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Crime and race representation: A content analysis of Las Vegas local television news

Julie Arradaza Chapman

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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CRIME AND RACE REPRESENTATION: A CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF LAS VEGAS LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS

by

Julie Arradaza Chapman
Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas 2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in Journalism and Media Studies
Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Spring 2008
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The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

March 13, 2008

The Thesis prepared by

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Entitled

Crime and Race Representation: A Content Analysis of Las Vegas Local Television News

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies

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ABSTRACT

Crime and Race Representation: A Content Analysis of Las Vegas Local Television News

by

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Media studies have found Blacks more often linked with media reports of violent crime in their local communities compared to other races. The aim of this paper is to reveal if current trends in the Las Vegas media market overrepresent African Americans as the most active perpetrators of crime by examining crime statistics, race demographics, and television representations of crime and race in the local news. This study is a content analysis of the five major television network affiliates: KVBC, KVVU, KLAS, KTNV, and KINC. Seven hypotheses are tested. Results indicate that local television viewers in Las Vegas receive inaccurate representations of crime and race reported in the news. No support for hypotheses testing visual representations of crime and race are found. Findings indicate a tendency for the Las Vegas news market to be driven by crime and less likely to be motivated by race when reporting crime news.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me in the completion of my Master’s thesis. First and foremost, thank you Dr. Paul Traudt for all your guidance, support, and patience in completing one of the largest papers I have written thus far. I would also like to thank my committee, Dr. Gary Larson, Dr. Ardyth Sohn, and Dr. Thomas Burkholder for their assistance with this project, and Dr. Larry Mullen and Dr. Anthony Ferri for their endless support for graduate students.

No thanks are complete without acknowledging those who have supported me through “thick and thin.” Thanks to my parents for instilling courage, hard work, and discipline in the best means that they could with the resources they had available. My family: Grace, Joce, Wayne, Nana, and Donovan also deserve many thanks for believing in me and for financially taking care of me when money was tight as a graduate student. Most importantly, thanks to the most supportive boyfriend on the planet, Andy. Your patience and unconditional support to leave the house so I can write my thesis and your continued support both financially and emotionally for my academic pursuits are sincerely appreciated.

Thanks so much to my coders Rachael Wax and Mamie Peers, who spent numerous hours recording various programs to establish intercoder reliability.

Lastly, I would like to thank myself for believing in me and achieving everything I put my hands to do. The sky is always the limit!
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Audiences have become accustomed to race portrayals depicted in television programming (Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 1996). Media scholars and viewers may characterize race representations as part of American culture (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Lipschultz & Hilt, 2002). According to the Missouri School of Journalism (2000), in American mass media, four major criticisms of African Americans in the news were observed: most stories pictured minorities as criminals or victims or emphasized conflict; depicted minorities involved in aspects of “nonmajority life,” such as in crisis or in festivals, holidays, and celebrations; primarily focused on entertainment figures and on minorities who were “firsts” in their disciplines, as well as a lack of coverage portraying minorities as people participating in day-to-day life of their communities (p. 133; see also Lipschultz & Hilt, 2002). In addition, Walker, Spohn, and DeLone (1996) observed that “the term crime evokes an image of a young African American male armed with a handgun who commits a robbery, rape, or murder. In the minds of many Americans, ‘crime’ is synonymous with ‘black crime’” (p. 37). Ultimately, academic scholars, media critics, and many others agree that race representations are ethically, morally, and culturally inaccurate and irresponsible (Martindale & Dunlap, 1997; Dixon & Azocar, 2006; SAG, 2000; Kumbier, 2002). This study will first provide a general overview of race representation reported in television
media, followed by the media's treatment of race and crime in television news programming compared to actual crime statistics.

In current television programs, audiences are exposed to a limited amount of minority representation. In June 2001, the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) released the African American Television Report, which analyzed both the quality and quantity of African American representation on network television (SAG, 2000). From a cultural standpoint, Hunt (SAG, 2000), who authored the SAG study, concluded three contributing factors that lead to the current representation of Blacks on television. Although Blacks were overrepresented in prime time, Black shows were limited to UPN and WB television networks, programs featuring all-Black casts aired only on Monday and Friday nights, and Blacks were more likely than any other racial group to appear in sitcoms (as opposed to serious dramas) (SAG, 2000). Hunt (SAG, 2000) categorized these factors as a form of "ghettoization" because representation was "not evenly distributed across show types, networks, or days of the week" (p. 12). Even though Blacks were overrepresented on prime time (in the two upstart networks), they were underrepresented on two of the more established networks (FOX & ABC). Due to the limited portrayal of minorities on certain programs and time slots, prime time television is one example of how the media inaccurately represent race.

According to Hunt, who was quoted in Kumbier's (2002) article:

Achieving programming diversity is about creating characters and scenarios in which Black characters are portrayed as more than the villain/gangsta or comic
sidekick/helper or incidental neighbor. In other words, it is about creating representations that reflect, in some meaningful way, the culture at large. (p. 4)

Although there were only a few Blacks in supporting roles found on the major broadcast networks — CBS, NBC, ABC, and FOX, “Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans and other ethnic groups [were] virtually invisible” (Braxton, 1999, p. A1). Furthermore, Hunt (SAG, 2000) indicated that race representation on television “echoes ongoing concerns about the exclusion of minority groups from our image of who and what America is all about.” (p. 23, emphasis in the original text)

Television depictions of race are problematic because audiences receive a distorted image of race in the real world (Brownstein, 2000; Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Donziger, 1996). On television, negative stereotypes are pervasive, most especially of specific races. Viewers are exposed to various dramas typecasting specific groups in particular roles. For example, in CSI: Miami, the majority of Latinos are represented as drug lords, murderers, and criminals while Whites are represented as police officers, detectives, judges, and forensic specialists. In Cops, although Blacks and Whites are both portrayed as perpetrators of crime, White police officials enforced harsher treatment to Black offenders than Whites, reinforcing African Americans as the more dangerous race. Many media critics may argue that television dramas and reality shows are a form of pure entertainment; however, research suggested that audiences view these programs to confirm pre-existing stereotypes of race found in their local cities.

---

1 Screen Actors Guild. (2000, June). African American television report. Retrieved October 18, 2006, from http://www.sag.org/sagWebApp/index.jsp; An actual definition of Black characters was not provided in the SAG study conducted by Hunt or in Kumbier’s article. Based on examples of television shows provided by Hunt and Kumbier, villain/gangsta refers to detective or vigilante crime fighting roles and comic sidekick/helper or incidental neighbor refers to Black characters who occupy the sidelines of television programs. They were depicted as helpmates to the white star or the costar in an ensemble cast.
Another important avenue of race representation in the media is television news programs. Numerous communication scholars indicate that local news strengthened and confirmed pre-existing stereotypes of minorities, specifically typecasting African Americans as the most active perpetrators of crime (Dixon & Azocar; 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996; Surette, 1992). Most individuals may not consider stereotypical representations on television news a problem, but media research proved otherwise (Entman & Rojecki; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996; SAG, 2000).

News Representation of Race

Local television crime news and race representation are a primary focus for many researchers who have immersed themselves in this area for a variety of reasons (Curry, 2005; Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman, 1990, 1992; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998). Previous media studies have examined the effects of overrepresentation, underrepresentation, and misrepresentation of race, the likelihood of news representations to influence and activate racial stereotypes of the public viewing audience, the dominance of crime-related stories commonly found on local television news broadcasts, and the news network’s capacity to sensationalize crime stories to attract audiences and increase ratings (Dixon & Azocar,
2006; Dixon et al., 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Lowry, Nio, & Leitner, 2003; Oliver & Fonash, 2002, Sinner, 2005). Although the majority of research has focused on race portrayals of Blacks, Whites, and Latinos, race and crime representations on local television news primarily emphasized one ethnic group, African Americans. Some common themes presented in media research were Blacks portrayed as offenders or perpetrators of crime, and in other instances, rarely depicted as victims or in professional occupations, like police officers, detectives, or lawyers (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon et al., 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000).

According to Martindale and Dunlap (1997), “the news media still project inaccurate and demeaning myths about minority groups in this country and reinforce and perpetuate popular ‘knowledge’ about them that is seldom grounded in reality” (p. 122). Dixon and Azocar (2006) found Black and Latino juvenile offenders as more likely to appear as perpetrators compared to White juveniles. In addition, Black juveniles were also more likely portrayed as perpetrators on television news, compared to Latino law-breakers. Latino juveniles were significantly less likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime, compared to crime arrest rates (Dixon & Azocar, 2006). White juveniles were neither over nor underrepresented as perpetrators of crime (Dixon & Azocar, 2006). Race representation on television is significant to television viewers because watching crime news can create one’s perception of social reality (Brownstein, 2000; Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Donziger, 1996). Although Whites were depicted more accurately on television news programs in conjunction with actual crime data, minorities should receive a fair representation of race and crime in the media.
In order to better understand the current dynamics of crime and race representation portrayed in the news, the following section will briefly introduce scholarly approaches to comprehending African American representation in the media, the prevalence of crime news stories as a routine standard, actual crime statistics in relation to race, and the justification for television as the primary source for information about crime. Each of these components plays a significant role in understanding how media representations of race can greatly influence and skew the public’s perception about crime and race in their local cities.

General Background

African American Representation

Depending on one’s personal interests, readers may be exposed to an array of perspectives explaining the media treatment of minorities found on television. For instance, Entman and Rojecki (2000) conducted a detailed analysis explaining the “racial skew” found in Chicago’s local television news programming (p. 78). From their study, a variety of thought-provoking themes were proposed: Blacks were dangerous members of society; White murders were more newsworthy than Blacks; Blacks were more likely to engage in criminal behavior; and society must be protected against the African American population (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). The overarching idea to consider is the negative implications that television news depictions may have on the audience’s perception of Blacks and crime in their community. Similar to the agenda-setting theory, where the mass media inform viewers about important issues and how to perceive them, a similar notion could be implied to Entman and Rojecki’s (2000) findings. Local
television newscasts in Chicago framed race and crime issues in a particular manner.

Entman and Rojecki (2000) emphasized that “racial representation on television actually does not appear to match crime statistics, with local news overrepresenting Black perpetrators, underrepresenting Black victims, and overrepresenting White victims” (p. 81). Apparently, African Americans appear to have a disadvantage in local television crime news reports. The odds may be against Blacks who fit an individual's stereotype or profile of a dangerous, violent criminal.

Crime News

Crime is a quintessential component of local television broadcasts. Chermak (1994) explained how “crime is an important news topic every day” and that “crime news has long been an information priority” for news organizations (p. 95). The news production process plays a pivotal role in understanding the types of news stories commonly presented to viewers, and the possible effects associated from the type of stories reported. According to Graber (1993), crime news is characteristic of local television news programs: “the local television news, with its heavy crime component, has eclipsed national news, which carries more serious political stories and less crime, in the battle for high audience ratings” (p. 332).

From the perspective of news reporters, editors, and source organizations, Chermak (1994) conducted an extensive analysis of the “selection, production, and editing decisions of both a newspaper and television station in a large Midwestern city” (p. 100). Crime stories were a routine standard in the news production process because they were relatively easy for journalists to report (Chermak, 1994; Lowry, Nio, & Leitner, 2003). Crime reports were “routine with a standardized news format in which the reporter
simply changes the details of what was involved, who was involved, and what the authorities are planning to do about it” (Chermak, 1994, p. 97).

Due to the competitive and dramatic nature of television, local crime stories contain the necessary criteria for attracting an audience’s attention (Lipschultz & Hilt, 2002, p. 10; see also Chermak, 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000). Similar to entertainment programs and movies that project violence, producers also utilized violent images and stories in news broadcasts because they were believed to be “good for station ratings” (Lipschultz & Hilt, 2002, p. 10; see also Chermak, 1994). In many television stations, a slogan commonly practiced in crime reporting was “If it bleeds, it leads” (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). Producers found the dramatic nature of crime significant to the overall success of news organizations and station ratings because “crime stories are easy to tell. . ., they usually feature good and bad; innocent victims subjected to lawless behavior by criminals” (Lipschultz & Hilt, 2002, p. 10; see also Chermak, 1994). Many scholars found the combination of crime stories frequently represented in the news media, and African Americans commonly portrayed as perpetrators of crime as a likely explanation for society’s negative perception of Blacks and their link to criminal activity (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996).

Crime Statistics and Media Representations

According to the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, violent crimes are defined as offenses of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (Maguire & Pastore, 2001). Research reveals that “Americans have been and remain quick to think of people of color as violent and to think of violent
offenders as black” (Brownstein, 2000, p. 139; see also Curtis, 1974; Donziger, 1996; President’s, 1967). However, the reality in 1997 was that 500,621 offenders were arrested for violent crime in the United States, 57% (284,523) of whom were White, and 41% of whom were Black (205,823) (Maguire & Pastore, 1999). The remaining 2% comprised of other races (Maguire & Pastore, 1999). In 1999, the total number of offenders for violent crime dropped to 419,000; Whites comprised 59% of those arrested, while Blacks comprised 39% (Maguire & Pastore, 2001). The remaining 2% comprised other races. In 2004, the most recent available data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that the number of arrests for violent crime increased to 586,558 (Department, 2006). The percentage of Whites arrested was 61%, Blacks 37%, and the remaining 2% were of other races (Department, 2006). From 1999 to 2004, Whites arrested for violent crime had increased 1%, while the number of Blacks arrested decreased by 3% (Department, 2006).

However, even though the number of Whites arrested for violent crime has increased while Blacks has decreased, Blacks commit more violent crime relative to their total population in the United States (Brownstein, 2000). Therefore, Blacks are often associated as the typical offender of violent crime (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Walker, Spohn, DeLone, 1996). In response, crime and race studies have suggested that other factors should be taken into consideration when observing these statistical numbers, such as selective enforcement of the law, and the relationship between the criminal justice system and their treatment towards other races (Brownstein, 2000; Donziger, 1996; Walker, Spohn, & Delone, 1996).
Walker, Spohn, and Delone (1996) expressed a lack of confidence about the “racial makeup of the offender population” (p. 56). They noted that “Although African Americans obviously are arrested at a disproportionately high rate, particularly for murder and robbery, it is not clear that this discrepancy reflects differential offending rather than selective enforcement of the law” (Walker et al., 1996, p. 56). Black (1980) found certain minority groups were more susceptible to arrest than others, particularly African Americans who appeared “hostile” or “aggressive” (see also Walker et al., 1996, p.39). According to Black (1996), the police arrested African Americans (52%) at a higher rate than Whites (39%) for all crimes. African Americans were more likely to be arrested than Whites because African American suspects were more likely to “display disrespect toward the police” (Black, 1996, p. 1097). Black (1996) also found that in the aggregate of cases, a misdemeanor suspect who was disrespectful toward the police was more likely to be arrested than a felony suspect who behaved in a civil manner. Put more simply, Black (1996) concluded that the “police enforce[d] their authority more severely than they enforce[d] the law” (p. 1099).

In order to better understand the high number of violent crime attributed to African Americans, one must also understand the relationship between the criminal justice system and how they “treat people in relation to their race and class” (Brownstein, 2000, p. 140). According to Donziger (1996), unfounded arrests and the decision to prosecute or drop a case were just some examples where African Americans were treated differently in the criminal justice system. In Schmitt’s (1991) examination of violent crimes and unfounded arrests reported in California’s criminal justice system, Blacks and Hispanics had a higher rate of unfounded arrests than Whites. Unfounded arrests were
cases in which suspects were innocent, inadequate evidence was collected, or an illegal search or seizure was conducted (Schmitt, 1991). In California, the rate of unfounded arrests for Blacks was four times greater than Whites. For Hispanics, the number was more than double the rate of Whites (Schmitt, 1991). In Oakland, unfounded arrests for Blacks amounted to twelve times the rate of Whites. In Los Angeles, the rate was seven times as great, and in San Diego, six times the rate of Whites (Schmitt, 1991). Minority representatives reported in Schmitt’s (1991) article stated that the higher number of unfounded minority arrests may be due to the “police mounting crackdowns on crime in non-white neighborhoods and using looser standards for arresting members of minorities while they’re doing it” (Schmitt, 1991, p. 1).

Lastly, Donziger (1996) indicated that racial discrimination “can and often does” play a potential role in the decision to prosecute offenders (p. 110). In Donziger’s (1996) review of literature, evidence suggested that “crimes involving white victims and African-American offenders were much more likely to be upgraded in severity by the prosecutor, while crimes involving African-American victims and white offenders were more likely to be downgraded” (p. 110). As a result, upgraded cases often lead to “more serious charges, a more energized prosecution, and higher sentences” (Schmitt, p. 110). This may be one explanation for the higher proportion of African Americans incarcerated in U.S. prison institutions.

From a historical analysis of violent crime, Donziger (1996) also revealed that “while crime rates for African-Americans are somewhat higher than those for whites relative to the population, crime by African-Americans is not getting any worse” (p. 99; see also Brownstein, 2000; Lipschultz & Hilt, 2002). In the mid-1970s, Blacks consistently
accounted for about 45% of those arrested for violent crime (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault), which indicated that the “proportion of overall crime committed by [Blacks] has not increased for several years” (Donziger, 1996, p. 100). However, since 1980, the number of African Americans in prison has increased significantly, while the number of Whites in prison has decreased (Donziger, 1996). With the increasing numbers of Blacks arrested in the United States, and the overrepresentation of Blacks in the media and in our prison system, one may conclude why media and criminal justice studies have found African Americans to be the most active perpetrators of crime (Dixon & Azocar; 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996). In addition, because police officers were more likely to arrest Blacks if they deferred police authority, the Black stereotype may further be perpetuated in society (Black, 1996). That viewers are more likely to report African Americans as violent individuals could be based on the media’s negative portrayal of African Americans in the local news, and the consistent representation of Blacks being arrested in society and on television. Entman and Rojecki (2000) emphasized that “highlighting the media’s ability to construct realities that do not necessarily accord with official statistics and other factual data,” the media exaggerate the public’s perception of the “actual racial disproportion” (p. 79).

Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) further supported the relationship linked between race and criminal activity. In their investigation of fifty-six different cities, crime accounted for more than 75% of all local news coverage. They examined the dynamics of local television news, specifically its adherence to a “standard script” of crime is violent, and criminal behavior is commonly associated with “racial imagery” (Gilliam Jr. & Iyengar,
Cognitive psychologists reported that scripts allowed the "reader to make inferences about events, issues, or behaviors" (p. 561). Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) concluded that crime scripts strongly influenced attitudes about crime and race. More importantly, the racial element of the crime script was found to be the most dominant component of crime-related news stories.

In addition, research indicated that television newscasts were found to be the primary source for information about crime (Chermak, 1994; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar 2000). Since the majority of individuals lacked personal experience and direct access to criminal sources, citizens were less likely to second guess the information they heard and observed in the news. As a result, viewers received a false sense of criminal activity occurring in their communities and in society. Many media researchers explained that such representations were responsible for the negative stereotypes associated with Blacks, and their overall threat to the community (Dixon & Azocar; 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996). Viewers had utilized local television crime news reports as a means for influencing and "shaping public opinion on important law and policy issues" (Dixon & Linz, 2000, p. 136; also Chermak, 1994).

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to determine whether current trends in local television news crime reporting continue to represent African Americans as the most active offenders compared to actual crime statistics. Research indicates that Blacks are commonly linked with violent crime in their local communities, which portrays them as
symbols of threat, as well as one who fits the stereotype, or profile of a dangerous, violent criminal. As indicated earlier, television newscasts were found to be the primary source for information about crime (Chermak, 1994; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar 2000). This study may enable us to determine whether crime stories in the news continue to present inaccurate portrayals of African Americans, which can further perpetuate the negative Black stereotype.

Although the majority of media research utilized content analyses of various television news programs, visual images were most influential because they were more likely to be remembered by television viewers; because they evoke "powerful emotional responses"; and because they were "more vivid, salient, and attention-grabbing" than other forms of media (Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996, p. 312; see also Neuman, Russell, Just, Marion, Crigler, & Ann, 1992; Graber, 1988; Biocca, 1991). Due to the competitive nature of television news networks to promote crime stories and the audience’s obsession with crime news, this study will examine the visual representations of race and crime presented in local television news reports.

Justification for Current Study

Representation of African Americans in the media is an important and growing topic. This study is significant because findings will reveal whether African Americans are overrepresented in violent crime news stories, or if more diverse representations of race and crime are presented in local television news programming. Does the public receive more accurate representations of race, or does the public continue to view distorted representations of race and crime on television news programs? Because there is an
abundance of research analyzing crime and race in various localities, each city and region is different, and thus upholds distinct characteristics and demographics. Since Clark County of Southern Nevada currently contains and attracts various groups of minority residents, research analyzing Las Vegas television news content is relevant.

According to 2006 Clark County Race/Ethnicity statistics provided by Clark County Nevada, the White population was 1,066,524 (56%), Blacks 169,236 (9%), Hispanics 499,401 (26%), Asian/Pacific Islander 141,062 (7%), American Indian 16,168 (1%), and the remaining 1% comprised other races (Clark County Nevada, 2007).

Local news networks, or the mass media in general, have a public responsibility to present crime and race in a fair and balanced manner, similar to the “code of ethics” established by professional journalism associations and news organizations (Journalism, 2006, p. 1). On the Society of Professional Journalists’ website, their “Code of Ethics” states that “the duty of the journalist is to [seek] truth and [provide] a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues” (Society, p. 1). Furthermore, journalists should “avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography . . . social status” (Society, p. 1). This study may allow us to perceive what the current role of local television newscasts play in invalidating or confirming the perception of African Americans as the central focus of crime in television. Is the news depicting a diverse representation of crime and race, or is the news representative of a network’s obligation to attract large audiences in the effort to improve ratings?
Organization of Thesis

This chapter has provided an overview of the research analyzing local television crime news and race representation as explored in various metropolitan cities, African American representation in the media, the prevalence and production of crime news, crime statistics pertaining to violent crime arrests in the United States, and a justification for why this topic warrants study. Chapter Two will provide an extensive literature review addressing scholarly approaches applied to race and crime representation, the definitions of crime and race utilized in the present research, and pertinent literature relating to the subject at hand. Chapter Three will discuss the methodology for the current study, including measurement procedures and coding of data. Chapter Four will report overall research findings. Chapter Five will facilitate further discussion of the present study, strengths and limitations of research, and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of race representation (of African Americans) and crime as depicted in local market television news programs. The following review of literature begins with content analyses covering race representation and crime in local television newscasts, content analyses of police statistics and media representation, and a discussion of visual images presented in television crime news reports.

Content Analyses of Crime and Race Representation

Numerous studies have examined crime and race representation in local television news (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman, 1990, 1992; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998). Exploring the results of these studies can help establish a foundation for the current study.

Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) investigated the dynamics of local television news and found that news crime stories dominated local news programs. According to their research, news reporting adhered to a standard narrative that crime was violent and perpetrators of crime were non-white males. Their primary objective was to determine which component of the crime script, violent crime or the “inclusion of racial imagery” on television would strongly influence viewer’s attitudes about crime and race (Gilliam,
To assess the impact of the crime script on the viewing public, Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) administered a multi-method design utilizing a content analysis, lab and field experiments, and self-administered surveys.

Utilizing the concept of scripts developed by cognitive psychologists, a script was defined as “a coherent sequence of events expected by the individual, involving him either as a participant or as an observer” (p. 561). Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) analyzed the script because scripts provided “an orderly and quite predictable set of scenarios and roles, scripts [allowed] the ‘reader,’ quite effortlessly, to make inferences about events, issues, or behaviors” (p. 561). In other words, viewers mentally upheld a script in their minds when they observed crime news on television. For example, Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) provided the following scenario of viewers who watched the local news. First, audiences understand the anchor’s role of introducing a brief announcement or lead-in to a crime story that has occurred in their community; second, the viewer is then transferred to the scene of the crime; and third, the news reports the “identity and apprehension of the perpetrator” and the official status of law enforcement officials in connection with the crime (p. 561).

Based on their research of Los Angeles viewers, Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) indicated that crime scripts “achieved the status of common knowledge” among viewers (p. 561). Audiences maintained certain assumptions about crime in their communities before the news had reported the details of the crime on the news. Due to the visual nature of television, Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) argued that the crime script informed viewers about the visual attributes of the suspect, specifically the suspect’s race or ethnicity.
Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) examined the prevalence of the crime news script by conducting a content analysis of television stations in the Los Angeles market in 1996-1997. Newscasts aired during the evening, prime time, and late-night periods from the three major network affiliates in Los Angeles (KCBS, KABC, and KNBC), the Fox (KTTV), Warner Brothers (KTLA), and two independent stations (KCAL and KCOP) were used in the study. A total of 3,014 crime stories were analyzed.

Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar’s (2000) results indicated that the number of murder stories (510) was nearly equivalent to the total number of nonviolent crime stories (522). In addition, although murder only accounted for less than 1% of crime in Los Angeles, murder crimes stories were the focus of 17% of crime stories sampled. As far as the racial element of the crime news script, minorities accounted for 59% of suspects in violent crime cases and White suspects accounted for 41% of violent crime. As a result, minorities were more likely to be depicted in the role of the suspect in violent crime news reports.

African Americans comprised the largest group of minority suspects; however, they did not comprise the largest (absolute) number of murder suspects (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000, p. 562, footnote 4). Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) found that Black crime in Los Angeles County in 1997 was representative of actual Black arrest rates with the exception of Blacks being accounted for the largest number of murders. Overall, Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) concluded that local television news was not an accurate reflection of the “real world of crime” (p. 562). In reality, the greatest number of arrests was for property crimes as opposed to violent crimes presented on the local news (Gilliam, Jr., 1998). In addition, minorities accounted for the largest share of nonviolent
crime in Los Angeles County (Gilliam, Jr., 1998). However, in Gilliam, Jr. and
Iyengar's (2000) content analysis of crime coverage in Los Angeles, Whites were the
typical perpetrator of nonviolent crime.

Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar's (2000) content analysis revealed the inaccurate
representation of crime and race found in local television news programs and the
association of minorities to violent crime stories that occurred in Los Angeles County.
The remaining component of the crime script, visual imagery, will be discussed later in
the visual discussion of crime and race representation.

Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau's (1998) research initiatives of crime and race
representation revealed a lack of clarity in previous media studies. In their literature
review, Romer et al. (1998) noted a difference of newsworthiness found between White
victims of violence and persons of color (minorities):^2

In the case of crime, stories involving White victims of violence perpetrated by
non-White actors [were] especially newsworthy. However,
when persons of color assume noncriminal roles related to crime, such as
bystanders, experts, or victims, they are less newsworthy than White actors
whose reactions and suffering signal greater identification with the White
audience. (p. 288)

Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998) pursued evidence that associated minorities
as contributing to crime rather than "preventing it, being victimized by it, or speaking
against it" (p. 289). They argued that if minorities were characterized as responsible for
crime in their communities, then minority representation in crime news reports would

^2 For simplicity, "minorities" is used instead of the original term "persons of color" which was utilized by
the authors.
typically portray them in the role of a perpetrator rather than as a victim or other roles related to the effects of crime (Romer, Jaimeson, & De Coteau, 1998).

In order to examine the roles of both White and non-White actors in crime news reports, Romer et al. (1998) conducted a content analysis of late evening news broadcasts (11:00 p.m.) of the three major networks (CAU, KYW, and PVI) in Philadelphia from July 1994 – October 1994. For each station, nearly 1,000 stories were coded. In total, they recorded about twenty-seven hours of weekday programming on each station (Romer et al., 1998).

Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998) found the following results for all three stations: (1) minorities were overrepresented in crime stories compared to their appearance in noncrime stories; (2) minorities were more likely to be shown in crime stories as perpetrators of both violent and nonviolent crime than they were shown in other stories; (3) White actors were portrayed at a greater rate as victims of violence than perpetrators of violence.

Romer et al. (1998) emphasized that their research confirmed similar findings of other studies examining local television news. Although the victimization rate of minorities within crime news stories was higher than the victimization rate found within noncrime stories; overall, there was a greater emphasis of minorities as perpetrators than victims of crime.

Additionally, Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998) examined whether ethnic blame discourse theory or realistic group theory was more prevalent in local news networks’ coverage of crime and race representation. Ethnic blame discourse was described as (Romer et al., 1998):
Problem behavior committed by ethnic others as intergroup conflict and accentuates the harmful effects of the behavior for the ingroup. By focusing on problems associated with outgroup members, the discourse perpetuates the belief that the outgroup has interests or values that conflict with the ingroup and deserves to be blamed for those problems. (p. 287)

In other words, the extent to which minorities (people of color) experienced problem behavior related to their own ethnic group, and how this behavior affected the ingroup (Whites). In this case, minorities were more likely to be shown as perpetrators of violent crime; therefore, the theory suggests that minorities would more likely be blamed for violent crime occurring in particular neighborhoods (Romer et al., 1998). Contrary to ethnic blame discourse, realistic group theory asserted “blame directed toward an ethnic group for social problems is related to conflicts of interest with that group rather than ethnocentric discursive processes” (Romer et al., 1998, p. 287). For instance, Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998) reported that residents who blamed ethnic others for youth violence, crime, and neighborhood deteriorations in their communities were examples of realistic group theory.

Overall, Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998) concluded that the high rate of victimization of Whites by minorities and the overrepresentation of White actors as victims all lead support to ethnic blame discourse theory operating in Philadelphia’s local newscasts. As the authors had noted, “the fact that similar patterns of reporting have been found in crime stories on television news is consistent with the hypothesis that news engages in a discourse of blame directed against ethnic others” (p. 300).

Lastly, Romer et al (1998) discussed that even though victimization and perpetration
rates of minorities and Whites were different, the overall effect of showing victims or perpetrators to the audience “could be quite small” (Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998, p. 298). However, Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998) explained that victim images painted another picture. White actors were predominantly shown as victims, and minorities were predominantly shown as perpetrators on all three stations. Compared to previous research, their results indicated that minorities were represented in crime news reports primarily for their “contribution to crime, whereas White actors [were] shown primarily for their reaction to and suffering from crime” (Romer et al., 1998, p. 299).

Content analyses by Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) and Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998) revealed that minorities were more likely depicted as offenders of crime compared to Whites. Based on Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar’s (2000) discussion of crime scripts, viewers make certain assumptions about the content and images they view on television. Applying the crime script to Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau’s (1998) research, crime news stories depict minorities as the most active perpetrators of crime and White actors as the victims in acts of violence.

Crime Statistics and Media Representation

Relevant to the objectives of the present study on whether current trends in local crime news reports continue to depict crime and race in a particular manner compared to actual crime data, Dixon and Linz (2000) hypothesized that: (1) Blacks and Latinos would appear as perpetrators at a higher rate compared to Whites; (2) Blacks and Latinos would appear as lawbreakers at a higher rate compared to law defenders; while Whites would appear as law defenders at a higher rate compared to law breakers; and (3) the distribution of perpetrators of crime by race on local television news would be
inconsistent with the distribution of crime arrest rates. Of particular interest to this study would be the third hypothesis.

Utilizing intergroup, interrole, and interreality comparisons to measure each hypothesis, Dixon and Linz (2000) conducted a content analysis to investigate lawbreaking and law defending on the local news. According to the authors, each comparison was important in understanding the portrayal of race on television news and the effects of news exposure on viewers (Dixon & Linz, 2000). Dixon and Linz (2000) emphasized that each of the three indexes would analyze the extent to which “Blacks and Latinos were overrepresented, underrepresented, or accurately represented as perpetrators of crime and defenders of law on television news,” as well as provide a more “comprehensive view of the portrayal of these groups on television” (p. 136).

In the effort to compare crime news reports with government crime reports, crime news stories aired in Los Angeles and Orange counties were included in the final analyses. KABC, KCBS, KNBC, KCAL, KCOP, FOX, and KTLA were used in the sample. The time period examined was from October 7, 1995 – June 7, 1996 (Dixon & Linz, 2000). A total of 116 programs were taped and stories that featured crimes monitored by the California Department of Justice were the only news reports utilized in the study.

Overall, in the intergroup comparisons that examined portrayals of Black and Latino perpetrators of crime to White perpetrators, Dixon and Linz (2000) found Blacks and Latinos were more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime than Whites. In the interrole comparisons of Black, Latino, and White perpetrators to Black, Latino, and White defenders of law on television news, 100% of the judges and 80% of the
prosecutors were White. Because there were a small number of judges and prosecutors depicted on television, minority law defenders were strictly limited to police officers. Blacks were almost four times more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators than as police officers, and Latinos were four times more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators than as officers.

Lastly, the interreality comparison of perpetrators of crime on television news to the California Department of Justice’s Criminal Justice Profile was most noteworthy. Compared to actual crime arrest rates, Blacks were more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime on television news (37%) than to be arrested (21%). Blacks were overrepresented by 16%. Latinos were less likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime on television news (29%) compared to actual arrest rates (47%). Latinos were underrepresented by 18%. Whites were less likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime on television news (21%) than to be arrested (28%). Whites were somewhat underrepresented by 7%. Others (e.g. Native Americans, Asians) were significantly more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators on television news (13%) compared to arrest rates (4%). Others were overrepresented by 9% as perpetrators on the local news (Dixon & Linz, 2000).

Dixon and Linz’s (2000) results revealed the role race played in crime news stories on local news programs. Based on the three comparisons measured, Blacks were clearly overrepresented as lawbreakers on television news, while Latinos were underrepresented compared to actual crime data. In order to understand these findings, it is also important to discuss Dixon and Linz’s (2000) theoretical explanations for their research.

In the aim of explaining the overrepresentation of Blacks as perpetrators, the under-
representation of Latinos as perpetrators and as police officers, and the overrepresentation of Whites as law defenders, ethnic blame discourse and structural limitations were advanced (Dixon & Linz, 2000). Similar to Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998), Dixon and Linz (2000) also described ethnic blame discourse as:

Ethnocentric talk that becomes routinized in everyday speaking and shapes the thoughts and actions of persons exposed to the discourse. The ethnic blame discourse frames a problem behavior committed by ethnic Others (e.g., Blacks and Latinos) as intergroup conflict and accentuates the harmful effects of the behavior on the in-group (e.g., Whites). (p. 148)

Dixon and Linz (2000) indicated that news reporters and editors were not exempt from such discourse. Since ethnic blame discourse occurs both in interpersonal and mass media contexts, the authors proposed that news reporters and editors were unconsciously depicting and selecting news stories that contained stereotypical assumptions of race. In other words, news organizations practiced ethnic blame discourse in their portrayal of certain ethnic groups. According to Dixon and Linz (2000) Black offenders were overrepresented because “ethnic out-groups are blamed for the problems of Whites,” while Whites, on the other hand, occupied “roles as officers who fight this problem” (p. 150).

However, ethnic blame discourse did not sufficiently explain the under-representation of Latinos reported in their study, since ethnic blame discourse predicted that Latinos would also be overrepresented as perpetrators (Dixon & Linz, 2000). As a complementary perspective, Dixon and Linz (2000) proposed structural limitations of the news media as an additional explanation for their findings. Due to the underrepresenta-
tion of bilingual Latino news reporters who facilitate in translation, language barriers may have facilitated to the underrepresentation of Latino offenders and officers reported in the news (Dixon & Linz, 2000). In addition, the prevalence of blue-collar crime reported on television news as opposed to white-collar crime may have contributed to the overrepresentation of Blacks as criminals (Dixon & Linz, 2000). Furthermore, the overrepresentation of Whites as police officers can be explained by the news organization’s reliance on “higher ranking police officers” for official crime sources, who were more likely to be White than Latino or Black (Dixon & Linz, 2000, p. 150).

In a similar study conducted by Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, and Wright (1996), criminal activity statistics and the ethnicity of criminal perpetrators were also examined. As discussed earlier, Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000) stated that the typical news story on crime consists of a standard script of crime as violent and criminals as nonwhite. Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, and Wright (1996) asserted that the second component of the crime script “‘primed’ viewers to consider crime through the lens of their racial stereotypes” (p. 8). In the aim to evaluate the accuracy of the “media’s reflection of ‘real-world’ criminality,” Gilliam, Jr. et al. (1996) results demonstrated that local news programs were distorted in two ways: they inaccurately portrayed crimes of violence and they overrepresented African Americans as perpetrators of violent crime (p. 8). More importantly, the racial variable depicted by the media impacted the audience’s perception of crime and race in a negative way. According to Gilliam, Jr. et al., the media “has [sic] in effect, defined crime in racial terms, and this serves to activate widely shared stereotypes about racial minorities” (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996, p. 8). Although the media focused on violent crime in the local news (first distortion), they found the race of
the perpetrator (the second distortion) was a more "significant cue" in raising the public's concerns about crime in their community (Gilliam, Jr. et al., 1996, p. 8).

A content analysis of violent content found on the ABC affiliate KABC in Los Angeles was conducted. News coverage from March 1993 – March 1994 was examined. A total of 148 broadcasts were sampled and 436 stories dealing with crime were analyzed. On average, three stories of crime per day were found.

Through their examination of violent content on KABC, crime was the lead story in 51% of the sampled newscasts (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996). As indicated in their research, they suspected the local news to be dominated by violent crime and the race of the alleged perpetrator would be nonwhite. Violent crime was the focus of 78% of the news reports broadcasted by KABC, but violent crime accounted for only 30% of all crime in Los Angeles County. In addition, homicide rates accounted for 2% of felony incidents in Los Angeles, but 27% of the news coverage was geared toward murder. The murder was exaggerated on KABC by a ratio of 14:1 (Gilliam, Jr. et al., 1996). Thus, local television news inaccurately represented violent crimes.

When the information about race was provided in the news report (which occurred in 40% of the stories), the perpetrator was either White, Hispanic, or Black (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996). Since Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, and Wright (1996) found the crime rate to vary among various ethnic groups, they assessed crime and ethnic representation in the media to the "groups' relative representation in the population" (p. 10). The results possibly indicated the extent of racial bias found in news coverage (Gilliam, Jr. et al., 1996). Contrary to their expectations, minorities were not substantially overrepresented in the news for violent crime. The African American
media crime rate was slightly exaggerated from 2.8 to 3.2 times their share of the actual population while Hispanics were significantly underrepresented because they committed crime at 20% above their expected rate, but appeared in the news as violent perpetrators 50% less than expected (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996). White violent crime in the news equaled the expected rate of violent crime committed by Whites.

Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, and Wright (1996) also calculated a “net violence” index that compared violent and nonviolent crime. Media coverage of Blacks was more violent than nonviolent by 22%. Although Hispanics were 7% more likely to engage in violent crime, the news depicted them as 14% more likely to be violent. Media coverage of White violent crime in the news was more nonviolent than violent by 31% (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996).

Content analysis studies by Gilliam, Jr. and Iyengar (2000), Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998), Dixon and Linz (2000), and others have supported the common notion found when examining crime and race depictions on local television news. Although research revealed that violent crime infiltrates local news programs compared to nonviolent crime, race played a significant factor in crime news reports. Minorities were primarily represented as perpetrators or suspects of criminal violence, while Whites were represented in nonviolent roles, victims, or in positions of authority. However, when comparing actual crime data, the level of overrepresentation found among African American perpetrators varied among research, while the levels of Hispanic representation clearly depicted a significant underrepresentation. As far as White violent crime was concerned, they were portrayed close to actual arrest rates or below the level of violent crime arrests.
Contrary to previous media research, more contemporary research conducted by Curry (2005) revealed surprising results. Based on early media literature, Curry (2005) indicated there was a propensity for television news media to overrepresent crime committed by Blacks and Latinos on television. Curry (2005) was interested in discovering whether the number of crimes reported in Las Vegas television news media accurately represented the number of index crimes that existed in that geographic area. He hypothesized that: (1) there would be an overrepresentation of Blacks and Latinos in index crimes in Las Vegas criminal news stories; and (2) there would be an underrepresentation of Whites as criminal offenders for index crimes in Las Vegas television news. Index crimes included violent crimes of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible entry, robbery, and aggravated assault, and the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft (Department of Justice, 2001,).

Newscasts of four Las Vegas network affiliates were analyzed: KVCB Channel 3 (NBC), KVVU Channel 5 (FOX), KLAS Channel 8 (CBS), and KTNV Channel 13 (ABC). A total of 1,145 crime news stories dealing with offenders were coded during December 1 - 12, 2003 and January 5 - 16, 2004. These four weeks were chosen to avoid any changes of news programming due to "sweeps." During the period of "sweeps," "the nature and content of news reports may become heightened in order to garner a larger audience" (Curry, 2005, p. 32).

Curry's (2005) results indicated that the local news was not an accurate representation of crime in the real world. His analysis revealed that murder was clearly overrepresented in Las Vegas television news compared to actual figures obtained from the State of Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles and Public Safety from 1990 - 1999.
Murder accounted for 0.19% of crime in the State of Nevada, 0.20% in Clark County, and on television news 12%. Although Curry’s (2005) assessment mentioned that “local news reports of index crimes [were] clearly overrepresented,” in actuality; only murder was clearly overrepresented by the news media (p. 43). All other index crimes: rape, robbery, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft were underrepresented on television news.

Hypothesis one predicted that there would be an overrepresentation of Blacks and Latinos in index crimes portrayed on Las Vegas television. Contrary to previous media studies, Curry (2005) reported that Blacks were underrepresented as criminal offenders and that Latinos were overrepresented in the Las Vegas market. Thus, Blacks had received the least amount of media coverage in connection with crime in Las Vegas. As Curry (2005) had noted, “this study may be the first to see a declining trend in reports of criminal activity by Blacks as well [as] an inclining trend for reporting Latino criminal offenders” (p. 49).

Lastly, Curry (2005) also hypothesized that there would be an underrepresentation of Whites as criminal offenders for index crimes in Las Vegas television news. Typically, Whites were usually depicted as victims of crime, not criminal offenders (Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998). According to Curry’s (2005) findings, there was no support for hypothesis two. Post hoc analyses indicated an overrepresentation of crime committed by Latinos (M=8.07) over Whites (M=7.92) and Blacks (M=5.88). Compared to previous research, Curry (2005) found that White perpetrators were reported more often than Blacks on the local news.
Overall, Curry’s (2005) primary objectives were to assess representations of race and crime found in local television news reports, and whether the number of crimes reported in Las Vegas television news accurately represented the amount of index crimes committed in Las Vegas. Similar to the purposes of Curry’s study, the present research will consider the racial make-up of crime reported on television compared to actual crime statistics in Nevada. The present study will also reveal whether current trends replicate or differ from Curry’s (2005) findings.

In addition, the largest racial category reported in Curry’s (2005) research was “unknown,” which accounted for 43.4% of all crime stories coded (p. 55). “‘Unknown’ offenders were those in which the identity of the suspect was not known by the news reporter, or those in which the primary coder could not accurately discern the race of the offender” (Curry, 2005, p. 55). The results of the unknown category could have dramatically impacted the results of Curry’s analysis, which is noted by the author. Therefore, the results of the current study could potentially differ from Curry’s (2005) results.
Visual Representation of Crime and Race

Another important element to consider when assessing content analyses of race and crime representation in the news is the visual component depicted in crime news reports. Several studies found crime news was often accompanied by racial imagery (Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; and Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996). Racial images portrayed in the local news have the potential to activate or confirm preexisting stereotypes (Dixon & Azocar, 2006, Dixon & Linz, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002). Although this study will not explore audiences’ perception about crime and race, it is essential to understand how the visual images depicted in television broadcasts can ultimately impact television audiences.

As discussed earlier, Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, and Wright’s (1996) content analysis of KABC produced two core findings: (1) the local news exaggerated violent crime; and (2) the news associated African Americans with violent crime and Whites with nonviolent crime. Interested in examining how their results impacted audiences’ opinions and beliefs, the authors developed an experimental design which measured two manipulations: the level of criminal violence and the race of the alleged perpetrator.

To examine the effects of news coverage of crime, research participants were exposed to a news report that described either a violent or nonviolent crime in which the perpetrator was either a White or Black male. Utilizing a computer-based technique, the picture of the perpetrator was “digitized” or “painted” to account for the perpetrator’s complexion (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996, p. 15). All features of the news report were identical except for the race of the perpetrator. The crime news report was inserted in the middle of a fifteen-minute local newscast. Participants were not
informed about the objectives of the study until after completing the post-questionnaire. At the end of the videotape, respondents answered questions about their fear of violent crime, explanations for rising crime, and their support for measures to remedy crime (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996). Participants were also asked about their stereotypic beliefs about Blacks.

Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright’s (1996) multiple regression analyses indicated that race was the more important element of crime news coverage than violence. Based on the various groups tested (the control group, the conditions featuring violent and nonviolent crime, and the exposure to a Black or White perpetrator), the authors found racial photographs of perpetrators were a precursor to triggering fear of crime and one’s willingness to reprimand people responsible for crime (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996). Violent crime reports on local television news did not have a “discernible effect on viewers’ opinions” compared to the race of the perpetrator (Gilliam, Jr. et al., 1996, p. 19). Overall, Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, and Wright’s (1996) results indicated that “how crime is covered [in the news] matters!” (p. 20). Audiences who were exposed to a visual image of a Black perpetrator were more likely to be concerned about the level of crime, activated stereotypic beliefs concerning Blacks and crime, and had “affected attributions of causal responsibility” (Gilliam, Jr. et al., 1996, p. 19).

Violent content broadcasted on the local news was studied by Entman and Rojecki (2000), who prepared a detailed analysis explaining the “racial skew” found in Chicago’s local television news programs (p. 78). They described the “racial skew” as the news’ tendency to “depict life in America as pervaded by violence and dangerous,” but also a
"genre [that] heightens Whites’ tendency to link these threats to Blacks" (Entman & Rojecki, 2000, p. 78). Most of Entman and Rojecki’s (2000) observations were focused on two racial categories African Americans and Whites, since both races were commonly depicted on the local news. Although they conducted a content analysis of crime and race representation, their assessment of violent visual images portrayed in Chicago’s local newscast was most relevant to the purposes of the current study.

Violent images were categorized as “accidents, fires, or explosions that killed or injured; murder; child abuse; and other forms of gun violence” (Entman & Rojecki, 2000, p. 80).

Entman and Rojecki (2000) conducted a ten-week content analysis of Chicago’s major local channels (WLS, WBBM, & WMAQ) during December 1993 – February 1994. A total of 164 news broadcasts were coded. When necessary, Entman’s (1990, 1992) results from a content analysis of visual images in Chicago’s local news during 1990–1991 was also included.

A pilot study administered by Entman in 1990 found statistical significance p < 0.05 of a “tendency for Blacks accused of crimes to be portrayed as individuals less than Whites—that is, to be lumped together without distinct identities and laden with negative associations” (Entman & Rojecki, 2000, p. 82). Incorporating Entman’s 1990 findings to their visual representation analysis, the data showed that local news shows were more likely to provide an on-screen name for White defendants accused of violence than for African Americans (or Latinos) (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). In the 1993-1994 sample, 47% of Whites accused of crime received a visualization that included their name printed on screen, while Blacks received 26% (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). Although the
relevance of this finding may seem unclear at first, Entman and Rojecki (2000) argued that providing the suspect's name with the visualization allowed for a "sense" of identity (p. 82). They further stated that "its absence may suggest that individual identity does not matter, that the accused is part of a single undifferentiated group of violent offenders: just another Black criminal—not much new or noteworthy there" (p. 82). Basically, Entman and Rojecki (2000) argued that naming suspects in a crime news report not only provided the suspect with a personal identification but may have allowed audiences to identify with the suspect, that he/she is a human being. Compared to suspects who are not named, the viewer may interpret the crime story as yet another average Joe committing a crime again. In this case, another Black perpetrator engaged in violence.

Additional evidence supporting the "racial skew" found in Chicago's visual images of crime news stories was also presented (Entman & Rojecki, 2000, p. 78). For instance, Entman and Rojecki (2000) found Blacks were more likely to be presented under the physical control of police officers: being handcuffed, grasped, or restrained by an officer. Whites were depicted in this manner 15% of the time, while Blacks were depicted 38%. Even though Blacks were less than half of all accused perpetrators depicted, Blacks comprised fully two-thirds of all persons displayed in physical control of a law defender (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). According to the authors, these visual representations of Whites and Blacks implied racial differences of crime committed in Chicago, specifically Blacks as the more dangerous or threatening race (Entman & Rojecki, 2000).

Another important observation was the defendant's appearance in motion videos (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). African Americans were more likely to be portrayed in street or jail clothing (54%) compared to Whites (31%), which was statistically significant.
However, due to social class differences of White and African American defendants, Entman and Rojecki (2000) did not find these data surprising. Defense attorneys are fully aware of the importance of clothing in a criminal trial because attorneys who dress up their clients for court appearances make them appear “less threatening to judges and juries (and cameras)” (Entman & Rojecki, 2000, p. 83).

Entman and Rojecki’s (2000) findings are significant to the visual objectives of the current study. An analysis of the use of an on-screen name, physical control by a police officer, and a defendant’s appearance in street or jail clothing are important variables for examination. Since television is a visual medium that has the potential to influence viewers, identifying whether a “racial skew” exists in Las Vegas local news content is essential to understanding the role of crime and race representation on television (Entman & Rojecki, 2000, p. 78).

Lastly, similar to Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, and Wright’s (1996) experimental design, Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996) also conducted an experiment where the race of the criminal suspect was altered in crime news stories. The purpose of the study was to investigate whether showing Black (versus White) criminal suspects in television news stories on crime would activate and reinforce Whites’ negative stereotypes of African Americans. In addition, to what degree do these racial stereotypes, once activated, bias viewers’ impressions of Black suspects portrayed in local television crime news? (Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996). Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996) hypothesized that: (1) regardless of the race-neutral language used by reporters in the auditory portion of the crime story, the visual image of the race of the suspect is likely to make a crucial difference in the way Whites respond to the story; and (2) Whites who
hold more negative stereotypes of African Americans—characterizing them as lazy or violent—are likely to respond more negatively to Black than to White criminal suspects.

A pre and post-test questionnaire was administered to ninety-five participants at a large Midwest state university to first and second year White students. The responses of Black students were not used because there were too few Black students to permit a separate analysis of their reactions to the news segment. Respondents were not informed about the purpose of the study until after the post-test was completed. One week after administering the pre-test, six classes were randomly assigned to one of two treatment conditions. Each class was shown a brief video of one of two crime stories.

An actual local news story was used in which every aspect of the video was similar, with the exception of one story that included a visual image of a White suspect while the other story included a similar visual image of a Black suspect. Two illustrations of a White and Black suspect being led away in handcuffs were used in the edited videotape. Although a newscast depicting no visual image of a perpetrator was presented, Pefflley, Shields, and Williams (1996) asserted that the experiment was still appropriate for measuring students' responses to Black and White suspects in televised news stories.

Utilizing a regression-based model to examine the interaction between racial stereotypes and the race of the suspect in the crime story, Pefflley, Shields, and Williams (1996) found that the race of the perpetrator and the Black stereotype affected one's judgment of guilt. For respondents who watched the video of the Black suspect, those who held the most negative stereotypes of Blacks were more likely to judge the suspect as guilty compared to the White suspect. For respondents who held positive stereotypes
of Blacks, they were neutral in judging the guilt of the Black suspect (Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996).

On the other hand, in the video of the White suspect, those who held negative stereotypes of Blacks were less likely to judge the White suspect as being guilty. Thus, Black suspects were judged more harshly than the White suspect. However, respondents who held positive stereotypes of Blacks judged the White suspect more negatively than those who viewed the Black suspect. Therefore, the results were the opposite. Students who were neutral in their stereotypes of Blacks evaluated both suspects the same, regardless of race.

Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996) also asked students to assess the future of criminal behavior of the suspects in the news story. The findings were similar to the pattern encountered for judgments of guilt. Those who occupied negative stereotypes of Blacks thought that the Black suspect was “very likely” to be “violent and aggressive” (Peffley et al., 1996, p. 318). However, in the case of the White suspect, respondents were uncertain about the future behavior of the White suspect (Peffley et al., 1996, p. 318). Those students who held positive stereotypes of Blacks were “equivocal” about the future violent behavior of the Black suspects but “relatively certain about the likely aggression of the White suspect” (Peffley et al., 1996, p. 318).

Overall, Peffley Shields, and Williams (1996) concluded that even a brief image of a Black suspect in a crime news story dramatically affected Whites’ reactions to the story. In the context of a Black male suspect who was pictured, the images were strong enough to activate respondents’ “global racial stereotypes, which in turn heavily biased their evaluations of the suspect along racial lines” (Peffley et al., 1996, p. 321). Students who
upheld negative stereotypes of Blacks, characterizing them as lazy and violent—possessed a double standard. Blacks were more likely to be guilty in a crime story, more deserving of punishment, and more likely to commit future violence compared to a similarly portrayed image of a White suspect (Peffley et al., 1996).

Peffley, Shields, and Williams (1996), Entman and Rojecki (2000), Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon and Wright (2000) are just a few of the mass communication scholars who have discussed the negative implications associated with crime and race visualizations depicted in the media. Racial images have the capacity to impact how viewers think about crime and race in their community. For some viewers, the race and crime relationship on television can activate powerful racial stereotypes. As Entman and Rojecki (2000) emphasized in their research, how the media reports crime in the news was significant. Media organizations and journalists have a public responsibility to avoid stereotyping whenever possible, even at the expense of increasing or sustaining ratings.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the media’s depiction of crime and race found in local television news programs. Most of the content analyses showed that minorities were primarily emphasized as perpetrators of violence and rarely depicted as victims or in occupations of authority. Content analyses covering race representation and crime in local television newscasts, police statistics and media representation, and visual imagery presented in television crime news reports occupied one general theme: race played a significant role in local television news. Race, more so than violence, appeared to be the most important element in distorting one’s perception of crime reality.
Overall, media studies have concluded the following: Blacks and Latinos were commonly portrayed as perpetrators of crime and in occupations of law breaking compared to Whites. Local news was an inaccurate representation of crime in the real world. The greatest number of arrests was for property crimes; however, violent crimes were presented more on the local news. In addition, Whites were depicted as the most common offenders of nonviolent crime when minorities actually occupied the lowest numbers for nonviolent arrests. Minorities were overrepresented in crime news stories compared to noncrime stories, and they were more likely to be presented as offenders in both violent and nonviolent crimes. Whites were shown at a greater rate as victims than perpetrators of violence. Lastly, when theoretical explanations were advanced, ethnic blame discourse was the most dominant theory discussed.

Contrary to previous research, Blacks for the first time were underrepresented as criminal offenders and Latinos were overrepresented in the Las Vegas market (Curry, 2005). Finally, a racial bias was prevalent in an analysis of crime and race representations in the Chicago area. Blacks were less likely to be identified with an on-screen name, more likely under the physical control of a police officer, as well as more likely to be depicted in street or jail clothing compared to White defendants.

Most of the content analyses reported in this chapter were based in the 1990s. With the exception of Curry’s (2005) study, contemporary research conducted in the 2000s focused on race and crime portrayals in network television news (Dixon, Azocar, Casas, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2002; Lowry, Nio, & Leitner, 2003; Oliver & Fonash, 2002). Since viewers utilize the local news as a primary source for information about crime in their communities, additional studies of crime and race representation in the local news will
determine if media history continues to prevail or reinvent itself well into the 21st century.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Local news markets or the mass media in general have a public responsibility to present crime and race from a representative perspective. As indicated in the “code of ethics,” journalists have a duty to “[seek] truth and [provide] a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues”, as well as “avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity…” (Society, p. 1). Since previous scholarship found newscasts to be a primary source for information about crime, and thus influenced and shaped a viewer’s opinion on issues of law and policy, and their stereotypes of certain racial groups; reporters and news organizations for the benefit of the public should be required to uphold this code of ethics at all times (Chermak, 1994; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar 2000).

Numerous media scholars interested in crime and race representations on the local news have utilized content analyses (Curry, 2005; Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman, 1990, 1992; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998). Similar to the objectives of these researchers, this study examined race and crime representation in the local news compared to actual crime statistics. This study is a content analysis of television news programs in the Las Vegas,
Nevada market. It was grounded upon research methods employed by researchers discussed in Chapter Two. The aim was to discover whether current trends in local news crime reporting continued to represent African Americans as the most active perpetrators of violent crime or whether diverse representations of crime and race were projected in Las Vegas television news media.

Rationale for this Study

According to the United States Census Bureau, Clark County continues to hold a spot as one of America’s fastest-growing cities (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). In 2002, the Clark County population was 861,817 (Clark County Nevada, 2008). In 2007, the population of Clark County increased to 1,119,309 (Clark County Nevada, 2008). As a result of such growth, the overall demographics of Clark County’s population have changed. Since Clark County of Southern Nevada currently occupies and attracts an ethnically diverse group of residents, particularly Latinos who “represent a large influx of foreigners” in Nevada, a content analysis of Las Vegas media content is necessary to determine if diverse representations of race and crime are presented in the local news (Curry, 2005, p. 50). Does the public continue to view distorted representations of Blacks and Whites in regards to crime on local television news programs as previous trends have revealed, or does the public receive a more representative sample of Blacks and Whites in relation to crime proportions in the local news?

Additionally, most of the research assessing crime and race depictions on television news and crime data was done in the 1990s, with the exception of Curry’s (2005) analysis. Since Curry’s (2005) research was the first to observe a declining trend in
reports of criminal activity committed by Blacks and an upward trend for reports of Latino offenders, more recent research reassessing Las Vegas’ television content was necessary. In addition, the current study may differ from Curry’s (2005) findings because 43.4% of the perpetrators coded by Curry were “unknown” (p. 55). Depending on the results of the unknown category of race reported in the present research, the current analysis will determine whether a shift in media crime reporting exists, or whether previous media findings of crime and race continue to dominate well into the 21st century.

Hypotheses

This study examined crime and race representation in the local news and the visual images associated with crime news reports. The seven hypotheses generated for this study were based on information developed by Dixon and Azocar (2006), Dixon and Linz (2000), Entman and Rojecki (2000), Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, and Wright (1996), and Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998). The following seven hypotheses were examined:

H1: Blacks will be overrepresented, while Whites will be underrepresented in index crime news stories in Las Vegas local television news compared to actual crime arrests reports by race.
H2: The distribution of perpetrators of crime by race in local Las Vegas television news will be inconsistent with the distribution of actual crime arrests reports by race in Las Vegas.

H3: Homicide will be overrepresented in Las Vegas local television news compared to actual crime data.

H4: Minorities will be visually identified more frequently than Whites in crime stories of Las Vegas local television news.

H5: Blacks will appear more frequently than any other race under the physical control of a police officer(s), in street or jail clothing, and in a mug-shot in Las Vegas local television crime news.

H6: Whites will appear more frequently than any other race with an on-screen name and in a suit compared to all other clothing in Las Vegas local television news.

H7: Local Las Vegas news stations differ in their treatment of crime and race representation.
Sampling

Sampling procedures were grounded on content analyses conducted by Curry (2005) and Sinner (2005). A composite, one-week, weekday sample of five newscasts was generated for each of the five news affiliates, over a one-month sampling period. Late evening newscasts from the following five Las Vegas television network affiliates were examined: KVBC Channel 3 (NBC), KVVU Channel 5 (FOX), KLAS Channel 8 (CBS), KTNV Channel 13 (ABC), and KINC Channel 15 (Univision). Each newscast that aired during the late evening (10:00 p.m. for FOX, 11:30 for Univision, and 11:00 p.m. for the other three affiliates) from Monday through Friday comprised the sample. Only weekday broadcasts were used in the sample due to the inconsistent nature of weekend broadcasts. According to Curry (2005) and Sinner (2005), news crews, anchors, and story content on the weekend, do not follow the same format during the five-day week. In addition, non-sweep time periods were examined due to the tendency of news organizations to alter their regular patterns of news content during the sweeps period. "Sweep" data are often used by local stations and cable systems to set local advertising rates and to make program decisions (Nielsen, 2007, p. 1). Therefore, the four "sweep" months: February, May, July, and November were not included in the current study (Nielsen, 2007, p. 1).

Moreover, evening newscasts rather than morning and early evening newscasts were chosen for several reasons. First, Channel 5 (KVVU) does not have an early evening newscast. In order to ensure a representative sample and an equal playing field, late evening newscasts were selected. Furthermore, the number of houses using television (HUT) is usually higher during the late evening broadcasts because more people are at
home at that time as opposed to the dinner hour (Curry, 2005; Sinner, 2005). Late evening newscasts are also similar in nature by providing audiences with comparable viewing coverage of news stories. Lastly, some early evening broadcasts report national news taken from a major network, also known as “wrap-arounds” (Curry, 2005, p. 33). Since these events are not representative of specific events occurring in the Las Vegas community, early evening broadcasts were not selected.

The first 15-minutes of KVBC, KLAS, and KTNV at 11:00 p.m. and KINC at 11:30 p.m. Monday through Friday were collected. Since local news stations divide a half-hour newscast into two parts: the news block for the first 15-minutes, followed by weather and sports, only the news section of the newscasts was included in the analysis (Curry, 2005). Because KVVU has an hour-long broadcast Monday through Friday, “Fox 5 News at 10” and “Fox 5 News at 10:30,” only the first 15-minutes of KVVU newscasts were recorded. Similar to the format and story content followed by the other station newscasts, KVVU first half-hour focuses more on local news, whereas the second half-hour emphasizes news on a national scale (Sinner, 2005).

To ensure a representative sample, local evening news programs were recorded for a total of four weeks: May 25, 2007 through June 21, 2007. These dates were chosen to avoid inconsistencies with news programming during periods like rating “sweeps,” where news organizations tend to alter their regular patterns of news content in the effort to attract additional viewers. Since the nature and content of news reports may be uncharacteristic of typical programming, the “sweeps” time period was not examined. Each newscast that was recorded was assigned a number. Numbers were mixed thoroughly and then selected by a colleague. Five newscasts from each station were
randomly selected for analysis. The entire taped news sample consisted of 24 newscasts which totaled approximately six hours of recorded news data. As a result of technical difficulties, one KINC newscast was not included in the sample.

Measures

News Story

A news story consists of a report given by an anchor or field reporter who describes a specific event or occurrence. Each story usually begins with an anchor's lead, which is a brief introduction to a story's content, and then followed by an anchor, reporter, or a pre-videotaped news package that delivers the actual story (Sinner, 2005). The end of a news story is indicated by the change in topic and can be identified as (1) a toss to another anchor for a different story, (2) a transition by the same anchor to a different story, or (3) a commercial break (Sinner, 2005).

Crime Story

This study utilized the definition of crime provided by Dixon and Azocar (2006): "Crime was defined as behavior or information either pertaining to the commission of a particular law-breaking act, or social or legal reaction to law-breaking more generally" (p. 149). Based on the United States Department of Justice, violent crime composed of four offenses: murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (Crime in the United States, 2005). However, for data collection purposes of crime in the United States, violent crime includes murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, followed by the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft (Crime in the United States, 2005, p.
1). For the purposes of this research, all seven violent crimes tracked by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Las Vegas Metro Police Department were coded to compare the depiction of violent crime on the news with crime data. Coders utilized all cues contained in a crime story including reporter statements and officer statements regarding the nature of the crime in question.

Utilizing similar methods employed by Romer, Jamieson, and De Coteau (1998), participants in crime were classified as the person who “was reported as having been accused of, arrested for, or convicted of a violent or nonviolent crime” (p. 292). All crime stories dealing with perpetrators, crime offenses, and trial stories were included in the analysis. However, stories that specifically dealt with victims of crimes, bystanders, or experts were not included. The objective of this study was to determine whether an overrepresentation or underrepresentation of crime exists among perpetrators of specific racial groups. Lastly, to ensure further validity of these measures, local and national crimes reported on the news were coded.

Index Crime

Each crime was coded (see Appendix I and II) based on the violent crime index utilized by the Department of Justice. The following codes were used to categorize Las Vegas television crime news: local murder and nonnegligent manslaughter = 1 which is the willful (nonnegligent) killing on one human being by another; forcible rape = 2 which is the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will; local robbery = 3; local aggravated assault = 4 which is an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great
bodily harm. The remaining codes: local burglary = 5; local larceny-theft = 6; local auto theft = 7; local other = 8; nationally reported crime = 9; and 10 = indeterminate. The coding method in Appendix I and II provided crime and race representation of Blacks and Whites as found in the local news media. These figures were compared with Las Vegas Metro Police Department’s violent crime and race statistics.

Race Identification

To determine the race of perpetrators, the following indicators were used to assess race: shown on videotape, in mug shots or artist sketches, actual photographs, or when indicated by anchors or reporters (Dixon & Linz, 2000). In previous scholarship, “when these more apparent indicators of race were not available, race was inferred based on characteristics of the story,” such as surname, a family member was shown, and when prior news reports indicated race (p. 139). Although the process of assuming race is not always definitive, in most cases the information provided will help make an informed decision regarding the race of the perpetrator. When coders were absolutely certain that they could not identify the race of the offender, the “unknown” option was selected. The race groups listed by the American Community Survey served as the categories for this study. They were: White, Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander. For coding simplicity, Asian and Pacific Islander were grouped as one category. In addition, even though Latinos (Hispanics) are not identified as a racial category in demographic assessments, they were included in the newscast analysis (N. White & K. Thompson, personal communication, December 11, 2006). The following codes were used when classifying race: White (Caucasian) = 1; Black (African American) = 2; Latino (Hispanic) = 3; American Indian/Alaskan Native = 4; Asian/
Pacific Islander = 5; Other = 8; Unknown Race = 9; 10 = No Suspect; and 11 = More than one race.

In the instances where multiple perpetrators were depicted in a single news story, this study followed Dixon and Linz’s (2000) procedures for coding multiple perpetrators. The “category for race was coded based on the attributes of the majority of characters in any one story” (p. 139).

Visual Identified Race

Each visual image was coded (see Appendix I and II) using methods conducted by Entman and Rojecki (2000). Each visual representation that depicted race in a crime news story was coded using yes or no variables: yes = 1 and no = 2. This coding method determined whether any racial differences existed in the visual portion of crime news reports.

On-Screen Name

Each crime suspect who received a visualization that included their name printed on screen in a crime news story was placed into this category using yes or no variables: yes = 1 and no = 2. The presence of an offender’s name determined whether or not individual identification exists among certain racial groups.

Under Physical Control of an Officer

Each perpetrator that was visually presented as being handcuffed, grasped, or restrained by an officer(s) was coded using yes or no variables: yes = 1 and no = 2. Media depictions of suspects who were in physical custody of law defending officials had revealed if certain racial groups were more threatening than others.
Clothing

The following codes were used to categorize clothing depictions in Las Vegas television crime news stories: jail clothing = 1 which is the prison garb worn by prisoners; professional business attire = 2 which is a business suit, which comprises a coat, trousers, and/or tie; urban or hip hop clothing = 3 which is considered baggy jeans, sports jerseys, oversized t-shirts, and flashy jewelry; other clothing = 4; indeterminate = 5; and not applicable = 6.

Appears in a Mug-shot

Lastly, suspects who were visually associated with a mug-shot were coded in this category. A mug-shot was an obvious photo taken by a law enforcement personnel at the time of an alleged perpetrator’s booking at a police facility. This was one or two straight or side shot head profiles, and did or did not include a name and/or booking number. Some of the elements of this picture were cropped by the news production in a newscast. Each variable was coded using yes or no variables: yes = 1 and no = 2.

Las Vegas Metro Police Department Statistics

Violent crime statistics obtained from the Las Vegas Metro Police Department for January – December 2006 were compared to the frequency of violent crimes as represented in local newscasts (K. Zimmer, personal communication, February 21, 2007). For the purposes of this study, Blacks and Whites who committed violent crimes in Clark County from January – December 2006 were compared to the frequency of such crimes as depicted on local news media. However, not all violent crimes were included. The Las Vegas Metro Police Department was unable to provide race statistics for
burglary, larceny, and auto theft crimes since the perpetrator was often unknown by the victim (K. Zimmer, personal communication, February 21, 2006).

Coding

Coder training and testing was conducted before completion of sampling all newscasts. The principal coder trained a colleague in coding procedures utilizing the measures reported in this chapter. A random sample of five newscasts, not part of the larger sample, was chosen for coder training and testing. The primary investigator and colleague independently coded five randomly selected newscasts and then compared results, discussed any conflicts, and resolved any differences. Following satisfactory training, 24 episodes of the 100-episode sample were independently coded by both the primary coder and trained colleague. A coefficient of .80 or higher was established \textit{a priori} to determine if measures were reliable. Inter-coder reliability was calculated by means of Cohen's kappa. All measures were reliable and were reported as follows: for the number of news stories, $\kappa = 1.0$; for crime stories, $\kappa = 1.0$; for index crime, $\kappa = 1.0$; for race identification, $\kappa = .934$; for visual identified race, $\kappa = .901$; for on-screen name, $\kappa = .897$; for under physical control of an officer, $\kappa = 1.0$; for clothing, $\kappa = .916$; and for appears in a mug-shot, $\kappa = 1.0$. The principal coder and trained colleague completed the remaining coding.
Analysis Plan

Chapter Four reports the results for the current study. First, an overview of data was reported, including the total number of news stories analyzed. This total number was broken down into the types of violent crime news stories reported for each news station, crime stories classified by race identification, the race representations associated with specific violent crimes, and the visual differences, if any, associated with crime and race depictions reported in the local news. Hypotheses one through seven were tested by means of descriptive, Chi Square, and ANOVA statistics.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

General Description

The sample for this study consists of 562 news stories. An overview of results follows. Table 1 illustrates the number of stories per channel in the sample. Percentages based on frequencies are rounded to the nearest tenth. Therefore, not all percentage columns total 100%. Frequencies show KVBC Channel 3 comprises 16% of the sample, with a total of 90 news stories while KINC Channel 15 comprises 17.1% of the sample, with a total of 96 news stories. Even though KINC is missing one recorded newscast, the station displays a comparable amount of news stories reported in its first-15 minute news blocks. KVVU Channel 5 comprises 19.6% of the sample, with a total of 100 news stories, KLAS Channel 8 comprises 19.9% of the sample, with a total of 122 news stories; followed by KTNV Channel 13 which comprises 27.4% of the sample, with a total of 154 news stories. Statistical analysis reveals that of those 562 news stories, there is an average of 6.68 news stories for each 15-minute episode. Data also suggest that 33.6% (189 stories) are crime stories and 66.4% (373 stories) are non-crime stories.
Table 1

Number of News Stories per Channel (Entire Sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Number of Stories</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KVBC Channel 3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINC Channel 15</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KVVU Channel 5</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLAS Channel 8</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTNV Channel 13</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index Crime

Table 2 illustrates the breakdown of the type of crime news stories reported in the sampled newscasts. Descriptive analysis reveals that of the 189 crime news stories, 29.1% classify as local other. Stories coded in this category include criminal offenses of kidnapping, coercion, perjury, prostitution, child pornography, and money laundering. The second largest crime story coded is local murder/nonnegligent manslaughter, comprising 26.5%; followed by local aggravated assault 11.1%; local robbery 10.6%; local forcible rape 9.5%; national crime story 8.5%; and indeterminate 2.6%. Stories coded in the indeterminate category are crime news reports broadcast in Spanish on KINC Channel 15. Because both coders are unable to translate the Spanish language, they had difficulty in determining the type of crime news story reported. Lastly, local larceny/theft and local auto theft comprises 1.1% of the sample.
Table 2

Crime News Stories Classified into Type of Index Crime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Other</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Murder/Non-negligent Manslaughter</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Robbery</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Forcible Rape</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Crime Story</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeterminate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Larceny Theft</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Auto Theft</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Race Identification

Table 3 provides a general descriptive analysis of race depictions reported in all crime stories coded. The largest categories coded are White, accounting for 27.5% of the sample and Black, which comprises 26.5%. Unknown race and No Suspect comprise 16.9% of the sample. No Suspect involves crime reports where no race are depicted since the perpetrators are unknown by authorities and had yet to be found. Latinos comprise 7.4%; followed by other 2.6%; Asian/Pacific Islander 1.1%; and more than one race 1.1%.
Table 3

Crime News Stories Classified by Race Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Race</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Suspect</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one race</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visually Identified Race

Descriptive analysis reveals that of the 189 crime news stories reported, 66.1% (125 stories) of crime news reports visually identify race, while 33.9% (64 stories) did not visually identify the race of a perpetrator.

On-Screen Name

When crime news reports include an on-screen name of offenders, the exact opposite of the visual identified race variable occurred. Statistical data find 66.1% of perpetrators did not have an on-screen name, while 33.9% did include an on-screen name of the perpetrator. In other words, the data suggest that when crime news reports visually identify race, perpetrators did not have an on-screen name. On the contrary, when perpetrators are not visually identified, crime news reports contain an on-screen name.
Under Physical Control of an Officer

Of the 189 crime news stories reported, 85.7% (162 stories) of offenders are not under physical control of a police officer. Offenders that are visually presented as being handcuffed, grasped, or restrained by an officer represent 14.3% (27 stories) of the total sample.

Clothing

Table 4 illustrates the type of clothing worn by alleged perpetrators in various crime news report settings, such as in a courtroom, police chase, mug-shot, or in search of a suspect who has yet to be apprehended by police. The largest category for clothing type is not applicable, accounting for 39.2% (74 stories) of the sample. Non-crime related stories include video footage not pertaining to the charged crime. For instance, personal photographs of perpetrators from their mySpace account, illustrations of suspects in their professional work environment, such as a professional athlete playing football, or in other cases where no suspect is visually identified. The second largest category is other clothing at 29.6% (56 stories), which includes all types of clothing not categorized in the other three clothing variables. Professional business attire comprises 13.8% (26 stories), jail clothing 8.5% (16 stories), unknown 6.3% (12 stories), and urban hip hop clothing 2.6% (5 stories).
Table 4

*Clothing worn by Alleged Perpetrators in Crime News Stories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothing</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Clothing</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Business Attire</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail Clothing</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Hip Hop Clothing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>189</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appears in a Mug-shot

Of the total 189 crime stories coded, descriptive analysis reveals that alleged perpetrators appear in a mug-shot 73.5% (139 stories) of the time, while 26.5% (50 stories) of perpetrators did not appear in a mug-shot when reported on the local news.

**Hypothesis One**

The findings from this study provide partial support for hypothesis one. Recall hypothesis one: Blacks will be overrepresented, while Whites will be underrepresented in index crime news stories in Las Vegas local television news compared to actual crime arrests reports by race. Given the nature of crime and race statistics provided by the Las Vegas Metro Police Department, only local index crimes of murder/nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault are utilized for comparison in hypothesis one. Data for local burglary, larceny theft, and auto theft are not compared
since perpetrators of such crimes are often unknown to the victims and police (K. Zimmer, personal communication, February 21, 2006).

As indicated in Table 5, results conclude that Blacks are overrepresented for robbery and fairly represented for aggravated assault. For crime news reports that discuss local murder and forcible rape offenses, Blacks are underrepresented. There is zero representation of African Americans for forcible rape cases on the local news. In addition, Whites are underrepresented for forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault offenses, but overrepresented for murder. Whites contain zero representation for robbery cases. There is not enough evidence to suggest that Blacks are overrepresented in index crime news stories reported in local Las Vegas television news compared to actual crime arrests reports by race. However, Whites are underrepresented for three of the four index crime news stories assessed, compared to actual crime arrests reports by race. Overall, there is partial support for hypothesis one.

In addition, even though Latinos are not compared in hypothesis one, they are the least represented group for local crime news stories in the Las Vegas market. They are underrepresented for all index crime news stories sampled. Contrary to Curry’s (2005) findings of the Las Vegas market, Latinos are the most represented racial group, while Blacks are the least represented in local crime and race news reports. In the current study, the unknown race category is the most overrepresented group.
Table 5

*Index Crime Stories on Local Television News compared to Metro Crime and Race Arrest Reports*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local Murder</th>
<th>Forcible Rape</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>Aggravated Assault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metro/ TV</td>
<td>Metro/ TV</td>
<td>Metro/ TV</td>
<td>Metro/ TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>18.46%/ 28%</td>
<td>29.24%/ 18%</td>
<td>15.13%/ 0%</td>
<td>29.33%/ 9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(72)</td>
<td>(896)</td>
<td>(1256)</td>
<td>(434)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>44.62%/ 4%</td>
<td>18.77%/ 0%</td>
<td>59.2%/ 70%</td>
<td>36.35%/ 38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(174)</td>
<td>(575)</td>
<td>(5031)</td>
<td>(538)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>26.15%/ 12%</td>
<td>23.92%/ 0%</td>
<td>20%/ 0%</td>
<td>26.69%/ 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(102)</td>
<td>(733)</td>
<td>(1699)</td>
<td>(395)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Race</td>
<td>9.23%/ 16%</td>
<td>25.13%/ 0%</td>
<td>4.92%/ 20%</td>
<td>5.07%/ 28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td>(770)</td>
<td>(418)</td>
<td>(75)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Information in parentheses indicates the number of cases.

**Hypothesis Two**

The findings from this study provide support for hypothesis two. Hypothesis two predicts that the distribution of perpetrators of crime by race in local Las Vegas television news will be inconsistent with the distribution of actual crime arrests reports by race in Las Vegas. As mentioned in hypothesis one, only local index crimes of murder/nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault are utilized for comparison since crime arrests reports for local burglary, larceny theft, and auto theft are often unknown to the victims and police (K. Zimmer, personal communication, February 21, 2006).

As reported in Table 5, data analysis reveals that of the 189 crime news stories coded on television, Whites are overrepresented for local murder by 10%, underrepresented for
forcible rape by 11% and aggravated assault by 20%, and not represented at all in robbery cases compared to actual crime arrests data. Blacks are underrepresented for local murder by 41%, not represented at all for forcible rape cases, overrepresented for robbery by 11%, and fairly represented for aggravated assault compared to actual crime arrests data. Latinos are both underrepresented for local murder by 14% and aggravated assault by 8%, and not represented for both forcible rape and robbery. Finally, the unknown race category is primarily overrepresented in cases of local murder by 7%, robbery by 16%, and aggravated assault by 24%; followed by no representation for forcible rape cases compared to actual crime arrests. Overall, there is only one instance on local television crime news where crime is represented fairly compared to actual crime arrests reports by race in Las Vegas.

Furthermore, the current study considered additional tests to determine whether there were any significant differences among race groups for Metro crime statistics and local television crime news stories. Due to reasons discussed in Chapter Five, actual statistical analysis was not performed.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three posits that homicide will be overrepresented in Las Vegas local television news compared to actual crime data. As discussed previously, only local murder, aggravated assault, robbery, and forcible rape crime stories on television are used to determine the percentage of murder represented in Las Vegas local television news. Of the 109 crime news stories analyzed, the findings from the current study
provide support for hypothesis three. Homicide in Las Vegas local television news comprises of 45.8% of local broadcasts compared to actual arrests of 2.9%.

Hypothesis Four

The findings from this study do not provide support for hypothesis four. Recall hypothesis four: Minorities will be visually identified more frequently than Whites in crime stories of Las Vegas local television news. Contrary to the predicted hypothesis, the results indicate that Whites are visually identified more frequently than minorities in crime stories reported in local television newscasts, $\chi^2(1, N = 102) = 2.12, p = .14$. Whites are visually identified by race at 58%, while minorities (which included Black, Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other races) are visually identified at 48% of the sampled crime newscasts. These findings are not supported by the review of literature in this study. This analysis incorporates Chi-Square statistics to compare two groups utilizing nominal data. Tests reveal no statistical difference between Whites and all other race groups. In fact, both groups are visually identified most of the time and in the same proportion to each other.

Hypothesis Five

In hypothesis five, three visual variables are assessed. Recall hypothesis five: Blacks will appear more frequently than any other race under the physical control of a police officer(s), in street or jail clothing, and in a mug-shot in Las Vegas local television news. The results of this study find no support for all three variables analyzed. Of the 123 cases depicting perpetrators under the physical control of a police officer(s), Blacks
are under physical control at 24%, while other races (White, Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other) report 13.7%, $\chi^2(1, N = 123) = 2.14, p = .14$. There is not enough evidence for Chi-Square analysis to provide statistical significance for hypothesis five-A.

In hypothesis five-B, Blacks are predicted to appear more frequently than any other race in street or jail clothing. All other races (White, Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other) are visually identified in street or jail clothing at 21.9%, while Blacks represent 0%, $\chi^2(1, A = 111) = 9.73, p = .002$. Of the 111 cases depicting alleged perpetrators in street or jail clothing, Blacks are not portrayed at all in the total sampled newscast. Therefore, the results indicate no support for hypothesis five-B.

Lastly, hypothesis five-C posited that Blacks will appear more frequently in a mug-shot than any other race in Las Vegas local television crime news. The findings from the current study find no support for hypothesis five-C. Of the 123 crime stories assessed, all other races (White, Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other) appear more frequently in a mug-shot at 42.5%, compared to Blacks who appear at 36%, $\chi^2(1, N = 123) = .51, p = .47$. Overall, when analyzing the visual attributes associated with crime and race representation on the local Las Vegas news, there is no support to suggest that Blacks appear more frequently than any other race under the physical control of a police officer(s), in street or jail clothing, and in a mug-shot, as previous research has suggested.
Hypothesis Six

Findings from this study find no support for hypothesis six. Hypothesis six posits that Whites will appear more frequently than any other race with an on-screen name and in a suit compared to all other clothing in Las Vegas local television news. For the first part of hypothesis six, both race and the on-screen name variables are assessed. The top three race categories, Whites, Blacks, and Latinos are analyzed, since the remaining race variables: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other did not generate enough data for Chi-Square analysis. Whites appear with an on-screen name by 53.8%, Blacks 52%, and Latinos at 42.9%, $\chi^2(2, N = 116) = .536, p = .765$. The data report no statistical significance for both the race and on-screen name variables.

In addition, for the latter portion of hypothesis six, both the race and clothing variables are compared. Recall that hypothesis six-B posits that Whites will appear more frequently than any other race in a suit compared to all other clothing in Las Vegas local television news. The top three race categories are also applied in hypothesis six-B, however, there is an insufficient amount of data to produce a Chi-Square test. Because too many cells in the Chi-Square matrix have expected counts that are less than five observations, this part of the hypothesis did not lend itself to statistical analysis.

Hypothesis Seven

One of the ideas this study is interested in observing is how the five local Las Vegas news stations differ in their treatment of crime and race representation, specifically assessing whether the five local Las Vegas news stations differ in the percentage of stories they report about crime. The race portion of hypothesis seven will be discussed
later. Since there is minimal research assessing crime and race representation in the Las Vegas market, this study in addition to Curry’s (2005) will provide a more in-depth understanding for future media scholars observing crime and race in the Las Vegas area. Table 6 illustrates the percentage of crime news stories reported on each local news channel and the overall percentage of crime news stories reported across all five news stations.

Chi-Square analyses reveal a highly significant interaction, $\chi^2(4, N = 562) = 17.720, p = .001$. Overall, 33.6% of all stories are about crime. On Channel 13, KTNV, 24.7% of all news stories broadcast crime, which is the lowest percentage compared to all other news stations; followed by Channel 3, KVBC, at 28.9% and Channel 15, KINC at 30.2%. The remaining two news stations, Channel 8, KLAS, and Channel 5, FOX, indicate higher crime reporting rates compared to the overall crime news report total of 33.6%. KLAS reveals a crime new report total of 39.3%, followed by FOX with the highest number of crime news reports at 47.3%, nearly half of its total news broadcast.
Table 6

*Percentage of Crime News Stories reported on each Local News Channel*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KTNV, Channel 13 (ABC)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KVBC, Channel 3 (NBC)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINC, Channel 15 (Univision)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLAS, Channel 8 (CBS)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KVVU, Channel 5 (FOX)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Crime News Stories</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-related Crime News Stories</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, this study is also interested in assessing how the five local news stations differ when reporting race in crime news reports. Similar to Chi-Square tests conducted for hypothesis six-B, there are too many cells in the Chi-Square matrix that have expected counts that are less than five observations. Therefore, the latter portion of hypothesis seven did not lend itself to statistical analysis.

**Extended Analyses**

Additional analyses are conducted post-hoc in order to determine differences, if any, in the way that the five local news stations report local murder/non-negligent manslaughter and race. The local murder/non-negligent manslaughter variable is the second highest crime index story reported in a frequency analysis of all local news stations. Even though local other is classified as the highest reported index crime, the
variable is not selected because local other includes several crime offenses, which are kid­

napping, coercion, perjury, prostitution, child pornography, etc. Each of these offenses may 

not be identified for each news station. For simplicity, the local murder variable is chosen.

Table 7 illustrates the breakdown of local murder reported in the sampled newscasts. Because each news channel is sampled on various days, the following table is not an indication of the disparities found in local murder coverage for the Las Vegas market. However, the data reveal one interesting aspect future media scholars may want to explore when assessing crime coverage in the local news. For instance, future studies may assess the number of local murder crime stories reported on any given day among the five local news stations in Las Vegas.

Further exploring the murder and race variables, an additional analysis reveals what race is depicted more for murder stories on each local news station. Since there are too few cases to compile a Chi Square analysis for each race sampled, only Whites and Blacks are compared with local murder cases. Overall, it is not fair to assume that Blacks are more likely depicted in murder crime stories than Whites. However, the data do reveal that for Channel 15, the local Spanish news station, there are zero cases of murder stories depicting Blacks, compared to eight news reports of Whites. Channel 3 and Channel 13 are equal in their representations of both races, and both Channel 5 and Channel 8 are slightly higher in their representation of Blacks, but not enough to assume that Blacks were more likely portrayed than Whites for local murder crime news reports.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Number of Stories</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KLAS Channel 8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KVUU Channel 5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINC Channel 15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTNV Channel 13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KVBC Channel 3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

General Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to evaluate the role of crime and race representation in the local Las Vegas news market, specifically among African Americans and Whites. Content analyses that explore the media’s depiction of crime and race emphasized African Americans as the primary perpetrators of violence, while Whites were commonly portrayed as victims or in positions of authority (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998). As discussed in media studies introduced in Chapter Two, criminal depictions of Black and White offenders on local television news supported the belief that similar findings would be present in the current research. This chapter discusses the results of the current study, followed by the strengths and limitations of the study, and concludes with suggestions for future research.

Crime and Race Representation

Of the six hypotheses assessing crime and race variables, the current research found the majority of support for hypotheses focusing on crime and race representation, and no support for hypotheses testing visual representations of crime and race in local television news. As predicted in hypothesis two, the media’s depiction of crime and race were inconsistent with the actual distribution of crime and race reports in Las Vegas. Based on
the four violent crimes compared, local murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, this study revealed how farfetched the media’s depiction were of crime and race in comparison to the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s statistics. Overall, there was only one instance on local television crime news where crime was represented fairly compared to actual crime arrests reports by race in Las Vegas. In the current research, Blacks committed 36.35% of aggravated assault crimes in Las Vegas, and on the local news Blacks portrayed 38.1% of aggravated assault cases (Table 5). There was a difference of representation by less than 2%. For all other cases, crime and race representation varied from as low as 7% to as high as 41% for both underrepresentation and overrepresentation of crime and race compared to actual crime statistics in Las Vegas. Hypothesis two supported what previous media studies have reported, that the media are an “inaccurate reflection of the real world of crime” (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Curry, 2005).

Inaccurate representations of crime and race are problematic because viewers receive a distorted view of crime occurring in their communities. Viewers who lack personal experience and direct access to criminal sources are probably less likely to second guess the information they receive in the news. Since previous research found local television newscasts to be a primary source for information about crime, the possibility exists that heavy television viewers in the Las Vegas market may become even more fearful of being victims of crime in their own neighborhoods (Chermak, 1994; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar 2000).

Furthermore, this study revealed the inconsistent nature of how local Las Vegas news stations may report crime and race in the future, and a perspective for future scholars
interested in exploring crime and race representation in other growing metropolitan
cities. Curry (2005), who also explored crime and race content in Las Vegas news
media, concluded that Blacks were underrepresented as criminal offenders, while Whites
and Latinos were overrepresented in local news broadcasts. According to previous
research, Curry’s (2005) findings did not support previous literature since most studies
found Blacks overrepresented in violent crime stories and Whites and Latinos
underrepresented (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Romer, Jamieson,
& De Coteau; 1998). Thus, Curry’s (2005) results did not confirm previous trends of
crime and race representation.

In the current study, hypothesis one predicted that Blacks would be overrepresented,
while Whites would be underrepresented in index crime news stories in Las Vegas local
television news compared to actual crime arrests reports by race. However, hypothesis
one revealed that Blacks were fairly represented, underrepresented, and overrepresented,
while the majority of Whites were underrepresented for three of the four violent crimes
assessed. Although Latinos were not compared in hypothesis one, Latinos were
underrepresented for all four violent crime categories. With the exception of African
Americans, the current research supported previous findings of Latinos and Whites who
were often underrepresented in violent crime new reports in the local news (Dixon &
Linz, 2000; Gilliam, Jr. & Iyengar, 2000; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau; 1998).
Overall, compared to previous studies, hypothesis one was partially supported since
Blacks were not overrepresented for the four violent crimes explored.

Although Curry’s (2005) study was the “first to see a declining trend in reports of
criminal activity by Blacks”, and an upward trend for Latino and White criminal
offenders, a consistent trend between Curry (2005) and the current research was not represented in local Las Vegas news media (p. 48-49). However, one of Curry’s (2005) limitations was the large percentage of “Unknown” offenders who were not coded by race. The “Unknown” category for all crimes had the largest number of perpetrators at 43.4%, compared to the current study which comprised of 16% for murder, 20% for robbery, and 28.6% for aggravated assault (Curry, 2005). According to Curry (2005), the results of the study “could have been dramatically different had those identities been either discernable or known” (p. 56). Both Curry (2005) and the current study do agree that African American representation in the Las Vegas news market is changing compared to previous research in other localities.

Overall, based on the results of Curry’s (2005) findings and the current study, Las Vegas news stations do not conform to a specific pattern of reporting crime and race in the news. Although the current study sampled crime and race nearly three years after Curry’s (2005) research, the data reveal that local Las Vegas’ news portrayal of crime and race representation are unpredictable and does not consistently support an overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a specific race. Thus, local Las Vegas news content does not appear to represent one race over another when reporting crime news. In order to assess a consistent trend of crime and race representation in the Las Vegas market, additional content analyses are required to test Curry’s (2005) and the current study’s findings of crime and race representation in the local news.
Implications of Crime and Race Representation

Even though findings indicated that Las Vegas local news media were inconsistent in their representation of crime and race, hypothesis three and post hoc analyses suggested a tendency for the local Las Vegas news market to be driven by crime, and less likely to be motivated by race when reporting crime news. Hypothesis three asserted that homicide would be overrepresented in Las Vegas television news compared to actual crime data. Conclusions revealed that homicide comprised of 45.8% of local broadcasts compared to actual arrests of 2.9%. Compared to previous literature assessing the overrepresentation of murder, the current finding supported previous research that murder was often overrepresented on the local news, and thus was an inaccurate reflection of violent crime (Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Curry, 2005).

In addition, post hoc analyses of Table 6 (Percentage of Crime News Stories reported on each Local News Channel) and Table 7 (Number of Local Murder Stories reported on each Local News Channel) compared crime and murder representation of each local news station sampled. Murder was specifically assessed because the category was the second highest index crime presented in the current study. Although Local Other was the highest index crime classified, the category was not compared because it comprised of more than one crime. The Local Murder category was specific and easier to pinpoint for statistical comparisons. Table 8 illustrates the percentage of crime news stories reported on the local news, and the percentages of murder and all other crimes reported on each news broadcast.
As discussed in Chapter Four, Table 2 revealed that the average percentage of local murder news stories reported in Las Vegas was 26.5%. Of all five news stations sampled, four of the five channels reported over 26.5% in their representation of murder on the local news. KVBC Channel 3, KTNV Channel 13, KINC Channel 15, and KVVU Channel 5 were above the average number of murders represented in the total sample assessed. In some cases, murder was the dominating factor for local crime news representation. The results were troubling since the actual percentage of murder arrests
in Las Vegas were 2.9%. Overall, Las Vegas news audiences receive a skewed representation of murder from each local news channel in Las Vegas.

Furthermore, hypothesis seven determined whether the five local Las Vegas news stations differed in the percentage of stories they reported about crime. Chi-Square analyses revealed a highly significant interaction, \( \chi^2(4, N = 562) = 17.720, p = .001 \). Overall, 33.6% of all stories were about crime. These data confirmed that violent crimes are an essential component of crime news reports in local Las Vegas news media. In addition, audiences are not only receiving an inconsistent representation of crime in their communities, but the current study may also assume that local news viewers intake a large percentage of crime news in a thirty-minute newscast.

In addition, although the current study was not intended to compare local crime and race data with national crime and race data, this research aimed to explore Las Vegas Metropolitan Police statistics with national violent crime statistics provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s office. Such an attempt would help determine whether Las Vegas was higher, comparable, or lower in violent crime compared to the United States as a whole. This comparison would help justify the percentage of violent crime representation reported in the local news. Unfortunately, according to Pam Sebring, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Administrative Assistant for the State of Nevada, UCR violent crime statistics is not individually broken down by crime and race (P. Sebring, personal communication, February 20, 2008). Therefore, the current research was unable to compare local crime and race data with national crime and race data for 2006.
Visual Representation of Crime and Race

Lastly, as opposed to hypotheses one through three, and seven that were concerned with crime and race representation, hypotheses four through six tested the visual representation of crime and race depicted in the Las Vegas news market. Utilizing visual variables tested by Entman and Rojecki (2000), the current study did not produce similar results. From a visual perspective, data revealed that race did not appear to be a significant factor in crime news reports of Blacks and Whites. Hypothesis four indicated that minorities were not visually identified more frequently than Whites in crime news reports on the local news. Hypothesis five did not find Blacks to appear more frequently than any other race under the physical control of a police officer, in street or jail clothing, or in a mug-shot; and finally, hypothesis six did not find Whites to appear more frequently than any other race with an on-screen name and in a suit or casual clothing in Las Vegas television news.

Unlike Entman and Rojecki (2000), who found a “racial skew” embedded in Chicago’s local television news content, the current study did not reveal any significant racial differences that impacted the visual reporting of Whites and Blacks in crime news reports in the local Las Vegas news market (p.78). There was no indication that Black perpetrators were visually perceived to be the more dangerous or threatening race compared to Whites, no tendency for Blacks to be portrayed as individuals less than Whites due to an on-screen name, nor any social class differences based on clothing appearances when shown in motion videos or in court room appearances.

Compared to Entman and Rojecki’s (2000) findings, the dynamics in the Las Vegas news market may be entirely different from the city of Chicago. Entman and Rojecki’s
(2000) study was conducted in early 2000, as opposed to the current study conducted in 2007. In the past seven years, television news stations may have altered their news practices and how they report crime and race in the news. For instance, Entman and Rojecki (2000) explained that minorities constituted 10 percent or less of the news organization's workforce in Chicago. Based on a website tally of on-air personalities of each local news station sampled in this study, the Las Vegas market consists of an ethnically, diverse group of news anchors and reporters, who represent the racial makeup of residents who live in Clark County Southern Nevada. Since Nevada continues to be one of the fastest growing states in the nation, the overall demographics of the city continues to change and possibly the news organization’s perspectives in reporting crime and race in the news (Top 10 fastest growing states, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

In order to attract audiences to watch their local newscasts, on-air personalities signify the varied populations they represent.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the crime and race representation discussion, the Las Vegas market may tend to favor crime news over race in crime news reports. This may be indicative of why racial disparities are not a dominating factor in the sampled study. According to previous media studies, crime news is characteristic of local television news programs (Chermak, 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Graber, 1993; Lipschultz & Hilt, 2002; Lowry, Nio, & Leitner, 2003). Since local news stations are in the business of competing for high ratings, it is not farfetched to assume that the local Las Vegas news media sensationalize crime news of various races for their own personal interests. In addition, Las Vegas is unique in the sense that the city attracts and occupies many high-profiled, powerful, and atypical criminal circumstances. For example, in the current
study, some of the more popular crime cases reported on the local news consist of National Football League athlete Pac Man Jones (Black) and his alleged connection to a shooting at a Las Vegas gentleman’s club, a local resident’s (Latino) hand-made car bomb that resulted in murder at the Luxor Casino’s parking lot, and the alleged death of a local politician by her husband (White) through lethal poisoning. Each of these crime scenarios fulfills the dramatic nature of television, meets the necessary criteria to attracting an audience’s attention, and addresses violent crime of various races in the Las Vegas market.

Interpretation of Results

All of the above data indicate that current trends of African American representation from a criminal standpoint may be changing. According to previous research, African Americans were consistently linked with violent crime, and primarily emphasized as perpetrators of violence, and one who fits the stereotype, or profile of a dangerous, violent criminal (Dixon & Azocar; 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996). In the current study, Blacks were not overrepresented. Although Curry (2005) was the first to observe a declining trend in Black criminal activity, this research revealed a varied representation of Black crime for the four violent crimes assessed. Overall, Curry (2005) and the current study suggest that current trends of African Americans as the most active perpetrators of criminal violence were not supported in local Las Vegas news media.

In addition, this study focuses on White and Black representation in the local news. Although Latinos were not specifically assessed in the current study, both Whites and
Latinos were underrepresented in crime news reports compared to actual crime statistics. This finding supports previous literature.

The trends discussed here do not display the application of ethnic blame theory. Previous media research proposed that ethnic blame theory was responsible for the overrepresentation of minorities, specifically African Americans and Latinos, when reporting crime and race representation in the news (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau; 1998). The theory suggested that minorities were more likely to be blamed for violent crimes occurring in particular communities, since the problems that they experienced were related to their own ethnic group, and how their problem behavior affected the ingroup (Whites) (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau; 1998). Due to the findings of this study, ethnic blame theory was not applicable because Black and Latinos were not overrepresented.

In addition, based on the conclusions advanced in the current research, the justifications proposed in Chapter One, and previous studies conducted in the current century, it may be safe to suggest that local television news audiences continue to receive distorted representations of crime and race occurring in their communities. In a perfect world, media scholars may be optimistic to think that their local news media are reporting crime and race in an equitable fashion, since journalists have a public responsibility “to [seek] truth and [provide] a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues, as well as “avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity……”, as indicated in their personal oath to the “code of ethics” (Society, p. 1). However, in the real world, journalists are limited in the amount of information they can report in a
televised news story, due to deadlines and resources available in any given day. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, news stations are in the business in attracting audiences and increasing ratings, and local television news stories may reflect that competitive edge in the type of stories news networks continue to report. In the case of local Las Vegas news media, crime as opposed to race appears to be the more dominating factor when reporting crime and race in the news.

**Strengths of Current Study**

There were several major strengths for this study. The coding scheme used in this research models previous research assessing crime and race variables, specifically Curry's (2005) and Entman and Rojecki's (2000) research of crime and race news reports. In addition, this study included a detailed description for coding clothing variables in crime and race reports in the local news.

Intercoder reliability for the current study was high. All measures were reliable and were reported as follows: for the number of news stories, $\kappa = 1.0$; for crime stories, $\kappa = 1.0$; for index crime, $\kappa = 1.0$; for race identification, $\kappa = .934$; for visual identified race, $\kappa = .901$; for on-screen name, $\kappa = .897$; for under physical control of an officer, $\kappa = 1.0$; for clothing, $\kappa = .916$; and for appears in a mug-shot, $\kappa = 1.0$.

Lastly, actual crime statistics provided by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department were utilized in this research. Although annual data on arrests were produced by the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), which is administered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, UCR reports only include arrests statistics for four racial groups: White, African American, Native American, and Asian; and exclude offenders whose
crimes were not reported to the police, as well as offenders whose crimes do not lead to arrest (Walker, Spohn, DeLone, 1996). This study utilized crime data that included Hispanics (which is not available by the UCR), the number of offenses reported or known to police, and the number of offenses cleared by arrests (K. Zimmer, personal communication, February 23, 2006).

Limitations

In this study several limitations were noted. First, the sample consisted of four weeks of news programming, which may not be representative of an entire year of local news broadcasts. Although the research contained a snippet of what viewer’s experience when observing local news content, research suggested that cross-sectional trends seem to be stable across studies (Curry, 2005; Sinner, 2005). In addition, as a result of technical difficulties, one KINC newscast was not included in the sample.

Because this research was a content analysis, audience’s and news networks’ perceptions of crime and race in the Las Vegas news market were not assessed. Future research analyzing crime and race news coverage should consider incorporating a design that independently measures a viewer’s perception of crime and race and how the local news may impact one’s perception; in addition to a news organization’s perspective in how they decide to report crime and race news stories to the public.

Visual illustrations of crime and race representations were also collected from a local Spanish-speaking station. Although the visual illustrations allowed for a better understanding to how these stations differ in their crime and race depictions compared to English-speaking broadcasts, the primary investigator and trained coder were sometimes
unable to code the verbal content due to the coder's inabilities to understand the verbal content. In some instances, the type of crime stories reported was not determined. All the data collected from the local Spanish-speaking station were solely based on visual images. Future research should consider both the verbal and visual content for future content analyses.

Another limitation to consider in this study was whether the rate of arrest was considered a valid measure for comparison of violent crime and race representation in the local news. Future scholars assessing crime and race representation in the local media compared to actual crime statistics should incorporate the total offenses cleared by arrest for the violent crimes compared in this research. Basically, the number of actual convictions should be utilized for comparison when assessing crime and race news stories. This study did not include the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's total number of offenses cleared by arrest, such as those cases that were unfounded (instances where suspects were innocent, false baseless complaints were filed, inadequate evidence was collected, or an illegal search or seizure was conducted) (Schmitt, 1991). The Las Vegas Metro Police can provide future media scholars with the actual number of offenses cleared by arrest and the number of unfounded offenses (K. Zimmer, personal communication, February 23, 2006).

Although previous literature has utilized actual crime data provided by local police authorities to compare crime and race news reports in the local news, results may be skewed due to different intents and purposes (Dixon & Azocar, 2006; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Gilliam, Jr., Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996). It may be the case that actual crime
and race statistics provided by local authorities may not be the most reliable measure for comparison of crime and race news reports in the local media.

In addition, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department provided crime statistics committed by each race group identified in this research. This study did not determine how local law enforcement agencies classified individuals who could be identified in several race categories. For the current research, when the race category was indeterminate, offenders were classified under the “Unknown Race.”

Finally, this research explored crime and race representation in the Las Vegas television market. Findings from the current study are only applicable to that market and are not generalizable beyond Las Vegas.

Recommendations for Future Research

Prior to running intercoder reliability statistics, the primary investigator should conduct substantial training of each operational definition utilized in the code sheet. In this case, examples of sampled newscasts of crime stories reported on the local news were coded together by both the primary investigator and trained colleague. In order to minimize the number of discrepancies experienced in the pretest data set, as was encountered in this study, the primary researcher and trained coder should have a consensus on the number of stories coded in each newscast sampled (whether that includes coding a tease or bumper material), whether related news stories will be coded separately, and clear-cut definitions of each variable assessed. In this study, thorough descriptions and examples of each violent crime were necessary to achieving higher reliability statistics.
Additionally, for hypotheses five and six, there were several instances where hypotheses had not lent itself to statistical analysis and testing due to the limited counts of observations for Chi Square analyses. Even though a larger sample size would have eliminated the issue of not having enough observations to test the clothing variables of the current research, narrowing the number of clothing variables may have proved sufficient enough to test the social differences that may be associated with race and crime in court room appearances or in motion videos of crime news reports.
APPENDIX I

CODE SHEET 1 – NEWSCAST ANALYSIS

STATION, DATE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NEWS STORY</th>
<th>CRIME STORY</th>
<th>INDEX CRIME</th>
<th>RACE I.D.</th>
<th>VISUALLY I.D. RACE</th>
<th>ON-SCREEN NAME</th>
<th>UNDER PHYSICAL CONTROL OF AN OFFICER</th>
<th>CLOTHING</th>
<th>APPEARS IN A MUG-SHOT</th>
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**APPENDIX II**

**CODE SHEET 2 - VARIABLES FOR CODING CRIME, RACE, AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend:</th>
<th>Race Identification</th>
<th>Under Physical Control of an Officer</th>
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<tr>
<td>Crime Story</td>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
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<td>1 = Yes</td>
<td>2 = No</td>
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</table>

Index Crime (1-8= Las Vegas)

| 1 = Local Murder/ Nonnegligent manslaughter | 2 = Local Forcible Rape | 3 = Local Robbery |
| 4 = Local Aggravated Assault | 5 = Local Burglary | 6 = Local Larceny Theft |
| 7 = Local Auto Theft | 8 = Local Other | 9 = National Crime Story |
| 10 = Indeterminate | | |

| 1 = Yes | 2 = No | |
| 1 = Yes | 2 = No | |
| 1 = Yes | 2 = No | |

| Index Crime (1-8= Las Vegas) | Race Identification | 1 = White (Caucasian) |
| 2 = Black (African American) | 3 = Latino (Hispanic) |
| 4 = American Indian/ Alaskan Native | 5 = Asian/ Pacific Islander |
| 7 = Unknown Race | 11 = More than one Race |
| | |

| Clothing | 1 = Jail Clothing | 2 = Professional Business Attire | 3 = Urban Hip Hop Clothing | 4 = Other Clothing | 5 = Indeterminate | 6 = N/A |
| 1 = Yes | 2 = No | |
| 1 = Yes | 2 = No | |

| Visually Identified Race | On-Screen Name | Appears in Mug-Shot |
| 1 = Yes | 2 = No | |
| 1 = Yes | 2 = No | |
REFERENCES


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Thesis Title: Crime and Race Representation: A Content Analysis of Las Vegas Local Television News

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