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Content Analysis of Canadian Television Crime News

by

Jennifer T.C. van de Ven, B.Sc.H.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Psychology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
September 21, 1998
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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
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“Content Analysis of Canadian Television Crime News”

submitted by

Jennifer T. C. van de Ven, B.Sc.H.

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

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Thesis Supervisor

Carleton University
September, 1998

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of crime news coverage on a Canadian early evening local television news station using a content analysis. 144 newscasts were coded from June 1, 1994 to June 29, 1995. As hypothesized, a steady rate of crime news coverage over time was found, with super sensational crimes subsumed within the 20% threshold. Moreover, the average rate of crime coverage did not differ between newscasts with and without a super sensational crime story. A mirror image pattern of results emerged such that criminal justice system and nonviolent crime news contracted to make way for more socially significant violent crime news. Surprisingly, super sensational crimes did not increase the importance of similar crimes in newscasts and mundane crimes received more coverage than sensational crimes. As hypothesized, violent crimes were presented more frequently than nonviolent crimes; however, mixed findings emerged for prominence features of news stories. Finally, details in crime news were scarce suggesting that the media do not provide adequate context for crime incidents. The implications of the findings are discussed in terms of effects of media representations on public attitudes towards crime.

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Appendix

Appendix Television Codebook

Content Analysis of Canadian Television Crime News

The mass media serve many different functions in our society ranging from providing entertainment to educating the public on important issues. The news media, specifically, attempt to perform the latter function through written (e.g., newspaper), audio (e.g., radio), and audiovisual (e.g., television) mediums. Through these sources we attempt to understand and make sense of the world we live in. One popular news domain is that of crime. With crime news being a staple of journalism, the objective reporting of such events is considered a public duty of the press (Jaehnig, Weaver, & Fico, 1981). Research examining the depiction of crime news, however, has shown that the accounts provided by newspapers and television can be inaccurate (e.g., Graber, 1980), thus distorting the reality of the social problem.

Theory and research show that people form attitudes toward particular issues in many different ways. Doob and Roberts (1984) suggest that crime and criminal justice attitudes may be formed in a way that separates them from other kinds of attitudes. Specifically, the public may not have any clear idea about crime in Canada and how the criminal justice system really works. Research has shown that the media can be an integral part of influencing public attitudes toward and perceptions of crime (Graber, 1980; Roberts, 1988a; Roberts & Doob, 1990). Examining the nature of media presentations is important because the knowledge gained from media portrayals, and hence the attitudes formed about crime, may influence the public's behaviour on such matters as voting behaviour, which may affect future political issues and legislative decisions.

The systematic study of crime-related topics in news media typically takes on the form of content analysis. The majority of content analyses reported in the literature, however, have focused on newspapers to the exclusion of television (Garofalo, 1981). There is a trend toward increased television viewing over the past two decades (Xiaoming, 1994); consequently, more people are using television to obtain knowledge on current events. In fact, studies have shown that the public perceives television as the principal disseminator of news (Bower, 1973, 1985; Comstock & Cobbey, 1978; Steiner, 1963).

Television is a unique medium because news can be presented in both audio and visual forms, as opposed to newspapers which presents news primarily in the print modality. Indeed, it has been suggested that pictures give television news the appearance of authenticity and they also communicate actuality by providing the context for events (Brosius, Donsbach, & Birk, 1996). However, if the incidence of crime is misrepresented in television news, it could be argued that the use of graphic visuals may serve to strengthen this inaccuracy by further sensationalizing particular incidents or by enhancing the memorability of certain news items. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to examine how crime is portrayed in Canadian television news by using content analytic techniques.

Crime in the News Media

Numerous studies have established that crime news is a popular, significant, and constant component of the total news (Surette, 1992). Within newspapers, crime news

accounts for 4 to 28% of all the news reported (Garofalo, 1981; Graber, 1980; Chermak, 1995). The proportions range from 22 to 28% for all justice-related topics (Graber, 1980). Moreover, studies have shown that crime news constitutes newspapers' third (Sherizen, 1978) and fifth (Chermak, 1995) largest subject category. In fact, Chermak (1995) discovered that when the top two topic areas, sports and business, respectively, were excluded, crime was the third most prevalent subject category. Moreover, crime was the second most popular type of story presented in television news, preceded by sports.

Although crime is a popular topic used by both media it is apparent that crime is more prevalent in television than newspaper stories. This discrepancy can be attributed to the space advantage of newspapers, which allows them to cover a large range of different stories and dilutes the importance of crime as a story topic (Chermak, 1995). For national television, Cirino (1972) found that 13% of total news time was crime-related; Lowry (1971), about 10%; Graber (1980), 12.5%; and Chermak (1995) 17.5%. For local television, Graber (1980) found that 20% of the total news was devoted to crime. These findings confirm that the news media present a steady diet of crime news coverage.

Content analyses of crime-related topics have shown consistent results across time periods and geographic regions (for a review see Garofalo, 1981; Marsh, 1991).

Operationally defining crime in the broadest terms, researchers have found that violent crime is overrepresented relative to nonviolent crime in newspapers. This has been found in Colorado (Davis, 1952), St. Louis (Jones, 1976), Houston (Antunes & Hurley, 1977), Chicago (Graber, 1980; Sherizen, 1978), New Orleans (Sheley & Ashkins, 1981),

Cleveland (Ammons, Dimmick, & Pilotta, 1982), as well as in Canada (Dussuyer, 1979; Roberts, 1988b), Scotland (Ditton & Duffy, 1983), and Britain (Mawby & Brown, 1984; Roshier, 1981; Smith, 1984). A recent study that examined news articles in Time magazine found similar results (Barlow, Barlow, & Chiricos, 1995). With respect to television news, the disproportionate coverage of violent and nonviolent crime has also been confirmed (Chermak, 1995; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991; Graber, 1980; Randall, Lee-Sammons, & Hagner, 1988; Schlesinger, Tumber, & Murdock, 1991; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981).

Thus, the overall pattern of results across media studies is stable; however, the degree of overrepresentation of violent crimes varies somewhat across studies. For example, Jones (1976) found that the average crime against a person (murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery) received about 35 times as much attention as the typical crime against property (burglary, grand larceny, auto theft) in St. Louis newspapers. A Canadian study by Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1991) showed that violent crimes (murder and other violent crimes combined) accounted for 35% of newspaper stories and over 40% of television news stories.

Similarly, Chermak (1995) found that violent crimes (murder, robbery, shootings, assaults) accounted for 39% of newspaper crime stories and 45% of television news crime stories in an American media analysis. Conversely, Sheley and Ashkins (1981) reported that 68% of newspaper crime stories and 85% of television crime stories involved violent crime. Barlow, Barlow, and Chiricos (1995) report similar proportions using Time magazine stories with 73% and 27% of news stories consisting of violent and nonviolent

crimes, respectively. One explanation for these discrepant findings is that each study conceptualized violent crime in a different manner, thus possibly over- or underestimating the frequencies of this category.

Examination of the proportions of violent crimes to nonviolent crimes in the various news media reveals that violent crimes are presented more frequently in television newscasts than in newspapers. In part, this may be due to the limiting factor of space available for television news stories. With less space available to present stories, it may be the case that the broadcasters choose to fill the news hole with crimes that are the most newsworthy; namely, sensational and violent crimes frequently take priority in terms of air time. This is precisely what was found in Chermak's (1995) ethnographic analysis in which broadcasting producers were interviewed. In addition, this study found that mundane crimes were deemed more newsworthy because the circumstances surrounding the event were very unusual (i.e., the offense involved special groups of victims, such as females, the elderly or children).

Chermak (1995) also discussed super primary stories, which were defined as: "sensational crime stories with national or international newsworthiness" (p. 39). Although these crime stories were not included in the analyses, Chermak noted that super primary stories are the news stories that are talked about, watched, and the most likely to affect the impressions people have about crime. He further suggested that the importance of other stories similar to the presented super primary story is raised because the story piques the public's interest.

Studies examining crime content typically compare the frequency of crimes represented in the news media to the incidence of those crimes as reported in official statistics. In each of the aforementioned content analyses on crime-related topics the same finding emerged across all forms of media. Specifically, violent crimes were overrepresented and nonviolent crimes were underrepresented in the media relative to official crime statistics. In fact, within the violent offense category, murder consistently emerged as the crime most frequently overrepresented in relation to official crime statistics in both newspapers and television alike (Ammons, Dimmick, & Pilotta, 1982; Antunes & Hurley, 1977; Graber, 1980; Jones, 1976; Roberts, 1988b; Roshier, 1981; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981; Sherizen, 1978).

For example, Graber (1980) found that murder constituted 0.2% of all crimes recorded in the police index yet it constituted 26% of all crime mentions in the newspaper. By contrast, theft, a nonviolent crime, constituted 47% of all crimes in the police index, but only 4% of all crime mentions in the newspaper. Similarly, Sheley and Ashkins (1981) found that murder constituted 0.4% of police crimes yet it constituted 12% of newspaper and 48% of television crime stories; conversely, larceny constituted 46% of police crimes but only 8% of newspaper and 10% of television crime stories.

Thus, the media present an exaggerated picture of the incidence of violent crimes, especially murder, while the incidence of lesser crimes is minimized (Graber, 1980). The paradox is that the relative infrequency of violent crime in the real world heightens its newsworthiness and leads to its frequent appearance in crime news; consequently, the media turns the rare crime event into the common crime image (Surette, 1992).

Offenders and Victims in the News Media

It has been suggested that the seriousness of crimes provides only a partial explanation of why certain crimes are covered as news (Chermak, 1995). Factors such as the offender and victim involved also interact with the seriousness of the crime to determine which crime stories are presented in the news. Demographic characteristics of both offenders and victims can influence which crimes become news because they can make certain crimes appear more attractive (Chermak, 1995). The media images of offenders and victims in comparison to official statistics have yielded mixed results across studies.

Compared with the characteristics of offenders processed by the criminal justice system, newspaper crime stories tended to overrepresent older, white, and higher socioeconomic status offenders in some studies (Graber, 1980; Mawby & Brown, 1984; Roshier, 1981), while other research showed a high frequency of youthful offenders of lower socioeconomic status in newspaper crime stories that was consistent with the situation portrayed by official crime statistics (Dussuyer, 1979). More recently, Chermak (1995) found that older white offenders were reported most frequently in crime stories, a result that was consistent with official statistics. Gender is one characteristic on which there is consistent agreement between media images and official statistics: Both represent offenders as predominantly male (Barlow et al., 1995; Chermak, 1995; Dussuyer, 1979; Graber, 1980; Mawby & Brown, 1984; Roberts, 1988b; Roshier, 1981).

References to offender occupation in the news media were scarce, but for crime stories that included this information, Dussuyer (1979) found an overrepresentation of

offenders as semi- and unskilled workers and unemployed in Ontario news stories. This finding was consistent with official crime statistics. However, crime stories that originated from other provinces or outside of Canada presented offenders in higher status positions such as professionals or semi-professionals. Chermak (1995) reported that offenders in crime news stories were presented most frequently as professionals, politicians, and criminal justice personnel, some of the most newsworthy occupations. Thus, past research has demonstrated that offenders tend to be presented in the media as either violent predators or professionals and bureaucrats (Chermak, 1995; Graber, 1980).

Examination of demographic characteristics of crime victims reveals that newspaper crime stories presented victims as predominantly male, white, and fairly young (17-25 years old) (Chermak, 1995; Graber, 1980; Humphries, 1981). These findings concur with Mawby and Brown's (1984) results with the exception of the gender of victims. Mawby and Brown found that victims tended to be female in 66.2% of the crime stories. In some stories an individual victim was not identified, rather the name of a corporation or business was the subject of victimization. In such cases, Chermak (1995) found that corporations comprised 6.2% of victims.

When comparative data were provided, researchers found that female (Chermak, 1995) and young (Graber, 1980) crime victims were overrepresented in the news in comparison to their representation in official crime statistics. In regards to the occupational status of individual victims, content results revealed a consistent overrepresentation of middle- and upper-income groups (Chermak, 1995; Graber, 1980; Mawby & Brown, 1984). Chermak (1995) found that the most frequently cited

occupation was that of a worker in the criminal justice system. In addition, victimizations of politicians, students, and helping professionals were more newsworthy than those of individuals with service or labour jobs.

Chermak (1995) suggests that crime victims in the news media provide a human interest element to each story by supplying an emotional component through which consumers can experience crime vicariously. The media's presentation of the impact that crime has on the victim fulfills this function. Chermak's content results revealed that financial and property impacts were mentioned in less than 5% of the newspaper crime stories because these types of crime were not considered newsworthy. In these instances, large financial and property amounts were reported most frequently. Surprisingly, psychological effects were mentioned in approximately 1% of the crime stories. When reported, the psychological effects that predominated crime stories were fear, denial, mood shifts, and the victim being "shaken up".

Chermak (1995) reasoned that reporters do not understand the nature of victimization or the psychological harm that can result from it, hence they exclude these elements from crime stories. Another reason for this exclusion is that the public cannot relate to the psychological harm associated with victimization. The public does, however, relate to the physical harm associated with victimization. With murder being the type of crime predominantly presented in the news, it was not unusual that death was the type of harm most likely to be presented in the news. Indeed, death constituted 70% of the physical harm category in Chermak's study.

The Criminal Justice System in the News Media

Researchers have also identified a distorted media portrait of the criminal justice system and its workings (Bortner, 1984). The criminal justice system and its component parts are seldom in themselves the topic of news stories, rather the criminal justice system serves as a background setting for a news story (Surette, 1992). Graber (1980) found that less than 4% of all newspaper crime stories contained explicit evaluations of the criminal justice system. Conversely, reports on specific crimes or on the processing of specific criminal cases in the courts comprised 69% of all criminal justice news stories. When the criminal justice system was referred in crime stories Graber (1980) found that the court system received the most prominent coverage, the correctional system received the least coverage with the police evaluations in between. Graber (1980) noted that: "Substantively, the evaluations were heavily negative, with the courts and the correctional system faring worst. The police fared reasonably well" (p. 74).

Chermak (1995) found that police effectiveness was evaluated in less than 4% of the total number of newspaper crime stories and the courts were evaluated in less than 3% of the stories; however, there was no mention of correctional system evaluations. The content analysis revealed that the police received overall positive evaluations while the courts received overall negative evaluations. These findings parallel those of Graber's (1980) with respect to police and court evaluations. Interestingly, Chermak (1995) also found that when the police or courts were evaluated in crime stories, the media evaluated their performance on one specific instance. Thus, the problem was assumed to be

isolated and caused by a rotten apple rather than being ongoing and systemic (Chermak, 1995).

While a limited number of stories reach the public concerning corrections, it appears that they are almost universally negative (e.g., the shocking depiction of prison riots and brutal attacks by assailants on parole) (Avery, 1989; Curran, 1989; Meddis, 1989; Schwartz, 1989). This contributes to public doubt and the further erosion of confidence in corrections' ability to serve its function in making a difference (Avery, 1989). Thus, without adequate news media evaluations of the police, the courts, and the correctional system the public is left to build its own general picture of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system (Graber, 1980; Surette, 1992).

Another aspect of crime news reporting by the media that has raised concerns among researchers is the portrayal of the stages of the criminal justice process. It appears that certain aspects of the criminal justice process are presented while others are not considered. Researchers have consistently found that the media place an emphasis upon law enforcement and the initial stages of the criminal justice process to the exclusion of other dimensions of the process (Chermak, 1995; Dussuyer, 1979; Graber, 1980; Sherizen, 1978). Sherizen (1978) discovered that the majority of the news stories were limited to one particular stage of the criminal justice system, with more than two-thirds of crime news coverage relating to the beginning stages of the justice system. Moreover, postarrest stages were seldom mentioned except in trial reports.

Dussuyer (1979) found that the police (36.6%) and court (54.7%) stages were most frequently cited, with the correctional stage (3.5%) rarely mentioned in Ontario

newspaper crime stories. The court verdict and sentence imposed was the stage most frequently cited followed by the arrest/charge stage, and then the preliminary hearing stage. Similarly, Chermak (1995) found that most newspaper stories reported on either the police (38.3%) or court (44.0%) stage. The most frequent stage cited in crime stories was the official discovery of a crime followed by arrests, charges, and trial proceedings, respectively. Thus, it appears that crime stories are more newsworthy at the beginning stages of the criminal justice system than they are later, resembling an inverted criminal justice funnel (Chermak, 1995).

The effectiveness of the criminal justice process is also judged by the penalties assigned to offenders. Studies have found that the reporting of sentencing decisions in the media tend to be the exception rather than the norm (Chermak, 1995; Garofalo, 1981; Graber, 1980; Roberts, 1988b). For example, Graber (1980) reported that only 11% of the newspaper crime stories covered this topic explicitly. Roshier (1981) found that when sentences were reported in newspaper crime stories there was a marked tendency to overreport the more serious punishments, particularly imprisonment. Similarly, Graber's (1980) results showed that prison sentences were overrepresented in newspapers in relation to other penalties. Moreover, in nearly half of the stories dealing with sentencing no penalty was cited or it was delayed and uncertain.

More recently, Roberts (1988b) reported that 70% of Canadian newspaper crime stories dealing with sentencing information cited prison terms whereas less than 10% of the stories cited fines. Alternate sentences, such as community service or restitution rarely appeared in crime stories. These content results were inconsistent with actual

Canadian sentencing practices in which imprisonment is rarely imposed whereas fines comprise nearly half of all sentences (Roberts, 1988b; Surette, 1992).

It has been established that crime stories in the news media consist primarily of brief accounts of discrete events, with few details and little background information (Garofalo, 1981). Rarely does the media present interpretive analyses that place criminal justice information into historical, sociological, political, or psychological perspectives (Graber, 1980). Consequently, the causes of crime appear infrequently in crime news stories. Chermak (1995) found that causes of crime were mentioned in approximately 2% of the newspaper crime stories and Graber (1980) noted 4% of such cases.

In Graber's (1980) study, only 1% of crime stories mentioned more than one cause and only four tenths of 1% mentioned three or more causes. Among the causes that were reported, 37.1% were attributable to criminal justice system deficiencies. Specifically, these stories indicated that the criminal justice system encourages crime by dealing inappropriately with offenders, in part through excessive leniency. One fifth of the causes dealt with political system deficiencies and 28% of the causes referred to personal deficiencies, alcohol and drug addiction, and poor home life conditions. Thus, the news media provides the public with information about crime events but provides little or no information about the root causes of crime or the nature of offenders (Marsh, 1991).

Public Perceptions of Crime

The various findings from content analytic studies suggest that the presentations of crime and the criminal justice system in the news media are often incomplete and

distorted. The primary concern raised regarding these media portrayals has to do with their effect on public attitudes toward and perceptions of justice. The extent to which the media actually influence the public's attitudes has been the subject of some argument (Surette, 1992). In this regard, the research findings have been mixed.

Due to the fact that relatively few people experience crime directly (Courtis, 1970; Graber, 1980; Lewis, 1984; Stroman & Seltzer, 1985), it has generally been assumed that the public's image of crime, offenders, victims, and the criminal justice system are shaped to a large degree by the media (Garofalo, 1981). In part, this assumption has been confirmed by Graber's (1980) finding that 95% of respondents cited the mass media as the primary source of information about crime. However, in order to determine the extent to which the public actually forms images of crime using media presentations it is necessary to compare the public's perceptions with those of crime in the news media and official crime statistics.

Researchers have established that the news media overrepresent the proportion of violent crimes committed by offenders (e.g., Chermak, 1995; Graber, 1980; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981). In a Canadian nation-wide poll, Doob and Roberts (1982) found that 88% of respondents overestimated the percentage of crimes involving violence in relation to official statistics. In light of this evidence, it is not surprising that the Canadian public were most likely to mention violent offenders when asked their views of the typical offender (Brillon, Louis-Guerin, & Lamarche, 1984). Thus, it appears that one consequence of the distorted picture of violent crime in the news media is that the public tend to overestimate the frequency of these crimes and these offenders.

Indeed, almost five decades ago, Davis (1952) presented evidence demonstrating that newspaper crime coverage and official crime rates are unrelated and that the public's image of crime more accurately reflects the portrayal of crime presented in the newspapers, especially with respect to violent crimes. However, contrasting evidence has been presented in two British studies where the overall finding was that the public perceptions of crime did not appear to be influenced by the distortions in the newspapers, rather, they were surprisingly close to the official picture (Cumberbatch & Beardsworth, 1976; Roshier, 1981). Specifically, the public's estimations of the relative frequency with which different types of offenses occurred were more similar to those offered by official crime statistics than those presented in newspapers.

Sheley and Ashkins (1981) attempted to sort out the contradictions between public and media images of crime and those found in official statistics examining television news as well. Respondents were asked to rank in decreasing order of occurrence seven index offenses (i.e., homicide, robbery, rape, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, vehicle theft). The researchers found that while the public was more realistic concerning violent crimes than were television crime stories, public rankings still differed from police rankings of index offenses. Overall, there was little concordance among the public and police views of the relative frequency of index crimes. However, the public image of the relative frequency of occurrence of various crimes was similar to the image portrayed by newspapers, though it was distinctly dissimilar from that provided by television (Sheley & Ashkins, 1981).

To explain these findings Sheley and Ashkins (1981) suggested that television may be viewed by the public as a summarizing medium while newspapers are seen as providing broader coverage. Thus the mature viewer may comprehend that there is more to the crime picture than the murders and robberies reported on television. It must be noted, however, that a causal relationship cannot be determined regarding the influence of one particular medium on the public's perceptions of crime. Indeed, the public relies on a combination of television, newspapers, radio, and to a lesser extent, personal experiences to form views on the crime phenomenon (Graber, 1980; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981). These findings must be viewed in light of the study limitations which include the use of only 7 possible index crimes examined over a 3 month sample period in 1978 and the use of a sample of convenience.

The public's perceptions of offender and victim characteristics in comparison to those reported by the media and official statistics have also yielded mixed results. Research has shown that the public's estimates of offenders' ages more closely resembled official statistics than newspaper presentations (Graber, 1980; Roshier, 1981). Researchers' examinations of the gender distribution of offenders has demonstrated that newspaper accounts were consistent with official statistics; however, public perceptions differed from both of these sources (Graber, 1980; Roshier, 1981). For example, Graber (1980) found that the public underestimated the percentage of female offenders while Roshier (1981) discovered that the relative frequency of female offenders was overestimated by the public.

Respondents' estimations of the occupational status of offenders also differed across studies. Graber (1980) found that the public designated offenders predominantly as unemployed, poor, or unskilled. These data were in the opposite direction of newspaper accounts. In contrast, Roshier's (1981) respondents overestimated the extent of crime among the higher status groups, in comparison to official statistics. In this study, the public's estimations were consistent with newspaper portrayals. Regarding the public's perceptions of the racial distribution of offenders, Graber (1980) found that the public overrepresented black offenders in relation to newspaper stories and official statistics, both of which reported offenders to be predominantly white. These disparities across studies may stem from a failure to specify the exact types of crimes respondents were thinking about when asked about offender characteristics (Garofalo, 1981).

The public's images of crime victims have been assessed to a lesser extent than images of offenders. In Graber's (1980) study, respondents overestimated the frequency of victims who were black and female, relative to newspaper stories and victimization surveys. In regard to the age distribution of victims, respondents were consistent with newspaper accounts in that both overestimated the frequency of victims over age 35, relative to victimization surveys. In references to victim social status 33% of the victims were identified by respondents in terms of poverty criteria and only 17% were presented as higher status. These findings contrasted newspaper accounts that cited nearly two-thirds of victims as middle- and upper-class.

Research examining the public's perceptions of the criminal justice system in comparison to media portrayals is also scarce. Roshier (1981) found that both

respondents and newspapers overestimated the percentage of crimes cleared up. This was in line with the finding that newspaper stories overrepresented solved crimes. In Graber's (1980) study, the public's evaluations of the criminal justice system were somewhat similar to evaluations presented in newspapers. In the public's view, the system's components did only marginally better, but in the same order as that presented in the news media. Specifically, the public rated the police as good to fair, the courts as fair to poor, and corrections as poor. Thus, the public's largely dissenting evaluation of the criminal justice system reflects overall the information and impressions offered by the news media (Graber, 1980; Surette, 1992).

In sum, the aforementioned research suggests that the public's images of crime and its related aspects are not entirely consistent with information presented by the news media; however, it is clear that the public is influenced to some degree by media portrayals of crime. In addition to direct effects upon members of the public (e.g., leading people to overestimate the number of violent crimes), researchers have suggested a number of indirect effects on public perceptions of crime (Gebotys, Roberts, & DasGupta, 1988; Roberts & Edwards, 1988). These indirect effects have been explained in terms of a social psychological process known as anchoring.

Anchoring effects occur when responses to one stimulus affect subsequent responses to a second stimulus (Roberts & Edwards, 1989). In line with anchoring theory, Gebotys, Roberts, and DasGupta (1988) proposed that a preponderance of high seriousness crimes in the media, such as violent crimes, may serve to inflate the public's seriousness ratings of crimes. Moreover, ratings of offense seriousness made by frequent

media users would be higher than those made by infrequent users. They found a significant positive relationship between media use and perceptions of crime seriousness. Thus, high scores on television news viewing were associated with high seriousness ratings of various crimes. These results suggest that media presentations of crime have an anchoring effect such that media emphasis on high serious crimes will affect public perceptions of other, less serious and unrelated offenses.

In another Canadian study, Roberts and Edwards (1989) examined the anchoring phenomenon. According to anchoring theory, they suggested that the news media's constant reference to violent crimes may arouse a desire for retribution and that this may generalize to all types of offenses and offenders. Thirty participants were randomly assigned to each experimental condition. Each participant evaluated one stimulus story after reading one anchor story. The dependent variables comprised ratings of the second offense and offender, as well as the importance ratings of five sentencing purposes.

Roberts and Edwards (1989) found that when participants first read a news story that was high in seriousness, they later rated an unrelated offender and offense more negatively and were more punitive in their sentences. Ratings of the importance of retribution were significantly correlated with severity of sentence assigned. However, ratings of the importance of the other four sentencing purposes were not significantly correlated with sentence severity. It was suggested that harsher penalties resulted from changes in perceptions of offense seriousness. Thus, these results support the notion that the overrepresentation of violent crimes in the news media may bias the public's impressions of all offenses and offenders (Roberts & Edwards, 1989).

respondents endorsed the view that sentences administered by the court are too lenient.

When respondents were asked to state the kind of offense that they had heard about recently that had received a lenient sentence, offenses involving violence accounted for approximately 90% of responses.

The public's perception of judicial leniency contrasts the depiction of sentences in newspapers, which tend to overreport incarcerations (Roberts, 1988b). Roberts' (1988b) results suggest that it is the sentences in light of the seriousness of the offense reported in the media that conveys the perception of leniency; it is not that the sentences themselves are particularly lenient. Other research suggests that the media are responsible for public dissatisfaction with sentencing practices due to the fact that the public receives inadequate information about sentencing from the media (Doob & Roberts, 1984). For instance, Roberts (1988b) found that in 90% of Canadian newspaper stories sampled no mention was made of any particular purpose of sentencing. General deterrence was mentioned in 6% of the stories, while the remaining 4% cited one of the remaining sentencing aims (i.e., rehabilitation, special deterrence, incapacitation, or retribution).

In a representative survey of the Canadian public respondents were asked to estimate some common maximum penalties (e.g., robbery, theft, assault) (Canadian Sentencing Commission, 1987). It was found that few respondents had any accurate idea of the maxima contained in the Criminal Code. Specifically, the public consistently underestimated the severity of maximum penalties. Moreover, respondents were unable to state which offenses carried a minimum penalty.

of the maxima contained in the Criminal Code. Specifically, the public consistently underestimated the severity of maximum penalties. Moreover, respondents were unable to state which offenses carried a minimum penalty.

Roberts' (1988b) examination of sentencing stories shows why the public's estimates are so far from reality. He found only 23 stories that made reference to a maximum penalty. Mandatory minimum penalties were noted in only seven articles. Finally, in terms of information about current sentencing practice, not even one story mentioned the average sentence for any particular offense.

Roberts and White (1986) compared public estimates of recidivism rates of three offense categories (i.e., property, person, sex) to actual rates for Canadian offenders. They found that public estimates of first offender recidivism were significantly higher than the official rates for all three offense categories. However, the difference between the public estimates and the reported statistics disappeared for the second and third-time offender groups. The authors suggested that the public appears to be unaware of the increased probability of reconviction for these groups.

Respondents were also asked to state the category of second reconviction into which first-time offenders were likely to fall if they were reconvicted. The public viewed a high degree of consistency from first to second offense. Thus, to the public the first offense categorizes an offender for subsequent reconvictions. This finding contrasts official data which demonstrate that property is the most likely second offense category, regardless of the nature of the first conviction (Roberts & White, 1986). Finally, respondents were asked whether the courts are too harsh towards convicted offenders, too

lenient or about right. Those respondents who thought that sentences were too lenient generated higher recidivism estimates than people who were satisfied with the severity of the current sentences.

Not only do the public overestimate recidivism rates of first-time offenders, but they also overestimate the amount of crime by people obtaining early release, with 56% and 66% largely overestimating reconvictions for crimes against the person and for crimes against property, respectively (Canadian Sentencing Commission, 1987). When members of the public were asked for the strongest argument against parole over half mentioned recidivism of parolees; no other argument came close. These results suggest that the Canadian public might look more favourably upon sentencing and early release mechanisms if it had more accurate views of the proportion of offenders who commit further offenses. In fact, when the public is presented with more detailed information, research has shown that public attitudes are more congruent with actual sentencing practices (Doob & Roberts, 1984; Roberts & Doob, 1990; Stalans & Diamond, 1990; Zamble & Kalm, 1990).

Thus, one of the implications of the inaccurate media presentations of crime and the criminal justice system is that the public may become more conscious of particular aspects of crime-related issues than others. This, in turn, reflects upon political decisions and future legislative actions which ultimately affect how offenders are managed because it is the public, and their social consciousness, who elect politicians. In fact, some empirical research suggests that judges consider public opinion in their sentencing decisions (Gibson, 1980). As well, researchers have suggested that public opinions partly

provide the impetus for mandatory prison terms (Cullen, Gilbert, & Cullen, 1983; Flanagan, McGarrell, & Brown, 1985; Stalans & Diamond, 1990; Thomson & Ragona, 1987).

Fear of Crime

Knowledge of the potential influence of crime presentations in the news media is important not only for understanding how the public judges various offenses and offenders, but also for understanding public attitudes that are apt to have socially significant consequences, such as fear and anxiety about personal safety (Graber, 1980). Research examining the relationship between news media use and fear of crime has shown mixed support (for a review see Heath & Gilbert, 1996). Doob and Macdonald (1979) examined fear of crime in relation to total television use and use of news from televisions, newspapers, or radios in Canada. They found that television viewing was related to fear of being a victim of a crime; however, when the actual incidence of neighborhood crime was controlled for, this relationship did not hold up. Moreover, they found no relationships between the use of the three news media and fear of victimization. In subsequent studies, Gomme (1986) and Skogan and Maxfield (1981) also found no link between exposure to news media and fear of crime among Canadians and Americans, respectively.

Other researchers, however, have found a relationship between fear of crime and exposure to crime reports in newspapers (Heath, 1984; Jaehnig, Weaver, & Fico, 1981; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Williams & Dickinson, 1993) and on television news (O'Keefe, 1984; O'Keefe & Reid-Nash, 1987). O'Keefe and Reid-Nash (1987) found

that greater attention to televised news was related to subsequent increased fear, concern, and avoidance activity; however, no such effects were found for newspaper crime news. In their review of the literature, Heath and Gilbert (1996) suggested that the more detailed operationalizations of crime news exposure lead to stronger relationships between media and fear and, in some cases, to the identification of moderating variables that influence the relationship.

Heath (1984) conducted a component analysis of newspaper crime coverage examining sensationalism (i.e., sensationalism intrinsic to the crime rather than sensationalistic reporting style), randomness of victim selection, and crime location based on the assumption that detail and perspective in crime articles can influence the level of fear aroused by readers. The three components are based on the social psychological theories concerning attribution of control, normativeness, and downward comparison. According to the perceived control theoretical framework, people have a general tendency to prefer to be in control of their environments. In line with this theory, Heath (1984) hypothesized that the absence of information about precipitating events in newspaper crime stories would be associated with high levels of fear among readers.

According to the normativeness theory, sensational crimes are severe violations of social norms and they are unusual or unexpected, thus these crimes should be better remembered than reports of mundane crimes. This in turn should lead to greater impact on perceptions of crime. Based on the theoretical notions of normativeness, Heath (1984) further hypothesized that the prevalence of sensational crimes in newspapers will be associated with high levels of fear among readers. The last theory, downward

comparison, posits that people can decrease anxiety and increase their subjective well-being in negative situations by comparing themselves with others in more dire situations. According to this theory, Heath (1984) hypothesized that factors that increase fear when occurring in the immediate locale (i.e., randomness and sensationalism) should reduce fear when they occur elsewhere.

Using a quasi-experimental design, Heath (1984) examined the perceptions of crime among a random sample of readers ($N = 335$) of newspapers with different reporting styles across 42 American cities. She found that the location of crime interacted significantly with sensationalism and randomness. Newspaper stories of local crime news that were sensational or random were associated with higher levels of fear whereas reports of nonlocal crime news that were sensational or random were associated with lower levels of fear. These findings were replicated in a second laboratory experiment with 80 college students.

Thus, all three theoretical frameworks received support from Heath's (1984) findings. As predicted from the downward comparison theory, the more newspapers printed stories about offenders in other locations, choosing victims at random, and violating social norms, the more secure readers felt in their own environment. As predicted from the perceived control theory, readers felt less safe when offenders chose their victims at random in the same locality, presumably because in this situation people feel more vulnerable. Finally, predictions concerning nonnormative behavior were supported by the finding that people were more fearful of reports of unusual and violent crimes if they occurred locally (Heath, 1984).

In a replication of Heath's (1984) study Liska and Baccaglini (1990) examined fear of crime in relation to readership of local and nonlocal crime stories with a larger content analysis and survey base. In addition, they examined initial versus follow-up reports. They found that of the various types of crime stories, homicides showed the strongest relationship to fear. Local stories were positively associated with fear; moreover, this effect was accentuated both for stories in the first part of the paper (i.e., first fifteen pages) and for initial crime stories. With regard to nonlocal stories, a negative relationship to fear of crime emerged that was accentuated both for stories in the first part of the newspaper and for follow-up stories. These findings suggest that while crime stories inundate newspapers, fear of crime is affected positively and most strongly by only initial local homicide stories in the first part of the newspaper, which constituted only 10% of all homicide cases and 2.9% of all crime stories in this study (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990).

Prominence in Newscasts and Learning from Television News

When the public uses newspapers and television to obtain information about crime, presumably this information is incorporated into their existing knowledge base. Given the findings that the public's images of crime and its related aspects were in some respect congruent with media presentations, and that media presentations influenced the public's fear of crime, it seems reasonable to assume that learning has occurred. The format differences between newspapers and television, however, may lead to differential levels of learning about crime by media consumers. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1991) state that:

The news reality of each medium is a matter of how [italics added] it presents knowledge in its established formats, rather than what [italics added] it presents. Aspects of format fundamentally delimit and shape the news product: for example, the time available for a broadcast-news bulletin and the space available in a newspaper; the sequencing of broadcast-news items and the layout of a newspaper ... Content must always fit the format, and therefore it is always secondary to the format. (p. 21)

Indeed, the visual capacity of television allows it to bind its messages to the context in which they were produced, hence, television is seen as having greater validation powers than newspapers (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991). This aspect of television news accounts for the fact that the public finds television news more believable, fair, and influential than newspapers (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991; Robinson & Levy, 1986).

The ability of a medium to convey its messages is necessarily limited by the media consumer's level of attentiveness to news items. Newspaper readers have much more flexibility in being able to choose stories of interest and they have the opportunity to take in information at their own pace. Television news viewers, on the other hand, have much less selectivity in choosing the level of attentiveness to a news item. For this reason and due to air time constraints, television news producers attempt to convey information to its viewers using optimal conditions; for example, newscasts are frequently accompanied by dramatic visuals to illustrate and enhance the news text. The remainder of this section will discuss the format differences of television news stories and the impact of presentation differences on learning.

It has been suggested that prominence features of news stories facilitate knowledge acquisition and retention (Berry, Gunter, & Clifford, 1982). Such features include the length, serial position, and presence of accompanying headlines and visuals in a newscast. Content analyses have shown that crime stories vary with respect to the prominence features contained within newscasts (e.g., Graber, 1980; Lowry, 1971).

Among content analyses of television news found in the literature, Graber's (1980) study has been the most comprehensive with respect to crime news evaluations. Other content analyses have typically examined the differential presentations of good and bad news. In such studies, researchers have defined good news as that which a majority of persons would perceive as positive or upbeat (e.g., new business opening); conversely, bad news was defined as that which a majority of persons would perceive as negative or downbeat (e.g., postal strikes) (Stone & Grusin, 1984; Stone, Hartung, & Jensen, 1987). Accordingly, crime has typically been subsumed under the latter category.

In a topical analysis of good news in relation to bad news, Stone and Grusin (1984) found that there was a larger proportion of bad news among early portions of the national network newscasts (i.e., among the first five stories), a larger proportion of bad news among stories that were more than 30 seconds in length (i.e., the longest story category), and a larger proportion of bad news among those stories with film clips. In a subsequent study, Stone, Hartung, and Jensen (1987) found that there was a larger proportion of bad news in the first third of local newscasts, a larger proportion of bad news among stories that were less than 31 seconds in length (i.e., the shortest story category), and a larger proportion of bad news among those stories with moving graphics.

A comparison of these two studies demonstrates that bad news on local newscasts tended to be shorter and had fewer graphics than bad news on national newscasts (Stone, Hartung, & Jensen, 1987).

In Lowry's (1971) content analysis, evening national network news stories were examined. Overall, bad news was given a significant position and visual emphasis in relation to other news. The results showed that 63% of all bad news was presented in the first half of the newscasts with 53% of the stories less than 30 seconds in length. For bad news stories, visual aids were used in 82% of all items, film/tape was used in 36% of stories, a correspondent on camera was used in 23% of stories, and 14% contained all three. The bad news category was further subdivided into five areas, one of which included crime. In regards to crime stories, 67% were clustered in the middle two quarters of the newscasts with 64% less than 30 seconds in length. Visual aids, film/tape, and a correspondent on camera were shown in 86%, 28%, and 13% of crime stories, respectively, and 10% of crime stories contained all three.

Among the few content analyses that have examined televised crime news in greater depth (Chermak, 1995; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991; Graber, 1980; Schlesinger, Tumber, & Murdock, 1991; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981), only Graber (1980) and Chermak (1995) examined the prominence features of crime stories. Regarding prominence features of crime stories in general, Graber (1980) found that crime stories were predominantly presented with graphics or film, without verbal or written headlines, and most stories were under 60 seconds in length. It should be noted that the most prominent stories were categorized as those airing for more than 120 seconds, with

headlines and graphics. Given these findings it would appear that crime stories were not prominently displayed. Graber (1980) did note, however, that among news sources that presented crime stories prominently, the most sensational treatment generally was accorded to violent individual crimes that had occurred locally.

Chermak (1995) found that the most newsworthy crimes took up the most air time, were presented in the first part of the newscast, and were followed up for longer periods of time (i.e., through the various criminal justice stages). Specifically, sensational murders and other violent crimes were the most prominently presented.

A common finding among the television news content analyses examined was the abundance of visual material that accompanied newscasts. This finding is not surprising given the fact that television is an audiovisual medium. It cannot be assumed, however, that the mere presence of visual material will facilitate learning. Indeed, empirical investigations of the effects of visual format on television news learning have been equivocal.

For example, research comparing learning from print, audio, and audiovisual modalities has shown that recall was superior from the print modality (Furnham & Gunter, 1985, 1987; Gunter & Furnham, 1986; Gunter, Furnham, & Gietson, 1984). However, it is possible that the format of presentation in the audiovisual modality may have affected recall rates. Interestingly, researchers have also found that violent news was recalled better than nonviolent news in all media (Gunter & Furnham, 1986; Gunter, Furnham, & Gietson, 1984; Furnham & Gunter, 1987).

Stories in television newscasts are presented in a variety of ways. Formats include using an announcer/anchorman only, still pictures, interviews, and film clips. Research in this area has typically examined information gain from television news using a combination of story topics, such as politics, sports, social problems, and accidents. Hazard (1963) examined respondents' information gain from news stories using announcer, film, and still picture formats. It was found that the method of presentation had no differential effect on information gain. Similar results have been obtained by researchers who examined film clips in comparison to anchorman only newscasts (Edwardson, Grooms, & Pringle, 1976).

In Booth's (1971) analysis of the presentation characteristics of television, radio, and newspaper items, he found that news items having a longer presentation time or more space were recalled more frequently than items having less time and space devoted to them. In addition, news items assigned a favourable location (i.e., the front or back page of any section of a newspaper or the two lead or two last items of a radio or television newscast) were recalled more readily than items not possessing such a location. Finally, news items accompanied by pictorial materials were recalled more often than items without the additional channel.

Katz, Adoni, and Parness (1977) presented evidence that the recall of news items somewhat improved by seeing the news on television rather than hearing it on the radio. However, the form of visual presentation, whether it was accomplished by means of films, stills, or a presenter reading a script, did not differentially affect recall or comprehension of news items. A primacy effect was noted from the results; that is, first

items were remembered the best, regardless of the mode of visual presentation.

Moreover, longer items (i.e., 2 minutes or more) were better remembered than shorter items. In this regard, respondents viewing the news recalled longer items twice as often as listeners only.

Subsequent research has confirmed that pictorial content does add to the recall of television news items (Berry & Brosius, 1991; Brosius, 1989; Edwardson, Grooms, & Proudlove, 1981; Edwardson, Kent, Engstrom, & Hofmann, 1992; Graber, 1990; Gunter, 1980). For example, Gunter (1980) found that film-clip items and still-insert items were recalled significantly more often in the video modality than no-inserts items, but not in the audio modality.

Although the substance of visuals is an important aspect to examine in television news Graber (1985) suggests that the impact of visuals must also be assessed. In an attempt to assess the manner of presentation of television news and the information contained in audiovisuals, Graber (1990) analyzed a series of television news stories with an emphasis on the nature and contributions of visual aspects of the newscast. This study showed that when the length of each news story was divided by the number of visual scenes depicted in it, on average, 67% of news stories has visual scenes that appeared on the screen for less than 20 seconds and only 13% of stories displayed visual scenes that averaged more than 30 seconds. Between one-third and one-half of all the stories were heavily illustrated, carrying more than 10 visual scenes.

Graber (1990) also examined the prevalence of picture types among news stories. The results demonstrated that when pictures were classified according to their primary

focus, close-ups of people were the most prevalent picture type. Indeed, an average of 70% of the stories contained close-ups of identified individuals. Fewer scenes focused on identifiable locations (48%) or on identified objects close-up (17%). It was suggested that the presence of close-ups of people, rather than objects or locations, will readily elicit inferences and emotions from the viewers.

Although crime stories were not singled out for analysis, Graber (1990) noted that crime stories that included visuals generally depicted the harm done to victims, such as a battered, bandaged victim in a hospital bed or the removal of a homicide victim's draped body from the crime scene. Pictures of suspects or their living environments were rarely shown. Dussuyer (1970) conducted a content analysis of newspapers examining the subject of photographs and found that 18.2% portrayed a victim, 14.9% an alleged offender, 6.1% the police, 16.7% the crime scene, and 4.3% stolen or damaged property (39.8% dealt with other or combined subjects).

Graber (1990) also conducted an evaluation of the primary contribution of the visuals as a whole to the verbal themes contained in the television news stories. The results showed that in 51% of the stories, the pictorial information failed to enhance the verbal story line. That is, pictures were either irrelevant to or redundant with the verbal information. In 49% of the stories, the visual scenes enhanced the verbal information by adding new information (29%), identifying unfamiliar people and places (10%), enhancing the clarity of the verbal story (6%), and providing further emotional content relevant to the verbal themes (4%).

Using a laboratory setting, Graber (1990) examined respondents' abilities to learn from television news. Results showed that visual themes were more memorable than verbal themes. More than half of the respondents recalled three types of visuals, namely, those involving various close-ups of people. Overall, the results indicated that the greatest information gains came from unusual sites and from pictures of people that provided respondents with information about characteristics of the media figures and that enabled the respondents to develop emotional reactions to the pictured individuals (Graber, 1990). Rather than advancing the verbal story line directly, the most memorable visual content served clarification and emotional functions.

Research has shown that visuals can enhance learning from television news. Cue summation theory points to how the relationship between visual and verbal information affects learning. According to this theory, irrelevant cues presented in either audio or visual channels will cause a loss of learning from the other channel, but when audio and visual information is complementary, learning will be enhanced (Son, Reese, & Davie, 1987). In a test of this theory, Severin (1967) found that verbal information that was relevant to pictorial cues produced superior learning than when cues were irrelevant. Using television news, Reese (1984) found that learning from news was greater when visual and audio channels were redundant than when they were not redundant. Findings from subsequent studies support the cue summation theory in relation to the ability of congruent text-picture relations to enhance television news learning (Brosius, Donsbach, & Birk, 1996; Crigler, Just, & Neuman, 1994; Drew & Grimes, 1987; Reese & Davie, 1987).

The emotions provoked by the audiovisual nature of television news may also enhance the public's learning of news items. Research has shown that emotion promotes memory both for information central to an event and for peripheral detail (Heuer & Reisberg, 1990). Numerous studies confirm that the media increasingly cover negative events and that negative information is better remembered and has a greater impact than positive information (Garrazone, Atkin, Pinkleton, & Cole, 1990; Kepplinger & Daschmann, 1997; Lang, Newhagen, & Reeves, 1996; Lau, 1982; Lau, 1985; Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987). In addition, Lang et al. (1996) discovered that the presence of negative video in news stories increased the self-reported negative emotional impact of the story, making it more arousing and more negative, resulting in an increase in memory.

Limitations of Existing Research and Purpose of the Present Study

Several observations can be made from this review of the literature about television portrayals of crime news. First, research on the topic is scarce, particularly among Canadian television. In fact, only one Canadian study of this nature exists (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991). More importantly, among studies that have investigated the presentation of crime in television news, researchers have typically focused on the quantitative content of verbal material to the exclusion of qualitative visual displays. This is in line with content analyses that have been conducted with newspapers. The single content analysis of television news in Canada did not examine the combination of visual and verbal aspects of crime news (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991). A further limitation of previous research is that investigators have examined

crime news over short periods of time, with the longest study period being one year (Graber, 1980).

The available literature suggests that crime news, especially violent crime, is more prevalent in television newscasts than in newspapers (Chermak, 1995; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981). Indeed, the implications of the overrepresentation of violent crime in the news media are that the public may overestimate the relative frequency of such crimes, and they may be more fearful of their environments. These effects on the public's images of crime may lead individuals to judge criminals and offenses more harshly, which in turn could affect public policy making decisions in areas such as sentencing.

Due to the inherent nature of television, the news viewer is restricted in the sense that information from stories cannot be absorbed according to the viewer's own pace. Moreover, the audiovisual format of television news presents distinct differences in the manner in which viewers may acquire crime news information. Research on the effects of visual format differences on learning from television news suggests that various visual presentations may facilitate knowledge acquisition; however, these features have not been examined in the context of television crime stories. Thus, both theory and research suggest that visual representations in television news are an important avenue of further research, particularly with respect to crime images portrayed in the media.

In sum, the primary purpose of the present study was to add to the existing crime literature by examining the visual aspects of crime content in conjunction with its verbal presentations using quantitative and qualitative content analytic techniques from a

Canadian television local news station during a 13 month time period. Secondly, three established super sensational crime stories (i.e., Paul Bernardo, O.J. Simpson, Oklahoma city bombing) occurred during the study period which allowed for a close examination of the steady diet hypothesis of crime news coverage.

It should be noted that in the past, researchers have avoided content analyses of crime news using samples that contained spectacular or super sensational offenses (e.g., Sheley & Ashkins, 1981). The investigation of super sensational crimes and their effect on the overall coverage of crime is thus an important research avenue due to the lack of existing knowledge on the topic and due to the fact that the presentation of super sensational crimes on the news is inevitable. Essentially, these are the stories that news organizations seek out and use more resources to cover due to their interesting nature (Chermak, 1995).

For the purpose of the present study, sensational crimes were defined as those that are extremely unusual or bizarre in nature. These crimes will not necessarily be violent in nature, rather they will involve newsworthy features such as celebrity status. For example, if the prime minister's house is broken into, this would constitute a sensational crime story if presented on the news. Consistent with Chermak's (1995) operationalization of super primary crimes, in the present study super sensational crimes were defined as sensational crimes with national or international newsworthiness.

Hypotheses

In order to examine the nature of television crime and criminal justice system news coverage over time the following hypotheses were generated:

H₁: Television news will provide a steady rate of crime news across time which will range between 10 and 20% of total news coverage.

H_{1a}: When super sensational crime stories are presented in newscasts the proportion of crime news will not exceed the 20% threshold of total news coverage. Moreover, the average rate of crime news coverage will not differ between newscasts with and without super sensational crime stories.

H_{1b}: Criminal justice system and nonviolent crime news will fluctuate while news about violent crime will remain stable over time.

The present study also examined how the presence of three super sensational crime stories (i.e., O.J. Simpson case, Paul Bernardo case, and Oklahoma city bombing) influenced the depiction of other crimes in the same newscast. Specifically, the frequency and type of coverage, breadth of topic coverage, story placement, and visual presentation of other crime stories were examined. The depiction of these crime stories were compared to crimes in newscasts that did not contain a super sensational crime story. With respect to the above characteristics it was also hypothesized that:

H₂: The importance of other stories similar to the presented super sensational story will be raised.

The remaining hypotheses were designed to examine the characteristics of crime news with respect to the representation and accuracy of media portrayals of crime, the prominence of crime stories in the news, and the extent of media coverage of crime. Thus, it was further hypothesized that:

H₃: Sensational crimes will be overrepresented and displayed more prominently in relation to mundane crimes in television crime news stories.

With respect to prominence, the sensational crimes will be longer, presented earlier in the newscast, and followed up over more criminal justice stages. Another measure of prominence is the use of visuals and their apparent impact in a news story. From a qualitative perspective, it was further hypothesized that sensational crimes stories, in contrast to mundane crime stories, will be presented with more and longer visual scenes, depicting more video footage than still picture or talking head footage, with more close ups of identifiable people (e.g., offender) and locations (e.g., crime scene), with more visual-verbal congruency than irrelevant picture text relations, and containing visuals with a stronger emotional impact.

H₄: Violent crimes in television news stories will be overrepresented in relation to official crime statistics, whereas nonviolent crimes in television news stories will be underrepresented in relation to official crime statistics.

H₅: Violent crimes will be overrepresented and displayed more prominently in relation to nonviolent crimes in television news stories. Accordingly, sentences of imprisonment will predominate in television news stories.

H₆: Television crime stories will provide few details concerning offenders, victims, causes of crime, motives for crime, and aspects of the criminal justice process.

H_{6a}: Television news coverage of crime will focus more on the early stages (i. e., police and court) than later stages (i.e., correctional) of the criminal justice process.

H_{6b}: Evaluations of the criminal justice system will be scarce, with the police portrayed more positively than the courts and the correctional system.

H_{6c}: References to sentencing purposes, maximum penalties, minimum penalties, and current sentencing practice will rarely be addressed in crime stories.

H_{6d}: Recidivism rates will rarely appear in television crime stories; however, television news stories will present more crimes committed by recidivists than first time offenders.

Method

Research Design

The present study utilized three content analysis research designs, derived from Holsti (1969), in order to analyze and make inferences about the characteristics of television crime news. The purpose of the research designs was to describe the characteristics of the messages produced by television newscasts. The first research design was used to describe trends in television crime news content. This was accomplished by comparing messages over time, thus allowing inferences to be drawn about secular trends. The second research design was used to examine the relationship of two variables within a single news source. This was achieved by comparing two content variables to each other. The final research design was used to evaluate the accuracy of television crime news. Comparisons between content data and aggregate data achieved this end.

Materials

Materials in the present study consisted of a 20 inch colour television, a VHS videocassette recorder, a Sanyo microcassette audio recorder, and videotaped one hour local newscasts from CJOH-TV Newslane at 6:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday during the period of 13 months. CJOH-TV is a CTV network affiliate in the Nation's capital, serving an audience of approximately 1.6 million people throughout Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec (B. Matthews, personal communication, April 1996).

Official crime data were obtained for the time period studied from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR) statistics. The UCR survey is the most comprehensive and commonly used source of Canadian crime data (Martin & Ogrodnik, 1996). According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (1996), the UCR survey produces a continuous historical record of crime and traffic statistics reported by every police agency in Canada. The UCR survey is a summary or aggregate type census, with data available for nearly 100 separate criminal offenses. UCR data reflect reported crime that has been verified through police investigation. The survey collects information on the number of criminal incidents, the clearance status of those incidents and persons charged.

Procedure

In order to examine the hypotheses of this study and the related research questions, data were gathered from the early evening newscasts (i.e., 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.) of a major local television news station broadcasting in Ottawa, Ontario. Newscasts were videotaped and were coded from the period of June 1, 1994 to June 29,

1995. Thirteen months were selected in order to capture adequate coverage of the Oklahoma city bombing story.

A sample of every second newscast was used for the present study. For the sake of convenience, the first day of each month was used, the third day, and so on across the sample period. This sampling procedure was selected because most content analysis research using sampling techniques usually select between one-fourth and one-half of the days during the period under study (Lichty & Bailey, 1978). The present sampling method was also selected based on research that indicates that every fifth and sixth day samples do not differ significantly from figures for the entire month (Chermak, 1995; Davis, 1952; Mintz, 1966).

The television content analysis included an examination of the subject matter discussed in the newscasts, as well as the placement and emphasis given to various types of stories. A theme analysis of content was completed using coding rules adapted from previous research (Chermak, 1995; Graber, 1980; Graber, 1990). First, all news stories were categorized then timed to the nearest second using the timer on the VCR. Next, all crime stories were recorded using a microcassette audio recorder and transcribed verbatim with the inclusion of the visuals that accompanied each portion of verbal text. Then, content was coded from all crime stories within an entire newscast. It should be noted that although every second newscast was content analyzed, crime stories from every newscast were viewed across the sample period by the investigator in order to adequately code the novelty of the crime stories (e.g., initial versus follow-up).

This study adopted a fairly broad definition of what constituted a crime story, similar to that used in previous studies (e.g., Chermak, 1995; Graber, 1980). Stories included were local, national, and international crime stories; stories about specific crime incidents; legislative operations that focused on specific aspects of criminal justice; evaluations of the criminal justice process; and statistical reports of crime data. Stories involving a specific crime incident had to contain information demonstrating a clear violation of the law in order to be considered a crime story.

Consistent with previous research, to be included, a television crime story was required to be over ten seconds in length (Chermak, 1995; Graber, 1980). This inclusion criterion allowed for a more manageable data set due to the large number of variables that needed to be collected for each story. Moreover, it has been suggested that crime stories under 10 seconds in length are fillers chosen for convenience and do not reflect what news reporters and the organization think is actually important about crime (Chermak, 1995).

Crime stories were coded on such quantitative features as the nature of the crime covered, references to the causes and motives of crime, details revealed about particular crimes (e.g., victim and offender characteristics, location of the crime, details of injuries and crime execution), and arrest, prosecution, conviction, and penalties. Stories that dealt primarily with the criminal justice process (i.e., the police, courts, and correctional system) as well as crime prevention and criminal justice policies were also included in the coding scheme. Visual aspects of crime news stories were also coded on such features as the format of presentation (e.g., newscaster only, still photograph, video), picture types

(e.g., offender, victim, close-up of identified person, identifiable location), and the contribution of the visuals to the verbal themes of stories (e.g., irrelevant, redundant, clarification). The television codebook contained detailed information regarding all of the news story features that were captured in the coding (see Appendix).

Crime data were also collected from official crime statistics (i.e., UCR survey data) in order to compare the relative frequency of various crimes in television news stories to their actual occurrence. These comparisons determined whether or not the frequency of crimes depicted on a Canadian television local news station was distorted in relation to official crime data.

To test the reliability of the coding, a second coder was trained to use the coding scheme of the present study. First, training involved discussing the specifics of the codebook. The second coder then watched the primary investigator record data from a randomly chosen newscast. Both coders subsequently coded another randomly selected newscast and the data sheets were compared and any discrepancies discussed. When the primary investigator had adequately trained the second coder, the second coder content analyzed a portion of the newscasts. Ten percent of all newscasts were randomly selected for recoding by the second coder and the primary investigator to determine the degree of consistency both between different coders and also for the same coder after an interval of several months.

Results

Reliability Analyses

Fourteen newscasts were randomly selected for reliability analyses. The interrater

reliability of coding nominal data (e.g., frequency counts) was analyzed by measuring the percentage of interjudge agreement using Cohen's kappa. Cramer's ϕ_c was also used to measure the reliability of 8 nominal level variables in those instances where Cohen's kappa was not provided. When coding involved ratio data (e.g., time length), Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used.

Using Cohen's kappa, an average of 98% agreement was achieved both between the two coders and the same coder over time. Using measures of association, strong relationships were found between the two coders ($\phi_c = .97$, $r = .91$) and between the same coder over time ($\phi_c = .97$, $r = .94$).

It should be noted that the reliability of one variable in particular, the overall emotional impact of visuals, was considered questionable due to its subjective nature. Despite the subjectivity of this variable, reliability analyses revealed a strong relationship between the two coders, $r = .91$, and the same coder over time, $r = .92$. These results confirm the reliability of this variable therefore it was maintained in the codebook. Overall, the reliability analyses confirm that the television codebook is reliable to measure the various aspects of television newscasts.

Descriptive Statistics

In total, 144 newscasts were examined during the sample period yielding a total of 4,770 separate news stories. The mean length of newscasts was 2281.5 seconds ($SD = 109.6$) or 38.0 minutes. The frequency distribution and rank ordering of the various story topics are displayed in Table 1. The frequency of story topics presented on the news differed significantly, $\chi^2 (12, N = 4770) = 3147.2$, $p < .05$. As can be seen, the top four

story categories were sports, general interest, business and economy, and crime, respectively (see Table 1).

Table 2 presents the story length means, standard deviations, and rank ordering for each topic. A oneway analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether the means were significantly different. Levene's test for homogeneity of variances indicated that the topic groups were not homogeneous with respect to the variability in their time lengths, $F(12, 4757) = 18.6, p < .05$. ANOVA is not robust when this assumption has been violated, hence one is more likely to make a Type I error; thus a more conservative critical alpha of .01 was adopted. The ANOVA revealed that the mean time lengths of the different topic groups were significantly different, $F(12, 4757) = 18.0, p < .01$.

Post hoc comparisons were conducted using Dunnett's C correction procedure assuming unequal variances and maintaining a familywise error rate of .01. This analysis yielded statistically significant mean differences between the crime group and domestic affairs (-17.6), sports (13.5), business (12.1), science (-32.5), and accidents and natural disasters (22.9). Thus, the mean length of crime news was significantly lower than domestic affairs and science but significantly greater than sports, business and economy, and accidents and natural disasters.

A comparison was made between 'prominent' and 'non-prominent' stories with prominent defined as those exceeding 120 seconds while non-prominent stories were those less than 60 seconds. To facilitate a crime, non-crime comparison, all non-crime topics were combined. Results showed that there was no significant difference between

Table 1

Frequency Distribution and Rank Order of Story Topics (N = 4770)

Story Topic	n	Percent	Rank
Domestic Affairs	409	8.6	6
Foreign Affairs	270	5.7	7
Sports	1025	21.5	1
Business and Economy	639	13.4	3
Crime	564	11.8	4
Science	242	5.1	8
Education	103	2.2	10
Accidents and Natural Disasters	185	3.9	9
Celebrations	86	1.8	11
Weather	422	8.8	5
Environment	30	.6	12
General Interest	773	16.2	2
General Stories	22	.5	13

Table 2

Story Length Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank Order of Story Topics

Story Topic	n	Story Length		Rank
		M	SD	
Domestic Affairs	409	87.2	66.4	3
Foreign Affairs	270	79.8	59.5	5
Sports	1025	56.1	50.5	11
Business and Economy	639	57.5	53.0	10
Crime	564	69.6	59.2	8
Science	242	102.0	79.1	1
Education	103	87.2	70.7	2
Accidents and Natural Disasters	185	46.7	46.4	13
Celebrations	86	69.1	76.0	9
Weather	422	73.7	70.5	6
Environment	30	83.6	92.9	4
General Interest	773	73.4	74.4	7
General Stories	22	49.9	38.9	12

Note. Story length measured in seconds.

crime and non-crime stories in terms of story length prominence, $\chi^2 (1, N = 3403) = 1.9$, ns.

Story placement in the newscast was also examined as a measure of prominence. This was done by assigning a number to each story according to the sequential order of presentation in the newscast. Results revealed that crime stories were significantly more likely to be placed earlier in the newscast lineup ($M = 11.6$, $SD = 9.3$) than non-crime stories ($M = 17.9$, $SD = 9.7$), $t (736) = 15.2$, $p < .05$.

Serial learning theory suggests that stories placed earlier in the newscast are more likely to be remembered than stories in the middle of the newscast due to less interference from preceding news stories. Therefore, it was important to examine the number of crime stories broadcast before the first two commercials because these stories were considered to be the most influential in terms of memorability. Thus, stories placed before the first two commercials were considered more prominent than stories later in the newscast. It was found that more crime stories, 75.2%, were placed before the first 2 commercials than non-crime stories, 52.9%, $\chi^2 (6, N = 4769) = 271.1$, $p < .05$. Hence, it appears that crime stories are more prominent than non-crime stories with respect to placement of the story in the newscast but not duration of coverage.

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of the various types of crime stories displayed in television newscasts. A total of 562 crime stories were examined. Due to triple coding of story topics some stories were assigned more than one crime story topic. The table shows that the majority of crime stories reported on the news dealt with specific crime incidents (82.7%). Terrorism stories were the next most prevalent crime story type

(6.4%). Crime prevention and government/legislative activity stories received the next most substantial coverage, 5.7% and 5.3%, respectively. Crime fighting stories, which included crime statistics stories, also received a fair amount of coverage (4.8%). The remaining story topics received only minimal amounts of coverage (see Table 3).

Hypothesis Testing

In order to examine the fluctuations in news coverage of crime topics over time all crime and criminal justice news items were combined and presented as monthly data. Figure 1 presents crime stories as a function of mean percent of total newscast length from June 1994 to June 1995. An examination of the graph reveals that crime news ranged from an average of 5.3% of total news coverage in August to an average of 16.4% in April. Collapsed across 13 months, the overall mean coverage of crime news was 11.9% ($SD = 7.2$) of total news coverage.

In order to examine the degree of regularity of crime news, scores for each month were converted into z scores. No monthly z scores reached or exceeded two standard deviations. The bulk of the fluctuations (7 out of 13) represented upward rather than downward deviations. Monthly fluctuations for January, February, July, August and June 1995 represented downward deviations. Thus, overall it appears that the data are consistent with the hypothesis that television news will provide a steady rate of crime news across time.

A trend analysis was conducted to examine the nature of the relationship between the percent of newscasts devoted to crime across time. Levene's test for homogeneity of variances indicated that the groups were homogeneous with respect to the variability in

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of the Nature of Crime Stories in Television Newscasts (N = 562)

Story Type	Frequency	Percent
General discussion of crime	3	0.5
Specific crimes	465	82.7
General and specific discussion	3	0.5
Crime fighting	27	4.8
Crime prevention	32	5.7
Causes of crime	6	1.1
Organized crime	4	0.7
Criminal profile	3	0.5
Victim profile	1	0.2
Gang violence	3	0.5
Court activities	1	0.2
Police activities	23	4.1
Prison reform	3	0.5
Criminal justice process	3	0.5
Prison escape or attempted escape	3	0.5
Prison riot	1	0.2
Terrorism	36	6.4
Court reform	2	0.4
Criminal law changes	12	2.1
Support for victims of crime	4	0.7
Prison conditions	9	1.6
Prison program	2	0.4
Correctional activities	1	0.2
Government/legislative activities	30	5.3
Crime victims - specific incidents	3	0.5
Hate crimes	3	0.5
Suicide	6	1.1
Riot	3	0.5
Free press-fair trial	1	0.2

Note. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to triple coding of crime story topics.

Figure 1. Crime news as a function of the mean percent of total newscast length across time.

their means, $F(12, 131) = 1.5$, ns, thus homogeneous variances were assumed. Due to a significant omnibus F test, $F(12, 131) = 2.5$, $p < .05$, the data were examined for a linear trend. Results showed that a linear trend does not describe the data, $F(1, 131) = .07$, ns. Due to a significant residual component, $F(11, 131) = 2.7$, $p < .05$, a quadratic trend was examined. A quadratic trend does not describe the data, $F(1, 131) = 2.0$, ns, thus a cubic relationship was examined due to a significant residual component, $F(10, 131) = 2.8$, $p < .05$. A cubic relationship was not found, $F(1, 131) = .5$, ns, however, the residual component suggested an additional trend component is present, $F(9, 131) = 3.0$, $p < .05$. The 4th-order term was significant, $F(1, 131) = 7.3$, $p < .05$.

Thus it can be concluded that a quartic trend describes the relationship between the variables. It appears that the proportion of news devoted to crime goes through waves of increases and decreases over the time period studied. Specifically, crime news decreased over the summer months of 1994, increased in the fall, decreased in the winter, increased in the spring, and finally decreased towards the summer months of 1995.

It has been established that television news provides a steady diet of crime news coverage. In light of this finding, it is of particular interest to determine whether the presentation of super sensational crime stories increases the overall coverage of crime beyond the average coverage for newscasts that do not present super sensational crime stories on the news. Another factor that must be assessed is the proportion of crime coverage that is devoted to super sensational crime stories. In order to address these questions the component parts of crime news coverage across time were examined in Figure 2.

Figure 2 presents the mean percent of newscast length devoted to super sensational crime, sensational crime, mundane crime, and criminal justice system news as a function of time. The figure shows that super sensational crimes were presented in newscasts during every month of the sample period except October and December. During April and June 1995, super sensational crimes constituted the largest proportions of crime news ($\bar{M} = 40.1\%$, $SD = 34.7$ and $\bar{M} = 43.6\%$, $SD = 30.4$, respectively). However, on average, super sensational crime stories constituted only 15.6% of total crime news ($SD = 23.0$). As can be seen, the inclusion of super sensational crimes in newscasts did not increase the monthly coverage of crime beyond the 20% threshold of total news coverage. This finding confirms the first part of hypothesis 1_a.

The second part of hypothesis 1_a stated that the average rate of crime news coverage will not differ between newscasts with and without super sensational crime stories. In order to test this hypothesis an independent samples *t*-test was conducted between newscasts that presented super sensational crimes ($n = 53$) and newscasts that did not present super sensational crimes ($n = 91$). The results showed that the mean percent of crime coverage for newscasts with super sensational crime stories ($\bar{M} = 13.2$, $SD = 6.6$) and without super sensational crime stories ($\bar{M} = 11.1$, $SD = 7.5$) were not significantly different, $t(142) = 1.7$, *ns*. This finding confirms hypothesis 1_a.

To examine the fluctuations in crime news over time for hypothesis 1_b, crime news was separated into violent, nonviolent, and criminal justice components. Figure 3 presents the percentage of total crime story length devoted to criminal justice system, nonviolent crime, and violent crime stories across time. The graph shows that criminal

Figure 2. Super sensational crime, sensational crime, mundane crime, and criminal justice news as a function of the mean percent of total newscast length across time.

justice system news ranged from 7.1% to 29.5% of crime story length ($M = 15.6$, $SD = 23.0$), nonviolent crime news ranged from 4.4% to 35.4% of crime story length ($M = 19.9$, $SD = 27.6$), and violent crime news ranged from 40.5% to 83.2% of crime story length ($M = 63.1$, $SD = 27.3$).

In order to examine the degree of regularity of criminal justice system, nonviolent crime, and violent crime news, scores for each month were converted into z scores. No monthly z scores reached or exceeded two standard deviations in any of the topic groups. For comparative purposes, coefficients of variation (CV) were computed for the groups due to the large discrepancy between the overall group means. The CV computed for the criminal justice system group (1.48) and the nonviolent crime group (1.39) in comparison to the violent crime group (0.53) suggests that the former groups were more variable in terms of crime news coverage than the latter. These findings confirm the hypothesis that criminal justice system and nonviolent crime news are more variable than violent crime news. An examination of the fluctuations of violent crime to nonviolent crime and criminal justice system news across each month reveals that fluctuations in the news about violent crime were complemented by accommodations in nonviolent crime news, $r = -.67$, $p < .01$, and to a lesser extent criminal justice system news, $r = -.52$, $p < .01$.

In addition to examining the nature of crime and its component parts over time, the present study investigated how the presence of super sensational crime stories in newscasts influenced the depiction of other crimes within the same newscast in contrast to crimes in newscasts without a super sensational crime story. To begin, the frequency and type of crime news coverage of newscasts with and without super sensational crime

Figure 3. Mean percent of crime news coverage as a function of criminal justice system, violent crime, and nonviolent crime stories across time.

stories were assessed. The influence of super sensational crimes on the presentation of unusual crimes was examined first. Results showed that newscasts without a super sensational crime presented the same proportion of sensational (38.3%) and mundane (61.7%) crimes as newscasts with a super sensational crime (sensational = 31.4%, mundane = 69.6%). Thus, the presence or absence of a super sensational crime in a newscast did not result in a significant difference in the presentation of other sensational and mundane crimes in newscasts, $\chi^2 (1, N = 512) = 1.7, ns$.

The presentation of specific offense types was examined next. Figure 4 presents the frequency distribution of offense types for newscasts with and without a super sensational crime in the newscast. The figure shows that overall, there was little difference between the types of crimes presented. The only crime category in which the frequency of the presented crimes reached significance was for driving offenses, $\chi^2 (1, N = 512) = 4.1, p < .05$. Specifically, newscasts that presented a super sensational crime also presented more driving offenses than newscasts that did not present a super sensational crime.

The following results will examine the influence of super sensational crimes on the breadth of topic coverage, story placement, and visual presentation of other crime stories. It should be noted that story placement was determined by assigning a number to each story according to the sequential order of presentation. An overall measure of attention was obtained using a 5 point scale. Stories with a score of 5 were defined as those that contained all of the following criteria: an anchor lead in, a lead story, a time

Figure 4. Distribution of offense types for newscasts with and without a super sensational crime.

length exceeding 2 minutes, and video footage. Conversely, a score of 0 consisted of a story with none of the aforementioned criteria (see Appendix). Finally, emotional impact of visuals was gauged on a 5 point scale ranging from 0 (no impact) to 5 (very strong impact). Immediately after the crime story was viewed, the investigator derived a score based on the affectivity evoked by the combination of all visual scenes presented.

Table 4 presents the mean comparisons of sensational and mundane crime story characteristics in newscasts that either do or do not contain a super sensational crime story. The table shows that both sensational and mundane crime stories were not displayed differently depending on whether or not a super sensational crime was present in the newscast.

Table 5 presents the mean comparisons of violent and nonviolent crime story characteristics in newscasts with and without a super sensational crime. For violent crimes, the table reveals no significant differences between newscasts with or without a super sensational crime on any of the story characteristics. For nonviolent crimes, the only difference that emerged was on story placement. As can be seen, newscasts with a super sensational crime placed nonviolent crimes later in the broadcast lineup than newscasts without a super sensational crime story.

Another aspect of the visual presentation of news stories, the primary contribution of visual scenes to the verbal themes, was considered for comparison between crime stories. Table 6 presents the percent of sensational and mundane crime stories by contribution of visuals to verbal themes in newscasts with and without a super sensational crime. Chi square analyses are not reported for either sensational or mundane crime

Table 4

Mean Comparisons of Sensational and Mundane Crime Story Characteristics in
Newscasts With and Without a Super Sensational Crime

	Super Sensational Crime		
Characteristic	Present	Absent	t
Sensational Crimes ^a			
Story length	63.1 (45.3)	65.5 (52.8)	.25
Story placement	12.4 (11.1)	9.4 (7.9)	1.5
Attention score	2.2 (1.3)	2.4 (1.2)	.78
Average length of visual scenes	8.3 (4.2)	8.2 (4.7)	.15
Number of visual scenes	9.8 (7.7)	10.2 (9.2)	.19
Emotional impact of visuals	1.1 (1.1)	1.1 (1.2)	.24
Mundane Crimes ^b			
Story length	51.5 (38.6)	52.3 (43.1)	.14
Story placement	12.8 (9.9)	11.3 (8.7)	1.2
Attention score	1.8 (1.3)	1.7 (1.4)	.41
Average length of visual scenes	10.9 (6.9)	11.3 (6.8)	.48
Number of visual scenes	6.7 (5.5)	7.1 (6.8)	.49
Emotional impact of visuals	.7 (.7)	.7 (.9)	.50

Note. Standard deviations are in brackets.

^an = 137. ^bn = 261.

Table 5

Mean Comparisons of Violent and Nonviolent Crime Story Characteristics in Newscasts With and Without a Super Sensational Crime

	Super Sensational Crime		
Characteristic	Present	Absent	t
Violent Crimes ^a			
Story length	57.3 (41.6)	59.0 (49.2)	.28
Story placement	11.0 (9.6)	9.5 (7.7)	1.3
Attention score	2.1 (1.3)	2.0 (1.4)	.36
Average length of visual scenes	9.5 (5.8)	10.1 (6.4)	.81
Number of visual scenes	8.2 (6.5)	8.7 (8.4)	.51
Emotional impact of visuals	1.2 (1.1)	1.0 (1.1)	1.6
Nonviolent Crimes ^b			
Story length	47.3 (38.7)	52.0 (40.8)	.51
Story placement	19.2 (10.3)	13.8 (9.5)	2.4*
Attention score	1.4 (1.4)	1.8 (1.3)	1.4
Average length of visual scenes	12.1 (7.3)	10.4 (6.2)	1.2
Number of visual scenes	5.9 (6.0)	7.0 (6.1)	.75
Emotional impact of visuals	.3 (.5)	.4 (.7)	.97

Note. Standard deviations are in brackets.

^an = 297. ^bn = 100.

*p < .05.

categories because more than 20% of the cells had expected frequencies of less than 5 in both instances. An examination of sensational and mundane crimes shows that the predominant contributions of visuals to verbal themes were to provide redundant information, identify people or objects, or no information was added. Moreover, the use of the aforementioned visual contributions were higher in newscasts that contained a super sensational crime, with the exception of the people or object identification condition for sensational crimes and the no information condition for mundane crimes (see Table 6).

Table 7 displays the percent of violent and nonviolent crime stories by contribution of visuals to verbal themes in newscasts with and without a super sensational crime. Chi square analyses are not reported for the nonviolent crime category because more than 20% of the cells had expected frequencies of less than 5. For violent crimes, the distribution of the types of contributions of visuals to verbal themes was significantly different between newscasts with and without a super sensational crime story, $\chi^2 (6, N = 359) = 27.7, p < .05$. From the table, it can be seen that newscasts with super sensational crime stories displayed more visual scenes that portrayed redundant information and people or object identification than newscasts without super sensational crimes stories. Moreover, newscasts that did not contain super sensational crime stories presented more visuals that added no information to the verbal text, were irrelevant to the text, provided new information, or clarified the text than newscasts that did contain super sensational crime stories.

Table 6

Percent of Sensational and Mundane Crime Stories by Contribution of Visuals to Verbal Themes in Newscasts With and Without a Super Sensational Crime

Contribution	Super Sensational Crime	
	Present	Absent
Sensational ^a		
Irrelevant information	2.5	7.2
Redundant information	35.0	25.8
New information	--	4.1
People or object identification	37.5	41.2
Clarification	5.0	3.1
Emotional component	--	8.2
No information	20.0	10.3
Mundane ^b		
Irrelevant information	4.8	7.3
Redundant information	34.5	27.1
New information	1.2	2.8
People or object identification	33.3	22.6
Clarification	6.0	5.1
Emotional component	--	3.4
No information	20.2	31.6

Note. Dashes indicate no data were obtained.

^an = 137. ^bn = 261.

Table 7

Percent of Violent and Nonviolent Crime Stories by Contribution of Visuals to Verbal Themes in Newscasts With and Without a Super Sensational Crime

Contribution	Super Sensational Crime	
	Present	Absent
Violent ^a		
Irrelevant information	1.9	8.5
Redundant information	39.0	25.0
New information	1.9	4.5
People or object identification	39.6	28.0
Clarification	1.9	3.5
Emotional component	1.9	6.5
No information	13.8	24.0
Nonviolent ^b		
Irrelevant information	7.7	3.9
Redundant information	34.6	32.9
New information	--	--
People or object identification	19.2	31.6
Clarification	15.4	6.6
Emotional component	--	1.3
No information	23.1	23.7

Note. Dashes indicate no data were obtained.

^an = 359. ^bn = 102.

For nonviolent crimes, an observation of the data reveals that crime stories were portrayed in much the same manner in newscasts with and without a super sensational crime, with visuals being used primarily to provide redundant information in both cases. In the presence of a super sensational crime story, it appears that the use of visuals to identify people or objects was used less and the use of visuals to clarify the text or provide irrelevant information was used more than in the absence of such stories.

The influence of super sensational crime stories on specific crimes was also of interest in this study. Thus, hypothesis 2 examined crimes that were similar in nature to the super sensational crimes. It was hypothesized that the importance of other stories similar to the presented super sensational story will be raised. To assess this hypothesis the Paul Bernardo and O.J. Simpson murder cases were combined and compared to murders presented in the same and in other newscasts as these super sensational crimes. Similarly, the Oklahoma city bombing was compared to other terrorist acts that did and did not occur in the same newscast as the super sensational news story. Table 8 presents mean comparisons of super sensational and related crimes on story characteristics for murder and terrorism. An examination of the murder category in the table shows that groups differed with respect to story length and story placement.

In order to examine where the differences in time length and story placement emerged, Tukey's HSD post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted maintaining a familywise error rate of .05. The mean difference between super sensational murders and murders which were not in the same newscast (23.5) was significantly different; thus, super sensational murders were presented longer than murders in other newscasts. Due to

Table 8

Mean Comparisons of Super Sensational and Related Crimes on Story Characteristics for Murder and Terrorism

Characteristic	Super Sensational Crime	Super Sensational Crime in Newscast		F
		Yes	No	
Murder ^a				
Story length	82.9 (52.4)	55.6 (46.1)	59.4 (50.4)	4.0*
Story placement	12.2 (9.9)	7.9 (8.3)	7.0 (5.3)	6.8**
Attention score	2.5 (1.4)	2.1 (1.2)	2.2 (1.5)	1.2
Average length of visual scenes	8.7 (5.3)	8.8 (5.4)	9.7 (6.8)	.48
Number of visual scenes	12.6 (11.6)	8.1 (6.5)	8.8 (8.6)	3.0
Emotional impact of visuals	1.3 (.96)	.95 (.95)	1.1 (1.0)	1.4
Terrorism ^b				
Story length	153.1 (48.1)	70.2 (31.6)	66.2 (37.2)	15.3**
Story placement	7.3 (9.6)	2.2 (.50)	10.3 (9.1)	1.5
Attention score	4.1 (.88)	2.7 (.50)	2.5 (1.1)	8.6**
Average length of visual scenes	5.3 (1.4)	5.8 (2.0)	6.2 (3.8)	.25
Number of visual scenes	29.7 (9.1)	12.0 (4.4)	12.3 (7.0)	18.0**
Emotional impact of visuals	3.6 (1.3)	2.2 (.96)	2.0 (1.2)	5.4*

Note. Standard deviations are in brackets.

^an = 142. ^bn = 31.

*p < .05. **p < .01.

the finding that the other murder groups did not differ from each other, it can be suggested that the presence of a super sensational crime in the newscast did not influence the time length devoted to other murders in the same newscast.

With respect to post hoc comparisons of crime story placement, the mean difference between super sensational murders and murders in other newscasts (5.1) was significantly different. Interestingly, super sensational crimes were displayed later in the broadcast than murders which were not part of a newscast with a super sensational crime story. Once again, both categories of other murders did not differ from each other with respect to story placement. Thus, the presence of a super sensational murder in a newscast did not affect the story placement of other murder stories in the same newscast, relative to murders in newscasts without a super sensational crime story.

An examination of the terrorism category in the table shows that groups differed with respect to story length, attention score, number of visual scenes, and emotional impact of visuals. In order to determine where the differences in crime story characteristics emerged, Tukey's HSD post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted maintaining a familywise error rate of .05. Results showed that the mean differences in story length between the Oklahoma city bombing and both terrorism stories in other newscasts (86.9) and terrorism stories in the same newscast as the Oklahoma city bombing (82.8) were significantly different. That is, the Oklahoma city bombing stories were presented longer than both terrorism categories. The two types of terrorism stories, however, did not differ from each other. Thus, the presence of the Oklahoma city bombing story in a newscast did not influence the story length allotted to other terrorism

stories in the same newscast, relative to terrorism stories in newscasts without a super sensational crime story.

The results further demonstrated that the mean difference on attention scores between the Oklahoma city bombing stories and terrorism stories in other newscasts (1.6) was significantly different, with the Oklahoma city bombing stories receiving more attention than the other terrorism stories. No other mean differences were significant. Therefore, once again, the Oklahoma city bombing did not influence the overall attention given to terrorism stories in the same newscast.

With respect to the number of visual scenes presented in crime stories, the results showed that the mean differences between the Oklahoma city bombing stories and both terrorism stories in the same newscast (1.3) and terrorism stories in other newscasts (1.6) were significantly different. Specifically, the Oklahoma city bombing was shown with more visual scenes than both types of terrorism stories. The mean difference between terrorism stories in the same newscast as the Oklahoma city bombing and stories in other newscasts was not significant (.29). Thus, the number of visual scenes depicted in terrorism stories was not affected by the presence of the Oklahoma city bombing story in the same newscast.

The findings on the overall emotional impact of visuals revealed that the mean difference between the Oklahoma city bombing story and terrorism stories in other newscasts (1.6) was significant, with the visuals presented in the Oklahoma city bombing story being more emotionally laden than terrorism visuals in other newscasts. No other differences emerged. Hence, the emotional impact of visuals in terrorism stories that

were presented in the same newscast as the Oklahoma city bombing story were not influenced by the super sensational crime story.

In sum, the data suggest that hypothesis 2 was not supported. That is, the importance of other stories similar to the presented super sensational stories was not raised in either the case of the murder trials of Paul Bernardo and O.J. Simpson or the case of the Oklahoma city bombing. Rather, crime stories similar in nature to the presented super sensational crime story displayed consistent story features across newscasts that did and did not share air time with super sensational crimes.

Further analyses examined the characteristics of crime news with respect to specific crime incident stories. In particular, the representation and accuracy of media portrayals of crime, the prominence of crime stories, and the extent of media coverage of crime were investigated. Results will be presented for sensational versus mundane crimes, violent versus nonviolent crimes, and finally for the extent of overall crime news coverage.

Hypothesis 3 states that sensational crime stories will be overrepresented and displayed more prominently in relation to mundane crime stories. Contrary to expectations, the results showed the opposite pattern with respect to the first part of the hypothesis. Specifically, television crime news presented more mundane crime stories (65.5%) than sensational crime stories (34.5%), $\chi^2 (1, N = 397) = 38.1, p < .05$. With respect to the hypothesis on prominence features of mundane and sensational crime stories, the data showed mixed support. Sensational crime stories were significantly longer ($M = 64.8, SD = 50.4$) than mundane crime stories ($M = 52.2, SD = 41.7$), $t (235)$

= 2.5, $p < .05$. Sensational and mundane crime stories did not, however, differ with respect to position in the newscast, ($M = 10.3$, $SD = 9.0$) and ($M = 11.8$, $SD = 9.1$), respectively, $t(395) = 1.6$, ns .

As well, comparisons between sensational and mundane crime stories across criminal justice stages revealed no significant differences between the two groups, $\chi^2(2, N = 393) = 5.0$, ns . For sensational crimes the police stage, judicial stage, and corrections stage constituted 62.8%, 35.0%, and 2.2%, respectively, of the crime stories. For mundane crimes, the police stage, judicial stage, and corrections stage constituted 76.9%, 20.7%, and 2.3%, respectively, of the crime stories. Thus, sensational and mundane crimes were followed up over the same proportions of criminal justice stages.

Sensational and mundane crime stories were also compared on visual prominence features. Using a global measure of news attention, it was found that the crime stories were differentiated by attention scores, with sensational crime stories receiving higher scores ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 1.3$) than mundane crime stories ($M = 1.8$, $SD = 1.4$), $t(294) = 4.3$, $p < .05$.

With respect to the visual aspects of the news, sensational crime stories displayed more visual scenes ($M = 10.1$, $SD = 8.8$) than mundane crime stories ($M = 7.0$, $SD = 6.4$), $t(214) = 3.7$, $p < .05$. Table 9 displays the breakdown of the number of visual scenes as a function of sensational and mundane crime news. The table shows that the 5 to 10 range of visuals scenes was the most prevalent visual scene category used by both sensational and mundane crime stories. With mundane crimes, a large proportion of stories were presented using 1 visual scene, most likely the anchorman reading the script in the studio.

Table 9

Percent of Sensational and Mundane Crime Stories by Number of Visual Scenes

Number of scenes	Percent	
	Sensational ^a	Mundane ^b
1	16.1	32.3
2-4	18.2	14.6
5-10	56.9	49.6
11-20	--	--
21-54	8.8	3.5

Note. Dashes indicate no data were obtained.

^an = 137. ^bn = 260.

In contrast, sensational crime stories were more likely to present stories using a variety of visual scenes.

The reverse relationship, with respect to visual prominence, was found when the average length of visual scenes was examined between the groups. That is, mundane crime stories presented longer visual scenes ($M = 11.2$, $SD = 6.8$) than sensational crime stories ($M = 8.3$, $SD = 4.6$), on the average, $t(373) = 5.1$, $p < .05$. Table 10 presents the percent of sensational and mundane crime stories as a function of the average length of visual scenes. The table demonstrates that over three quarters of sensational crime stories presented visual scenes in 10 seconds or less. Mundane crime stories, however, presented longer visual scenes on the average.

While the number and average length of visual scenes are important aspects of news, the actual mode of visual presentation should also be examined. News can be presented using different formats, such as anchorman only, still picture, video footage, or a combination of many different types. The format of visual presentation is a meaningful aspect of crime news because different formats may be more conducive to learning; thus the type of visual presentation was considered. Table 11 presents the mode of visual presentation of sensational and mundane crime stories. An examination of the table reveals that sensational and mundane crimes were presented with video footage, in addition to other visual displays, in 85.4% and 65.8% of the stories, respectively. Moreover, mundane crime stories relied more on anchorman only footage than sensational crime stories. Overall, sensational and mundane crime stories differed significantly in terms of the types of visual presentations of crime stories,

Table 10

Percent of Sensational and Mundane Crime Stories by Average Length of Visual Scenes

Time	Percent	
	Sensational ^a	Mundane ^b
1-10 seconds	78.8	58.6
11-20 seconds	19.7	30.0
21-30 seconds	1.5	10.8
More than 30 seconds	--	0.8

Note. Dashes indicate no data were obtained.

^an = 137. ^bn = 260.

Table 11

Mode of Visual Presentation of Sensational and Mundane Crime Stories

Type of Visual Presentation	Percent	
	Sensational ^a	Mundane ^b
Anchorman/reporter	11.7	27.3
Film/video	5.1	1.5
Anchorman & still photo	2.9	6.9
Anchorman & video	32.1	23.1
Anchorman, still photo, & video	48.2	41.2

^an = 137. ^bn = 260.

$\chi^2 (4, N = 397) = 19.1, p < .05$. These findings confirm the hypothesis that sensational crimes are presented more prominently than mundane crimes in television news.

Table 12 displays the percent of sensational and mundane crime stories by prevalence of general picture types. The table shows that sensational crime stories presented significantly more pictures of people, both identified and unidentified, across all camera shots than mundane crime stories. Moreover, apart from reporter on camera shots, pictures of identified people were the most prevalent picture type in both sensational and mundane crime stories.

Overall, 570 visual types were noted for sensational crime stories and 696 visual types were noted for mundane crime stories. The breakdown of picture types in the sensational crime category was as follows: defendant (16.0%), victim (7.5%), crime scene (5.3%), body/body bag/casket (2.6%), crime instrument (1.4%), crime in progress (1.2%), evidence (1.6%), destroyed objects (3.5%), police (8.2%), and justice paraphernalia (0.4%). The corresponding figures for the mundane crime category were: defendant (7.9%), victim (7.3%), crime scene (9.2%), body/body bag/casket (2.3%), crime instrument (1.9%), crime in progress (3.9%), evidence (3.7%), destroyed objects (2.9%), police (8.2%), and justice paraphernalia (6.2%).

Table 13 displays the percent of sensational and mundane crime stories by prevalence of specific picture types. The table demonstrates that pictures of defendants, victims, police, and destroyed objects were more likely to be displayed in sensational than mundane crime stories, with the reverse pattern for pictures of justice paraphernalia.

Table 12

Percent of Sensational and Mundane Crime Stories by Prevalence of General Picture Types

Picture Types ^a	Percent		χ^{2d}
	Sensational ^b	Mundane ^c	
Identified person close-up	54.7	34.6	15.0**
Identified person medium	67.9	36.5	35.4**
Identified person far	48.9	22.7	28.5**
Unidentified person close-up	17.5	10.4	4.1*
Reporter on camera	97.1	97.3	0.0
Identifiable location close-up	10.9	9.6	0.2
Identified object close-up	21.9	28.8	2.2

^aStill photo and video combined. ^b $n = 137$. ^c $n = 260$. ^d $df = 1$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 13

Percent of Sensational and Mundane Crime Stories by Prevalence of Specific PictureTypes

Picture Types ^a	Percent		χ^2 ^d
	Sensational ^b	Mundane ^c	
Defendant	67.1	22.3	76.8*
Victim	31.4	19.6	6.9*
Crime scene	21.9	24.6	0.4
Body/body bag/casket	10.9	6.2	2.9
Crime instrument	5.8	5.0	0.1
Crime in progress	5.1	10.4	3.2
Evidence	6.6	10.0	1.3
Destroyed objects	14.6	7.7	4.7*
Police	34.3	21.9	7.1*
Justice paraphernalia	1.5	16.5	47.0*

^aStill photo and video combined. ^bn = 137. ^cn = 260. ^ddf = 1.

*p < .05.

Table 14 presents the percent of sensational and mundane crime stories by the primary contribution of visuals to verbal themes. From the table, it is evident that discrepancies exist between sensational and mundane crime stories with respect to the contribution of visual scenes to verbal themes. In fact, the two groups were significantly different overall in the primary contributions of the visuals, $\chi^2 (6, N = 397) = 18.7, p < .05$. Proportionally equal amounts of sensational and mundane crime stories displayed visuals that were redundant with the text, yet higher than stories which presented irrelevant information. Sensational crime stories presented visuals in more instances than mundane crime stories to identify people or objects or to add an emotional element to the story. A larger proportion of mundane than sensational crime stories presented no information visually; that is, stories were presented by the newscaster reading a script in the studio.

The overall emotional impact of visuals in sensational and mundane crime stories were also compared. Results showed that sensational crime stories presented visuals with a stronger emotional impact ($M = 1.1, SD = 1.2$) than mundane crime stories ($M = .72, SD = .85$), $t (209) = 3.7, p < .05$.

In order to examine the accuracy of television crime news coverage for a local news station, crimes were first differentiated by location. Table 15 presents the nature of the crimes reported in the news separated into location. The table shows that the majority of crime news items originated from Ontario (60.4%). Crimes in the United States were the next most prevalent (15.5%), followed by crimes in other provinces of Canada (12.5%) and crimes in other countries (10.9%). Not surprisingly, the most frequent type

Table 14

Percent of Sensational and Mundane Crime Stories by Primary Contribution of Visuals to Verbal Themes

Contribution	Percent	
	Sensational ^a	Mundane ^b
Irrelevant information	5.8	6.5
Redundant information	28.5	29.6
New information	2.9	2.3
People or object identification	40.1	25.8
Clarification	3.6	5.4
Emotional components	5.8	2.3
No information	13.1	28.1

^an = 260. ^bn = 137.

Table 15

Criminal Activity Reported in Crime News Items

Nature of Crime	Ontario	Other province in Canada	United States	Other country	Cannot be determined
Person	205 (74.2)	41 (71.9)	62 (87.3)	45 (90.0)	2
Drug	6 (2.2)	1 (1.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0
Driving	15 (5.4)	2 (3.5)	2 (2.8)	1 (2.0)	1
Property	32 (11.6)	9 (15.8)	6 (8.5)	1 (2.0)	0
Other	18 (8.5)	4 (7.0)	1 (1.4)	3 (6.0)	0
Total	276 (100.0)	57 (100.0)	71 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	3
<u>Note.</u> Percentages are in brackets.					

of crime reported involved person based crimes (i.e., violent crimes) for Ontario crime news, $\chi^2(4, N = 276) = 514.5, p < .05$ and crime news originating from other provinces in Canada, $\chi^2(4, N = 57) = 82.4, p < .05$. Statistical comparisons could not be made for crime items from the United States and the other country categories due to observed frequencies of 0; however an examination of the table reveals the same pattern of presenting more person based crimes.

News media crimes and official crime statistics originating from Ontario were examined in hypothesis 4. This hypothesis stated that violent crimes in television news stories will be overrepresented in relation to official crime statistics, whereas nonviolent crimes in television news will be underrepresented in relation to official crime statistics. This analysis was separated into two parts to examine comparisons across 1994 and 1995. Media crime figures for 1994 are based on 7 months (June to December) of newscasts. Media crime figures for 1995 are based on 6 months (January to June) of newscasts. All official crime statistics are based on figures for the entire year. Thus, the crime percentages with respect to media data are an underestimation of the actual number reported for the year. It should be noted that crimes committed by Paul Bernardo were excluded from the analyses in order to prevent inflated estimates of violent crime.

Figure 5 presents the distribution of media content crimes and official crime statistics in 1994. The figure shows that media presentations of the crime groups were significantly different from official crime statistics, $\chi^2(4, N = 1,027,206) = 656.1, p < .05$. As hypothesized, media presentations of violent crime were overrepresented in relation to

Figure 5. Distribution of offense types for media content crimes and official crime statistics in 1994.

official statistics. Moreover, media presentations of nonviolent crime were underrepresented in relation to official crime statistics.

The top seven content crimes were selected for comparison to official crime data. Table 16 presents the percentage of crimes reported in content data and official crime data and their relative rankings. An examination of the table reveals that the top seven crimes reported in the content data were not similar to those reported to the police. Although Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was not significant, $r_s = -.62$, *ns*, suggesting no relationship between the two sets of rankings, the direction of the relationship suggests that the content data rankings were in the opposite direction to those found for police data. Murder ranked 1st in content data was actually ranked 28th in police statistics. Conversely, theft, ranked 1st in police data was ranked 7th in content data. These results demonstrate that the crimes reported in the media do not reflect the actual occurrence of crimes that are reported to the police.

Figure 6 presents the distribution of media content crimes and official crime statistics in 1995. Consistent with the figures obtained with the 1994 data, the 1995 figures show that media presentations of the crime groups were not similar to official crime statistics, $\chi^2 (4, N = 1,028,080) = 472.5$, $p < .05$. Specifically, media presentations of violent crime were overrepresented in relation to official statistics. Moreover, media presentations of nonviolent crime were underrepresented in relation to official crime statistics. Thus, the 1995 results lend further support to hypothesis 4.

Table 17 presents the percentage of crimes reported in content data and official crime data and their relative rankings. An examination of the table reveals that overall

Table 16

Percent and Relative Rankings of Selected Crimes from Content Data and Official Crime Data in 1994

Offense Type	Content Data ^a		Official Data ^b	
	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank
Murder	24.1	1	0.05	28
Sexual Assault	11.2	2	1.1	13
Assault	9.8	3	8.4	4
Possession of Weapon	5.8	4	0.8	15
Robbery	5.4	5	0.8	14
Impaired Driving	4.0	6	2.5	8
Theft	3.6	7.5	35.5	1
Fraud	3.6	7.5	3.6	5

Note. $r_s = -.62$, ns.

^a $n = 151$. ^b $n = 533,722$.

Figure 6. Distribution of offense types for media content crimes and official crime statistics in 1995.

Table 17

Percent and Relative Rankings of Selected Crimes from Content Data and Official Crime Data in 1995

Offense Type	Content Data ^a		Official Data ^b	
	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank
Murder	19.9	1	0.04	28
Sexual Assault	12.8	2	1.0	13
Theft	9.6	3	36.5	1
Assault	9.0	4	8.2	4
Robbery	8.3	5	0.9	14
Arson	5.1	6	0.4	17
Possession Narcotic	3.8	7	1.2	9

Note. $r_s = -.14$, ns.

^a $n = 107$. ^b $n = 495,065$.

the top seven ranked crimes reported in the content data were not similar in ranking to those reported to the police, $r_s = -.14$, ns. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was not significant, however, the direction of the relationship suggests that the content data rankings were in the opposite direction to those found for police data. Consistent with the 1994 results, in 1995 murder ranked 1st in content data and was ranked 28th in police statistics. Theft was ranked 1st in police data and 3rd in 1995 content data, but it was ranked 7.5th in the 1994 content data. Surprisingly, assault obtained the same 4th place ranking in both content and police data in 1995. These results demonstrate that although some of the specific crimes reported in the media were a little closer to the actual occurrence of crimes reported to the police in 1995 than in 1994, discrepancies still exist between the two sources of crime information on a macroscopic level.

It was further hypothesized that violent crimes will be overrepresented in relation to nonviolent crimes. This hypothesis was supported with violent crimes consisting of 78.1% of the crime stories and nonviolent crimes consisting of 21.9% of crime stories, $\chi^2 (1, N = 465) = 146.5$, $p < .05$. Due to an expected overrepresentation of violent crime stories, it was also hypothesized that sentences of imprisonment will predominate in crime stories that deal with sentencing issues. While 17.8% of the sentencing stories did not identify the sentence type, in those cases where the sentence type was revealed, apart from dismissals (23.8%), prison terms were the predominant sentence type (23.8%), followed by other penalties (16.7%), with only 3.6% of stories reporting fines, $\chi^2 (8, N = 69) = 66.8$, $p < .05$, thus supporting the hypothesis.

Violent and nonviolent crime stories were compared on several prominence features for hypothesis 5. Prominence measures consisted of story length, story placement, and extent of follow up over criminal justice stages. No significant difference was found between violent crime stories ($M = 68.7$, $SD = 59.2$) and nonviolent crime stories ($M = 62.4$, $SD = 55.2$) in terms of the overall length of the news story, $t(498) = 1.0$, *ns*. Violent crime stories were, however, placed earlier in the newscast ($M = 10.4$, $SD = 8.8$) than nonviolent crime stories ($M = 15.4$, $SD = 10.0$), $t(176) = 4.9$, $p < .05$. Comparisons between violent and nonviolent crime stories across criminal justice stages revealed a significant difference between the two groups, $\chi^2(2, N = 462) = 12.0$, $p < .05$. For violent crimes the police stage, judicial stage, and corrections stage constituted 61.3%, 36.5%, and 2.2%, respectively, of the crime stories. For nonviolent crimes, the police stage, judicial stage, and corrections stage constituted 80.0%, 19.0%, and 1.0%, respectively, of the crime stories. Thus, violent crimes were followed up over more criminal justice stages than nonviolent crimes, which appear to be restricted primarily to the police stage.

Taken together these results partially support the hypothesis that violent crimes will be presented more prominently than nonviolent crimes. Specifically, violent crimes are more prominent with respect to placement in the newscast and follow up over criminal justice stages; however, there is no prominence of display between the two groups with respect to story length.

Violent crime stories were also compared to nonviolent crime stories on various measures of prominence involving the visual aspects of newscasts. First, the two groups

were compared on an overall measure of attention using a 5 point scale. Results of an independent samples t -test revealed that violent crime stories had significantly higher attention scores ($M = 2.2$, $SD = 1.4$) than nonviolent crime stories ($M = 1.8$, $SD = 1.3$), $t(462) = 2.5$, $p < .05$.

The two groups were also compared on the number of visual scenes depicted in a story. It was found that violent crime stories contained more visual scenes ($M = 9.7$, $SD = 9.3$) than nonviolent crime stories ($M = 6.9$, $SD = 6.2$), $t(241) = 3.6$, $p < .05$. Table 18 displays the breakdown of the number of visual scenes as a function of violent and nonviolent crime stories. As can be seen, a higher percentage of violent than nonviolent crime stories used more visual scenes in the presentation of news items. Overall, the most prevalent number of visual scene category used by both violent and nonviolent crime stories was in the 5 to 10 range.

The average length of visual scenes was also examined across crime stories. Results showed no significant difference between violent ($M = 9.7$, $SD = 6.1$) and nonviolent ($M = 10.8$, $SD = 6.5$) crime stories, $t(462) = 1.6$, ns . Table 19 presents the percent of violent and nonviolent crime stories as a function of the average length of visual scenes. The table demonstrates that at least 90% of violent and nonviolent crime stories presented on the news had visual scenes that appeared on the screen for less than 20 seconds, on the average.

Table 20 displays the mode of visual presentation of violent and nonviolent crime stories. An examination of the table shows that there is little discrepancy between violent and nonviolent crime stories in terms of the type of visual display presented. The visual

Table 18

Percent of Violent and Nonviolent Crime Stories by Number of Visual Scenes

Number of scenes	Percent	
	Violent ^a	Nonviolent ^b
1	23.2	31.4
2-4	13.8	14.7
5-10	53.9	50.0
11-20	--	--
21-54	8.8	3.9
55-100	0.3	--

Note. Dashes indicate no data were obtained.

^an = 362. ^bn = 102.

Table 19

Percent of Violent and Nonviolent Crime Stories by Average Length of Visual Scenes

Time	Percent	
	Violent ^a	Nonviolent ^b
1-10 seconds	69.6	60.8
11-20 seconds	23.2	29.4
21-30 seconds	6.9	8.8
More than 30 seconds	0.3	1.0

^a_n = 362. ^b_n = 102.

Table 20

Mode of Visual Presentation of Violent and Nonviolent Crime Stories

Type of Visual Presentation	Percent	
	Violent ^a	Nonviolent ^b
Anchorman/reporter	18.2	23.5
Film/video	3.3	2.0
Anchorman & still photo	5.0	10.8
Anchorman & video	23.5	19.6
Anchorman, still photo, & video	50.0	44.1

^an = 362. ^bn = 102.

presentations contained video and some other form of visual display in 76.8% and 65.7% of the violent and nonviolent crime stories, respectively. However, no significant differences were found between the groups overall, $\chi^2 (4, N = 464) = 7.0, ns$.

Table 21 presents the percent of violent and nonviolent crime stories by prevalence of general picture types. As can be seen, both violent and nonviolent crime stories presented moderate proportions of identified people at all camera shots; however, pictures of identified people were more abundant in violent crime stories than in nonviolent crime stories. Close-ups of identifiable locations and objects and reporters on camera were shown with equal prevalence across the crime groups.

In addition to general categorizations of visuals, specific picture types were examined in newscast crime stories. A post hoc decision was made to combine results for still photos and videos due to their large number of categories and the small frequencies that emerged in each. Overall, 1,406 visual types were noted for violent crime stories and 277 visual types were noted for nonviolent crime stories. The breakdown of picture types in the violent crime category was as follows: defendant (15.6%), victim (8.0%), crime scene (7.5%), crime instrument (1.1%), crime in progress (1.6%), evidence (3.3%), destroyed objects (2.8%), police (7.3%), and justice paraphernalia (2.1%). The corresponding figures for the nonviolent crime category were: defendant (15.5%), victim (5.8%), crime scene (4.0%), crime instrument (2.5%), crime in progress (4.3%), evidence (6.1%), destroyed objects (3.6%), police (6.9%), and justice paraphernalia (5.4%).

Table 22 presents the percent of violent and nonviolent crime stories devoted to specific picture types. The table shows that violent crime stories presented significantly

Table 21

Percent of Violent and Nonviolent Crime Stories by Prevalence of General Picture Types

Picture Types ^a	Percent		χ^{2d}
	Violent ^b	Nonviolent ^c	
Identified person close-up	52.2	36.3	8.1**
Identified person medium	55.5	41.2	6.6*
Identified person far	42.3	21.6	14.5**
Unidentified person close-up	16.3	8.8	3.6
Reporter on camera	96.1	98.0	0.9
Identifiable location close-up	10.5	7.8	0.6
Identified object close-up	25.1	33.3	2.7

^aStill photo and video combined. ^b $n = 362$. ^c $n = 102$. ^d $df = 1$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 22

Percent of Violent and Nonviolent Crime Stories by Prevalence of Specific Picture Types

Picture Types ^a	Percent		χ^{2d}
	Violent ^b	Nonviolent ^c	
Defendant	60.5	42.2	10.9*
Victim	31.2	15.7	9.6*
Crime scene	29.3	10.8	14.4*
Crime instrument	4.1	6.9	1.3
Crime in progress	6.4	11.8	3.3
Evidence	12.7	16.7	1.1
Destroyed objects	11.0	9.8	4.1*
Police	28.2	18.6	3.8
Justice paraphernalia	8.3	14.7	3.7

^aStill photo and video combined. ^b $n = 362$. ^c $n = 102$. ^d $df = 1$.

* $p < .05$.

more visuals of defendants, victims, crime scenes, and destroyed objects than nonviolent crime stories (see Table 22).

Table 23 displays the percent of violent and nonviolent crime stories by the primary contribution of visuals to verbal themes. A chi-square analysis could not be calculated to distinguish between the two groups due to small expected frequencies. Thus, observations will be made on the data without statistical accompaniment. Overall, it appears that a similar pattern emerged for violent and nonviolent crimes stories. Specifically, both violent and nonviolent crime stories assigned the highest percentages to people or object identification and redundant information as the primary contribution of visuals to verbal themes. While it was hypothesized that violent crime stories will present more visual-verbal congruency than irrelevant text picture relations in comparison to nonviolent crime stories, the data show that both crime story types presented more redundant information than irrelevant text-picture relations. Thus, in part, this hypothesis was confirmed.

The final aspect of hypothesis 5 stated that violent crime stories would present visuals with a higher emotional impact than nonviolent crime stories. It was found that violent crime stories obtained greater scores on emotional impact ($M = 1.1$, $SD = 1.1$) than nonviolent crime stories ($M = .4$, $SD = .6$), $t(462) = 6.1$, $p < .05$, thus supporting this part of the hypothesis.

Overall, the results show mixed support for hypothesis 5. Although violent crime stories were presented with more visuals scenes, more close-ups of identifiable people, such as defendants and victims, and they had a stronger emotional impact than nonviolent

Table 23

Percent of Violent and Nonviolent Crime Stories by Primary Contribution of Visuals to Verbal Themes

Contribution	Percent	
	Violent ^a	Nonviolent ^b
Irrelevant information	5.5	4.9
Redundant information	31.8	33.3
New information	3.3	--
People or object identification	32.9	28.4
Clarification	2.8	8.8
Emotional components	4.4	1.0
No information	19.3	23.5

^an = 362. ^bn = 102.

crime stories, both violent and nonviolent crime stories were displayed equally prominently with respect to the mode of visual presentation, average length of visual scenes, and contribution of visual to verbal themes.

The final hypothesis examined the extent of coverage of the characteristics of defendants, victims, and factors related to crime and the criminal justice process. Table 24 displays the victim and defendant characteristics presented in crime news stories. The table reveals that for all victim and defendant characteristics, with the exception of gender, the percentage of cases in which no information was provided for a particular characteristic was at least 40% with a maximum of 70% for victim race. Thus, the basic demographic information of victims and defendants appears to be unknown in many crime story presentations. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that crime stories will provide few details concerning victims and offenders.

Results showed that victims were not likely to be named in crime stories, $\chi^2 (1, N = 429) = 1.7$, *ns*, whereas defendants were significantly more likely to have their name mentioned than not mentioned, $\chi^2 (1, N = 473) = 8.9$, $p < .05$. With respect to gender, victims were equally likely to be male or female, $\chi^2 (1, N = 429) = 1.7$, *ns*. However, male defendants were presented significantly more often than female defendants, $\chi^2 (1, N = 372) = 289.2$, $p < .05$. For both victim and defendant race, crime stories presented Caucasians more than any other race category, $\chi^2 (2, N = 155) = 92.2$, $p < .05$ and $\chi^2 (2, N = 248) = 157.8$, $p < .05$, respectively. Discrepancies also emerged in the age group categories. Defendants were significantly more likely to be adults than young or elderly, $\chi^2 (2, N = 285) = 296.2$, $p < .05$. On the other hand, crime victims were presented in

Table 24

Victim and Defendant Characteristics of Crime News

Characteristic	Victim (in percentages)	Defendant (in percentages)
Individual Named		
No	53.1	43.1
Yes	46.9	56.9
Gender		
Male	29.0	72.8
Female	29.5	4.6
Other ^a	23.1	0.6
Unknown	18.4	22.0
Race		
Caucasian	20.7	29.4
Black	4.2	8.1
Other ^b	4.8	4.1
Unknown	70.3	58.4
Age		
0-17 years (youth)	27.7	8.6
18-59 years (adult)	26.4	48.2
60 years and over (senior)	5.3	2.7
Unidentified	40.6	40.5

Table 24 (continued)

Characteristic	Victim (in percentages)	Defendant (in percentages)
Occupation		
Professional	0.8	1.0
Business managers	--	2.1
Politician	1.5	1.8
Criminal justice personnel	6.3	10.3
Helping professions	4.5	3.9
Celebrity/entertainer	0.9	8.1
Media	0.2	--
Clerical/sales	1.9	0.2
Skilled worker	2.3	1.1
Nonskilled worker	0.6	0.6
Students	24.7	10.3
Homemaker	--	0.2
Criminal	3.6	9.3
Unemployed	--	0.5
Not identified	52.7	50.6

Note. Dashes indicate no data were obtained.

^aIncludes businesses, corporations, and the government. ^bIncludes Asians, Middle Easterners, Natives, and Hispanics.

equal proportions as youths and adults, with elderly victims being the smallest age category, $\chi^2 (2, N = 225) = 60.7, p < .05$.

Victim and defendant occupation were not analyzed statistically due to missing data. Examination of Table 24 reveals that students were the most likely to be presented as victims, followed by criminal justice personnel and helping professionals, respectively. Students and criminal justice personnel were also most likely to be presented as offenders. Not surprisingly, individuals noted for criminal careers were the next highest likely to be presented as defendants, followed by the celebrity/entertainer category.

The relationship of the victim to the offender was also examined in the present study. In 28.4% of the stories no reference was made as to whether the victim was known to the offender. In 42.8% of the stories the defendant was a stranger to the victim and in 28.2% of the stories the victim was known to the defendant, either as a friend/acquaintance, relative, or spouse/ex-spouse; this difference was significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 378) = 16.1, p < .05$. In 0.6% of the cases a crime was committed against the self (i.e., suicide).

Table 25 presents the amount of detail reported in crime stories about various facets of crime. As can be seen, considerable detail (i.e., three or more sentences) on any aspect was found in less than a quarter of the stories. Over 90% of crime stories reported either few or no details concerning the various aspects of crime. This lack of detail cannot be attributed to large numbers of follow-up stories that could be expected to omit details covered earlier because the majority of the stories were either completely new (60.7%) or were updates of existing stories with major new developments (33.9%). Only

Table 25

Percentage of Crime Incident Stories Containing Details about Various Aspects of Crimes

News Topic	Details		
	None	Some ^a	Considerable ^b
Extent of injuries	8.9	87.7	3.4
Extent of financial loss	23.6	74.5	1.8
Extent of property loss	11.9	86.4	1.7
Extent of psychological harm	87.3	12.7	--
Crime execution details	27.1	64.5	8.4
Criminal apprehension	22.0	76.9	1.0
Pretrial procedures	52.8	39.4	7.9
Courtroom procedures	27.5	52.0	20.5

Note. Dashes indicate no data were obtained.

^aOne to three sentences. ^bThree or more sentences.

5.4% of the stories were updates of existing stories with no major new developments.

These findings further confirm the hypothesis that television crime stories provide few details concerning aspects of crime.

The present study also found that references to the causes of crime and motives for crime were not mentioned in 92.2% and 59.0% of crime stories, respectively. This finding lends further support to hypothesis 6. When crime motives were mentioned, the top five consisted of references to drugs/alcohol (5.8%), rape (4.8%), money (4.4%), robbery (3.3%), and political differences (2.5%).

The data were further examined to determine whether a differential focus on the stages of the criminal justice process existed in television crime stories. Consistent with hypothesis 6_a, television news coverage of crime focused more on the early stages (police = 61.0% and court = 30.9%) than later stages (corrections = 1.8%) of the criminal justice process, $\chi^2 (2, N = 464) = 277.5, p < .05$.

Consistent with hypothesis 6_b, evaluations of the criminal justice system were particularly scarce, with 3.7% devoted to police evaluations, 0.7% devoted to court evaluations, and 2.3% devoted to corrections evaluations. Contrary to the second part of hypothesis 6_b, police evaluations were heavily negative (80.9%) or mixed (19.0%), with no positive evaluations, while court system evaluations were equally positive (50.0%) and negative (50.0%). As hypothesized, correctional system evaluations were more negative (76.9%) and mixed (15.4%) than positive (7.7%), $\chi^2 (2, N = 13) = 11.3, p < .05$.

Hypothesis 6_c and 6_d were designed to address the public opinion literature. Specifically, it was of interest to examine whether public attitudes towards crime related

issues can be indirectly attributed to the information, or lack thereof, presented on the news. In crime stories that dealt with sentencing issues, 86.9% of the stories made no particular reference to the purpose of sentencing. Of the remaining stories, rehabilitation was cited the most frequently (8.7%) followed by general deterrence (2.2%) and incapacitation (2.2%). Mandatory maximum penalties, mandatory minimum penalties, and current sentencing practice were mentioned in 23.8%, 4.8%, and 1.6% of sentencing stories, respectively. Overall, these results confirm the hypothesis that crime stories will rarely address sentencing issues, such as the purposes of sentencing and mandatory penalties and current sentencing trends.

Finally, hypothesis 6_a suggested that recidivism rates will rarely appear in television crime stories and that television news stories will present more crimes by recidivists than first time offenders. Indeed, in 96.1% of the stories mentioning prior criminal history, the actual recidivism rate for the crime in question was not mentioned, whereas 3.9% of the stories made specific reference to the recidivism rate of the crime mentioned in the story, $\chi^2 (1, N = 77) = 65.5, p < .05$. Moreover, in 85.9% of specific crime incident stories there was no mention of prior criminal history. Fourteen percent of stories reported the defendant's criminal history and in those, 94.4% mentioned the individual as a recidivist or on parole with only 5.6% of the stories mentioning the individual as having no prior record, $\chi^2 (1, N = 54) = 42.7, p < .05$.

Thus, the data show support for this hypothesis. Further examination of the recidivist/parole group revealed that in the majority of cases the specific crime incident

upon which the news story was based involved in a violent crime (78.4%) rather than a nonviolent crime (21.6%), $\chi^2 (1, N = 54) = 16.5, p < .05$.

Several variables related to the fear of crime research were also examined, with no specific hypotheses formed. First, the location of crimes were examined in relation to the unusualness and randomness of crimes. The results showed that television crime news presented more local crimes that were random (59.6%) than nonrandom (40.4%), $\chi^2 (1, N = 330) = 1.2, ns$, however, the difference was not significant. As well, significantly more local crimes were mundane (92.3%) rather than sensational (17.8%), but a larger percentage of nonlocal crimes were sensational in nature (82.2%), $\chi^2 (1, N = 463) = 263.1, p < .05$. It should be noted that the majority of the crime stories that were presented both locally (73.8%) and nonlocally (84.4%) were violent in nature.

The location of crimes was also examined in relation to where it was presented in the newscast and whether they were initial or follow-up reports. Results demonstrated that the majority of local crimes were presented in the first part of the newscast (i.e., before the first two commercials) (82.1%) rather than later in the newscast (17.9%) and the same relationship was found for nonlocal crimes (68.8% and 31.2%, respectively), $\chi^2 (1, N = 466) = 11.1, p < .05$. The findings related to the novelty of crime stories and crime locality showed that more local crime stories were presented as initial stories (74.3%) than follow-up stories (25.7%); conversely, more nonlocal crimes were presented as follow-up stories (59.7%) than initial crime reports (40.3%), $\chi^2 (1, N = 466) = 54.1, p < .05$.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to add to the existing crime literature by examining the visual and verbal aspects of crime content from a Canadian local television news station during a 13 month period. Secondly, three established super sensational crime stories were presented on the news during the sample period thus allowing for an in depth examination of the steady diet hypothesis of crime coverage.

Reliability analyses revealed that the television codebook was stable over time and across different coders. Consistent with prior research, it was found that crime was among the top 5 most prevalent subject categories presented on the news (Chermak, 1995; Sherizen, 1978). With regard to story length, however, crime was ranked 10th out of 13 topic categories. When crime was compared to a combined non-crime topic category, results showed that crime stories were more prominent than non-crime stories with respect to placement in the newscast, but not duration of coverage. Specifically, crime stories were more likely to be placed before the first two commercials than non-crime stories.

The possible consequence of placing crime stories at the beginning of the broadcast, according to serial position effect research, is that these stories may be more likely to be remembered by the viewing audience due to primacy effects (Gunter, 1979). Indeed, with radio news, a differential effect on learning emerged according to the position of an item in the newscast, with items at the two extremes of the newscast recalled significantly better than the middle items (Tannenbaum, 1954).

The first hypothesis of the present study stated that television news will provide a steady rate of crime news across time that will range between 10 and 20% of total news coverage. Although the month of August was below the 10% criterion, overall, the results confirmed this hypothesis with an average crime coverage of 11.9%. This finding is consistent with research that has found television news to provide a steady rate of crime coverage (Chermak, 1995; Cirino, 1972; Graber, 1980; Lowry, 1971).

Although research attests to a steady diet of crime news coverage, there is a paucity of research on how super sensational crimes fit into the overall framework of television news stories. In fact, some researchers have chosen specific sample periods that did not contain super sensational crimes (e.g., Sheley & Ashkins, 1981). Chermak (1995) acknowledged the presence of what he called 'super primary' crime stories in the news, however, his analyses failed to include these types of crimes. Super sensational crimes are important to examine because these are the news stories that are talked about, watched, and the most likely to affect the impressions people have about crime (Chermak, 1995). Thus, the present study sought to examine the prevalence of such crimes in the context of the steady diet of crime news coverage hypothesis.

In line with the steady diet of crime news coverage premise, it was hypothesized that the presence of super sensational crimes in newscasts would not increase the proportion of crime news beyond the 20% threshold of total news coverage. The results supported this hypothesis. Moreover, as hypothesized, the average rate of crime news coverage was not significantly different between newscasts with and without super sensational crime stories. It is important to note that super sensational crime stories were

presented in 11 of the 13 months sampled, yet these crimes constituted only 15.6% of total crime news on average. This finding suggests that although super sensational crimes are a relatively constant part of televised news, these stories do not predominate newscast crime coverage. Rather, it appears that crime news consists of a variety of super sensational, sensational, and mundane crime stories, and criminal justice system news.

In conjunction with the sensational/mundane crime distinction, crime news was differentiated on violent and nonviolent characteristics in order to examine fluctuations over time. Criminal justice system news was also included in the analysis. Consistent with hypothesis 1_b, criminal justice system and nonviolent crime news were more variable than violent crime news. It was also found that fluctuations in violent crime news were complemented by accommodations in nonviolent crime and to a lesser extent criminal justice system news, such that upward and downward compensatory bulges were generally followed by bulges in the opposite direction. This mirror image pattern of results provides evidence that nonviolent crime and criminal justice system news contract to make way for socially more significant news, namely, news about violent crime. As a consequence of this process of peaks and associated valleys in the component parts of crime news, there is a constant news flow of crime stories over time.

Thus, it has been established that crime news is a constant component of total news and that super sensational crime stories are a constant component of crime news. It was also of interest in this study to determine how the presence of super sensational crimes in newscasts may influence the depiction of other crimes in the same newscast. To do this, comparisons were made between crime stories with and without a super

sensational crime in the newscast on the frequency and type of coverage, breadth of topic coverage, story placement, and visual presentation. These factors are important to examine because research has shown that prominence features of news stories facilitate knowledge acquisition and retention (Berry, Gunter, & Clifford, 1982).

The results showed that the presence of super sensational crimes did not influence the frequency of coverage of either sensational and mundane crimes or violent and nonviolent crimes. The only significant difference that emerged was for driving offenses, which were portrayed more frequently in newscasts that also contained a super sensational crime story. This difference, however, can be attributed to two cases in particular that were covered over several criminal justice stages during the sample period, with both cases involving a local police officer as a defendant. The fact that these driving offenses were presented in the same newscasts as super sensational crime stories was most likely an artifact of the timing of the evolving court cases of the driving offenses.

In regards to breadth of topic coverage, story placement, and visual presentation, the only significant finding was for the nonviolent crime category on story placement. Specifically, nonviolent crimes in the same newscast as a super sensational crime story were placed later in the newscast than nonviolent crimes in newscasts without a super sensational crime story. This finding suggests that broadcasters may assign more importance to super sensational crimes than nonviolent crimes, thus, the latter are placed later in the broadcast. As a possible consequence, viewers may be hindered with respect to learning about nonviolent crimes when they are presented in newscasts that contain a super sensational crime story.

To introduce a combination of audio and visual content coding, stories were examined with respect to the contribution of visuals to verbal themes. Across all crime categories examined, visual verbal redundancy was used most frequently when super sensational crime stories were presented. According to the cue summation theory, congruent text-picture relations enhance television news learning (Brosius, Donsbach, & Birk, 1996; Crigler, Just, & Neuman, 1994; Drew & Grimes, 1987; Reese & Davie, 1987). Thus, based on this characteristic of visuals it is possible that crime stories presented in the same newscast as a super sensational crime will be more amenable to memory than other crime story presentations.

Taken as a whole, the preceding results provide little confirmation that the presence of a super sensational crime in a newscast will affect the presentation of other crime stories in general, with the exception of story placement for nonviolent crimes. It may be possible, however, that one particular variable may have an overriding impact on viewers; namely, the potential contribution of visuals to verbal themes. If this is the case, then viewers may be able to learn more about crime when super sensational crime stories are presented on the news, provided the finding of visual verbal congruency is consistently applied by newscasters.

Crime stories similar in nature to the presented super sensational stories (i.e., murder and terrorism) were also examined with respect to prominence characteristics. It was hypothesized that the importance of stories similar to the presented super sensational story will be raised. In order to examine this hypothesis, comparisons were made between murders in the same newscast as either the Paul Bernardo murder trial or the O.J.

Simpson murder trial and murders that were not accompanied by a super sensational crime in the newscast. Similarly, comparisons were made between the terrorism stories in the same newscast as the Oklahoma city bombing story and terrorism stories that were not presented in the same newscast as the super sensational crime. The respective super sensational crimes were also included in the analyses to determine whether these crime stories possessed significantly different properties from stories that were of the same offense type, but not considered super sensational. Overall, the results failed to support the hypothesis with respect to the effect of super sensational murders and super sensational terrorism on stories similar to the presented super sensational crimes in the same newscast.

The results did show, however, that the super sensational murders were significantly different from 'regular' murders on story length and story placement characteristics. Specifically, super sensational murders were longer in duration than other murders, yet the super sensational murders were placed later in the newscast. This latter finding can be attributed to the manner in which the Paul Bernardo murder trial was presented on CJOH-TV news.

When the Bernardo trial was to be presented during a newscast, specific reference was made at the beginning of the broadcast that coverage would take place at 6:26 p.m., for example, usually after the second commercial, and a warning was provided due to the graphic nature of the crime story so that viewers could choose to see the story if so desired. During the entire sample period, the Bernardo trial was the only crime story to which this type of advanced warning and consequent later placement in the broadcast was

applied. While it could be suggested that the Bernardo trial was not prominently displayed with respect to position in the newscast, one must consider the fact that this crime story was treated differently than any other during the sample period. Essentially, it could be argued that this tactic in and of itself made the Bernardo trial prominent.

The Oklahoma city bombing stories, in comparison to other terrorism stories, were presented longer, had greater attention scores, more visual scenes, and visuals with a stronger emotional impact. These results suggest that the Oklahoma city bombing was presented more prominently than other terrorism stories.

Overall, these results indicated that super sensational crime stories contain characteristics that will make these stories more amenable to memory. While it was not surprising that super sensational crime stories were displayed more prominently than other crime stories of the same general offense types, several observations can be made about the possible consequences for these other crime stories.

First, it should be noted that hypothesis 2 gauged the importance of the other crime stories that were similar in nature to the presented super sensational crime stories according to essentially quantitative standards. Thus, based on these standards it appears that murder or terrorist stories that were presented in the same newscast as a super sensational crime story may not be remembered or focused on by viewers due to the lack of prominence characteristics. It may be the case, however, that the presence of a super sensational crime story in a newscast will pique the viewers' interest in the news, hence they may be more attentive to either crimes in general or crimes that resemble the super sensational crime story, with the consequence being a heightened ability to learn from

televised news. Future research is needed to confirm exactly what aspects of super sensational crime stories, the crimes themselves or the way they are displayed, may make other crime stories more memorable.

Further hypotheses examined the characteristics of crime news with respect to the representation and accuracy of media reports of crime, the prominence of crime stories, and the extent of media crime coverage. It was hypothesized that sensational crimes will be overrepresented and displayed more prominently than mundane crimes in television news stories. Results failed to support this hypothesis. Rather, it was found that mundane crimes were more frequently displayed on the news. This result suggests that viewers may be more likely to overestimate the frequency of such crimes. Further examination of the consequences of the overrepresentation of sensational crimes will be discussed in the section dealing with violent and nonviolent crimes.

This study also found mixed support for the prominence of sensational crimes over mundane crimes. Specifically, sensational crimes were longer in duration, received higher attention scores, were presented with more visual scenes of a shorter average duration, and more video footage than mundane crimes. The finding in this study with respect to a shorter average length for visual scenes in sensational crime stories suggests that these stories may be less amenable to memory than mundane crime stories. Specifically, if visual scenes are displayed for a short period of time, viewers cannot absorb the visual information fully, considering that scenes follow each other in rapid succession with no breaks to permit reflection (Graber, 1990).

However, it is important to note that research has shown that the presence of video footage facilitates learning (Berry & Brosius, 1991; Brosius, 1989; Edwardson, Grooms, & Proudlove, 1981; Edwardson, Kent, Engstrom, & Hofmann, 1992; Graber, 1990; Gunter, 1980). In the context of the present findings, it is possible that the presence of the video footage, in and of itself, may be adequate to permit viewers to learn information from the news. The results showed that mundane crime stories were presented with a newscaster only in a larger proportion of cases than sensational crime stories. Due to the fact that 'talking head' news items are recalled less than items with video footage (Berry & Brosius, 1991; Brosius, 1989; Edwardson, Grooms, & Proudlove, 1981; Edwardson, Kent, Engstrom, & Hofmann, 1992; Graber, 1990; Gunter, 1980), it may be the case that regardless of the average length of visual scenes, the presence of video footage may be an adequate characteristic to promote learning of sensational crime stories over mundane crimes stories.

The visual presentation of sensational and mundane crime stories were further examined with respect to the prevalence of general and specific picture types. The results confirmed that sensational crime stories were presented with more close-ups of identifiable and unidentifiable people, as well as medium and distance shots of identifiable people than mundane crime stories. Contrary to expectations, there were no apparent differences in the presentation of identifiable locations between the two types of crime stories. Graber (1990) stated that close-ups of human beings elicit rich inferences and emotions. For this reason, it is probable that the preponderance of identifiable people

in sensational crime stories may enhance their memorability, relative to mundane crime stories.

This study also found that sensational crime stories were more likely than mundane crime stories to present pictures of defendants, victims, destroyed objects, and police. Although both types of crime stories presented an equal proportion of visuals that were redundant with the text, the prevalence of the aforementioned picture types, and the finding that sensational crime stories presented visuals with a stronger emotional impact suggest that sensational crime stories are more likely to influence viewers impressions about crime than mundane crime stories.

Subsumed within the sensational/mundane crime distinction is the aspect of whether crimes involve violence. This aspect is important to consider because research has shown that violent crimes are overrepresented in the media relative to the actual incidence of these crimes reported to the police, whereas nonviolent crimes in the media are underrepresented in the media relative to official statistics (Ammons, Dimmick, & Pilotta, 1982; Antunes & Hurley, 1977; Graber, 1980; Jones, 1976; Roberts, 1988b; Roshier, 1981; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981; Sherizen, 1978).

As hypothesized, the present findings were consistent with prior research in regards to the over- and underrepresentation of violent and nonviolent crimes, respectively, in the television news relative to official crime statistics. In accordance with prior research, the present results across both years showed that murder was consistently overrepresented in the media relative to official crime statistics (e.g., Graber, 1980; Jones, 1976; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981; Sherizen, 1978). Interestingly, a negative relationship

emerged with respect to media rankings of specific crimes and police rankings across both years. These findings suggest that, for the time period sampled, CJOH-TV news portrayed an inaccurate image of crime to the public. Although it is important to note that the media data presented for 1994 and 1995 were underestimations for the respective years, the findings were nevertheless consistent across years.

A comparison of violent to nonviolent crimes presented in newscasts supported the hypothesis that violent crimes will be overrepresented relative to nonviolent crimes in television news stories. As hypothesized, sentences of imprisonment also predominated in crime news stories. These findings concur other content analyses on crime-related topics (Ammons, Dimmick, & Pilotta, 1982; Antunes & Hurley, 1977; Chermak, 1995; Davis, 1952; Ditton & Duffy, 1983; Dussuyer, 1979; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991; Graber, 1980; Jones, 1976; Mawby & Brown, 1984; Roberts, 1988b; Roshier, 1981; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981; Sherizen, 1978; Schlesinger, Tumber, & Murdock, 1991; Smith, 1984).

The present study adds to the content analytic literature on crime news by presenting evidence not only on the prevalence of violent and nonviolent crimes presented on Canadian television news, but also the visual depiction of crime stories in newscasts. Thus, prominence characteristics of violent and nonviolent crime stories were examined in hypothesis 5, which stated that violent crimes will be displayed more prominently than nonviolent crimes in television news. The results showed mixed support for this hypothesis. Specifically, violent crimes were more prominent than nonviolent crimes with respect to position in the newscast and extent of follow up over

criminal justice stages, but no differences emerged between crime stories on duration of coverage. The findings with respect to position in the newscast and extent of follow up of violent crimes were consistent with previous research (Chermak, 1995).

Violent crime stories were also found to be more prominent than nonviolent crime stories on a measure of overall news attention and the number of visual scenes presented. The finding that no differences emerged between violent and nonviolent crime stories in regards to the average length of visual scenes, yet violent crime stories presented more visuals than nonviolent crime stories suggests that violent crime stories are displayed using a wider variety of pictures. Thus, violent crime stories may be easier to comprehend due to the abundant use of visuals. No distinction was found, however, between crime stories on mode of visual presentation, with both types of stories presenting primarily video footage.

An examination of the prevalence of general and specific picture types revealed that violent crime stories presented more pictures of identified people at all camera shots and more pictures of defendants, victims, crime scenes, and destroyed objects than nonviolent crime stories. This finding with respect to more prevalent victim pictures in violent crime stories is not surprising given the fact that violent crimes are person based. The primary contributions of visuals to verbal themes in both violent and nonviolent crime stories were to provide redundant information with the verbal text and to identify people or objects. The final measure of prominence revealed that violent crime stories were presented with visuals that were more emotionally arousing than nonviolent crime stories.

Taken together, the overall results for the analyses regarding violent and nonviolent crime stories suggest that viewers will be more likely to remember the stories presented on violent crimes due to the visual presentation of violent crime stories and the emotion they evoke. The nature of the crime itself is also a factor that will render violent crimes more memorable than nonviolent crimes. Indeed, research has found that violent crimes are better remembered than nonviolent crimes (Gunter & Furnham, 1986; Gunter, Furnham, & Gietson, 1984; Furnham & Gunter, 1987).

The final set of hypotheses were derived to examine the extent of coverage of the various aspects of crime. Overall, the hypothesis that television crimes stories will provide few details concerning offenders, victims, causes of crime, motives for crime, and aspects of the criminal justice process was supported as were each of the subhypotheses. Specifically, television news coverage of crime focused more on the early police and court stages rather than later correctional stages of the criminal justice process; evaluations of the criminal justice system were scarce, however, negative and mixed portrayals predominated; references to sentencing purposes, maximum penalties, minimum penalties, and current sentencing practice were rarely addressed in sentencing stories; finally, recidivism rates rarely appeared in television crime stories, however, more crimes committed by recidivists were presented than crimes by first time offenders.

Several variables related to the fear of crime research were examined in the present study. Indeed, it was found that more local crimes were presented as random, in terms of victim precipitation, but local crimes were also more likely to be mundane rather than sensational in nature. Finally, this study found that the majority of local and

nonlocal crimes were placed in the beginning of the newscast, with local crimes presented more as initial crime stories and nonlocal crimes presented as follow-up stories. These findings are discussed in the context of prior research on fear of crime.

Research has shown that stories of local crime news that were random or sensational were associated with higher levels of fear; conversely, stories of nonlocal crime news that were random or sensational crimes were associated with lower levels of fear (Heath, 1984). In a replication of Heath's (1984) study, Liska and Baccaglini (1990) found higher levels of fear associated with local stories presented in the first part of the newspaper and initial crime stories. In contrast, nonlocal crime stories were associated with lower levels of fear when they were presented in the first part of the newspaper and were presented as follow-up crime stories.

In light of the previous research on fear of crime (Heath, 1984; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990), the results of the present study suggest that television news presented an amalgam of stories associated with high and low levels of fear. Thus, overall, it is possible that these effects could cancel each other out. A confirmation of this, however, is beyond the scope of the present study.

In sum, one implication of the findings of the present study is that the public are not provided with adequate coverage of the various aspects of crime and the criminal justice process. Indeed, the public opinion literature has shown that people are unaware of mandatory maximum penalties, minimum penalties, and current sentencing practice (Canadian Sentencing Commission, 1987). The literature also revealed that the public are unaware of recidivism rates of offenders for person, property, and sex crimes, with the

public overestimating the recidivism rates of first time offenders for these offenses (Roberts & White, 1986). The findings of the present study must be examined in light of this literature because few people experience crime directly, hence, the public most likely derive crime related information from the media (Courtis, 1970; Graber, 1980; Lewis, 1984; Stroman & Seltzer, 1985). In fact, Graber (1980) reported that 95% of her respondents used the media as a primary source of information about crime.

Public education is neither the sole nor the primary aim of the news media; however, the fact is that many people do rely on the media to learn information about crime (Canadian Sentencing Commission, 1987). The results of this study were presented in the context of the memorability of crime news items specifically for this reason. It is important to know what kinds of crime are being presented, how they are presented, and what impact these factors may have on the viewing public.

The present study established that there is a steady diet of crime news coverage. Thus, it can be assured that the public will have a constant flow of information with which they can develop 'informed' opinions about crime. However, this study showed that the public is being flooded with crime information that is not consistent with official crime data. Moreover, the presence of super sensational crimes, which were all violent in nature, and the preponderance of other sensational and mundane violent crimes (81.9% and 69.2%, respectively) are likely to have an effect on the public's attitudes toward crime and their consequent behaviour on crime related issues.

Specifically, an implication of the domination of violent crime on the news, whether it involves a super sensational or mundane crime, are that the public may

overestimate the frequency of violent crimes, as previous research has already demonstrated (Doob & Roberts, 1982). In line with the anchoring theory, it may be the case that viewers of televised news may judge other offenses and offenders more harshly after watching television news that is inundated with emotionally laden violent pictures which are depicted in the most influential manner according to other prominence criteria. The public's behaviour on matters such as voting behaviour, in turn, may be influenced, which may affect the outcome of future political issues and legislative decisions.

The final implication of the present findings is that the public may become more fearful of their environments; thus the public may resort to avoidance behaviour. Hence, if the public is misinformed on crime related issues, the potential consequences could be damaging from the public sphere to the legislative sphere. A solution to avoid these negative outcomes would be for the criminal justice system and its component parts to provide the media with systematic, comprehensive information so that a more accurate presentation of crime can be given to the public through media sources.

The overall findings of this study must be examined in light of the study limitations. Specifically, a sample of convenience was used taking every other newscast. Thus, half of the possible days in the sample period were examined. It may be the case that the days chosen for the sample were significantly different from the days that were not examined. It should be noted that the primary investigator did watch all of the available crime stories in the sample period, although only every other newscast was content analyzed. Although no statistics were computed between the days chosen and the days not chosen, it is the opinion of the author that the newscasts chosen were not

qualitatively different from the days chosen. Other content analytic research suggests that there are no differences between every fifth and sixth day samples and the figures for the entire month (Chermak, 1995; Davis, 1952; Mintz, 1966).

The second limitation of this study was the use of seven months for 1994 and six months for 1995 media data in order to examine the accuracy of media presentations of crime news in relation to UCR data. The UCR is also associated with its own limitations because not every crime is reported to the police; hence the UCR data are also an underestimate of the actual number of crimes that occur.

Thirdly, this study was limited in terms of sample size. In the comparisons between super sensational crime stories and other crime stories that were similar in nature, the sample sizes per group were reduced to possibly to a point where significant differences should have emerged but there was not enough power to find an effect. Thus, future studies should attempt to employ a larger sample of super sensational and other crime stories to facilitate adequate comparisons.

A final limitation was that only one media source, television news, from one location, Ottawa, Ontario was used. It may be possible that differences in visual format exist between televised broadcasting corporations. Thus, the results of the present study cannot be generalized beyond the particular sample period chosen and for CJOH-TV Newslane, a local news station. Future studies could examine different media, that is, newspapers, radio, and televised news. Moreover, local versus national televised news could be investigated further.

The present study inferred all of the possible consequences of crime news on the public, thus future studies could also examine the direct and indirect effects of watching televised news on public attitudes towards crime related issues in conjunction with content analytic techniques.

To conclude, future studies could employ the use of ethnographic observation of the crime-news production process. Ethnography considers news production, observing the organizational processes involved in making news, essentially how a particular news item gets presented to the public (Chermak, 1995). Moreover, interviewing of reporters, editors, and management can be conducted to examine why particular crimes get presented to the public (Chermak, 1995). These two research techniques would add to and clarify the results produced by the content analysis.

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Appendix¹

Television Codebook

General Coding Information

Crime news to be coded included all news about infractions of criminal law. It also included stories about crime prevention, police activities related to crime fighting, general discussions of the crime problem, and the criminal justice system. General discussions of crime fighting policies, such as gun control, the death penalty status, parole system reform were also considered crime news.

Coding was designed to gain information about the representations of crime depicted in the television medium through selective attention to various types of crime and various aspects of crime and the criminal justice system. In stories that discussed several crimes, coding followed the most serious crime depicted. For example, if a murder and robbery took place, the murder will be coded as the primary crime. Coding was based solely on story content rather than the coder's awareness of facts that could have been potentially incorporated into the story but were omitted. A clear violation of the law had to be contained within a story; however, no distinctions were made between alleged or suspected criminal activity and proven criminal activity.

Coding Unit

1. The basic coding units were the story and the episode within a story.
2. A story was an item with a common theme, for example, an evaluation of the courts,

¹ A number of the procedures and variables or parts of the variables were taken directly from Graber's codebook (see Graber, D. (1980). Crime news and the public, pp. 131-183. New York: Praeger.) and Chermak's codebook obtained from the author with permission.

that was told without intervening stories on different themes.

3. A story may discuss several subthemes. For example, a story on the main theme “fatal shooting” may be presented as follows: after the subtheme, “victim interviewed”, the newscast may turn to the second subtheme, “police looking for assailant”, and to the third subtheme, “fear aroused in townspeople”. Each of the distinct subthemes was defined as an episode and was coded individually.
4. When the introductory or concluding comment by the television anchorman or reporter was a lead-in into the story or a summation of the story told by others, the introduction and windup were counted as part of the subtheme that they complemented.
5. Subthemes (i.e., episodes) in stories that were not crime related (e.g., weather, sports) were not coded individually, rather, they were collapsed into one story. In the case that a crime story was included in the sports section, the particular story was coded as were all other crime stories.
6. At the start of a newscast headline stories were sometimes presented. These were not considered as part of the stories coded in the newscast. As well, newscasts frequently presented the top or headline stories of the day at the end of the broadcast with open captioning. Due to the fact that these stories reiterated the main points of news stories already mentioned in the newscast, these were not considered as part of the original stories and thus were not included for coding. Sometimes, however, new stories were introduced at that point, but they were usually very short in length (i.e., under 10 seconds), thus they were not included for coding.

7. The following factors were considered as exclusion criteria from the analysis:

- a) Crime stories that are under 10 seconds in length
- b) Commercials
- c) Beginning and closing statements that are not related to the story (e.g., “Good evening...” or “...and this sums up the state of affairs for tonight...”).
- d) Jokes or other conversations of anchorpersons or reporters that are not related to any part of the news story

Coding Directory

Variable	Variable Name	Code	Explanation
Weekday	weekday	1	Monday
		2	Tuesday
		3	Wednesday
		4	Thursday
		5	Friday
Date	day	1-31	Day of month
Month	month	1	January
		2	February
		3	March
		4	April
		5	May
		6	June
		7	July
		8	August
		9	September
		10	October
		11	November
		12	December
Year	year		Code last numeral only
		4	1994
		5	1995
Story number	storynum	1-99	Each story is given an identification number corresponding to the sequential order of presentation. Each program is coded separately.
Story topic	storytop	1	domestic affairs (Includes stories about the prime minister and his public, official activities, parliament members and their performances, provincial and local city government and their activities, and similar topics)
		2	foreign affairs (Includes stories about Canadian foreign policy, domestic issues of foreign nations, with or without direct involvement of Canada, international politics, international war, activities of international organizations such as UN, OPEC, NATO, and similar topics)
		3	sports

		4	business and economy (Includes stories about economic state of individuals, groups, corporations, problems in the business world, taxes, energy, unemployment, government spending, general economy, housing/rent, and similar topics)
		5	crime (Includes stories about specific crime incidents, crime trends, and all criminal justice related stories)
		6	science (Includes stories about medical and health issues)
		7	education (Includes stories related to schools, education, and similar topics)
		8	accidents and natural disasters (Includes stories about traffic accidents, fires, floods, earthquakes, storms, and similar topics)
		9	celebrations (Includes ceremonies and parades)
		10	weather (Includes stories on the regular discussion of weather other than disaster conditions)
		11	environment
		12	general interest (Includes stories about arts, entertainment, people, gardening, and similar topics)
		13	general stories (Includes stories about specific incidents such as power outages, gas leaks, chemical leaks, and similar topics)
Story length	stoleng	0-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for a story.
Number of stories	numstor	0-99	Total number of stories mentioned in the newscast.
Newscast length	lengnew	0-9999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for the newscast.
Number of crime stories	numcrim	0-100	Total number of crime stories mentioned in the newscast.
Length of crime news	lengcrim	0-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for all crime stories combined.

Percentage crime stories	perc crim	0-100	Percentage of seconds devoted to crime stories out of entire newscast of stories.
Number of criminal justice system stories	num crjus	0-100	Total number of criminal justice stories mentioned.
Length of criminal justice stories	lng crmj	0-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for all criminal justice stories combined.
Percentage criminal justice stories	perc crim	0-100	Percentage of seconds devoted to criminal justice stories out of all crime stories
Number of violent crime stories	num viol	0-100	Total number of violent crime stories mentioned.
Length of violent crime stories	lng viol	0-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for all violent crime stories combined.
Percentage violent crime stories	perc viol	0-100	Percentage of seconds devoted to violent crime stories out of all crime stories.
Number of nonviolent crime stories	num nviol	0-100	Total number of violent crime stories mentioned.
Length of nonviolent crime stories	lng nviol	0-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for all nonviolent crime stories combined.
Percentage nonviolent crime stories	perc nviol	0-100	Percentage of seconds devoted to nonviolent crime stories out of all crime stories.
Number of sensational crime stories	num sens	0-100	Total number of sensational crime stories mentioned.
Length of sensational crime stories	lng sens	0-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for all sensational crime stories combined.
Percentage sensational crime stories	perc sens	0-100	Percentage of seconds devoted to sensational crime stories out of all crime stories.
Number of mundane crime stories	num mund	0-100	Total number of mundane crime stories mentioned.
Length of mundane crime stories	lng mund	0-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for all mundane crime stories combined.

Percentage mundane crime stories	percmund	0-100	Percentage of seconds devoted to mundane crime stories out of all crime stories.
Super sensational crime in newscast	supsen	0 1	Super sensational crime present in newscast. No Yes
Number of super sensational crime stories	numspen	0-100	Total number of super sensational crime stories mentioned.
Length of super sensational crime stories	lngspen	0-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for all super sensational crime stories combined.
Percentage super sensational crime stories	perspen	0-100	Percentage of seconds devoted to super sensational crime stories out of all crime stories.

All subsequent coding relates to crime stories only:

Crime story number	crimenum	1-99	Each crime story is given an identification number corresponding to the sequential order of presentation.
Crime story placement	cripla	1-99	Crime story placement in newscast.
Placement before commercial	crplcom	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Crime story placement before commercial number. Crime story before commercial 1 Crime story before commercial 2 Crime story before commercial 3 Crime story before commercial 4 Crime story before commercial 5 Crime story before commercial 6 Crime story before commercial 7
Number of episodes	episonum	1-99	Number of episodes within each crime story.
Crime story length	crlength	1-999	Actual number of seconds of broadcast time for a crime story.
Headline presence	headline	0 1	Presence of headline at start of newscast. No Yes
Mode of visual presentation	modevis	1 2 3 4	Up to 3 modes may be coded for each story. Anchorman/reporter Graphics/Still Photos Film/Video Combination of categories 1 to 3

		9	Other
Number of visual scenes	numvis	1-99	Record number of visual scenes.
Length of visual scenes	avlgvis	1-999	Average length of visual scenes (length of story divided by number of visual scenes).
Still photo	stnopic		Still photo included
		0	No
		1	Yes
Video	vnopic		Video included
		0	No
		1	Yes
Type of visual scene			Classify visual scenes according to their main focus. A scene is identified as a shot or shots of the same subject, bounded by adjacent scenes of different subjects. A new scene means cutting to a completely new subject, not merely motion within a scene, or a pan shot, or a change in focus through zooming or changing angles.
	stprvic	0-99	Number of pre-victimization pictures
	stpovic	0-99	Number of post-victimization pictures
	stmug	0-99	Number of mugshot pictures
	stfamil	0-99	Number of family pictures
	stbody	0-99	Number of body/body bag/casket pictures
	stvicre	0-99	Number of victim's reaction pictures
	stdef	0-99	Number of defendant/offender pictures
	stcrsce	0-99	Number of crime scene pictures
	stcrins	0-99	Number of crime instrument pictures
	stneigh	0-99	Number of neighborhood pictures
	stviint	0-99	Number of victim interview pictures
	stsour	0-99	Number of source pictures
	stpers	0-99	Number of person pictures
	stcrpro	0-99	Number of crime in progress pictures
	stjudg	0-99	Number of judge pictures
	stamb	0-99	Number of ambulance pictures
	stvamb	0-99	Number of victim removed by ambulance pictures
	stpolicr	0-99	Number of police car pictures
	stfuner	0-99	Number of funeral procession pictures
	stpolce	0-99	Number of police pictures
	stplcrt	0-99	Number of people leaving courtroom pictures
	starrst	0-99	Number of arrest pictures
	stpris	0-99	Number of prison pictures

stattor	0-99	Number of attorney pictures
stcrths	0-99	Number of courthouse pictures
stgovoff	0-99	Number of government official pictures
stwitns	0-99	Number of witness pictures
stvicdef	0-99	Number of victim/defendant pictures
stvigil	0-99	Number of vigil pictures
stvifam	0-99	Number of victim's family pictures
stvivfam	0-99	Number of victim/victim's family pictures
stviadv	0-99	Number of victim advocate pictures
stdfrel	0-99	Number of defendant's relative pictures
stpjai	0-99	Number of prisoners in jail pictures
stppcrt	0-99	Number of people in courtroom pictures
stguar	0-99	Number of guard pictures
stpolt	0-99	Number of politician pictures
stdrugs	0-99	Number of drug pictures
stdesobj	0-99	Number of destroyed object pictures
stdefpol	0-99	Number of defendant escorted by police pictures
stschooll	0-99	Number of school pictures
stevld	0-99	Number of evidence pictures
stmedia	0-99	Number of media pictures
stdoctor	0-99	Number of doctor/nurse pictures
stpsycho	0-99	Number of psychologist/psychiatrist pictures
stwarden	0-99	Number of prison warden/prison official pictures
stpolsta	0-99	Number of police station pictures
stjustic	0-99	Number of justice paraphernalia pictures
stgovblg	0-99	Number of government building pictures
strescue	0-99	Number of firefighter/rescue worker pictures
stgang	0-99	Number of gang member pictures
stganpar	0-99	Number of gang paraphernalia pictures
stexpert	0-99	Number of expert pictures
sthospit	0-99	Number of hospital pictures
stother	0-99	Number of other pictures
vprvic	0-99	Number of pre-victimization videos
vpovic	0-99	Number of post-victimization videos
vmug	0-99	Number of mugshot videos
vfamil	0-99	Number of family videos
vbody	0-99	Number of body/body bag/casket videos
vvicre	0-99	Number of victim's reaction videos
vdef	0-99	Number of defendant/offender videos
vcrsce	0-99	Number of crime scene videos
vcrins	0-99	Number of crime instrument videos

vneigh	0-99	Number of neighborhood videos
vviint	0-99	Number of victim interview videos
vsour	0-99	Number of source videos
vpers	0-99	Number of person videos
vcrpro	0-99	Number of crime in progress videos
vjudg	0-99	Number of judge videos
vamb	0-99	Number of ambulance videos
vvamb	0-99	Number of victim removed by ambulance videos
vpolcr	0-99	Number of police car videos
vfuner	0-99	Number of funeral procession videos
vpolce	0-99	Number of police videos
vplcrt	0-99	Number of people leaving courtroom videos
varrst	0-99	Number of arrest videos
vpris	0-99	Number of prison videos
vattor	0-99	Number of attorney videos
vrths	0-99	Number of courthouse videos
vgovoff	0-99	Number of government official videos
vwitns	0-99	Number of witness videos
vvicdef	0-99	Number of victim/defendant videos
vvigil	0-99	Number of vigil videos
vvifam	0-99	Number of victim's family videos
vvivfam	0-99	Number of victim/victim's family videos
vviadv	0-99	Number of victim advocate videos
vdfrl	0-99	Number of defendant's relative videos
vpjai	0-99	Number of prisoners in jail videos
vppcrt	0-99	Number of people in courtroom videos
vguar	0-99	Number of guard videos
vpolt	0-99	Number of politician videos
vdrugs	0-99	Number of drug videos
vdesobj	0-99	Number of destroyed object videos
vdefpol	0-99	Number of defendant escorted by police videos
vschool	0-99	Number of school videos
vevid	0-99	Number of evidence videos
vmedia	0-99	Number of media videos
vdoctor	0-99	Number of doctor/nurse videos
vpsycho	0-99	Number of psychologist/psychiatrist videos
vwarden	0-99	Number of prison warden/prison official videos
vpolsta	0-99	Number of police station videos
vjustic	0-99	Number of justice paraphernalia videos
vgovblg	0-99	Number of government building videos
vrescue	0-99	Number of firefighter/rescue worker

	vgang	0-99	videos
	vganpar	0-99	Number of gang member videos
	vexpert	0-99	Number of gang paraphernalia videos
	vhospit	0-99	Number of expert videos
	vother	0-99	Number of hospital videos
	graphic	0-99	Number of other videos
	text	0-99	Number of graphics in newscast
Distance in			Number of textual displays in newscast
visual scene			(e.g., quotation)
			Further classify visual scenes according to
			camera shot.
			Close-up (face only)
			Medium length (face and chest)
			Far shot (full body)
	idpclup	0-99	Number of identified people, close up
	idpmed	0-99	Number of identified people, medium
	idpfar	0-99	Number of identified people, far
	idlocip	0-99	Number of identified locations, close up
	idlocmd	0-99	Number of identified locations, medium
	idlocfr	0-99	Number of identified locations, far
	idobclp	0-99	Number of identified inanimate objects,
			close up
	idobmd	0-99	Number of identified inanimate objects,
			medium
	idobfar	0-99	Number of identified inanimate objects, far
	repcam	0-99	Number of reporter on camera
	uipclup	0-99	Number of unidentified people, close up
	uipmed	0-99	Number of unidentified people, medium
	uipfar	0-99	Number of unidentified people, far
	uilocip	0-99	Number of unidentified locations, close up
	uilocmd	0-99	Number of unidentified locations, medium
	uilocfr	0-99	Number of unidentified locations, far
	uiobclp	0-99	Number of unidentified inanimate objects,
			close up
	uiobmd	0-99	Number of unidentified inanimate objects,
			medium
	uiobfar	0-99	Number of unidentified inanimate objects,
			far
Contribution	contrvis		Evaluate the primary contribution of visuals
of visuals			as a whole to verbal themes contained in the
to verbal			story.
themes		1	Irrelevant information
		2	Redundant information
		3	New information

		4	People or object identification
		5	Clarification
		6	Emotional components
		9	No information
Impact of visuals	visimp		Overall emotional impact of visuals
		0	No impact
		1	Very low impact
		2	Low impact
		3	Moderate impact
		4	Strong impact
		5	Very strong impact
Mode of verbal presentation	modeverb		Up to 3 modes may be coded for each story.
		1	Narration by reporter
		2	Question/answer or interview
		3	Formal speech/conference
		4	Filmed conversation
		9	Other
Nature of story	natstory		To retain information on the content of each story, record a verbatim written summary. Each story will be categorized according to its major emphasis. Use narrowest applicable category.
		1	General discussion of crime
		2	Specific crime(s)
		3	Combination of general discussion and specific discussion
		4	Crime fighting in general (includes crime statistics stories)
		5	Crime prevention
		6	Causes of crime
		7	Organized crime
		8	Criminal profile
		9	Victim profile
		10	Gang violence
		11	Juvenile delinquency
		12	Court activities - general (or both favorable and unfavorable)
		13	Court activities - favorable
		14	Court activities - unfavorable
		15	Police activities - general (or both favorable and unfavorable) (exclude personnel activities such as pay, hiring, union activities except when specifically related to crime-fighting activities)

		16	Police activities - favorable appraisal
		17	Police activities - unfavorable appraisal
		18	Prison reform - pro
		19	Prison reform - con
		20	Prison reform - mixed
		21	Criminal justice process, other than police activities
		22	Prison escape or attempted escape
		23	Prison riot
		24	Terrorism
		25	Court reform
		26	Criminal law changes, proposed and actual
		27	Nonspecific, general discussion of pretrial or trial procedures
		28	Support for victims of crime
		29	Support for offenders
		30	Prison conditions
		31	Prison program
		32	Correctional activities
		33	Government/legislative activities
		34	Victims of crime - specific incidents
		35	Hate crimes
		36	Suicide
		37	Riot
		38	Free press-fair trial - general discussion (or both pro and con)
		39	Free press-fair trial - pro
		40	Free press-fair trial - con
Nature of alleged crime	natcrime	see Offense Codes	Three crimes may be coded. Select crimes according to seriousness (e.g., in a crime story that reports a robbery, murder, and dangerous driving, record murder as the first crime, robbery as the second crime, and dangerous driving as the third crime).

Offense Codes

Person based

01	Murder
02	Manslaughter
03	Attempted Murder
04	Assault
05	Aggravated Assault
06	Assault with Weapon
07	Assault Peace Officer

08	Robbery
09	Attempted Robbery
10	Disguise with Intent
11	Use of Firearm to Commit
12	Possession of Weapon
13	Possession of Restricted Weapon
14	Possession of Prohibited Weapon
15	Carrying Concealed Weapon
16	Kidnapping
17	Forcible Confinement
18	Assault Bodily Harm
19	Resist Arrest
20	Point Firearm
21	Uttering Threats
22	Explosion with Intent
23	Possession Firearm
24	Sexual Assault
25	Live off Avails of Prostitution Crime
26	Robbery with Violence
27	Accessory after fact Manslaughter
28	Dangerous Use of Firearm
29	Wounding
90	Causing Bodily Harm
91	Arson
97	Criminal harassment
98	Criminal negligence causing death
	Drug based
30	Possession of Narcotics
31	Possession of Restricted Drug
32	Trafficking in Narcotics
	Driving based
40	Dangerous Driving
41	Impaired Driving
42	Fail to Remain at Scene of Accident
43	Driving While Disqualified
44	Impaired Causing Bodily Harm
45	Refuse to Provide Sample
	Property based
50	Break and Entering (BE)
51	Attempt BE
52	Theft
53	Attempted Theft
54	Possession Stolen Property
55	Fraud

		56	Forgery
		57	Mischief
		58	Willful Damage
		59	Extortion
		60	Possession Tools to Commit
		61	Unlawfully in Dwelling
		62	Attempted Fraud
		63	Take Car without Consent
		64	Possession Stolen Credit Card
			Other based
		70	Fail to Comply
		71	Fail to Appear
		72	Escape Lawful Custody
		73	Unlawfully at Large
		74	Conspiracy
		75	Obstruct Justice
		76	Attempt Obstruct Justice
		77	Breach of Recognizance
		78	Causing a Disturbance
		79	Breach of Condition
		80	Unsafe Storage of Gun
		81	Parole Revocation
		82	Attempted Escape
		83	Defacing Firearm
		84	Impersonating Peace Officer
		85	Disobey Order of Justice
		86	False Pretenses
		87	False Messages
		88	Personation
		89	MS Violation
		92	Bankruptcy Act
		93	Canada Shipping Act
		94	Customs Act
		95	Excise Act
		96	Immigration Act
		100	Proceeds of Crime
		777	Other
		999	Specific nature of crime not clear
Violence	vionon	0	Nonviolent (e.g., property or drug based offense)
involved		1	Violent (e.g., person based offense)
Unusualness	unusual	0	Mundane (ordinary crime, no unusual circumstances)
of crime		1	Sensational (unusual and bizarre nature of

			crime, e.g., crime against a celebrity; celebrity engages in crime)
		2	Super sensational (sensational crime with national or international newsworthiness)
Type of	tysupsen	1	O.J. Simpson
super		2	Paul Bernardo
sensational crime		3	Oklahoma city bombing
Randomness	random	0	Random or nonprecipitated crime
of crime		1	Nonrandom or victim precipitated crime In such crimes there is some degree of precipitation by the victim such as being in a dangerous place (e.g., a bar renown for brawls), engaging in a dangerous occupation (e.g., a drug dealer, night store clerk at a convenience store), or the victim taking a dangerous action (e.g., hitchhiking, leading a protest).
		9	Cannot be determined
Causes of	causes		Up to three causes may be coded. Select in order of emphasis delineated explicitly in the story.
crime		00	None cited
		01	Heredity, genetic factors
		02	Methods of child rearing
		03	Poor home life, includes parental abuse, illness, poverty, marital strife, alcoholism, rejection
		04	Adolescent stresses
		05	Religious deficiencies
		06	Materialism
		07	Economic stress, unemployment
		08	Slum/ghetto conditions
		09	Educational difficulties (drop out, poor grades)
		10	Inefficient police-criminal justice system
		11	Judicial leniency
		12	Prison conditions/leniency/recidivism
		13	Abuse of political power
		14	Influence of mass media: movies, TV/radio
		15	Racism
		16	Availability of guns
		17	Accident
		18	Street problems
		19	Welfare state mentality (somebody owes me

		a living)
	20	Faulty coordination between judicial and legislative branches
	21	Antisocial attitudes/peers
	22	Social class
	23	Personal distress (anxiety, low self-esteem, apathy)
	24	Temperament or misconduct problems (psychopathy, impulsivity, substance abuse)
	25	Technological advances
	26	Political statement
	27	Prescription drugs
	99	Other
Motives, triggering incidents	motive	Up to three may be coded. Select in order of emphasis delineated explicitly in the story.
	00	None cited
	01	Fight among strangers - argument
	02	Fight among acquaintances - argument
	03	Family fight/argument
	04	Racial/ethnic incident
	05	Gang violence
	06	Sex (rivalry, infidelity, promiscuity, and the like)
	07	Labor/union problems
	08	Political differences (partisan strife, radicalism, left-right clashes, and the like)
	09	Mental derangement/going berserk
	10	Prison inmate strife
	11	Prison inmate - authority strife
	12	Opportunity
	13	Intimidating potential witness/ victim
	14	Robbery
	15	Rape
	16	Protecting national security
	17	Drugs/alcohol
	18	Influence of mass media: movies/TV/radio
	19	Money
	20	Occult worship/sacrifice
	21	Kicks
	22	Grudge/revenge/jealously
	23	Hit embankment
	24	Natural disaster
	25	Protest

		26	Weather
		27	Burglary
		28	Mechanical difficulties
		29	Unsuspected waves
		30	Bet
		31	Against judge's orders
		32	Accident
		33	Police use of force
		34	Self defense
		35	Death in family
		36	Gambling
		37	Copy cat
		38	Routine traffic stop
		39	High speed chase
		40	Family problems
		41	Work problems
		42	Sporting event
		43	Religious differences
		99	Other
Stage of	stagpro	00	General story
criminal		01	Discovery of crime
justice process		02	Crime investigated by police
		03	Questioning of suspects
		04	Arrest
		05	Charges laid
		06	Pretrial (preliminary hearing/bail/remand)
		07	Plea
		08	Trial
		09	Jury deliberation
		10	Court verdict
		11	Sentence
		12	Extradition
		13	Appeal
		14	Charges dismissed in court
		15	Case settlement
		16	Supreme court decision
		17	Probation
		18	Commitment to prison
		19	Parole behaviour
		20	Pardon request
		21	Release from prison
		22	Funeral of victim
		23	General follow-up
		24	Victim follow-up

		25	Offender follow-up
		99	Other
Offender(s)' gender/identity	offiden	1	Female
		2	Male
		3	Both
		4	Institution
		5	Unknown
		6	Institution + individual
		9	Not applicable
Victim's gender/identity	victiden		See codes for offiden.
Offender(s)' name	offname	0	No
		1	Yes
Victim's name	victname	0	No
		1	Yes
Offender(s)' age group at time of crime	offage		May be inferred from pictures/video if not in story.
		01	Young child - (< 12)
		02	Youth - (12 - 17)
		03	Young adult - (18 - 24)
		04	Premiddle age - (25-34)
		05	Middle age - (35 - 59)
		06	Seniors - (60 and over)
		07	Members of <12-59 age group
		08	Members of <12-60 & > age group
		09	Members of 12-24 age group
		10	Members of 18-34 age group
		11	Members of 25-59 age group
		12	Members of 25-60 & > age group
		13	Members of 12-59 age group
		14	Members of 12-60 & > age group
		15	Private institutions, companies, corporations
		16	Public institutions
		17	Combination private + public institutions
		18	Named individuals + institutions
		19	Members of <12-17 age group
		20	Members of <12-34 age group
		99	Unidentified/not given
Victim(s)' age group at time of crime	victage		See variable offage.
Number of offenders	numoff	1-998	Use actual number or estimate. When ranges are provided, use midpoint.

		999	Indeterminate number (use this category when offender is an institution) See variable numoff.
Number of victims	numvict		
Offender(s)' race	offrace		Use narrowest identification. If name, address, or organizational identification is an obvious clue, identify accordingly.
		1	Caucasian
		2	Black
		3	Asian
		4	Middle East
		5	Native
		6	Spanish
		7	Other
		8	Mixed
		9	No identity tags
		99	Not applicable
Victim's Race	victrace		See variable offrace.
Offender(s)' occupation	offoccup		Three occupations may be coded. Retired individuals should be coded for most prominent past occupation. Code only one occupation per person.
		1	Professional/technical (college degree required, generally)
		2	Business-managers/union officials
		3	Politician/bureaucrat
		4	Police officer
		5	Prison guard/other criminal justice actor
		6	Military
		7	Doctor/nurse
		8	Teacher/school affiliation
		9	Firefighter
		10	Clergy
		11	Celebrity/entertainer
		12	Media
		13	Clerical/sales
		14	Skilled workers/trades/farmers
		15	Labourer
		16	Nonskilled workers/ex-taxi drivers
		17	Students
		18	Homemaker
		19	Unemployed
		20	Criminal

		21	Not identified
		99	Not applicable
Victim's occupation	vicoccup		See variable offoccup.
Victim/offender relationship	voffrel		Relationship of victim to offender. Up to 3 may be coded.
		1	Stranger crime
		2	Crime by spouse/ex-spouse
		3	Crime by parent
		4	Crime by other relative
		5	Crime by child
		6	Crime by friend/acquaintance
		7	Unknown
		8	Crime by self
Previous crime record	crimhist		Code only fact of mention. Do not code details of previous alleged offenses.
		1	No mention
		2	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
		3	A lot mention (more than 3 sentences)
		4	Mention as recidivist - some (1-3 sentences)
		5	Mention as recidivist - a lot (more than 3 sentences)
		6	Mention as on parole - some
		7	Mention as on parole - a lot
		8	Having no record
			Note: Use discretion on sentence measures.
			One very long sentence packed with detail may be counted as two normal sentences.
			Two very brief, sparsely descriptive sentences may be counted as one.
Recidivism rate	recidrat		Recidivism rate mentioned explicitly in story.
		0	No
		1	Yes
Details of injuries	detinj	1	None
		2	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
		3	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
Financial loss	finloss	0	Does not indicate
		1	Indicates loss
Financial amount	finamt	1	\$0-100
		2	\$101-1,000
		3	\$1,001-35,000
		4	\$35,001-100,000
		5	\$100,001-999,999

		6	Above 1 million
		7	Everything own
		9	Does not specify
Times	detfin	0	None
mentioned		1	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
financial		2	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
loss			
Property	proplos	0	Does not indicate
loss		1	Indicates property loss
Property	propamt	1	\$0-1,000
amount		2	\$1,001-10,000
		3	\$10,001-50,000
		4	\$50,001-999,999
		5	1,000,000-6,000,000
		6	Hundreds of millions
		7	Home/business destroyed
		9	Does not specify
Times		0	None
mentioned		1	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
property loss		2	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
Physical	physeff	0	Not mentioned
effects		1	Physical effects mentioned
Physical	physharm		Up to 3 may be coded.
harm		1	Death
		2	Broken bones
		3	Cuts/lacerations
		4	Bumps
		5	Severe trauma
		6	None/minor
		7	Beaten
		8	Sexually abused
		9	Other
		10	Does not specify
		11	Gunshot wound
		12	Heat/smoke inhalation
		13	Burned
		14	Verbally abused
		99	Not applicable
Condition	condvic		Up to 3 may be coded.
of victim		1	Critical
		2	Serious
		3	Moderate/satisfactory
		4	Fair/stable
		5	Fine

		6	Excellent/good
		9	Does not specify
		99	Not applicable
Times	detphys	0	None
mentioned		1	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
physical harm		2	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
Psychological	psycimp	0	Does not indicate
impact		1	Indicates psychological effects
Psychological	psycharm		Up to 3 may be coded.
harm		1	Fear
		2	Shock
		3	Denial
		4	Anger
		5	Mood shifts
		6	Shaken up/upset
		7	Shame
		8	Self-blame/guilt
		9	Other
		10	Does not specify
		11	Numbness
		12	Relief
		13	Vulnerability
		14	Trouble concentrating
		15	Nervous
		16	Emotional distress
		99	Not applicable
Times	detpsyc	0	None
mentioned		1	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
psychological harm		2	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
Details of	detcrex		Refers to who did what, where, with what
crime execution			tools.
		0	None
		1	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
		2	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
Details of	detarr		Code only if there is a description of
apprehension			specific actions taken to bring about arrest,
measures/arrest			regardless of success or failure.
		0	None
		1	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
		2	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
Apprehension	appsucc	1	No arrests, bookings, preliminary charges
success rate		2	Arrests, bookings, preliminary charges for
			some suspects
		3	Arrests, bookings, preliminary charges for

			all suspects
		4	Arrests, and so forth and release pending trial - some suspects
		5	Arrests, and so forth and release pending trial - all suspects
		6	Mixture - no suspects
		7	Mixture - some suspects released
		8	Suspect detained but not charged
		9	Suspect deceased or in hospital
		10	Suspect charged and released on bail
Details of pretrial action	detprtr		Code for discussion of matters such as indictments, grand jury action, pretrial detention, jury selection, bail questions, trial delays, lawyers' motions, and so on.
		0	None
		1	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
		2	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
Discussion of courtroom procedures	detcort	0	None
		1	Some mention (1-3 sentences)
		2	A lot (more than 3 sentences)
Sentence/ disposition	sentence		Up to 3 may be coded.
		1	Dismissal - innocent
		2	Dismissal - insufficient evidence
		3	Dismissal - technical difficulties
		4	Guilty - no penalties (or penalties already served)/ instant parole
		5	Prison - 2 years less a day
		6	Prison - 2-10 years
		7	Prison - 11 or more years
		8	Prison - indeterminate
		9	Hospital commitment/criminally insane
		10	Fine - less than \$100
		11	Fine - \$100-\$10,000
		12	Fine - more than \$10,000
		13	Combinations for individual (e.g., low prison, low fine)
		14	Group combinations - (e.g., low and medium prison)
		15	Parole after serving part of sentence
		16	Other penalties
		17	Mistrial declared
		18	Death penalty
		19	Not given, but on appeal
		20	Retrial ordered

		21	Appeal denied
		22	Freed after serving sentence
		23	Pardon requested
		24	Pardon granted
		25	Appeal denied for some, granted for others
		26	Parole denied
		27	Retrial under consideration
		28	Innocent on appeal
		29	Guilty on appeal
		30	Sentence commutation considered
		31	Death penalty considered
		32	Probation
		33	Extradition
		34	Parole granted
		35	Transfer to adult court
		99	Not identified
Purpose of sentencing	sentpur		Purpose of sentencing mentioned explicitly in the story. Up to 3 may be coded.
		1	General deterrence
		2	Special deterrence
		3	Rehabilitation
		4	Incapacitation
		5	Retribution
		9	Not mentioned
Maximum penalty	maxpen		Mandatory maximum penalty mentioned explicitly in the story.
		0	No
		1	Yes
Minimum penalty	minpen		Mandatory minimum penalty mentioned explicitly in the story.
		0	No
		1	Yes
Current sentencing practice	currssen		Average sentence for particular offense mentioned explicitly in the story.
		0	No
		1	Yes
Overall evaluation of police system	evpolice		Code only if specific evaluations are made.
		1	Improving
		2	Stable
		3	Mixed
		4	Declining
		5	Not enough officers
		6	Discrimination
Overall	evcourt		Code only if specific evaluations are made.

evaluation	1	Improving
of court	2	Stable
system	3	Mixed
	4	Declining
	5	Selective prosecution
	6	Overcrowded
Overall evcorr		Code only if specific evaluations are made.
evaluation of	1	Improving
correctional	2	Stable
system	3	Mixed
	4	Declining
	5	Racism/brutal in prisons
	6	Overcrowded
		When juvenile correctional system is involved (without mention of general court system), use the following subcategories:
	31	Improving
	32	Stable
	33	Mixed
	34	Declining
Overall evdanger		Code only if specifically mentioned or if statistics are given, indicating trends.
evaluation		
of crime danger	1	Violent crime on increase
	2	Violent crime on decrease
	3	Violent crime stable
	4	Violent crime mixed change
	5	All crime on increase
	6	All crime on decrease
	7	All crime stable
	8	All crime, mixed change
	9	Nonviolent crime on increase
	10	Nonviolent crime on decrease
	11	Nonviolent crime stable
	12	Nonviolent crime mixed change
	13	Violent crime on rise, nonviolent crime on decline
	14	Violent crime decreasing, nonviolent crime rising
	15	Not dangerous for police
	16	Drugs/gangs on rise
	17	Preventive measures taken
	18	Family crime most dangerous
	19	Crime by women on increase
	20	Hate crimes on increase

		21	Drug arrests down
		22	Teenage crime on increase
		23	Impaired driving on increase
		24	Impaired driving on decrease
		25	People feeling safe in neighborhood on rise
		26	People feeling safe in neighborhood on decline
		27	People feeling safe in neighborhood stable
		28	Crimes against seniors on increase
		29	Terrorism on increase
		99	Other
Discussion of crime prevention devices	criprev		Up to 3 may be coded.
		1	General discussion
		2	Specific how-to advice for citizens
		3	Societal programs - to remedy economic causes of crime
		4	Societal programs involving high-crime potential population (for example, summer jobs, recreational facilities, job training)
		5	Stress on penalties/dangers of crime commission
		6	Witness protection
		7	Citizen watch groups
		8	Government advertisement campaigns
		9	Special police squad set up to combat specific crimes
		10	Other
		11	Tighter security measures
		12	Crime prevention council
		13	Community policing
Discussion of criminal justice policies	crjupol		Code "mixed" if no evaluation is provided, or if both positive and negative evaluations are given.
		1	Gun control - pro
		2	Gun control - con
		3	Gun control - mixed
		4	Death penalty - pro
		5	Death penalty - con
		6	Death penalty - mixed
		7	Fixed sentences - pro
		8	Fixed sentences - con
		9	Fixed sentences - mixed
		10	Parole reform - pro
		11	Parole reform - con

12	Parole reform - mixed
13	Plea bargaining - pro
14	Plea bargaining - con
15	Plea bargaining - mixed
16	Marijuana decriminalization - pro
17	Marijuana decriminalization - con
18	Marijuana decriminalization - mixed
19	Prostitution decriminalization - pro
20	Prostitution decriminalization - con
21	Prostitution decriminalization - mixed
22	Arresting johns
23	Fight racial crime - pro
24	Court reform - pro
25	Court reform- con
26	Court reform - mixed
27	Free press/fair trial - pro
28	Free press/fair trial - con
29	Free press/fair trial - mixed
30	Prison reform - pro
31	Prison reform - con
32	Prison reform - mixed
33	Community policing - pro
34	Use of lie detector tests - pro
35	Use of lie detector tests - con
36	Use of lie detector tests - mixed
37	Change in criminal law - pro
38	Change in criminal law - con
39	Change in criminal law - mixed
40	Compensation for crime victims - pro
41	Compensation for crime victims - con
42	Compensation for crime victims - mixed
43	High speed pursuit - con
44	Policy on terrorism - con
45	More money to prisons
46	Border agents guns - mix
47	Policy on immigrants convicted of serious crimes - pro
48	Policy on immigrants convicted of serious crimes - con
49	Policy on immigrants convicted of serious crimes - mixed
50	Releasing victims' or defendants' names - mixed
51	Harsher sentences

		52	DWI - pro
		53	DWI - con
		54	DWI - mixed
		55	Upgrade of weapons - mixed
		99	Other
Novelty of story	novelty		Use this category to indicate an unfolding story of specific crimes and court cases. Do not use it to indicate repeat discussions of policy issues unless they are discussed in connection with a specific case.
		1	New story (to coder's best knowledge)
		2	Update of existing story - no new major developments
		3	Update of existing story - major new developments
		4	New story and update of existing story - major new developments
Impact level	impact		Refers to the geographic area to which a story is relevant, meaningful, or important.
		1	Local: Stories largely limited to one particular city, county, or intraurban area.
		2	Provincial: Stories with potential impact on entire province.
		3	Regional: Stories relevant to people in several adjacent provinces, but not nationally significant.
		4	National: Stories important to entire Canadian population
		5	International: Stories involving 2 or more countries including Canada
		6	Foreign: Stories involving foreign countries and not directly related to Canada.
		7	All: Combined stories. These stories cannot be categorized into any one impact level because of the different impact levels of individual items within the story.
Local relevance	local	0	No Stories that are not directly concerned with people in the local area (outside Ottawa-Carleton region)
		1	Yes Stories that are directly concerned with or relevant to people in the local area (within Ottawa-Carleton region). Note: national,

			international, foreign, and all impact level stories should not be coded in this column.
Crime location	crimloc	9	Cannot be determined
			Location where crime(s) occurred. Up to 3 may be coded.
		1	Ontario
		2	Other province in Canada
		3	United States
		4	Other country
Crime news coverage	newscov	5	All across Canada
		9	Cannot be determined
			News coverage of crime story by broadcast station.
		1	Canadian
		2	American
		3	Other
Attention score	attscore	9	Cannot be determined
		0-5	1 Point to any story with anchor lead in
			1 Point any lead story
			1 Point to story longer than 1:00 minute;
			2 Points to story longer than 2:00
			1 Point for any video footage

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

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