

# Perceived Fears: The Reporting Patterns of Juvenile Homicide in Chicago Newspapers

**John G. Boulahanis**

*Southeastern Louisiana University*

**Martha J. Heltsley**

*Blackburn College*

*This article takes a social constructionist approach in examining the reporting patterns of juvenile homicide in two major daily newspapers: Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times, from 1992 to 2000. The authors speculate that although juvenile homicide rates have steadily declined, the number of cases receiving media attention have increased. Also hypothesized is that the newspapers overreport certain atypical, newsworthy cases, which influence public perceptions and fear of crime. To test these hypotheses, a comparison is made between homicide cases that received newspaper coverage to those that did not receive any media exposure. Perceptions and fear of crime were measured with a mailed survey to Chicago residents. The findings suggest that the newspapers may be responsible for socially constructing an atypical image of juvenile homicide by overreporting cases involving females, Caucasians, and extremely young victims and offenders. Additionally, in examining the spatial distribution of the reporting patterns of the papers, the findings indicate that cases in the northern districts of the city are preferred over cases in the south side. In examining perceptions of fear, the findings suggest that individuals receiving most of their crime-related information from the newspapers report higher levels of fear of crime than those who receive crime information from other mediums.*

**Keywords:** *homicide; media; juvenile; fear of crime*

It is a seeming paradox: Homicides involving juvenile offenders have been declining, and yet there remains a high fear of crime by youth (Heide, 1999). Although the late 1980s and early 1990s saw an increase in violent offenses involving juveniles, the increase peaked in 1994 and has declined steadily ever since. The years of increased juvenile crime led to a change in the perception of juveniles. Mahini (2000) suggests that a juvenile was no

*Criminal Justice Policy Review*, Volume 15, Number 2, June 2004 132-160

DOI: 10.1177/0887403404263624

© 2004 Sage Publications

longer perceived as a petty criminal but as a serious and motivated offender. Heide (1996) suggests that news media have played a substantive role in this perception in that they have portrayed today's juvenile as "more dangerous to society than [his or her] predecessors" (p. 27). Utilizing a constructionist approach, this study examines the accuracy in reporting patterns of juvenile homicide in Chicago newspapers. Juvenile homicide cases that have received coverage in the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune* from 1992 to 2000 are compared to those that were not covered in the papers. The results indicate any discrepancies between actual homicides reported to the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and the homicides selected for coverage by the newspapers. A constructionist approach posits that overreporting of certain types of homicide may affect perceptions of fear; as well, focusing on atypical elements of the crime may further perpetuate false perceptions about offenders and victims.

### MEDIA AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

The power of the media to shape public perceptions of crime depends on the type and depth of coverage given a particular offense. Gusfield (1981) suggests the media is an "image-making industry" (p. 439), and Barak (1994) argues that the media is "the principal vehicle by which the average person comes to know crime and justice in America" (pp. 3-4). The result of overreporting particular crimes increases the chances of what Cohen (1972) calls moral panics. Moral panics are conditions shaped by experts about the increasing dangerousness and growth of a particular episode that generates intense fear in society (Cohen, 1972; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). Often these claims have been unfounded or grossly exaggerated, such as missing children (Best, 1990), serial murder (Jenkins, 1994), and drug use (Reinarman, 2000). The recent anthrax scare is a more recent example of an exaggerated problem causing fear in society.

The media does have internal and external constraints on their coverage. Internal constraints, such as format, limit the space given to a particular article, and the time spent covering a particular case is governed by publishers

---

AUTHORS' NOTE: We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who provided us with valuable suggestions. We have attempted to incorporate most of these suggestions. We also thank Carolyn Rebecca Block, Richard Block, and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority for their assistance and for maintaining the most comprehensive homicide data set in existence, and David A. Easley for his copyediting assistance. Please address all correspondence to John Boulahanis, Department of Sociology & Criminal Justice, Box 10686-SLU, Hammond, LA 70402.

rather than reporters (Altheide, 1985; Chermak, 1994; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991; Gans, 1979). External constraints include the practice of media hegemony or the preference for certain images, symbols, and subjects that reflect the views of sponsors or the audience (Altheide, 1985). News items are also constrained by the type and amount of information reporters receive. Often a mutual dependency is established between the police and the media. The media rely on the police to inform them of crimes and, conversely, the police are dependent on the media for supporting their needs (Barak, 1988; Chermak, 1994; Ericson et al., 1991; Fishman, 1978). The newsmaking process is not random, and many variables influence the type of information the public receives. News reports are "neither a pure picture of society nor a fully controlled propaganda message, but is instead an organizational product" controlled by a few key individuals (Surette, 1998, p. 62).

#### THE REPORTING OF CRIME: A FOCUS ON THE "ATYPICAL"

Speaking on news reporting, Elikann (1999) suggests that "if it bleeds, it leads" (p. 55). Numerous studies have suggested the media tends to overreport murder and other serious crimes (Davis, 1952; Ericson et al., 1991; Graber, 1980; Hubbard, DeFleur, & DeFleur, 1975; Jerrin & Fields, 1994), but few have attempted to differentiate between adult and juvenile crime. According to Spratt (1996), juveniles have not been studied as intensely as adult crime. Spratt's (1996, p. 280) content analysis on juvenile cases in Canada found violent crimes were overreported and focused primarily on "the impact of crime on others." A survey accompanying Spratt's study found that almost three-fourths of respondents tended to overestimate the amount of crime, believed homicides involving juvenile offenders had increased (while they had actually decreased), and most viewed the juvenile court as "too lenient" (p. 280). However, most studies concerning the overreporting of crime have been conducted on adults rather than juveniles since violent crimes committed by youth are statistically rare events. It is also common knowledge that property crimes occur far more frequently than homicides; yet they receive very little newspaper coverage. Other atypical features of the crime influence newsworthiness and these include demographic variables such as race, gender, and age.

## Race

Race is problematic as a variable when analyzing newspaper accounts because it is no longer a journalistic practice to indicate the race of the offender or victim in articles. Race is less of a problem when the medium is television. Some studies examining television news reporting have indicated the overreporting of African Americans as offenders (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Grabe, 1999). However, in a New Orleans study, Sheley and Ashkins (1981) found very little disparity between cases reported to the police and cases reported on television and in newspapers. Race of the victim may also play a role in whether a case receives media attention. Johnstone, Hawkins, and Michener (1994) examined the victim characteristics of homicides reported in Chicago newspapers to those reported to the CPD and found that African American and Hispanic victims were underreported in the newspapers. Boulahanis, Esmail, and Heltsley (2000) interviewed reporters from the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times* and found that race often determined the value given the homicide cases. They quote one reporter as stating the following:

I'm sorry to say that race influences whether or not to run the story. This is not to say that we are racist, but because we know that the vast majority of homicides are committed by African-Americans so they become run-of-the-mill.

The explanation offered by another reporter suggested that certain individuals within the CPD take it upon themselves to determine what is newsworthy, and race is often a criterion:

Many desk sergeants in Area headquarters referred to cases that involved African-American offenders and victims as "blue cases" and these cases were usually not reported. Many times I would call the desk sergeant to see if anything interesting had happened to report and they would respond by saying something to the effect that we just had a couple of blue cases, and that would be the end of it.

Both statements suggest that crimes committed by African Americans are less appealing in terms of newsworthiness because they occur more frequently. Thus, homicides perpetrated by offenders that are atypical in regard to racial composition are the cases that receive more attention. Given this, it is likely that race may well play a role in newspaper accounts; however, due to the current formatting of newspaper articles, it is sometimes impossible to accurately determine the race of the offender or victim.

## Gender and Age

Unlike race, gender can easily be established when reading newspaper accounts. Research examining gender and crime has consistently indicated that most crimes involve male offenders and victims. Cases involving females are rare; thus, when they occur, they are perceived to be more newsworthy and are more likely to receive media coverage (Chermak, 1995; Katz, 1987; Madriz, 1997; Naylor, 1995). In a particular study examining the reporting patterns of female offenders, Naylor (1995, p. 80) concluded that although female offenders constitute about 10% of the crimes reported to the police, they made up about one third of the violent cases reported in newspapers, warning that the depiction of females may lead others, and particularly females, to be more fearful of women as potential offenders. As one of her research subjects stated, "All you have to do is read the newspapers or watch the news on TV and see how women have become worse than men" (p. 26). Likewise, the gender of the victim plays an important role in the newsworthiness of the case for much of the same reason. Chermak (1995) argues, "Society thinks females, like children, are more vulnerable and feels crimes committed against them are more newsworthy" (p. 130). If the atypical is given more coverage, female victims should be disproportionately represented in the media.

The age of the offender and victim also influence media coverage. According to Chermak (1995), the majority of crimes are committed by individuals between the ages of 17 and 24, but these cases are reported disproportionately less often than cases involving younger and older offenders. Because of their rarity and perceived vulnerability, cases involving victims who are children or elderly get an exorbitant amount of attention. To test whether the age of the victim is a determinant in deciding newsworthiness, we divided the victim's ages into the following aggregates: younger than 14, 14 to 19, 20 to 29, 30 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65 and older. Thus, we should expect to find the greatest coverage given to victims younger than 14 and older than 65.

The literature thus suggests that the media are guilty of overreporting cases containing atypical features. This prompts us to examine the impact these patterns have on public perception and fear of crime. Fear of crime due to media consumption is by no means a neglected topic in the social science literature. A brief review of some previous findings is provided in the following section.

## MEDIA AND FEAR OF CRIME

Various studies of media influences on fear of crime have been conducted, yielding mixed results. In one study, Jaehnig, Weaver, and Fico (1981) compared levels of fear of violent crime to exposure to newspaper depictions of crime in three cities (Evanston, Illinois; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Lebanon, New Hampshire). Based on interviews conducted with randomly selected panels in each city, the researchers concluded that levels of reported fear were more consistent with the images portrayed in the newspapers rather than the actual amount of crime committed in each community. Findings suggest that the reported levels of fear were highest in the community that had the highest rate of violent victimization and the highest percentage of crime-related news in the newspaper, and lowest in the community that had the least amount of violent crime reported in the newspaper.

In a study conducted in Britain, Williams and Dickinson (1993) observed a positive relationship between reading the newspapers and fear of crime. The researchers analyzed 10 papers in a 1-month period (May to June 1989) to examine the types of criminal cases reported in each newspaper. Their findings indicated that, on average, 12.7% of the news reported on a daily basis was crime-related. Furthermore, of these articles, 64.5% were devoted to violent crime (Williams & Dickinson, 1993, p. 40). Williams and Dickinson also sent out 1,000 questionnaires to addresses around the newspapers' circulation area to estimate the level of fear of crime among individuals who subscribed to the newspapers. The majority of respondents who reported being fearful of the possibility of an attack attributed that fear to previous stories they had heard about in the media.

Heath (1984), in an attempt to measure reporting patterns of the media and levels of fear, conducted a content analysis of 36 newspapers throughout selected cities in the United States for a week. Furthermore, she measured the effects of the newspapers' claims by conducting telephone interviews of randomly selected individuals residing in the selected cities. Perceived fear was assessed by asking respondents general questions such as "How safe do you feel out in the streets of your neighborhood at night?" (p. 266). The findings revealed marked differences between females and males who read the paper. Overall, females reported higher levels of fear of crime when compared to males. In examining the location of the crime, Heath (1984) concluded that females were more fearful of local crimes than of nonlocal cases. Building on Heath's study, Liska and Baccaglini (1990) examined the impact of the media on reported levels of fear of crime by analyzing the content of newspapers in 26 cities throughout the United States

during 1974 and 1975 and using fear of crime data collected for the National Crime Survey. To measure whether the location of the story (i.e., the page number the story appeared on) influenced public perception, the researchers separated stories by whether they appeared on the first 15 pages or the last 15 pages of the newspaper. The researchers concluded that homicide cases were overreported in the media; although homicides comprised .02% of all index crimes, they constituted 29.9% of all crime stories reported in the newspapers (pp. 366-367). Additional findings from the study indicated that local homicide stories tended to produce high levels of fear among all respondents (African American, Caucasian, young, middle-aged, and elderly), whereas nonlocal stories tended to reduce levels of fear among all respondents. Consistent with Heath, Liska and Baccaglioni attributed reduced levels of fear among nonlocal cases of homicide to the possibility that readers felt safer in their community by comparing it to other areas. However, Liska and Baccaglioni noted that nonlocal stories might reduce reported levels of fear because an increase in reporting of nonlocal homicide means a decrease in reporting of local homicide cases because there is limited space in the paper.

Various studies have focused on perceptions and reported level of fear of crime among individuals who reside in high-crime areas and are exposed to these accounts by the news media. In one such study, O'Keefe and Reid-Nash (1987) compared fear of crime generated by reading newspaper depictions versus televised news in high-crime areas. In doing so, the researchers were able to test the "cultivation hypothesis" (p. 148). The cultivation hypothesis postulates that individuals exposed to the type of images of violence portrayed by the media cultivate a similar image of crime in the real world (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, cited in O'Keefe & Reid-Nash, 1987). The findings supported the cultivation hypothesis, revealing that individuals who watched televised news reported higher levels of fear than those who relied solely on newspaper accounts.

Chiricos, Eschholz, and Gertz (1997) tested whether the characteristics of the audience influenced fear of crime. They suggested that individuals perceive things differently based on various characteristics, such as race, gender, age, and previous victimization history. The researchers measured fear of crime by posing "direct" and "crime specific" questions such as: "On a scale of one to ten . . . how much do you fear being robbed by someone who has a gun or a knife?" (p. 347). Respondents were further asked to report the frequency with which they read the newspaper, watched the news on television, and listened to the news on the radio per week. Regression results, derived from a random sample of Tallahassee, Florida, residents,

indicated a positive relationship between televised news exposure and reported fear of crime among White, middle-aged females. In examining the type of cases depicted in the media, the researchers observed that most cases involved White, middle-aged victims, thus causing them to conclude that “white women see victims ‘like themselves’ on TV news and are more fearful” (p. 354). However, 3 years later, in a similar study conducted on a statewide basis, Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz (2000) reported somewhat conflicting results. Although the earlier study (Chiricos et al., 1997) showed a significant positive relationship between viewing televised news and increased levels of fear solely among White, middle-aged females, the statewide examination revealed a significant relationship between reported levels of fear and exposure to televised news among both African American and Caucasian females. Chiricos et al. (2000) attributed the discrepancy in the findings to a possible bias effect in the initial study due to a rash of reported cases in Tallahassee, Florida, involving White, middle-aged female victims reported in the news media at that time.

### THE CURRENT STUDY

In summary, fear-of-crime research has suggested that increased exposure to the media can be positively correlated to increased levels of fear. However, very few studies have differentiated between crimes committed by adults and juveniles. Additionally, no study, to our knowledge, has used mapping techniques to examine the spatial distribution of the reporting patterns of the media and measured perceptions and fear of areas that are overreported and underreported by the newspapers. This is what we attempt to do in this study.

### METHODOLOGY

To determine the characteristics of juvenile homicides (i.e., homicides involving an offender younger than 17) reported to the CPD, police department data was utilized.<sup>1</sup> The selection of these data was facilitated by three factors. First, because Chicago is one of the four leading cities with respect to the number of reported annual homicides, it was preconceived that enough cases would be readily available for statistical analysis. Second, the data set is one of the most complete data sets in existence. Finally, due to the serious nature of homicide, and because these data were reported directly by the CPD, they are fairly accurate.



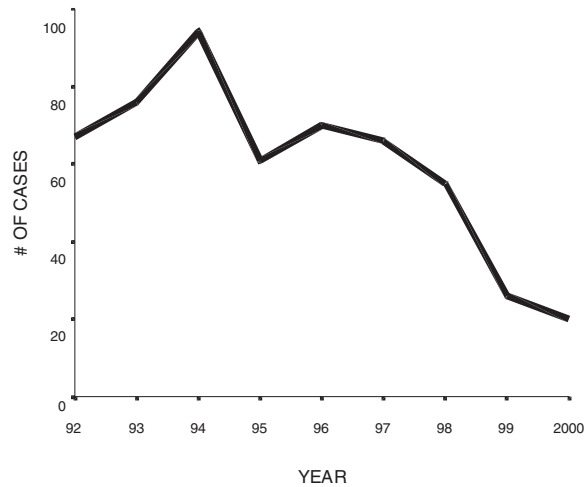
The purpose of analyzing these data was to provide some descriptive characteristics of juvenile offenders and their victims in Chicago, as reported in the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, and to compare this profile with the juvenile homicide cases that did not receive coverage in the newspapers. In doing so, variations on the type of weapon, age, gender, and race of offenders/victims are examined and compared.

Full-text articles were accessed using keyword searches (such as “juvenile murder,” “juvenile homicide,” “youth murder,” and “youth homicide”) on *WestLaw*. We used 1992 to 2000 as our time frame, and examined every story reported during this period. However, not every story pertained to an actual murder by a juvenile in Chicago. Several of the articles were excluded because they either dealt with juveniles who were murdered by adults, or discussed juvenile homicide in general terms without focusing on a specific case. Others were omitted because they occurred outside Chicago city limits. Additionally, it is quite possible that some cases were excluded simply because *WestLaw* did not pick up these cases. We minimized this threat by using multiple keyword searches when retrieving the cases.

Of all the articles sampled, 117 stories from the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune* together met the criteria for this research—actual homicides committed by juvenile perpetrators within the CPD’s jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup> These stories were matched to the CPD data using date, age of the victim, and age of the offender as grouping variables. Weapons were separated into the categories of guns, knives, and other.

To examine the spatial distribution of homicides reported in the newspapers, homicide data was converted into ArcView, and maps depicting the spatial distribution of homicide cases both reported and unreported were created. This procedure took the geographical district of each reported homicide (which was a variable already provided by the CPD in the reported data and coded in the newspaper data) and matched it using the X and Y coordinates of the centroid of each district, thus plotting it on a map of Chicago. Once plotted, we were able to determine the spatial distribution of the reporting patterns citywide in each of the 25 police districts in the city of Chicago.

Fear of crime was measured using a mail-survey questionnaire modeled after the National Crime Prevention Survey. Individuals were randomly selected from the 2001 Chicago telephone directory and were asked various questions geared toward measuring their perception and fear of juvenile homicide and the amount of exposure they have to the news media.

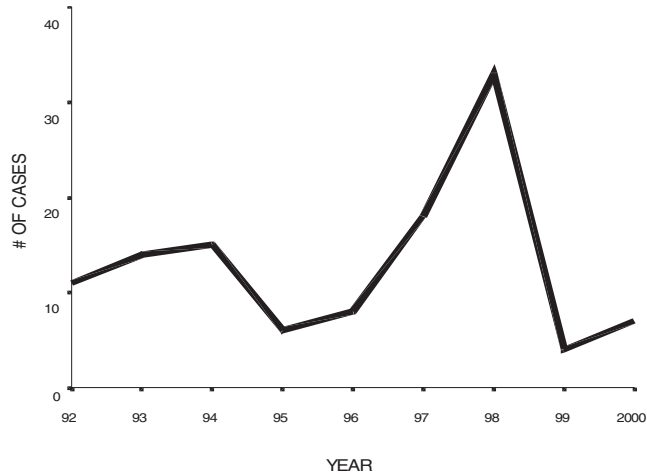


**Figure 1: Number of Juvenile Homicide Cases Reported to the Chicago Police Department (CPD), 1992 to 2000**

## FINDINGS

From 1992 to 2000, 535 juvenile homicides were reported to the CPD. Figure 1 displays the number of juvenile homicide cases reported to the CPD from 1992 to 2000. As this figure indicates, homicides increased from 1992 to 1994, peaked in 1994, and steadily declined thereafter. Whereas 535 individual cases were reported to the police, only 117 (around 22%) of these received newspaper coverage.<sup>3</sup> Figure 2 displays the trend in this reporting, showing that newspaper coverage rose steadily from 1992 to 1994, declined from 1994 to 1995, increased sharply from 1996 to 1998, declined in 1999, and increased slightly in 2000. Taken together, these two figures indicate that although the total number of homicides involving juvenile offenders have declined in relatively linear fashion since 1994, the number of cases receiving newspaper coverage mostly increased over the same time period.

To compare the cases that were reported in the newspapers to those cases that did not receive coverage, we computed a chi-square statistic (see Table 1) and a logistic regression model (see Table 2). These findings are discussed in greater detail below.



**Figure 2: Number of Juvenile Homicide Cases Reported in the Newspapers, 1992 to 2000**

### Age of the Offender

The most significant predictor in whether the homicide received newspaper coverage was the age of the offender and victim. Because our sample consists of juveniles, we are dealing with young offenders to begin with; however, the findings revealed that the newspapers favored homicides committed by young children, rather than those that involved adolescent offenders. Consistent with previous research, cases that involved extremely young offenders were more likely to receive coverage (14.23 vs. 15.21,  $t = 7.839$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The age difference was even more evident when cases were categorically defined to include offenders younger than 14 and those between the ages of 14 and 16. The majority of homicides in Chicago, both reported (82.9%) and unreported (94.3%), involved offenders older than 13. However, although offenders younger than 14 make up 5.7% of the unreported cases and 8.2% of the total number of homicides reported to the CPD from 1992 to 2000, they constituted 17.1% of the cases that received news media attention. More important, more than 45% of the cases involving offenders younger than 14 were reported by the newspapers, whereas less than 20% of the cases involving older perpetrators (aged 14 to 16) received news coverage.

As Table 2 suggests, the age of the offender entered negatively into the model. The findings suggest that for every 1-year increase in age, we de-

**Table 1: A Comparison of Age, Race, Gender, and Type of Weapon Among Reported and Unreported Cases**

	<i>Reported Status in Newspapers (%)</i>		<i>Chi-Square</i>
	<i>Unreported</i>	<i>Reported</i>	
Age of the victim			
Younger than 14	39.1	60.9	
14 to 19	78.9	21.1	
20 to 29	85.7	14.3	
30 to 49	85.4	14.6	
50 to 64	80.0	20.0	
65 and older	58.3	41.7	52.432***
Race of the offender			
Caucasian	40.9	59.1	
African American	79.5	20.5	
Latino	83.0	17.0	
Asian/Other	50.0	50.0	20.858***
Race of the victim			
Caucasian	67.6	32.4	
African American	79.8	20.0	
Latino	77.3	22.7	
Asian/Other	50.0	50.0	4.771
Gender of the offender			
Male	79.6	20.4	
Female	64.4	35.6	5.386*
Gender of the victim			
Male	80.8	19.2	
Female	62.0	38.0	12.510***
Type of weapon used			
Gun	79.0	21.0	
Knife	84.6	15.4	
Other	69.9	30.4	3.224
Total	419	117	

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

crease the odds-ratio of reporting by 0.725. In other words, every 1-year increase in offender age corresponded to a 27.49% reduction in the odds of receiving newspaper coverage.

### Age of the Victim

Not unlike age of the offender, newspapers overreported cases that involved youthful victims as well. On average, cases reported in the news-

**Table 2: Predicting the Reporting Patterns of the Newspapers**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Attribute</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Exp(β)</i>
Offender's age		-0.3214**	0.1020	0.7251
Victim's age (0 = 20 to 29)	Younger than 14	1.7576***	0.4201	5.7986
	14 to 19	0.3783	0.2917	1.4598
	30 to 49	-0.0958	0.3954	0.9087
	50 to 64	-0.8412	1.2033	0.4312
	65 and older	0.8246	0.7313	2.2816
Offender's race (0 = Caucasian)	African American	-1.4929*	0.5867	0.2247
	Latino	-1.8639***	0.5685	0.1551
	Asian/Other	-0.2650	1.6889	0.7672
Victim's race (0 = Caucasian)	African American	-0.6361	0.5517	0.5293
	Latino	-0.2533	0.5625	0.7763
	Asian/Other	0.1131	1.2027	1.1198
Offender's gender	Female	0.7709*	0.3948	2.1616
Victim's gender	Female	0.7300*	0.3164	2.0751
Type of weapon (0 = gun)	Knife	-0.5174	0.6214	0.5960
	Other	-0.2906	0.4240	0.7478
White in district (%)		-0.0272	0.201	0.9731
Black in district (%)		-0.0319	0.0203	0.9686
Latino in district (%)		-0.0212	0.0139	0.9790

Note: Nagelkerke  $r^2 = .2188$ , model  $\chi^2 = 81.305***$ ,  $df = 19$ ,  $n = 534$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

papers involved victims with a mean age of about 21, whereas unreported cases involved slightly older victims with a mean age of about 24, a mean difference of about 3 years ( $t = 1.975$ ,  $df = 533$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Prompted by previous research that has indicated that the news media overreport homicides committed against children and the elderly (Chermak, 1995), we collapsed victim age into categories that included those younger than 14, 14 to 19, 20 to 29, 30 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65 and older. In doing so, it was discovered that victims younger than 14 disproportionately represented almost one fourth of the cases reported by the news media, whereas they constituted only 4.3% of the unreported cases and 8.6% of the total cases reported to the CPD. Furthermore, of the 46 cases that involved victims younger than 14, almost 61% were reported by the newspapers, compared to just 21.1% of those aged 14 to 19, 14.3% aged 20 to 29, 15.7% aged 30 to 49, and 20% aged 50 to 64. As indicated in Table 2, homicides that involved victims younger than 14 were around 480% more likely to receive coverage than cases that involved victims aged 20 to 29. No significant differences were observed among homicides committed against the elderly.

### **Race of the Offender and Victim**

The vast majority of juvenile homicides in Chicago involved African American offenders (75.5%). This held true for both cases that received news media attention (72.1%), as well as those that received no attention at all (76.6%). Significant differences were noted between the racial characteristics of the offender and the reporting status of the case where Caucasian offenders received disproportionately higher coverage than did African Americans and Latinos. More than 59% of the cases involving Caucasian offenders received newspaper coverage, compared to roughly 21% and 17% of the cases involving African American and Latino offenders, respectively. The race of the offender also entered significantly into the logistic regression model. Homicides involving Latino and African American offenders were about 85% and 78% less likely to be reported in the newspapers when compared to cases that involved Caucasian offenders.

Although significant differences were noted between the race of the offender and the reporting status of the case, none were noted between the race of the victim and whether the case received coverage. Quite similar to the characteristics of the offender, the majority of homicides involved African American victims (72.3%); Latinos (20.5%), Caucasians (6.4%), and Asian/Other (0.8%) victims followed, respectively.

### **Gender of the Offender**

As found in previous research, male perpetrators committed the vast majority of cases. Past research on the reporting patterns of crime by the media have suggested that cases involving female participants (either victim or offender) have generated more coverage because their statistical rarity has made them more newsworthy (Chermak, 1995; Katz, 1987; Madriz, 1997; Naylor, 1995). From 1992 to 2000, 535 juvenile homicide cases were reported to the CPD, of which 490 (around 91%) involved male offenders. In comparing gender differences between reported and unreported cases in Chicago, variation was noted. Slightly more than 20% of the cases involving male perpetrators received news media attention, whereas almost 36% of the cases involving female offenders received coverage. As indicated in Table 2, this difference proved to be significant in our model, suggesting that homicides committed by female perpetrators were more likely to receive newspaper coverage than cases committed by males.

### **Gender of the Victim**

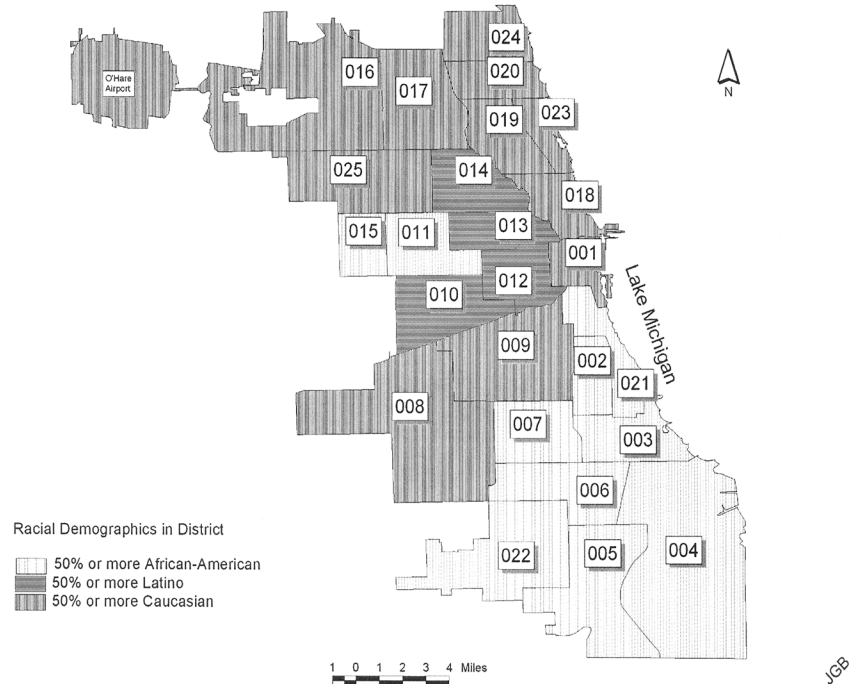
When gender differences between cases that were reported in the newspapers were compared to nonreported cases, significant differences were observed. Female victims, although involved in only slightly more than 13% of the homicides reported to the CPD, make up almost one fourth of the cases reported in the newspapers. On average, homicides committed against females were 2.08 times more likely to receive media coverage than cases that involved male victims, a finding consistent with previous research.

### **Geographical Coverage of Cases**

Although various studies have examined the reporting patterns of newspapers by focusing on variables such as age, gender, and race, very few have explored the location in which the homicide occurred. We believe location is an important variable to consider, especially in Chicago because it acts as a proxy for race and income. While Chicago is a racially diverse city, it is still segregated in that each district is relatively homogeneous. As Figure 3 indicates, the majority of residents in the southernmost districts of the city are African American, whereas those in the northern districts are predominately Caucasian. Latinos make up the majority in the central portion of the city in Districts 10, 12, 13, and 14.

Besides racial differences between the north and south side of the city, economic differences are present as well. The south side is marked with greater poverty and violence than the north. If rarity is an element in the newsmaking process, we would expect to see disproportional reporting in the northern districts of the city.

Figure 4 provides a depiction of the distribution of juvenile homicides reported in the papers to the total number of cases reported to the CPD. Because population varies from district to district, the raw number of homicides reported was converted into a rate per 100,000. As this figure illustrates, homicides reported to the CPD ranged from a low of 1.09 (District 16) to a high of 42.53 per 100,000 (District 2), with a mean homicide rate of 20.45 per 100,000 citywide. The percentage of juvenile homicide cases reported in the newspapers in each district ranged from a low of 0 (Districts 1 and 16) to a high of 60 (District 20). With few exceptions, our findings suggest that the reporting patterns of the newspapers correspond with the reported homicide rates in each district. From 1992 to 2000, very few homi-

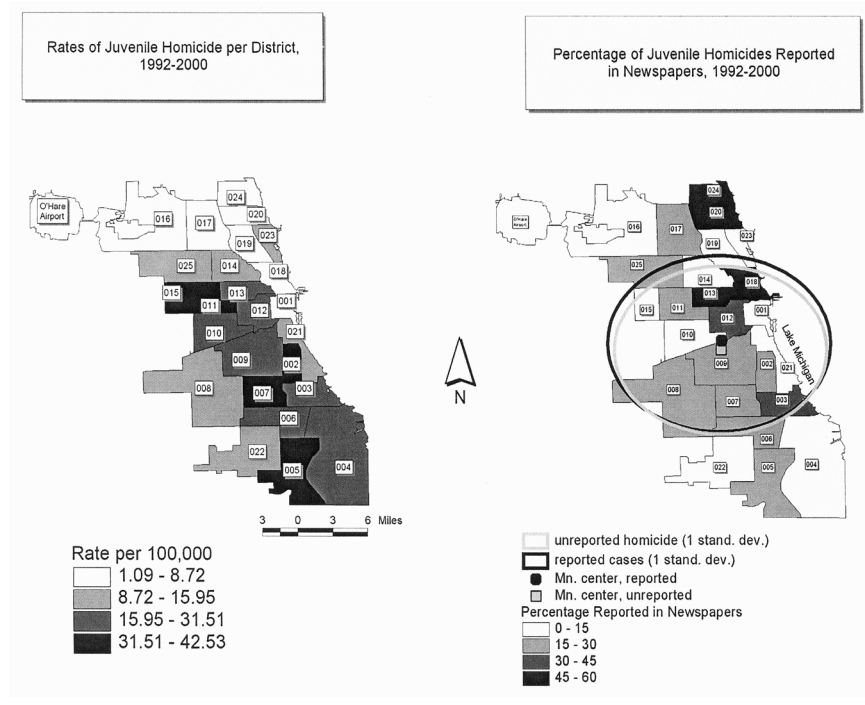


**Figure 3: Racial Demographics by District in Chicago**

cides in the northern districts were reported to the CPD. Similarly, these areas received less attention by the media.

There was some noticeable variation in the spatial distribution of reported juvenile homicides. For example, northern Districts 17, 18, 20, and 24 were better represented by the newspapers when compared to Districts 4 and 5, the southernmost districts. Better representation in the north was further evident when standard deviational ellipses were mapped out. Map 2 in Figure 4 depicts the geographical location of reported and unreported cases. Each ellipse represents one standard deviational unit—meaning that roughly 68% of the cases fall within the geographical boundaries of each ellipse. As Figure 4 illustrates, there is much agreement in the geographical location of reported and unreported homicides. Both ellipses center on District 9 and encompass much of the same geographical location; however, there is one noticeable difference. The ellipse representing the homicides reported in the papers shifts slightly to the north, whereas the lower bound-





**Figure 4: Rates of Juvenile Homicide and Percentage of Cases Reported in Each District, 1992 to 2000**

any of the ellipse representing unreported cases shifts to the south. In other words, the papers tended to slightly overreport from the northern districts. This finding is not that surprising, given that fewer cases occur in the north; thus, when they occur, they are more likely to be seen as newsworthy.

### Type of Weapon

No significant differences were noted between the type of weapon used in the homicide and whether the case received media attention (see Table 1). Most juvenile homicides involved the use of some type of firearm or gun (84.7%). Similarly, the majority of homicides reported in the newspapers were gun-related as well (81.9%). It should be noted, however, that cases that received increased newspaper coverage in the form of multiple stories tended to involve atypical, “other” weapons.

In summary, significant differences were noted between the juvenile homicide cases that received newspaper coverage versus those that did not.

Newspapers favored cases that involved Caucasian, young, female victims and offenders. In examining the location of the homicide, the newspapers favored homicides reported in the northern districts. This raises the following questions: What impact, if any, do the reporting patterns of homicide have on public perception and fear? Do individuals subscribe to the news media's claims to begin with? And if so, does this resonate fear in their everyday life? This is addressed in the concluding sections below.

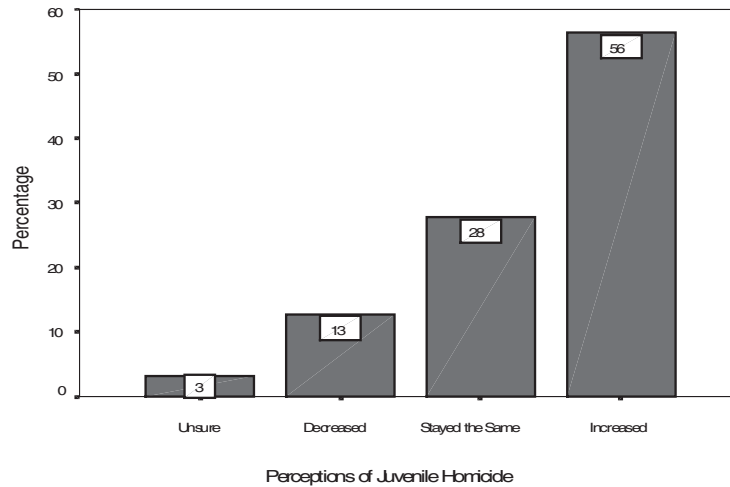
### Fear of Crime

To measure public perception and fear of crime, a mail survey was conducted. As noted earlier, 500 respondents were randomly selected and a questionnaire (both English and Spanish) was mailed to their home. Of the 500 questionnaires sent, 126 were returned, a response rate of slightly more than 25%. This is a dangerously low response rate and, as such, the findings presented here should be viewed only as suggestive.

The majority of respondents were female (53.2%). Additionally, 70.2% of the sample reported their race as Caucasian; African Americans (21.8%), Latinos, and Asian/Other followed, respectively. Most participants reported to be between the ages of 30 to 49 (31.7%); 25 to 29 (23%), 50 to 64 (23%), 65 and older (15.9%), and 18 to 24 (6.3%) followed, respectively. None of the respondents was younger than 18.

Respondents were asked to respond to various questions geared toward measuring their perceptions of juvenile homicide, their exposure to the newspapers, and their fear of crime. More than 81% of the sample reported reading either the *Chicago Tribune* or the *Chicago Sun-Times* on at least a weekly basis, whereas 42% reported the newspaper as their primary source of crime-related information. When asked if the newspapers did an adequate job in reporting juvenile homicides, roughly 62% of the respondents said "yes." When asked if whether they believed homicides involving juvenile offenders had increased, decreased, or stayed the same, more than 58% believed that it had increased, whereas only 13% reported that it had declined (see Figure 5).

Fear of crime was measured using 14 Likert-type scale questions. These questions (see Table 3 for a list of questions used in scale) were scaled, and a composite "fear of juvenile crime" score was calculated.<sup>4</sup> Fear scores ranged from a low of 14 to a high of 64, with a mean score of 26.27. Scores were dichotomized into a *low fear* and *high fear* category, using 33 as a natural break. In other words, individuals who reported scores ranging from 14 to 33 were labeled as *low fear*, and those who scored 34 to 64 were labeled as



**Figure 5: Within the Past 5 Years, Have Juvenile Homicides Increased, Decreased, or Remained Unchanged?**

*high fear.* Of those who reported higher levels of fear, 59% resided in the southern districts of Chicago (see Figure 6 for fear distribution).

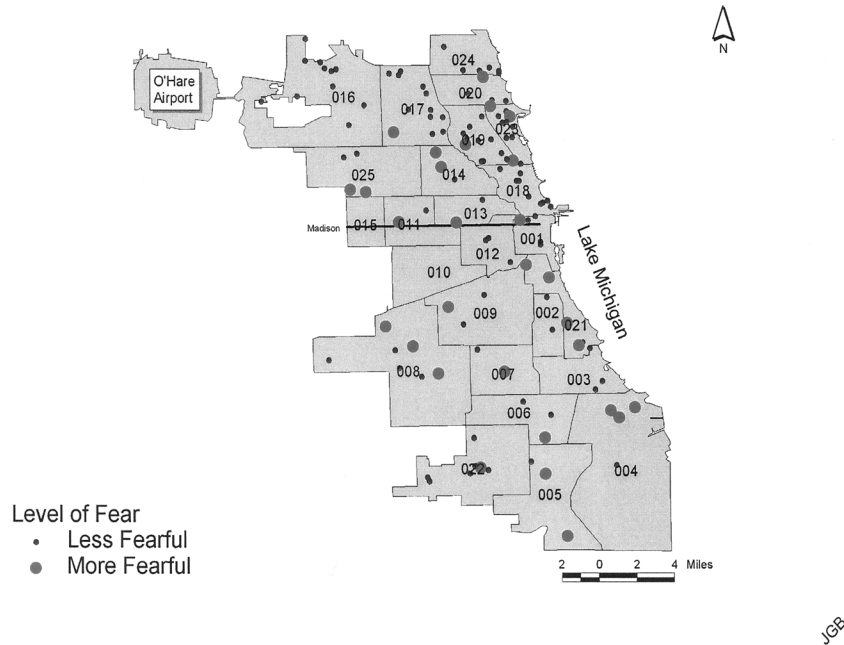
Using variables such as respondent age, gender, race, number of years lived in Chicago, type of neighborhood (low, medium, or high crime), and exposure to the media, a logistic regression model was computed (see Table 4). The model accurately predicted 83.62% of the cases and was significant ( $\chi^2 = 32.403$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < .01$ ), whereas the Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test revealed that the model's estimates fit the data at an acceptable level ( $\chi^2 = 12.6268$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = .0817$ ). The race of the respondent proved to be the best predictor of fear, with African American respondents reporting a higher level of fear than Caucasian participants. Statistically, being African American increased the odds-ratio of reported levels of fear 9.43 times.

Whether individuals received most of their crime-related news from the newspapers was also a significant variable in the model. Reporting that the primary source of crime information was newspapers increased the odds-ratio of reported fear 7.28 times, when compared to those who received their information from either other mediums or friends/family members.

As noted earlier, we included a geographical variable to control for the juvenile homicide rate. Districts were categorically defined into *low*, *moderate*, and *high rate* groups based on their respective rate of juvenile homi-

**Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Responses to Fear of Crime and Safety Questions (in percentages)**

<i>Question</i>	<i>Fairly Safe</i>		<i>Neither Safe Nor Unsafe</i>		<i>Fairly Unsafe</i>	
	<i>Very Safe</i>	<i>Slightly Afraid</i>	<i>Moderately Afraid</i>	<i>Mostly Afraid</i>	<i>Very Afraid</i>	<i>Very Unsafe</i>
1. How safe do you feel walking alone in the area of your home at night (1 mile)?	22.2	33.3	20.6	6.3	17.5	
2. How safe do you feel walking alone in the area of your home at night (0.5 mile)?	27.0	36.5	18.3	6.3	11.9	
3. How safe do you feel walking alone in the area of your home during the day (1 mile)?	51.6	35.7	7.9	3.2	1.6	
4. How safe do you feel walking alone in the area of your home during the day (0.5 mile)?	59.5	29.4	5.6	2.4	2.4	
5. How safe do you feel when you walk by a group of youth you do not know?	13.6	37.6	30.4	9.6	8.8	
6. How safe do you feel in your home?	64.0	28.8	4.0	2.4	0.8	
	<i>Not Afraid</i>	<i>Slightly Afraid</i>	<i>Moderately Afraid</i>	<i>Mostly Afraid</i>	<i>Very Afraid</i>	
7. How afraid are you of being victimized in the area of your home at night (1 mile)?	31.7	38.1	19.0	5.6	5.6	
8. How afraid are you of being victimized in the area of your home at night (0.5 mile)?	35.7	39.7	15.1	4.0	5.6	
9. How afraid are you of being victimized in the area of your home during the day (1 mile)?	61.1	28.6	7.1	2.4	0.8	
10. How afraid are you of being victimized in the area of your home during the day (0.5 mile)?	68.3	25.4	3.2	2.4	0.8	
11. How afraid are you of being attacked by a juvenile offender near your home?	41.3	31.0	16.7	6.3	4.8	
12. How afraid are you of being murdered by a juvenile offender near your home?	55.6	21.4	9.5	9.5	4.0	
13. How afraid are you of being attacked by a juvenile offender in your home?	69.0	16.7	6.3	3.2	4.8	
14. How afraid are you of being murdered by a juvenile offender in your home?	73.8	13.5	4.8	1.6	6.3	



**Figure 6: Spatial Distribution of Fear**

cide per 10,000 residents. Although this variable did not prove to be significant at the .05 level, it approached significance ( $p = .08$ , Wald = 2.93) and in all probability would have reached it had the sample size been larger. The findings indicated that residing in areas that had moderately high juvenile homicide rates increased the odds-ratio of reported fear 3.23 times. Paradoxically, living in an area with a high rate of juvenile homicide was not a significant predictor of fear. One possible explanation is that individuals who reside in high-crime areas see violence on a daily basis, become somewhat desensitized to it, and are therefore less fearful.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was twofold. The first purpose was to examine the accuracy of the reporting of juvenile homicide cases in two Chicago newspapers. In particular, we questioned whether the public was getting a clear perception of the characteristics associated with juvenile offenders and their victims. If the newspapers are guilty of overreporting atypical cases, this led us, as a second purpose, to ponder the impact this has on public perceptions and fear of juvenile homicide.

**Table 4: Predicting Fear: A Logistic Model**

Variable	Attribute	B	SE	Exp( $\beta$ )
Age (0 = 18 to 24)	25 to 34	-0.9025	1.2980	0.4055
	35 to 49	1.5402	1.3505	0.2143
	50 to 64	-1.2933	1.4024	0.2744
	65 and older	-1.8608	1.5289	0.1556
Race (0 = Caucasian)	African American	2.2439***	0.8725	9.4300
	Other	-0.5419	1.2531	0.3428
Gender	Female	-0.2051	0.5788	0.8145
Newspaper		1.9850*	0.7744	7.7290
Television		0.9356	0.7145	2.5487
Live in Chicago (0 = less than 20 years)	20 or more years	0.8011	0.7622	2.2279
Homicide rate in neighborhood (0 = less than 0.72)	0.72 to 2.11	1.1734	0.6849	3.2329
Black in district (%)		0.1621	0.9522	1.1760

NOTE: Nagelkerke  $r^2 = .368$ , model  $\chi^2 = 32.408^*$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $n = 120$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Overall, cases receiving press coverage from the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune* were significantly different than cases not receiving coverage in terms of the offender and victim's age, race, and gender. The most significant variable predicting newspaper coverage was the age of the offender. Because the focus of this study is on juveniles, we are already dealing with young offenders to begin with. However, homicides committed by 16- and 17-year-olds were not as newsworthy as cases committed by young offenders and, as such, were less likely to receive coverage. A similar pattern was noted with respect to the age of the victim. If the homicide involved a victim younger than 14, it increased the odds of receiving newspaper coverage by 480% when compared to cases involving victims between the ages of 20 and 29. Our findings with respect to age are consistent with previous studies. Chermak (1995), for example, suggested that cases involving young children receive disproportionate amounts of coverage by the press because they are perceived to be more vulnerable and incapable of protecting themselves; thus, when a case involving a child victim occurs, it elevates the importance of the case.

The race of the offender was also a significant predictor of newspaper coverage. Homicides committed by Latino and African American offenders were less likely to be reported than cases committed by Caucasian offenders. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by

Johnstone et al. (1994) and Boulahanis et al. (2000). However, we should note that although significant differences were noted, the newspapers' portrayal of race was not that different from the cases reported to the CPD. Overall, 75.7% of all homicides reported to the CPD involved an African American offender and 72.2% of all cases reported in the papers involved an African American as well. Cases involving Latino offenders constituted nearly 20% of the cases reported to the police and 15.7% of the cases printed in the newspapers. Caucasians, on the other hand, comprised slightly more than 4% of all cases reported to the CPD, yet they made up 11.3% of the stories in the newspapers. Taken together, these findings suggest that although the percentage of homicides committed by Caucasians were disproportionately covered, the majority of actual stories depicted in the newspapers involved African American and Latino offenders.

With regard to gender, the findings suggest that the media disproportionately covered cases involving female victims and offenders. One of the most consistent findings in homicide research is that homicide is by far a male-dominated act. We found this to be the case as well. More than 91% of the cases reported to the CPD involved a male offender and almost 87% involved a male victim. Of the cases reported in the newspapers, 86% and nearly 77% involved male offenders and victims, respectively. As was the case with race, the newspapers' audience is getting elements of the typical cases involving male offenders and victims, as well as the overreporting of the atypical female offender and victim cases.

In examining the spatial distribution of the reporting patterns of the news media, we noted much agreement between the geographical location of homicides reported in the newspapers and those not reported. The majority of cases in Chicago occurred in the southern districts, and the majority of cases reported in the papers reflect this as well. There was, however, a slight northern shift in reported cases, indicating that the newspapers tended to favor homicides in the northern portion of the city. There are clear racial differences between the north and south side of the city. Individuals residing in the north are predominately Caucasian, whereas the south is predominately African American. The increased exposure given to the north by the newspapers may have influenced public perceptions by the population residing there.

In an attempt to measure public perceptions of fear, we sent out a mail survey to residents in Chicago. Our findings revealed that 81% of the sample reported reading either the *Chicago Sun-Times* or *Chicago Tribune* on a weekly basis. The findings also revealed that 84% believed that homicides involving juvenile offenders had either increased or stayed the same during

the past 5 years. In examining fear, the findings indicated that African Americans tended to be more fearful than Caucasians and those who reported receiving most of their crime-related news from the newspapers were more fearful than those who received this information from other mediums or friends and family.

Overall, our findings suggest that the newspapers overreported certain atypical cases. Additional findings revealed that increased exposure to the newspapers is associated with increased fear. It is obviously primitive to suggest that the reporting patterns of the media caused this fear, as there are many variables that influence perceptions and fear. Because this study only investigated present-day perceptions of fear, it is impossible for us to examine any longitudinal effects in reaction to atypical characteristics. The majority of cases that received coverage were ordinary, suggesting that newspaper reporting is fairly accurate. However, by overreporting the atypical, the readers receive a steady diet of both typical and atypical, thus making it difficult to uncover patterns of victimization. In the absence of discernable patterns, the image of the type of juvenile likely to be an offender or victim becomes convoluted and fear is more broadly dispersed. For example, Riedel (1998) concludes that fear of serial killers rests on the inability of law enforcement to either identify the offenders and the media's portrayal of these homicides. The uncertainty produces a fear that anyone can be a victim and anyone can be a perpetrator. We suggest that this may also be occurring in the case of juvenile homicide. Although police data have suggested that homicides involving juvenile offenders have declined in recent years, the atypical cases remain to be sensationalized and distort perceptions in a number of ways. First, juvenile homicides are a statistical rarity and are therefore newsworthy. The more bizarre, the greater the chances of receiving media attention. Second, juvenile homicides represent a problem with America's youth, a problem that is perceived to be growing. Children can and do kill, and for many this is an indication of throw-away youth, poor parenting, spoiled children, or lax juvenile laws. The generation gap between children and adults is further increased when it comes to the commission of senseless crime resulting in death. Third, the sensationalized representation of atypical cases suggests the offenders and victims could be anyone. This also may be the result of the various locations in which these homicides occur, which was not examined in this research: the school classroom, the playground, the street, or in the home. There are patterns, but unless these patterns are identified in the press, the levels of fear may intensify. This is not to suggest that atypical cases should not receive attention, but rather, responsible reporters should identify them as rarities.



In turn, public perceptions often influence law makers, and a better informed public audience would be less likely to overexaggerate the problems with today's youth.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are a few limitations to this study that should be addressed. First, characteristics of the cases in the article were examined independently. That is, we analyzed the data on race, gender, age, and weapon as distinct properties that we compared to the cases unreported in the media. There are clear patterns noted in juvenile homicide cases in Chicago. Offenders are generally males using guns, and are disproportionately African American. Victims, more often than not, are males older than 14 and African American. The majority of cases examined in this study confirm those statements but indicate that there are some significant differences found when analyzed separately. Focusing on the atypical features of the news story without viewing the article as a composite of many separate elements may exaggerate the importance of these features. In examining the cases receiving press as a composite, we suggest that future researchers may find that most cases have some atypical features. For example, we found one story in which a male African American offender used a gun to kill an African American male victim. It sounds rather typical at first glance, but this case involved a "pedal-by" shooting by a juvenile too young to drive a car. Another case involved several African American teenage males that killed an African American man by setting him on fire; only the method of murder is unusual. In still another story, gang violence broke out and a young female was caught in the crossfire—the innocent victim is the unusual element in this story. Thus, cases like these have more typical features than atypical. Only one element is necessary to make a case appear atypical in regard to statistical analysis, and we suggest future researchers should take a more qualitative approach to analyzing this data.

A second limitation is a methodological one. We compare reported to unreported homicides without examining cases that received multiple stories. Our findings indicated that only about 20% of the juvenile homicide cases reported to the CPD received newspaper coverage. Obviously, if all stories were reported, individuals would be exposed to five times as many cases and fear could be intensified. However, by not examining the type of case that received increased attention in the form of multiple and follow-up stories, we may be de-emphasizing the effects the atypical stories may have had on perceived fear. Future studies should consider including multiple

and follow-up stories, as well as determining the type of case that generates this level of interest.

It is our hope that this research will fill a void in the constructionist and media studies literature. Although much research has been conducted on the reporting patterns of homicide by the media, very few studies have examined the reporting patterns of cases involving juvenile offenders. Understanding the reporting patterns of juvenile homicide is a necessary first step in examining current perceptions and public policy dealing with juveniles. The timing for research could not be more perfect for additional research on this subject. Data sets are readily available to examine the increase and decline in juvenile crime, and media accounts are at a more manageable level since the decline in homicide rates. Furthermore, no study, to our knowledge, attempts to use Geographic Information System technology to map out the reporting patterns of homicide by the media, as we have attempted to do. Future studies should consider this technique as a valuable tool to map reporting patterns of the media.

## NOTES

1. See Block, Block, and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (1998). Data from 1992 to 1995 came directly from the Chicago Homicide data set. Data from 1996 to 2000 was made available by the Chicago Police Department. We are indebted to Superintendent Terry G. Hillard, Lieutenant Lemmer, and Rachel M. Johnston of the Chicago Police Department.

2. Because the majority of cases involved lone victims and offenders, only the first offender and victim in each case was selected. In other words, multiple offenders and multiple victims were excluded from these analyses.

3. Some cases received multiple follow-up coverage. No multiple stories are used in these analyses.

4. A Cronbach's alpha level of 0.9364 indicated that the questions measured a strong univariate construct, thus allowing us to effectively create a scaled score.

## REFERENCES

- Altheide, D. L. (1985). *Media power*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Barak, G. (1988). Newsmaking criminology: Reflections on the media, intellectuals, and crime. In G. Barak (Ed.), *Media, process, and the social construction of crime: Studies in newsmaking criminology*. New York: Garland.
- Barak, G. (1994). Media, society, and criminology. In G. Barak (Ed.), *Media, process, and the social construction of crime: Studies in newsmaking criminology*. New York: Garland.

- Best, J. (1990). *Threatened children: Rhetoric and concern about child-victims*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Block, C. R., Block, R. L., & the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. (1998). *Homicides in Chicago, 1965-1995* (4th ICPSR version) [Computer file]. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Boulahanis, J. G., Esmail, A., & Heltsley, M. (2000, November). *An examination of juvenile homicides and perceptions of violence in Chicago: A true phenomenon or constructed reality caused by the media*. Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco.
- Chermak, S. (1994). Crime in the news media: A refined understanding of how crimes become news. In G. Barak (Ed.), *Media, process, and the social construction of crime: Studies in newsmaking criminology*. New York: Garland.
- Chermak, S. (1995). *Victims in the news: Crime and the American news media*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Chiricos, T., Eschholtz, S., & Gertz, M. (1997). Crime, news, and fear of crime: Toward an identification of audience effect. *Social Problems*, 44, 342-357.
- Chiricos, T., Padget, K., & Gertz, M. (2000). Fear, TV news, and the reality of crime. *Criminology*, 38, 755-786.
- Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk devils and moral panics: Creation of mods and rockers*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.
- Davis, F. J. (1952). Crime news in Colorado newspapers. *American Journal of Sociology*, 57, 325-330.
- Dixon, T. L., & Linz, D. (2000). Overrepresentation and underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos as lawbreakers on television news. *Journal of Communication*, 50, 131-154.
- Elikann, P. (1999). *Superpredators: Demoralization of our children by the law*. New York: Plenum.
- Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M., & Chan, J. B. L. (1991). *Representing order: Crime, law, and justice in the news media*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Fishman, M. (1978). Crime waves as ideology. In S. Cohen & J. Young (Eds.), *The manufacture of news: Social problems, deviance, and the mass media*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Gans, H. J. (1979). *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Goode, E., & Ben-Yehuda, N. (1994). *Moral panics: Social construction of deviance*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell.
- Grabe, M. E. (1999). Television news magazine crime stories: A functionalist perspective. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 16, 155-171.
- Graber, D. A. (1980). *Crime news and the public*. New York: Praeger.
- Gusfield, J. R. (1981). *The culture of public problems: Drinking-driving and the symbolic order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heath, L. (1984). Impact of newspaper crime reports of fear: Multimethodological investigation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 263-276.
- Heide, K. (1996). Juvenile homicide in the United States: Trends and contributing factors. In M. Riedel & J. G. Boulahanis (Eds.), *Lethal violence: proceedings of the 1995 Research Working Group*. Ottawa, Canada: U.S. Department of Justice.

- Heide, K. M. (1999). Youth homicide: An integration of psychological, sociological, and biological approaches. In M. D. Smith & M. A. Zahn (Eds.), *Homicide: A sourcebook of social research* (pp. 221-238). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hubbard, J. C., DeFleur, L. B., & DeFleur, M. L. (1975). Mass media influences on public conceptions of social problems. *Social Problems, 23*, 22-34.
- Jaehnig, W. B., Weaver, D. H., & Fico, F. (1981). Reporting crime and fearing crime in three communities. *Journal of Communication, 31*, 88-96.
- Jenkins, P. (1994). *Using murder: Social construction of serial homicide*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Jerrin, R. A., & Fields, C. B. (1994). Murder and mayhem in the USA today: A quantitative analysis of the national reporting of states' news. In G. Barak (Ed.), *Media, process, and the social construction of crime: Studies in newsmaking criminology*. New York: Garland.
- Johnstone, J. W. C., Hawkins, D. F., & Michener, A. (1994). Homicide reporting in Chicago dailies. *Journalism Quarterly, 71*, 860-872.
- Katz, J. (1987). What makes crime "news"? *Media Culture and Society, 9*, 47-75.
- Liska, A. E., & Baccaglini, W. (1990). Feeling safe by comparison: Crime in women's lives. *Social Problems, 37*, 360-374.
- Madriz, E. (1997). *Nothing bad happens to good girls: Fear of crime in women's lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mahini, R. B. (2000). There's no place like home: The availability of judicial review over certification decisions invoking federal jurisdiction under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. *Vanderbilt Law Review, 53*(4), 1131-1354.
- Naylor, B. (1995). Women's crime and media coverage: Making explanations. In R. E. Dobash, R. P. Dobash, & L. Noaks (Eds.), *Gender and crime*. Cardiff, UK: The University of Wales Press.
- O'Keefe, G. J., & Reid-Nash, K. (1987). Crime news and real-world blues: Effects of the media on social reality. *Communication Research, 14*, 147-163.
- Reinarman, C. (2000). The social construction of drug scares. In P. A. Adler & P. Adler (Eds.), *Constructions of deviance: Social power, context, and interaction* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Riedel, M. (1998). Serial murder, communities, and evil: A review essay. *Criminal Justice Review, 23*, 220-232.
- Sheley, J. F., & Ashkins, C. D. (1981). Crime, crime news, and crime views. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 45*, 492-506.
- Sprott, J. B. (1996). Understanding public views of youth crime and the youth justice system. *Canadian Journal of Criminology, 38*(3), 271-290.
- Surette, R. (1998). *Media, crime, and criminal justice: Images and realities*. Belmont, CA: West/Wadsworth.
- Williams, P., & Dickinson, J. (1993). Fear of crime read all about it? The relationship between newspaper crime reporting and fear of crime. *British Journal of Criminology, 33*, 33-56.

*John G. Boulahanis is an assistant professor in the department of Sociology & Criminal Justice at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, Louisiana. He holds a*

*Ph.D. in sociology with a specialization in administration of justice from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. His research interests include fear of crime, homicide studies, juvenile delinquency, and crime mapping. He was involved in an evaluation gauging the effectiveness of alternatives to suspension programs in Illinois (1998) and, more recently, juvenile drug courts (2004). His most recent publication can be found in Calhoun and Chapple's Readings in Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice (2003).*

*Martha J. Heltsley received her Ph.D. in 2003 from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. She currently teaches and directs the criminal justice program at Blackburn College. Her areas of interest are diverse, ranging from social construction and the media to children's beauty pageants. Her publications can be found in Calhoun and Chapple's Readings in Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice and Deviant Behavior.*