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HOMICIDE REPORTING IN
CHICAGO DAILIES

By John W.C. Johnstone, Darnell F. Hawkins, and Arthur Michener

Fewer than a third of the 684 homicides committed in Chicago in 1987 were reported in either of the two metropolitan Chicago dailies. Both papers, as expected, were more likely to cover "high amplitude" crimes that involved more than one victim. They were also more likely to report homicides if the offender was male and the victim female, and less likely to do so if the victim was African-American or Hispanic. Additional factors affected whether an individual paper would cover a story. Once selected for coverage, only the "amplitude" factor consistently predicted the prominence a story received.

This study focuses on the coverage of homicide in two Chicago daily newspapers. Our point of departure is the realization that as the volume of homicides increases in American cities it becomes increasingly difficult for dailies to cover them case by case. This in turn necessitates either a selection of incidents, or a different type of reporting strategy, such as focusing on group rather than individual identities and circumstances.

In this paper we examine selection decisions by comparing the universe of Chicago homicides in 1987 with those reported in two Chicago daily newspapers, the *Tribune* and the *Sun-Times*. Of 684 homicides investigated in 1987 by the Chicago police, 212 were reported in one or both of these dailies. We analyze whether this subset represents the total.

Background

The practice of reporting local crime stories as news originated in England and was adopted by American newspapers early in the nineteenth century. Although Benjamin Day, founder of the New York *Sun*, is often credited as the American innovator, crime news appeared in American newspapers prior to the arrival of the penny press. In the summer of 1830, for example, James Gordon Bennett had been sent to Massachusetts by the New York *Courier and Enquirer* to cover a widely publicized murder trial.[2] Later, as publisher of the New York *Herald*, an early competitor of the *Sun*, Bennett not only wrote editorials and covered the stock market, but made daily forays into the community for news emphasizing "sex, crime and upper-class misconduct."[3] It was the *Herald*'s coverage of the murder of a New York prostitute in 1836, in fact, that propelled it to the position of the city's dominant newspaper, a status it enjoyed until the 1880s.[4] Other penny papers were quick to follow suit: another competitor, the *Transcript*, specialized in "lively police-court stories" having learned from the *Sun* "how popular was crime."[5]

A frequent interpretation of the success of the penny papers is that they served as a functional equivalent for village gossip, a form of communication that was becoming more and more difficult to sustain in an increasingly urban America. Press historians[6] usually claim that the papers appealed primarily to a working-class audience, the newly literate immigrant masses of the mid-nineteenth century. Schudson,[7] however, challenges this view, suggesting that the primary appeal was to middle-class readers who obtained vicarious satisfaction comparing their own rising social fortunes with those of the urban lowlife chronicled daily in the penny papers.

Whatever the basis of its appeal, crime reporting had become a staple in American newspapers by the middle of the nineteenth century. The tradition was reinforced in the milieu of tabloid journalism of the 1920s, when there was a "journalistic preoccupation" not only with murder trials, but with murder and crime in general.[8] Today, the crime and justice beat remains one of the most heavily staffed desks of American news media. A national survey of journalists in 1971[9] found that 14 percent of all reportorial personnel in the American news media covered police and crime news, a number exceeded only by those covering municipal government and sports. When courtroom assignments were added in, the count rose to 18 percent. Moreover, because the police beat tends to be an entry-level assignment, over time the number of American journalists who cover crime news is undoubtedly much higher.[10]

Traditions of Homicide Reporting

With the possible exception of kidnapping or treason, intentional homicide traditionally has ranked as the most newsworthy of crime stories. Empirical studies of the news verify this. For example, Graber[11] found that while murders constituted just .2 percent of the crime recorded in 1976 by the Chicago police, they made up more than a quarter of the crime stories reported that year in the Chicago *Tribune*. Antunes and Hurley[12] found even larger imbalances in a Texas study, where murder incidents made up 39 percent of all 1973 crime stories reported in the Houston *Post* and as many as half of those that appeared in the Houston *Chronicle*.

Homicide qualifies as "high impact" news[13] because everyone can identify with the significance and finality of violent unscheduled death. As Galtung and Ruge[14] noted, homicides also have the proper "frequency" for daily newspaper reporting, since in large urban areas, there are usually one or more new incidents to be covered each day. This means that a new "high impact" story can be told during each twenty-four hour publication cycle. By comparison, other spectacular crimes, such as kidnapping, have much too low a frequency of occurrence to be relied on as a news staple, while lesser crimes are simply too common to generate much news interest.

In newsroom culture, fairly clear-cut criteria also have evolved for determining what constitutes a "good" murder, and in the largest metropolitan areas it is frequently necessary to call on such criteria because the daily volume of murders may be too numerous to permit coverage of all of them. In New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, for example, crime reporters often have a half dozen or more violent deaths to choose from on the same day.[15] What, then, are the criteria they use to make a selection? We suspect they may be the same norms that prevailed during the heyday of the tabloids, namely the fame of the offender or the victim and "the gruesomeness of the murder."[16] As recently as 1957, one journalism textbook defined a good crime story as one that "features prominent individuals, shocking behavior or violence, and mystery or suspense."[17] A more recent and more vivid

 861

expression of these norms surfaced in a 1976 interview with Pat Doyle of the New York *Daily News*. In his thirty-one years with the *Daily News*, Doyle, the self-proclaimed "world's greatest police reporter," had covered 18,000 murders, suicides, and fatal accidents. He defined a "good" murder as follows:

> A *good murder is when you have a prominent official who happens to be slain; a good murder is when you have a police officer shot to death or stabbed to death while on duty, or if an actress on her way home from the Broadway stage is shot to death, and then stabbed, or kidnapped and then found murdered. Also any child who is slain always goes up front.*[18]

Less newsworthy for Doyle were the "senseless junkie killings day after day on the Lower East Side," thus echoing Roscho's observation[19] that events that become ordinary and commonplace are "scarcely news."

In overview, a newsworthy homicide was defined by what might be called the "human interest" tradition of storytelling.[20] It would be one in which (a) a socially "prominent" or "respectable" citizen is involved either as victim or offender; (b) the victim is an innocent or overmatched target, perhaps a woman, child, or elderly person; (c) the murder had "high amplitude"[21] – it was either particularly shocking or brutal, involved multiple victims or offenders, or perhaps employed an unusual method of killing; and (d) the narrative generates mystery, suspense, or drama, as when an at-large serial killer claims still another victim. These criteria also fit closely with Roshier's[22] conclusions about newsworthiness of crime stories in British newspapers.

Focus of the Study and Data Sources

In the analysis that follows we assess how well these traditional reportorial norms describe contemporary homicide reporting in the Chicago daily newspapers. The time period of the study is calendar 1987, and the homicides studied are those that occurred that year in Chicago, and which, therefore, were recorded and investigated by the Chicago Police Department. Data for the study come from two main sources: (a) the monthly homicide reports compiled by the Chicago police, and (b) the incidents from those lists that were reported by the Chicago *Tribune* and the Chicago *Sun-Times*. We also utilize selected 1980 census tract statistics that describe social and economic attributes of the neighborhoods in which the homicides occurred.

The police records made available to us listed all deaths resulting from murder, justifiable homicide, and manslaughter that occurred between 1 January 1987 and 31 December 1987. There were 684. Except for juveniles, the offender's name, age, sex, and race were provided, if known, and similar data were available for most victims. In addition, the police reports listed the date and time of the incident, the street address and type of location where it occurred, the home address of the victim, the manner in which the victim was killed, and whether the police had "cleared" the case and closed their investigation. Data on the number of victims and offenders involved in each incident, if known, were also available, and by a process of matching offender, victim, and incident characteristics, we made a tentative identification of homicides that had resulted from domestic quarrels. No data on motives, contexts, or resolutions of cases were available.

Newspaper coverage of the homicides was measured by having coders fill out data sheets for each incident of sudden death reported anywhere in each newspaper. Only city editions were analyzed. All 365 days

for 1987 were examined, as well as newspapers published during the first week of 1988. Most of the newspaper analysis was done from microfilm records. To ensure that we had found all published accounts, each edition of the *Sun-Times* was read by two different persons, and each edition of the *Tribune* by three.[23] Although several characteristics were recorded for each homicide story, we are concerned in this paper with just two items of data: (1) whether the homicide was reported at all, and (2) if it was, how much attention was devoted to it.

As might be anticipated, newspaper descriptions of victims and offenders varied greatly in their completeness. To begin with, in 32 percent of the cases the offenders were unknown to the police, at least at the time the incident was recorded, and the newspaper accounts therefore lacked any information about them. In many of these cases, of course, suspects were identified, apprehended, and charged several days or weeks later, which often provided the context for a continuing story. In one such case, a January 1987 homicide remained a mystery until November, when a suspect was identified and apprehended. However, we found just one story of a delayed arrest that was reported when the original incident had gone unreported. Selection decisions, then, seem to be made at the time of death, whether or not an offender can be identified. This would suggest, too, that characteristics of the victim may be more important than those of the offender in determining newsworthiness.

The most frequently available items of information in newspaper stories were the victim's name, age, and gender, and the date and location of the incident. Race routinely was *not* reported. Knowing the name of each victim was the critical datum for our purposes, of course, since that was what enabled us to match newspaper accounts with the police reports.

Of the 684 homicides, a total of 175 (25.6%) were reported in the *Tribune*, and 118 (17.3%) in the *Sun-Times* – selection rates, respectively, of one-in-four and one-in-six. Eighty-one of the incidents (11.8%) were reported in both papers, 131 appeared in one paper but not the other, and 472 (69.0%) were not reported at all. We utilize multivariate analytic techniques to identify the characteristics that made some of these homicides more newsworthy than others.

Dependent Variables

Two pairs of dependent variables are investigated in the study. The first focuses on selection outcomes, which we analyze separately for each newspaper. *Tribune* Selection and *Sun-Times* Selection are dummy variables where a score of "1" means the incident was reported, and "0" that it wasn't. The second pair of dependent variables, *Tribune* Prominence and *Sun-Times* Prominence, indicate the amount of attention given to a particular homicide once it had been selected. In each newspaper, we assigned a value of "1" to indicate *minimal* attention – defined as a brief news item of no more than three paragraphs, with no separate heading, and buried deep within the newspaper. Most of the items of this type appeared in a column along with other local news briefs. A value of "2" was assigned if we thought *moderate* attention had been given to the incident. Stories in this category were typically between four and twelve paragraphs in length, each with its own one or two column heading. However, these stories were neither lengthy nor prominently placed within the paper. Values of "3," then, were reserved for stories given *major* attention. This included a small number of local homicides that became front page news, but most were substantial news stories prominently dis-

played on inside pages with at least a two-column headline. In addition any continuing homicide story that initially was given only *moderate* attention was upgraded to a score of "3."[24]

Independent Variables

The predictor variables examined are those linked to the "human interest" norms of crime reporting discussed earlier. They include characteristics of the victims, of the incidents themselves, and of the census tracts in which the events unfolded. Fourteen are included in the multivariate analysis, twelve of which are measured as dummy variables.

The independent variables are as follows: Victim Black and Victim Hispanic indicate, respectively, that the victim was classified by the police as African-American or Hispanic. Victim Female measures gender, while Victim Child, Victim Youth,[25] and Victim Elder indicate, respectively, whether the deceased was 14 years of age or under, between 15 and 29, or 65 or older.

Multiple Victims and Multiple Offenders measure the "amplitude" of the homicide. They indicate, respectively, if the incident claimed two or more victims, or if the victim was listed by the police as having been slain by more than a single offender. Interracial Homicide is an additional "high amplitude" attribute, and measures whether the offender and victim were known or thought by the police to have been from different racial backgrounds. Unusual Method of Killing is another incident variable. Most Chicago homicides in 1987, more than 90 percent, were the result of shootings, stabbings, or assaults, which are here scored as "0." A value of "1" on this measure means that the homicide was dispatched in some less common manner, for example, by arson or drowning. Domestic Violence measures whether there was evidence to suggest that the incident resulted from a "domestic" quarrel. Since domestic violence cases were not recorded as such in the police data, we had to infer domestic homicides from other information available. We classified as "domestic" all those in which the victim and offender had the same last name, and in addition added all cases where victims had been murdered at home by someone of the opposite sex who was approximately their own age.[26] The last event variable, Cleared by Police, indicates that the police had apprehended or identified a suspect and closed their investigation.

The two other independent variables measure characteristics of the communities in which the homicides occurred, and these serve as proxy measures of the social status of the actors involved in the incident. Both are 1980 census tract measures. Minority Community sums the percentages of black and Hispanic residents in the tract where the murder occurred. The result was a measure with values ranging from "0" to (due to rounding) "101." Tract Family Income, finally, measures the average annual family income in hundreds of dollars. These ranged from $3,600 to $46,800 per annum in the tracts where 1987 Chicago homicides occurred. Means and standard deviations for all of these variables are reported in Table 1.

Results

We begin with a logistic regression analysis of the factors that predict story selection. Table 2 reveals several significant predictors as well as several similarities between the two newspapers. First, the strongest predictor for both papers was an event characteristic, the high amplitude variable Multiple Victims. For the *Tribune* two other event attributes, Multiple Offenders and Unusual Method, were also significantly related to story

TABLE 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Variables in Regression Analyses

Variable	Mean	(s.d.)
(A) Dependent Variables		
Tribune Selection	.26	(.44)
Sun-Times Selection	.17	(.38)
Tribune Prominence	1.66	(.81)
Sun-Times Prominence	1.77	(.87)
(B) Independent Variables		
Victim Black	.70	(.46)
Victim Hispanic	.13	(.34)
Victim Female	.19	(.39)
Victim Child	.05	(.21)
Victim Youth	.46	(.50)
Victim Elder	.05	(.22)
Multiple Victims	.05	(.23)
Multiple Offenders	.12	(.32)
Interracial Homicide	.07	(.26)
Unusual Method of Killing	.06	(.25)
Domestic Violence	.14	(.35)
Cleared by Police	.65	(.48)
Minority Census Tract	77.51	(31.78)
Tract Family Income	142.74	(61.28)

selection. Several individual characteristics were also important. At both papers, black victims and Hispanic victims were significantly less likely than whites and others, the comparison group, to have their deaths reported. At the *Sun-Times*, deaths of women and children were both *more* likely to be reported when compared, respectively, with men, or in the case of children with those of adults 30 to 64, the omitted comparison group.[27] Just one census tract measure significantly predicted selection: at the *Sun-Times* homicides were much more likely to be reported when they occurred in more affluent neighborhoods.

From these results, then, it would appear that human interest norms are in fact still utilized to identify newsworthy murder stories. Not unexpectedly, perhaps, the principal criterion is still a "high amplitude" killing; but, in addition, murders are also more likely to be reported when they claim victims from the dominant social group, or take place in more affluent areas of the city. Deaths of women or children also remain newsworthy. The Doyle criteria, in short, survive essentially intact.

One feature that many of these criteria share is that they depict rare rather than commonplace characteristics of homicides. For example, only 5% of the 1987 homicides claimed multiple victims; only 6% involved unconventional methods; only 5% involved children; only 12% had multiple offenders;

TABLE 2
Logistic Regression Coefficients for Effect of Homicide Characteristics on Log Odds of Story Selection, Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times, 1987

Characteristics	Tribune Selection	Sun-Times Selection
Victim Black	−.814 **	−.952 **
	(.328)	(.386)
Victim Hispanic	−.901 **	−1.732 **
	(.358)	(.507)
Victim Female	.431	1.138 **
	(.243)	(.271)
Victim Child	.473	1.253 **
	(.440)	(.488)
Victim Youth	.070	−.190
	(.211)	(.260)
Victim Elder	.581	.474
	(.423)	(.513)
Multiple Victims	2.170 ***	3.347 ***
	(.413)	(.460)
Multiple Offenders	.887 **	−.088
	(.292)	(.412)
Interracial Homicide	−.330	−.482
	(.393)	(.519)
Unusual Method of Killing	.871 *	.029
	(.371)	(.427)
Domestic Violence	.359	−.405
	(.299)	(.371)
Cleared by Police	.264	.308
	(.229)	(.280)
Minority Census Tract	−.006	−.004
	(.004)	(.005)
Tract Family Income	.003	.007 **
	(.002)	(.002)
Constant	−1.035	−2.179
Chi-square (d.f. = 14)	108.4	152.4
N	684	684

Standard errors in parentheses.
*** $p < .001$
** $p < .01$
* $p < .05$

and only 19% involved women as victims. Yet all of these characteristics significantly increased the probability of story selection at one or both newspapers. By contrast, the more commonplace youthful black male shooting victim was, indeed, "scarcely news."

It is difficult to say whether the results regarding black and Hispanic victims should be interpreted as an under-representation of lower socio-economic groups, an under-representation of racial and cultural minorities,

Percent Selected

Sex of Offender	Male		Female		Unknown	
Sex of Victim	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Tribune	24.6	47.7	29.9	7.7	19.0	29.0
Sun-Times	13.6	40.9	7.5	15.4	13.0	32.3
N	(301)	(88)	(67)	(13)	(184)	(31)

or an under-representation of groups in which homicides are simply commonplace. Examining the 1987 police data on victims against 1980 census figures, the Chicago homicide rates per 100,000 would be estimated at 40.3 for the black population, 22.0 for Hispanics, and just 6.2 for whites – differentials that are not likely to have changed much because of population shifts between 1980 and 1987. With respect to racial differences, then, the "status" and "rare occurrence" interpretations are indeed confounded.

Some clarification of the matter is provided, perhaps, by the gender and age-group comparisons. Few students of social stratification would disagree that adults in our society have higher status than children, or that men have higher social status than women. Yet it is adults and males who have much the higher murder rates.[28] With respect to age and gender, in other words, it would appear that selections were based on rarity rather than on social prominence. It is possible, then, that the racial-ethnic differences also reflect the frequency of occurrence.

It is telling, nonetheless, that at both newspapers the chances of a white murder victim being reported were much higher than those of either a black or Hispanic, and by ratios of between 2:1 and 4:1. Moreover, similar differentials were obtained for offenders.[29] Thus, while these imbalances may be best explained by the "man bites dog" criterion, they do leave one with at least the impression that the metropolitan papers favor news, even homicide news, that involves whites rather than people of color. That is, it is questionable whether the imbalances can be attributed solely to a journalistic concern for the comparative frequency of death.

Table 2 also identifies several factors that do not seem to influence story selection much. The mystery of an unsolved murder case did not affect the selection probabilities, nor did a domestic violence case. Moreover, the regression coefficients for interracial homicides, though negative at both newspapers, suggesting underselection, were not statistically significant. There were forty-nine cross-racial homicides in 1987, thirty claiming white victims, but these cases were no more likely to be reported than other cases that involved white victims.

Although the racial offender-victim interactions proved not to be significant, additional analysis uncovered an interesting interaction effect

TABLE 4

Unstandardized OLS Regression Coefficients for Level of Prominence Given Homicide Stories in Chicago Metropolitan Dailies, 1987

Predictors	Tribune Prominence	Sun-Times Prominence
Victim Black	−.213	−.250
	(.187)	(.266)
Victim Hispanic	−.216	−.427
	(.228)	(.364)
Victim Female	−.012	−.019
	(.139)	(.167)
Victim Child	.415	.018
	(.229)	(.274)
Victim Youth	−.174	.166
	(.130)	(.183)
Victim Elder	.073	−.521
	(.246)	(.324)
Multiple Victims	.661 ***	.503 *
	(.178)	(.216)
Multiple Offenders	.233	−.416
	(.166)	(.293)
Interracial Homicide	−.207	.835 •
	(.225)	(.402)
Unusual Method of Killing	.199	.471
	(.185)	(.249)
Domestic Violence	.047	.235
	(.179)	(.240)
Cleared by Police	−.178	.005
	(.149)	(.196)
Minority Census Tract	−.002	−.0002
	(.002)	(.003)
Tract Family Income	.0006	−.0008
	(.001)	(.001)
Intercept	1.892	1.567
R Square	.193	.229
N	175	118

Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p < .001$
* $p < .05$

involving the genders, which we report in descriptive form in Table 3. It turned out that the type of homicide *most* likely to be reported was one in which a male was the offender and a female the victim. More than 40 percent of the eighty-eight cases of this type were reported by each newspaper. On the other hand, the sixty-seven cases where women murdered men were much less likely to reported, particularly at the *Sun-Times*, which selected only five. Evidently, female offenders, though rare,[30] are not considered newsworthy. And of the thirteen cases where both the offender and victim were female, the *Sun-Times* reported only two and the *Tribune* only one.

In summary, then, selection of 1987 murder incidents by the two main Chicago daily papers was enhanced if the case claimed multiple victims, if the victim was a woman killed by a man, or was white rather than black or Hispanic. In addition, stories were more likely to get into the *Tribune* if they involved multiple offenders or statistically rare methods, and were more likely to be selected in the *Sun-Times* if the victim was a child or if the incident took place in a wealthier neighborhood. The selection of 1987 murder stories, in short, departed substantially from proportionate representation on a sizable number of demographic, social, and incident characteristics.

Did these same factors also predict how murder stories were played? Table 4 reveals few significant predictors of story prominence. The amplitude of the crime, as indexed by the number of victims involved, was the only consistent predictor of story placement and length. There is one interesting departure from the earlier results, however: in the *Sun-Times*, interracial murders were significantly *more* likely to receive prominent attention once a decision had been made to report them at all.

Discussion and Conclusions

In his study of network television and newsmagazine journalism, Gans[31] concluded that news is about "knowns," and that the only time ordinary people get into the news is in the role of protesters, strikers, rioters, victims of crimes or catastrophes, or as moral deviants, usually criminal offenders. From the results of the present study, however, it would appear that members of subdominant social groups do not gain their proportionate share of media attention even as murderers or murder victims. In this area of reporting, too, newspapers are more likely to pay attention to whites than to minorities, and to incidents in middle class than in poor neighborhoods.

This is not a surprising outcome, but it does depart from the criticism of some analysts that by focusing disproportionately on deviant rather than conventional activities, the news media *overreport* the criminal behavior of poor urban minorities.[32] At least with regard to homicide, the distortion clearly is in the opposite direction. However, this is not to say that the news media do not produce stereotyped images of minorities and crime: indeed, it undoubtedly is in fact true that the primary roles in which urban blacks, Chicanos, or Puerto Ricans turn up in the news are those that Gans listed. In these populations, in short, criminal behavior often is portrayed as usual behavior, whereas in the white population it is treated as unconventional and aberrant. In homicide reporting, then, the news once again is "top–down," to use another of Gans' phrases.

Homicide news is a curious mixture of the expected and the unexpected. To a very large extent, homicide incidents are selected by newspapers when they have atypical and idiosyncratic elements. Yet in other ways they conform closely to stereotypes. This is especially noticeable with regard to gender stereotypes, in which men are characterized as aggressive and violent, and women as nurturant and passive. Homicides that conform to this stereotype have a much higher probability of selection than those that do not.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that in 1987, the Chicago daily newspapers still approached homicide news from a frame of reference developed by the early penny newspapers and brought into full maturity in the era of the tabloids. We think it is especially significant that *both* major Chicago dailies, though in somewhat different ways, adhered to these journalistic traditions, and that as a result the information about homicide

                    869

made available to the Chicago newspaper-reading public was distorted in essentially the same ways. This suggests that the norms are rooted deeply in newsroom culture and are not simply a reflection of the editorial policies of a particular newspaper.

The problem with the "human interest" approach to storytelling is that it tends to treat social reality as fiction. By focusing on the unusual and the bizarre, the media frame the homicide problem in terms of individual rather than social pathologies. The high homicide rates of inner cities are presented as neither systematic nor patterned, and the impression the reader gets is that all population groups are equally vulnerable to victimization. Indeed, if one were completely dependent on newspaper accounts, one might conclude that population groups with the lowest rates of homicide are among those at much greater risk. In the long run, this fosters distorted images of the nature of homicide, and also produces a public opinion that essentially ignores the economic and social underpinnings of the problem. Perhaps most disturbing is the impression it leaves that the lives of some groups of Americans are more important than those of others.

There are, of course, alternative editorial policies for reporting crime. One is to deemphasize coverage of street crime altogether, which seems to have become policy at the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. A more realistic approach, perhaps, would be a style of reporting where crime is framed more as a societal problem than as a source of sensational stories. One such model, identified by Griffin et al.[33] as "enterprise reporting," implores reporters to "delve beyond the bare facts of law violation and arrests" and to report on "the nature of crime and its far-reaching effects upon a community." Homicide coverage of this type might well contribute to a public understanding of the problem based more in fact than in fantasy.[34]

NOTES

1. The authors thank William Bridges, Cedric Herring, and Anthony Orum for suggestions for this manuscript, to Richard Block for providing census tract numbers to match the street addresses of 1987 Chicago homicides.

2. James L. Crouthamel, *Bennett's New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 12.

3. Roy E. Lotz, *Crime and the American Press* (NY: Praeger, 1991), 10.

4. John D. Stevens, *Sensationalism and the New York Press* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1991), 42.

5. Frank M. O'Brien, *The Story of the Sun* (NY: Appleton, 1928), 84.

6. See for example, Frank L. Mott, *American Journalism* (NY: MacMillan, 1950), Edwin Emery and M.B. Emery, *The Press and America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972), or John C. Nerone, "The Mythology of the Penny Press," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 4 (December 1987): 376-404.

7. Michael Schudson, *Interpreting the News* (NY: Basic Books, 1978).

8. John R. Brazil, "Murder Trials, Murder, and Twenties America," *American Quarterly* 33 (Summer 1981): 165.

9. John W.C. Johnstone, Edward Slawski, and William Bowman, *The News People* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

10. Robert J. Griffin et al.,in *Interpreting Public Issues* (Ames: Iowa State University, 1991), 185, argues that a majority of journalists cover crime at

some point in their career.

11. Doris Graber, *Crime News and the Public* (NY: Praeger, 1980).

12. George Antunes and P.A. Hurley, "The Representation of Criminal Events in Houston's Two Daily Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 54 (Winter 1977): 756-760.

13. Phillips W. Davison, James Boylan, and Frederick T.C. Yu, *Mass Media: Systems and Effects* (NY: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1982), 101.

14. J. Galtung and M.H. Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News," in *Media Sociology*, ed. Jeremy Tunstall (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 262.

15. In smaller metropolitan areas, on the other hand, *all* homicide incidents may be reported. For example, see Joseph F. Sheley and C.D. Ashkins, "Crime, Crime News, and Crime Views," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 45 (Winter 1981): 492-506.

16. Brazil, "Murder Trials, Murder, and Twenties America," 167.

17. Charles Brown, *Informing the People* (NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1957), 229.

18. Ron Rosenbaum, "Death and the Nite Owl," *MORE* 6 (September 1976): 44-49.

19. Bernard Roshco, *Newsmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

20. Helen M. Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940).

21. Galtung and Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News," 262.

22. Bob Roshier, "The Selection of Crime News by the Press," in *The Manufacture of News*, ed. S. Cohen and J. Young (London: Constable, 1973), 28-39.

23. We decided to conduct the third reading of the *Tribune* when we found that the first coder had missed 11 news items recorded by the second, while the second missed 6 recorded by the first. Only 5 such discrepancies were found between the two persons who read the *Sun-Times*, the higher accuracy perhaps attributable to the tabloid format of that newspaper.

24. The classification of story prominence was made by the two senior authors and not by the coders. Each story was discussed, and a judgment made about its treatment in the paper – subjective assessments, to be sure, but assessments on which we had come to a consensus.

25. The age category we identify here as "youth" might more accurately be designated "adolescence, youth, and young adulthood." In an era of prolonged schooling, delayed marriage, and late entry into the full-time labor market, however, the 15-29 age group is increasingly recognized as the life stage of the transition to adulthood in postmodern societies.

26. This latter criterion might well yield a few "false positive" cases, but on the basis of what is about offender-victim pairs involved in homicides, we are convinced that more errors of measurement are created by omitting these cases than by including them.

27. Female victims were also somewhat more newsworthy than males at the *Tribune*, but the difference there only reached the .10 confidence level.

28. Based on 1980 census figures, homicide rates per 100,000 would be estimated at 4.5 for children and 26.0 for adults 30 to 64. The comparable estimates for men and women are, respectively, 37.7 and 8.2.

29. The percentages of white, black, and Hispanic victims selected by the *Tribune* were, respectively, 43, 22, and 20, and by the *Sun-Times*, 33, 16, and 8. The comparable figures for offenders were 47, 27, and 20 in the *Tribune*, and 39, 17, and 7 in the *Sun-Times*.

30. Only 22 percent of known offenders were female.

31. Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Pantheon, 1979).

32. See, for example, Bradley S. Greenberg et al., *Mexican-Americans and the Mass Media* (Norwood NJ: Ablex, 1983), 203.

33. Griffin et al., *Interpreting Public Issues*, 201–202.

34. Although we have not systematically charted it, there is evidence that the *Tribune* adopted an "enterprise" style of reporting crime news in 1991 when Chicago inner-city homicide rates approached all-time record levels.