

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Crime News and Racialized Beliefs: Understanding the Relationship Between Local News Viewing and Perceptions of African Americans and Crime

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A survey of Los Angeles County adults was undertaken to determine whether exposure to the overrepresentation of Blacks as criminals on local news programs, attention to crime news, and news trust predicted perceptions of Blacks and crime. After controlling for a number of factors including the diversity of respondents' neighborhood and neighborhood crime rate, attention to crime news was positively related to concern about crime. In addition, attention to crime news was positively associated with harsher culpability ratings of a hypothetical race-unidentified suspect and a Black suspect but not a White suspect. Finally, heavier consumption of Blacks' overrepresentation as criminals on local television news was positively related to the perception of Blacks as violent. The theoretical implications of these findings are discussed in light of chronic activation and accessibility of stereotypical constructs.

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A growing number of investigations have concluded that local television news programs often overrepresent Blacks as criminal suspects (Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Entman, 1992; Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, 1996; Romer, Jamieson, & de Coteau, 1998). Scholars have documented this local television news distortion of race and crime in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Florida (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Entman, 1992; Romer et al., 1998). However, the majority of this work has been conducted in the Los Angeles area (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998, 2000; Gilliam et al., 1996; Matei, Ball-Rokeach, & Qiu, 2001).

Moreover, a growing number of media effects experiments suggest that news' distorted portrayals might influence social reality judgments regarding race and crime (Dixon, 2006a, 2006b; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). However, very little research has used survey methodology to investigate the relationship between news exposure and race and crime perceptions (Armstrong & Neuendorf, 1992; Busselle & Crandall,

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2002; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). The current study is designed to overcome this limitation by investigating whether news exposure and news orientation (e.g., attention to crime news) predict race and crime perceptions.

Crime news portrayals and social cognition

A number of previous studies have relied on theories of social cognition to investigate how viewers might process stereotypical information regarding Black criminality (Dixon, 2006a; Domke, Shah, & Wackman, 1998; Price & Tewksbury, 1997). For example, researchers have used the theory of cognitive accessibility that suggests people use shortcuts derived from frequently or recently activated stereotypes in order to make relevant social judgments (Domke, McCoy, & Torres, 1999; Domke et al., 1998; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Gilens, 1999; Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Valentino, 1999). These stereotypes are part of an associative network of related opinion nodes linked in memory (Domke et al., 1998; Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Valentino, 1999). Scholars have contended that stereotypes are more likely to be used if they have either recently or frequently been activated in the past (Dixon, 2006a, 2006b; Dixon & Maddox, 2005; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Hamilton, Stroessner, & Driscoll, 1994; Higgins, 2000).

Prior news viewing, stereotypes, and chronic activation

News viewing may be part of a process that makes the construct or cognitive linkage between Blacks and criminality frequently activated and therefore chronically accessible. Prior content studies have revealed that Blacks are linked with criminality more often than are Whites in news programming (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman & Rojecki, 2000). Therefore, heavy television news viewing should increase exposure to the overrepresentation of Blacks as criminals (Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b). Theoretically, each instance of exposure to a Black criminal activates the stereotype of Black criminality, strengthening the cognitive association between Blacks and crime.

As a result of chronic accessibility, heavy television news viewers should be more likely than light viewers to invoke a Black criminal schema when making relevant race and crime judgments. Television news might be especially potent because audience members might be more likely to trust the veracity of the news over entertainment (Armstrong & Neuendorf, 1992; Busselle & Crandall, 2002; Perse, 1990). Also, those who pay attention to crime news might process the misrepresentation of Blacks as criminals more deeply than those who do not (Gebotys, Roberts, & DasGupta, 1988; Perse, 1990; Shrum, 1997).

Experimental support for chronic activation and accessibility

Experimental investigations designed to test the above theoretical perspectives have provided evidence that news exposure to Black criminality activates stereotypes of Blacks as criminals, and prior news viewing enhances this effect. For example, Dixon (2006a) concluded that prior news viewing contributed to the frequent activation of

the Black criminal stereotype and this increased the accessibility of the stereotype when relevant judgments needed to be made. However, the vast majority of experiments provide evidence of recency activation effects, whereby immediate exposure to racialized news temporarily makes stereotypes more accessible in memory (Gilliam et al., 1996; Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996).

Experimental limitations and the need for survey research

There are two limitations of these prior experiments that need to be addressed by complementary survey research. First, none of the prior experimental work exposes viewers to content they would naturally see during the course of viewing typical news programs. These experiments provide evidence of crime news' priming effects but do not offer adequate evidence that exposure to typical news programs outside of the laboratory predicts racial perceptions.

Second, although a substantial amount of prior experimental work has tested recency effects of immediate exposure to Blacks in crime news, much less work has focused on frequency activation (Dixon, 2006a, 2006b). From these prior studies, we cannot determine whether heavy news viewers will be more likely than light news viewers to use stereotypes when making social judgments over time. In other words, these experiments do not provide evidence that frequent crime news exposure shapes stereotypical perceptions (Dixon, 2006a; Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998, 2000). The current study is designed to overcome these limitations.

Prior survey work

A few researchers have begun to examine news consumption and perceptions. However, most of these studies have not focused specifically on news and racial beliefs. Most of this research has found that there is a positive relationship between crime news exposure and concern about crime (Chiricos, Eschholz, & Gertz, 1997; Chiricos, Padgett, & Gertz, 2000; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). Other studies have suggested that neighborhood context is important for understanding people's "connections" with news media and fear perceptions (Ball-Rokeach, Kim, & Matei, 2001; Matei, Ball-Rokeach, & Qiu, 2001; Matei, Ball-Rokeach, Wilson, Gibbs, & Hoyt, 2001).

Only a handful of researchers have actually attempted to directly examine news consumption and racial perceptions. For example, Armstrong and Neuendorf (1992) and Busselle and Crandall (2002) examined the relationship between news consumption and perceptions of Black's economic success. They each found a negative relationship between television news viewing and Black income. However, neither study differentiated between local television news and network news consumption or controlled for racial prejudice. Another study by Gilliam and colleagues (2000) found that news exposure predicted support for racism and punitive crime policies. However, this study does not reveal whether news viewing shapes stereotypical perceptions independent of preexisting racial attitudes.

The current investigation directly assesses the relationship between news viewing and race and crime perceptions in three ways that overcome the above-stated limitations. First, unlike most prior surveys, the current survey includes a measure of the racialized content participants are most likely to encounter on news programs. In addition, the survey includes controls for various kinds of news exposure and orientation. Finally, the current survey uses controls for neighborhood racial composition and preexisting racial attitudes.

Predictors of race and crime perceptions

Based on the above theoretical discussion, four primary predictors of race and crime perceptions are assessed in the current study. They include a measure of exposure to Blacks' overrepresentation as criminals on local television news, network news exposure, attention to crime news, and the extent to which respondents trust television news.

Exposure to Blacks' overrepresentation as criminals

Given that prior content studies have found that local television news overrepresents Blacks as criminals (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000), the current survey investigates whether viewers' conceptions of Blacks are congruent with these images. Theoretically, we might expect to see differences between viewers exposed to larger rather than smaller numbers of Black criminals. In the current study, content analyses conducted in the late-20th century are used to construct measures of exposure to Black overrepresentation drawn from 21st-century respondents. This is useful but also presents some limitations that are more fully discussed later.

Network television news exposure

Although network television news is known for highlighting politics and disaster more than crime, crime news is also a feature of network programming (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Entman, 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000). Moreover, network news depicts Blacks either as complainants or as criminals (Entman, 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000). These themes might contribute to negative perceptions of Blacks.

Attention to crime news

The above-described exposure measures provide information regarding the extent to which people watch news programs. However, viewers can watch news programs simply for the sports and weather, and they might purposefully avoid crime news. Therefore, an assessment of how much attention viewers pay to crime news needs to be included. Countless studies have demonstrated that people are variably active media consumers (Rubin, 1993; Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2000; Ruggiero, 2000). The more viewers attend to media, the more their perceptions become linked to media exposure. If crime news tends to racialize criminal behavior, attention to crime news should predict race and crime perceptions.

Trust in television news' accuracy

In addition to attending to the news, accepting the news as being an accurate depiction of reality should also be related to psychological perceptions (Perse, 1990; Shrum & O'Guinn, 1993). For example, the recall and use of soap opera themes are tied to the extent to which viewers believe the soap opera reflects social reality (Rubin, 1993). Believing that the news accurately depicts race and crime phenomena should be related to race and crime perceptions.

Race and crime perceptions

In the current study, three outcome variables are assessed. These include concern about crime, culpability ratings of hypothetical suspects, and the perception of Blacks as violent.

Concern about crime

Prior research has found that overall crime concern appears to be connected to racialized crime news exposure (Dixon, 2006a; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Valentino, 1999). News exposure, attention to crime news, and news trust may be associated with perceptions of crime as a largely Black phenomenon that requires immediate action due to a Black predisposition toward criminal activity (Hewstone, 1990; Pettigrew, 1979). The more people believe this criminal activity is a threat, the more likely they should be to express concern regarding criminal behavior (Chiricos et al., 1997; Matei, Ball-Rokeach, & Qiu, 2001; Romer et al., 2003).

Culpability ratings of hypothetical suspects

News exposure, attention to crime news, and news trust might also influence culpability ratings of hypothetical suspects. A number of prior media stereotyping studies have used measures that required participants to render judgments of culpability or guilt to a race-unidentified suspect after exposure to a crime news stimulus (Devine, 1989; Dixon, 2006a, 2006b; Johnson, Adams, Hall, & Ashburn, 1997). Harsher guilt ratings of suspects unrelated to the media stimulus provided evidence of stereotyping.

Prior experimental research has found that racialized crime news is associated with negative judgments of both unidentified and Black suspects but not White hypothetical suspects. Scholars have argued that this occurs because of the overrepresentation of Black criminality on television news (Dixon, 2006a). In the current study, the link between news viewing/orientation and culpability judgments of Black, White, and unidentified suspects is assessed.

Perception of Blacks as violent

Research has found that local television news overrepresents violent Black criminality. In addition, Black criminals are much more likely to be cognitively linked with violent rather than nonviolent criminal behavior (Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Johnson et al., 1997; Oliver & Fonash, 2002). News exposure, attention to crime news, and news trust should be related to perceptions of Blacks as violent.

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses are tested by the current study through a survey of adult residents:

- H1: News exposure, attention to crime news, and television news trust are positively related to concerns about crime.
- H2: News exposure, attention to crime news, and television news trust are positively related to harsher culpability judgments of Black and unidentified suspects but not White suspects.
- H3: News exposure, attention to crime news, and television news trust are positively related to the perception of Blacks as violent.

Method

Telephone surveys were conducted in the County of Los Angeles, CA, from November 19, 2002, to January 29, 2003. These data were originally gathered and analyzed as part of a larger study on race and media perceptions. Los Angeles County was chosen as the location for the survey because extensive research has demonstrated that its news stations consistently overrepresent Blacks as criminals (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998, 2000; Gilliam, Valentino, & Beckmann, 2002; Gilliam et al., 1996; Matei, Ball-Rokeach, & Wilson, et al., 2001).

A multistage sampling approach was undertaken using random-digit dialing techniques in order to gather the sample of adults aged 18 years and older (GENESYS Sampling Systems, 2003). First, a standard random sample was gathered using random-digit dialing and computer-aided interviewing. Second, census tract data were used to stratify the sample by race.

Respondents

A total of 506 respondents took part in the survey. Due to limited resources, eligible numbers were only called an average of 1.65 times. In addition, non-English speakers were not included in the sample. The cooperation rate was 60%. Although this is somewhat low, both Oliver (1995) and Babbie (1990) contend that a response rate of at least 50% is considered adequate when a survey is not designed to estimate population parameters but to examine the relationships between variables (Lavrakas, 1987; Oliver & Armstrong, 1995). The final sample was 58% female and 42% male. In addition, the sample was 43% White, 16% Black, 26% Latino, and 15% Other. The demographics of the sample mirrored the diversity of Los Angeles County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003b).

Control variables

The control variables employed in this survey included gender, age, education, conservatism, income, racism, race of respondents, overall television exposure, newspaper exposure, neighborhood diversity, and community crime rate. Each is described below.

Gender/females

Males were coded as 0, and females were coded as 1.

Age

Respondents reported how old they were in years ($M = 41.36$, $SD = 17.96$). The youngest was 18, and the oldest was 93. The median age was 38, and the modal age was 28.

Education

Educational attainment was assessed on a 1 (*eighth grade or less*) to 11 (*graduate work past masters degree*) scale ($M = 5.94$ or about 2 years of college, $SD = 2.69$).

Political ideology/conservatism

Respondents were asked about their conservatism on a 1 (*strongly liberal*) to 7 (*strongly conservative*) scale ($M = 4.23$ or moderate, $SD = 1.78$).

Income

Respondents were asked their total household income on a 1 (*less than \$30,000*) to 7 (*more than \$100,000*) scale ($M = 3.71$ or about \$40,000–\$60,000 a year, $SD = 2.39$).

Racism

Participants were asked about their racial attitudes or level of racism using the Modern Racism Scale (MRS; McConahay, 1986; e.g., “Blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted”; five items; $\alpha = .82$, $M = 10.46$, $SD = 5.31$). Although some have criticized the potential reactive nature of the MRS (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995), research has also shown the scale to be correlated with more traditional racial attitudes (Akrami, Ekehammar, & Araya, 2000; Crandall, 1994; McConahay, 1986). Those concerned about the MRS often cite evidence that it is more useful for assessing explicit rather than implicit racial attitudes (Akrami et al., 2000; Fazio et al., 1995; Phelps et al., 2000). The explicit nature of the MRS is not a concern in the current context because it is being used to assess respondents’ motivation to seek out news content that may confirm preexisting racist assumptions, and such motivation is conceptualized as part of an explicit process (Oliver & Armstrong, 1995).

Race

Respondents were asked which race or ethnicity they most identify with (White/Caucasian, Black/Black, Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, or Other). Race was later dummy coded as Black, Latino, or Other, with Whites as a reference group. This categorization strategy mirrors the conceptual definition of race employed by the California Department of Justice (2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b).

Overall television viewing

Respondents were asked how many hours on an average day they spend watching television ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 2.24$).

Newspaper exposure

Participants' exposure to news via newspapers was assessed by asking how often they read newspapers on a 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*) scale ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.63$).

Neighborhood diversity

Neighborhood diversity was measured by calculating the percentage of people of color in each community, town, or city in which respondents lived. Respondents' ZIP codes were used to identify their location. Afterward, the census bureau's Web site was consulted to calculate the percentage of Latinos, Blacks, Native Americans, and Asian Americans living in each community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003a; $M = 66.17$, $SD = 19.90$).

Community crime rate

Crime rate was calculated using ZIP code information and the California Department of Justice (2003) Profile. Each crime category was summed and divided by 1,000, yielding crimes per thousand in each participant's area ($M = 33.73$, $SD = 57.10$).

Measures of news exposure and orientation

This survey sought to employ a number of media measures including (a) exposure to Blacks' overrepresentation as criminals, (b) attention to crime news, (c) television network news exposure, and (d) news trust.

Black overrepresentation exposure

Primary research had determined that local television news programming overrepresents Blacks as perpetrators (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b). In order to understand whether this misrepresentation influenced perceptions of Blacks and crime, a media measure was created based on calculations advanced by Huesmann and colleagues (Harrison, 2001; Huesmann & Miller, 1994; Huesmann, Moise, & Podolski, 1997). A composite score was created for each respondent based upon the frequency of exposure to a specific news program and the extent to which that program overrepresented Black criminals.

Respondents were first asked which station they watched most often for their local news consumption (KCBS–CBS affiliate, KABC–ABC affiliate, KNBC–NBC affiliate, KCAL, KCOP, KTTV, or KTLA). Afterward, respondents were asked how often they watched this program on a 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*) scale. These frequency data and the local news station selected by the respondent were used to create the composite score. Based on the most recent content analyses available at the time, which were conducted in the late-20th century (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Gilliam & Iyengar, 1998, 2000; Gilliam et al., 1996, 2002; Matei, Ball-Rokeach, & Qiu, 2001), a measure of Black overrepresentation as criminals was calculated for each station. The use of these content studies presents some limitations, which are discussed later.

This measure was derived by subtracting the proportion of Black Los Angeles County perpetrators featured on each station from the proportion of Blacks arrested in Los Angeles County (California Department of Justice, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2002). The resulting percentage point difference was taken as a measure of overrepresentation

for that particular station. Exposure to Black overrepresentation was the product of the frequency respondents reported watching the news multiplied by the resulting percentages based on respondents' stated news station preferences ($M = 70.74$, $SD = 41.51$).

Network news exposure

Survey participants were asked how often they watched their favorite network news program on a 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*) scale ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.86$).

Attention to crime news

An index of attention to crime news was used (e.g., "How much attention do you pay to news stories about crime?" and "How important to you are the crime stories that you see on news programs?"; two items; $\alpha = .80$, $M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.10$).

Television news trust

An index of the extent to which respondents trust news was used (e.g., "I trust what I see on local TV news"; four items, $\alpha = .71$, $M = 13.31$, $SD = 3.72$).

Perceptions of crime and Blacks

The controls and media variables described above were designed to predict (a) concern about crime, (b) culpability judgments of unidentified suspects, (c) culpability judgments of Black and White suspects, and (d) perceptions of Blacks as violent.

Concern about crime

Several items were designed to assess respondents' fear of crime (e.g., "I often worry about being murdered"; five items, $\alpha = .85$, $M = 12.73$, $SD = 5.89$).

Race-unidentified culpability

A question asked whether prisoners in furlough programs will commit subsequent crimes on a 1 (*not at all likely*) to 5 (*extremely likely*) scale. The prisoners were not identified by race ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.05$).

Black and White suspects culpability judgments

A question asks about whether participants agreed that three teens should receive the maximum sentence allowed for car theft on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale. The sample was randomly divided such that half of the respondents heard the teens described as Black, whereas the other half heard the teens described as White ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.29$). Both sets of culpability measures were designed to be indirect assessments that tapped punitive responses. These were used in order to decrease the potential reactivity of participants by mimicking traditional opinion polls. Similar items have been used in prior research to assess culpability (Dixon, 2006a, 2006b, 2007).

Blacks as violent

The final measure was designed to assess the perception of Blacks as violent (e.g., "Blacks are peaceful"—reverse coded, and "Blacks are responsible"—reverse coded; two items; $\alpha = .63$, $M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.93$).

Results

In order to test the relationship between news media exposure/orientation and perceptions of Blacks/crime, multiple regression analysis was undertaken. Age, gender, education, political ideology, income, MRS score, race, overall television viewing, newspaper exposure, neighborhood diversity, and community crime rate served as controls and were entered simultaneously on the first step of the analysis. Males served as the reference group for the female/gender variable, and Whites were the reference group for the race variables (i.e., Blacks, Latinos, and Others). The news exposure and orientation predictor variables were entered on the second step simultaneously. These measures were regressed on the dependent variables: concern about crime; culpability ratings of unidentified, Black, and White suspects; and perceptions of Blacks as violent. All statistical tests were conducted at the $p < .05$ significance level.

Concern about crime

Hypothesis 1 stated that news exposure, attention to crime news, and news trust are positively associated with concern about crime. The results for the concern about crime regression model are displayed in Table 1. After the control variables were assessed, attention to crime news ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) was positively related to concern about crime, $F(17, 184) = 4.09, p < .001, R^2 = .27$. This provides limited support for Hypothesis 1.

Culpability ratings

Hypothesis 2 stated that news exposure, attention to crime news, and news trust are positively associated with harsher culpability judgments for Black and race-unidentified suspects but not White suspects. In order to test this hypothesis, three regression models were run corresponding to the unidentified, White, and Black suspects.

Unidentified suspect

The results of the regression for culpability ratings of a hypothetical race-unidentified suspect are displayed in Table 2. After the control variables were assessed, attention to crime news ($\beta = .24, p < .001$) was positively related to culpability ratings of the hypothetical race-unidentified suspect, $F(17, 174) = 2.89, p < .001, R^2 = .22$.

Black suspects

The results of the regression for culpability ratings of hypothetical Black suspects are displayed in Table 3. After assessing the controls in this model, attention to crime news ($\beta = .28, p < .001$) was again positively related to culpability ratings of the hypothetical Black suspects, $F(17, 77) = 2.08, p < .001, R^2 = .32$.

White suspects

The results of the culpability ratings of hypothetical White suspects are displayed in Table 4. In this analysis, none of the primary predictor variables contributed

Table 1 News Exposure and Attitudes as Predictors of Concern About Crime

Variable	β	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change
Step 1: Demographics and controls		.23	—	4.37***
Age	.001			
Females (reference males)	.24***			
Education	-.07			
Conservatism	-.10			
Income	-.01			
Racism	.32***			
Blacks (reference Whites)	.24**			
Latinos (reference Whites)	.16			
Others (reference Whites)	.003			
Overall television viewing	-.08			
Newspaper exposure	-.02			
Crime rate (crimes per thousand)	.01			
% people of color in neighborhood	.15*			
Step 2: News exposure and orientation		.27	.04	2.69*
Black overrepresentation exposure	-.05			
Network news exposure	-.03			
Attention to crime news	.19**			
Television news trust	.09			

Note: Final model: $F(17, 184) = 4.09, p < .001, R^2 = .27$.

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

to the model, $F(4, 86) = 1.17, p < .33$. This pattern of findings provides limited support for Hypothesis 2. Attention to crime news was positively related to culpability judgments of Black and unidentified suspects but not White suspects.

Perception of Blacks as violent

Hypothesis 3 stated that news exposure, attention to crime news, and news trust are positively associated with the perception of Blacks as violent. The results of the perception of Blacks as violent regression model are displayed in Table 5. After assessing the control variables, exposure to Blacks' overrepresentation as criminals ($\beta = .17, p < .05$) was positively related to the perception that Blacks are violent, $F(17, 183) = 4.10, p < .001, R^2 = .28$.

Discussion

The current study was designed to understand whether news exposure, attention to crime news, and news trust could predict perceptions of race and crime. After controlling for a number of variables, attention to crime news was positively related to crime concern. In addition, attention to crime news was positively associated with

Table 2 News Exposure and Attitudes as Predictors of Unidentified Suspect's Culpability

Variable	β	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change
Step 1: Demographics and controls		.16	—	2.72**
Age	.06			
Females (reference males)	.04			
Education	-.10			
Conservatism	.05			
Income	.10			
Racism	.17*			
Blacks (reference Whites)	-.14			
Latinos (reference Whites)	.17			
Others (reference Whites)	-.09			
Overall television viewing	-.07			
Newspaper exposure	.17*			
Crime rate (crimes per thousand)	-.05			
% people of color in neighborhood	.004			
Step 2: News exposure and orientation		.22	.06	3.04**
Black overrepresentation exposure	-.02			
Network news exposure	.11			
Attention to crime news	.24**			
Television news trust	-.06			

Note: Final model: $F(17, 174) = 2.89, p < .001, R^2 = .22$.

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

culpability judgments of hypothetical unidentified and Black suspects but not White suspects. Finally, exposure to Blacks' overrepresentation as criminals on local news programming was positively related to the perception of Blacks as violent. The implications of these findings are discussed below.

A few constraints

There are a number of limitations to employing a cross-sectional survey such as this one to explore race and crime perceptions. Some of these limitations are explored below. Afterward, the implications of these findings are more fully discussed.

Black misrepresentation exposure and timing of the survey

One of the innovations of the current study also presents some challenges. In an attempt to understand how the overrepresentation of Blacks as criminals on local news might be related to perceptions, an overrepresentation measure was created that used data from previous content analysis studies. The data for these analyses were gathered in the mid- to late 1990s. However, the sample for the current survey was drawn between late 2002 and early 2003.

One potential problem might be that the sample was drawn too late to correspond to the content registered in the earlier studies. However, research has found that local

Table 3 News Exposure and News Attitudes as Predictors of Black Suspect's Culpability

Variable	β	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change
Step 1: Demographics and controls		.25	—	2.16**
Age	.08			
Females (reference males)	-.31**			
Education	-.33*			
Conservatism	.18			
Income	.33**			
Racism	-.11			
Blacks (reference Whites)	.05			
Latinos (reference Whites)	.15			
Others (reference Whites)	.34**			
Overall television viewing	.12			
Newspaper exposure	-.01			
Crime rate (crimes per thousand)	-.14			
% people of color in neighborhood	-.11			
Step 2: News exposure and orientation		.32	.07	1.60†
Black overrepresentation exposure	-.02			
Network news exposure	.10			
Attention to crime news	.28**			
Television news trust	.01			

Note: Final model: $F(17, 77) = 2.08, p < .01, R^2 = .32$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. † $p = .18$.

television news uses stable production conventions that create biased depictions of race (Heider, 2000; Poindexter, Smith, & Heider, 2003). This would suggest that 5–8 years is not enough time between the content analysis and survey for the patterns of racial misrepresentation to change.

A second concern might be whether the observed survey relationships would be replicated with survey respondents today. However, the goal of the survey is to demonstrate that a relationship exists between the consumption of media content and perceptions. The data appear to suggest that this relationship indeed exists such that misrepresentation consumption can predict perceptions. As long as misrepresentation occurs, the same relationship should be observed. All the most recent research on Los Angeles news content suggests that the patterns have remained stable (Gilliam et al., 2002). Changing these patterns requires intensive training and organizational restructuring that none of the local stations have announced (Bennis, 1987).

No news trust and network news effects

News trust was not related to any of the dependent measures. One of the reasons for this pattern may be that a trust measure may only be useful in distinguishing between genres (e.g., entertainment and news) but perhaps not within genre (i.e., only news) in terms of perceptual effects (Perse, 1990). The lack of a network news finding

Table 4 News Exposure and News Attitudes as Predictors of White Suspect's Culpability

Variable	β	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change
Step 1: Demographics and controls		.26	—	2.41**
Age	-.25**			
Females (reference males)	-.07			
Education	-.32**			
Conservatism	-.04			
Income	.11			
Racism	.12			
Blacks (reference Whites)	.14			
Latinos (reference Whites)	-.11			
Others (reference Whites)	.07			
Overall television viewing	-.07			
Newspaper exposure	-.04			
Crime rate (crimes per thousand)	-.34**			
% people of color in neighborhood	.16			
Step 2: News exposure and orientation		.30	.04	1.17
Black overrepresentation exposure	-.02			
Network news exposure	-.16			
Attention to crime news	-.01			
Television news trust	.20			

Note: Final model: $F(17, 86) = 2.13, p < .01, R^2 = .30$.

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

probably relates to the dependent measures used. Network news is typically associated with politics and social policy such as welfare (Gilens, 1999), which was not assessed, whereas local news typically focuses on crime, which was assessed (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b).

News exposure and perceptions of race and crime

One of the more interesting findings in the current study is that exposure to Blacks' overrepresentation as criminals was positively related to perception of Blacks as violent. Somewhat puzzling was the lack of a finding on the other dependent variables. One possible explanation for this may be related to the limitations mentioned above. This exposure measure provides information on what local news station respondents watched and whether they reported watching regularly. However, it did not provide precise information on whether they consistently viewed crime news on those stations. It is entirely possible that respondents paid more attention to sports and weather on news stations that overreported Black crime. Another reason for the lack of findings on some variables but not on the Blacks as violent perception measure may have to do with the specificity of the dependent measures. In other words, the perception of Blacks as violent is most tied to exposure to Black violent criminals.

Table 5 News Exposure and News Attitudes as Predictors of Perceptions of Blacks as Violent

Variable	β	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change
Step 1: Demographics and controls		.24	—	4.71***
Age	-.15*			
Females (reference males)	-.06			
Education	-.09			
Conservatism	.25***			
Income	-.11			
Racism	.23**			
Blacks (reference Whites)	.05			
Latinos (reference Whites)	-.15			
Others (reference Whites)	.07			
Overall television viewing	-.01			
Newspaper exposure	-.14*			
Crime rate (crimes per thousand)	-.03			
% people of color in neighborhood	-.08			
Step 2: News exposure and orientation		.28	.04	1.84†
Black overrepresentation exposure	.17*			
Network news exposure	-.01			
Attention to crime news	.09			
Television news trust	-.09			

Note: Final model: $F(17, 183) = 4.10$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .28$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. † $p = .12$.

Selective perception of race, crime, and news

One possible explanation for the current findings that attention to crime news and exposure to Black criminal overrepresentation on local news programs predict race and crime perceptions is that some other third unmeasured variable influences both news viewing and racialized perceptions (Babbie, 1990, 1992). Another possible explanation is related to selective exposure and perception, the notion that viewers selectively attend to information that already supports their preconceived notions (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2005; Mutz, 1994; Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974). In the simplest terms, selective exposure means that people look for information and interpret it through their personal filters (Campbell et al., 2005). Thus, a prejudiced person or stereotype endorser would seek information on the news that coincides with his or her perspective (Mutz, 1994). Therefore, people with a particular political or racial perspective would be inclined to seek out news programming that has information supporting their personal views and filter out news programming with opposing views.

News exposure, attention to crime news, and chronic activation

However, there are two reasons why a causal explanation might best fit with the current data. First, racism was statistically controlled in the current study, yet

the exposure and attention to crime news relationships remained (Armstrong & Neuendorf, 1992; Busselle & Crandall, 2002; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). Second, prior experimental research has already established a causal relationship between news exposure and racial perceptions (Dixon, 2006a, 2006b; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000; Johnson et al., 1997; Oliver, 1999; Peffley et al., 1996).

Attention to crime news and chronic activation

Higgins (2000), Fiske and Taylor (1991), and Devine (1989) suggest that frequent activation of a stereotype might lead to automatic use of the stereotype over time. Exposure to an overrepresentation of Black criminality and attention to crime news might contribute to repeated cognitive activation of the stereotype linking Blacks with criminality. This frequent activation of the stereotype then strengthens its use in perceptions of race and crime over time. News viewers exposed to the regular overrepresentation of Blacks with criminality were particularly likely to link Blacks with the trait of violence, and attention to crime news was associated with viewing crime as serious, viewing Blacks as culpable criminals, and perceiving unidentified criminality as Black criminality. The most likely underlying mechanism for these effects includes increased accessibility of stereotypical constructs linking Blacks with violent crime as a result of frequent activation that results from local crime news viewing (Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Shrum, 1996, 2002). This study appears to be one of the first to establish these frequency effects outside of the laboratory. Future research should continue to explore the link between local news viewing and race and crime perceptions by examining the chronic activation mechanism.

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Les bulletins d'informations criminelles et les croyances racialisées : Comprendre la relation entre le visionnement de bulletins d'informations locaux et les perceptions des

Afro-Américains et du crime

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Résumé

Un sondage fut mené auprès d'adultes du comté de Los Angeles afin de déterminer si l'exposition à la surreprésentation de criminels Noirs dans les émissions d'informations locales, l'attention portée aux informations criminelles et la confiance dans les informations prédisaient les perceptions des personnes noires et du crime. Après avoir neutralisé plusieurs facteurs, dont la diversité du voisinage des répondants et le taux de crime du voisinage, l'attention portée aux informations criminelles fut liée positivement à une inquiétude à propos du crime. De plus, l'attention portée aux informations criminelles fut liée positivement à des évaluations de culpabilité plus sévères envers un suspect hypothétique dont l'ethnicité n'est pas identifiée et envers un suspect noir, mais pas envers un suspect blanc. Finalement, une consommation plus forte de la surreprésentation des Noirs comme étant des criminels aux bulletins d'information locaux fut liée positivement à la perception de violence des personnes noires. Les implications théoriques de ces résultats sont commentées au vu de l'activation chronique et de l'accessibilité des construits stéréotypés.

Mots clés : race, Noirs, informations, crime, sondage

Nachrichten über Verbrechen und rassistische Überzeugungen: Zum Verständnis der Beziehung zwischen dem Sehen von Lokalnachrichten und der Wahrnehmung von Afroamerikanern und Verbrechen

Mittels einer Umfrage unter Erwachsenen von Los Angeles County wurde untersucht, ob die Wahrnehmung von Schwarzen und Verbrechen beeinflusst wird durch den Kontakt zur Überrepräsentation von schwarzen Straftätern in den Lokalnachrichten, die Aufmerksamkeit gegenüber Verbrechen nachrichten und dem Vertrauen in Nachrichten,. Nachdem eine Reihe von Faktoren wie unterschiedliche Wohngegenden und die Verbrechensrate der Wohngegend kontrolliert wurden, zeigte sich, dass Aufmerksamkeit bezüglich Verbrechen nachrichten mit dem Interesse an Verbrechen positiv zusammenhing. Außerdem hing die Aufmerksamkeit bezüglich Verbrechen nachrichten positiv mit einer extremen Strafbarkeitseinschätzung für einen hypothetischen, rasse-neutral dargestellten Verdächtigen, nicht aber mit einem weißen Verdächtigen zusammen. Letztendlich war ein ausgeprägter Konsum der Überrepräsentation von schwarzen Kriminellen in den Lokalnachrichten positiv verbunden mit der Wahrnehmung, dass Schwarze gewalttätig sind. Die theoretischen Schlussfolgerungen dieser Ergebnisse werden mit Hinblick auf chronische Aktivierung und Zugang zu stereotypen Konstrukten diskutiert.

Las Noticias de Crímenes y las Creencias Raciales: Entendiendo la Relación entre la Exposición a las Noticias Locales y las Percepciones de los Africano-Americanos y el

Crimen

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Resumen

Una encuesta de adultos en el Condado de Los Ángeles fue realizada para determinar si la exposición a la representación exagerada de los criminales negros en los programas de noticias locales, la atención hacia las noticias de crimen, y la confianza en las noticias predecían las percepciones sobre los negros y el crimen. Después de controlar una serie de factores entre otros, la diversidad de los barrios de los participantes y el índice de crimen en el vecindario, la atención prestada a las noticias de crimen fue relacionada positivamente con la preocupación acerca del crimen. Además, la atención a las noticias de crimen fue asociada positivamente con los índices de culpabilidad más severos en casos hipotéticos de un sospechoso de raza no identificada y de un sospechoso de raza negra, pero no así cuando el sospechoso era blanco. Finalmente, un consumo mayor de representaciones exageradas de negros como criminales en las noticias locales de televisión fue relacionada en forma más positiva con la percepción de los negros como violentos. Las implicancias teóricas de estos hallazgos son discutidas a la luz de la activación crónica y la accesibilidad de constructos estereotípicos.

Palabras claves: Raza, Negros, Noticias, Crimen, Encuesta

犯罪新闻和种族化的信仰：

收看当地新闻和认知非裔美国人及犯罪之间的关系

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本研究对洛杉矶的成人进行调查以确定能否用以下几个因素来预测有关黑人和犯罪的认知，即对当地电视新闻中有关黑人罪犯之过量报道的接触、对犯罪新闻的关注、以及新闻的可信度。在控制诸如受访者社区之多元性及社区犯罪率等因素之后，对犯罪新闻的关注被发现与对犯罪的关注正相关。另外，对犯罪新闻的关注和对一个虚构的身份不明的嫌疑犯（以及对一个黑人嫌疑犯）所进行的更严厉之谴责度正相关，但在一个虚构的白人嫌疑犯身上没有发现这种关联。最后，对当地新闻中有关黑人罪犯的报道看得越多，就越有可能形成黑人-暴力的概念。本文还从周期性激活和刻板概念之接触的角度探讨了上述发现的理论涵义。

범죄뉴스와 인종차별화된 믿음들: 지역 뉴스 시청과 흑인과 범죄 인식간 관계에 관한 이해

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요약

로스엔젤레스구 성인들에 대한 서베이가 지역뉴스프로그램에서 흑인범죄에 대한 과도한 대표성에 대한 노출, 범죄뉴스에 대한 주목, 그리고 뉴스신뢰가 흑인과 범죄의 인지를 예측할 수 있는지를 연구하기 위해 단행되었다. 반응자의 이웃과 이웃 범죄비율의 다양성을 포함한 여러 요소를 통제한 후, 범죄뉴스에 대한 주의는 범죄에 관한 주목에 긍정적으로 연계된다는 것을 발견했다. 이외에, 범죄뉴스에 대한 주의를 가설적으로 인종이 확인되지 않은 용의자의 경우, 중범죄자가 백인이 아닌 흑인일 가능성이 높은 것으로 인지하는 것으로 나타났다. 마지막으로, 지역텔레비전뉴스에서 범죄자로서 흑인들의 대표성을 지나치게 나타내는 것은 흑인들을 폭력적으로 인지하는 것과 긍정적으로 연계되어 있는 것으로 나타났다. 이러한 발견들의 이론적 함의들이 논의되었다.