is instilled in our government," said Shanna Lawrie, her hands in the air as she marched to the Capitol.

Another marcher was Samaria Rice, whose 12-year-old son, Tamir, was [playing with] a toy gun [in a park] when a [White] Cleveland police officer fatally shot him

[on November 22, 2014]. The local medical examiner ruled [the African American child's] death a homicide. (para. 4, 11, 14, 15 & 18)

However if history is any indication, innocent pre-teen Tamir Rice's case might follow suit with those of Michael Brown and Eric Garner's – lack of indictment and/or prosecution for arguably overzealous, seemingly reckless, police officers senselessly continuing to take the lives of unarmed Black men and boys. Therefore, what was once a rash of protests begat in Missouri, has joined forces with waves of dissenters denouncing police brutality from Staten Island to far beyond stateside, and even in cyberspace – and, this is a new element of the observed ritual! Washington (2014) resounds that as the ritual relates to such police confrontations, brutality, and the malignantly repetitive killing of unarmed Black males at the hands of officers, “Progress will be found in the uncouneted: The young man who doesn't run from [or resist] police. The officer who doesn't pull the trigger [or resort to violence]. The ritual that doesn't get repeated” (para. 36-39). A shockingly tragic and unfortunate occurrence which happened outside of the typically reported police confrontation and subsequent customary response ritual should also be noted; because, on December, 20, 2014, Officer Rafael Ramos (who was Hispanic) and Officer Wenjian Liu (who was Asian) were shot and killed as they sat in their patrol car in Brooklyn, New York, by Ismaaiyl Brinsley, allegedly in retaliation for lack of officer indictments for the killings of Brown and Garner by police – separate, tragic, fatal police confrontations that officers Ramos and Liu were not connected to (Berlinger, Sanchez, & Prokupecz, 2014). According to Berlinger et al. (2014), Brinsley was found dead in a nearby subway station from a self-inflicted gunshot wound; nevertheless, Brinsley's retaliatory actions against police has placed officers nationwide

on high alert regarding potential violence aimed at them from alleged Black criminal suspects and ironically, protesters of ongoing police brutality.

Toporek (2013) has a possible answer to the question posed by Washington (2014) regarding whether or not the public response ritual (of protesting) surrounding violent and/or fatal police confrontations such as in Ferguson are helping to end the tragic cycle, by stating that with regard to the killing of Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant:

Protests in the community erupted with questions of the role of racial bias in the incident when it appeared that the investigation of the incident was slow and inadequate. Reflecting on these cases, the point made by [Mays et al., 2013] is relevant: social practices and public policies that have historically conflated crime with African Americans influence the perceptions and action of law enforcement.

(p. 3)

By proactively employing that train of thought, the protestors' responses peacefully demanding police reform in Ferguson and beyond, due to the death of Eric Garner, could become widespread socio-political practices that positively affect the actions of law enforcement officers – thereby reducing violent police responses aimed at Blacks and other minorities.

Moreover, both the Ferguson and Eric Garner death response ritual has shed light on the fact that unfortunately, many individuals – including those involved in presenting such statistics via news media – are unaware of just how rampant the problem of violent and/or fatal police confrontations with minorities is. K. Johnson et al. (2014) found that:

Nearly two times a week in the United States, a White police officer killed a Black person during a seven-year period ending in 2012, according to the most recent

accounts of justifiable homicide reported to the FBI.

On average, there were 96 such incidents among at least 400 police killings each year that were reported to the FBI by local police....

The reports show that 18% of the Blacks killed during those seven years were under age 21, compared to 8.7% of Whites.... (para. 1-3)

Another positive outcome of the Ferguson response ritual is discussion of the fact that nationwide data collection of Blacks' and other individuals' deaths at the hands of police is scant and unreliable, because it is only voluntary. According to K. Johnson et al. (2014):

While the racial analysis is striking [as is], the database it's based on has been long considered flawed and largely incomplete. The killings are self-reported by law enforcement and not all police departments participate so the database undercounts the actual number of deaths. Plus, the numbers are not audited after they are submitted to the FBI and the statistics on "justifiable" homicides have conflicted with independent measures of fatalities at the hands of police.

About 750 agencies contribute to the database, [that is only] a fraction of the 17,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States.

University of South Carolina criminologist Geoff Alpert, who has long studied police use of deadly force, said the FBI's limited database underscores a gaping hole in the nation's understanding of how often local police take a life on America's streets—and under what circumstances.

"There is no national database for this type of information, and that is so crazy," said Alpert. "We've been trying for years, but nobody wanted to fund it and the

(police) departments didn't want it. They were concerned with their image and liability. They don't want to bother with it.”

“I've looked at records in hundreds of departments,” Alpert said, “and it is very rare that you find someone saying, ‘Oh, gosh, we used excessive force.’ In 98.9% of the cases, they are stamped as justified and sent along.” (para. 4-7 & 9)

Moving now, specifically to instances of law enforcement confrontations with Hispanics – in general across the nation, Hispanic individuals often have unique circumstances surrounding their confrontations with police and other criminal justice officials. While more African Americans seem to fall prey to police shootings, Hispanic individuals nationwide are by no means untouched by tragic, unnecessary, police violence. In one shocking example, 29 year old Anthony Baez – who was Hispanic – was killed December 22, 1994, by an illegal police chokehold in the Bronx after his football accidentally hit a patrol car. According to Marzulli and Jamieson (1997), Baez, a security guard, was visiting from Florida when he and his brothers got into a pickup football game outside their parents' house at one a.m.; then, former officer, Francis X. Livoti – who is White – asked the group to go inside, but they refused. Feuer (2005) states:

A stray toss landed on a nearby police car. Then another. Officer Livoti got out of the car and placed one of Mr. Baez's brothers under arrest for disturbing the peace.

Anthony Baez...protested and eventually resisted his own arrest by crossing his arms on his chest as he leaned against a parked car. Mr. Livoti put Mr. Baez in a chokehold. Shortly afterward, Mr. Baez died. (para. 6-7)

According to Feuer, Baez's mother said, "My husband was right there begging him to let him go..." "He chose to murder my son" (para. 11 & 16). However, Livoti claims Baez died from a medical condition – "an asthma attack and his weight of 270 pounds" (Marzulli & Jamieson, para. 2). That claim helped lead to Livoti's initial acquittal, along with other officers' claims that Baez was able to move around after the struggle – despite the fact that according to Marzulli and Jamieson, during the criminal trial, forensics experts testified that Baez showed signs of having been placed in a choke hold. Feuer notes:

Mr. Livoti was acquitted in the first trial stemming from the case, a state trial in 1996 in which he was charged with criminally negligent homicide. After the acquittal, he was charged by federal prosecutors with depriving Mr. Baez of his civil rights. In that trial, he was convicted and sentenced to the seven and a half years behind bars. (para. 8)

According to Feuer, prior to Livoti's release in 2005, Baez's mother intimated that Livoti only got a slap on the wrist, saying: "It's already a slap in the face that he was convicted for violating Anthony's rights, not murder. Now he's getting out. I call it a slap" (para. 11). In light of such police confrontations, it is understandable why members of oppressed and exploited minority groups – like African Americans and Hispanics – view the police as an indelible symbol of how this country is in constant conflict between its ideals of "freedom and liberty" and its practices of the social and legal oppression of minorities, as enforced by many police officers – who are rarely, if ever, equally punished for their own crimes against citizens (Staples, 2011).

In addition to general “criminal” police confrontations, Hispanic individuals with an undocumented immigration status also often face harsh, demeaning, law enforcement confrontations with INS, Border Patrol, and/or ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents; and, unfortunately sometimes these individual micro-aggression confrontations are also broadcast on television news – often as anti-immigration rhetoric (that’s part of the larger macro-aggression effort). Supreme Court decisions over the past four decades have eroded Fourth Amendment protections for many Hispanic individuals (and other minority individuals with questionable U.S. citizenship status), by ruling that police can stop individuals *because* of their membership in a particular ethnic group (Romero, 2006). The key is that the police must provide some additional reason for the stop – which could be hunches or other subjective statements that the courts can not contradict as violations of that individual’s civil liberties (Staples, 2011). However, unfortunately for many Hispanic individuals just appearing “illegal” or “Mexican” is often enough to warrant an individual police confrontation; and, that makes it inevitable that individual citizens and legal residents will be stopped, and potentially harassed by police. In response to such excessive, often violently intimidating immigration policing practices, according to Romero, many Hispanic individuals have been known to avoid certain public areas – extending the reach of petit apartheid and harms of reduction and repression; and, many elderly individuals fear the police – sometimes asking for assistance in obtaining food and medication so they can remain home, behind closed doors to avoid officers. Romero also espouses that:

Immigration policing is based on determining that citizenship is visibly inscribed on bodies in specific urban spaces rather than “probable cause.” In the Chandler

Roundup, official investigations found no evidence that stops and searches were based on probable cause of criminal activity. The conclusion drawn by the Attorney General's investigation underscores the harms of micro- and macro-aggressions... [stating:] there were no other warrants, charges, or holds for these individuals that in any way indicated other criminal activity or that required [the] extraordinary security or physical force [which was used]. The issue raised by this type of treatment is not whether the arrest and deportation is legal, but whether human beings are entitled to some measure of dignity and safety even when they are suspected of being in the United States illegally. (p. 468)

Citizen confrontations.

Another form of ethnic and/or racialized micro-aggressions broadcasted during the confrontation phase of minority news coverage is citizen confrontations between individuals. Recently, the most commonly aired and analyzed form citizen confrontation micro-aggressions on televised news are White-on-Black physical or verbal attacks. However of course, not all racial/ethnic confrontations covered by news media are top-down; because, some minority targets of discrimination, threats, and violence have fought back. According to Eitzen and Zinn (2004):

The rage that racial minorities feel against Whites has surfaced sporadically in small and diffuse ways as well. Most commonly, it has been manifested in individual crimes (murder, theft, and rape) or in gang assaults on Whites or in destruction of property owned by Whites. (p. 70)

Nevertheless, countless White individuals have engaged in violent and/or physical micro-aggression confrontations with minorities for centuries in America – often with legal

impunity. Such actions are either explained-away, and/or framed stereotypically by news media: as in the case of some news outlets framing Jordan Davis as just another loud Black “threat” listening to offensively loud “thug music” (Edney, 2014, p. 2) “rap crap” (Botelho et al., 2014, Confrontation at a gas station, para. 3) – as his killer, Michael Dunn, calls it. Those repeated journalistic implications arguably steeped in hegemonic rhetoric, about African Americans and a particular genre of music, which were originally spouted by Dunn, presumably warrant someone like Dunn (White, male) to permanently silence Davis (perhaps also evidenced by the fact that Davis’ death did not receive nearly as much national media or social attention as Trayvon Martin’s – which happened the same year).

Trayvon Martin was also framed stereotypically in the media regarding his citizen confrontation with George Zimmerman. While reporting on the Martin-Zimmerman confrontation, some news media entities clearly took sides in the confrontation by emphasizing Martin’s alleged character flaws. Brown (2013) points out that major news media entities such as FOX and CNN emphasized that Martin’s visit to his father’s house resulted from his “ten day suspension from school...[stemming] from school officials’ discovery of drug related residue in [his] book bag” (p. 260) – rather than focusing on Martin as Zimmerman’s victim. In addition, some news media outlets engaged in the public framing of Martin as a Black, physical “threat,” despite the fact that the teen was unarmed and did not approach Zimmerman. Brown espouses that fact:

In an interview with CNN journalist Anderson Cooper, shortly after the not guilty verdict, one of the six jurors, identified as Juror B37, made the following comments. Despite the fact that Zimmerman was the one that initiated contact with Trayvon,

Juror B37 remarked that she had “no doubt” Zimmerman feared for his life in the final moments of his struggle with Trayvon Martin, and that was the definitive factor in the verdict. She continues by stating that, I think George Zimmerman is a man whose heart was in the right place, but just got displaced by the vandalism in the neighborhoods, and wanting to catch these people so badly that he went above and beyond what he really should have done. (p. 260)

A way to try to understand such shocking efforts to explain-away “the legal murder of Trayvon Martin” (Brown, 2013) and other African Americans and minorities – even though notions about the controversial Stand Your Ground law were only informally introduced to jurors – Lithwick (2014) states:

Under “Stand Your Ground,” we are asking jurors to impose a subjective test about whether the shooter was experiencing a profound moment of existential panic. We are asking them whether – in a country seemingly full of people who are both armed and terrified that everyone *else* is armed – shooting first makes sense. By redirecting jurors to contemplate whether people who are armed and ready to kill are thinking reasonably about others they believe to be armed and ready to kill, we have created a framework in which one’s subjective fears about the world are all that matters. (p. 2)

Lithwick also says we should expect more of such *legal* citizen confrontations to occur and be broadcast on television news:

The fact that “Stand Your Ground” defenses have been staggeringly successful in Florida in recent years (one study shows it’s been invoked more than 200 times since being enacted in 2005 and used successfully in 70 percent of the cases) suggests that it’s been embedded into more than just jury instructions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a

Tampa Bay Times study from 2012 shows that “as ‘Stand Your Ground’ claims have increased, so too has the number of Floridians with guns. Concealed weapons permits now stand at 1.1 million, three times as many as in 2005 when the law was passed.”

(p. 2)

Ours is not a polite society: many are rude, terrified, hotheaded, confrontation oriented; and, now some individuals (i.e., Whites) can apparently *legally* use guns to sort it all out as they see fit (Brown, 2013; Lithwick, 2014). As it relates to this phenomenon, Lane and Meeker (2003) examined the “indirect victimization” thesis – a theoretical approach to explaining the discrepancy between actual risk and fear of a perceived threat – regarding the effects of mass media on perceived risk and fear of crime among Whites and Latinos. The researchers found that “focusing on the television as the most important source of crime information *increases* perceived risk and therefore fear” (p. 19) of a particular “threat”. Espousing that finding, and extending it to recent, highly televised, confrontations between Whites and Blacks – given that televised crime news typically relegates depictions of Blacks as perpetrators (Dixon, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011; Dixon & Linz, 2000) and “threats” – I contend that, (as previously alluded to in Chapter 1) feeling threatened socially, is not the same as being threatened physically; and, many top-down racial micro-aggression confrontations between Whites and Blacks (and other minorities) could be avoided if that notion is heeded and indirect victimization applications are avoided.

A recent example of a non-violent, non-verbal, micro-aggression that has been televised in news media – often in sports news – is individual fans throwing bananas at Black individuals on sports teams. That confrontational act is a physical extension of the

offensive reason a White Cambridge police officer called professor Henry Louis Gates a “banana-eating jungle monkey” (Staples, 2011, p. 38). According to Chandler (2011), of NBC Sports, the racist act of banana throwing is unfortunately common in televised sports. In 2013, Baltimore Orioles outfielder, Adam Jones, had a banana thrown at him during a victorious game over home team, the San Francisco Giants (ESPN.com news services, 2013). That incident was briefly discussed in news media; but, some tried to sweep the racist act under the rug – apparently including ESPN news services writers and Giants team officials. The sports writers’ seemingly biased reporting states:

A possible racially motivated incident forced the All-Star to take to Twitter to voice his displeasure....

Jim Moorehead, the Giants’ senior director of media relations, told The (Baltimore) Sun on Sunday night that the Giants received no reports of an incident involving anything being thrown onto the field in the bottom of the ninth inning. Moorehead, however, told the Sun that the Giants will review security footage [later]. (para. 1 & 4)

Chandler also points out that:

[In 2011] someone threw a banana at Black Philadelphia Flyers winger Wayne Simmonds during their [hockey] game against the [Detroit] Red Wings... Amazingly, this may not have been the first time it happened to Simmonds. And it’s certainly not the first time it’s happened in sports...

The Simmonds incident isn’t the first in the NHL. In 2002, a banana was thrown onto the ice near Carolina Hurricanes goalie Kevin Weekes as his team was leaving the ice after a 2-1 loss to Montreal in Game 3 of their Stanley Cup playoff series. (para. 1 & 4)

Opposed to that non-verbal form, a verbal micro-aggression citizen confrontation attacking African American individuals has unfortunately taken center stage near Las Vegas; and, has recently made national headline news – even garnering a response from President Obama. According to an AP journalist (Rindels, 2014) cited by local CBS affiliate KLAS Channel 8, White cattle rancher, Cliven Bundy, “told reporters near his ranch 80 miles from Las Vegas that he wonders whether Black people are better off now or when they were slaves in the South” (para. 2) picking cotton. Before his comments about ““the Negro”” (para. 15) – as Bundy referred to Black people, according to other AP journalists (Ritter & Riccardi, 2014) cited by KLAS Channel 8 – Bundy was already in the news for alleged unauthorized cattle grazing on public federal land, and his subsequent fight with the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) over “\$1.1 million in grazing fees and penalties” (Ritter & Riccardi, para. 4) owed for the infraction. The BLM says he has not paid grazing fees for the past 20 years; but, Bundy claims that he has ““ancestral rights”” (Murphy, 2014, para. 14) and does not have to pay the fees to the federal government. In addition, “Bundy says he doesn’t recognize federal authority over lands that his cattle have grazed on for years” (Ritter & Riccardi, para. 13). According to Ritter & Riccardi, “after the BLM called off their roundup and released about 350 animals back to Bundy, the rancher [initially] drew praise from many Republicans – most notably Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, a likely 2016 presidential candidate...” (para. 14).

KLAS Channel 8 was the first local news station to present Bundy’s offensive comments about African Americans to Las Vegas area viewers, on Thursday April 24, 2014. However, Rindels (2014) says Bundy made the comments the previous weekend; and, “they were first published Wednesday [April 23rd] by The New York Times” (para.

4). The rancher made comments about Blacks, abortion, and welfare – pointing specifically to African American individuals in a housing project in North Las Vegas; and, Bundy said that he wondered, “are they better off as slaves, picking cotton and having a family life and doing things, or are they better off under government subsidy? They didn’t get no more freedom. They got less freedom” (Murphy, 2014, para. 4). The historically inaccurate – since slavery was a violent, cruel, system that tore families apart by selling individuals and deeming them less than human – offensive remarks were top story news on KLAS Channel 8 at noon on April 24th; and, Bundy’s comments aired in a sound-bite in the cold-open pre-show, then KLAS immediately repeated their entire SOT (Sound On Tape) as the opening of their top story of the afternoon.

The next day, on Friday April 25th, Bundy held a news conference to address the media and his supporters – many who’d already come to his Bunkerville, Nevada, area ranch to help him fight the BLM. During that news conference Bundy said:

“Sometimes I say the right thing, sometimes I say the wrong thing,”... “There is an issue, of racial issue yesterday and it got sort of bad. They figured I was probably one of the worst racial people on the whole earth, but I never did believe that. I believe that the people that did listen to me knew better.” (Murphy, 2014, para. 2)

Bundy also spoke one on one with KLAS Channel 8 – whose reporter informed the rancher that many people are outraged by his comments:

“([KLAS:] You have offended people.) [Bundy:] Well, I’m sorry about that. I’m sorry that I have offended people, but I am not sorry about what I said. I stand by what I said, because I felt like that I said it from my heart and I said good things.” (Murphy, para. 10)

In a further apparent attempt to explain his comments Bundy also used Facebook to compare himself to Civil Rights icon Rosa Parks and discuss Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Dream," then said during an interview:

"Her taking her seat in the front of the bus didn't fulfill the reverend's dream. His dream was that Rosa Park [sic] could sit anywhere in the bus and I said for the last 40-50 years, the Negro community, the Black community, see I said that word again, I'm in trouble," Bundy laughed, "The Black community has been sitting in the proper seat in the front of the bus, but have they really had the freedom and liberty and enjoyment of sitting anywhere in the bus? And what I said, the statement this morning is I'd be proud to sit with Rosa anywhere in the bus." (Murphy, para. 12)

That same day is when other Las Vegas news stations aired their stories on Bundy, but with a second day slant (inclusive of missed day one coverage). That Friday, April 25th, at 11 a.m., Las Vegas' ABC affiliate KTNV Channel 13 aired the Bundy comments as the top pre-show story with a SOT aimed at Bundy's attempted clarification; but, the SOT was still inflammatory. Then, KTNV Channel 13 led with Bundy's remarks as a top story with sound from Bundy about African American individuals in North Las Vegas specifically – referring to them as being "on welfare," their "daughters having abortions," "sons in jail," and possibly being "better off as slaves?" It is important to note that KTNV Channel 13 was the only station that actually got reaction SOTS from African Americans in North Las Vegas and on Las Vegas' Historic Westside – which is an historically Black residential area. Of course, all three Black people (two men, one woman) interviewed/featured were outraged! Next, four Nevada Legislators – including the governor – had statements of disapproval typed on screen as a graphic. Then, a video

and SOT ran of (then sitting) Nevada Representative, (the now former Congressman) Steven Horsford, in a news conference in which Horsford called for Bundy's supporters to "go home." The five minute top story (unusually lengthy) then switched focus to cattle grazing; and, had a SOT from a young White male supporter of Bundy's saying how "good strong soldiers need support for the battle."

On a different local news program that same day, Friday April 25th, NBC affiliate KSNV Channel 3 also aired Bundy as a second day slanted story at noon. KSNV Channel 3 also placed Bundy as a top story in their preshow with a SOT; and, as their top story of the afternoon. KSNV Channel 3 – the only local news station seen on air to attribute the CNN show that originally broadcasted Bundy's comments – simply aired Bundy's inflammatory SOT as second day news coverage. No rebuttal – from African Americans or disapproving Nevada legislators – was given. The anchor simply concluded by saying, "We'll have more for you on that in later newscasts."

Also the same day, Friday April 25th, at 11p.m. – during the final local news broadcast of the day – KLAS Channel 8 concluded airing their second day of Bundy comment coverage. In a whopping seven minute segment show opener dedicated to Bundy: their preshow featured him; then his local coverage day two attempt to "explain" was aired – featuring Bundy stating that he apologizes, but he meant what he said! and, maybe people just misunderstood him; his supporters had their say at a BBQ featured near Bundy's land; one Black person showed up there to support – but didn't want to give his name or comment on air; that Black man was shown being heartily greeted by Bundy's son – who said his dad is not a racist; then Bundy's other son in Arizona was featured regarding his troubles with the BLM, and that man also said his dad is not a

racist; finally, a PKG (reporter and/or anchor packaged story with details) was shown with Bundy and his local BLM troubles.

According to one KLAS Channel 8 reporter (Rozyla, 2014), many of the rancher's supporters say Bundy's comments on race mean nothing to them and they are standing by him:

Alex Bieniecki, one of the armed militia [members] patrolling the area,...

[said] "regardless of whether somebody was racist or not, I believe in the right to be able to feel that way. If you want to be a racist in this country, you have the right to be a racist. It is when you hurt somebody, that you step over the line." (para. 9 & 12)

However, one does not have to physically touch a minority to harm them with racist views – especially with the merging of institutional racism and biased reporting practices broadcasting skewed images of minorities to the masses. Perhaps that is why Democratic (then sitting, now former) Nevada Rep. Steven Horsford – who is Black and represented "the remote area outside Las Vegas where Bundy and his supporters made their stand" (Ritter & Riccardi, 2014, para.11) – has said, "They are statements infused with bigotry, and racism, and they are not to be tolerated" (Rozyla, para. 8). Furthermore, Nevada based Democratic (then sitting, now former) Senate Majority Leader, Harry Reid, said Bundy "revealed himself to be a hateful racist" (Ritter & Riccardi, para. 22) and "by denigrating people who work hard and play by the rules while he mooches off public land,..." "[Bundy] also revealed himself to be a hypocrite" (para. 23).

As the news continued to be broadcast nationwide, on Saturday May 3rd, at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, President Obama even commented on Bundy's remarks

by taking a scornfully comedic approach to his rebuke. According to one MSNBC journalist (Brand, 2014) the Commander-in-Chief used an athlete as a comedic set-up saying:

“Olympic snowboarding gold medalist Jamie Anderson is here. We’re proud of her. Incredibly talented young lady. Michelle and I watch the Olympics. We can not believe what these folks do. Death-defying feats. Haven’t seen somebody pull a 180 that fast since Rand Paul dis-invited that Nevada rancher from this dinner.”

“As a general rule, things don’t end well if the sentence starts, ‘Let me tell you something I know about the Negro.’ [(Obama continues)] You don’t really need to hear the rest of it. Just a tip for ya, don’t start your sentence that way!” (Brand, p.2, video)

Bundy’s offensive remarks remain no laughing matter to many Americans – especially African Americans and other disenfranchised minorities – who hear, or at least feel the effects of sentiments such as Bundy’s every day. So, why are his comments considered news? If they are news, why did it take several days for something that happened in Las Vegas news stations’ backyards to be covered? Were they trying to sweep it under the rug? – meaning Bundy’s comments and/or a discussion about the ghettoization of many Blacks in North Las Vegas and surrounding areas. Why are his comments being repeated on air over & over again, if they’re so offensive? Or, is the news media just looking to sensationalize or reiterate the racist premise of the powers-that-be – thereby reinforcing such stereotypical thought. All those questions can be answered by analyzing Fainstein’s (2004) theories in regard to Bundy’s comments:

Some images about race confront us every day when we turn on our television sets:

teenage mothers on welfare, crack addicts, drive-by shootings, rundown neighborhoods, children dying in tenement-house fires, the MTV rap world of fast girls and violent boys. Such images reflect and reinforce popular identification of African Americans with the worst-off and the most socially “deviant” segments of the Black poor – the members of the so-called underclass – and with the places where they live – the Black ghetto....

Popular images – and the more sophisticated discussion of the underclass – have managed to avoid confrontation with evidence about income distribution and economic reorganization, even in the face of an abundance of empirical and theoretical work in these areas. The same may be said about the most omnipresent and long-standing reality about [many] African Americans – their residential segregation....

Blacks are ghettoized through political and economic processes that establish residential segregation as a sign of, and basis for, group subordination. The Black ghetto – like the Jewish ghetto of the Middle Ages – encompasses the entire population bearing an ascriptive attribute, in this case skin color, which signifies a deeply rooted set of historical and contemporary relations. The Black ghetto is continually and mainly intentionally reproduced by White Americans and the institutions that they dominate. (p. 425 & 428)

Those institutions include the majority-White owned media – specifically the multitude of majority-White owned news media corporations – who produce and continually rebroadcast images that reaffirm many Whites’ inaccurate perception that welfare assistance benefits mostly Blacks and Hispanics; and, their fear of a crime wave that they

believe has a distinct color. Therefore, if there is a belief by many Whites that Blacks and Hispanics being jobless, and on welfare is a problem – why aren't minorities being afforded more job opportunities? Why isn't the fact that many local minorities aren't hired for advertised jobs being aired as news investigations? The answer – according to Eitzen and Zinn (2004), “Although the media do investigative reporting and occasionally question the system, the overall impact of the media is supportive of it” (p. 144) – a system that reinforces the socio-economic dominance of the White majority by controlling valuable resources such as jobs. For instance, one African American man went on air via news radio in Las Vegas regarding Bundy's statements about unemployed Blacks – on Saturday, April 26th, on the politically oriented “The Patricia Cunningham Show” on 88.1 FM, an African American station and the only all-Black local media forum publicly addressing topics relating to Bundy's statements – saying he responded to a job opening with a local union, was told he could not have the job because he needed to be in a union; then, when he proved he was a union member, and had several years of on-the-job experience, he was told they weren't hiring. In light of that instance of employment discrimination, Mills (1959) made a famous distinction between “private troubles” and “public issues” by stating that if a situation is problematic for an individual or scattered individuals, this represents a private trouble. To illustrate this point, Mills cites a single unemployed individual. However, when that trouble is widespread, as is the case when unemployment affects large numbers of individuals in a society – like African Americans, as pointed out by Bundy – this becomes a public issue.

The federal government has been formally aware of the modern public issues chronically plaguing many African Americans since at least 1968, through release of the

Kerner Commission report – commissioned by President Lyndon B. Johnson to inquire about reasons sparking ongoing race riots during the 1960's – which found that America's separate and *unequal* Black and White society left many African Americans with at least 12 deeply held grievances that the social science researchers ranked into three levels of intensity:

First Level of Intensity – 1. Police practices, 2. Unemployment and underemployment, 3. Inadequate housing. Second Level of Intensity – 4. Inadequate education, 5. Poor recreation facilities and programs, 6. Ineffectiveness of the political structure and grievance mechanisms. Third Level of Intensity – 7. Disrespectful White attitudes, 8. Discriminatory administration of justice, 9. Inadequacy of federal programs, 10. Inadequacy of municipal services, 11. Discriminatory consumer and credit practices, 12. Inadequate welfare programs. (Kerner Commission, 1968, p. 7)

The Kerner report delivered an indictment of White society for isolating and neglecting African Americans, and urged legislation to promote racial integration and to improve and enrich ghettos primarily through the creation of jobs, job training programs, and adequate housing; however, not surprisingly, President Johnson rejected the recommendations (Kerner Commission, 1968). With those grievances in mind, since not very much has changed for many African Americans since release of the Kerner report, the aforementioned public issues are the types of daily slights that should outrage news viewers – he-said/she-said controversial, confrontational, comments like Bundy's that simply whip viewers into a ratings frenzy; because, the fact that these stories aired on the cusp of May "Sweeps" (attempts to log high ratings, which equals higher ad revenue) is not lost!

Sadly, later that same week – on Saturday, April 26, 2014 – (then sitting, now former) Los Angeles Clippers basketball team owner, lawyer, and billionaire real estate investor, Donald Sterling, was caught on tape spouting anti-Black, hateful, exclusionary speech (Shoichet & Almasy, 2014); and, Sterling’s comments made national news top story headlines and sparked widespread outrage. During this micro-aggression confrontation, Sterling, who is White, verbally attacked his alleged girlfriend V. Stiviano – who is half Black and Mexican – for associating and taking pictures with Black people, including famous athletes such as Earvin “Magic” Johnson and Matt Kemp. This shocking individual confrontation took a very public, highly offensive turn, once versions of the audio were released. According to TMZ (and its sports staff) – who was the first media entity to leak the audio – Stiviano’s attorneys say ““This office understands that the currently released audio tape of approximately 15 minutes is a portion of approximately one (1) hour of overall audio recording of Mr. Donald T. Sterling and Ms. Stiviano, and is in fact legitimate”” (para. 3). According to one transcript portion from Solomon Jones (2014), Sterling asks Stiviano, “And why are you taking pictures with minorities... Why?” (para. 12). Sterling then tries to defend his compliance with, and acceptance that “there’s a culture [of racism]” (Jones, para. 22); and, declares that he does not want Stiviano to disrespect “the world before [her]” (para. 36) by saying: “I’m living in a culture, and I have to live within that culture. So that’s the way it is” (para. 30). According to Jones, Stiviano later says, “People call you and tell you that I have Black people on my Instagram. And it bothers you,” (para. 45) to which Sterling replies, “Yeah it bothers me a lot that you want to promo... broadcast that you’re associating with Black people. Do you have to?” (para. 46); then, Stiviano responds saying, “You

associate with Black people,” (para. 47) but Sterling notably (and hypocritically) declares, “I’m not you, and you’re not me. You’re supposed to be a delicate White or a delicate Latina girl” (para. 48). According to Wagner (2014), in another portion of their conversation – that was not previously released but was later leaked to Deadspin.com – Stiviano (V:) says she doesn’t understand the way Sterling (DS:) thinks; and, further explains her Instagram pictures, after she agreed to remove the Black people as he wished:

V: I don’t understand, I don’t see your views. I wasn’t raised the way you were raised.

DS: Well then, if you don’t feel—don’t come to my games. Don’t bring Black people, and don’t come.

V: Do you know that you have a whole team that’s Black, that plays for you?

DS: You just, do I know? I support them and give them food, and clothes, and cars, and houses. Who gives it to them? Does someone else give it to them? Do I know that I have—Who makes the game? Do I make the game, or do they make the game? Is there 30 owners, that created the league?...

V: I didn’t remove Matt Kemp and Magic Johnson, but I thought—

DS: Why?

V: I thought Matt Kemp is mixed, and he was OK, just like me.

DS: OK.

V: He’s lighter and Whiter than me.

DS: OK.

V: I met his mother.

DS: You think I’m a racist, and wouldn’t—

V: I don't think you're a racist.

DS: Yes you do. Yes you do.

V: I think you, you—

DS: Evil heart....

V: It's like saying, "Let's just persecute and kill all of the Jews."

DS: Oh, it's the same thing, right?

V: Isn't it wrong? Wasn't it wrong then? With the Holocaust? And you're Jewish, you understand discrimination.

DS: You're a mental case, you're really a mental case. The Holocaust, we're comparing with—

V: Racism! Discrimination.

DS: There's no racism here. If you don't want to be... walking... into a basketball game with a certain... person, is that racism? (para. 4-7; 13-24; and, 38-43)

It is worth noting that hardly anyone ever thinks, or *admits*, that they are actually racist; because, Cliven Bundy does not think he is racist either. Perhaps that is due to development of the notions of “symbolic racism” – a modern form of racism encompassing negative views about minorities not directly linked to race but indirectly through social and political issues, and is perhaps currently the most prevalent form of racism (Henry & Sears, 2008). According to Henry and Sears' theory, someone with beliefs fostering symbolic racism might actually ideologically oppose old fashioned racism (such as Jim Crow laws and segregation) and may even genuinely believe they are not racist; because, symbolic racism's rationales occur subconsciously. Furthermore, even in the middle of Sterling's racist micro-aggression rant targeting Stiviano

specifically, and African Americans in general – in which Sterling even insults his own Clippers players by professing a plantation-“owner” master-like role, in which he is supposedly providing for Black men who can’t earn a living elsewhere – Sterling is still offended at the suggestion that he’s a racist. Nevertheless, Sterling’s hurtful racist thoughts and words were apparently manifested in his harmful, discriminatory deeds against minorities; because, according to ESPN contributors Broussard et al. (2014):

In November 2009, Sterling agreed to pay \$2.73 million to settle allegations by the government that he refused to rent apartments to Hispanics and Blacks and to families with children. The Justice Department [also] sued Sterling in August 2006 for allegations of housing discrimination in the Koreatown area of Los Angeles. (para. 42)

ESPN’s Broussard et al. also say when the news broke:

The NAACP issued a statement about the remarks.

‘If these allegations are proven true, we are extremely disappointed in Mr. Sterling,’ Alice Huffman, president of the NAACP California State Conference, said in [a news] release. ‘Recent remarks like these, and those of Cliven Bundy, remind us that racism is not a footnote of our past, but a reality of our present that we must confront head on.’ (para. 18-19)

Thompson (2006) addresses “a little-discussed wound in the heart of many Whites: the Black woman lover” (p. 150). V. Stiviano’s relationship with Donald Sterling – just as Susan Lawson’s relationship with Justin Volpe of the Louima sodomy – embodies a seeming paradox in the personal versus professional lives of these White men. How could they allegedly uphold bigoted sentiments and commit such racist acts, all while

engaging in personal relationships with Black women? The answer – according to Thompson:

With White women still standing on the [socially historical] pedestal of purity, White men are permitted to roam sexually with the dark exotic Other. But unlike White women who have Black lovers and who bear the burden of keeping White civilization “pure,” White men who have Black lovers [(especially in the absence of producing mixed offspring)] too often retain their true-White manhood or favorite-son status. (p. 151)

On the other hand though, why would Stiviano remain in a personal relationship with Sterling? That answer – according to Thompson’s theory – is connected to the fact that in some ways Sterling’s relationship with Stiviano echoes the relationship between slave owner, President Thomas Jefferson, and his Black slave with whom he had many children – Sally Hemmings. Although she has considerably more choice in the matter than Hemmings likely did, Stiviano’s relationship with Sterling suggests elements of both power and amorous reciprocity. According to CNN (Yan, 2014), Stiviano is being sued by Sterling’s estranged wife; and, she reportedly made the financial claim against Stiviano the month before the recording leaked:

[Rochelle Sterling] claims that Donald Sterling used the couple’s money to buy Stiviano a Ferrari, two Bentleys and a Range Rover.

Stiviano also [received] a \$1.8 million duplex [condominium in the LA area]...and received about \$250,000 in cash from Sterling, the court document claims. (She’s the target of a lawsuit, para. 2-3)

Thompson also espouses that:

Some Black women and men...[inappropriately seek] access to White power and White privilege; too often this embrace suggests racial transcendence where Blackness becomes marginalized. Extending the argument of Whiteness as [valuable], George Lipsitz analyzes the materiality of Whiteness [saying]: Whiteness has a cash value: it accounts for advantages that come to individuals through profits made from housing secured in discriminatory markets [(such as Sterling's)], through the unequal education allocated to children of different races through insider networks that channel employment opportunities to the relatives and friends of those who have profited most from present and past racial discrimination, and especially through intergenerational transfers of inherited wealth that pass on the spoils of discrimination to succeeding generations. (p. 151)

That is why many are concerned about the future potential forced sale of the Clippers – which Sterling will likely profit greatly from.

The next day – Sunday April, 27th – in response to the allegations, the Clippers players themselves became a Breaking News story for protesting their team owner's apparent comments during their spotlighted playoff game. Just before the basketball game the players huddled center court and removed their Clippers jerseys, threw them on the floor, and mainly wore the team's solid colors. By the coming Tuesday – April 29th – NBA (National Basketball Association) officials announced during a national news conference that they had concluded their investigation and reached a punitive decision against Sterling – he was banned for life from any and all parts of the NBA including attendance of games or business meetings, and fined the maximum amount of 2.5 million dollars (The Associated Press, 2014). During his news conference, the new NBA

commissioner, Adam Silver, also recommended forcing Sterling to sell the Clippers; although, according to Silver, as noted by The Associated Press, that decision can only come from a three-quarter majority vote from a panel of all the NBA team owners. Sterling, bought the Clippers in 1981, and has been the longest-tenured owner in the NBA since Lakers owner, Jerry Buss, died in 2013 (Broussard et al., 2014). Ironically, if that sale is forced, Sterling could profit greatly from his racism; because, according to NBC Sports (Helin, 2014) Sterling bought the team for only 12.5 million dollars, but will likely sell the team for more than one billion dollars!

On Friday, May 2, 2014, V. Stiviano gave her first “exclusive” interview since Sterling’s racist rant scandal began, on ABC News’ “20/20” to Barbara Walters. Stiviano says Sterling is “traumatized and hurt by the things he said” (ABC News, 2014, “Transcript,” para. 35):

I just want him to come to his senses. I want him to believe it and feel it and to generally feel apologetic to the world. I’m giving him the advice that he should apologize to the nation, to the world, for his racist remarks. (ABC News, “Transcript,” para. 36)

During that same timeframe Sterling reportedly gave an “exclusive” interview to “DuJour” magazine – which caters to the wealthy, according to ABC News – saying, “I wish I had just paid her off” (p.1) while also reportedly saying he will limit his news interviews. Then, on Monday, May 12th, Sterling’s first television interview since his rant controversy began, finally aired (he reportedly canceled a scheduled interview with Walters). It was an “exclusive” interview with CNN’s Anderson Cooper that aired on “Anderson Cooper 360.” According to CNN (Shoichet & Almasy, 2014), Sterling

offered a belated apology claiming he's not a racist – saying he'd been “baited” (para. 5) into making what he called “terrible” (para. 5) remarks; but, also further attacked both Earvin “Magic” Johnson – saying the former Laker advised him not to speak to the press – and affluent African Americans claiming some don't give back to underprivileged and/or financially struggling Black people:

“I think [Johnson] wanted me to just do nothing so he could buy the team,” Sterling said.

“What kind of a guy goes to every city, has sex with every girl, then he catches HIV? Is that someone we want to respect and tell our kids about?” Sterling asked. “I think he should be ashamed of himself. I think he should go into the background. But what does he do for the Black people? He doesn't do anything.”

“That's one problem I have. Jews, when they get successful, they will help their people, and some of the African-Americans – maybe I'll get in trouble again – they don't want to help anybody,” [Sterling – who is Jewish –] said. (p. 2-3)

According to Shiochet and Almasy, Johnson – who is chairman and CEO of Magic Johnson Enterprises which raises millions in funds for HIV/AIDS awareness, testing and treatment, and provides scholarships and mentoring for (so far) more than 10 thousand minority students – hasn't indicated if he will pursue a Clippers ownership position. NBA commissioner, Adam Silver, again stepped up after Sterling's shockingly disappointing interview; and, Shiochet and Almasy note Silver said:

“While Magic Johnson doesn't need me to, I feel compelled on behalf of the NBA family to apologize to him that he continues to be dragged into this situation and be degraded by such a malicious and personal attack,” Silver said in a statement. “The

NBA Board of Governors is continuing with its process to remove Mr. Sterling as expeditiously as possible.” (p. 2)

The now 29 member group of *active* NBA team owners (since Sterling is banned for life) voted to make an ownership decision regarding the Clippers. Then, according to ESPN reporters Rovell, Goodman, and Markazi (2014), on August 12, 2014, former Microsoft CEO “Steve Ballmer’s [\$2 billion] bid to purchase the Clippers [was finalized, accepted, and] closed...after...a California court confirmed the authority of Shelly Sterling to sell the team on behalf of the Sterling Family Trust...” (para. 2), “...without the consent of her husband, Donald Sterling” (para. 3). As predicted, yet still shockingly, the Sterling family profited exponentially from the racially charged, insulting controversy, and historic \$2 billion dollar sale of their team for a record NBA price!

Notably, during the NBA’s initial national news conference on Tuesday, April 29th, one unidentified reporter jarringly asked the NBA commissioner, “Should someone lose their team for remarks shared in private as this is a slippery slope?” (The Associated Press, 2014, para. 21) to which Adam Silver responded, “Whether or not these remarks were initially shared in private, they are now public, and they represent his views” (para. 22). In light of that journalistic sentiment, Wilson et al. (2003) note, “It is during confrontation that news media have the opportunity to exhibit leadership in race relations; unfortunately, their historical track record has been poor and continues so into the 21st century” (p. 119). Along that line, it is also important to note that news media’s repetitive airing of top-down, inflammatory, purportedly racist ideals such as Bundy’s and Sterling’s can be interpreted as a creative form of mass media “hegemony”

(discussed in detail in this chapter's section regarding biases within reporting information).

The Stereotypical News Selection Phase

The next pattern within minority television news coverage is the stereotypical news selection phase – which Wilson et al. (2003) say is inclusive of newer media stereotypes: “success stories,” and the infrequent, yet more familiar “Zoo News” coverage of featured minority groups. Wilson et al. state:

After society had met the perceived threat of a non-White racial group via confrontation, social order must be restored.... Reportage in news media, therefore, moves into another phase, one designed to neutralize White apprehension with regard to non-Whites while accommodating the presence of people of color. Information items that conform to existing White attitudes toward other groups are then selected for inclusion in what is presented by news media, and such items are given repeated emphasis until they reach thematic proportions. (p. 122)

The researchers say “success stories” – featuring people (such as minority politicians) who have risen from the despair of places such as the Indian reservation, Black ghetto, or Mexican barrio – are examples of the process of stereotypical news selection which *appears* to be favorable to non-Whites. However, Wilson et al. point out:

These stories accomplish the two objectives of stereotypical selective reporting: (1) The general audience is reassured that non-Whites are still “in their place” (that is, the reservation, ghetto, etc.) and (2) those who escape their designated place are not a threat to society because they manifest the same values and ambitions of the dominant culture and have overcome the “deficits” of their racial and cultural

backgrounds. (p. 122)

Many examples of such local and national news coverage were seen regarding President Obama during his initial White House campaign in 2008 – which overwhelmingly highlighted how his African father abandoned him and his White mother, yet young “Barry” (as news media seemingly enjoyed pointing out he was once called) “succeeded against the odds” stacked against him and other minorities (Staples, 2011), excelling at Harvard Law School and beyond. According to Wilson et al.’s theory, President Obama’s “success story” and the upward mobility of other minorities as framed within television news media, often gives credit to the majority-White social system that “tolerates” it, “without [positively or actively] facilitating it” (p. 122).

“Zoo News” focuses on special occasions and features minorities who did not make it past newsroom gatekeepers as part of “hard news” crime coverage; instead, they are incorporated into stories about minorities as infrequent, colorful “soft news” features (Wilson et al., 2003). The term itself, “Zoo” news, as it relates to minorities is pejorative because it conjures up images of wild, violent, caged animals and/or beasts not fit to be free in society, but sufficient for “show” for the entertainment pleasure of the masses. Holiday “Zoo News” coverage on The Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo, and during Native American festivals, according to Wilson et al., is a prime example of news media’s thematic, stereotypical coverage of minorities. Outside of those holidays, there is hardly any mention on local or national television news of: hopes for China’s prosperity and growth; Mexicans’ and/or Mexican Americans’ rights to the pursuit of freedom and liberty (extending from French occupation to American citizenship); or, celebrations of Native Americans’ heritage. Markedly in contrast, Las Vegas area news

viewers are often subjected to: anti-Chinese economic growth rhetoric – with stories about “The Sleeping Giant” that could take over American markets such as gaming in Las Vegas with local story slugs (titles) like KSNV Channel 3’s “Pockets are only getting deeper for casino companies in China” (Velotta, 2013), and Americans’ campaign to ban purchasing anything “Made in China” with stories like KLAS Channel 8’s “In your words: Reid turns fashion critic on Olympic uniforms” (Kanigher, 2012); images of immigration enforcement like KTNV Channel 13’s story, “Illegal immigrants caught with 41 pounds of marijuana” (Hostetler, 2014), and/or top-down anti-immigration political rhetoric spouting about “Keeping our Borders Safe” – specifically the Southern border with Mexico – with stories like KSNV Channel 3’s “Senators on verge of breakthrough on immigration reform” (Handelsman, 2013); and, the ongoing near exclusion of Native Americans on local news, despite annual mention of the area Paiute tribe’s sale of fireworks ironically on Independence Day – with the exception of sporadic tribal economic “success stories” like KLAS Channel 8’s “Ground broken on solar plant on Moapa Paiute tribal land” (Cullen, 2014). Wilson et al. say such exclusion of more substantive news reporting is indicative of widespread policy. Notably, local African Americans do not get consistent local Zoo News coverage – not even during Black History Month or Las Vegas’ Juneteenth Festival. Most local news images of African Americans conform to stereotypical coverage of incidents involving police action. Despite some paradoxical “success stories,” Wilson et al. purport, “The old stereotypes of [minorities] – as violent people who are too lazy to work and who indulge in drugs and sexual promiscuity – remain prominent in 21st century ‘news’ reporting” (p. 124). Johnson and Dixon (2008) have exclaimed that “news organizations presently stand at the

‘stereotypical selection phase’ of reporting, in which journalistic repetition creates iconic news themes that conform to White perspectives on minorities” (p. 140). In Wilson et al.’s next, aspired to, evolutionary phase of treatment of minorities in news media – the multiracial coverage phase – minorities would be consistently, universally, and equitably integrated into all news coverage categories without reflecting stereotypes and ethnocentricity.

The Multiracial Coverage Phase

This final pattern of news media coverage of minorities, within the past few years, has fostered a slight increase in the number of minority news sources, due in part to the importance and ever-increasing presence and influence of online news media. However, Wilson et al. (2003) say the 21st century phenomenon of multiracial news coverage has been met with grudging acceptance and often uneven application in majority-White newsrooms; because, multiracial news coverage is the antithesis of exclusion. Regarding their hopes for multiracial news coverage, the researchers note:

This does not mean that all news about [minorities] will be good news – it means that they will be reflected in all types of news coverage. News will be reported from the perspective that “us” represents all citizens....

The result should be a functional information surveillance system that promotes social understanding and alleviates unwarranted fears based on racial prejudices.

(p. 124)

Despite some progress and the lofty aspirations of many, Wilson et al. point out that there are still major barriers working against the full achievement of multiracial, culturally integrated, news reporting in the United States. The researchers purport that:

Progress toward this phase depends on the ability to overcome two major obstacles. Overcoming the first requires a renewed commitment to the ideals espoused by owners of the media and editors from the inception of professional news reporting standards; overcoming the second necessitates a change in the basic “news values” that journalists apply to their work. (p. 125)

Minority journalists: The need to move from presentations to positions of power.

To bring about change in news media processes by urging journalists to be more sensitive in treatment, coverage, and depictions of racial and ethnic minorities, one major first step is hiring more minority journalists. The Kerner Commission report (as previously discussed in this chapter) also provided insight into the nature of American journalism – as one of the earliest systematic examinations of news media’s coverage of race – by noting that news was determined from a White perspective; so, among many other suggestions, Commission researchers recommended that the government should:

- * Expand coverage of the [Black] community and of race problems through permanent assignment of reporters familiar with urban and racial affairs, and through establishment of more and better links with the [Black] community.
- * Recruit more [Blacks] into journalism and broadcasting and promote those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. Recruitment should begin in high schools and continue through college; where necessary, aid for training should be provided. (Kerner Commission, 1968, p. 18)

Unfortunately, even when some of these recommendations were heeded in the years after release of the 1968 Kerner report, Wilson et al. (2003) maintain that most majority-White

newsroom gatekeepers still enforced long-standing policies concerning news values surrounding minority coverage. The researchers cite:

A common complaint of non-White reporters working in mainstream newsrooms is the application of unwritten policy to their stories and “news angle” ideas. Their ideas are often disregarded because White colleagues define news in terms of the dominant cultural perspective.... Both non-White and White reporters face sanctions when [such] policy is violated...[including] reprimand, loss of esteem among colleagues, and less opportunity for upward mobility in the [news] organization. (p. 128)

For instance, a report issued by the National Association of Black Journalists (1992) noted that although major news organizations had sufficient representation of Black reporters on their staffs, coverage of the civil unrest in Los Angeles following the initial not guilty verdicts of the four police officers connected to the Rodney King beating was severely flawed. The report’s findings note of the ensuing “riots” – as they were headlined and slugged, instead of as protests – that many Black reporters assigned to the event from mainstream media had their stories filtered through White editors, which resulted in stories slanted toward preconceived racial stereotypes held by many White middle-class Americans. According to the report, general news coverage of the riots was framed as being racially motivated – as in Blacks versus the White “establishment”; but, they were in fact bottom-up class struggles – due to disenfranchised Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks alike, joining in the looting and burning because of shared despair of their socio-economic plight and oppression by brutal police. However, as the National Association of Black Journalists points out – a scant few, if any minority reporters were afforded the opportunity to fully explore that crucial, cornerstone, angle of the King

verdict protests. Moreover, Smith (1994) draws attention to the parallel between journalists' coverage of the 1960's riots throughout the U.S. and the 1992 Los Angeles protests following the first King verdict:

The Kerner Commission found that television news coverage was characterized by two main frames, or themes; the riots were portrayed as a confrontation between Blacks and Whites, and the coverage emphasized law enforcement and thus downplayed the underlying causes such as poverty, racism and unemployment.

Twentyfive years later, had television's coverage changed, or were there similar news frames evident in coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles riot? (p. 1)

The answer – according to Smith's findings regarding the King riot – is news coverage had not changed: “The vast majority of the images of the riot were not accompanied by narratives about causal themes, but by narratives that described a series of [over represented] episodes of violence” (p. 14) when images of Black rioters (48% on LA news; 58% on network news) and Latino rioters (31% on LA news; 24% on network news) on television are compared to actual LAPD arrest reports – “Latinos comprised 51 percent of those arrested by Los Angeles police during the riot; Blacks, 38 percent; Whites, nine percent and Asians, two percent” (p. 13). Thus, evidence of Black versus “the establishment” (White) news framing and disproportionate coverage is seen with images of Black rioters comprising nearly half of LA stories and nearly 60% of network news – compared to actual arrests at a rate of only 38%. Hispanics actually had the highest arrest rate, but ranked significantly lower (20% difference on LA news, and 27% difference on networks) for riot images shown on the news.

Such television news misrepresentations of minorities as violent and/or dangerous criminals are still unfortunately the norm – despite having a bit more minority journalists in television newsrooms, and the increasing influence of organizations such as the National Association of Black Journalists (Martin, 2014), and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. Perhaps this is because minority journalists find it difficult for their concerns to make it past the majority-White newsroom gatekeepers; or, as the National Association of Black Journalists found in their 2012 study on television newsroom management (Butler, 2012), minority journalists are finding it difficult to themselves become gatekeepers and effectively produce equitable representations of minorities in news media.

If you turn on cable news, you'll see mostly White anchors leading discussions on race. But don't just look at the faces of these networks. Take a stroll through the newsrooms. Where are the minority executive producers, senior producers and line producers of these shows? On the morning front, Al Roker, Robin Roberts and Gayle King are co-hosts on NBC, ABC and CBS, but when it comes to those behind the scenes, minorities are few and far between.

Why is this important? When minorities are shut out of these prime jobs, it affects their ability to land top jobs elsewhere. (Martin, para. 17-18)

This is because not very much has changed in news media practices since the Kerner Commission (1968) noted that fewer than 5% of U.S. journalists were Black and far fewer were in decision making positions. The Kerner Commission also pointed out that the journalism profession had been shockingly backward in seeking out, hiring, training, and more importantly, promoting African Americans. According to Butler's 2012

research, of the 295 television stations the National Association of Black Journalists studied (out of more than 700) across the U.S. – which are owned by only 19 companies – the researchers found that people of color fill only 12% of newsroom managerial positions even though according to the 2010 United States Census non-Whites comprise nearly 35% of the U.S. population. Butler also states:

NABJ understands that a lack of diversity in management does not mean a station's coverage and hiring will be unfair. However it believes the workforce, including managers, that reflects the marketplace gives a station the best chance to air accurate coverage of communities of color.

More than half (153) of the television stations in the report have no one of color in management, despite being located in cities with significant diversity such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Antonio, Atlanta and Little Rock.

In fact none of the four television stations in Little Rock, where 30% of the population is non-White, has any diversity in management. “Given the historical significance of Little Rock in the Civil Rights Movement, you’d think there would be more diversity on the air AND some in management but there’s not,” said one reporter in Little Rock who did not want to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the media. “Many people in town complain of biased or unfair news coverage but there’s no one of color in the (editorial) meetings who could make different decisions.”...

Out of a total of 1,647 managers, 1,447 (87.9%) are White, 115 (6.98%) are Black, 56 (3.40%) are Hispanic, 27 (1.64%) are Asian and 3 (.12%) are Native American.

(p. 1-2)

Therefore, even a minority is presented on television news as a reporter, or even an anchor, they essentially have no managerial power to effect any real, lasting, overall policy change in coverage of minority communities; because, they do not set the news agenda or make final coverage decisions, as newsroom managers do. Even when such efforts are made, some minority reporters and anchors walk the fine line of fair-and-balanced reporting and keeping their jobs – as presumed evident by the reporter in Little Rock, Arkansas, cited by the NABJ, but who did not want to give their name, for apparent fear of repercussion. According to Martin (2014), “A lot of the frustration you hear from minorities about race in America is also being said in newsrooms nationwide. But the media industry wants you to think all is well” (para. 29). If minority reporters and other journalists focus too heavily on race-related issues, it jeopardizes their standing with their colleagues; and, work on such issues rarely results in the kind of recognition that leads to promotion (Wilson et al., 2003). Conversely, perhaps due in part to that reason, some minority journalists choose not to engage in “the good fight” for accurate news coverage of minorities. According to Wilson et al., for various reasons:

Some reporters of color accept the tenets of racial policy as simply sound journalism: Decades of racially insensitive practice having come to define professional practice. [Meanwhile,] other journalists of color lament the newsroom atmosphere that forces them to see their profession from an Anglo American perspective. They complain that their colleagues and superiors – who are not so much overtly racist as insensitive or ignorant – evaluate their performance on culturally biased news criteria. (p. 132)

Despite having slightly more diverse television newsrooms, given the nature of such varied discriminatory factors supporting traditional (i.e., majority-White) newsroom policies, the slow progress made toward accurate news reporting concerning minorities – especially through hiring and promoting more minority journalists to *key* newsroom positions (i.e., the gatekeepers) – becomes understandable, although not excusable.

The continued proliferation of new media: Minorities moving online & upward.

Equally as important as minority journalists flourishing in majority-White television newsrooms is minorities representing *themselves* in news media by setting their own agenda for coverage, and producing their own multiracial content via arguably now the second most influential form of journalism – online news media. According to Vesperi (2010), “Top-down, mass-mediated statements about almost any issue are as likely to be labeled hegemonic, and hence rejected, as they are to be embraced as unifying – or even useful. Journalists who work online understand this best...” (p. 261). That is why minority (African American) online news sources such as “The Root,” “News One,” BlackVoiceNews.com, MSNBC associated “theGrio,” “Black America Web,” etc., typically produce content that is markedly different from the online news content connected to majority-White television news stations.

NABJ has fought newspapers on diversity for years, and we are seeing the same exclusion among online outlets. Many of these websites are devoid of minority staffers, editors and execs. The 21st century may be all about digital properties, but they are having the same 20th-century problems when it comes to diversity.

(Martin, 2014, para. 21)

This is because in general, the same Anglo American cultural slant that dominates majority-White television news practices is also reflected in their online content. Josey et al. (2009) assessed the extent of that Anglo cultural slant by examining occurrence and stage of representation of minorities in online news content, by using Clark's (1972) "four stages" of entertainment-media (TV shows and movies) group representation model – nonrecognition, ridicule, regulation, and respect. Josey et al. found that: Asians are in the nonrecognition stage – extremely underrepresented and "mostly" invisible due to minimal presence; Blacks and Hispanics are in the ridicule stage – slightly underrepresented but often portrayed in stereotypic manners, such as being ignorant or lazy; Whites are in the respect stage – accurately represented with a diverse set of roles and an appropriate level of nuance to their portrayal; and, none of the four groups tested are in the regulation stage – happens when a minority group achieves a more accurate frequency of representation, in combination with a one-dimensional portrayal – of online news media content. Josey et al. say in news media – online or televised – Clark's "respect" stage as it relates to minorities "would be indicated by accurate representations in number, depth, and lack of stigmatization" (p. 137). As the researchers note, currently in an overwhelming majority of online news, only Whites are consistently afforded such "respect".

According to Vesperi (2010), as television scrambles to retain viewers who are less and less willing to adapt their schedules to a nightly news hour, some local television stations have attempted to compete with cable news and the internet by adopting a nearly 24-hour news cycle and drastically increasing their online news content. In fact, many local television stations have hired journalists to specifically produce online content.

During their 2012 examination of television newsroom management, the National Association of Black Journalists say, “The position of web director/web manager was added to the criteria because that person oversees the production of news on the station website, which has become a critical part of the station’s overall news coverage” (Butler, 2012, p. 2). That study found that the majority of those positions are primarily filled by Whites – just as most other key management positions in television newsrooms. As for others working in the television newsroom, many reporters cut and paste their PKGs (including video) and post them online; and, many producers and assignment editors copy and paste stories and video from the approved rundown (list of all on-air stories covered) to the television station’s website – with minimal editing or content additions. In general, television journalists – and those working for television news outlets – who post news online often pull their facts from, and/or supplement their local information with, information from other forms of online news media they deem reliable, such as: The Associated Press; the affiliate’s national news website; Reuters.com; and/or online articles from major newspapers. Vesperi points out that due to the often required immediacy demanded of television news outlets to present information to the public, journalists sometimes post “raw” news to the television station’s website, then later offer updated drafts and corrections as the stories develop. Vesperi also notes a media industry discussion about the effect of technology on content, saying, “One young online editor replied that narrative form was no longer the issue when it came to attracting readers to a story. Even when stories were not well crafted, readers valued the big picture that emerged through personal accounts” (p. 261). It is important to note that in the heat of

Breaking News, this is how many mistakes about minorities and their presumed culpability in reported criminal incidents can be made.

However, many minorities representing themselves in online news media are often forced to take a different, more creative, yet equitable, journalistic approach to multiracial coverage. “Throughout their 177-year history, successful Black-owned news organizations have responded deftly to a cacophony of diverse environmental influences, including mainstream news operations” (Johnson & Dixon, 2008, p. 131). Conditions are not much different now – in this age of continued online news proliferation – than they have always been for many minority journalists; because, according to Johnson and Dixon:

To maintain their oppositional presence, Black editors and journalists have weathered years of political and economic instability in multiple forms, including threats of violence or death directed against publishers; FBI harassment during World War II; successful post-civil rights-era marketing of mainstream newspapers to minorities, causing Black publishers to lose readers and advertisers once considered captive markets; pressure from influential corporate advertisers to soften hard-hitting editorial stances; recent declines in employment ads, an important source of revenue; and disproportionately strong competition from [mainstream] television and...Internet.

In theory, then, Black-owned news organizations in any given market [format] operate under significantly harsher and more volatile conditions than do their mainstream counterparts. (p. 129)

Johnson and Dixon also say “Organizational Behavior Theory” – which predicts the likelihood of institutional change – provides a helpful framework for understanding the

evolution of media imagery at both mainstream and Black-owned news operations.

According to the researchers:

Organizational behavior theorists might say that...[environmental] variables bring Black-owned news outlets under the so-called resource dependence model, which acknowledges the influence of environmental factors on organizational decisions.

The resource dependence model suggests that in order to survive in a dynamic unpredictable business climate, organizations must be adaptable (able to change their internal policies and procedures to meet the demands of the external environment) and “copable” (able to maintain their identity as they change). (p. 129)

Fortunately, many Black-owned and/or Black-run news outlets have been able to do just that, as they’ve moved, and subsequently flourished, online. The same can be said of many Hispanic-owned and/or Hispanic-run online news outlets also seeking to present equitable multiracial coverage – such as the “Latino-Voices” section of the Huffington Post.com, the Spanish language Univision.com, Spanish language site MSN Latino, and even the Las Vegas based, Spanish language news site, ElMundo.net – which like Black online news outlets realize that many “television audiences resist both the content and [length] of broadcast programming with recording equipment that has become a home standard. News consumers, especially younger ones, are equally impatient with general-content sources that can’t be reshaped to fit their interests” (Vesperi, p. 262).

Potential limitations of online news.

Even in the face of many minority news outlets succeeding at adapting online, Vesperi (2010) importantly asks: “What is news?” and “What makes someone a journalist?” – because such questions “were rarely examined and remained self-reinforcing throughout

most of the twentieth century” (p. 259). The answers to those questions, according to Vesperi, vary depending on who is asked; because:

The cultural constructs that shape journalism into a recognizable career of habits, outlooks, and expectations rest...on shared assumptions about how to pluck “news” from the stream of daily events and the need to establish its truth value through a multistage process of crafting, framing, and institutionalized presentation.

Perhaps most challenging is the way bloggers with [little to] no journalism training and no editorial oversight have laid claim to the role of the news reporter, sometimes forcing mainstream journalists to acknowledge them as sources. (p. 258-259)

Bloggers’ Neilson-comparable ratings guide – Technorati – ranks the popularity of blogs in several different categories including page views and links on a continuous basis; and, blog range from being news oriented, political, literary, and personal (Siegel, 2008).

According to its 2014 website details, Technorati was founded as the first blog search engine and “has expanded to a full service media company providing services to the blogs and social media sites and connecting them with advertisers who want to join the conversation, and whose online properties introduce blog content to millions of consumers” (p. 1). News bloggers get the most “hits” (people going to the site) by blogging more noisily and outrageously about whatever buzzy news topic everyone else is blogging about or discussing in news media. As Technorati states, it is important to note that news bloggers receive advertising revenue for spots on their page – just like television news stations do for commercials. Therefore Siegel asserts, many popular news bloggers are also often motivated – whether they admit it or not – by profit. That

could lend to aptness for posting some journalistically questionable content – as long as it’s profitable.

Moreover, the Wikimedia Foundation has also touched the traditional journalistic format nerve by providing an online platform for collaborative news sharing. That lofty ideal is front and center on the Wikinews (2014) homepage – “*Wikinews* is written by people like **you**. Find a current topic you’d like to see *Wikinews* cover, create an account and write an article on it!” (para.1). Any writers interested who click on “write an article” are also informed by the site:

“Anyone, *including you*, can **write for Wikinews!** All you need is an Internet connection, access to a web browser (which we can assume you have if you’re reading this), and your time, effort, and willingness to learn a few easy skills.” (para. 2)

However, many formally trained journalists argue that those skills are not “easy” to acquire and hone. Traditionally “news” is crafted, framed, and presented institutionally; but, many online “journalists” have often trained themselves in constructing their version of news events. Vesperi (2010) says both forms of news media have begun shifting away from hard news and are blurring the line between news and entertainment. For instance, Patterson (2007) surveyed 1800 teens, young adults, and older adults, and found that many young people could not distinguish between hard news and soft news – stories about celebrities and the like. Patterson’s findings also reveal:

Not only were the younger respondents less likely than older respondents to be aware of hard news stories, they were also less likely to correctly identify the factual element of such stories. Whereas 50 percent of older adults who claimed awareness of a hard news story correctly identified the factual element, only 39 percent of young adults

did so. (p. 16)

Patterson also found that young Americans rely more heavily on television than on the internet for their news; because, surprisingly, the internet represented first exposure to a major news story for only 18 percent of the younger age groups, whereas television was their first exposure source 41 percent of the time. Contrary to the popular assumption that online news is the medium of choice for young news seekers, Patterson points out:

The large fact about teens and young adults is not that they are heavily dependent on new media but that they partake only lightly of news, whatever the source. A shift in sources is occurring, and it is in the direction of the new media, but the larger tide has been the movement away from a daily news habit. (p. 21)

However, citing statistics from 2010 and 2011, Bailey, Fox and Grabe (2013) point out that “in 2010 Americans spent more time (70 minutes daily) consuming news than ever before. Despite doom and gloom over the demise of the American TV news audience, television is still the most used news source” (p. 318). Even so, in light of the ongoing proliferation of online news mediums, the Media Insight Project (2014) – an initiative of the American Press Institute and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research – conducted a national news source survey from January 9, 2014 through February 16, 2014, and found that, “In contrast to the idea that one generation tends to rely on print, another on television and still another the web, the majority of Americans across generations now combine a mix of sources and technologies to get their news each week...” (Introduction, para. 3). Despite those findings of mixed news source usage, the Media Insight Project researchers also agree with Bailey et al.’s (2013)

assertion that television news is still the most prevalent format. According to Media Insight Project researchers:

TV news reporting organizations are the most common source mentioned across all types of news, but especially so for breaking news, with 61 percent noting some type of TV news organization – including cable news, local news, or broadcast networks – as the source where they first heard about the last breaking news story they followed....

The generational breakdowns do indicate the path of future change. Younger adults are more likely to find news through web-based media. Younger people are three times more likely to discover news through social media than adults age 60 and older. Similarly, people under 40 are more likely than those 40 and over to discover news through internet searches and online news aggregators. (Introduction, para. 28 & 30)

Social media & its pro-social effects.

Part of that path to future change mentioned is due in large part to the continued increase in use of social media (Media Insight Project, 2014). Social media technologies including social network sites, blog tools, mobile technologies, etc., provide people with a low cost – in terms of time and effort (such as digital news alerts) – way of making and keeping information connections, enabling a scenario in which people can have huge numbers of diverse, but many times not very close, acquaintances with whom news and other information can be shared online. According to the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (2014), social media – often inclusive of digital video – has risen as a new pathway to news. In addition, according to the Media Insight Project:

Social media appears to be largely adding to, rather than replacing, other ways that people get news. At the same time that 4 in 10 now use social media, more than 80 percent of Americans say they also got news...by going directly to a news organization [(TV, etc.)] in some manner – and that was consistent across generations. (Introduction, para. 24)

Lee (2013) importantly poses the question: “*Who* is using *what* type of news, and *why*?” (p. 301). The answer, according to the Media Insight Project:

There is a strong correlation between mobile technology and social media and various other digital activities. Smartphone owners, for instance, are two and half times as likely to get news through social media as those without smartphones, twice as likely to use search engines and aggregators for news and to get news alerts, and more than twice as likely to share news. Patterns are similar for tablet owners as well.

(Introduction, para. 14)

Although there are currently numerous popular forms of social media and/or social networking, with more new sites gaining use daily – such as Instagram, LinkedIn, tumblr., flickr, various blog sites, etc. – Lee documents motivational differences in uses for news between the two currently most prominent forms of social media – Facebook and Twitter. According to an “eBizMBA” article posted May 1, 2014, listing the 15 most popular social media and/or social networking sites, Facebook has 900 million “estimated unique monthly visitors,” and Twitter comes in second with 310 million. Lee notes that individuals’ news use for each site varies depending on individual motivations; because, “Specifically, compared to Facebook, Twitter is consistently used more among those with

entertainment, opinion, and social motivations. On the other hand, both Twitter and Facebook are used least frequently by those with information motivations” (p. 311).

According to the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (2014), “Social media in particular may offer new opportunities for African American news media” (p. 8) and other African Americans. For example, citing Lee’s (2013) finding that Twitter is consistently used more as a news medium among people with social motivations – in an example of multiracial coverage of the Donald Sterling racist rant incident effected through social media – tweets (communications on Twitter) from outraged basketball players, fans, and news viewers definitely helped expedite the reaction of the NBA regarding the Sterling controversy; because, many minorities could weigh-in and have their voices instantaneously heard regarding the matter – which might not have happened without social media. According to ESPN’s Broussard et al. (2014), Earvin “Magic” Johnson – whose Twitter name is @MagicJohnson – tweeted the following messages to his 2.15 million followers (people voluntarily connected to a Twitter feed; and, the number of followers one has is important because that is how many news viewers/consumers you can potentially influence):

“TMZ reported this morning that Clippers owner Donald Sterling doesn’t want me or other African-Americans to come to Clippers games.”

10:30 AM - 26 Apr 2014

19,229 Retweets 8,227 favorites

“.@cjbycookie [my wife] and I will never go to a Clippers game again as long as Donald Sterling is the owner.”

10:32 AM - 26 Apr 2014

27,881 Retweets 16,423 favorites

“LA Clippers owner Donald Sterling’s comments about African Americans are a black eye for the NBA.”

10:38 AM - 26 Apr 2014

24,103 Retweets 13,285 favorites

Former Clipper Baron Davis [@Baron_Davis also] took to Twitter to express his thoughts about Sterling. “That’s the way it is...He is honest about what he believes in..Been going on for a long time, Hats off 2 the Team.. 4 playin above it all.”

10:11 AM - 26 Apr 2014

823 Retweets 473 favorites (para. 10-12 & 32-33)

Notice that Johnson’s second tweet cited by ESPN regarding him and his family boycotting Clippers games due to Sterling’s remarks was retweeted (posted on other people’s Twitter accounts) nearly 28 thousand times! That likely meant that as many, if not more, people were planning to do the same thing – indefinitely boycott Clippers games – which would mean a drastic loss in ticket (and other related) revenue for the team and the NBA. Simultaneously, several different bottom-up Twitter hashtag (a topic heading beginning with #) campaigns began trending (repeatedly being discussed nationally) among general news viewers/consumers and celebrities alike, immediately after Sterling’s audio leaked such as: #BoycottSterling and #BoycottClippers. Even journalists like sports and political commentator, ESPN2’s Keith Olbermann (2014) – @KeithOlbermann – defended the idea of players threatening a boycott/strike by posting the following comments, among many he made regarding the topic, on his Twitter timeline to his nearly half a million followers:

“If LeBron James said ‘We, all the players in the league, won’t play again until #Sterling is gone’ Sterling’d be on Mars by Monday #Clippers”

8:18 PM - 26 Apr 2014

1,505 Retweets 700 favorites

“.@nthartness NBA cannot afford to refund tv forfeit \$, cannot punish players for standing up to racism, cannot be seen defending #Sterling”

2:05 PM - 27 Apr 2014

46 Retweets 37 favorites

“.@nthartness The NBA would acquiesce to the players demands. Immediately. There would be no walkout and no forfeit.”

2:16 PM - 27 Apr 2014

23 Retweets 12 favorites (p. 7)

Perhaps partly in response to Olbermann’s astute (and later proven correct) observations, on April 29, 2014, LeBron James (2014) posted onto his Twitter timeline for his whopping 12.8 million followers, a link to a *New York Daily News* article entitled “LeBron James leads Donald Sterling protest as Miami Heat, like Clippers, wear warmups inside out” – regarding the previous night’s game – which was the day before NBA commissioner Adam Silver’s decision regarding Sterling. In addition, many other influential African American celebrities from all entertainment arenas – including rapper, Snoop Dogg – called for Sterling and/or Clippers game boycotts on social media as well. Moreover, other NBA teams and their players were planning to join in the proposed boycott. According to Fogel (2014), the Golden State Warriors – who were scheduled to

play the Clippers in the next playoff game – had a boycott plan in place pending Commissioner Silver’s decision regarding Sterling:

The Warriors had a detailed plan in place to boycott Game 5 if they thought Silver’s punishment was too light....

The Warriors concocted the idea to be purposefully bold and controversial to send a message to the league....

Golden State wanted to protest earlier, but ultimately decided to give Silver a chance to act accordingly. (para. 3 & 5-6)

No doubt, Commissioner Silver and other high ranking NBA officials and team owners were aware of such plans by the NBA players and also gave heed to the various, immediately accessible, social media reactions and boycott threats from thousands of fans. In fact, one of the league’s most valued players besides LeBron James, Kobe Bryant (2014) – @kobebryant – said of Sterling on Twitter to the star player’s 4.82 million followers:

“I couldn’t play [basketball on a team] for him”

3:31 PM - 26 Apr 2014

36,768 Retweets 30,404 favorites

“No. He should not continue owning the clippers. #nochance #noway #nohow”

8:55 AM - 28 Apr 2014

23,585 Retweets 19,409 favorites (p. 1)

The multitude of such social media responses – like Kobe Bryant’s with a staggering nearly 37 thousand Retweets – also likely played a part in the reaction of several corporate sponsors pulling advertising dollars from the Clippers; because, if the players

aren't at the games, their fans won't be either, to see any ads – and the NBA's overall revenue will decline. According to CNN Money's Smith and Isidore (2014), at least a dozen corporate sponsors had announced by the day before Commissioner Silver's news conference that they were dropping or suspending sponsorships with the team; and, that list includes: CarMax – the first sponsor to pull funding; Virgin America; State Farm – which ended team sponsorship, but not ad funding for Clippers player, Chris Paul; Red Bull – which pulled team sponsorship, but will still support Clippers player Blake Griffin's ad campaign; Sprint – which suspended Clippers relations, but not NBA ties; Amtrak; Corona; Kia; AquaHydrate; LoanMart; Yokohama Tire Corporation; and, the Chumash Casino Resort.

Social media also served as a response platform for many African Americans and many other further outraged viewers following Donald Sterling's first televised "exclusive" interview on CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360," on May 12th. According to CNN (Shoichet & Almas, 2014), Sterling's latest comments drew immediate backlash across social media, for saying Earvin "Magic" Johnson and some other affluent African Americans haven't done anything to help the Black community; and, in a series of Twitter posts after Sterling's interview, Johnson – @MagicJohnson – fired back, but didn't respond to the embattled Clippers owner's specific allegations. This, perhaps since Johnson was already scheduled for his own interview with Anderson Cooper – set to air on CNN Tuesday, May 13th – the behind-the-scenes pictures of which "Magic" also posted for his millions of Twitter followers (and potential interview viewers):

'I'd rather be talking about these great NBA Playoffs than Donald Sterling's interview.'

8:02 PM - 12 May 2014

4,793 Retweets 5,154 favorites

“After this week, no more Sterling talk. Just the NBA Playoffs, my @Dodgers and my @LA_Sparks!”

8:05 PM - 12 May 2014

1,420 Retweets 1,952 favorites

“Great interview between @andersoncooper & myself, tonight on #AC360.”

2:23 PM - 13 May 2014

289 Retweets 347 favorites

“.@andersoncooper is a pros pro and one of the best journalists in the business! pic.twitter.com/jBDPI9FOE1”

2:27 PM - 13 May 2014

275 Retweets 651 favorites (Johnson, 2014, p. 1-2)

Also note how one can effectively use Twitter as a promotional/ratings tool in news media – evidenced by Johnson posting about his upcoming interview with Cooper regarding the Sterling controversy.

In another example of social media’s pro-social uses, according to Dewey (2014), social media also helped in the bittersweet battle to bring accused murderer, George Zimmerman, forth to answer for his actions in the killing of Trayvon Martin. Dewey asserts that without the #JusticeforTrayvon hashtag, the teen’s death would not have gotten as much national attention, and Zimmerman might not have even been arrested.

The researcher states:

Zimmerman was hardly investigated, for instance, when he shot and killed...

unarmed teenager, Trayvon Martin, in the Florida suburbs. The case initially attracted no attention outside of Florida. But when the case began to trickle out onto Twitter's trending topics list, issues like contemporary racism, gun control and Florida's controversial "Stand Your Ground" law suddenly became hallmarks of the national conversation.

Between March and April 2012, users sent more than 2.8 million tweets mentioning Trayvon. That virality was credited, in part, for attracting more than 2 million signatures to a Change.org petition calling for the arrest of Martin's shooter – and for getting notables like President Obama involved. (#JusticeforTrayvon, para. 2-3)

Moreover, social media is once again currently being used at our nation's highest level in effort to effect social change related to an ongoing international news story. On May 7, 2014, First Lady, Michelle Obama, drew attention to the social media hashtag – #BringBackOurGirls – as part of an international Facebook and Twitter campaign to help nearly 300 kidnapped girls from Chibok, Nigeria, return home; because, both Nigerian and U.S. officials and news media have been criticized for slow, to no response, and distancing themselves from the kidnapping – with news coverage of the ordeal only slowly disseminating to the public (BVN Staff, 2014). According to BlackVoiceNews.com (BVN):

Terrorist group Boko Haram, which was suspected of leading the mass kidnapping, confirmed responsibility...for the abduction of 276 schoolgirls.... An additional 8 girls between the ages of 12 and 15 were abducted in another [Nigerian] village....

Boko Haram has been reportedly linked to al Qaeda. The group's leader Abubakar

Shekau released a video...threatening to sell the kidnapped girls. Speculation has mounted that some of the girls may have already been sold, and the prospects of selling them increasingly likely since [sex] slave trade is common in the region.

(para. 2 & 5)

Due to mounting social and political pressure thanks in part to the successful #BringBackOurGirls social media campaign – which to date has gotten nearly 180 thousand likes (approvals by users) with more than 200 thousand people talking about it on Facebook, and “more than one million people – including First Lady Michelle Obama – have Tweeted the hashtag” (Dewey, 2014, para.1) which also seemingly served as an interactive gauge of the American public’s support of the cause – BVN says three weeks after the kidnapping, U.S. officials finally said they were deploying support comprised of military, law enforcement, and other agencies to help with rescue efforts. Dewey also notes that since #BringBackOurGirls began trending, both the U.K. and France have also all promised to aid Nigeria in its search for the abducted girls.

It is important to note that other than social media, there is nowhere else the U.S. government, local government officials in Florida, or NBA executives and their corporate advertising sponsors could have gained access to such vast, immediate, interactive feedback from nationwide masses of the general viewing and consuming public – who were importantly calling for social change (Lee, 2013). Therefore, as news stories such as all the aforementioned unfold on air via television, now, due to social media, they are also developing online in vast ways – such as in the case of the #BlackLivesMatter, #StolenLives, and #BlackoutForChange campaigns which began to be widely used in late 2014 as pro-social media tools to communicate and encourage social change regarding

ongoing, often unchecked, social injustices suffered by many Blacks and other minorities, after Michael Brown and Eric Garner's deaths warranted no indictment for the officers who killed them. According to Garza (2014), widespread use of hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter can (eventually) positively affect multiracial news coverage and begat further needed public outcries for, and top-down social power structure responses to, demands for pro-social change of all kinds. Garza notes of her work:

I created #BlackLivesMatter with Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, two of my sisters, as a call to action for Black people after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was post-humously placed on trial for his own murder and the killer, George Zimmerman, was not held accountable for the crime he committed. It was a response to the anti-Black racism that permeates our society and also, unfortunately, our movements.

Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.

We were humbled when cultural workers, artists, designers and techies offered their labor and love to expand #BlackLivesMatter beyond a social media hashtag. Opal, Patrisse, and I created the infrastructure for this movement project – moving the hashtag from social media to the streets. Our team grew through a very successful Black Lives Matter ride, led and designed by Patrisse Cullors and Darnell L. Moore, organized to support the movement that [grew] in St. Louis, MO, after 18-year old Mike Brown was killed at the hands of Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson. We've hosted national conference calls focused on issues of critical importance to

Black people working hard for the liberation of our people. We've connected people across the country working to end the various forms of injustice impacting our people.

We've created space for the celebration and humanization of Black lives. (para. 1-3)

The #StolenLives hashtag began to be widely used just before Thanksgiving 2014, to draw widespread attention to countless loved ones – like Michael Brown and Eric Garner – who unfortunately would not be at the dinner table with their families, due to use of excessive, fatal, police force. As part of the #StolenLives campaign many mourning families, including Brown's, posted pictures on social media of empty chairs around their Thanksgiving dinner table – as a powerful, emotional, image representing their slain family members' absence. In addition, Blackout for Human Rights – which launched one of many social movement hashtags, including #BlackoutForChange – also took a proactive stance during Thanksgiving 2014, in an effort to stage a nationwide Black Friday civil rights boycott. According to the “About Blackout” header page on the Blackout for Human Rights (2014) website:

Blackout for Human Rights (Blackout) is a network of concerned citizens who commit their energy and resources to immediately address the staggering level of human rights violations against fellow Americans throughout the United States. We have witnessed enough. We mourn the loss of men like Oscar Grant, Eric Garner, Ezell Ford, John Crawford and Michael Brown, who met their deaths at the hands of police officers. We mourn the loss of life and the absence of justice for Trayvon Martin, Renisha McBride and Jordan Davis, killed by private citizens, in a climate where police action demonstrates this as acceptable. An affront to any citizen's human rights threatens the liberty of all. So, we participate in one of the most time

honored American traditions: dissent.

We demand an immediate end to the brutal treatment and inhumane killings of our loved ones; the lives of our friends, our parents and our children have value and should be treated with respect. Our right to life is secured not only by our humanity, but is protected by law both federally and internationally by the Constitution of the United States of America and the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Our Hope: to end violence against and the unjust killings of American citizens.

Our Aim: to raise awareness that builds and maintains pressure on the instruments of power until we are satisfied that the current threat has passed.

Our Goals:

- To **raise awareness** about publicly funded human rights violations, through social media influence and organized grassroots events.
- To **find lasting solutions** to the root causes of this issue, through research, fundraising, and advocacy.
- To **empower citizens** most at risk for these types of violations (low income, minorities, women and the disabled) by using our collective economic resources to make impact.

Our First Action: To make Black Friday (November 28, 2014) a nationwide day of action and retail boycott. Blackout will be organizing grassroots events, nationwide, for people to come out and show their solidarity in the fight for equal human rights. (para. 1-4)

Social media pitfalls.

Despite those social change efforts and equivalent accomplishments made through use of social media, as mentioned, Lee (2013) says Twitter and Facebook are used least frequently by people seeking accurate information; so, anyone who relied on and/or responded to a tweet or Facebook post after the Donald Sterling rant news broke, without first seeking sound journalistic information (regardless of the source) found themselves not wholly uninformed, but rather *under-informed*. Such is the disadvantage of sole social media reliance on news. For instance, Black-Hispanic actor, Laz Alonso, had to apologize to his 256 thousand Twitter followers (many of whom refer to themselves as “Black Twitter” due to following Black celebs and African American oriented news and social issues) for being unaware of Sterling’s history of alleged racial discrimination connected to federal housing lawsuits against Sterling involving Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians (Broussard et al., 2014; Diaz, 2014). Also note the whole unfortunate Sterling racist rant incident has its origins in an anti-social effect of social media – a domestic confrontation about Instagram pictures. According to Diaz, Alonso made the following Twitter comments – which he promptly deleted after being informed of the entire Sterling backstory – then, the “Avatar” movie actor publicly apologized for his tweets during an interview:

“Why r they makin such a big deal about #DonaldSterling? He was arguing with his girl who was clearly baiting him 2 say those things,” Alonso tweeted on Sunday [4/27/14]. “In arguments of passion & despair people say horrible things they don’t Truly feel...Making racial comments when either #roadraging or #arguing with a lover does not count!!! Everybody acts holier than thou until u do the same. Dude was

feeling insecure. End of story.”...

“I made a mistake in speaking before I had all of the facts”... “First of all, I didn’t know any of Donald Sterling’s history prior to me tweeting that and that was my mistake. Had I known all of the history that this guy has, as far as racial discrimination and real estate discrimination, then that would’ve totally changed the way that I heard the conversation.”

He continues, “At the time, when I tweeted that only part of the phone call had come out. I listened to the entire tape last night and the things that were said were disgusting. The part that I was tweeting about was specifically related to the pictures that he wanted her to take down and what I heard was a man who is extremely powerful and extremely wealthy, and old, and no matter how much money he has on the planet, he cannot get [V. Stiviano] to stop doing something that he’s trying to control. He thinks she’s one of his possessions.”

“I can admit that there were some tweets that could’ve been better thought out before I started a debate,” he says. (para. 2 & 4-6)

The actor’s “Black Twitter” fans expressed their disappointment in him on the social media site; and, Alonso (2014), whose Twitter name is @lazofficial, later went back onto Twitter to respond to and retweet (RT) some of his fans’ messages – making it clear that now he has grasped the full Sterling story:

[@lazofficial:] “Alright yall have sent me a 10 year history on this dude, i’ll read it & see wassup. Cuz based on the recording he sounded like a hurt insecure dude”

5:40 PM - 26 Apr 2014

9 Retweets 6 favorites

[Fan – @rookdagreat:] “...@lazofficial...makes it even worse that you’re defending Him and haven’t even done your research”

5:48 PM - 26 Apr 2014

[@lazofficial:] “I was confident about what i heard. Didnt know his history tho
RT [Fan –]@sharonbtitus: @lazofficial I think ppl reacted to you speaking so confidently abt something u weren’t clear on that was hurtful.”

7:29 PM - 26 Apr 2014

2 Retweets 7 favorites (p. 10-11)

Additionally, Nevada rancher, Cliven Bundy, also ineffectively used social media and created even more fallout from his cattle grazing dispute with the BLM and his subsequent controversial, allegedly racist, remarks about African Americans – by using Facebook on Friday, April 25, 2014, to compare himself to Rosa Parks and say “he was working to fulfill Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream, but he wanted to clear the air on the comments that turned the cattle battle into a racial one” (Murphy, 2014, para. 11). That effort failed; because, so many offended and irate people responded to Bundy Ranch (2014) on Facebook that one of the rancher’s supporters posted instructions on Facebook to delete comments from Bundy’s detractors:

April Carroll “Ok bundy supporters if you come across any negative non followers on any bundy update please everyone just click on that trolls name then in the top right click there and choose block. We have to stop feeding the trolls. There debate is not going to change the bundy supporters and we are not going to change them. So lets all just remove them.”

[likes] 221 · April 27 at 8:27am · Edited

38 Replies (p. 16)

Notice that Carroll's comment got more than 200 likes – more than enough people to comply and delete and block the plethora of commenters critiquing Bundy's offensive remarks.

In another example of a social media pitfall, unlike the successful launch of the #JusticeforTrayvon and #BringBackOurGirls social media campaigns, “hashtag activism” was ineffectively used as part of the #Kony2012 social media campaign. Dewey (2014) points out that:

Two days after the documentary “Kony 2012” premiered, the first (and to date, only) definition of hashtag activism appeared on Urban Dictionary: The kind of activism undertaken when you “do something” about a problem by tweeting or posting links to Facebook, without any intent of ever actually doing something. Nothing more than a nonsense feelgood gesture so that one can say they “did something about” whatever trendy cause they're pretending to care about. Usually only lasts a week or two before the cause is completely forgotten (i.e. it stops being cool to forward/retweet on the subject)....

Sparked by a documentary of the same name on Ugandan military leader and indicted war criminal Joseph Kony, and fueled by tweets from celebrities like Rihanna, Stephen Fry and Nicole Richie, #Kony2012 earned nearly 2.4 million tweets in March 2012... but failed to articulate any specific demands, besides the self-evident “stop Kony.” Worse, the documentary (and the hashtag) were organized by... Americans, not Ugandans....

They may have meant well, but the meddling, imperialist overtones of Kony would

forever haunt the hashtag. Kony, critics pointed out, had been accused of abducting child soldiers since the '90s. But millions of Americans noticed only when it became trendy to do so, and when it was other Americans advancing the issue. (#Kony2012, para. 1-2)

However, Dewey also asserts that despite some seeming frivolity in addressing societal change on a social media platform, one should never wholly dismiss such efforts; because, there is evidence of “hashtag activism” success, and as writer/actress @clarkewolfe importantly tweeted:

“Shaming people for awareness, even if it comes from a #, simplifies everything and also solves nothing”...

6:54 AM - 8 May 2014

5 Retweets 8 favorites (#BringBackOurGirls, para. 5)

As noted, of course not all the products of social media are positive. We can all point to its negative consequences: bullying, gossip mongering, increased procrastination, narcissism, etc. Television news and other forms of news media have attacked social media for such social ills. Among the semi-positive news stories that do air about social media uses, many often have a negative or sensationalist slant – such as stories like CBS News’ about people who have inefficiently used Twitter to track wildfires in California and Colorado (Diep, 2012). Unfortunately, many who do not fully understand the potential pro-social news uses of social media look to traditional forms of news, see the negative coverage, and decry most social media useless. Continuously emerging social media technology does not have predictable and absolute positive *or* negative effects –

which is why social scientists must continue to research if the benefits of these news and communication tools outweigh the risks.

In conclusion with regard to online news and social media, Lee (2013) states, “With news information supply significantly outweighing news information demand today, news audiences are in control of what they consume from a plethora of news media choices for the first time in history” (p. 313). With such gaining influence and instantaneous, lasting feedback, one could argue that online news *might* one day surpass television news’ influence. However even with online news’ influence in the fast-lane, it is still a slow, winding road, toward equitable news media depictions and more multiracial news coverage – whether on television or online – but it is a road that many journalists, media critics, and social science researchers nonetheless travel, as our way of contributing to improved race relations and driving toward an overall more humane society.

Media-Image Affect on Viewers

Social science and communication scholars have for years contended that exposure to mass media imagery may have an impact on viewers’ construction of social reality (Fujioka, 1999; Gerbner, 1990; Gerbner, Gross, Eleey, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1977). Malveaux (1999) posits that within mass media, imagery is everything, and is often the only thing that truly resonates with viewers. Parenti (1992) demonstrates that television programs – including the “news” – and other forms of mass media promote social images and ideologies that support: racism, authoritarian violence, militarism, imperialism, vigilantism, sexism, capitalism, and anti-working class attitudes.

Among a vast list of observations, Parenti argues that mass media specifically force-feeds us the following images and ideologies:

- * All Americans are equal, but some (the underprivileged) must prove themselves worthy of equality.

- * Women and ethnic minorities are not really as capable, effective, or interesting as White males.

- * Affluent professionals are more interesting than blue-collar or ordinary service workers.

- * The police and everyone else should be given a freer hand in combating the large criminal element in the United States, using generous applications of force and violence without too much attention to constitutional rights.

- * The ills of society are caused by individual malefactors and not by anything in the socioeconomic system.

- * There are some unworthy people in our established institutions, but they usually are dealt with and eventually deprived of their positions of responsibility. (p. 2-3)

In sum, Parenti asserts that media images often work as catalysts shaping how individuals evaluate themselves and other people; and, just as importantly, media images can directly affect the way viewers perceive and interpret news events.

Social Cognition, Frequency Effects, & Priming of Stereotype Activation in television News

According to Dixon (2006), “social cognition” research finds that television news exposure to out-group members (minorities) activates ideals such as Parenti’s (1992) aforementioned group-based stereotypes – which are greatly informative about the extent

to which media portrayals themselves contribute to stereotyping. Dixon states that social cognition theory indicates that categorizing individuals as part of a stigmatized social group – such as minorities – leads to the activation of constructs that implicitly link minority group members with various stereotypical traits. Dixon’s 2006 research also states the “priming paradigm” is often used to suggest that people may make judgments about race-related social issues based upon their racial perceptions; and, priming research typically utilizes theories such as “cognitive accessibility,” (as related to stereotypes) informed by the social cognition and priming perspectives – which suggests that people use shortcuts in order to make social judgments. According to priming theory, the activation of a stereotype increases the likelihood that the social “knowledge” will be used in subsequent judgments; and, priming describes how these schemas or cognitive structures influence the interpretation news information. In Dixon’s 2006 study, stereotype endorsement’s moderating effect is applied “in order to better understand whether prior news viewing is part of an independent stereotype activation or application process” (p. 167). In that research, Dixon assessed news viewing and stereotype endorsement simultaneously in order to test whether news viewing independently contributes to racial stereotyping. Findings of that 2006 research reveal, African American stereotype endorsement is positively related to perceiving the world as a dangerous place; and, for those exposed to a majority of Black suspects, news viewing is positively associated with viewing the world as a dangerous place. The latter finding was a statistically significant difference compared to participants exposed to non-crime stories.

Dixon's 2007 research offers detailed cognitive explanations of how news viewers' information processing processes can beget stereotype endorsement. Within this follow-up research Dixon discusses the "cultivation effect" hypothesis versus the notion of "chronic activation" and states:

The general notion of cultivation can be applied to issues of stereotyping, crime news, and beliefs about racial groups. However, earlier work on cultivation received criticism for not specifying the underlying mechanisms related to cultivation outcomes. More recently, media effects scholars and psychologists have used theories of stereotyping, especially chronic activation and accessibility, to assess the underlying mechanisms that may facilitate the cultivation effect. (p. 271)

Dixon's 2007 work also defines stereotypes as "cognitive structures or categories that affect the encoding and processing of information" (p. 271); therefore, the researcher says those cognitive structures:

Direct attention to some stimuli and away from others, influence categorization of information, help us "fill-in" missing information, and influence memory.... Media effects scholars have contended that stereotypes are more likely to be used if they have either recently or frequently been activated. (p. 272)

Thus, according to Dixon, the "recency effects" theory associated with the Black criminality construct posits that each Black criminal featured in recently viewed news stories should activate the stereotypical constructs linking Blacks with law-breaking. Additionally, the "frequency effects" associated with long-term news viewing are also important because in alignment with the cultivation processes, frequent news exposure may facilitate the activation of stereotypes. Moreover, Dixon's 2007 research also

theorizes that the more these chronically activated stereotypes are used, the more likely they are to be used in the future.

In sum, according to the researcher's prior work (Dixon & Linz, 2000), Blacks are linked with criminality more often than Whites in news programming; therefore, heavy television news viewing should increase exposure to the overrepresentation of African Americans as criminals, and theoretically each instance of exposure to a Black rather than a White criminal should activate the stereotype of Black criminality – thereby strengthening the cognitive association between African Americans and crime. The researchers say as a result of such cognitive associations, heavy television news viewers are more likely to invoke a Black criminal schema when making race and crime judgments. According to Dixon's 2008 research, "television news might be especially potent because audience members might be more likely to trust the veracity of the news over entertainment" (p. 107). In a broader sense, Lane and Meeker (2003) say making such race and crime judgments about criminals, regardless of race or ethnicity, is common of "interpretive communities" – social and cultural groups that likely construct meanings of media messages in similar ways, because they interact regularly and share common norms, ideologies, and frames of reference. Lane and Meeker posit that Whites and minorities constitute different interpretive communities and thus process and react to criminal depictions on television news differently – especially depending on how such messages are framed.

News media framing effects: There's good news & bad news.

Kunelius (2006) asserts there is an explicitly articulated core definition of classic good journalism:

This core definition of journalism emphasizes realistic (both in terms of epistemology and attitude), independent, neutral and generally representative journalism: good journalism [is] seen as something presenting generally important objective facts as realistically as possible and remaining open for subsequent debate. (p. 675)

Taking that into consideration, how news is framed (as previously mentioned) affects viewer perception (Smith, 1994). Although Erving Goffman and Gregory Bateson introduced the concept of framing into social science literature nearly four decades ago, for little more than the past two decades (Entman, 1993), this theoretical concept has been applied to social science research within the realm of journalism and communications. Formally defined, Smith says “media framing” as part of a news “frame” is:

A theme or story line that organizes the facts in a news report and gives them meaning. A journalist might refer to a frame as the story angle, news peg or hook which is determined by the facts deemed most important. For news events, such as an ongoing crisis like the [Rodney King riot] that occurred in Los Angeles, many themes will unfold as more facts are known. Framing is particularly crucial in television news where mountains of facts and visuals are condensed into narratives to tell a story in two minutes or less....

Frames are conveyed by the reporter in his/her script as well as by the anchor in story lead-ins and closings. Frames also are conveyed by the people interviewed for the story, or soundbites, and the visuals used to illustrate the story. For example, although poverty is rarely an explicit topic of television news, it is quite often conveyed visually in scenes showing run-down and/or abandoned buildings with

boarded-up windows. (p. 2)

Such news imagery of poverty is typically framed in Black ghettos and/or Hispanic barrios – with at least one purposeful framing shot/image of the type of racial and/or ethnic minorities living in the area. Therefore, within his 1993 research on the topic Entman says “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Such framing efforts within news media often have a direct affect on viewers.

Grabe, Zhou, Lang and Bolls (2000) investigated the impact of framing features associated with the packaging of both “tabloid news” and “standard news” on viewer arousal, attention, information recognition, memory, and evaluations of television news. Tabloid news programs – such as “Inside Edition” – can increase the arousal of viewers in at least two ways (Grabe et al., 2000). The researchers say first, arousal may be influenced by story topic or content:

Violence, disaster, and sex have been shown to elicit arousal in most viewers whereas topics such as meetings and nature have been shown to elicit comparatively less arousal....

The second way television producers can increase viewer arousal is through the use of structural features. Research shows that the use of specific formal features, such as editing pace, point-of-view camera movement, shot length, and music can increase reports of emotional arousal. (p. 582-583)

Grabe et al.’s research asserts this form of tabloid news emotional incitement is also said to stimulate unwholesome cognitive responses – such as potential stereotype activation.

Grabe et al. found that viewers thought stories on standard news programs – such as “60 Minutes” – are “more believable and informative than the tabloid versions of news stories” (p. 581).

General television and news viewing effects.

Fujioka’s (1999) research examined the effects of vicarious social contact via television as it relates to African American stereotype beliefs among Whites, and Japanese international college students. Fujioka (1999) found that “television portrayals significantly associate with the formation of ethnic stereotypes” (p. 71). Fujioka’s study also explores “Cultivation Theory” and “Social Cognitive Theory”. Cultivation Theory posits that television’s messages are cumulatively internalized by viewers as a result of massive exposure to its uniform messages (Fujioka, 1999). According to Cultivation Theory, television portrayals are more likely to be accepted as valid and real by viewers when television is watched frequently. Cultivation Theory is also concerned with long-term influences of television exposure on broad-based conceptions of reality. However, some researchers suggest that mere frequency of television viewing is insignificant when explaining its effects on social reality. For example, Social Cognitive Theory stresses the importance of viewers’ cognitive activities when consuming television messages. Social Cognitive Theory assumes that vicarious learning via television takes place through a series of cognitive processes including attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Fujioka, 1999). Social Cognitive Theory suggests that one’s ability to evaluate and interpret television messages affects any potential consequences of television viewing. Thus, television messages must be cognitively processed, evaluated, and consciously interpreted by viewers before any influence occurs. Southwell and Lee

(2004) explored two important dimensions of media effects on human memory: media content structure and user control over content presentation. Southwell and Lee found that viewers are four times more likely to understand and later recognize complex media content, if they are assigned to a situation comparable to traditional television viewing.

Early research on the relationship between television viewing and fear posited that people were passive receptors of information – for example, that television socialized its viewers and “cultivated” fear regardless of demographic characteristic. Gerbner and his colleagues conducted extensive television research in the 1970’s and believed that heavy television viewing was the critical factor that heightened fear in all social groups (Gerbner et al., 1977). The researchers concluded that “TV’s independent contributions to the cultivation of these conceptions of a ‘mean world’...are not significantly altered by sex, age, education, [or] income...” (p. 171). However, other researchers believed that audience characteristics – demographic factors, susceptibility, and personal experience – were important determinants in predicting fear of crime (Chiricos, Eschholz, & Gertz, 1997; Chiricos, Padgett, & Gertz, 2000). Chiricos et al. (1997) asserted that it is critically important to attend to “specific ‘audience effects’” (p. 354) of television news viewing and found that for White women and for people who had been victimized, watching television news was related to more fear. Then, Chiricos et al. (2000) importantly found during later research that the frequency of watching local and national news was related to fear, even after controlling for demographic factors and perceived risk; and, when they disaggregated their sample by ethnic group, they found the frequency of watching local news predicted fear for Whites and Blacks, but not Hispanics. The researchers’ 2000 study also found that local television news influenced fear for Blacks and Whites in high

crime areas but affected fear for Hispanics in low crime areas; and, when they disaggregated by victimization experience, they found that Whites and Hispanics who were victimized were influenced by local news, but Blacks who were not victimized were also affected by local news. Within that latter study, Chiricos et al. say belief in the reality of television news was also a significant predictor of its affect on viewers.

Connected to that notion as part of a perilously related social issue, researchers contend that mass media images – especially depictions of criminality on television news – can also affect viewers’ opinions regarding important public policy issues such as the death penalty (Iyengar, 1991; Slater et al., 2006; Sotirovic, 2001). Iyengar (1991) suggested that television news typically fails to put violent crime stories and events into perspective or to connect them into meaningful social patterns. Iyengar also found that news reports that depict certain instances of violent crime make viewers more likely to consider punitive measures rather than social or political reform as the appropriate response to crime. Moreover, Sotirovic (2001) states:

[News] media use may indirectly affect extremity of support for the death penalty relative to prisoners’ rehabilitation through its influence on complexity....

More in-depth reporting emphasizing the causes of events in an attempt to explain them, may also contribute to individuals’ capability to integrate various ideas into a meaningful whole. Frequent exposure and high attention to more complex media formats (e.g.,...television news about government and politics) is related to more complex thinking, whereas exposure and attention to more simple media formats (e.g., tabloid [news] and television news magazines) inhibits complexity. An increased media tendency to simplify [news] events by focusing on dramatic events

and individual affective reactions to those events may undermine individuals' efforts to develop a complex, multidimensional understanding of social issues and to articulate an integrated view of reality. (p. 16-17)

Such limited thinking then leads to often biased tautological arguments about race, crime, culpability, and criminals' rights to either social reformation or extermination.

Biases within Reporting Information

Storytelling inclusive of bias is often a standard template in the modern newsroom mass media culture (Leo, 1997). The news media's famed obsession with "balance" is ironically a powerful support for biased reporting (Edwards & Cromwell, 2009).

Edwards and Cromwell state:

The great blockbuster myth of modern journalism is objectivity, the idea that a good newspaper or broadcaster simply collects and reproduces the objective truth. It is a classic...tale, widely believed and devoid of reality. It has never happened and never will happen because it cannot happen. Reality exists objectively, but any attempt to record the truth about it always...involves selection. (p. 3)

Perkins and Starosta (2001) analyze selection and story "form" as a news value, making key observations – "News values may incorporate journalistic biases that then insinuate themselves into the final news story....[; and,] form as a journalistic bias serves to promote detrimental 'rhetorical visions' about the minority community" (p. 73).

Considering journalistic form as a catalyst shaping bias in representations of minorities in news media, Perkins and Starosta offer a critical questioning "model" that displays how the repetition of the "form" of a news story can focus the perspective of reporting toward one social group, and against another. The researchers' multi-question model includes

important queries such as: Who is / is not quoted?; Whose ideas are supported (reinforced) / questioned?; and, Which details are included or excluded? Perkins and Starosta then importantly ask – What happens to audiences subjected to biased news narratives? Weston (1996), though focusing on print news, answers that question best regarding news “form” in *all* forms – including television news – stating that through habits of language and through repeated news form routines, reporters “teach” audiences about, and how to socially view, particular minority groups from a top-down majority-White perspective; and, this teaching and “learning” centers on “the way the stories are organized and written, [and] the phrases used in headlines” (p. 163).

Grabe et al. (2000) state in their research that because television is a primary source of information, the bulk of the aforementioned criticism can be leveled against broadcast news. Specifically, critics express concern about the proliferation of producer and reporter bias in tabloid news production practices. According to Grabe et al., news media critics point out that many local television stations have adopted tabloid news magazine reporting techniques for newscasts. The researchers say media critics have dubbed the sensational news practice “infotainment” – in which production style overpowers reporting substantive information. According to Sotirovic (2001), “Documenting the effect of infotainment is particularly important when the traditional news media also stand accused of yielding to commercial pressures that value violence, sex, and gossip above meaningful and useful information” (p. 17).

“Infotainment” Television News: Framing & Dramatization

As an outlying effect of that infotainment style, Kunelius (2006) discusses framing as a general problem in reporting information when preconceived notions and/or biases

might be employed by journalists. According to Kunelius' research:

There is [often in journalism] this particular storyline and a strong need to stick to it.

For the interviewees (i.e. for people who often provide the substance of which our public debates are made of) the practical terms of newsmaking seemed sometimes rather frustrating. From their point of view, there seemed to be a readymade frame for the forthcoming story they were involved in, and the frame pre-existed the interaction with the reporter. They felt they were put into a position where they were largely expected to supply the necessary comments or play the role the storyline was in need of. Respondents also felt...that journalism too easily used applied conflict frames and that journalists looked for those actors who were willing to present extreme views on a given issue. (p. 677)

Note that “conflict” and/or “confrontations” keep arising as a dominant reporting thematic frame within news media. Perhaps this is because many journalists are thought to hold clichéd “us versus them” social conceptions; and, as Kunelius also observes while conducting research, “Journalists think that the police want more hard-core action...[and] that social security sector people [(government assisted)] are ineffective and hostile to ordinary [(mainstream/White)] people...” (p. 677).

Dates and Barlow (1990) also address framing in news media, but through a Black and White lens – with the researchers noting what they call a “split image” in the discrepancy between the way Blacks and Whites are depicted on television news. The researchers analyzed newscasts broadcast in a dozen major U.S. cities – Birmingham, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Greensboro, Jacksonville, Miami, Milwaukee, Phoenix,

Pittsburgh, and Spokane – and found evidence of a split image system, where Whites were framed one way and other racial and ethnic groups were typically framed in a biased manner. Dates and Barlow also discovered that news stories on race and discrimination were virtually non-existent. Thirteen years later, Poindexter et al. (2003) reported similar findings about a lack of news stories regarding racial and ethnic discrimination.

Kunelius (2006) also discusses general biases toward dramatization in reporting information, noting of research findings:

First,...the attention paid by journalism to particular actors seemed to depend on something dramatic enough taking place. Second, the creation of news leads with a journalistically legitimate amount of exaggeration seemed to skew the picture of the world. Journalism was criticized for choosing and emphasizing the exciting over the relevant....

It is often said that journalism has problems representing “everyday life” or “ordinary people.”... Journalism seemed to be unable to see “inside” the [social] institutions it works with. Instead, journalism is stuck repeating particular, dramatized stereotypes....

Journalism’s taste for the dramatic also pointed to an interesting question about the relationship between fiction and fact in the media: sometimes respondents sensed that journalists (perhaps unconsciously) tried to fit the real [news story] actors into [social] roles possibly constructed elsewhere... (p. 678)

As framing and dramatization can relate to depictions of minorities in the news media, Kunelius says the combined effect of the interplay of those two journalistic reporting

practices:

Is a degree of unpredictability (and sense of powerlessness) about how one is represented in journalism. These problems can be alleviated to a degree by investing in the skills the strategic power game requires: continuous contact with reporters, information packages prepared in advance [when able] for journalists, skill in giving interviews all seems to help... [In news] the fact that unpredictability is managed suggests a practically negotiated balance of power between journalism and those who routinely deal with reporters. Nevertheless, this supposed level of satisfaction with the routine sources disregards the problems of those who are not routinely involved in the game and have less time and skills (developed in the routines) to handle journalism. (p. 679)

In relation to that problem, Poindexter et al. (2003) found “there were fewer opportunities for African Americans to be a source for the news when a story contained only one source. For Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, there were few or no chances to be a news source” (p. 533). According to Kunelius’ general observations, unbiased news reporting on racial and ethnic minorities would involve giving members of those groups more of a voice, and an opportunity to feel a certain amount of authenticity in representations of one’s own public depiction – “or at the very least, an ability to demand this kind of validity from journalism[; because,] without such criteria journalism is free to turn any identity or experience into a commodity or a caricature – or both” (p. 686).

Biased toward sensationalism: Further effects of tabloid style news reporting.

Grabe et al.’s (2000) aforementioned investigation of whether tabloid production

features influence viewer judgments about the newsworthiness or trustworthiness of news stories, and whether or not the flamboyant format of tabloid news influences biased information processing and evaluative responses among viewers, also found that the high levels of emotional and psychological arousal associated with television news viewing is connected to a reporting form known as “sensationalism.” Bailey et al. (2013) discuss sensationalism in journalism stating:

Sensational news has been defined both by its content (topics) and its packaging (production style). Specifically, emphasis on arousal-producing content (e.g., accidents, disasters, crime), with a short supply of public affairs stories (e.g., politics and economics), marks the sensational approach. (p. 319-320)

A consequence of news sensationalism is that it contributes to the public’s fears, because it focuses heavily on crime news reportage. This is what researchers call the “media paradox” – the more we rely on popular media to inform us, the more apt we are to misplace our fears (Radford, 2003). Radford says this paradox is the combined result of two biases, one inherent in the news-gathering process, the other inherent in the way our minds organize and recall information:

For a variety of reasons – including fierce competition for our patronage within and across the various popular media outlets – potential news items are rigorously screened for their ability to captivate an audience.... The stories that do make it through this painstaking selection process are then often crafted into accounts emphasizing their concrete, personal, and emotional content. (p. 70)

Radford then notes that the second bias lies in what researchers deem the “availability heuristic.” Simply put, our judgments of frequency and probability are heavily

influenced by the ease with which we can imagine or recall instances of an event. So, the more often we hear reports of plane crashes, school shootings, or train wrecks, the more often we think they occur. Radford (2003) cites the following example:

[If] a consumer group dedicated to travel safety established a network of correspondents in every country that reported every train wreck, no matter how minor, and broadcast daily pictures anyone watching that broadcast would see dozens of wrecks and crashes every day – complete with mangled metal and dead bodies – and would likely grow to fear such transportation. (p. 71)

The same holds true for stories about minorities and crime. The newsgathering process bias toward sensationalism encourages repetitious presentations of minority criminality – which makes such instances seem more frequent than they really are. Applying Radford’s availability heuristic example to public fears begat from racialized crime news coverage presented in a similar repetitive manner – Wilson et al. (2003) have declared that “major changes must be made in the training of journalists and in applied news philosophy if reporting concerning non-White racial groups is to improve” (p. 124). Part of those changes include journalists being less focused on profit, and more on unbiased representations of the people who are subjects of their news stories.

Economic & socio-economic biases.

Wilson et al. (2003) declare that news media’s obsession with increasing revenue – as evidenced by markedly increased sensational tabloid journalism practices during Sweeps – has created an inherent bias in general reporting practices. The researchers state:

A major barrier to more racially comprehensive news coverage in the media has been preoccupation with the profit incentive, as “marketing” of the news has led to, among

other questionable practices, an increased emphasis on information targeted to high economic profile audiences. (p. 125)

As mentioned by Parenti (1992) as a forced theme within mass media, affluent professionals are also presented in news media as being more interesting than blue-collar workers. Wilson et al. intimates that not only are affluent news viewers more interesting, they are a ratings key to television news media's need to attract major advertisers in order to increase station profits. This is due to the affluent being ascribed purchasing "power." Therefore, pandering to the notions and ideals of more affluent populations – who are assumed to be typically White – is not only encouraged, but largely profitable for television news organizations. However, Wilson et al. note that "because [minorities] are vastly underrepresented in the upper-middle to upper-class income categories, they have been short-changed by being underrepresented in coverage in the news media as well" (p. 125) – perhaps because such news coverage debunks the social myth of the random, sole, minority "success story" paradigm (as discussed in the stereotypical news selection phase) designed to make White audiences feel more socio-economically secure.

According to Rutland (1998) mass media has always ineffectively addressed the issue of race relating to varied socio-economic statuses in the United States. Rutland says the media usually tends to unduly confuse race with class by failing to differentiate poor Blacks from middle-class and wealthy Blacks, and largely avoiding reporting about poor Whites. Another study on the aforementioned problem of biased media portrayals of poor people as Black, found that the media uses pictures of Blacks more often than pictures of Whites to illustrate stories about poverty (Dixon, 2007). This is true, even in our current economic downturn – which is affecting a wide variety of Americans.

However, it should be noted that based on population numbers alone, there are more poor Whites than Blacks – because the Black population remains only around thirteen percent of the total U.S. population (Kurtz, 2013). Wilson et al. importantly observe that:

Although the news media, operating under the free enterprise system, have every right to pursue profits, they should not do so at the expense of their responsibility to serve the informational needs of society. The surveillance system of mass communication requires that the news media inform society about the perspectives, aspirations, and contributions of all its members. (p. 125)

Along that line, Zilber and Niven (2000) say comparatively little attention has been given to the effects of reporting on minority politicians. These researchers say the way journalists present stories on African American politicians may have a direct relationship to the way Americans think about race and gender relations, minority issues, and minorities themselves. According to Zilber and Niven, the scant research that does exist on minority politician portrayals, all seems to point in the same general direction: news coverage of African Americans is inadequate, frequently inaccurate, and arguably has an elitist tone that seems more harmful than helpful. Many critics even cited this claim during the 2008 Presidential Campaign – especially prior to the Democratic Primary and official nomination of President Obama. Zilber and Niven say monitoring in effort to curb these inconsistencies is important because these media portrayals – or lack thereof – do affect race and minority perceptions. This is because the reported treatment of African American politicians in news media falls in line with images of a false ideal which Parenti (1992) says mass media force-feeds viewers – ethnic minorities are not really as capable, effective, or interesting as White males.

Often using financial profit as a motivation, the news media also creates myths that have come to shape our world (Radford, 2003). Within his work, Radford states that television, by its very nature, distorts the reality it claims to reflect; because, events are compressed, highlighted, and sped up. Eitzen and Zinn (2004) say the media's selective perception of race and class is often glaringly apparent in coverage of national disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and the massive 1989 San Francisco Bay area earthquake. When showing images of those affected by Hurricane Katrina, race often dictated how people were referred to. Many television and online news outlets called Whites "survivors" of the storm; meanwhile, often poor Blacks were called "refugees" – which pejoratively connoted images of impoverished and/or downtrodden foreigners from "third-world" countries. It was only after Civil Rights leaders brought national attention to the issue, and others brought local attention to the biased journalistic references, that the term "refugee" in relation to Hurricane Katrina was banned in most television newsrooms by News Directors – which this researcher witnessed firsthand, and also expressed concerns about use of the term (see Appendix A).

In the aftermath and coverage of the Bay area earthquake, Eitzen and Zinn (2004) cite that many poor minorities' plight was ignored by most Whites and news media altogether who reportedly declared:

This is not the time to speak of race and class... Our television anchors reflect this point with pithy clichés: "We are all in this together." Together or not, it rankles that some people's suffering generates more concern than that of others.

The fact is that the earth shrugged, concrete tumbled, and people lost their lives. But once again, race and class determined the focus of the news and our national

concern. (p. 75)

The same is true of reporting and response to Hurricane Katrina. As a society, when such shortcomings are brought to the majority's attention, we typically throw money at things we fear – such as the homeless poor due to the storm – in order to fix problems; but, when we misplace our fears, we run the very real risk of wasting time and resources on some insignificant issues, instead of efficiently addressing the problem. Notably, much of news media took a socio-economically biased approach and aired stories about how some displaced people (i.e., Blacks) were allegedly abusing FEMA funding. Examples of such reporting are evident in news stories like CBS' which was slugged "FEMA To Katrina Victims: It's Payback Time" (CBS News, 2007) – featuring FEMA officials who were "providing assistance to people who, they claim, didn't deserve it" (para. 8); and, *The Atlantic's* online story entitled, "Did Katrina Victims Really Spend Their Relief Money on Gucci Bags and Massage Parlors?" (Weissman, 2012). Within that story, the legislator who is quoted also seemingly implies that the East Coast and Northeast area Superstorm Sandy victims – a majority of whom are White – are somehow more deserving of relief funding.

Hegemony & Anglo-American bias on local news & beyond.

In addition to economic biases in news reporting, biased, Anglicized reporting practices serve as a foundation for maintaining racial and ethnic stereotypes that are the source of top-down social prejudice, discrimination, and inequality. Elements of both institutional racism and systemic discrimination (as defined in Chapter 1) against minorities in general, are reflected in news media biases in reporting information (Kerner Commission, 1968; Martinot, 2010; Mays et al., 2013; Poindexter et al., 2003; Romer et

al., 1998). This has been evident ever since the Kerner Commission report (1968) criticized the news media for notably reporting from a biased, Anglo-only, perspective and failing to report the history, culture, and activities of Blacks in American society. Unfortunately, since that 1968 study, there has been little significant change in news media coverage of racial and ethnic minorities (Mays et al., 2013; Poindexter et al., 2003).

One could argue that typical reporting practices are simply a form of “indirect institutionalized discrimination” – dominant group (White) practices that have a harmful impact on members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups (minorities), even though the organizationally or community prescribed norms guiding the actions were established with no intent to harm (Feagin & Feagin, 1999). For instance, determining news from a White perspective (Kerner Commission, 1968) was historically instilled in aspiring journalists during the very early stages of training within the field of journalism; however, some journalists simply desired to report community news without any apparent racial, political, or social agenda. Nevertheless, historically, the importance of what was considered reportable “news” by newsroom leaders was based solely on an event’s significance to the White majority.

Such top-down decisions being repeated over time, is an example of news media “hegemony” – the process by which those in power (Whites) secure the consent of the socially subordinated (minorities) to the system that suppresses and/or subordinates them; and, rather than requiring overt force (as used by police), the elite, through their control of various social institutions (including news media) attempt to persuade the populace that the hierarchical social and economic system is fixed and natural, and therefore

unchangeable (Gramsci, 2000). The basic premise of Gramsci's theory of hegemony is that man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas; and, currently there is no better way to spread the ideas and ideals of the ruling White majority to the masses, than through mass media. Moreover, espousing Gramsci's theory regarding hegemony, Boggs (1976) says mass media is a tool that ruling elites use to "perpetuate their power, wealth, and status [by broadcasting] their own philosophy, culture and morality" (p. 39) then popularizing it among the viewing public. Television news is observed as a particularly deceptive form of hegemonic communication because of the way it presents itself as unbiased "truth" – especially in discussions of race and crime. Lull (2003) points out that as powerful as mass media is, it does not work alone to effect a hegemonic response from minorities regarding the status quo; because, messages from the news media are reinforced by those emanating from political organizations, businesses, trade unions, the military, schools, and even religious groups. According to Lull, those social institutions ideologically merging and inter-articulating mutually reinforcing top-down values, influence, and collective efforts aimed at the social oppression of minorities – is the essence of hegemony. Lull also espoused other researchers' theories regarding hegemony and connected them to mass media stating:

Hegemony is not a direct stimulation of thought or action, but, according to Stuart Hall, is a "framing [of] all competing definitions of reality within [the dominant class'] range, bringing all alternatives within their horizons of thought. [The dominant class] sets the limits – mental and structural – within each subordinate classes 'lives' and make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them." ...Social theorist Philip Elliot suggested similarly that the

most potent effect of mass media is how they subtly influence their audiences to perceive social roles and routine personal activities. The controlling economic forces in society use the mass media to provide a “rhetoric [through] which these [concepts] are labeled, evaluated, and explained.” (p. 62)

Such is the role of news media in broadcasting stories about: new legislation (Immigration “Reform”); governmental policies (The “War” on Drugs); and, police enforcement tactics against the criminal “threat” element (Blacks and Hispanics).

However, according to Gramsci (2000), consent of influence and control from the socially subordinated – such as racial and ethnic minorities – is never secured once and for all, and must be continually sought; because, there is always room for resistance through “counterhegemonic” cultural work – as evidenced by bottom-up social and political protests (1992 King verdict riot). In addition, notably, as part of a resistance effort on the periphery of the field of broadcast news, Wilson et al. (2003) say leading into the 21st century some:

Journalism departments and organizations in academia increased efforts to make students aware of the importance of racial and cultural diversity in reporting. But, historically, journalism students were taught that news – by definition – encompassed events of consequence to the majority population audience, which meant Anglo Americans. (p. 125)

That notion is so engrained that, as previously discussed, even minority reporters and/or minority news anchors attempting unbiased, equitable coverage of minorities often have their stories filtered through White editors – resulting in stories slanted toward the preconceived biases of many Whites. Wilson et al. also assert that “content observation”

is a way for contemporary journalists and researchers alike, to analyze newsrooms' reporting policies on race; because, contemporary news products of an organization:

Would find reportage on non-Whites ranging from the threatening issue phase to the confrontation phase to the stereotypical news selection phase, depending on the historical moment and the ethnicity of the [minority] group involved. The absence of a fully integrated approach to either individual reports or general coverage would be a strong indicator of organizational policy. (p. 128-130)

Examples of biases on network news.

Brown (2013) purports that “over the past 30 years, the Right’s political perspective on crime has dominated public policy and criminal justice practices that are still having pernicious impacts on the Black community” (p. 259) and other racialized minorities. Therefore, according to Brown, it is not surprising to hear conservative commentators such as FOX News’ Bill O’Reilly spout seemingly biased sentiments regarding race and crime, by making the following remarks after George Zimmerman’s not guilty verdict connected to Trayvon Martin’s killing:

...It was wrong for Zimmerman to confront Martin based on his appearance. But, the culture that we have in this nation does not lead to criminal profiling, because young Black men are so involved in crime. The statistics are overwhelming. But here is the headline; young Black men commit homicides at a rate 10 times greater than Whites and Hispanics combined. When presented with damning evidence like that, the Civil Rights industry looks the other way or makes excuses. They blame the barbarity on guns or poor education or lack of jobs. Rarely do they define the problem accurately. The reason there is so much violence and chaos in the Black precincts is the

disintegration of African American family. (p. 259)

O'Reilly's comments, according to Brown, extoll many of the ruling White majority's sentiments spuriously linking race and crime in America; and, is a clear example of top-down hegemonic rhetoric disguised as "news" – with O'Reilly's narrative perpetuating the dominant view that African American males are responsible for the vast majority of crimes due to their subordinate social standing and lack of "family" values. Moreover, O'Reilly's narrative also encompasses, and not surprisingly, fits perfectly into many ideologies that Parenti (1992) says mass media force-feeds us, with the main intimated – (in parenthesis) – by O'Reilly being: The police and everyone else ("Zimmerman") should be given a freer hand in combating the large criminal element ("young Black men") using generous applications of force and violence without too much attention to constitutional rights (like "Martin[']s") – as evidenced by O'Reilly using the word "But" which typically negates any remark before it); The ills of society ("crime," "homicides," "barbarity," "violence and chaos") are caused by individual malefactors ("young Black men") and not by anything in the socioeconomic system ("guns or poor education or lack of jobs"); and, There are some unworthy people (the "African American family") in our established institutions, but they (specifically "young Black men") usually are dealt with ("confront[ed]" like "Martin") and eventually deprived of their positions of responsibility (or life, like "Martin"). It is also important to note here how violent confrontations – whether by police "in the Black precincts," or other citizens – are seemingly used by news media to point to ways to combat, and as O'Reilly also puts it, "confront" "the culture that we have in this nation [that] does not lead to criminal profiling."

Additionally, as previously discussed, Brown asserts that O'Reilly's claim that "young Black men commit homicides at a rate 10 times greater than Whites and Hispanics combined" (p. 259) is rooted in a dubious brand of scholarship – abstracted empiricism (Mills, 1959) – purporting that a strong link between race and criminal behavior exists; consequently, extraordinary social measures set in place to control Black boys and men due to the often socially instilled fear of them, seem justified. Therefore, based on O'Reilly's citation of abstract empiricism, the controversial commentator can safely make all of the aforementioned claims from his apparently biased viewpoint, without fear of any negative repercussions from his employer and sponsors. Brown says based on such claims fear of Black men seems rational, and:

In this racialized context driven by the success of the labeling of Black men as dangerous, larcenous, and purveyors of wanton violence, the George Zimmerman not guilty verdict and the stubborn insistence that the stop-and-frisk program must continue are perhaps [better, if never fully,] understood. (p. 266)

In another example of perceived racial bias on network news, Staples (2011) points to comments made following the racial profiling arrest of professor Henry Louis Gates, and President Obama's subsequent "Beer Summit" – at which both Officer Crowley and Professor Gates presumably agreed to have had a misunderstanding and overreacted. Regarding that notion, Staples posits:

Whether he intended it or not, Obama's equal allocation of blame in the Gates case ironically echoed conservative [news media] voices that used the incident to criticize him: Greta Van Susteren on FOX News, for example, emphasized that Gates "brought up race first," and said "racism is a terrible thing, and being falsely accused of racism

is *equally* terrible” (emphasis mine)... (p. 39)

Staples contends that Van Susteren’s claim is both socially insensitive and:

Not true [because] being accused of bias is in no way as horrible as being arrested, brutalized, or murdered as a result of it, and Whites as well as Blacks who have an understanding of the history and dynamics of racial profiling understand this. (p. 39)

Implicit or unconscious bias?

Mays et al. (2013) formally explain theories of “implicit bias” and “unconscious bias” as biases relate to news media reporting practices and viewing audiences:

Theories of implicit or unconscious bias contend that individuals use information derived from experience, media, culture or others to organize people into social categories according to salient traits, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity or social roles in society. Such descriptions as “a large Black man” carry [social] meaning shaped by feelings, expectations of behaviors and schemas also influenced by experience with these social categories, the media, culture or information from others that influences how people respond. Studies of implicit bias find that stereotypes often guide the way people respond to certain descriptions or traits. For instance, people are shaped to view the “little old lady” as frail and non-threatening while “a large Black man” may invoke a response of fear and anger. (p. 14)

As news media relates to unconscious bias, Mays et al. say many “White Americans hold attitudes and engage in behaviors that unintentionally disadvantage or discriminate against racial and ethnic minority groups” (p. 14) – such as the unconscious biases displayed by many journalists adhering to long-standing industry policies when reporting

on crime and race. Mays et al. also point to various theories about racism, including symbolic racism, and note of that kind of bias:

Acts of race discrimination are often couched in beliefs about individualism i.e., sense of personal freedom, self-reliance, work ethic, personal achievement, fairness and egalitarianism....

Prejudiced feelings [can] activate spontaneously and without intention or effort which stands in contrast to the individuals' perception of themselves as not racist or prejudiced.... Even when an individual rejects that they are prejudiced or engaged in stereotypes, they are still subject to automatic activation of prejudice as if it is an "autonomous mental reflex." (p. 14 & 17)

Based upon Mays et al.'s observation one can perceive Bill O'Reilly's narrative as an example of implicit bias – because he specifically declared his biased views citing the alleged criminality of *all* "young Black men" repeatedly, and sweeping claims of "the disintegration of African American family" *everywhere*. Conversely, Greta Van Susteren's comment can be perceived as the likely result of unconscious bias – whereas she likely didn't mean to imply that police and/or citizens accused of intentionally arresting, brutalizing, and/or murdering Blacks suffer in an equal manner as that of their victims. Nevertheless, implicit and/or unconscious bias in news media largely has the same social effects – covertly reporting to the masses that notions of prejudice, acts of discrimination, and efforts supporting social inequality, are acceptable.

Biases in crime reporting & criminal depictions.

As noted, the coverage of crime is severely biased within much of news media. It has long been a concern that the mass media, especially television news, has repeatedly

portrayed minority groups in a biased and unfavorable manner – resulting in viewing audiences’ potential endorsement of negative attitudes toward minorities, through activation of racial and ethnic stereotypes (Fujioka, 1999; Dixon, 2007). Glassner (1999) notes that:

Journalists, politicians, and other opinion leaders foster fears about particular groups of people both by what they play up and what they play down. Consider Americans’ fear of Black men. These are perpetuated by the excessive attention paid to dangers that a small percentage of African American men create for other people, and by a relative *lack* of attention to dangers that a majority of Black men face themselves...

The most egregious omissions occur in the coverage of crime. Many more Black men are casualties of crime than are perpetrators, but their victimization does not attract the [news] media spotlight the way their crimes do. Thanks to profuse coverage of violent crime on local TV news programs, “night after night, Black men rob, rape, loot, and pillage in the living room”... (p. 109)

The frequency of such events on the news is often due to news stories about one criminal suspect constantly being aired and re-aired, whenever *any* new development – even if relatively insignificant – surfaces that fosters an excuse to broadcast the same story again, and repeat details of the accused’s alleged crime. For instance, if a suspect’s court hearing is delayed, many news outlets will report that small detail along with repeated information about the suspect and the crime. Such biased reporting practices lend to Dixon’s (2007) previously addressed frequency effects and recency effects theories.

Tamborini, Mastro, Chory-Assad, and He Huang (2000) also address the issue of biased crime reporting practices – specifically discussing concerns regarding criminal

depictions and presenting Blacks as a criminal justice “threat.” Tamborini et al. (2000) state:

In a sample of national news portraying alleged criminals from 1985 to 1989, African American characters appeared more frequently than Whites as criminal suspects and were more likely to be depicted as physically threatening. It has been suggested that these news portrayals may encourage racial/ethnic hostility, fear of African Americans, and the proliferation of racial/ethnic stereotypes. (p. 643)

During their analysis of criminal depictions on local news in major metropolitan areas and on national news, Tamborini et al. cited alarmingly disproportional rates:

In New Orleans...African Americans accounted for...more than 80 percent of robbery suspects shown on local television newscasts. In Chicago, almost half of all news stories broadcast on local television news featured African Americans involved in violent crime. Furthermore, research has shown that 77 percent of crime stories reported on network news were related to African American suspects, compared to only 42 percent of stories featuring Caucasian criminal suspects. (p. 643)

During their study Tamborini et al. assessed racial and ethnic group stereotypes concerning representation of African Americans and Hispanics in the criminal justice system; and, roles and differences in depictions of Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics on television news and other primetime programming were investigated. The researchers found that most African Americans and Hispanics were depicted as representatives of the court.

In other studies primarily focused on the biased practice of stereotyping African Americans and Latinos as lawbreakers, Dixon and Linz (2000) gathered statistical data

and discussed their research about media coverage of different races. The researchers found that positive portrayals of African Americans are consistently underrepresented as a whole; but, that group is overrepresented as lawbreakers in the media. Scholars and watchdog organizations are absolutely correct to point out instances of shoddy or sensational journalism in those contexts. Dates and Barlow (1990) also discovered that racial and ethnic minorities were often missing from newscasts, and when covered, were over-represented in stories about crime. Zilber & Niven (2000) also say news programs are disproportionately more likely to feature Whites as law enforcers, helpers, or “Good Samaritans”, while minorities are more likely to be portrayed as criminals.

When it comes to over-representing crime stories in news, Radford (2003) notes that television viewers are likely to see more murders than a homicide detective, more robberies than a security guard, and more drug busts than an undercover agent; because, the amount of news time devoted to crime coverage is widely disproportionate to the amount of crime and destruction that actually occurs. Unfortunately, when stories about crime are aired, the news media often profits from fear mongering through biased, sensationalized, top story headline coverage (Glassner, 1999). Nothing gets viewers to tune in to a news program like fear: fear of violence, disease, death, or criminal harm coming to them or loved ones at the hands of dangerous “others” – who are often assumed to be minorities.

Challenging bias: A model for change.

Zilber and Niven (2000) state that if we are serious about tackling the problem of race relations, we need to take active, legal, steps to change the way minorities are portrayed in the news. Wilson et al. (2003) address how to legally challenge bias in broadcasting

by pointing to media advocacy actions taken by The United Church of Christ (UCC) – a coalition of Protestant denominations with long-standing interests in Civil Rights, freedom of religion, and other forms of expression, that has “dedicated itself to the proposition that the communications media should operate under Judeo-Christian principles” (p. 249) – meaning fair and unbiased treatment of *all*. According to Wilson et al., the UCC’s Office of Communication is responsible for landmark legal decisions that begat reform within the broadcasting industry in the U.S., and within broadcasters’ regulatory agency – the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Wilson et al. note:

The first major race-related case the UCC took on involved television station WLBT in Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1960’s. WLBT had incurred the wrath of Jackson’s Black community for a number of years because of its discriminatory racial practices, which included on-air references to Black people as “niggers.” WLBT also refused to carry a network television show on race relations by airing a sign that read, “Sorry, Cable Trouble” during the scheduled time slot. The station openly advocated racial segregation in a region where Black people comprised 45% of the station’s service area. The UCC became involved because...it had a congregation in nearby Tougaloo, Mississippi, and Blacks comprised a significant portion of its membership. When WLBT began to attack local civil rights activities in which church members were involved, UCC...filed a petition to deny renewal of WLBT’s FCC license in 1964.... The crux of the legal case was...WLBT’s breach of the FCC requirement (established by the Communications Act of 1934) that all licensees broadcast “in the public interest, conscience and necessity.” (p. 249-250)

However, the researcher's point out that "the FCC had evolved into a protector of broadcasters instead of the public's rights" (p. 250) because:

[The FCC] denied [the UCC] "standing" to even present their petition on the grounds they had no "interest" (financial) in the license renewal procedure. The FCC renewed WLBT's license, but the UCC then filed suit in the U.S. Court of Appeals, which granted standing to the complainants and ordered the FCC to hold a full hearing of their case. The court maintained that members of WLBT's audience most certainly had standing because as consumers they had an interest in local broadcasting content over public airways.... Despite [UCC] participation in the hearing process, the FCC granted a license renewal to WLBT on a 1-year probationary status....

The UCC once again took the issue to the Court of Appeals... In harsh language that took the FCC to task for its shoddy treatment of the petitioners, the court took matters into its own hands and denied the license to WLBT.... on the grounds that the Fairness Doctrine had been violated and that WLBT practiced racial discrimination in their programming and hiring... (p. 250-251)

The UCC taking up that lengthy legal challenge was a major risk because as previously discussed, during that period Mississippi was in social and political turmoil, as part of the heart of the racially segregated South – making efforts to enforce Jim Crow "laws" with violent, even fatal, force against African Americans, and sometimes their White advocates, who challenged the system (Hampton et al., 1990). Nevertheless, they risked their lives to "fight the good fight" against undue discrimination and bias in broadcasting and news media. Currently though, the price for challenging biases is not quite that

costly; because, instead of lives, livelihoods (financial) are on the line. Even despite that risk, Grabe et al. (2000) assert that:

Providing the citizens of a democratic society with accurate and unbiased information is an enduring journalistic value. That may explain why critics of journalism have, since the development of the Penny Press, focused on the information function of journalism to argue publicly for the distinction between “proper” reporting and sensational...[biased] attempts to inform the public. (p. 584)

Gatekeeping

The powerful and greedy conspire to hide vital facts from the general public by gatekeeping omission, or by “spinning” events to tilt their significance (Vesperi, 2010). News coverage of racial and ethnic minorities has been, and remains, a reflection of the attitudes held by newsroom gatekeepers and owners and/or controllers of the media corporations who influence them. Researchers have labeled those involved in the news selection process the “gatekeepers” of information because they are in position either to let information pass through the system, or stop its progress (Wilson et al., 2003). While discussing George Gerbner’s theory of media monopolies and censorship, Stossel (1997) notes that by 1986 ABC, CBS, and NBC controlled 70 percent of the television market, and points out:

A media monopoly has consolidated the diversity of human experience into a few basic formulas. A concentrated marketplace puts distinct limits on the range of views represented. The people have no say in what gets broadcast. This, in Gerbner’s view, is plainly undemocratic. But we have become so accustomed to the dominance of a market-driven, advertiser-sponsored media system that we don’t realize it doesn’t

have to be this way. (p. 98)

Even with the current advent of cable and various forms of online entertainment and news options, a media monopoly still exists, and is ever apparent in television news media – with only 19 companies controlling several hundred television news stations nationwide (Butler, 2012).

So, who are the daily gatekeepers in television newsrooms? According to Butler (2012), the 2012 NABJ diversity in television newsroom management report counts those people with the title of general manager, news director, assistant news director, managing editor, assignment manager, executive producer, and web director/web manager, as gatekeepers. They are the people who set the daily news agenda and make coverage and personnel decisions. Those individuals performing the “gatekeeping” – filtering out information and/or news stories altogether – function of their journalistic duties results in what some scholars have referred to as “agenda setting” for society (Wilson et al., 2003). According to Butler, historically, and continuing into the present, not many racial and ethnic minorities are counted among gatekeepers in American news media. Wilson et al. say this is important because:

The perspectives of American values, attitudes, and ambitions brought to society have largely been those of gatekeepers and others with access to media....

Since news content, in theory, reflects what is really important to society, the coverage of [minorities] in mainstream news media provides insight into their social status. The gatekeepers of news reveal by their professional judgments precisely how [in]consequential they regard Americans of color to be. (p. 116)

Gatekeeping of Information

Even if substantive news stories and/or topics do meet upper-level newsroom gatekeepers' (management) approval, other lower-level television newsroom journalists – associate producers, producers, reporters/anchors, assignment editors, and video editors – are constantly reshaping and editing news stories thereby acting as defacto secondary gatekeepers of information, for one main reason: air time is finite! Sometimes journalists have as few as 20 seconds to tell a complex news story. Therefore, substantive and important topics and details often get buried in, or omitted from, newscasts. This is especially true when there is a choice to feature a non-sensational “hard news” story – such as on employment discrimination – versus typically violent, ratings driven, “Breaking News” featuring a recently committed crime. For instance, education issues only received two percent of air time nationally, in newscasts analyzed by Radford (2003); and, race and minority relations got only one percent. In contrast, Radford says on average, nearly 30 percent of news air time is spent covering crime, courts, and cops.

Gatekeeping of imagery: Managing menacing images & mug shots.

Gatekeeping of imagery also plays an important role in newscasts – especially pertaining to accused criminals. Many gatekeepers allow certain mug shots of criminal suspects and pictures of victims to filter through and be aired, while other criminal suspects' and victims' images are sometimes withheld (Shepard, 2012). This gatekeeping practice is engaged for several reasons – including affecting audience perceptions regarding presumed culpability and/or innocence (Norris, 2013; Shepard,

2012). Norris asserts that selective news airings of mug shots and other images – whether intentional or unintentional – often affects public perceptions of criminality:

Mug shots play a major role in how the media report crime. [In 2012], several news outlets covering the death of Trayvon Martin stirred up controversy by featuring an outdated mug shot of a younger, heavysset George Zimmerman in an orange [shirt often mistaken for a jail] jumpsuit, which some alleged was a calculated attempt to make him look more menacing. (p. 1575)

Shepard says that is the most common photo of Zimmerman – a 2005 police photo taken after he was arrested for assaulting an officer; those charges were dropped. In that mug shot, Shepard says the then 22 year old Zimmerman “looks unhappy, if not angry” (para. 5).

Meanwhile, Shepard says some news outlets were conflicted about which image of Zimmerman’s teenaged victim to use – pointing out that some news media gatekeepers had certain pictures of the slain youth, but purposely chose not to use them:

The dominant photo of Martin shows him 13 or 14 years old, wearing a red Hollister T-shirt....

Keith Jenkins, head of multimedia at NPR, wasn’t as concerned about the... Zimmerman photo – it was the only one available – as he was with news outlets’ choice of Martin photos. They generally chose the one of the boy in the red T-shirt rather than a more recent photo of him in a gray hoodie, which has been available all along....

“The picture of him was not of a happy, smiling kid in a hoodie,” said [one journalist]. “He looks hard in it. His expression is stern. Having the hoodie around

his head can have a negative connotation. We talked about that but decided at that point, the hoodie had become part of the story.”...

“The images used are clearly prejudicial to both men,” said Kenny Irby, Poynter’s senior faculty for visual journalism and diversity. “If those are the repeating images, then we continually reinforce prejudice and negative emotions. We never get to appreciate the life experience or further context of either individual.” (para. 4; Trayvon Martin photos loaded with meaning, para. 1 & 7; and, para. 7)

Departing from that unique case, Norris (2013) analyzes the extent to which mug shot images in general, strongly implicate criminal guilt:

The remarkably consistent characteristics of mug shots, coupled with the secondary meaning society has ascribed to them, attach a stigma of criminality to the suspect featured in the picture. The basic format of the mug shot has not changed since the mid-nineteenth century: a frontal shot of the head and shoulders of an expressionless suspect, against a monochromatic background. Today no one views such an image without immediately identifying it as a mug shot and assuming that the subject was arrested for some crime.... The police mug shot has become an icon in contemporary visual culture. The pose, framing, and formal conventions of the image are easily recognized throughout the general public. It is an image that is taken to indicate criminality. (p. 1591)

Yet, the mug shot itself explains none of the surrounding circumstances of the arrest, and Norris says most people assume that the detainee was doing something illegal.

Unfortunately, this holds true even if the suspects in mug shots might in fact be innocent.

Rule, Krendl, Ivcevic, and Ambady (2013) also shed light on the stigmatizing, criminalizing effect of mug shots. The researchers assessed the perceived trustworthiness of people based on their headshots versus mug shots. Viewers saw either regular photographs or cropped mug shots disguised as photos of a group of White men. Rule et al. (2013) found that viewers rated the men in the mug shots 20% more untrustworthy than the exact same men in the normal pictures. These perceptions of untrustworthiness based simply on unconscious association with mug shots and criminality are important as they relate to news depictions of minorities (Entman 1992; Jamieson, 1992).

Many local news stations receive official suspect images – mug shots and sometimes surveillance and other video – from area police departments, sometimes only upon request (Norris, 2013). In such cases, image options are limited. Nevertheless, according to Norris, gatekeepers are afforded the discretion of whether or not to air questionable criminal suspect images – such as those with scowls and/or frowns which generally seem more threatening. Thanks to social media, now there is always the option of searching for other sources of a criminal subject’s picture – such as on Instagram, Twitter, and/or Facebook. Unfortunately, gatekeepers don’t always exercise that option – often choosing instead to broadcast questionable images. Online photo searches are also an option regarding name-identified criminal suspects when no mug shot is given by police – which typically happens more for White suspects. One could argue that this is because Black criminal suspects have more available mug shots because they are allegedly arrested more; however, as previously noted by Norris, once *any* criminal suspect is arrested, a mug shot is usually taken and made available to news media upon request.

Racialized gatekeeping of pictures, video, & information: Air this, not that.

Hurwitz and Peffley (1997) note that the conflation of criminal activity with a certain race is also connected to racialized gatekeeping of criminal images in news media:

Given the aforementioned tendency of the media to portray Blacks as menacing criminal suspects when covering violent crime, it is not surprising that...the image of Blacks as a violent underclass has become a central component of contemporary White stereotypes of African-Americans: one of the most popular negative beliefs expressed about “most” Blacks is that they are “violent and aggressive.” (p. 380)

Moreover, given the aforementioned notion that a mug shot is a powerful, vivid symbol of criminality (Norris, 2013), both Entman (1992) and Jamieson’s (1992) research have shown that news portrayals of African Americans are indeed menacing portraits; because, Black criminal suspects are shown with mug shots more than Whites. Hurwitz and Peffley also note:

Experimental evidence suggests, moreover, that even a brief visual image of a Black male in a typical nightly news story on crime is powerful and familiar enough to activate viewers’ negative stereotypes of Blacks, producing racially biased evaluations of Black criminal suspects. (p. 395)

In fact, Norris points out that criminal justice authorities “speculated that a mug shot of Rodney King would be essential in moving public opinion if there had been no videotape of his beating, implicitly conceding that mug shots leave a much deeper impression on their viewers” (p. 1598-1599). In other words, since King was out on parole for robbery, releasing his mug shot to news media could have swayed public opinion by depicting

King as just another Black criminal “threat” who somehow deserved to be treated in such an overly aggressive, excessively violent manner by police.

In short, Blacks and their images are seemingly demonized rather than humanized as a tool of news media – a tendency which is not counterbalanced because Whites and other news audience members rarely get to see African Americans portrayed on the news as lawful, contributing members of society – perhaps due to biased gatekeeping practices. In fact, due to such conflation of race and crime, Dixon and Azocar (2007) and Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) – two main studies of a scant few that have directly tested whether exposure to unidentified criminals shapes race and crime perceptions – found that even when no picture is shown, exposure to “unidentified” criminals in the news elicits responses that are similar to exposure to African American suspects. As previously mentioned, Dixon’s 2007 and 2008 research also discuss that notion regarding unidentified criminals conflated with Black criminality. Abraham and Appiah (2006) also tested the role of visual imagery in priming racial stereotypes – notably in online news – by analyzing differences in response to depictions of Blacks, Whites, and “no photographs” in news reports on the three-strikes (criminal) law and school vouchers (education assistance). The researchers found that even when no picture was shown, racial stereotypes about Blacks were primed, in association with the social problems addressed in the news stories. Therefore, exposure to crime news without racial identifiers might nonetheless elicit unfavorable thoughts about African Americans (Dixon & Linz, 2000); because, when presented with illegal activity committed by unidentified suspects in a television news context, audience members might invoke the relevant construct linking African Americans with criminality and hence infer that the perpetrators

are African American (Abraham & Appiah, 2006; Dixon & Azocar, 2007; Dixon, 2008; Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000). It is important to note that in local newsrooms, as gatekeeper judgment calls, journalists are sometimes told not to mention a criminal suspect's race in a story if they are White – a practice of which I have also been instructed, because I was told “it is redundant” by a White local newsroom gatekeeper in a managerial position.

In addition to pictorial differences, local news video presentations of Black criminals are also often quite different from that of White criminals. Selective use of video – whether intentional or unintentional – by news video editors, also affects minority perceptions. Granted, video editors are sometimes under severe time constraints to get news story images on air; however, that is no excuse for biased, shoddy, and/or irresponsible image selections of minorities. Not only are Blacks shown more often as criminal suspects, television news is also more likely to show images of Black suspects handcuffed and poorly dressed – such as in prison gear like an orange jumpsuit – compared to White suspects (Entman, 1992). According to Entman's 1992 research, gatekeeping to protect some Whites' images might be involved; because, Black criminals were more likely to: remain unnamed; be seen in physical custody – such as a perp-walk; and, were less likely to speak for themselves. This current research tests for any statistically significant differences between Whites and minorities for such depictions on Las Vegas area newscasts.

Within Dixon and Linz's 2002 work, the researchers provide damning gatekeeping of information evidence – that African American defendants are more likely than White criminal defendants to have prejudicial pretrial information aired about them on local news programs. The researchers say such gatekeeping practices can bias juries against

some defendants (Blacks) and in favor of others (Whites) – directly affecting court verdicts. On the opposite end of the racialized gatekeeping of information spectrum, unfortunately, some stories involving minorities have been omitted altogether – as an extreme form of discriminatory news media practices:

Cable news networks have been blasted for years for their insatiable desire to trumpet missing White women, and yet none of their executives is willing to answer when it comes to missing minority women. The coverage is virtually nonexistent. There has to be a reason....

Maybe it's because the executive suites in which those [gatekeeping] news decisions are made are virtually devoid of minorities. (Martin, 2014, para. 22-23)

The most recent example is the nearly 300 kidnapped pre-teen and teenaged schoolgirls from Nigeria in April 2014. U.S. news media has been heavily criticized for little, to no coverage, and seemingly distancing itself from the story (BVN Staff, 2014). However, many other news stories regarding affairs in foreign countries happening around the same timeframe – such as Russian president, Vladimir Putin's, reclamation of Crimea – have garnered far more coverage by U.S. news outlets. In fact, the majority-White mainstream media's response has been so dismal, that on Friday May 23, 2014, BET News premiered "Stolen Innocence: Your Daughters Are Our Daughters" – on which African American journalist, Lola Ogunnaike, and African American professor and TV commentator, Marc Lamont Hill, co-hosted a town-hall-style discussion about: the young girls' kidnappings; the slow global response to this crisis; the story's lack of news media attention; and, human trafficking and rising instances of the sexual exploitation of children around the

world (Zonyeé, 2014). Moreover, Gleick (1997) discusses another such glaring example of apparent racialized gatekeeping of stories in the fact that during the same year:

A 9-year-old [Black] girl, raped, beaten and poisoned in a Chicago housing project, got none of the media attention that was focused on the case of murdered JonBennet Ramsey, a wealthy, White child, until local community and church leaders drew the media's attention to the disparity. (p. 31)

The question of how and why news media placed more importance on one little girl's life than the other, is still being asked by researchers in order to draw attention to unfair gatekeeping practices in mass media – which often involve overlooking newsworthy stories about African Americans and other minorities.

Since many newsrooms still do not reflect the diversity of the general population, another part of the problem resulting in gatekeeping is news professionals to some degree share the same misperceptions about minorities that the public does (Butler, 2012).

When absent of implicit bias, the people who are choosing the photographs and video often simply misunderstand the social realities of minorities and how a minority representation as “criminal”, “delinquent”, or “impoverished” affects general perceptions.

That's why the National Association of Black Journalists has consistently called for the hiring of more visual journalists and editors from minority backgrounds, to reverse the trend of biased and/or subjective reporting and gatekeeping. NABJ also calls for, and challenges news organizations to be more sensitive in their editing and reporting of all social issues (Butler, 2012; Freeman, 1997). However, simply hiring more minorities in these positions will not bridge the newsroom diversity gap in minority coverage (just as previously discussed for other positions such as reporters and anchors), due to the

consistently high turnover rate of news media in general: “According to the American Society of News Editors, overall newsroom employment fell by 2.4 percent. For minorities, it was more than double that: 5.7 percent. One out of three [recent] newsroom layoffs involved a minority” (Martin, 2014, para. 8).

Looking at the big picture: What is television news really showing us?

Permanent policy changes must be made at the highest gatekeeping levels in news media to improve media coverage of minority related content. This is of dire importance because, according to the Media Insight Project (2014):

Among the different types of TV news, more Americans (82 percent) turn to their local TV news stations either through the TV broadcast or online than any other type. Sizeable majorities also cite the three national network broadcast news operations (73 percent) in their various forms and 24-hour cable news channels (62 percent) – such as FOX News, CNN, or MSNBC – as sources of news, either on television or digitally....

Overall, Americans report that they trust the information they get from local TV news stations to a greater degree than any other source of news, with 52 percent who seek out local TV news saying that they trust the information very much or completely....

[Additionally as important,] local TV news stations are the most popular source for news about crime and public safety...[(which typically disproportionately depicts minorities as criminal “threats”)]. (Section 2 - “People are discriminating...”, para. 4 & 8 and Section 3, para. 6)

According to American Journalism Review (1999) research, 68% of Black journalists gave their media entity's coverage of racial and ethnic communities a grade of "C" or lower, as did 56% of Asian-American and 53% of Hispanic journalists. Unfortunately, currently it appears as though not much has changed and according to Wilson et al. (2003), "If [equitable, multiracial news coverage] is to become the goal and policy of American news media, the last vestiges of prejudice and racism must be removed from the gatekeeper ranks" (p. 124). Perhaps journalist, "News One Now" host, and former CNN analyst, Roland Martin (2014), surmises current issues pertaining to minority news coverage and race and ethnic relations in America best:

Numerous networks have hosted specials and roundtables tackling the issue of race. But not a single network has had the courage to turn their cameras onto themselves.

It's really easy for members of the media to question race in America. But for some reason, they get shy when it comes to what is happening in their own buildings. (para. 2-3)

Due to such ongoing biased practices both within, and spewing from, news media outlets, Dixon (2009) then importantly asks:

So what are our options if we want to resist the effects of negative media coverage?

The first step, of course, is to make a conscious decision to resist prejudice and stereotyping. The more we can resist thinking of people in stereotypical ways, the less potent the media message. Many scholars [such as Devine (1989)] have uncovered evidence that reflective thinking before making a judgment deflates the use of the stereotype. (p. 29)

It appears clear then, from all of the aforementioned literature, that various potential

media-image effects, biased journalism practices, and gatekeeping of imagery and information, all seemingly work together – whether intentionally or unintentionally – as news media applications that largely reinforce rather than eradicate racial and ethnic stereotypes. Therefore, news audiences’ racial perceptions and beliefs can potentially be linked both to what they view, and their views about crime (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997). In conclusion, this expansive literature review is designed to lead one point-by-point through varied citations, logically toward more specific secondary hypotheses; thus, building upon this work’s previously stated general primary hypothesis (in Chapter 1). Therefore, this independent researcher’s two specified secondary hypotheses (being explored empirically within this work’s subsequent chapters) are as follows:

H₀₁: I expect that criminal suspects categorized in racialized ethnic minority groups as Black will be depicted as having more Notable Images – defined in general conceptual terms by this independent researcher as frowning excessively in mug shots, being shown in court, handcuffed, and/or in prison attire, etc. – than will criminal suspects of the racialized group known as White.

H₀₂: I expect that criminal suspects categorized in racialized ethnic minority groups as Hispanic will be depicted as having more Notable Images – defined in general conceptual terms by this independent researcher as frowning excessively in mug shots, being shown in court, handcuffed, and/or in prison attire, etc. – than will criminal suspects of the racialized group known as White.

Within the next chapters, expected outcomes are described in terms of how this independent researcher predicts depictions will differ by formally defining and referring

to all chosen variables – including the Notable Image variable which will also be formally operationally defined.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

A content analysis was designed by the independent researcher to ascertain whether local television news programs present crime in such a way as to perpetuate misrepresentations or distortions of African Americans and/or other minorities' propensity toward criminality in society.

Sample

The sample in this study was drawn from a six month period between July 1, 2011 and December 30, 2011, and consists of Las Vegas area television news broadcasts during their daily, half-hour, 11:00 p.m. airings on NBC (KSNV Channel 3), CBS (KLAS Channel 8), and ABC (KTNV Channel 13). The 11:00 p.m. newscast was chosen as a sole focus because it is local news affiliates' final broadcast of the day, and therefore usually contains the most comprehensive and conclusive news story information comprised of final daily updates from official sources, and previously aired and/or corrected information from prior newscasts. FOX (KVVU Channel 5) was excluded from the local news sampling frame because the affiliate does not broadcast a daily 11:00 p.m. newscast, and because of the independent researcher's working relationship with the television news station. The time periods allotted for the 11:00 p.m. local news broadcasts on New Year's Eve (December 31, 2011) were also excluded from the sampling frame due to concerns about abnormal programming and lack of focus on crime reporting during the annual, typically celebratory and/or or reflective (year-in-review style) newscasts. Accounting for only two days (December 7, 2011 & December 10,

2011) during the six month sample in which recorded newscast data was not available due to technological malfunctions, the final recorded newscast data sample size includes a collection of 1,291 observed stories involving local crimes and/or criminal suspect depictions. There were 11 missing values, for a total observation number of 1,302; because, there are a few days when no local crimes/criminal suspects were reported locally on any of the three news stations. This small change does not compromise the comparability of the models, because it only affects the Network Affiliate variable.

Instruments, Coding Procedures, & Definitions of Crime and Race

A newscast analysis code sheet was developed by the independent researcher as an instrument to aid in recording data on any crimes and/or criminal suspects being broadcasted. Newscasts on each television station sampled were analyzed focusing on content of each crime story based on eight different categories (see Appendix B). Each of those eight variables was chosen by the independent researcher because they reveal key social characteristics about the composition of locally broadcasted crime stories. Note that a value code sheet was also developed by the independent researcher as an instrument to aid the researcher's extensive data entry process (see Appendix C). Coding procedures are as follows. The researcher's eight main variable categories are: Network Affiliate, Crime/Story Slug, Criminal/Suspect Race, Criminal/Suspect Sex, Criminal/Suspect Picture/Image Shown, Type of Image Shown, Criminal/Suspect Previous Conviction(s)/Arrest(s) Mentioned, and Number of Days Criminal/Suspect Race Aired. The Network Affiliate variable was assigned value codes representative of the particular news station's broadcast number, and was either coded as 3 to represent NBC, 8 representing CBS, or 13 representing ABC. The Crime/Story Slug variable was named

in accordance with the news stations' broadcasted slug while initially analyzing newscasts; then, the independent researcher assigned each slug a Crime Category coding value – numbered in succession from one through 12 – based on 12 main typically recurring categories of crimes that were repeatedly being observed:

- 1 = Murder-Homicide / Body Found
- 2 = OIS
- 3 = Robbery-Theft / Fraud
- 4 = DUI / Hit & Run or Car AX / Police Car Chase
- 5 = Assault-Battery (non-fatal)
- 6 = Abuse-Neglect (Child or Criminal)
- 7 = Arson-fire / Bomb Threat
- 8 = Non-Violent Miscellaneous / Strip Safety
- 9 = Home Invasion / Kidnapping (Missing Person) / Standoff
- 10 = Drugs-Narcotics / Firearms Raid
- 11 = Prostitution / Solicitation / Pandering-Human Trafficking
- 12 = Inmate Escape / Resisting Arrest / Fugitive.

The Criminal/Suspect Race variable was recorded by using corresponding letters representing the broadcasted race of the criminal/suspect where A = Asian, B = Black, H = Hispanic, W = White, and NI = Not Identified/Not Identifiable – meaning a criminal/suspect's race was either not broadcasted or was not identifiable by the independent researcher from the news story (such as in rare instances of criminal/suspect racial ambiguity). Additionally, the number of each different criminal's race was specified, when there was more than one racially identified criminal mentioned in a news

story. Likewise, the number of all suspects was also specified even when race was not identified. The Criminal/Suspect Sex variable was also recorded by using corresponding letters representing the broadcasted sex of the criminal/suspect, where M = Male, F = Female, and NI = Not Identified/Not Identifiable – meaning a criminal/suspect’s sex was either not broadcasted or was not identifiable by the independent researcher from the news story (such as in very rare instances of criminal/suspect gender ambiguity).

Additionally, each different criminal’s sex was specified by numerical amount, when there was more than one gender identified criminal mentioned in a news story. The Criminal/Suspect Picture/Image Shown binary variable is coded as Y = Yes, and N = No, pertaining to whether or not a criminal/suspect’s image was pictured (regardless of type) on air. Then, each “Y” or “N” binary variable response was subsequently assigned specific value codes during SPSS data entry for the purpose of data analysis. The Type of Image Shown variable indicates the form of image broadcasted – such as the criminal/suspect’s mug shot, video of the suspect, and/or a “still” picture – where MS = Mug Shot, V = Video, and S = Still Picture/Snapshot. During initial newscast analysis, the form and number of each image type was specified, when there was more than one. Then, during SPSS data entry specific value codes were assigned representing each type, and the various observed combinations of, the image types seen in the crime news stories:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 = Mug Shot | 5 = Mug Shot & Video |
| 2 = Video | 6 = Mug Shot & Still |
| 3 = Still Picture/Snapshot | 7 = Mug Shot, Video, & Still. |
| 4 = Still & Video | |

It is important to note that if an image was shown, it *might* also be considered as notable and/or noteworthy – meaning it distinctly caught the researcher’s attention (and likely news viewers’). Only a select number of images (418) were considered notable. Listed are the forms of observed Notable Images analyzed and coded during this broadcast news research:

- 1 = Excessive Frowning
- 2 = Smiling
- 3 = Speaking in Court (SOT)
- 4 = In Court, Cuffed, & in PG (Prison Gear)
- 5 = Perp-Walk & Cuffed
- 6 = In Court, In Regular (Casual) Clothes, but Cuffed
- 7 = In Court, In (Business) Suit, not Cuffed
- 8 = Surveillance (Video or Images)
- 9 = Field Arrest-Cuffed on Scene / Field Sobriety Test
- 10 = Generic File Image (At Job)
- 11 = Tattoo / Unique Distinguishable Features
- 12 = Court or Witness Sketch
- 13 = Holding Gun / Knife / Weapon
- 14 = Generic Court Video (No Cuffs Shown)
- 15 = In Jail
- 16 = Candid Pose.

The Criminal/Suspect Previous Conviction(s)/Arrest(s) Mentioned binary variable is coded as Y = Yes, and N = No, pertaining to whether or not any previous arrest and/or

conviction of a criminal/suspect was mentioned on air. Then, each “Y” or “N” binary variable response was subsequently assigned specific value codes during SPSS data entry for the purpose of data analysis. Finally, the Number of Days Criminal/Suspect Race Aired interval variable was observed and noted following each corresponding news story, then was exhaustively tallied across the entire six month sample following each repeated news story featuring a criminal/suspect’s race – either visually or verbally.

As part of the researcher’s main instrument of analysis, crime was defined as behavior or information either pertaining to the commission of a particular law-breaking act, or general social or legal reaction to law-breaking (T. L. Dixon et al., 2003). In addition, within the realm of this research, a criminal was defined as anyone accused of and/or associated with a crime – whether or not actual culpability or guilt had been legally determined. For that reason, the terms criminal and suspect are used interchangeably.

Roth (2010) states that race can be understood as a group of people seen as distinct because of common physical and/or biological characteristics that are believed to be inherent, even though the characteristics seen and used to define race are shaped by social conventions. As it relates to Roth’s observation, the independent researcher’s main instrument, and most news viewers’ typical perceptions of race – a criminal’s race was defined and categorized by the general phenotypes socially understood as relevant to racial classification. Additionally, for the purpose of this study the researcher, like Frank et al. (2010), “evaluate[d Hispanics’/]Latinos’ place in racial terms, as opposed to ethnic, because racial boundaries are understood to be more exclusionary than ethnic boundaries in the United States” (p. 379). Phenotypic information and social cues such as

individuals' names – for example Ramirez – were used as aids in classification of criminals/suspects as Hispanic.

Coding and Reliability

All crime story newscasts within the sample were coded independently by the researcher. The independent researcher's dissertation committee chair served as a supplemental coder, to establish inter-coder reliability. One newscast from each of the three network affiliates was viewed by both coders and discussed until agreement was reached regarding coding of the eight different crime story categories being analyzed. Then, the supplemental coder independently analyzed newscasts that the original researcher had already coded. The outside coder accounts for 10% of the total crime news stories coded by the original researcher. Inter-coder reliability was calculated at 100% after the supplemental coder's analyses were compared to the independent researcher's results.

Analysis

All statistical tests were conducted at the $p < .05$ significance level, by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 (IBM Corp., 2013) to analyze the final coded data. Data analyses included applicable statistical tests, frequencies, means, cross-tabulations with statistics appropriate for nominal-level data, and multiple logistic regression (Agresti, 2002; Pampel, 2000) for binary responses.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Findings of this research reveal some statistically significant differences in the amount and/or type of racialized criminal depictions within the categories tested in the content analysis of local news programming.

Statistical Analysis of Content Oriented Research Questions and Hypotheses

The dependent variables of the study included: Suspect Image Shown, Notable Image, mention of any Previous Arrest(s), and Days Race Aired. The primary independent variable used in this study is Race. Network and Crime category were the control variables. Note that when the dependent variable was Notable Image, Image Type was also included as one of the control variables.

The primary interest of the study was, for each of the dependent variables, to investigate if there was a relationship between the dependent variable and Race, after controlling for the control variables. Thus, there were four content oriented research questions in this study. The research questions and the associated null and alternative hypotheses are stated as follows:

Research question 1: Was there a relationship between Suspect Image Shown and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category?

H_{01} : There was no statistically significant relationship between Suspect Image Shown and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category.

H_{a1} : There was a statistically significant relationship between Suspect Image Shown and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category.

Research question 2: Was there a relationship between Notable Image and Race, after controlling for Type of Image, Network and Crime category?

H₀₂: There was no statistically significant relationship between Notable Image and Race, after controlling for Type of Image, Network and Crime category.

H_{a2}: There was a statistically significant relationship between Notable Image and Race, after controlling for Type of Image, Network and Crime category.

Research question 3: Was there a relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s) and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category?

H₀₃: There was no statistically significant relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s) and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category.

H_{a3}: There was a statistically significant relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s) and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category.

Research question 4: Was there a relationship between Days Race Aired and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category?

H₀₄: There was no statistically significant relationship between Days Race Aired and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category.

H_{a4}: There was a statistically significant relationship between Days Race Aired and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category.

For each of the four content oriented research questions, multiple logistic regression (Agresti, 2002; Pampel, 2000) for binary responses was used to investigate if there was a relationship between the dependent variable and Race, after controlling for Network and

Crime (and Image Type, when dependent variable was Notable Image). Wald chi-square test for type III analysis was used to determine if the effect of a predictor was statistically significant. *P* value less than 0.05 resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis. The coefficient of determination, the Nagelkerke R^2 (Nagelkerke, 1991) was used to determine the usefulness of the model in terms of the power of prediction (Menard, 2000). The range of Nagelkerke R^2 is between 0 and 1. The higher the Nagelkerke R^2 , the better the regression model in terms of the power of prediction. The odds ratio estimates and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals were presented. The strength of association between the dependent variable and the predictors can be measured by odds ratios. Note that if the confidence interval did not contain 1, then it implies the effect was significant.

Analysis Results and Interpretations

The total number of observation was 1,302. The study has observed the following variables: Network, Crime category, Race, Suspect Image Shown, Notable Image, Image Type, mention of Previous Arrest(s), and Days Race Aired.

Table 1 shows the frequency counts and percentages of network crime stories. Among the 1,302 observations, 402 (30.9%) were from NBC, 456 (35.0%) were from CBS, and 444 (34.1%) were from ABC.

Table 1

One-way Frequency Table of Network

Network Crime Stories	Frequency (%)
NBC	402 (30.9)
CBS	456 (35.0)
ABC	444 (34.1)

Table 2 shows the frequency counts and percentage of the observed crime categories. There were 11 missing values. Among the 1,291 observed values, the top three crime categories were: Murder-homicide / body found (26.2 %), Robbery-theft / fraud (18.9%), and Assault-battery (11.4%). These three types of crimes made up over 50% of the total crimes observed.

Table 2

One-way Frequency Table of Crime Category

Crime category	Frequency (%)
Murder-homicide / body found	338 (26.2)
OIS	75 (5.8)
Robbery-theft / fraud	244 (18.9)
DUI / hit & run or car AX / police car chase	127 (9.8)
Assault-battery	147 (11.4)
Abuse-neglect	60 (4.6)
Arson-fire / bomb threat	43 (3.3)
Non-violent-miscellaneous / strip safety	90 (7.0)
Home invasion-kidnapping (missing person)-standoff	38 (2.9)
Drugs-narcotics / firearms raid	117 (9.1)
Prostitution / solicitation / pandering-human trafficking	8 (0.6)
Inmate escape / resisting arrest / fugitive	4 (0.3)

Table 3 shows the frequency counts and percentage of the observed race, and all the crime stories with more than one suspect – in which each suspect is a different race. There were 591 missing values (including race Not Identified / Not Identifiable). Among the 711 observed values, the top three races were: White (44.2 %), Hispanic (24.1%), and Black (22.5%).

Table 3

One-way Frequency Table of Race

Race	Frequency (%)
Asian	27 (3.8)
Black	160 (22.5)
Black and Hispanic	2 (0.3)
Black and White	13 (1.8)
Black, White, and Asian	2 (0.3)
Black, White, and Hispanic	1 (0.1)
Hispanic	171 (24.1)
White	314 (44.2)
White and Asian	4 (0.6)
White and Hispanic	17 (2.4)

Table 4 shows the frequency counts and percentage of the suspect image shown. There were 11 missing values. Among the 1,291 observed values, it appeared that 694 (53.8%) have shown the image of the suspects and 597 (46.2%) did not.

Table 4

One-way Frequency Table of Suspect Image Shown

Suspect Image Shown	Frequency (%)
Yes	694 (53.8)
No	597 (46.2)

Table 5 shows the frequency counts and percentage of the type of images shown. There were 608 missing values. Among the 694 observed values, Mug shot (38.6%), Video (28.5%) and Still picture / snapshot (18.6%) have made up over 85% of the types of image shown.

Table 5

One-way Frequency Table of Type of Image

Type of Image	Frequency (%)
Mug shot	268 (38.6)
Video	198 (28.5)
Still picture / snapshot	129 (18.6)
Still picture / snapshot & video	39 (5.6)
Mug shot & video	45 (6.5)
Mug shot & still picture / snapshot	11 (1.6)
Mug shot, video & still picture / snapshot	4 (0.6)

Table 6 shows the frequency counts and percentage of the observed notable images. There were 884 missing values. Among the 418 observed values, it appeared that surveillance (26.1%), “In court, cuffed & in PG (Prison Gear)” (14.6%) and “In court, in suit, not cuffed” (12.9%) has made up over 50% of the notable images shown.

Table 6

One-way Frequency Table of Notable Image

Notable image	Frequency (%)
Excessive frowning	5 (1.2)
Smiling	53 (12.7)
Speaking in court	27 (6.5)
In court, cuffed & in PG	61 (14.6)
Perp-walk & cuffed	10 (2.4)
In court, in regular clothes, but cuffed	7 (1.7)
In court, in suit, not cuffed	54 (12.9)
Surveillance	109 (26.1)
Field arrest cuffed on scene / Field sobriety test	46 (11.0)
Generic file image (at job)	12 (2.9)
Tattoo / Unique distinguishable features	2 (0.5)
Court or witness sketch	16 (3.8)
Holding gun / knife / weapon	6 (1.4)
Generic court video (no cuffs shown)	1 (0.2)
In jail	1 (0.2)
Candid pose	8 (1.9)

Table 7 shows the frequency counts and percentage of mention of Previous Arrest(s). There were 11 missing values. Among the 1,291 observed values, it appeared that 121 (9.4%) crime stories have mentioned about any previous arrest of the suspects and 1,170 (90.6%) have not.

Table 7

One-way Frequency Table of Mention of Previous Arrest(s)

Mention of Previous Arrest(s)	Frequency (%)
Yes	121 (9.4)
No	1,170 (90.6)

Table 8 shows the frequency counts and percentage of Days Race Aired. There were 588 missing values. Among the 714 observed values, it appeared that 67% have been aired 1 day and 33% have been aired more than 1 day. The average number of Days Race Aired was 1.74 ($SD = 1.42$).

Table 8

One-way Frequency Table of Days Race Aired

Days Race Aired	Frequency (%)
1	476 (66.7)
2	119 (16.7)
3	48 (6.7)
4	27 (3.8)
5	18 (2.5)
6	12 (1.7)
7	7 (1.0)
8	3 (0.4)
9	2 (0.3)
10	2 (0.3)

Regrouping the variables.

For the purpose of data analysis, some categories of the variables with small sample size have been regrouped. The variables and categories used for data analysis are as follows:

- Network: NBC, CBS, and ABC.
- Crime category: Murder-homicide / body found, Robbery-theft / fraud, Assault-Battery (non-fatal), and other.
- Race: Black, Hispanic, White, and other. Note that “other” includes Asian and all crime stories with more than one suspect – in which each suspect is a different race.
- Suspect image shown: Yes and No.
- Image Type: Video, Still picture / snapshot, and other. Note that “other” includes all the mixed types of images and Mug shot.
- Notable Image: Surveillance and other, where other includes all the notable images that were not surveillance.
- Mention of Previous Arrest(s): Yes and no.
- Days Race Aired: 1 day vs. more than 1 day.

Analysis results of research question 1.

Research question 1 asked: Was there a relationship between Suspect Image Shown and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category? A logistic regression with

dependent variable, Suspect Image Shown (a 2-level variable: yes vs. no), and predictors, Race, Network, and Crime category, was fit to answer research question 1. The total sample size used for this analysis was 711. The Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.18$. Table 9 shows the results of the Wald χ^2 test for the logistic regression, and the results suggest that:

- There was a statistically significant relationship between Suspect Image Shown and Race ($\chi^2(3, N = 711) = 42.67, p = 0.000$).
- There was no statistically significant relationship between Suspect Image Shown and Network ($\chi^2(2, N = 711) = 0.54, p = 0.765$).
- There was no statistically significant relationship between Suspect Image Shown and Crime category ($\chi^2(3, N = 711) = 7.45, p = 0.059$).

Table 9

Results of the Wald χ^2 test

	Wald χ^2	DF	p
Race	42.67	3	0.000*
Network	0.54	2	0.765
Crime category	7.45	3	0.059

Note. Dependent variable = Suspect Image Shown, DF = degrees of freedom, $p = p$ value, * significance at the 0.05 level.

Based on the results of parameter estimation (Table 10), the fitted model could be written as:

$$\begin{aligned}
& \text{Logit}(P(\text{Suspect Image Shown} = \text{"No"})) \\
&= \log(P(\text{Suspect Image Shown} = \text{"No"})/(1-P(\text{Suspect Image Shown} = \text{"No"}))) \\
&= -3.17 + 1.95*\text{Race1} - 0.40*\text{Race2} + 0.21*\text{Race3} - 0.25*\text{Network1} - 0.02*\text{Network2} \\
&\quad + 0.66*\text{Crime category1} + 0.39*\text{Crime category2} - 0.45*\text{Crime category3}, \quad (1)
\end{aligned}$$

where, based on dummy coding,

- Race1 = 1 if race = Hispanic; Race1 = 0, otherwise.
- Race2 = 1 if race = White; Race2 = 0, otherwise.
- Race3 = 1 if race = "other"; Race3 = 0, otherwise.
- Network1 = 1 if network = CBS; Network1 = 0, otherwise.
- Network2 = 1 if network = ABC; Network1 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor1 = 1 if crime category = robbery-theft/fraud; Crime categor1 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor2 = 1 if crime category = assault-battery; Crime categor2 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor3 = 1 if crime category = other; Crime categor3 = 0, otherwise.

Thus, for Race, Black was the reference group; for Network, NBC was the reference group; for Crime category, Murder-homicide / body found was the reference group.

The odds ratio estimates are also presented in Table 10. Odds ratios can be used to determine the strength of the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Note that if the confidence interval of the odds ratios did not contain 1, then it

implies the effect was significant. As Race is the primary independent variable of interest, I illustrate only the odds ratios for Race.

- For “Race1”, the odds ratio was 7.04, indicating that the odds of not having suspect image shown (Suspect Image Shown = “No”) for Hispanic was 7.04 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (2.95, 16.82), indicating that the odds ratio was statistically significantly different from 1. Thus, I concluded that it was more likely not having suspect image shown for Hispanic, compared to Black.
- For “Race2”, the odds ratio was 0.67, indicating that the odds of not having suspect image shown (Suspect Image Shown = “No”) for White was 0.67 times less likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.24, 1.86), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.
- For “Race3”, the odds ratio was 1.23, indicating that the odds of not having suspect image shown (Suspect Image Shown = “No”) for Asian and all crime stories with more than one suspect – in which each suspect is a different race, was 1.23 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.30, 5.00), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.

Table 10

Parameter Estimates and Odds Ratio

	B (SE)	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp (B)
Intercept	-3.17 (0.49)		
Race1	1.95 (0.44)	7.04	(2.95, 16.82)
Race2	-0.40 (0.52)	0.67	(0.24, 1.86)
Race3	0.21 (0.72)	1.23	(0.30, 5.00)
Network1	-0.25 (0.36)	0.78	(0.38, 1.60)
Network2	-0.02 (0.36)	0.98	(0.49, 1.97)
Crime category1	0.66 (0.40)	1.93	(0.88, 4.23)
Crime category2	0.39 (0.53)	1.48	(0.52, 4.21)
Crime category3	-0.45 (0.38)	0.64	(0.30, 1.35)

Note. Dependent variable = Suspect Image Shown, Exp(B) = odds ratio.

Analysis results of research question 2.

Research question 2 asked: Was there a relationship between Notable Image and Race, after controlling for Type of Image, Network and Crime category? A logistic regression with dependent variable, Notable Image (a 2-level variable: Surveillance and other), and predictors, Race, Type of Image, Network, and Crime category, was fit to answer research question 2. The total sample size used for this analysis was 381. The Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.51$. Table 11 shows the results of the Wald χ^2 test for the logistic regression, and the results suggest that:

- There was no statistically significant relationship between Notable Image and Race ($\chi^2(3, N = 381) = 1.10, p = 0.778$).

- There was no statistically significant relationship between Notable Image and Network ($\chi^2(2, N = 381) = 0.30, p = 0.863$).
- There was a statistically significant relationship between Notable Image and Crime category ($\chi^2(3, N = 381) = 60.84, p = 0.000$).
- There was a statistically significant relationship between Notable Image and Image Type ($\chi^2(2, N = 381) = 14.86, p = 0.001$).

Table 11

Results of the Wald χ^2 test including Image Type

	Wald χ^2	DF	<i>p</i>
Race	1.10	3	0.778
Network	0.30	2	0.863
Crime category	60.84	3	0.000*
Image Type	14.86	2	0.001

Note. Dependent variable = Notable Image, DF = degrees of freedom, *p* = *p* value, * significance at the 0.05 level.

Based on the results of parameter estimation (Table 12), the fitted model could be written as:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Logit}(P(\text{Notable Image} = \text{“Surveillance”})) \\
 &= \log(P(\text{Notable Image} = \text{“Surveillance”}) / (1 - P(\text{Notable Image} = \text{“Surveillance”}))) \\
 &= -2.96 + 0.09 * \text{Race1} - 0.23 * \text{Race2} + 0.35 * \text{Race3} - 0.22 * \text{Network1} - 0.09 * \text{Network2} \\
 &\quad + 2.67 * \text{Crime category1} + 1.71 * \text{Crime category2} - 1.73 * \text{Crime category3} \\
 &\quad + 1.65 * \text{Image Type1} + 0.86 * \text{Image type2}, \tag{2}
 \end{aligned}$$

where, based on dummy coding,

- Race1 = 1 if race = Hispanic; Race1 = 0, otherwise.
- Race2 = 1 if race = White; Race2 = 0, otherwise.
- Race3 = 1 if race = “other”; Race3 = 0, otherwise.
- Network1 = 1 if network = CBS; Network1 = 0, otherwise.
- Network2 = 1 if network = ABC; Network1 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor1 = 1 if crime category = robbery-theft/fraud; Crime categor1 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor2 = 1 if crime category = assault-battery; Crime categor2 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor3 = 1 if crime category = other; Crime categor3 = 0, otherwise.
- Image type1 = 1 if image type = still picture / snapshot; image type1 = 0, otherwise.
- Image type2 = 1 if image type = other; image type2 = 0, otherwise.

Thus, for Race, Black was the reference group; for Network, NBC was the reference group; for Crime category, Murder-homicide / body found was the reference group; for Image Type, Video was the reference group.

The odds ratio estimates are also presented in Table 12. Odds ratios can be used to determine the strength of the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Note that if the confidence interval of the odds ratios did not contain 1, then it implies the effect was significant. As Race is the primary independent variable of interest, I illustrate only the odds ratios for Race.

- For “Race1”, the odds ratio was 1.10, indicating that the odds of having Notable Image = Surveillance for Hispanic was 1.10 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.36, 3.40), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.
- For “Race2”, the odds ratio was 0.79, indicating that the odds of having Notable Image = Surveillance for White was 0.79 times less likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.34, 1.85), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.
- For “Race3”, the odds ratio was 1.42, indicating that the odds of having Notable Image = Surveillance for Asian and all crime stories with more than one suspect – in which each suspect is a different race, was 1.42 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.36, 5.52), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.

Table 12

Parameter Estimates and Odds Ratio with Notable Image

	B (SE)	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp (B)
Intercept	-2.96 (0.62)		
Race1	0.09 (0.58)	1.10	(0.36, 3.40)
Race2	-0.23 (0.43)	0.79	(0.34, 1.85)
Race3	0.35 (0.69)	1.42	(0.36, 5.52)
Network1	-0.22 (0.40)	0.81	(0.37, 1.76)
Network2	-0.09 (0.42)	0.81	(0.40, 2.07)
Crime category1	2.67 (0.50)	14.48	(5.40, 38.85)
Crime category2	1.71 (0.54)	5.51	(1.93, 15.74)
Crime category3	-1.73 (0.73)	0.18	(0.04, 7.33)
Image type1	1.65 (0.43)	5.21	(2.25, 12.07)
Image type2	0.86 (0.42)	2.37	(1.03, 5.43)

Note. Dependent variable = Notable Image, Exp(B) = odds ratio.

Analysis results of research question 3.

Research question 3 asked: Was there a relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s) and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category? A logistic regression with dependent variable, mention of Previous Arrest(s) (a 2-level variable: yes vs. no), and predictors, Race, Network, and Crime category, was fit to answer research question 3. The total sample size used for this analysis was 711. The Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.03$. Table 13 shows the results of the Wald χ^2 test for the logistic regression, and the results suggest that:

- There was no statistically significant relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s) and Race ($\chi^2(3, N = 711) = 3.57, p = 0.312$).
- There was no statistically significant relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s) and Network ($\chi^2(2, N = 711) = 0.54, p = 0.762$).
- There was a statistically significant relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s) and Crime category ($\chi^2(3, N = 711) = 8.27, p = 0.041$).

Table 13

Results of the Wald χ^2 test with Mention of Previous Arrest(s)

	Wald χ^2	DF	<i>p</i>
Race	3.57	3	0.312
Network	0.54	2	0.762
Crime category	8.27	3	0.041*

Note. Dependent variable = mention of Previous Arrest(s), DF = degrees of freedom, *p* = *p* value, * significance at the 0.05 level.

Based on the results of parameter estimation (Table 14), the fitted model could be written as:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Logit}(P(\text{mention of Previous Arrest} = \text{“No”})) \\
 &= \log(P(\text{mention of Previous Arrest} = \text{“No”})/(1-P(\text{mention of Previous Arrest} = \text{“No”}))) \\
 &= 1.40 - 0.10*\text{Race1} + 0.37*\text{Race2} + 0.44*\text{Race3} + 0.14*\text{Network1} + 0.19*\text{Network2} \\
 &+ 0.17*\text{Crime category1} - 0.39*\text{Crime category2} + 0.50*\text{Crime category3}, \quad (3)
 \end{aligned}$$

where, based on dummy coding,

- Race1 = 1 if race = Hispanic; Race1 = 0, otherwise.
- Race2 = 1 if race = White; Race2 = 0, otherwise.
- Race3 = 1 if race = “other”; Race3 = 0, otherwise.
- Network1 = 1 if network = CBS; Network1 = 0, otherwise.
- Network2 = 1 if network = ABC; Network1 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor1 = 1 if Crime category = Robbery-theft/fraud; Crime categor1 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor2 = 1 if Crime category = Assault-battery; Crime categor2 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor3 = 1 if Crime category = other; Crime categor3 = 0, otherwise.

Thus, for Race, Black was the reference group; for Network, NBC was the reference group; for Crime category, Murder-homicide / body found was the reference group.

The odds ratio estimates are also presented in Table 14. Odds ratios can be used to determine the strength of the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Note that if the confidence interval of the odds ratios did not contain 1, then it implies the effect was significant. As Race is the primary independent variable of interest, I illustrate only the odds ratios for Race.

- For “Race1”, the odds ratio was 0.90, indicating that the odds of not mentioning previous arrest (mention of Previous Arrest = “No”) for Hispanic was 0.90 times less likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.50, 1.63), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.

- For “Race2”, the odds ratio was 1.45, indicating that the odds of not mentioning previous arrest (mention of Previous Arrest = “No”) for White was 1.45 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.83, 2.52), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.
- For “Race3”, the odds ratio was 1.55, indicating that the odds of not mentioning previous arrest (mention of Previous Arrest = “No”) for Asian and all crime stories with more than one suspect – in which each suspect is a different race, was 1.55 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.63, 3.82), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.

Table 14

Parameter Estimates and Odds Ratio with Mention of Previous Arrest(s)

	B (SE)	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp (B)
Intercept	1.40 (0.30)		
Race1	-0.10 (0.30)	0.90	(0.50, 1.63)
Race2	0.37 (0.28)	1.45	(0.83, 2.52)
Race3	0.44 (0.46)	1.55	(0.63, 3.82)
Network1	0.14 (0.26)	1.15	(0.69, 1.91)
Network2	0.19 (0.27)	1.21	(0.71, 2.05)
Crime category1	0.17 (0.33)	1.19	(0.63, 2.25)
Crime category2	-0.39 (0.33)	0.68	(0.35, 1.30)
Crime category3	0.50 (0.29)	1.66	(0.94, 2.92)

Note. Dependent variable = mention of Previous Arrest(s), Exp(B) = odds ratio.

Analysis results of research question 4.

Research question 4 asked: Was there a relationship between Days Race Aired and Race, after controlling for Network and Crime category? A logistic regression with dependent variable, Days Race Aired (a 2-level variable: 1 day vs. more than 1 day), and predictors, Race, Network, and Crime category, was fit to answer research question 4. The total sample size used for this analysis was 710. The Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.06$. Table 15 shows the results of the Wald χ^2 test for the logistic regression, and the results suggest that:

- There was no statistically significant relationship between Days Race Aired and Race ($\chi^2(3, N = 710) = 2.06, p = 0.561$).

- There was no statistically significant relationship between Days Race Aired and Network ($\chi^2(2, N = 710) = 2.01, p = 0.367$).
- There was a statistically significant relationship between Days Race Aired and Crime category ($\chi^2(3, N = 710) = 25.63, p = 0.000$).

Table 15

Results of the fourth Wald χ^2 test

	Wald χ^2	DF	<i>p</i>
Race	2.06	3	0.561
Network	2.01	2	0.367
Crime category	25.63	3	0.000*

Note. Dependent variable = Days Race Aired, DF = degrees of freedom, *p* = *p* value, * significance at the 0.05 level.

Based on the results of parameter estimation (Table 16), the fitted model could be written as:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Logit}(P(\text{days race aired} = \text{“more than 1 day”})) \\
 &= \log(P(\text{days race aired} = \text{“more than 1 day”}) / (1 - P(\text{days race aired} = \text{“more than 1 day”}))) \\
 &= -0.61 + 0.24 * \text{Race1} + 0.31 * \text{Race2} + 0.27 * \text{Race3} + 0.17 * \text{Network1} + 0.29 * \text{Network2} \\
 &\quad - 1.38 * \text{Crime category1} - 0.22 * \text{Crime category2} - 0.46 * \text{Crime category3}, \quad (4)
 \end{aligned}$$

where, based on dummy coding,

- Race1 = 1 if race = Hispanic; Race1 = 0, otherwise.
- Race2 = 1 if race = White; Race2 = 0, otherwise.
- Race3 = 1 if race = “other”; Race3 = 0, otherwise.
- Network1 = 1 if network = CBS; Network1 = 0, otherwise.
- Network2 = 1 if network = ABC; Network1 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor1 = 1 if crime category = Robbery-theft/fraud; Crime categor1 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor2 = 1 if crime category = Assault-battery; Crime categor2 = 0, otherwise.
- Crime categor3 = 1 if crime category = other; Crime categor3 = 0, otherwise.

Thus, for Race, Black was the reference group; for Network, NBC was the reference group; for Crime category, Murder-homicide / body found was the reference group.

The odds ratio estimates are also presented in Table 16. Odds ratios can be used to determine the strength of the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Note that if the confidence interval of the odds ratios did not contain 1, then it implies the effect was significant. As Race is the primary independent variable of interest, I illustrate only the odds ratios for Race.

- For “Race1”, the odds ratio was 1.27, indicating that the odds of Days Race Aired = “more than 1 day” for Hispanic was 1.27 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.79, 2.05), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.

- For “Race2”, the odds ratio was 1.37, indicating that the odds of Days Race Aired = “more than 1 day” for White was 1.37 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.88, 2.11), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.
- For “Race3”, the odds ratio was 1.30, indicating that the odds of Days Race Aired = “more than 1 day” for Asian and all crime stories with more than one suspect – in which each suspect is a different race, was 1.30 times more likely than for Black. The 95% Wald confidence interval was (0.69, 2.45), indicating that the odds ratio was not statistically significantly different from 1.

Table 16

Fourth Parameter Estimates and Odds Ratio

	B (SE)	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp (B)
Intercept	-0.61 (0.24)		
Race1	0.24 (0.24)	1.27	(0.79, 2.05)
Race2	0.31 (0.22)	1.37	(0.88, 2.11)
Race3	0.27 (0.32)	1.30	(0.69, 2.45)
Network1	0.17 (0.20)	1.19	(0.81, 1.76)
Network2	0.29 (0.20)	1.33	(0.89, 1.98)
Crime category1	-1.38 (0.28)	0.25	(0.15, 0.44)
Crime category2	-0.22 (0.27)	0.81	(0.48, 1.36)
Crime category3	-0.46 (0.21)	0.63	(0.42, 0.94)

Note. Dependent variable = Days Race Aired, Exp(B) = odds ratio.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The sociological impact of race and crime portrayals featured on local news can be a significant force in influencing perceptions regarding race and ethnicity in local communities (across America) because of its dominance as a news source (Media Insight Project, 2014). Poindexter et al. (2003) purport that by examining coverage of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians on local television news it may be possible to identify how this dominant news source may be influencing how minorities are perceived, and the implication of those perceptions.

Prior to Poindexter et al.'s (2003) key research, Hutchinson (1997) also explored how the media, in general, typically depicts African Americans, and included among several key research points that:

1. There have been negative portrayals of ethnic minorities by non-minorities [especially within news media].
2. These negative portrayals have been internalized by ethnic minorities and non-minorities, and are perceived as true or correct representations.
3. Such negative portrayals are usually myth or the product of historical racism.
4. There may be sociopolitical, economic, and academic motivations for negative portrayals of ethnic minorities.
5. Negative portrayals affect race relations.
6. Negative cultural portrayals influence the [White] in-group perception of racial/ethnic identity among African Americans. (p. 2)

Further narrowing the scope of such research, Dates and Barlow (1990) address framing in news media through a Black and White lens – with the researchers noting what they call a “split image” in the discrepancy between the way Blacks and Whites are depicted on television news. The researchers analyzed newscasts in a dozen major U.S. cities and found evidence of a split image system – where Whites were framed one way, and other racial and ethnic groups were typically framed in a biased manner.

As part of the news media framing effects paradigm, Dixon and Azocar (2007) dedicate their research to understanding the psychological impact of the overrepresentation of African Americans as lawbreakers on television news, since Whites and other members of news audiences rarely get to see African Americans portrayed on the news as lawful, contributing members of society. In fact, due to such conflation of race and crime in news media, Dixon and Azocar, and Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) – two main studies of a scant few that have directly tested whether exposure to unidentified criminals shapes race and crime perceptions – found that even when no picture is shown, exposure to “unidentified” criminals in the news elicits psychological and social responses that are similar to exposure to African American suspects.

Summary: Empirical Research Framework

Wilson et al. (2003) expound upon Hutchinson’s (1997) observations by positing that news about people of color and/or racial and ethnic minorities in White mainstream news media has been characterized by five developmental phases and patterns of reporting that have been experienced by all minority groups:

- (1) The exclusionary phase,
- (2) The threatening issue phase,

- (3) The confrontation phase,
- (4) The stereotypical news selection phase, and
- (5) The multiracial coverage phase.

These ways of treating non-White groups in news reports are not mutually exclusive and each is evident in contemporary journalism depending on which [minority] group and topical issue is being addressed at a given time. In fact, the first four patterns have been so uniformly practiced by news media as to have become virtually established as covert policy. (p. 116-117)

During this research, the threatening issue phase – in which television and other forms of news media play a pivotal role in perpetuating racist ideals to the viewing public by routinely portraying minorities as threats and reinforcing racial ignorance, group hatred, and discriminatory government policies (Gonzalez and Torres, 2011), and the confrontation phase – a multifaceted phase in which news media and its ratings thrive because it involves broadcasting legislative action against, and the often violent responses to, racial and ethnic minorities (Smith, 1994), both emerged as currently the most frequently observed phases/forms of news reporting involving minorities, especially African Americans. During the confrontation phase discussion of this work, this independent researcher solely conceptualized and launched use of two micro-aggression concept terms: “police confrontations” – defined by this independent researcher as targeting specific individuals with excessive verbal or physical aggression and/or extreme, often fatal, force; and “citizen confrontations” – defined and identified by this independent researcher as recently typically being individual White-on-Black physical or verbal attacks against minority individuals. Each of those two types of confrontations,

and all such occurrences, are usually top story news features such as news reports on now infamous police confrontations involving: the sodomizing of Abner Louima; the beating of Rodney King; and the fatal shootings of Amadaou Diallo, Sean Bell, Oscar Grant, Stanley Gibson (locally), D'Andre Berghardt, Jr. (locally), and Michael Brown; and, the swarming, tackling, and fatal choking of Eric Garner that was captured on video and broadcast nationwide as a shockingly undeniable example of a typical police confrontation – because each African American man killed during those police confrontations was unarmed.

Additionally, examples of recent citizen confrontations outlined in this research that have recently made top news story headlines include fatal physical attacks such as those against: Trayvon Martin following that unarmed teen being pursued, attacked, and shot to death simply for walking in a gated community; and, Jordan Davis following that unarmed teen being shot and killed reportedly over “loud music”. Though there is no excuse for callously taking the lives of young Black men in such manners, Lane and Meeker (2003) examined the indirect victimization thesis – a theoretical approach to explaining the discrepancy between actual risk and fear of a perceived threat – and found that “focusing on the television as the most important source of crime information increases perceived risk and therefore fear” (p. 19) of a particular “threat”. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance to note that feeling threatened socially, is not the same as *being* threatened physically. In addition to often fatal physical citizen confrontations apparently due to such perceived threats, examples and instances of verbal citizen confrontations discussed within this work include: embattled Nevada cattle rancher, Cliven Bundy, “[telling] reporters near his ranch 80 miles from Las Vegas that he wonders whether

Black people are better off now or when they were slaves in the South” (Rindels, 2014, para. 2) picking cotton; and, former Los Angeles Clippers basketball team owner, Donald Sterling, being caught on tape spouting anti-Black, hateful, exclusionary speech (Shoichet & Almasy, 2014). Arguably, both Bundy and Sterling’s comments, and the subsequent seemingly hegemonic repetitive airings of them on local and national television news (and other forms of mass media) seemed to reaffirm – by widely broadcasting – some people’s inaccurate notions that welfare assistance benefits mostly Blacks and Hispanics; and, reaffirm fear of a crime wave that many falsely believe has a distinct color. In lieu of that notion, macro-aggressions typically aimed mostly at Blacks and Hispanics in general (rather than usually at specific individuals as with micro-aggressions) are also addressed, including: racial profiling, the War on Drugs, and immigration raids. This study’s examination of each of those three forms of mass affronts helps explain why Blacks and Hispanics have such disproportionately high arrest rates, and are typically disproportionately depicted as criminals on television news.

Summary: Media-Image Affect on Viewers

For decades, social science and communication scholars have contended that exposure to mass media imagery may have an impact on viewers’ construction of social reality (Fujioka, 1999; Gerbner, 1990; Gerbner, Gross, Eleey, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1977). Fujioka’s research explores “Cultivation Theory” and “Social Cognitive Theory”. According to Fujioka, Cultivation Theory posits that television’s messages are cumulatively internalized by viewers as a result of massive exposure to its uniform messages. Therefore, as outlined within Cultivation Theory, television portrayals are more likely to be accepted as valid and real by viewers when television is

watched frequently. Cultivation Theory is also concerned with long-term influences of television exposure on broad-based conceptions of reality. Social Cognitive Theory stresses the importance of viewers' cognitive activities when consuming television messages. Fujioka states Social Cognitive Theory assumes that vicarious learning via television takes place through a series of cognitive processes including attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation. Social Cognitive Theory suggests that one's ability to evaluate and interpret television messages affects any potential consequences of television viewing.

Another key media research work includes Parenti (1992) exploring media images and demonstrating that television programs – including the news – and other forms of mass media promote social images and ideologies that support: racism, authoritarian violence, militarism, imperialism, vigilantism, sexism, capitalism, and anti-working class attitudes. Among a vast list of observations, Parenti argues that mass media specifically and consistently force-feeds us the following images and ideologies:

- * All Americans are equal, but some (the underprivileged) must prove themselves worthy of equality.
- * Women and ethnic minorities are not really as capable, effective, or interesting as White males.
- * Affluent professionals are more interesting than blue-collar or ordinary service workers.
- * The police and everyone else should be given a freer hand in combating the large criminal element in the United States, using generous applications of force and violence without too much attention to constitutional rights.

* The ills of society are caused by individual malefactors and not by anything in the socioeconomic system.

* There are some unworthy people in our established institutions, but they usually are dealt with and eventually deprived of their positions of responsibility. (p. 2-3)

Moreover, according to Dixon (2006), “social cognition” research finds that television news exposure to out-group members (minorities) activates ideals such as Parenti’s (1992) aforementioned group-based stereotypes – which are greatly informative about the extent to which media portrayals themselves contribute to stereotyping. Dixon states that social cognition theory indicates that categorizing individuals as part of a stigmatized social group – such as minorities – leads to the activation of constructs that implicitly link minority group members with various stereotypical traits. Dixon’s 2006 research also states the priming paradigm is often used to suggest that people may make judgments about race-related social issues based upon their racial perceptions; and, priming research typically utilizes theories such as cognitive accessibility, (as related to stereotypes) informed by the social cognition and priming perspectives – which suggests that people use shortcuts in order to make social judgments. According to priming theory, the activation of a stereotype increases the likelihood that the social “knowledge” will be used in subsequent judgments; and, priming describes how these schemas or cognitive structures influence the interpretation news information. In Dixon’s 2006 study, stereotype endorsement’s moderating effect is applied “in order to better understand whether prior news viewing is part of an independent stereotype activation or application process” (p. 167). In that research, Dixon assessed news viewing and stereotype endorsement simultaneously in order to test whether news viewing independently

contributes to racial stereotyping. Findings of that 2006 research reveal, African American stereotype endorsement is positively related to perceiving the world as a dangerous place; and, for those exposed to a majority of Black suspects, news viewing is positively associated with viewing the world as a dangerous place.

Dixon's 2007 research offers detailed cognitive explanations of how news viewers' information processing processes can beget stereotype endorsement. Within this follow-up research Dixon discusses the "cultivation effect" hypothesis versus the notion of chronic activation and states:

The general notion of cultivation can be applied to issues of stereotyping, crime news, and beliefs about racial groups. However, earlier work on cultivation received criticism for not specifying the underlying mechanisms related to cultivation outcomes. More recently, media effects scholars and psychologists have used theories of stereotyping, especially chronic activation and accessibility, to assess the underlying mechanisms that may facilitate the cultivation effect....

Direct attention to some stimuli and away from others, influence categorization of information, help us "fill-in" missing information, and influence memory.... Media effects scholars have contended that stereotypes are more likely to be used if they have either recently or frequently been activated. (p. 271-272)

Thus, according to Dixon, the recency effects theory associated with the Black criminality construct posits that each Black criminal featured in recently viewed news stories can activate the stereotypical constructs linking Blacks with law-breaking.

According to Dixon's 2008 research, "television news might be especially potent because audience members might be more likely to trust the veracity of the news over

entertainment” (p. 107). Perhaps this is also largely due in part to media framing effects; because, Smith (1994) says media framing as part of a news frame is:

A theme or story line that organizes the facts in a news report and gives them meaning. A journalist might refer to a frame as the story angle, news peg or hook which is determined by the facts deemed most important. For news events, such as an ongoing crisis like the [Rodney King riot] that occurred in Los Angeles, many themes will unfold as more facts are known. Framing is particularly crucial in television news where mountains of facts and visuals are condensed into narratives to tell a story in two minutes or less....

Frames are conveyed by the reporter in his/her script as well as by the anchor in story lead-ins and closings. Frames also are conveyed by the people interviewed for the story, or soundbites, and the visuals used to illustrate the story. For example, although poverty is rarely an explicit topic of television news, it is quite often conveyed visually in scenes showing run-down and/or abandoned buildings with boarded-up windows. (p. 2)

Such news imagery of poverty is typically framed in Black ghettos and/or Hispanic barrios – with at least one purposeful framing shot/image of the type of racial and/or ethnic minorities living in that often low-income, run-down, presumably crime-ridden area. Within his 1993 research on the topic, Entman says “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52).

In sum, according to the researcher's prior work (Dixon & Linz, 2000), many Blacks are presumed to be poor and are thusly linked with criminality more often than Whites in news programming; therefore, heavy television news viewing should increase exposure to the overrepresentation of African Americans as criminals, and theoretically each instance of exposure to a Black rather than a White criminal can activate the stereotype of Black criminality – thereby strengthening the cognitive association between African Americans and crime.

Summary: Biases within Reporting Information

The news media's famed obsession with "balance" is ironically a powerful support for biased reporting (Edwards & Cromwell, 2009). Edwards and Cromwell state:

The great blockbuster myth of modern journalism is objectivity, the idea that a good newspaper or broadcaster simply collects and reproduces the objective truth.

It is a classic...tale, widely believed and devoid of reality. It has never happened and never will happen because it cannot happen. Reality exists objectively, but any attempt to record the truth about it always...involves selection. (p. 3)

Moreover, Perkins and Starosta (2001) analyze selection and story form as a news value, making key observations – "News values may incorporate journalistic biases that then insinuate themselves into the final news story...[; and,] form as a journalistic bias serves to promote detrimental 'rhetorical visions' about the minority community" (p. 73).

Considering journalistic form as a catalyst shaping bias in representations of minorities in news media, Perkins and Starosta offer a critical questioning "model" that displays how the repetition of the form of a news story can focus the perspective of reporting toward one social group, and against another. The researchers' multi-question model includes

important queries such as: Who is / is not quoted?; Whose ideas are supported (reinforced) / questioned?; and, Which details are included or excluded? Perkins and Starosta then importantly ask – What happens to audiences subjected to biased news narratives? Perhaps Weston (1996) best answers that question regarding news “form” in *all* forms – including television news – by stating that through habits of language and through repeated news form routines, reporters “teach” audiences about, and how to socially view, particular minority groups from a top-down majority-White perspective; and, this teaching and “learning” centers on “the way the stories are organized and written, [and] the phrases used in headlines” (p. 163).

In addition to such overt bias, news media critics also express concern about the proliferation of producer and reporter bias in tabloid news production practices. According to Grabe et al. (2000), news media critics point out that many local television stations have adopted tabloid news magazine reporting techniques for newscasts. The researchers say media critics have dubbed the sensational news practice “infotainment” – in which production style overpowers reporting substantive information. According to Sotirovic (2001), “Documenting the effect of infotainment is particularly important when the traditional news media also stand accused of yielding to commercial pressures that value violence, sex, and gossip above meaningful and useful information” (p. 17).

As an outlying effect of the infotainment style, Kunelius (2006) discusses framing as a general problem in reporting information when preconceived notions and/or biases might be employed by journalists. According to Kunelius’ research:

There is [often in journalism] this particular storyline and a strong need to stick to it.

For the interviewees (i.e. for people who often provide the substance of which our public debates are made of) the practical terms of newsmaking seemed sometimes rather frustrating. From their point of view, there seemed to be a readymade frame for the forthcoming story they were involved in, and the frame pre-existed the interaction with the reporter. They felt they were put into a position where they were largely expected to supply the necessary comments or play the role the storyline was in need of. Respondents also felt...that journalism too easily used applied conflict frames and that journalists looked for those actors who were willing to present extreme views on a given issue. (p. 677)

It is important to further note that “conflict” and/or “confrontations” keep arising as a dominant reporting thematic frame within news media. Perhaps this is because many journalists are thought to hold clichéd “us versus them” social conceptions either due to their own inherent world views – as discussed by Fujioka (1999) – or due to hegemonic coercion and/or norms established in the field of journalism. Kunelius also observes while conducting research, “Journalists think that the police want more hard-core action...[and] that social security sector people [(government assisted/minorities)] are ineffective and hostile to ordinary [(mainstream/White)] people...” (p. 677). That notion is directly connected to economic and socio-economic biases which also play a dominant role in news presentations. Wilson et al. (2003) declare that news media’s obsession with increasing revenue is a major factor in news media’s decision to yield to commercial pressures – as evidenced by markedly increased sensational tabloid journalism practices during Sweeps; because, more controversy and violence typically equals more consistent viewership! The researchers point out that news media’s focus on ratings and revenue,

rather than relevant and objective reporting, has created an inherent bias in general reporting practices:

A major barrier to more racially comprehensive news coverage in the media has been preoccupation with the profit incentive, as “marketing” of the news has led to, among other questionable practices, an increased emphasis on information targeted to high economic profile audiences. (p. 125)

As previously mentioned by Parenti (1992) as a forced theme within mass media, more affluent professionals – a great majority of whom are White – are also presented in news media as being more interesting, and more deserving of truly representative and objective coverage.

Implicit bias and unconscious bias must also be examined when analyzing news presentations – especially those depicting criminal suspects. Mays et al. (2013) formally explain theories of “implicit bias” and “unconscious bias” as biases relate to news media reporting practices and viewing audiences:

Theories of implicit or unconscious bias contend that individuals use information derived from experience, media, culture or others to organize people into social categories according to salient traits, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity or social roles in society. Such descriptions as “a large Black man” carry [social] meaning shaped by feelings, expectations of behaviors and schemas also influenced by experience with these social categories, the media, culture or information from others that influences how people respond. Studies of implicit bias find that stereotypes often guide the way people respond to certain descriptions or traits. For instance, people are shaped to view the “little old lady” as frail and non-threatening while “a large Black man” may

invoke a response of fear and anger. (p. 14)

Moreover, Tamborini et al. (2000) also address the issue of biased crime reporting practices – specifically discussing concerns regarding criminal depictions and presenting Blacks as a criminal justice “threat.” The researchers state:

In a sample of national news portraying alleged criminals from 1985 to 1989, African American characters appeared more frequently than Whites as criminal suspects and were more likely to be depicted as physically threatening. It has been suggested that these news portrayals may encourage racial/ethnic hostility, fear of African Americans, and the proliferation of racial/ethnic stereotypes. (p. 643)

During their analysis of criminal depictions on local news in major metropolitan areas and on national news, Tamborini et al. cited alarmingly disproportional rates:

In New Orleans...African Americans accounted for...more than 80 percent of robbery suspects shown on local television newscasts. In Chicago, almost half of all news stories broadcast on local television news featured African Americans involved in violent crime. Furthermore, research has shown that 77 percent of crime stories reported on network news were related to African American suspects, compared to only 42 percent of stories featuring Caucasian criminal suspects. (p. 643)

In addition to their previously addressed work on split image television news presentations of Blacks and Whites, Dates and Barlow (1990) also discovered that news stories on race and discrimination were virtually non-existent. Thirteen years later, Poindexter et al. (2003) reported similar findings about a lack of news stories regarding racial and ethnic discrimination. In relation to that problem, Poindexter et al. found “there were fewer opportunities for African Americans to be a source for the news when

a story contained only one source. For Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, there were few or no chances to be a news source” (p. 533). This, evidently due in large part to hegemony and Anglo-American bias being seemingly inherent in most forms of news media practices. Elements of both institutional racism and systemic discrimination against minorities in general, are reflected in news media biases in reporting information (Kerner Commission, 1968; Martinot, 2010; Mays et al., 2013; Poindexter et al., 2003; Romer et al., 1998). This has been evident ever since the Kerner Commission report (1968) criticized the news media for notably reporting from a biased, Anglo-only, perspective and failing to report the history, culture, and activities of Blacks in American society. Unfortunately, since that 1968 study, there has been little significant change in news media coverage of racial and ethnic minorities (Mays et al., 2013; Poindexter et al., 2003).

Summary: Gatekeeping

Researchers have labeled those involved in the news selection process the “gatekeepers” of information because they are in a key position either to let information pass through the system, or stop its progress (Wilson et al., 2003). News coverage of racial and ethnic minorities has been, and largely remains, a reflection of the attitudes held by both newsroom gatekeepers, and the owners and controllers of the media corporations who influence them. Stossel (1997) points out that by 1986 ABC, CBS, and NBC controlled 70 percent of the television market:

A media monopoly has consolidated the diversity of human experience into a few basic formulas. A concentrated marketplace puts distinct limits on the range of views represented. The people have no say in what gets broadcast. This...is plainly

undemocratic. But we have become so accustomed to the dominance of a market-driven, advertiser-sponsored media system that we don't realize it doesn't have to be this way. (p. 98)

Even with the current advent of cable and various forms of online entertainment and news options, a media monopoly still exists, and is ever apparent in television news media – with only 19 companies controlling several hundred television news stations nationwide (Butler, 2012).

According to Butler (2012), the 2012 NABJ diversity in television newsroom management report lists television newsroom gatekeepers as people with the title of: general manager, news director, assistant news director, managing editor, assignment manager, executive producer, and web director/web manager. They are the people who set the daily news agenda and make coverage and personnel decisions. Those individuals performing the “gatekeeping” – filtering out information and/or news stories altogether – function of their journalistic duties results in what some scholars have referred to as “agenda setting” for society (Wilson et al., 2003). According to Butler, historically, and continuing into the present, not many racial and ethnic minorities are counted among gatekeepers in American news media. Wilson et al. say this is important because:

The perspectives of American values, attitudes, and ambitions brought to society have largely been those of gatekeepers and others with access to media....

Since news content, in theory, reflects what is really important to society, the coverage of [minorities] in mainstream news media provides insight into their social status. The gatekeepers of news reveal by their professional judgments precisely how [in]consequential they regard Americans of color to be. (p. 116)

In television news if stories and/or topics manage to filter past the primary gatekeepers, both gatekeeping of information and gatekeeping of imagery, still remain major obstacles. Other lower-level television newsroom journalists – associate producers, producers, reporters/anchors, assignment editors, and video editors – are constantly reshaping and editing news stories thereby acting as defacto secondary gatekeepers of information, for one main reason: air time is finite! Sometimes journalists have as few as 20 seconds to tell a complex news story. Therefore, substantive and important topics and details often get buried in, or omitted from, newscasts – even after they were originally approved for air. This is especially true when there is a choice to feature a non-sensational “hard news” story – such as on employment discrimination – versus typically violent, ratings driven, “Breaking News” stories featuring a recently committed crime. For example, education issues only received two percent of air time nationally, in newscasts analyzed by Radford (2003); and, race and minority relations got only one percent. In contrast, Radford says on average, nearly 30 percent of news air time is spent covering crime, courts, and cops.

Gatekeeping of imagery also plays an important role in newscasts – especially pertaining to accused criminals, and managing menacing images and mug shots. Many gatekeepers allow certain mug shots of criminal suspects and pictures of victims to filter through and be aired, while other criminal suspects’ and victims’ images are sometimes withheld (Shepard, 2012). This gatekeeping practice is engaged for several reasons – including affecting audience perceptions regarding presumed culpability and/or innocence (Norris, 2013; Shepard, 2012). Norris asserts that selective news airings of

mug shots and other images – whether intentional or unintentional – often affects public perceptions of criminality:

Mug shots play a major role in how the media report crime. [In 2012], several news outlets covering the death of Trayvon Martin stirred up controversy by featuring an outdated mug shot of a younger, heavysset George Zimmerman in an orange [shirt often mistaken for a jail] jumpsuit, which some alleged was a calculated attempt to make him look more menacing. (p. 1575)

In that mug shot, Shepard says the then 22 year old Zimmerman (who is a White-Hispanic) “looks unhappy, if not angry” (para. 5). Notably, historically, many such examples of menacing news image criminal suspect depictions seemed to be purposely framed around racial and ethnic minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics.

Meanwhile, Shepard says some news outlets were conflicted about which image of Zimmerman’s teenaged victim to use – pointing out that some news media gatekeepers had certain pictures of Trayvon, but purposely chose not to use them:

The dominant photo of Martin shows him 13 or 14 years old, wearing a red Hollister T-shirt....

Keith Jenkins, head of multimedia at NPR, wasn’t as concerned about the... Zimmerman photo – it was the only one available – as he was with news outlets’ choice of Martin photos. They generally chose the one of the boy in the red T-shirt rather than a more recent photo of him in a gray hoodie, which has been available all along....

“The picture of him was not of a happy, smiling kid in a hoodie,” said [one journalist]. “He looks hard in it. His expression is stern. Having the hoodie around

his head can have a negative connotation. We talked about that but decided at that point, the hoodie had become part of the story.”...

“The images used are clearly prejudicial to both men,” said Kenny Irby, Poynter’s senior faculty for visual journalism and diversity. “If those are the repeating images, then we continually reinforce prejudice and negative emotions. We never get to appreciate the life experience or further context of either individual.” (para. 4; Trayvon Martin photos loaded with meaning, para. 1 & 7; and, para. 7)

Norris (2013) analyzes the extent to which mug shot images in general, strongly implicate criminal guilt:

The remarkably consistent characteristics of mug shots, coupled with the secondary meaning society has ascribed to them, attach a stigma of criminality to the suspect featured in the picture. The basic format of the mug shot has not changed since the mid-nineteenth century: a frontal shot of the head and shoulders of an expressionless suspect, against a monochromatic background. Today no one views such an image without immediately identifying it as a mug shot and assuming that the subject was arrested for some crime.... The police mug shot has become an icon in contemporary visual culture. The pose, framing, and formal conventions of the image are easily recognized throughout the general public. It is an image that is taken to indicate criminality. (p. 1591)

Yet, the mug shot itself explains none of the surrounding circumstances of the arrest; and, Norris says most people assume that the detainee was doing something illegal.

Unfortunately, this holds true even if the suspects in mug shots might in fact be innocent.

Many local news stations receive official suspect images – mug shots and sometimes surveillance and other video – from area police departments, sometimes only upon request (Norris, 2013). In such cases, image options are limited. Nevertheless, according to Norris, gatekeepers are afforded the discretion of whether or not to air questionable criminal suspect images – such as those with scowls and/or frowns which generally seem more threatening. Thanks to social media, now there is always the option of searching for other sources of a criminal subject’s picture – such as on Instagram, Twitter, and/or Facebook. Unfortunately, gatekeepers don’t always exercise that option – often choosing instead to broadcast questionable images often loaded with social implications.

Given the aforementioned notion that a mug shot is a powerful, vivid symbol of criminality (Norris, 2013), both Entman (1992) and Jamieson’s (1992) research have shown that news portrayals of African Americans are indeed menacing portraits; because, Black criminal suspects are shown with mug shots more than Whites. Hurwitz and Peffley (1997) also note:

Experimental evidence suggests, moreover, that even a brief visual image of a Black male in a typical nightly news story on crime is powerful and familiar enough to activate viewers’ negative stereotypes of Blacks, producing racially biased evaluations of Black criminal suspects. (p. 395)

In fact, Norris states that criminal justice authorities “speculated that a mug shot of Rodney King would be essential in moving public opinion if there had been no videotape of his beating, implicitly conceding that mug shots leave a much deeper impression on their viewers” (p. 1598-1599). In other words, since King was out on parole for robbery, releasing his mug shot to news media could have swayed public opinion by depicting

King as just another Black criminal “threat” who somehow *deserved* to be treated in such an overly aggressive, excessively violent, and brutal manner by police.

In sum, many Blacks and their images are seemingly demonized rather than humanized as a tool of news media. For instance, in addition to pictorial differences, local news video presentations of Black criminals are also often quite different from that of White criminals (Entman, 1992). Selective use of video – whether intentional or unintentional – by news video editors, also affects minority perceptions. Granted, video editors are sometimes under severe time constraints to get news story images on air; however, that is no excuse for biased, shoddy, and/or irresponsible image selections of minorities. According to Entman, not only are Blacks shown more often as criminal suspects, television news is also more likely to show images of Black suspects handcuffed and poorly dressed – such as in prison gear like an orange jumpsuit – compared to White suspects. Entman’s research also intimates that gatekeeping to protect some Whites’ images might be involved; because, Black criminals were found more likely to: remain unnamed; be seen in physical custody – such as a perp-walk – and, were less likely to speak for themselves. Unfortunately, that tendency is rarely counterbalanced because news audience members seldom get to see African Americans equitably depicted during crime coverage and other news reports; because, those with power often conspire to hide vital facts from the general public by gatekeeping omission, or by “spinning” events to tilt their significance (Vesperi, 2010).

Discussion of Results

During this television news analysis of the Las Vegas area focusing on race and crime depictions, for each of the four content oriented research questions postulated, at least

one answer component yielded statistically significant results. Given findings of this research, that there are some statistically significant differences in local news presentations of crime related to race – the most noteworthy being among analysis results of research question 1: that there was a statistically significant difference between whether or not a suspect’s image was shown and the race of the suspect – an argument can be made that racial presentations of Las Vegas area criminals is slightly disproportionate. Results show odds of not having the suspect’s image shown for Hispanics was 7.04 times more likely than for Black criminal suspects. Thus, it was more likely to not have a suspect image shown for Hispanics, compared to Blacks. Odds of not having a suspect’s image shown for White criminals was 0.67 times less likely than for Blacks; and, that odds ratio was not statistically significantly different – thus, disproving this study’s primary hypothesis: There is a statistically significant difference between the depiction of minority (non-White; with Black as the reference group) criminal/suspect images, and White criminal/suspect images on local news programs. Interestingly, results of research question 2 reveal there was not a statistically significant difference between criminals’ various types of Notable Image(s) – such as being depicted in court, cuffed and in prison gear, etc. – and Race; thus, nullifying the expectations of this independent researcher’s specified secondary hypotheses (listed at the end of Chapter 2). However, there was a statistically significant relationship between Notable Image and Crime category; and, there was a statistically significant relationship between Notable Image and Image Type. Although there was no statistically significant relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s) and Race, results of research question 3 reveal there was a statistically significant relationship between mention of Previous Arrest(s)

and Crime category. Finally, analysis results of research question 4 find there was a statistically significant relationship between Days Race Aired and Crime category.

Therefore, the number of days a criminal suspect's race is aired on local news is found to be related to the particular crime for which the suspect is accused.

Implications: The Las Vegas paradox – Here's the “good news”.

I will now explore the fact that the primary (main) hypothesis of this independent research – There is a statistically significant difference between the depiction of minority (non-White; with Black as the reference group) criminal/suspect images, and White criminal/suspect images on local news programs – has been nullified; then, defend/discuss specifics regarding the Las Vegas area news market and its demographics – which could explain how and/or why media depictions of Las Vegas area criminal suspects might be different from other major metropolitan news markets. Essentially, here's the good news – overall, Las Vegas was found to have no statistically significant difference in the way White criminal suspects are reported about, versus minority criminal suspects. Therefore, during the specific timeframe of this six month content analytic study (July – December 2011), the implication arises that “good news” – i.e., fair and balanced reporting practices – about Las Vegas area criminal suspects is broadcasted from news stations in our local market.

Although the antithesis of primary outcome expectations of this inquiry was found, this independent researcher is nevertheless pleased to discover that things appear to bode well for Las Vegas news outlets regarding overall equity of criminal suspect coverage. However, some unexpected statistically significant racial presentations of Las Vegas area criminals were found to be slightly disproportionate between key ethnic minorities

(Hispanics and Blacks); because, results show odds of not having a suspect's image shown for Hispanics was 7.04 times more likely than for Black criminal suspects. Thus, it was found significantly more likely to *not* have a local criminal suspect's image shown for Hispanics, compared to Blacks. Exploring now why that *might* be likely, I turn to Las Vegas' current demographics. Although Las Vegas' Hispanic population – 195,793 (32.8%) – far outnumbers our local “Black alone” population – 60,176 (10.1%) – (City-Data.com, 2015), by more than three to one, one could speculate: 1.) that regarding local crime news coverage and criminal suspect depictions, “White-Hispanic” criminal suspects with more Caucasian phenotypes might reap the benefits of some sort of social advantage (as discussed in Chapter 1) – since individuals of Hispanic ethnicity can be a member of any race, including being a “White-Hispanic” or a “Black-Hispanic” (Frank et al., 2010); and/or, 2.) that images of area criminal suspects who have not yet been arrested might not be as readily accessible for many “undocumented” Hispanic immigrants (discussed in Chapters 1 & 2) – as in a police database of mug shots – because there might not yet be a U.S. record with an attached image established. Conversely, scores of local Black criminal suspects – namely alleged repeat offenders and/or those repeatedly detained (as addressed throughout Chapters 1 & 2 regarding racial profiling, and Brame et al. (2014), Dixon & Linz (2000), and other researchers' assertion that African-American communities are being decimated by a criminal justice system that disproportionately over-polices, over-arrests, and over-incarcerates Black males) – might already have mug shots readily available for police and/or media to use, once they are subsequently accused of, and/or arrested for, another crime.

Per Las Vegas' general statistics, also note that according to City-Data.com (2015), Las Vegas' "White alone" population is 284,834 (47.8%), and the "Asian alone" population is only 35,358 (5.9%). Also noted on City-Data.com, the percentage of Las Vegas residents living in poverty in 2012: 17.6% – with 11.4% for White Non-Hispanic residents, 29.3% for Black residents, 24.7% for Hispanic or Latino residents, 26.1% for other race residents, and 11.7% for two or more races residents. Those 2012 local poverty statistics are similar to directly preceding years – including during the 2011 timeframe of this content analysis; and, although there is not always a *direct* and/or *inevitable* path from poverty to criminality, noticeably the percentage of local Blacks in poverty – which is the highest among all ethnic groups – is higher than for that of Hispanics living in poverty. Keeping those local poverty statistics in mind, (as previously noted in Chapter 1) Brown (2013), states "...Discriminatory anticrime policies that routinely violate, in particular, mostly poor Blacks' legal and constitutional rights are rarely questioned" (p. 260) – which could also directly affect how, and how frequently, Black criminal suspects without much socio-economic or socio-political power are depicted on television news, both locally and nationally.

Furthermore, a discussion of other national implications of this study involves: interrogating why news media depictions of Las Vegas criminal suspects might be different from other major metropolitan areas; and, further interrogating possibilities regarding why this independent researcher's primary and secondary hypotheses are not found here in Las Vegas. Exploring those aspects involves looking back at a study previously introduced in Chapter 2, in which Dates and Barlow (1990) analyzed news broadcasts in a dozen major U.S. cities – Birmingham, Cincinnati, Dallas, Denver,

Detroit, Greensboro, Jacksonville, Miami, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, and Spokane – and found evidence of a “split image” news system, where Whites were framed one way and other racial and ethnic groups were typically framed in a biased manner on television news in those major markets. Notably, though the city of Las Vegas and its surrounding areas is often thought of, and listed, among major metropolitan areas, it is currently ranked only number 41 among national television markets (News Generation, 2015) – falling much farther down on the list than many of the aforementioned cities analyzed by Dates and Barlow, excluding Birmingham-43, Greensboro-46, and Spokane-73. Even though it has moved up considerably in the rankings over the past two decades – due in part to area population growth – Las Vegas is not routinely counted among the major television markets. Therein lays the Las Vegas paradox: the fact that efforts to analyze the local television news market, to theorize why depictions of local criminal suspects are found to be largely equitable in this study, and might be consistently different from findings cited regarding other metropolitan areas, yields a variety of different reflections regarding Las Vegas’ vast media and social dynamics.

Moreover, regarding popular notions of Las Vegas, according to Gottdiener, Collins, & Dickens (1999) Las Vegas “has long been believed to be a city of transients” (p. 208) and gamblers, but that notion “has evolved” (p. 208); and, upon reflection, the researchers note that living in Las Vegas is much “like living anywhere else”:

In many ways the media hype about Las Vegas is contradicted by the reality of everyday life... Many locals [(including many local criminal suspects)] never go near a casino and barely notice them as they cross the Strip on the Desert Inn super arterial, a cross-town road constructed to avoid congested vehicle and tourist traffic.

Most similarly ignore the ever-present slot machines in supermarkets and convenience stores. The more mundane aspects of life in...town can be seen by taking a walk in its residential neighborhoods, which could be anywhere in the U.S. (p. 207-208)

That being said, upon further reflection, Las Vegas' unique history also simultaneously sets it apart from the 12 cities analyzed by Dates and Barlow because as Gottdiener et al. (1999) also point out:

Las Vegas is in many respects like any other metropolitan community.... In other ways, however, Las Vegas is unlike any other place:...part gambling and entertainment mecca, part postindustrial Sunbelt metropolis, part Old West frontier town, and part glorious desert setting. (p. 192)

With Las Vegas being at its core unlike any other major metro area in Dates and Barlow's study, so too might be Las Vegas' criminal element and subsequent crime reporting practices – possibly due in part to Las Vegas comprising some smaller pockets of minority populations than many of the 12 analyzed cities. Although, Gottdiener et al. do discuss that regarding urban decline, poverty, and crime (note: all those social ills can potentially relate to minorities and local crime reporting practices):

Elsewhere in the nation cities that experienced massive suburban development on the periphery suffered a decline of their urban cores. Reams of writing from the 1960's and 1970's document this "urban crisis" and the need for government funding to halt the decay of inner cities as a consequence of population and resource flight to the suburbs....

Las Vegas is again a typical American city in this regard. Instead of a shift of population, its patterns of change are a consequence of the differential drift of

newcomers to separate parts of the region....

In short, the middle class and wealthier newcomers have drifted to Green Valley, Summerlin, and other new communities outside the older sections of [Las Vegas]....

Many of the remaining areas of the inner city and those adjacent to the Strip corridor, however, have experienced decline. Dope dealers, pimps, prostitutes, and derelicts, along with minimum-wage workers, have moved into depressed properties that are poorly maintained, forming an inner-city core of blight characteristic of other metropolitan areas. The notorious 89109 [(mostly Black and Hispanic)] zip code area is the site of high-density apartments mostly occupied by low-paid service workers and the elderly, but it is also a place of crime and blight. Many of the most troublesome blocks are just a few minutes away from the glitzy Strip, providing a vivid contrast that most tourists [(and news viewers who are unfamiliar with the area)] never see. Like other cities, graphic contrasts due to inequity abound. (155-157)

However, unlike in several major news markets, continued fair and balanced reporting techniques and impartial gatekeeping practices (all of which are discussed in Chapter 2) due to eager journalists trying to effectively work their way up the television market ranks, could also be contributing to the “good news” factor found crowning Las Vegas during this study. Therefore, those might be among many reasons why evidence of Dates and Barlow’s “split image” news system was not found during this content analysis – which although is extensive, spans only a six month timeframe and *perhaps* does not wholly represent Las Vegas area criminal suspect depictions (which is also discussed in this chapter’s subsequent section regarding Limitations of this research) – and could explain both why this independent researcher’s main hypothesis is not proven here in Las

Vegas, and why news media depictions of Las Vegas criminal suspects might be different from other major metropolitan areas.

Dates and Barlow (1990) also discovered that news stories on race and discrimination were virtually non-existent. This too can no longer be largely true in Las Vegas or in any other news market across the country, mainly due to the unfortunate continued influx of breaking news stories (such as those discussed in Chapter 1's introduction and throughout this research) involving racially charged police confrontations and citizen confrontations as part of television news' repetitive "confrontation phase" (Wilson et al., 2003) – in which the integral part that race and ethnicity plays can scarcely be ignored anymore – forcing a shift (even if only slight) in the way in which such stories are being reported (arguably more so by national news outlets), thanks in part to often instantaneous/immediate social media feedback from concerned news viewers.

Shifting focus now from Las Vegas specifically to variables employed within this independent research, I will now defend/address the fact that there is no discussion of the variables in this work that are not directly related to, and/or focusing on, Race. This independent researcher's eight main original variable categories noted during viewing of all 1,291 local crime stories are: Network Affiliate, Crime/Story Slug, Criminal/Suspect Race, Criminal/Suspect Sex, Criminal/Suspect Picture/Image Shown, Type of Image Shown, Criminal/Suspect Previous Conviction(s)/Arrest(s) Mentioned, and Number of Days Criminal/Suspect Race Aired. Although, each of those eight variables was chosen by the independent researcher because they reveal key social characteristics about the composition of locally broadcasted crime stories, as this massive research project continued unfolding and developing in vast and noticeably lengthy ways, a decision was

made by this independent researcher, to focus only on the main variable of interest in the Las Vegas market – Race – rather than on other sub-variables such as Criminal/Suspect Sex (the gender of the criminal suspect). Thus, as Race is the primary independent variable of interest, I illustrate only the odds ratios for Race. The decision to subsequently exclude analyses regarding Sex was made based on three different observations made during this study: 1) Regarding recent demographics of the Las Vegas area, men-50.4% slightly outnumber women-49.6% (City-Data.com, 2015); 2.) More importantly, during this research, women were found to commit significantly less news-making crimes than men (Table 17 shows the frequency counts and percentage of Sex of Suspect when sex is depicted on local news – there is significantly more often an image shown of males);

Table 17

One-way Frequency Table of Sex of Suspect

Sex of Suspect	Frequency (%)
Male	897 (69.5)
Female	201 (15.6)

and 3.) Perhaps most notably, during analysis and coding of my data, I observed that of the fewer number of women who did commit news-making crimes, a majority committed them in conjunction with men – and would therefore likely have been collapsed into

dummy coding variables for the purpose of statistical analysis; because, during this study for the purpose of data analysis, some categories of the variables with small sample size were regrouped. Furthermore, as discussed in detail throughout Chapters 1 and 2, many researchers analyzing crime and race tend to focus more on Black males and exploring the myth of hyper-violence and/or innate criminality seemingly ascribed specifically to African American men (Brame et al., 2014; Brown, 2013; Dixon, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011; Staples, 2011). Additionally, as previously noted in Chapter 2, Black men are more typically the object of false, imaginary Black “threat” claims, versus Black women; because, according to Alexander (2012), many television news images have generally served to reinforce existing stereotypes regarding many African American women as irresponsible “welfare queens,” thus usually reserving the stereotype of being violent criminals largely for African American men. Finally, as previously noted in Chapter 2, some African American women deemed criminal suspects have suffered abuse at the hands of police, with some even losing their lives – like 23 year old Shantel Davis (an unarmed woman shot and killed by an NYPD officer in 2012) – to excessive force that the officers often try to explain away. However, the number of Black men who lose their lives due to such apparent targeted violence and brutality at the hands of officers during news-making police confrontations is much, much higher.

Limitations.

While some results of this investigation jell with many elements of the numerous findings of T. L. Dixon (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011) and other cited researchers, and contributes to social scientists’ ongoing analyses of the impact of intersections of racial depictions and crime on television news, some limitations should be considered. General

limitations of content analysis research include the fact that of course, one can not infer behavior from content; therefore, this independent researcher had to take care regarding citing research and making statements on this issue. Although of course, this is ultimately what academicians, researchers, and other members of the public at large are interested in – how media portrayals of different racial/ethnic minorities affects perceptions of them. However, solely employing content analysis in this work has limited this independent researcher to being able to fully address only one side of the news media depictions issue, without being able to measure news audience reactions and/or responses to criminal suspect depictions.

Specific limitations of this research also include the fact that this independent researcher's sample of news broadcasts was collected during the summer, fall, and winter of 2011 – three years prior to the most timely and prominent primary news story examples discussed in detail during the body of this research, such as the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner at the hands of police in 2014 – with the content analysis sample frame ending just weeks before Trayvon Martin was killed in 2012. Nevertheless, the ongoing occurrence of such tragic national news story events happening in tandem with the unfolding of one of the main themes of this research, points to the current necessity of academically exploring and addressing these phenomenon. Subsequent research studies should attempt to explore concurrent data. Additionally, the sample size of the newscasts might not wholly represent depictions of Las Vegas area minorities over time, because of the six month sample period. Although, no sample is ever perfectly representative of the population from which it is drawn, a basic principle of probability sampling is that a sample will be more representative of the population from

which it is selected if all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected and/or represented. Moreover, additional limitations include the fact that no one study can cover all relevant areas; and, a final research limitation to consider is a question posed by Sherry (2004): “Are the effects of media too complex to understand with scientific investigation?” (p. 84). Sherry warns that from a scientific point of view, to admit so could prematurely curtail further exploration.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research that uses more detailed news media measures, further examines presentation differences among minorities, and analyzes causal effects – especially over time through longitudinal designs – could teach social scientists even more than what has been learned in this or prior studies. Despite prevalent biases within news reporting practices, and often disproportionate depictions of minorities reinforcing biased racial stereotypes, television news and mass media should not be completely vilified; and, should be further explored by researchers, especially due to the continued proliferation and pro-social effects of social media responses like #BlackLivesMatter, #StolenLives, and #BlackoutForChange, to often biased and/or racialized news coverage and other social injustices. Moreover, Dasgupta (2004) points out that, the path from implicit bias to discriminatory action in the social realm is not always inevitable. That is why more research on moderating and linking variables has both theoretical and practical importance. Jeffries (1996) states that television is often unjustly blamed for all of society’s ills – such as racism and rampant violence – without accurately accounting for other behavioral factors. Jeffries reminds people that television also showcases love in all its forms – from which people can always learn. That is why suggestions for future

research include academicians promoting the use of television's pro-social effectiveness to counteract news media's often anti-social effects, by expounding on Mastro and Tropp's (2004) and Slater et al.'s (2006) findings – that negative attitudes towards minorities and racial stereotypes can be curbed through viewing positive minority representations on television. A way to ensure positive minority representations on television, particularly in news media, begins with properly training news reporters and other journalists.

Although journalistic “reasons” may be offered for the style of [many] reports, these news routines appear to inform the reporting in such a way that the news reporters develop language and reportorial habits that guide them and their audience toward “certain choices of interpretation” and toward rhetorical visions about those being reported on....

A continued reliance on such institutionalized news routines...ultimately invites [news audiences] to think about [minorities] in xenophobic ways wherein certain people are important, others are not, and there is value to certain ethnic groups but less to others. (Perkins & Starosta, 2001, p. 82)

Future news media effects research could also build upon Devine's (1989) theory that points to evidence asserting that reflective thinking before making a judgment reduces the use of stereotypes. Devine advanced a dissociation model to explain the circumstances under which either stereotype activation or stereotype application influence social reality judgments. According to Devine, regardless of personal beliefs, stereotypes (e.g., the belief that many Blacks tend to commit criminal acts) can be activated and readied for future use by exposure to relevant stimuli (e.g., Black criminals in news media). The

researcher, however, also found that those stereotypes *might not* be applied in social judgment if the individual personally rejects the stereotype and has sufficient cognitive resources to make a more reasoned decision. Therefore, while television *can* instill positive, pro-social effects within viewers, many watching do not use reflective thinking (as Devine suggests), or internalize the scantily broadcast “fair and balanced” messages about racial minorities and the ilk. Consequently, future research should investigate that seemingly ongoing phenomenon because unfortunately, as West (1993) says, even in today’s paradoxically post racial society – “Race Matters.”

In conclusion, television’s pro-social effects could indeed self-contain the cure for what ails society – racism – as long as television’s positive effects are coupled with a healthy dose of applied research. So how can journalists and academic researcher work together on curing the social cancer of racism? To enact such social change, according to Mays et al. (2013):

Effort is now needed to address and balance, at a larger societal population-level, the embedded nature of negative cultural/racial bias and stereotypes that endanger and cut short the lives African American men and boys. [Social scientists and other academicians] can use their [research] tools to make the world a better place and ensure that the Trayvon Martins of the future can walk through a neighborhood without fearing for their lives. However, it requires many of us to be willing to believe that the tools of the [social] science of racism are valid and ready for application beyond the labs of [sociology]. It requires that we not only teach the students of [sociology] about the results of studies and impart hope for changing behavior that is based on racism and prejudice but that we embed the science and its

potential interventions more broadly into societal expectations of race related interactions, into the courts and policies that mandate acceptable societal behaviors.

(p. 22)

Buhin and Vera (2009) theorize that racism can be prevented through psycho-educational and public policy interventions designed to avert the development of racist beliefs and attitudes in White youth – such as the members of the SAE fraternity chapter at the University of Oklahoma who reportedly admitted they were *taught* the racist song they were caught on video singing despite SAE’s national chapter objecting to those claims (Svrluga, 2015); and even younger children who are also potentially taught such notions through mass media depictions and other stimuli. Buhin and Vera’s theory also complements elements of Mares and Woodard’s (2005) meta-analysis of television’s potential pro-social effects on children. Efforts to combat racism should be made at every level of social development while being mindful of the effects of historical institutional racism in the forms of U.S. laws, federal, state, and local policies, and cultural “norms” shaping our social world – including media depictions. Given the seemingly ongoing intertwining of institutional racism and biased reporting practices broadcasting skewed images of minorities to the masses, my overall suggestions for news media improving coverage of African Americans and other minorities mirror those of the social scientists who conducted the Kerner Commission report more than four decades prior:

- * Cooperate in the establishment of a privately organized and funded Institute of Urban Communications to train and educate journalists in urban affairs, recruit and train more [African American] journalists, develop methods for improving police-

press relations, review coverage of riots and racial issues, and support continuing research in the urban field. (Kerner Commission, 1968, p. 18)

In spite of mounting content analytic evidence that indicates African Americans are much more often associated with criminality on television news compared to other minorities and Whites, far fewer studies have examined the direct and specific effects of local race and crime news imagery on viewers. From the standpoint of social stereotyping and social-role learning, evidence indicates that news media content could significantly influence the formation and reinforcement of audience beliefs about racial group characteristics and behaviors. Perhaps that is why, like the late George Gerbner (1990), we academicians steeped within the intersection of sociological and communicative disciplines should constantly try to “advance the path of righteousness” and awaken television viewers and mainliners of news media content, from their stupefaction; because, the more one analyzes the pervasiveness of stereotypical patterns in television, the more one can perceive the often inaccurate picture of social reality it can potentially cultivate in viewers.

APPENDIX A

POWERFUL WORDS

The following is a copy of an e-mail the researcher composed as part of a station-wide communication at local FOX affiliate KVVU Channel 5.

The original message is about the powerful words that were being used during on air news broadcasts to describe Hurricane Katrina survivors. Listed above it is the response from KVVU's General Manager to the News Director – as a station-wide directive for change.

9/4/2005 15:23:58, USER Eunette Gentry PEOPLE.E.E.GENTRY.MAIL 1 SLUG Powerful Words
A good reminder of the power and connotations of words...while they are certainly exiles from the city by necessity, and have been forced to literally take refuge elsewhere, evacuees is a more accurate descriptor. M ?
-H

--- Original message follows ---

From: Eunette Gentry
To: all
CC:
Sent: 9/3/2005 23:32:49
Subject: Powerful Words

We've gotten *several calls from viewers complaining about the way we're referring to the Hurricane Katrina victims (after only being 20 minutes into Saturday night's show).

Several viewers say they're "outraged" that we're calling the victims "refugees."

Many viewers suggest that we use the term "evacuee" and/or "survivor" (because they were "evacuated" after "surviving" the storm).

Many viewers say the term "refugee" is "offensive and degrading," because it "implies that the displaced evacuees aren't U.S. citizens... (and fear persecution for going back)." -- Sandra V (453-)

Dictionary.com defines refugee as:

- 1) "One who flees in search of refuge, as in times of war, political oppression, or religious persecution."
- 2) "An individual seeking refuge or asylum; especially : an individual who has left his or her native country and is unwilling or unable to return to it because of persecution or fear of persecution (as because of race, religion, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion).
- and 3) "An exile who flees for safety."

Our viewers say the hurricane victims are "not exiles" and "weren't forced from their country." Many viewers say the word "refugee has negative implications." -- Carol O (309-)

Many viewers also say using the term refugee is "irresponsible, because it carries negative racial connotations." -- Viewer (did not give name or number).

APPENDIX B

CODING INSTRUMENT 1

Key Codes:

Network Affiliate – NBC, CBS, ABC

Crime/Story Slug – (Various)

Criminal/Suspect Race – (Number of each specified, when more than one.)

A = Asian

B = Black

H = Hispanic

W = White

NI = Not Identified/Not Identifiable

Criminal/Suspect Sex – (Number of each specified, when more than one.)

M = Male

F = Female

NI = Not Identified/Not Identifiable

Criminal/Suspect Picture/Image Shown –

Y = Yes

N = No

Type of Image Shown – (Type & number of each specified, when more than one.)

MS = Mug Shot

V = Video

S = Still Picture/Snapshot

Also listed are Notable Images that *might* have aired. (See Appendix C, Coding Instrument 2, for list of notable images if/when needed.)

Criminal/Suspect Previous Conviction(s)/Arrest(s) Mentioned –

Y = Yes

N = No

of Days Criminal/Suspect Race Aired – (Various)

Example of Analysis Page Headers & Data (arranged by date):

<u>Network</u>	<u>Crime</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Pict./Image</u>	<u>Type/(Notable)</u>	<u>Prev. Arrest</u>	<u>Days Race Aired</u>
NBC	DUI	(2)W (1)B (1)NI	(2)M (1)F (1)NI	Y	V(Field Sob. Test)	N	1

APPENDIX C

CODING INSTRUMENT 2

Value Codes:

Network Affiliate – 3 = NBC
8 = CBS
13 = ABC

Crime Category –

1 = Murder-Homicide / Body Found
2 = OIS
3 = Robbery-Theft / Fraud
4 = DUI / Hit & Run or Car AX / Police Car Chase
5 = Assault-Battery (non-fatal)
6 = Abuse-Neglect (Child or Criminal)
7 = Arson-fire / Bomb Threat
8 = Non-Violent Miscellaneous / Strip Safety
9 = Home Invasion / Kidnapping (Missing Person) / Standoff
10 = Drugs-Narcotics / Firearms Raid
11 = Prostitution / Solicitation / Pandering-Human Trafficking
12 = Inmate Escape / Resisting Arrest / Fugitive

Criminal/Suspect Image Type –

1 = Mug Shot	5 = Mug Shot & Video
2 = Video	6 = Mug Shot & Still
3 = Still Picture/Snapshot	7 = Mug Shot, Video, & Still
4 = Still & Video	

Notable Image – 1 = Excessive Frowning

2 = Smiling
3 = Speaking in Court (SOT)
4 = In Court, Cuffed, & in PG (Prison Gear)
5 = Perp-Walk & Cuffed
6 = In Court, In Regular (Casual) Clothes, but Cuffed
7 = In Court, In (Business) Suit, *not* Cuffed
8 = Surveillance (Video or Images)
9 = Field Arrest-Cuffed on Scene / Field Sobriety Test
10 = Generic File Image (At Job)
11 = Tattoo / Unique Distinguishable Features
12 = Court or Witness Sketch
13 = Holding Gun / Knife / Weapon
14 = Generic Court Video (No Cuffs Shown)
15 = In Jail
16 = Candid Pose

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