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## Black and Blue and Read All Over: News Framing and the Coverage of Crime

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Black and Blue and Read All Over:  
News Framing and the Coverage of Crime

by

Kalistah Quilla Cosand

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science  
in  
Communication

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Portland State University  
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the representation of crime in the news in relation to expressed emotion and intention for future action. Episodic and thematic framing (Iyengar, 1991) and narrative processing (Singer & Bluck, 2001) served as the theoretical foundations of this study and helped examine how scripted news stories involving crime influence levels of fear, anger, and empathy in individuals, and how these emotions subsequently affect behaviors. To measure these framing effects, an experimental manipulation was employed using three conceptually different news stories all involving gun-related crimes. One news story utilized an episodic format, while the other two stories used a thematic format (one positive and one negative). Emotional responses, levels of narrative engagement, policy support, perceived risk of victimization, and pro-social behavioral intentions were measured, all based on exposure to the specific type of news frame. The results of this study indicated that while types of news frames did not have a direct effect on readers' emotions, there was a significant relationship between emotions and future actions. For example, fear, anger, and empathy were significant predictors of perceived risk of victimization, policy support, and pro-social behavioral intentions, respectively. These findings contribute to the understanding of the role emotions play in predicting behavior, both within and beyond the scope of message framing.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Steven and Tamara Cosand, and to the beautiful city of Portland, Oregon. Please recycle this thesis after use.

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### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On the morning of December 14, 2012, Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, became a scene of violent crime as an armed intruder opened fire in the building, fatally shooting 20 students and six staff members. The shooter, a 20-year-old male identified as Adam Lanza, was carrying multiple firearms and ammunition with him at the time of the attack and shot each of his victims multiple times. The students killed were boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 7, and the slain adults were women between the ages of 27 and 56. Several other individuals were injured during the unforeseen raid (Remembering, 2012).

In the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, an outpouring of support was provided throughout the country for the victims and families involved in this mass attack. Notably, stories of loss and heroism emerged, which focused on the specific details of and individuals involved in this event. These breaking news stories ignited strong emotional responses among readers. A *New York Times* article published several days after the shooting offered concrete illustrations of what happened the morning of the attack, providing readers with graphic images of how the event unfolded. It stated:

The gunman in the Connecticut shooting blasted his way into the elementary school and then sprayed the children with bullets, first from a distance and then at close range, hitting some of them as many as 11 times, as he fired a semiautomatic rifle loaded with ammunition designed for maximum damage, officials said Saturday. (Barron, 2012)

The day's tragic events were covered extensively across numerous media outlets, including television networks, newspapers, radio stations, Twitter feeds, and Facebook updates, reawakening public discussion of gun control policies, health care systems,

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public safety initiatives, and ultimately, discussions of hope and love (Obama Newtown Speech, 2012).

Within news reports, a story's content is one of the key components that attract readers; 'if it bleeds, it leads.' Some content focuses on in-depth coverage, while other content provides cursory details for quick access. Content is largely at the discretion of individual journalists and news companies, whereby the journalistic processes involved in news room production shape the way Americans interpret the news. Interpretation is facilitated by message framing. Journalistic procedures have been studied widely over the past several decades (Kaniss, 1995; Tuchman, 1973), and some scholars have pointed out the positives and negatives of certain types of news frames (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar, 1991). Episodic and thematic frames are two particular framing devices studied extensively by Shanto Iyengar and fellow scholars. Episodic frames focus on the specific details of a breaking news story and often follow a narrative format. Conversely, thematic frames focus on the overarching problem from which that single event (the event of focus in episodic frames) stems, and provide an examination of related historical and political trends (Iyengar, 1991). Specifically, Iyengar (1991) suggested that episodic frames, which have been found to be more prolific in mass media reports in comparison to thematic frames, are far too simplistic, and thus, potentially problematic to American society.

However, it is important to note that journalists are not merely reporters; they are also storytellers. Storytelling is a basic characteristic of humankind (Fisher, 1985).

Within persuasive communication, storytelling and narrative forms of communication

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have been shown to facilitate message processing (Niederdeppe, Shapiro, & Porticella, 2011; Oliver, Dillard, Bae, & Tamul, 2012). This suggests that news articles written in narrative format perhaps have a significant potential to influence human behavior, as stories have the ability to arouse basic, universal human emotions. When readers experience an emotional connection to subject matter, they may be more inclined to support the enactment of overarching laws and measures related to the “big picture” – or the outcome and treatment of tragic events. In this sense, episodic news framing can potentially have a positive impact in terms of intent for improving social issues in American society.

Strong affective responses—both positively and negatively valenced—to stories are one way in which narratives can facilitate positive social change (Aarøe, 2011; Gross, 2008). Anger, fear, and empathy are the emotions of interest for the current study, as these emotions are commonly connected to tragic events (Solloway, Slater, Chung, & Goodall, 2013). For example, empathy has been linked to compassionate behavior, especially toward victims and victims’ families (Solloway et al., 2013). Chandler (2012) argued that humans high in empathy are more likely to donate resources to those suffering from human-caused harm, in comparison to suffering caused by natural disasters. “If human actions play a role in creating disasters, then human actions can also play a role in preventing and solving them” (Marjanovic et al., 2012, p. 265). This illustrates the power that individuals possess in reducing human-caused harm, like violent crime and injuries.

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The potential for positive social action is further exemplified by the Boston bombings, where news reports focused on acts of heroism and bravery. On April 15, 2013, two explosions stemming from homemade explosive devices packed in backpacks near the finish line of the Boston Marathon struck runners and bystanders in all directions. Three people were killed, and hundreds of people were rushed to the hospital with serious injuries. In the aftermath, average citizens as well as high profile celebrities and political figures showed support for those affected through donation, visitation, and other forms of helping behavior. Helping behavior is defined as “any purposeful behavior, altruistic or egoistic, which results in the improved status or welfare of the target of one’s actions” (Marjanovic et al., 2012, p. 246) and includes giving one’s time, attention, energy, effort, money, or material possessions. In an NBC News article released one day after the Boston bombing, an episodic approach was taken to describe the event:

A retired football player carried a wounded woman from the Boston Marathon finish line. A father who lost both his sons, one in Iraq and one by suicide, rushed to aid the fallen. A veteran turned the shirt off his back into a bandage. A surgeon from Kansas finished the race and then started removing shrapnel from other runners. Besides the first responders, who are trained to help, there were countless other bystanders, race volunteers and runners who have become the faces of heroism in the aftermath of the two blasts Monday that killed three people and wounded at least 176 more. (Langfield & Briggs, 2013)

In addition to the numerous articles published regarding heroism, a *New York Times* article took a look at the bigger picture by providing evidence surrounding the historical string of violence that had taken place during the particular week of the attack, which gave readers more information about the crime:

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Some law enforcement officials noted that the blasts came at the start of a week that has sometimes been seen as significant for radical American antigovernment groups: it was the April 15 deadline for filing taxes, and Patriots' Day in Massachusetts, the start of a week that has seen violence in the past. April 19 is the anniversary of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. (Eligon & Cooper, 2013)

A further examination of the framing mechanisms involved in episodic and thematic framing will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The theoretical foundations of this thesis are comprised primarily of framing theory and narrative processing. The ultimate goal is to explore news frames used by nonfictional narratives, and to measure and interpret intentions for future actions, where emotions guide those actions. Specifically, the following project will explore message frames relating to crime, as introduced in this first chapter. Chapter two begins by reviewing the journalistic process where frames are inevitably born, and continues to explore the potential impact that these frames have on audience members. Included is a review of emotions which aims to connect framing to real-world issues, such as crime, safety, and gun control. The overarching research question is whether the ways in which news frames are interpreted influence emotions and in turn impact the behaviors in which readers engage. The third chapter describes the methodological steps taken in this research project, while chapter four focuses on the results. One set of hypotheses were supported, while the other set was not. Chapter five discusses the limitations and implications of these mixed results, as well as directions for future research. Given these findings, future researchers can highlight emotions and intended actions beyond the scope of news framing and into the realm of behavior change.

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Overall, the current thesis hopes to add to the body of framing literature by aligning with the teachings of Walter Lippmann (1922), who critiqued:

We shall assume that what each man does is based not on direct and certain knowledge, but on pictures made by himself or given to him ... the way in which the world is imagined determines at any particular moment what men will do. It does not determine what they will achieve. It determines their effort, their feelings, their hopes, not their accomplishments and results. (p. 10)

An understanding of the intersection of these topics is beneficial not only for reporters and journalists, but also for scholars and average citizens who can connect what they read and how they feel about what they read to pro-social community involvement, on a macro- or micro-level. Ultimately, it is highly recommended that more studies look at news messages and ways to promote altruistic behavior among citizens.

Humans are innately social creatures. In the developed world, communication technologies are continuously expanding in an effort to facilitate affordable, accessible, and versatile modes of human communication (Bucy, 2005). From the newspaper to new media applications, these media devices increase the output and abundance of information on events happening around the world.

Americans depend on the news for information. This dependence gives the media the power to shape public thinking by filling the news with media messages and message frames (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). A media message is the presentation of facts and ideas. It is the information made available for consumers. A message frame is the value added to those facts and ideas that organizes the content for readers (Lee, McLeod, & Shah, 2008). Message frames are defined based on features like headlines and word choice, which can have powerful effects on audiences' emotions and attributions in various contexts (Aarøe, 2011). This is especially true for topics that unveil aspects of the human condition and the current political and economic climate, including crime and terrorism (Iyengar, 1991). The following literature review explores message frames relating to crime and gun control.

### **Mounting the Frame: An Overview of Framing Research**

News stories are typically framed based on commonly held stereotypes and taken-for-granted assumptions omnipresent in society. The concept of framing is the idea that the media focuses attention on specific events (crime, for example) and then places those events within a field of meaning. Readers then interpret the meaning of the articles based



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on the dominant frame. In this regard, the media not only frame *what* consumers think about, but also *how* they think about the topics (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Frames influence audience members' perception of the news. Thus, the core assumption of framing is that the audience will accept one meaning over another.

However, a major debate among researchers within the framing paradigm revolves around the explication of the concept of framing. No uniform definition of framing exists. Entman (1993) describes frames as a way to diagnose, evaluate and prescribe; "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). Iyengar (1991) describes frames as "subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment and choice problems" (p. 11).

Price, Tewksbury, and Powers (1997) describe a frame as a "basic tool kit of ideas [that can be used] in thinking about and talking about" the news (p. 482). They look at news values, including conflict, human interest, and consequence frames, which serve as story slants and news hooks. Tversky and Kahneman (1981) look at decision frames, which are the "decision maker's conception of the acts, outcomes, and contingencies associated with a particular choice" (p. 453). Decision frames assume that the way in which problems are framed affects the choices individuals make. If a risk is presented, readers will choose the option they perceive has the least amount of risk or loss involved, which is drawn from the wording or order of the available options. Tversky and Kahneman (1973) further state that to process frames, people make decisions or

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associations based on the ease with which similar instances come to mind using an availability heuristic. In other words, due to information overload in the media, humans take mental shortcuts by scanning their memory and associating the information given to other recent or high profile events, and then make judgments based on their prior knowledge of those events. Thus, when evaluating complex events, mental images shape—or bias—decisions or estimates of the likelihood that similar events will happen again in the future (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973).

De Vreese, Peter, and Semetko (2001) focused more generally on issue-specific and generic frames. Issue-specific frames involve specific topics or news events that lead to specific and detailed news stories. For example, Entman (1991) researched TV news coverage of two airline accidents, finding frames related to “technical problems” and “moral outrage” (p. 6). In contrast, generic frames are applicable to a wider range of news topics, and can be used over time and in different cultural contexts. Examples of generic frames include the conflict, economic consequence, and human interest frames studied by Price et al. (1997).

The present research draws from Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss and Ghanem’s (1991) definition of framing. They state, “A frame is a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (as cited by Tankard, 2001, pp. 100-101). Tankard (2001) focuses on conceptualization and measurement by utilizing a systematic method of defining frames, which he refers to as framing mechanisms. These mechanisms focus on story headlines, kickers, subheads, leads, selection of sources,

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selection of quotes, use of statistics, and concluding statements of articles. Tankard (2001) also examines imagery, including photos, photo captions, large pull quotes, charts, and graphs. However, the present study will only explore text-based framing mechanisms and omit imagery-based mechanisms in an effort to maintain greater experimental control over the variables being manipulated.

### **Examining Framing Through Research Methods**

As stated above, according to Entman (1993), frames have four primary functions. They define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. While all four of these elements do not need to be present in a single frame, each frame typically takes on at least one of these roles. These roles then live within one or more of four locations: the communicator, the text, the receiver, or the culture. The production process pays particular attention to the communicator, which involves deciding *what* to say, and the text, which is *how* it is said. The text includes the keywords, phrases, stereotyped images, quotations, sources, and sentence structures that influence news frames (Entman, 1993). The receiver is the person or population who interprets the frame and draws conclusions based on the information presented. Readers' preexisting cognitive frames, such as prior knowledge and experience, also come into play when interpreting the news (Scheufele, 1999). These aspects are taken into consideration when researching framing.

Methodologically, scholars have primarily examined mass media framing through content analysis and experimental design (Coleman & Dysart, 2005; Price et al., 1997; Rill & Davis, 2008). Content analysis identifies types of frames, while

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experiments establish causes and effects of frames (Iyengar, 1991). Price et al. (1997) studied the intersection of news framing and cognitive framing and explored the effects of framing in relation to a news story about tuition increases. They used an experimental design involving four separate news articles that each portrayed a dominant frame: conflict, human interest, consequence, or control. They found that frame-induced knowledge activation influences decision making based on the issues that are made salient within the news story. The information journalists and media officials decide to cover and print is what readers use to shape their views of news topics.

Iyengar (1991) explored episodic and thematic framing through experimental design. Episodic framing focuses on recent, sensational news, while thematic framing discusses the general background and implications of current issues. Iyengar examined attributions of responsibility, which he divided into causal and treatment responsibility, with causal relating to where the problem originated, and treatment focusing on who has the power or authority to remedy the problem (Iyengar, 1991). He studied these within various contexts including crime, terrorism, poverty, and war.

Iyengar's (1991) overarching findings were that episodic frames often fail to convey the bigger picture of societal problems due to their focus on and elaboration of isolated events. However, because episodic and thematic frames have been explored in different avenues with findings in favor of episodic framing (Aarøe, 2011; Druckman & McDermott, 2008; Gross, 2008), and because these types of frames lend themselves to forming generalizability, the current study seeks to apply episodic and thematic framing to the subject of crime to test viewers' attributions of responsibility and affective

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responses. Episodic and thematic framing are discussed in more detail in later sections, with an emphasis on their relation to crime reporting.

### **Crime and Episodic and Thematic Framing**

Journalism is largely about capturing and sustaining audience attention (Uribe & Gunter, 2007). With strict deadlines and high workloads, journalists tend to report sensational stories that follow typical scripts and use news value frames (Price et al., 1997). News values are beliefs regarding what characteristics distinguish a good news story. In American society, citizens “like a good fight and consider life as a whole to be a struggle” (MacDougall, 1982, p. 119). As such, topics involving struggle or chaos make good leads. In terms of crime, stories that are easily scripted include ‘White fear of Black crime’ (where the victim is Caucasian and the perpetrator is African American), and ‘Male aggression/Female submission’ (where the perpetrator is male, and the victim is female; Lundman, 2003). These issues that make it to the front page of the newspaper are the ones most likely to set the public agenda. Agenda-setting relates to the media’s emphasis on specific issues, and the importance that members of an audience place on those issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

As stated, one aspect of human nature which is continuously brought to the forefront of news reporting is crime, particularly violent crime (Iyengar, 1991). There is a substantial amount of news that is dedicated to the reporting of crime, and more specifically, homicide, within the mass media (Borquez & Wasserman, 2006; Case, 2013; Goodall, Slater, & Myers, 2013; Klite, Bardwell, & Salzman, 1997). Thus, crime is salient in the news. Salience involves “making a piece of information more noticeable,

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meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Crime is typically divided into two different categories: violent crime and property crime. Violent crime includes murder, robbery, rape, and assault, while property crime involves burglary and theft of houses and vehicles (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). Newspaper coverage has a significant impact on the public’s perception of violent crime, more so than any other news media source (Paulsen, 2002).

The way the major news media frame coverage of our cities reinforces an overwhelmingly negative and misleading view of urban America. The images from the nightly news, newsmagazines, and daily newspapers are an unrelenting story of social pathology—mounting crime, gangs, drug wars, racial tension, homelessness, teenage pregnancy, AIDS, inadequate schools and slum housing. (Dreier, 2005, p. 193)

These concerns regarding biased reporting reiterate the idea that the media has the power to shape public opinion, and that media frames affect how people think about issues (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Publicizing sensational content connects with Walter Lippmann’s (1922) seminal argument that knowledge, exposure, and experience with public affairs create the ‘pictures in our head,’ which affects how individuals interpret and discuss the world.

Iyengar (1991) suggested that capturing audience attention is done through framing—episodic framing, in particular. He looked at episodic and thematic framing within television news, specifically. Episodic frames are visually compelling reports that make “good pictures” (p. 14), and are characterized by detailed illustrations of specific issues or events. Frames often take the form of case studies or on-the-scene coverage of hard news. Hard news includes reports on “eruptive violence, reversals of fortune and

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socially significant breaches of the moral order” (White, 1997, p. 1). It focuses on information citizens “should” know in order to be informed citizens: political updates, natural disasters, vehicle accidents, murders, bank robberies, and the like (Tuchman, 1973, p. 114). Dramatic visuals that comprise episodic frames facilitate “good TV” but usually do not tell the whole story (Altheide, 1987, p. 174). In contrast to episodic frames, thematic frames place issues in a general context. Thematic framing is characterized by general outcomes and conditions, evidence that is wider in scope, and usually depicts information from “talking heads” (Iyengar, 1991, p. 14).

Based on Iyengar’s (1991) research, recent reports of violent crime can be applied to episodic frames. As introduced in chapter one, in the days following the December 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, countless media reports filled the pages and channels of media outlets across the country. Major news publications featured front-page articles using illustrative language regarding the massacre of students and school staff. These articles contained elements of framing, including episodic and thematic framing devices. Excerpts from two articles are examined by aligning them with definitions set forth by Tankard (2001) and Iyengar (1991). To review, Tankard (2001) explains that frames provide the context of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration through the use of framing mechanisms, including headlines, subheads, leads, sources, quotes, statistics, and concluding remarks.

The Sunday after the Newtown shooting occurred, *The New York Times* printed an article with the headline, “Children were all shot multiple times with a semiautomatic,

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officials say” (Barron, 2012). This headline, which Tankard (2001) includes as a framing mechanism, already paints a picture of the scene before the article even begins by providing information on the victims and on the crime weapon. The lead of the article then continued,

The gunman in the Connecticut shooting blasted his way into the elementary school and then sprayed the children with bullets, first from a distance and then at close range, hitting some of them as many as 11 times, as he fired a semiautomatic rifle loaded with ammunition designed for maximum damage, officials said Saturday. (Barron, 2012)

The lead includes elements of hard news, specifically eruptive violence, and further paints a visually compelling image of the event (Iyengar, 1991; White, 1997). The selection of and emphasis on the words “blasted” and “sprayed” contribute to that image. The body of the article continues to describe the situation: “The children – 12 girls and 8 boys – were all first-graders. One little girl had just turned 7 on Tuesday. All of the adults were women” (Barron, 2012). The concluding statement—that one girl had just had a birthday and the adults were women—also utilized elements of episodic framing by focusing on the specifics of the event, such as the age ranges and genders of the victims, which provide an evaluation of the outcome.

News articles regarding the Newtown shooting also used thematic frames. Two days after the shooting, *The New York Times* featured an article with the headline, “Nation’s pain is renewed, and difficult questions are asked once more,” where the lead explained, “On Friday, as Newtown, Conn., joined the list of places like Littleton, Colo., and Jonesboro, Ark., where schools became the scenes of stunning violence, the questions were familiar: Why does it happen? What can be done to stop it?” (Glaberson,



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2012). This lead provides the scope of the event—that although it was a discrete event, other events like this have occurred in the past. Thematic framing focuses on a wider scope and collective evidence for the issue (Iyengar, 1991). The body of the article continued to answer the questions asked in the lead,

Research on mass school killings shows that they are exceedingly rare. Amanda B. Nickerson, director of a center that studies school violence and abuse prevention at the University at Buffalo, said studies made clear that American schools were quite safe and that children were more likely to be killed outside of school. But, she said, events like the Sandy Hook killings trigger fundamental fears. “When something like this happens,” she said, “everybody says it’s an epidemic, and that’s just not true.” (Glaberson, 2012)

Tankard (2001) suggested that selection of sources is a key element of framing, and in this excerpt, Glaberson (2012) not only quoted an expert source, but also discussed statistical risk—another framing mechanism—in the form of words like “rare” and “more likely.” In this example, Amanda Nickerson, or the “talking head,” explained that a common reaction to such events is fear, which is also an effect found in previous framing research. Overall, thematic frames require in-depth research and may take longer to prepare. These time constraints mean thematic frames are used less commonly in comparison to episodic frames (Iyengar, 1991).

### **Crime Reports and Effects of Framing on Readers Emotions**

From a statistical perspective, violent crimes, homicides specifically, are potentially misleading news pieces, as murder is one of the least often committed crimes in the United States (Dreier, 2005; FBI, 2012; Klite et al., 1997). Yet crime is reported for its shocking and sensational appeal. Sensational news is described as news that can “trigger emotional reactions in audiences” (Uribe & Gunter, 2007, p. 209). This disparity

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between the coverage of crime and the prevalence of actual crime can lead individuals to believe there is more crime occurring in their local environment than what is actually occurring. The episodic framing of violence can potentially cultivate a fear of crime (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan, & Jackson-Beeck, 1979). As a result of watching local news, viewers perceived crime as a serious problem in their city, and consequently became fearful of personal criminal victimization, even when, statistically, crime rates were decreasing (Romer et al., 2003). In these instances, episodic framing affected viewers' emotions—specifically, their levels of fear.

The salience of crime within news reporting has numerous implications in terms of media effects, including fear and avoidance behavior (Romer et al., 2003). A framing effect occurs when “salient attributes of a message (its organization, selection of content, or thematic structure) render particular thoughts applicable, resulting in their activation and use in evaluations” (Price et al., 1997, p. 486). In relation to crime in the news, fear is one factor commonly studied within the field of framing effects—specifically, fear of criminal victimization within specific locations or by specific minority groups (Baer and Chambliss, 1997; Chiricos, Eschholz, & Gertz, 1997; Rader, May, & Goodrum, 2007; Romer et al., 2003). Baer and Chambliss (1997) examined crime statistics and the results of the National Criminal Victimization Survey and argued that certain governmental agencies use crime data to frame stories that “maximize fear and minimize public understanding” (p. 100). Even at times when crime decreased year-over-year, or during times when crime was relatively low, crime was sensationalized or exaggerated in many news reports.

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Miller (1998) discussed location, stating that while crime occurs in numerous areas of the city, most crime coverage focuses on the downtown city center, the most population dense area, which can translate into a fear of traveling in that area. Paulsen (2002) explored homicides and the spatial coverage of crime and found that homicide hot spots were more likely to receive newspaper coverage when the hot spot was near the city center, as opposed to the periphery of the city. Further, homicides that occurred in neighborhoods were less likely to be reported based on the *frequency* of homicides that occurred in the neighborhood, and were more likely to be reported based on the *type* of the neighborhood within which the homicide occurred. The type of neighborhood relates to the economic and social stability of the community and its residents. Statistically, official crime rates indicated that nearly 60 percent of all crime took place outside of the city center, yet coverage focused on the downtown area as a hotspot of crime. This evidence suggests that community members would likely frame the city center as a dangerous location for citizens (Paulsen, 2002). However, it should be noted that this body of research is over a decade old. As such, updating the literature on location would be worthwhile to see if there have been changes over time.

Race and gender typifications are also highlighted in news media frames. Tuchman (1973) defines typification as a classification system wherein the relevant characteristics of the population are rooted in everyday activity and are central to the problem at hand. Within crime reporting, there is a tendency toward classifying race as binary (minorities as the perpetrators, Caucasians as the victims), and gender as one-sided (men are the perpetrators of crime). Lundman (2003) found that in crime reports,

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especially on front page news, what was newsworthy were the following categories:

black violator, male violator, white victim, female victim. More specifically, he found the following in terms of the relationship between violator and victim, respectively: black male-black male, black male-white female, black male-white male, white male-white female. These findings are supported by Paulsen's (2002) exploration of deviant homicides in homicide hot spots. He found that, within homicide reporting, stories involving white victims, females, young people, and multiple victims (all 'deviant' cases) were more likely to be reported compared to minority victims, male victims, older people, and single-victim incidents (all 'normal' cases).

Crime in the public image in the United States is not racially neutral. Crimes in the media and the view of the general public are acts committed by young black men. Never mind that more serious crimes occur daily at corporate headquarters, banks and on Wall Street. The public image is of violent, psychopathic, young black males. (Baer & Chambliss, 1997, p. 103)

This reiterates the idea that although crimes are being committed in different contexts by different populations, media coverage focuses on race and gender typifications (Case, 2013; Derksen, 2012). Romer, Jamieson, and DeCoteau (1998) found that African American and non-White residents are disproportionately reported as perpetrators of violence, thereby leading to increased fear and suspicion of minorities in the community. In addition to his research on newsworthy categories, Lundman (2003) also researched race in urban areas and found that African Americans were most likely to receive news coverage when they were the perpetrators of crime, even though, statistically, African Americans are most commonly the *victims* of violent crime. All of these findings suggest that an overarching aspect of news—particularly urban news—is

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crime, which heavily relies on episodic framing features. Episodic frames have been linked to fear of crime based on location, race, and gender, which are all components of public discourse on crime. In addition to fear, other emotions have recently been discussed in relation to crime stories.

### **Emotions and Episodic and Thematic Frames**

Uribe and Gunter's (2007) examination of sensational news—where “flashy production styles overpower substantive information” (Wang, 2012, p. 712)—found that stories on crime were the most emotionally-laden stories for television news, in comparison to stories on sports, war, politics, and other news. According to Wang (2012), sensational stories have a heightened ability to provoke sensory reactions and “arouse public emotion” (p. 713). Sensationalized news stories can “[prompt] the activation of certain constructs at the expense of others [and] directly influence what enters the minds of audience members” (Price et al., 1997, p. 504). I argue that these sensational slants are the basis of episodic news frames. Thus, it is highly probable that crime stories following an episodic format will activate senses and emotions. Episodic frames have a particularly strong impact on readers when they resonate with audience values and social contexts, which can influence opinion formation regarding the topics being discussed (Hart, 2011). This suggests that the framing of crime, intertwined with expressed emotions, affects how readers respond to certain issues. Thus, further research on these discrete emotions is important for helping understand readers' behavioral intentions and policy decisions.

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Original research on framing effects focused primarily on cognitive processes, including how episodic and thematic frames lead to attitudinal and behavioral responses among viewers (Iyengar, 1991). However, an emerging body of literature focuses more closely on the role emotions—as opposed to cognitions—play in the effects news stories have on readers (Goodall, Slater, & Myers, 2013; Kühne, 2012; Lecheler, Schuck, & de Vreese, 2012; Nabi, 2003; Solloway, Slater, Chung, & Goodall, 2013). For example, Nabi (2003) looked specifically at two discrete emotions, anger and fear, as independent variables by priming those emotions simultaneous to message delivery. She found that anger was linked to retributive solutions, while fear was linked to protective solutions.

More recently, Lecheler et al. (2012) took a similar approach and examined four discrete emotions as mediators of message framing related to political opinion formation and opinion change. These emotions included anger, fear, enthusiasm, and contentment. Anger and fear were categorized as negatively valenced emotions, while enthusiasm and contentment were considered positively valenced. Results from an experimental survey that primed these emotions within the news frames indicated that positively valenced news frames were more likely than negatively valenced news frames to increase policy support on political issues. That said, only two discrete emotions, regardless of emotion valence, mediated these framing effects. These emotions were enthusiasm and anger. The justification behind this was that enthusiasm and anger are both approach-based emotions, such that enthusiasm “[mobilizes] action tendencies and deep information-processing” (Lecheler et al., 2012, p. 9), while anger leads to “confrontational behavior” (Lecheler et al., 2012, p. 9). Conversely, contentment relates to immobility and fear is

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linked to avoidance. Nabi (2003) also supported the notion of anger being an approach-based emotion and fear being avoidance-based.

Goodall et al. (2013) examined fear and anger in relation to local news coverage of crime and policy support. Rather than manipulating emotions, like Nabi (2003) and Lecheler et al. (2012), Goodall et al. (2013) explored fear and anger as dependent variables and assessed policy support as a result of reading news content on alcohol-related crimes. Specifically, their study manipulated the presence of alcohol as the causal factor to see which emotions would arise and differentially affect policy support. The inclusion of alcohol as the causal factor was hypothesized to be the cause of the affective responses (for both fear and anger). Findings indicated that when alcohol was mentioned, more anger was experienced in comparison to fear. Stories that omitted alcohol as the causal factor resulted in high levels of fear. Further, those who experienced anger as a result of reading alcohol as the causal factor attributed responsibility to individuals, while those who experienced fear (when alcohol was omitted) attributed responsibility to society. Those who experienced anger supported policies at both the individual and societal levels, such as laws that prohibit serving alcohol to intoxicated patrons and underage youth, banning open containers in vehicles (individual-oriented), and limiting alcohol advertising and the number of bars in a community (societal-oriented). There was greater support for the enactment of these new alcohol-control policies, and the enforcement of existing alcohol related policies from those who were exposed to the alcohol stimuli and subsequently experienced anger. This demonstrates the power of anger in shaping opinions related to policy support.

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Similarly, Solloway et al. (2013) also explored expressed emotions, including anger, fear, and sadness, in relation to breaking crime and accident stories. Of particular interest was the role relative concern played as a mediating variable between emotions and policy support when alcohol was mentioned as the causal factor of the crime. Relative concern was defined as “the significance of a risk relative to other sources of concern in one’s life” (Solloway et al., 2013, p. 7). They used an experimental design that included exposure to a news story focusing on policy support, and found that anger and sadness were both mediated by concern, increasing public support for health policies. Conversely, fear was not mediated by concern. Sadness was included as a test variable because it was conceptually similar to anger, in that both have a negative valence and approach-based reactions. However, sadness is more often linked to compassion and helping behavior among victims of crime, whereas anger is retribution related toward perpetrators of crime. As such, sadness connects to empathy, sympathy, and altruistic behaviors (Solloway et al., 2013).

In terms of episodic and thematic frames, it is argued that each type of frame generates different emotional responses (Aarøe, 2011; Druckman & McDermott, 2008; Gross, 2008). That is, episodic frames influence emotions to a greater degree than thematic frames. That said, thematic frames are not inherently neutral and can take either a positive or negative perspective. As such, it is important to test the differences between thematic structures, as thematic frames can be conceptually different from one another depending on their valence. However, episodic frames are hypothesized to have the strongest emotional effects due to their focus on one event. The emotional power of



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episodic frames is potentially due in part to their narrative format. Narratives will be examined in greater detail in the next sections. Following this logic presented on frame types and emotions, specifically anger and fear, it is expected that:

H1: As compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience higher levels of fear.

H2: As compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience higher levels of anger.

### **Empathy: Walking in Their Shoes**

Overall, the majority of literature on emotions has focused on negatively valenced emotions. As such, a gap in the current literature on framing and crime is assessing the positively valenced affective responses of episodic and thematic frames. Of particular interest is empathy. For example, while fear has been linked to avoidance and defensive behavior (Rader et al., 2007), empathy, in general, has been linked to pro-social behavior (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Thus, it is suggested that positively-valenced emotions, such as empathy, are also experienced while reading crime stories, which may ultimately lead to helping behavior. Recent studies have begun to explore some aspects of empathy and framing (Aarøe, 2011; Gross, 2008).

Gross (2008) used an experimental design to look at how episodic and thematic frames impact emotions and affect policy opinions regarding the topic of mandatory minimum sentencing. Scales were used to assess empathy (sympathy and pity), aversion (anger and disgust), and anxiety (fear and worry). Findings indicated that episodic framing led to higher levels of empathy (sympathy and pity combined) in comparison to

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the thematic frame. Thus, it was suggested that those with higher levels of empathy would be more opposed to mandatory minimum sentencing. Additionally, in one of their two experiments, those who read the episodic frame were more likely than those in the thematic frame to feel anger. Further, when race was a factor, those who read the episodic frame were more likely than those in the thematic frame to feel disgust toward mandatory minimum sentencing when the story featured a black mother, instead of a white mother (Gross, 2008).

Aarøe (2011) extended Gross' (2008) research by looking at levels of compassion, pity, anger, and disgust in relation to Denmark's rule prohibiting residents who marry foreigners from living in Denmark until they both reach the age of 24. Findings supported the hypothesis that episodic frames induce stronger emotional reactions than thematic frames, especially for compassion and pity. As such, Aarøe (2011) argued that episodic frames have a stronger capacity to influence opinions than thematic frames when the viewer experiences intense emotions, but the specific emotions depend on the content and implications of the news story. The potential of empathy to be a positive effect of episodic framing can be understood in part by examining the relationship between episodic frames and narrative processing.

Language and presentation play pivotal roles in the creation and interpretation of episodic frames (Shapiro, 2013; Tankard, 2001). The potential effects of episodic frames on readers' emotions and actions could be influenced in part by humans' natural tendency toward creating and expressing information through story format (Singer & Bluck, 2001). This is known as narrative processing. Research on narrative processing (Escalas, 2004;

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Pillemer, 2001; Singer & Bluck, 2001) explores the relationship between narratives, emotions, and future actions. Specifically, narrative processing is “the tendency to create thought units that use vivid imagery, sequential plots, characters, and salient goals” (Singer & Bluck, 2001, p. 91). Essentially, individuals use stories to make sense of their own life events and life purpose. These stories activate emotions, which fuel their motivations to reach specific personal goals.

While the original contribution of narrative processing literature focused on the importance of creating an individual’s life story, it has also been applied to topics like advertising and health communication (Escalas, 2004; Murphy, Frank, Chatterjee & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2013). Murphy et al. (2013) analyzed narrative films regarding the importance of cervical cancer screening and found that women in minority groups who viewed films in narrative format reported higher levels of intent to be screened for cervical cancer than those who viewed nonnarrative films. They also found that discrete emotions play a role in processing stories, and that specific emotions (positive or negative) can influence behavioral intentions (Murphy et al., 2013).

Niederdeppe, Shapiro, and Porticella (2011) also examined narratives in terms of attributions of responsibility within the context of obesity, finding that, among liberal participants, narratives (as opposed to a sole summary of facts) were substantially more persuasive at influencing participants to attribute societal responsibility for obesity (in comparison to individual responsibility), allowing external solutions for social problems. In terms of emotions—specifically empathy—Oliver, Dillard, Bae, and Tamul (2012) found that, for stigmatized groups (including immigrants, prisoners, and the elderly),

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narrative news formats increased respondents' feelings of compassion for and pro-social behavioral intentions toward these groups.

Based on these findings, I argue that narrative processing can successfully be applied to nonfictional narratives presented in news sources, and further, can help explain the power of stories to shape human behavior. "The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 5). Whether narrative processing is being applied to life stories or to news stories, the underlying assumption is that humans rely on scenes and scripts to make meaning. The more specific and detailed the story is, the more likely individuals are to form an emotional connection and act on their inferences (Pillemer, 2001). As such, I argue that these nonfictional narratives in the news act as episodic frames. Much like an episodic frame's dependence on words and language that form dramatic visuals and "good TV" (Iyengar, 1991), narratives also focus on information that lead to "good stories" and "gripping drama" (Bruner, 1986, as quoted in Singer & Bluck, 2001, p. 92). By extending the scope of narrative processing, scholars can glean more insight into the effects of news framing. Due to the narrative structure of episodic frames, a reader may be more likely to identify with this event or with the victims and may react to the information by engaging in pro-social behaviors. Empathy is one specific positive emotion that may serve as a conduit in this process.

Eisenberg and Miller (1987) define empathy as "an affective state that stems from the apprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and that is congruent with it" (p. 91). It includes vicarious "emotional matching," which is where a reader feels the

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emotions of the victim, and, further, can understand the cause of those emotions (Carré, Stefaniak, D'Ambrosio, Bensalah, & Besche-Richard, 2013; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987).

Sympathy—a subset of empathy—is an emotional response in which the reader experiences feelings of sorrow or concern toward the victim or the victims' family, as opposed to specifically matching the victims' feelings of distress. Empathy has also been distinguished from identification, because empathy involves the preservation of “self” when experiencing the “other” (Carré et al., 2013).

Carré et al. (2013) describe empathy as a two-factor model comprised of cognitive empathy and affective empathy. Cognitive empathy involves understanding affective states, while affective empathy is “the ability to feel an appropriate emotional response when one is confronted with the mental state attributed to another person” (Carré, 2013, p. 680). In other words, empathy entails understanding and experiencing another person's emotions. Carré et al. (2013) examined the broad scope of empathy among adults, arguing that an empathic response is not dictated by emergencies alone, while Davis' (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index—a four-factor model comprised of personal distress, empathic concern, fantasy, and perspective taking—focused specifically on emergency situations. In line with this research on episodic framing, empathy, and narrative processing theory, it is expected that:

H3: As compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience higher levels of empathy.

Further, because few studies have examined the differences in emotions between men and women, gender is also of interest. The following research question is proposed:

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RQ: Do men and women differ in their affective responses toward crime following exposure to the episodic frame or thematic frames?

### **Attributions of Responsibility**

Attributions of responsibility of crime were discussed by Iyengar (1991) in terms of causal responsibility and treatment responsibility, which were then assessed based on individual and societal attributions. Causal responsibility focuses on the origin of the problem, and treatment responsibility focuses on who has the power to resolve the problem. For example, some people may attribute the *cause* of poverty to individuals: poor people are lazy. Conversely, other people may attribute the *cause* of poverty to society: political factors affect employment, lifestyles, and homeownership.

Relating to crime, a series of media frame experiments were conducted in the 1980's with a sample of New York residents to see whether residents attributed crime to society or to individuals. Findings indicated that the majority of respondents assigned causal responsibility of crime to individuals. That is, the perpetrators are at fault for their own crimes. This is similar to the findings by Goodall et al. (2013) in relation to alcohol related crimes. Individual attribution focused on the personal characteristics of the criminals, like greed, mental disorders, and laziness, as well as their inadequate education and employment skills. Conversely, a minority of respondents assigned causal responsibility of crime to society. Societal attributions included poverty, mass media, the entertainment industry, and racial inequalities (including racial discrimination, affirmative action, and economic inequality; Iyengar, 1991).

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Once causal responsibility was established—that the majority of respondents attributed the cause of crime to individuals—the next part of the study assessed *treatment* responsibility. In other words, who has the obligation to alleviate crime? Does the individual have the obligation, or does society? Individual treatment responsibility might include self-improvement. Societal treatment responsibility might include improving the overarching socioeconomic and political issues and enforcing stricter punishment for violators. Overall, findings indicated that the overwhelming majority assigned treatment responsibility of crime to society. That is, society is responsible for fixing the ways of criminals. “Attributions serve as important psychological cues for opinion formation” (Iyengar, 1991, p. 82). Respondents who reported more societal attributions than individual attributions were more likely to hold elected officials accountable for enacting change (Iyengar, 1991). Thus, the relationship between individuals being the *cause* and society being the *treatment* suggests that being more proactive at mitigating social issues and providing more support and funding for individuals, including free rehabilitation or education programs, might minimize the levels of crime occurring in the nation.

Regarding the Newtown shooting, there was immediate interest among American citizens in tightening gun control laws and improving the mental health care system in the United States. These imply society is responsible for finding a “cure” for violence, or that society is responsible for enacting laws or strengthening programs that better support individuals with mental illnesses. However, other frames focused on mental illness in terms of the perpetrator being the cause of the crime, meaning the individual is

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responsible for the act. The general implication of episodic and thematic framing is that drawing too heavily on episodic frames can be problematic in American society.

Americans' failure to see interconnections between issues may be a side effect of episodic news coverage. Most would agree that social problems such as poverty, racial inequality, drug usage, and crime are related in cause and treatment. Yet television typically depicts these recurring political problems as discrete instances and events. This tendency may obscure the 'big picture' and impede the process of generalization. (Iyengar, 1991, p. 136)

This suggests that episodic framing in particular may have negative effects on readers' due to its focus on providing good narratives and illustration, opposed to in-depth analysis of the larger issue. In terms of anger and fear, Nabi (2003) argued that emotional framing affects individuals' information processing and decision-making. As a reminder, Nabi (2003) articulated a rationale for distinguishing between anger and fear by showing that fear leads to "protection through avoidance" while anger leads to "retribution through approach behavior" (p. 230). Goodall et al. (2013) described fear and anger as "active and intense emotions associated with clear action tendencies and goals" (p. 375). Specifically, if fear is linked to avoidance, this may be a negative outcome of episodic framing. To explore this issue, fear will be analyzed in relation to perceived risk of victimization (a protection-related outcome).

H4: There is a positive correlation between levels of fear and levels of perceived risk of victimization among individuals.

However, following the logic of Nabi (2003) and Goodall et al. (2013), frames and emotions can lead to positive behaviors on a larger scale. Specifically, anger can lead to proactive behavior (a potentially positive result of episodic framing). To explore



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this claim, anger will be analyzed in the present study in relation to policy support (a retribution-related outcome). In terms of narrative processing, narratives in the news have the ability to reach a broad audience, where the activation of emotion can lead to goal-setting on a public scale; rather than making and acting upon goals set solely for oneself, individuals can also set and act upon goals for society, such as voting to enact or improve gun control laws. It is expected that:

H5: There is a positive correlation between levels of anger and levels of policy support for gun control among individuals.

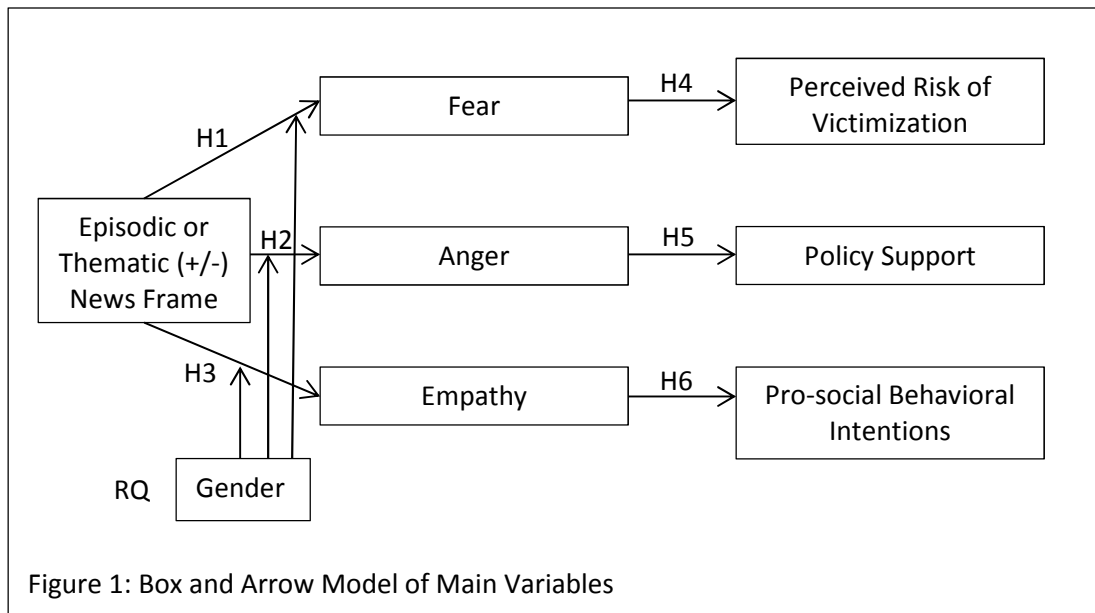
Similarly, in line with the findings of Gross (2008) and Aarøe (2011), episodic frames can be beneficial in other ways. Kim and Cameron's (2011) research on emotional framing and behavioral intention found that emotions can play a pivotal role in shaping behaviors. Similarly, narrative processing helps individuals reinforce personal identities and establish a "defined purpose for future action" (Singer & Bluck, 2001, p. 93). For example, an individual who reads a story about a hospitalized bombing victim and forms an emotional connection may decide to donate blood to the American Red Cross. Following this logic, it is expected that:

H6: There is a positive correlation between levels of empathy and levels of pro-social behavioral intent among individuals.

Overall, this study seeks to explore the layers of framing effects where emotions act as mediating variables by arguing that news frames first affect how individuals *feel*, then how individuals *think*. That is, news stories with an episodic or thematic frame are presented, and then emotions—fear, anger, empathy—are evoked, in turn leading to

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opinion formation and behavioral intention. The goal of this study is to examine the power of news reports and narrative stories in shaping human behavior. For a review of the hypotheses and research question proposed for the current study, please see Figure 1 below. It is proposed that different types of news frames affect emotions to different degrees, which then impact specific behaviors and intentions.



A quantitative method was used to explore the impact of news frames on emotions, opinion formation, and behavioral intentions. Specifically, a post-test only experimental design was used to test these relationships. Experimental design is ideal for quantitative research because it is the primary tool used to establish cause and effect (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Causal relationships emphasize the effect of one variable on another variable (Babbie, 2013). Specifically, experiments involve manipulating an independent variable and observing how that manipulation affects the dependent variable (Wrench, Thomas-Maddox, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2013). Experimental design utilizes groups of people as participants and aims to make claims about a population based on a sample of that population. As such, experiments lead to generalized understandings of groups of people.

Generalizability is useful in quantitative social scientific research because it helps to explain people's opinions and behaviors, and understand the factors that affect those behaviors (Babbie, 2013). Further, the random assignment of participants into experimental groups helps ensure that differences between the groups are attributed to the experimental manipulation (Iyengar, 1991). In this study, the experimental manipulation is the type of news frame: episodic, thematic-positive, or thematic-negative. Additionally, it is imperative in experimental research that the personal characteristics of the experimental groups be as similar to each other as possible so that it can be claimed that the experimental manipulation is the factor determining the differences in responses (Babbie, 2013). Having similar populations is especially important for post-test only

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experiments because there is no baseline observation (Wrench et al., 2013). The population in this study is college students.

### **Design and Stimuli**

The research question and hypotheses were investigated using a design consisting of three experimental groups. One group was exposed to a news story regarding violent crime with an episodic frame, which included a concrete illustration of the event, as well as quotes from concerned citizens. A second experimental group was exposed to a news story regarding violent crime with a positively valenced thematic frame, where the story focused on the decreasing frequency of crime. A third experimental group was exposed to a news story with a negatively valenced thematic frame, where the crime event was placed in the context of similar events and overall gun crime. Both thematic frames included general crime statistics and descriptions, as well as quotes from official sources, including the mayor. (The texts for each story are included in Appendix A.) That said, content differences existed between the conditions. Both thematic frames were created to represent the variations in news stories depicting general trends and the larger scope of crime. This scope can be represented from a positive or negative perspective in terms of message valence. The episodic frame focused specifically on one event. It is expected that differences may exist between both thematic conditions, and that the episodic condition will have a greater effect on emotions than either thematic frame due to its focus on using illustrative language and thick descriptions of hard news.

Participants were randomly assigned to read one of the three frames through Qualtrics, an online survey platform. Each participant was asked to select a particular

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response to a question with logic added to randomize response options, which led to exposure to one of the three types of frames. This randomization process resulted in roughly equal exposure for both thematic conditions (thematic-positive,  $N = 62$ ; thematic-negative,  $N = 63$ ), but considerably more for the episodic condition ( $N = 88$ ). Following exposure to either the episodic frame or one of the thematic frames, participants responded to a series of questions about affective responses, perceptions of risk, levels of policy support, behavioral intentions, and demographics (for the complete questionnaire, see Appendix B).

### **Participants**

Undergraduate students ( $N = 213$ ) at Portland State University served as the participants for this study. This sample size was based on a power analysis calculated via Harvard University's online calculator, which distinguished the sample size necessary to achieve a given level of statistical power (Schoenfeld, 2010). Statistical power is the probability that a research finding will have a significant effect, if one exists in the population (Field, 2009). The components of a power analysis needed to determine sample size include power, significance level, standard deviation, and a minimal detectable difference in mean scores. In social scientific research, the goal is typically to achieve a power of 0.80, meaning there is an 80 percent chance of finding a significant effect. Additionally, a significance level of 0.05 is utilized to be 95% confident the results did not occur by chance. Standard deviation is derived from scales measuring the dependent variable; for this calculation, means and standard deviations were extracted from Nabi's (2003) fear and anger scales. Finally, the minimal detectable difference

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represents the strength of the association between the dependent and independent variables (Schoenfeld, 2010). For this study, the minimal detectable difference was calculated at 0.85. Thus, for a power analysis based on a two-sided 0.05 significance level, there is an 80 percent probability that the study would detect a significant effect where the true difference between frames was 0.85 units if at least 150 participants were recruited.

The inclusion criteria for this study were that each participant be at least 18 years old and enrolled at the university. These were chosen as the inclusion criteria because the purpose of this study was to generalize findings among adults. While working with a college sample potentially limits the generalizability of findings, Babbie (2013) argued that in explanatory research, causal relationships drawn from experiments are more generalizable and stable than cross-sectional surveys, which are descriptive in nature. When there are variables being manipulated, like experimental stimuli, “we would have more confidence—without being certain—that it would have a comparable effect in the community at large” (Babbie, 2013, p. 233). This reinforces the decision to use a college student population as the sample for this study.

The sampling technique used for this study was convenience sampling. Participants were recruited through Portland State University’s student subject pool within the Department of Communication in the fall of 2013. Students were offered extra credit in exchange for their participation in the study, and all participation was optional and confidential. Participants first electronically agreed to take part in this study after reading a consent form (see Appendix C) in order to acknowledge and accept the minimal

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risks associated with taking part in this study. Participants electronically agreed via Qualtrics by clicking a button to advance to the next screen. The consent form also helped regulate that each participant was at least 18 years old by reminding participants they must be 18 years old or older to complete the questionnaire.

Additionally, because this research involved input from human subjects, it was imperative that it first underwent an ethical review. As such, an expedited ethical review was completed through the Human Subjects Research Review Committee (HSRRC), which is also known as the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB regulates research that involves human subjects and determines whether the methods, risks, benefits, and subjects' rights are appropriate for further study. For this study, the ultimate goal of the IRB was to determine whether the participants would experience no greater than minimal risk by participating, and that the methods involved in this study were designed in accordance with the ethical guidelines set forth by the committee. Ethical review is important for all research that desires to add to the current body of research through publication or the formal presentation of findings. As a master's thesis, the current study ultimately seeks publication in order to "contribute to generalizable knowledge" within the field of communication (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010, para. 28).

The final sample consisted of 75 men (35.5%) and 136 women (64.5%) whose mean age was 25 years old ( $SD = 7.3$ ), with ages ranging from 18-67 years old. Of these participants, 134 (63.8%) self-identified as White or Caucasian; 24 (11.4%) as Asian; 19 (9%) as Hispanic; 13 (6.2%) as African American; 3 (1.4%) as Pacific Islander; 2 (1%) as

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Native American; and 15 (7.1%) as other. A total of 165 (78.2%) were registered voters, and the majority of participants identified as either moderate (38.6%) or liberal (37.2%) in terms of political ideology. The majority of participants identified as living in a suburb of a big city (34.6%). Twenty-two (10.6%) of the participants indicated they had been victims of gun crime at some point in their lives, while 184 (88.9%) had not.

### **Procedures**

Prior to formal survey distribution, pilot testing was performed in two phases. The first phase consisted of working through the survey question-by-question with an individual pilot tester and discussing the flow and clarity of the survey. The second phase consisted of distributing the survey to six graduate students, recording the time it took the participant to complete the survey, and discussing the survey afterward. All feedback was recorded and used to improve the overall clarity of the survey.

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval by the Human Subjects Research Review Committee at Portland State University on November 26, 2013 (see Appendix D), the post-test only experiment was performed. The final survey instrument had eight key constructs: measurements of narrative engagement, fear, anger, empathy, policy support, perceived risk, behavioral intentions, and demographics. After participants provided their informed consent, each subject was asked to read the news frame to which they were randomly assigned and then respond to the questionnaire. Participants responded at their convenience within a two-week time period. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete.



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### Measures

**Narrative engagement.** To measure narrative engagement, participants responded to Busselle and Bilandzic's (2009) 12-item narrative engagement scale, which was modified for news stories. These items focused on gauging a reader's level of narrative understanding, attentional focus, narrative presence, and emotional engagement by asking participants their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 = *not at all* and 5 = *very much*. Statements included items like, "I felt sorry for some of the individuals in the news story," and "I found my mind wandering while the news story was displayed." An index was created by averaging responses to items, with higher scores reflecting greater narrative engagement. The Cronbach's alpha of the modified scale used for the current study was .69. Cronbach's alpha is the overall reliability of a scale, and values above .80 are ideal (Field, 2009). As such, an alpha of .69 indicates low reliability. The Cronbach's alpha of Busselle and Bilandzic's (2009) scale ranged from a .80 to .86 depending on the type of story. Given that the original study produced a respectable reliability, it was expected that the alpha for the current scale would also be respectable. However, even though this reliability is lower than the original, it is still acceptable for use (Field, 2009).

**Fear and anger.** To measure fear and anger, participants responded to Nabi's (2003) 15-item scale of fear and anger. These items asked about how often they associate particular feelings with gun violence on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 = *not at all* and 5 = *very much*. The question was formatted, "Do you feel \_\_\_\_ when you think about gun violence?" and was tailored to either fear or anger by filling the blank with one

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of 15 emotion words. Anger included the words angry, irritated, annoyed, frustrated, irate, pissed off, and mad. Fear included the words frightened, anxious, tense, fearful, uneasy, alarmed, nervous, and afraid. Responses were averaged separately for fear and anger. The Cronbach's alpha of anger was .94, while fear was .97.

**Empathy.** To measure levels of empathy, the affective empathy subscale of the Basic Empathy Scale in Adults (BES-A) from Carré et al. (2013) was used for this study, which consisted of 11 items. Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with particular statements. Affective empathy included items such as, "I often become sad when watching sad things on TV or in films," and "After being with a friend who is sad about something, I usually feel sad." Responses were coded on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*. An index was created by averaging responses to items, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of empathy. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .80.

**Policy support.** To measure policy support, Goodall, Slater, and Myers' (2013) index of alcohol-control policy support was adapted for violent crime. Respondents were asked to indicate how likely they are to support gun-control policies on a scale, with 0 = *strongly oppose* and 10 = *strongly support*. Statements included items such as, "I support the proposal for mandatory background checks for gun purchases," and "I support stricter gun control laws." An index was created by averaging responses to items, with higher scores reflecting greater support for the policies. The Cronbach's alpha of this policy support scale was .80.

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**Fear of criminal victimization.** To measure fear of criminal victimization, Rader, May, and Goodrum's (2007) fear of criminal victimization index was used. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on 6 items related to victimization. Items included statements like, "I am afraid of being attacked by someone with a weapon," and "I am afraid of being murdered." Responses were coded on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*. An index was created by averaging the responses for each individual participant. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .90.

**Perceptions of risk.** To measure perceptions of risk, Rader, May, and Goodrum's (2007) perceptions of risk index was used. Respondents were asked to indicate the likelihood that they would be victimized by certain crimes. This 7-item scale included crimes like, "Someone beating you or attacking you with a club, knife, gun or other weapon," and "Someone threatening you with their fists, feet, or other bodily attack." Responses were coded on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = *not at all likely* and 10 = *very likely*. An index was created by averaging the responses for each individual participant. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .95.

**Behavioral intentions.** To measure participants' future behavioral intentions, an exploratory 4-item scale was developed based on Chandler's (2012) argument that individuals' high in empathy are likely to help victims of intentional harm. Thus, this scale is designed to measure levels of intentions to engage in particular pro-social behaviors. Participants were asked to estimate the likelihood they would engage in specific activities within the next 12 months on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 =

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*extremely unlikely* and 5 = *extremely likely*. Items included statements like, “I will donate blood to the American Red Cross in the future.” Statements were examined together from a mean score averaged across all four questions. The Cronbach’s alpha of this exploratory scale was .64. This indicates a low reliability (Field, 2009). This was expected for two reasons. First, the scale was exploratory and was comprised of only four items. Second, the scale represented different kinds of behaviors. That said, even though high reliability was not established, this scale was still used to assess the different types of behaviors participants intended on engaging in.

### **Analysis**

Statistical analyses were conducted with IBM SPSS 21, a statistical software program. H1 hypothesized that, as compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience high levels of fear. H2 hypothesized that, as compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience high levels of anger. H3 hypothesized that, as compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience high levels of empathy. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed in the assessment of H1, H2, and H3. ANOVA is used to explore questions with more than two conditions by testing whether the means of two or more independent samples differ significantly from each other (Field, 2009). This type of test was chosen because each hypothesis involved a categorical independent variable (type of frame) and a continuous dependent variable (levels of fear, anger, or empathy). The independent variable

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consisted of three experimental groups (episodic, thematic-positive, or thematic-negative frame), and different participants were randomly assigned to each group.

ANOVA was also used to assess the RQ, which asked, do men and women differ in their affective responses toward crime following exposure to the episodic frame or thematic frames? Recall that ANOVA is used to explore questions with more than two conditions by testing whether the means of two or more independent samples differ significantly from each other (Field, 2009). Specifically, a multiple-factor ANOVA was used to analyze the RQ. A multiple-factor ANOVA is used for questions that involve one dependent variable and more than one independent variable, and tests whether a subgroup, in this case, gender, represents different populations in respect to the dependent variable (Williams & Monge, 2001).

Correlations were used for H4, H5, and H6. Recall that H4 hypothesized there is a positive correlation between levels of fear and levels of perceived risk of victimization among individuals. H5 hypothesized there is a positive correlation between levels of anger and levels of policy support regarding gun control among individuals. H6 hypothesized there is a positive correlation between levels of empathy and levels of pro-social behavioral intent among individuals. Specifically, the goal was to see whether emotions were associated with perceived threat of victimization, policy support, and pro-social behavioral intent.

**Preliminary Analysis**

A total of 237 participants took part in this self-report experiment. Participants were undergraduate communication students at Portland State University, who completed the survey for extra credit. Survey data were first downloaded from Qualtrics as an SPSS file, and before statistical analysis was conducted, the data went through a basic cleaning process. Data cleaning consisted of reviewing responses and removing participants who had multiple missing fields within their overall response. A total of 24 (10.1%) cases were removed. Of these, 18 (7.6%) cases were removed because they did not complete any of the questions, including exposure to the news story. Four (1.7%) cases were removed because they did not respond to any questions after exposure to the news story, and two (0.8%) cases were removed because they responded to the demographic information only. The final sample consisted of 213 (89.9%) participants. Of these 213 participants, one (0.5%) person responded to over half of the questions but produced a response set that still contained multiple missing fields. As such, portions of the data included in the main analysis are calculated out of 212 participants, as SPSS accounts for these missing fields.

Each scale within the survey demonstrated normal distribution. Fear ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ) and anger ( $M = 3.4$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) were both measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 represented *not at all* and 5 represented *very much* in terms of associating feelings of fear and anger with the news story. This suggests participants experienced, on average, higher levels of anger over fear. Empathy ( $M = 3.5$ ,  $SD = .6$ ) was also measured

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on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 represented *strongly disagree* and 5 represented *strongly agree* on items related to basic empathy. Average scores indicated that participants felt moderately high levels of empathy. Although all three emotional responses were similar in strength, higher levels of empathy were reported in comparison to both fear and anger.

Policy support ( $M = 6.7$ ,  $SD = 1.7$ ) was measured on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 indicating *strongly oppose* and 10 indicating *strongly support*. Average scores showed that, overall, readers were moderately to highly supportive of gun control laws. In terms of future behaviors, behavioral intentions ( $M = 2.7$ ,  $SD = .9$ ) were also assessed. This scale was exploratory and used four items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 represented *extremely unlikely* and 5 represented *extremely likely*. Mean scores showed that participants were somewhat unlikely to engage in specific pro-social behaviors, like donating blood, in the next 12 months.

Perceptions of risk ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ ) was measured on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represented *not at all likely* and 10 represented *very likely*. Average scores indicated that, overall, participants felt it was somewhat unlikely they were at risk of becoming the victims of certain crimes. Similarly, fear of criminal victimization ( $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being *strongly agree*. Here, average scores also indicated that, overall, participants were not very fearful of becoming the victim of a crime-related event that could potentially occur, such as being attacked by someone with a weapon.

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### Main Analysis

The first three hypotheses examined the relationship between the type of news frame and levels of affective responses among participants. Episodic framing was of particular interest to the research. Hypothesis 1 predicted that, as compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience higher levels of fear. A one-way ANOVA was utilized to assess this hypothesis. Results indicated no significant differences in levels of fear across the three frame types, ( $F(2, 210) = .68, p = .51, \eta^2 = .006$ ). An equal level of fear was reported in both the episodic ( $M = 3.1, SD = 1.3$ ) and thematic-negative ( $M = 3.1, SD = 1.1$ ) conditions, followed by the thematic-positive ( $M = 2.9, SD = 1.2$ ) condition. As such, H1 was not supported.

Similarly, the second hypothesis predicted that as compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience higher levels of anger. A one-way ANOVA was utilized to test this hypothesis. Results indicated no significant differences in levels of anger across the three frame types, ( $F(2, 210) = .19, p = .83, \eta^2 = .002$ ). Roughly equal levels of fear were reported in all three conditions, with the episodic condition ( $M = 3.5, SD = 1.2$ ) being statistically the same as the thematic-negative ( $M = 3.4, SD = 1.0$ ) and thematic-positive ( $M = 3.4, SD = 1.1$ ) conditions. As such, H2 also was not supported.

To assess hypothesis 3, which stated that compared to positive and negative thematic framing, episodic framing leads individuals to experience higher levels of empathy, a one-way ANOVA was utilized. Results indicated no significant differences in levels of empathy across the three frame types, ( $F(2, 210) = .19, p = .83, \eta^2 = .002$ ).



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Roughly equal levels of empathy were reported across the thematic-positive ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = .63$ ), episodic ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SD = .64$ ), and thematic-negative ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) conditions. As such, H3 was not supported. To review, no significant differences existed between type of news frame and levels of fear, anger, or empathy.

To go one step further, the research question explored whether men and women differ in their affective responses toward crime following exposure to the episodic frame or thematic frames. For this research question, a multiple-factor ANOVA was employed for each type of affective response. Affective responses included fear, anger, and empathy. The effects on these variables were assessed one at a time. Results indicated that the within-group factor of gender produced a significant main effect. Females ( $M = 3.4$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) were higher than males ( $M = 2.5$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ) in fear ( $F(1, 205) = 24.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .107$ ). Similarly, females ( $M = 3.5$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) were higher than males ( $M = 3.2$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) in anger ( $F(1, 205) = 4.3$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta^2 = .021$ ). Finally, females ( $M = 3.7$ ,  $SD = .6$ ) were also higher than males ( $M = 3.2$ ,  $SD = .5$ ) in empathy ( $F(1, 205) = 38.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .158$ ). That said, no significant interactions existed between gender and frame type for fear ( $F(2, 210) = .87$ ,  $p = .42$ ,  $\eta^2 = .008$ ), anger ( $F(2, 205) = .03$ ,  $p = .97$ ,  $\eta^2 = .000$ ), or empathy ( $F(2, 205) = .58$ ,  $p = .56$ ,  $\eta^2 = .006$ ).

The means for each of these groups (shown in Table 1) indicated that the influence of gender and frame type on emotions was not in the direction expected. Surprisingly, the 2 x 3 ANOVA revealed that the research question was not supported. As such, there is no evidence that the tendency to feel fear, anger, or empathy after reading a news story following an episodic format as opposed to a thematic-positive or

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thematic-negative format is different for males and females. Gender was not a significant moderating variable.

**Table 1** Means and standard deviations of Fear, Anger, and Empathy by Gender and Experimental Condition (episodic, thematic-positive, or thematic-negative news frame)

	Females ( <i>N</i> = 136)	Males ( <i>N</i> = 75)
Fear		
Episodic	3.6 (1.1)	2.5 (1.3)
Thematic-positive	3.2 (1.2)	2.4 (1.1)
Thematic-negative	3.3 (1.0)	2.7 (1.1)
Anger		
Episodic	3.6 (1.1)	3.3 (1.2)
Thematic-positive	3.5 (1.1)	3.1 (1.1)
Thematic-negative	3.5 (1.0)	3.1 (1.0)
Empathy		
Episodic	3.7 (.7)	3.2 (.5)
Thematic-positive	3.7 (.5)	3.1 (.7)
Thematic-negative	3.6 (.6)	3.2 (.5)

*Note:* Fear, anger, and empathy could range from 1 to 5. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

The next three hypotheses focused on the relationship between levels of emotions and various aspects of behavior. Recall that hypothesis 4 suggested there is a positive correlation between levels of fear and levels of perceived risk of victimization among individuals. To test the fourth hypothesis, two Pearson's product-moment correlations were utilized, as perceived risk of victimization was measured with two scales: fear of criminal victimization and perceptions of risk. For fear of criminal victimization, which was measured on a 1 to 5 scale from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5), a moderate correlation was detected ( $r(210) = .48, p < .01$ ). As hypothesized, there is a significant positive relationship between levels of fear ( $M = 3.1, SD = 1.2$ ) and levels of

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fear of criminal victimization ( $M = 2.6$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ). As fear increases, fear of criminal victimization increases. Fear explains approximately 23% of the variance in levels of fear of criminal victimization.

For perceptions of risk, which was measured on a 1 to 10 scale from *not at all likely* (1) to *very likely* (10), a low correlation was detected ( $r(210) = .24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As hypothesized, there is a significant positive relationship between levels of fear ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ) and levels of perceptions of risk ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ ). As fear increases, perceptions of risk increase. Fear explains approximately 5.8% of the variance in levels of perceptions of risk. Overall, H4 was supported, and there was a stronger relationship between fear (affect) and fear of criminal victimization, as compared to fear (affect) and perceptions of risk.

To test hypothesis 5, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was utilized. Recall that H5 predicted there is a positive correlation between levels of anger and levels of policy support for gun control among individuals. As hypothesized, there is a significant positive relationship between levels of anger ( $M = 3.4$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) and levels of policy support ( $M = 6.7$ ,  $SD = 1.7$ ) for gun control among individuals ( $r(210) = .38$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As anger increases, policy support increases. Anger explains approximately 14.4% of the variance in levels of policy support. Specifically, a low correlation was detected. H5 was supported.

To test the sixth and final hypothesis, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was utilized. H6 suggested there is a positive correlation between levels of empathy and levels of pro-social behavioral intent among individuals. As hypothesized, there is a

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significant positive relationship between levels of empathy ( $M = 3.5$ ,  $SD = .6$ ) and levels of pro-social behavioral intentions ( $M = 2.7$ ,  $SD = .9$ ) among individuals ( $r(210) = .17$ ,  $p = .013$ ). As empathy increases, pro-social behavioral intentions increase. Empathy explains approximately 2.9% of the variance in levels of pro-social behavioral intentions. Thus, a slight correlation was found. H6 was supported.

### **Post-hoc Analysis**

Finally, narrative engagement ( $M = 3.3$ ,  $SD = .6$ ) was assessed. This was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 representing *not at all* and 5 representing *very much*. This measurement indicates that participants were, on average, moderately engaged with the news story they were presented with. To go one step further, a one-way ANOVA was used to test the relationship between narrative engagement and frame type. Results indicated significant differences in levels of narrative engagement across the three frame types, ( $F(2, 210) = 7.5$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ ). The highest level of narrative engagement was reported in the episodic condition ( $M = 3.4$ ,  $SD = .6$ ), followed by the thematic-negative ( $M = 3.3$ ,  $SD = .5$ ), and thematic-positive ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = .5$ ) conditions. As such, a relationship between narrative engagement and frame type was discovered, with the highest relationship displayed for episodic frames. Further discussion of narrative engagement is included in the next chapter.

The purpose of this study was to explore news frames and nonfictional narrative, and to measure and interpret intentions for future actions, where emotions guided those actions. Shanto Iyengar's research on episodic and thematic news frames served as the guiding tool used in formulating a method to analyze these framing effects. All content utilized within the current study involved crime and conflict, and specifically emphasized media publicity and framing of violent crime. The overarching research question focused on whether the ways in which news frames were interpreted influenced emotions and in turn impacted the behaviors in which readers engaged, from supporting specific policies to donating time and resources to victims and families in need.

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) postulated that people become informed citizens and formulate public opinion based on the information they garner in the media. How people think about certain topics are guided by the way in which news stories are written, known as message framing. Thematic frames focus on the general conditions or outcomes of a trend, have a large scope, and rely on in-depth information from powerful sources (Iyengar, 1991). Alternatively, episodic frames provide thick descriptions of a single event and create a visually compelling illustration of hard news (Iyengar, 1991). Framing devices serve as the structural elements of frames and include headlines, subheads, leads, sources, quotes, statistics, and conclusions stated about the event (Tankard, 2001), while heuristics are used to create judgments about the event (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). Emotions also play a role. Recent researchers (Aarøe, 2011; Druckman & McDermott, 2008; Gross, 2008) found that fear and empathy can increase information processing and

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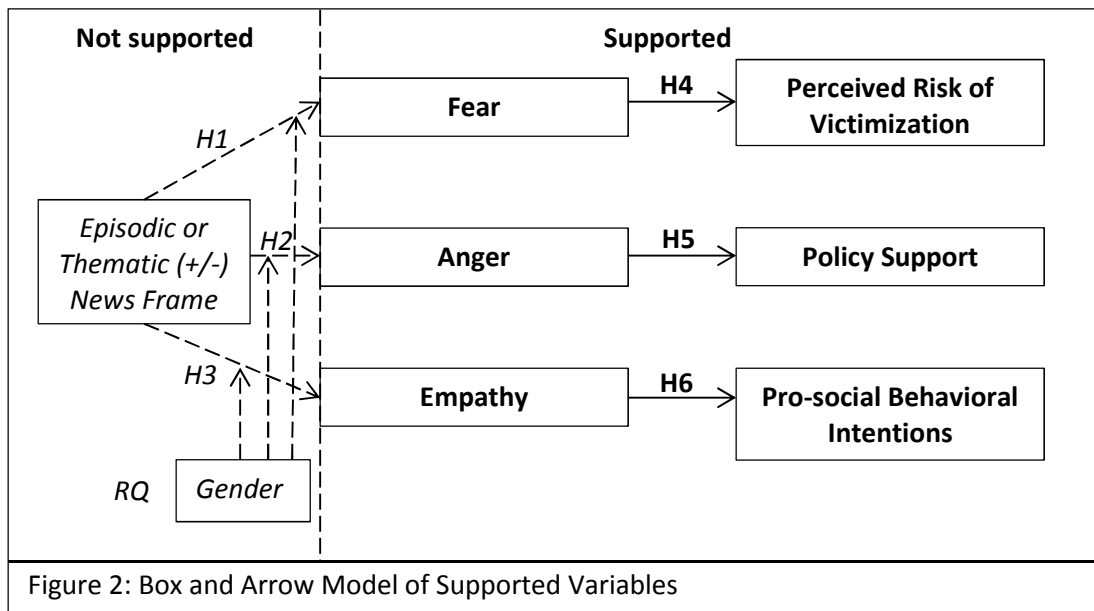
awareness of topics such that readers are more likely to be proactive in either changing a conflict-based situation through policy support, or by helping those involved in traumatic events through altruistic donating behavior (Aarøe, 2011; Chandler, 2012; Gross, 2008). Emotional engagement connects to the ideas presented by Walter Lippmann in the early 1920s regarding public opinion and what he referred to as *the pictures in our heads*. He stated, “The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event” (Lippmann, 1922, p. 5). This gives credence to the idea that news stories influence feelings and impact opinions.

To explore these levels of framing effects, a post-test only experimental design was used to test the proposed relationships. This experiment used undergraduate communication students as participants, and exposed them to one of three stimuli. Each stimulus was a news story involving violent gun crimes committed in public. One news story used an episodic frame, which focused on providing rich details of a shooting at a public park. In contrast, two thematic frames, which focused on a larger scope and general statistical interpretation of current trends, were included. One story took a positive slant on gun crime, and the other took a negative slant on gun crime. This was done to reflect the fact that thematic stories are not inherently neutral stories, and can be either positively or negatively valenced.

Overall, the findings indicated mixed results. No significant relationships were found between types of news frames and affective responses. That is, episodic and thematic frame types did not differentially affect emotions to a statistically significant degree. However, correlations were found between emotions and specific behaviors.

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That is, participants who reported feeling anger, fear, and empathy reported higher levels of policy support, perceived risk of victimization, and pro-social behavioral intentions, respectively. This demonstrates that emotions did play a role in shaping behaviors, but emotions were not significant effects of episodic or thematic news frames. The figure below illustrates which variables were supported. On the left, the research question and hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were not supported, while on the right, hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 were supported.



Given that Gross (2008) and Aarøe (2011) both found a significant relationship between episodic news frames and emotions, it was unexpected that the current study did not have similar findings. To review, the first hypothesis focused on the relationship between type of news frame and fear, a negatively valenced emotion. It was hypothesized that, as compared to thematic framing, episodic framing would lead

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individuals to experience higher levels of fear. This idea was not supported. Similarly, the second hypothesis focused on the relationship between type of news frame and anger, also a negatively valenced emotion. It was hypothesized that, as compared to thematic framing, episodic framing would lead individuals to experience higher levels of anger, which also was not supported. It should be noted that, when speaking about framing effects in general, other studies have shown that framing results in limited to moderate effects (Price et al., 1997).

The third hypothesis examined the relationship between type of news frame and empathy, a positively valenced emotion. It was hypothesized that, as compared to thematic framing, episodic framing would lead individuals to experience higher levels of empathy. As with both negatively valenced emotions, this idea also was not supported in relation to a positively valenced emotion. A post-hoc analysis using a one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a significantly different level of narrative engagement by news story. The highest level of narrative engagement was reported in the episodic condition, followed by the thematic-negative and thematic-positive conditions, respectively. This means that, overall, readers were engaged with their respective news story in the sense that they did not have a hard time making sense of what was going on in the news story, did not have a hard time keeping their minds on the news story, and felt emotionally affected by the news story. As such, it would seem that differences in frame type would significantly affect emotions differently. However, it may simply be that the particular news stories selected for this study were not distinct or authentic enough to elicit discrete emotions to a significantly different degree.



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Additionally, because few framing studies have examined the differences in emotions between men and women, gender was explored as a moderating variable. A multiple-factor ANOVA revealed that gender yielded a main effect; women experienced greater affective responses than men for all three emotions. However, no significant interaction was found between gender and frame type. This means that although there were significant emotional differences between males and females, gender as a subgroup was not a significant moderating variable between frame type and fear, anger, or empathy.

The final set of hypotheses focused on the relationship between emotions and actions. Correlations were used to test these relationships. Hypothesis four explored the relationship between fear and perceived risk of victimization, and found that those who experienced high levels of fear also experienced high levels of perceived risk of victimization. As such, the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between levels of fear and levels of perceived risk of victimization among individuals was supported. This is in line with findings from Goodall et al. (2013) who pointed out that fear activates apprehension, uncertainty, danger, and escape.

Hypothesis five explored the relationship between anger and policy support, such that as anger increased so did support for specific gun control related policies. These results are also similar to those found by Goodall et al. (2013), who discovered that when alcohol was mentioned as the causal factor of accidents or crimes in news stories, the reader was more likely to experience anger (in comparison to fear, which activates apprehension) and in turn support new and existing alcohol-control policies. In the current study, similar results were found for gun control when guns were included as the

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causal factor of the crime. As such, the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between levels of anger and levels of policy support for gun control among individuals was supported. To speak toward anger being an approach-based emotion, 78% of the current sample self-identified as registered voters, which may be the first step toward supporting change in the current political climate.

Finally, hypothesis six was also supported. There is a positive correlation between levels of empathy and levels of pro-social behavioral intent among individuals. This finding is particularly interesting because it offers support for the usefulness of positively valenced emotions. Here, empathy has been linked to the intent to engage in behaviors like donating blood to the American Red Cross, donating money to emergency support funds, volunteering time at local nonprofit organizations, and visiting injured victims or victims' families after tragic events. Oliver et al. (2012) similarly found that empathic attitudes were associated with intentions to help members of a target group through behaviors such as donating money, signing a petition, discussing the situation with friends and family, and forwarding the information on to others to help raise awareness of the topic. Experiencing empathy and compassionate affect is important as it is clearly linked to altruistic behavioral intentions. If the ultimate goal is changing actual behaviors, this research shows that the potential for behavior change is high when positive emotions are involved. This is hopeful news for individuals involved in traumas, including victims of gun crimes who need blood transfusions, or for any situation where humans could benefit from the support of others, even if that support is expressed by simply engaging in public discourse on the topic. If people can emotionally connect to

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the information they read in the news, there is great potential for humans to become involved citizens and act as catalysts of change, on an individual or societal level.

In terms of emotions overall, average scores indicated that readers reported the highest levels of empathy, followed by anger and then fear. As mentioned, empathy and anger can both be considered approach-based emotions, whereas fear relates to avoidance (Nabi, 2003). Lecheler et al. (2012) found that anger and enthusiasm were linked to policy support for specific political issues because they are considered mobilizing emotions, whereas fear and contentment were not. This gives hope to the notion that certain emotions can lead to positive change. Emotional individuals may elect to vote for things like mandatory background checks for gun purchases, the expansion of the police force, or an increase in the implementation of programs to help get guns off of the streets and used only in a responsible manner. In contrast, it may also be beneficial that relatively low levels of fear were reported in the current study, as this can help individuals feel safer traveling in certain locations and have less fear of experiencing a random act of violence or other bodily or sexual assault, whether by gun or other weapon.

### **Limitations**

Several elements of this study could have been improved. First, the sample in this study utilized a nonrandom sample. Specifically, convenience sampling was used to obtain a sample of college students, who were not necessarily representative of the larger population. This is especially evident when considering age. For example, in the experiment conducted by Solloway et al. (2013) on emotions and policy support, the mean age of participants was 48 years old, compared to the current study, in which the

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mean age was 25 years old. Probability samples are ideal, though it is often difficult to achieve truly random samples. That said, nonprobability samples are desirable for small, underfunded or nonfunded research projects, where time is limited (Babbie, 2013). A probability sample might be especially ideal when measuring framing effects that relate to the news, because the platforms in which readers access the news varies based on generation. For example, Coleman and McCombs (2007) found that individuals between the ages of 18 and 34 primarily accessed news online, while those between the ages of 35 and 54 gravitated toward television news, and those 55 and older relied on newspapers.

Regarding the experimental stimuli that were developed for this study, word count may have also been a limitation, as each of the three stories were relatively long (about 275 words). In an effort to trust that all participants read their assigned stories in full, shorter stories could have been used. Alternatively, in the Solloway et al. (2013) experiment, respondents were asked to read their assigned news story twice. Prompting participants to re-read their story is another solution for increasing comprehension. However, such an experimental manipulation lacks external validity. Further, the consent form that preceded exposure to the news story informed the participants that the examples and locations discussed were developed solely for the purpose of this study. While this disclaimer was necessary to meet IRB standards, it may have potentially influenced the strength of the frames and their activation of emotions. Also in terms of stimuli, there was not an equal distribution of participants between the news frames; the episodic frame consisted of 88 participants, while the thematic positive and thematic negative frames had 62 and 63, respectively.

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Finally, this study analyzed latent emotions, in terms of anger and fear, and perceived characteristics that comprise an emotion (i.e., basic empathy), and asked participants to indicate their levels of these emotions on a scale. By nature, this prompted their response pattern by activating emotions that may have otherwise been unconscious. To counter this bias, Solloway et al. (2013) recommended using open-ended responses that could then be coded for the emotions that were activated to allow participants to express a range of emotions that were salient to them immediately after exposure. Open-ended responses may also allow for a greater distinction between measurements of fear (Nabi, 2003), fear of criminal victimization, and perceptions of risk (Rader et al., 2007), specifically, to further demonstrate that fear is conceptually different from risk. Rader et al. (2007) described that fear is an “emotional response” while risk is a “cognitive judgment” (pp. 478-479). That said, a self-report method in general may have produced findings inconsistent with what participants actually felt, or actually would feel, in situations not under immediate study.

### **Future Research**

This topic can benefit from future research. Theoretically, future studies could focus on coupling framing with other theories like the elaboration likelihood model or appraisal theory to help explain message processing and effects. For example, the extended elaboration likelihood model focuses on persuasive messages, and suggests that news stories on breaking crime can act as persuasive messages if they are read with intent, as opposed to being skimmed (see Solloway et al., 2013). In terms of emotions as frames (see Nabi, 2003), emotional framing has been explored as a three-step process via

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appraisal theory (Kühne, 2012). This researcher postulated that in this process, emotional frames first trigger cognitions; cognitions then arouse emotions; finally, emotions influence opinion formation (Kühne, 2012). This perspective argues that the distinction between cognitions and emotions is not as independent as once suggested, and that cognitions elicit emotions. Kühne (2012) found that news frames can influence appraisals, and that cognitive appraisals influence affective responses. In turn, emotions influenced both information processing and opinion formation. This was specifically found for a news article involving a hit-and-run traffic accident and subsequent support for public policy programs that aim to increase road safety. As such, future studies could look more deeply at the link between framing and appraisal theory.

Future research should also focus on emotions that can impact altruistic and pro-social behavior. While seminal work on framing effects focused primarily on cognitive framing, a large portion of current framing research focuses on emotionality. That said, many of the emotions currently studied tend to be negatively valenced emotions, such as threat, anger, and fear. It should first be reiterated that valence is not necessarily associated with utility. For example, while anger and fear are both discrete, negative emotions, anger leads to retribution and fear leads to avoidance. This means that anger can lead to policy changes and fear may not. One negative emotion that could benefit from being explored further is sadness, as sadness has been shown to be a precursor of helping behavior, even given its negative valence (Solloway et al., 2013). However, it is important to also look at positively valenced emotions, as it is a gap in the current literature. Lecheler et al. (2012) recommended that positive emotions, such as passion,

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hopefulness, and enthusiasm be explored further. Pride has also been recommended (Kühne, 2012). Additionally, more research on empathy would also be useful. Positive emotions can be influential in message processing and improving attitudes on certain topics or groups (Oliver et al., 2012), thus, future research can look at attitudes in conjunction with emotions.

Future research could also look into how the new media environment, including the Internet, social media, and new technology, is shifting how information is processed online, and the depth in which readers engage with online stories in the age of information overload. Papacharissi (2011) claims that new technologies “blend previously individuated mass media,” which reinforces the idea that news is now being accessed via multiple channels, both print and online, and news is being conceptualized in broader terms (p. 17). Thus, methodologically, a qualitative research approach could also be useful in assessing members’ meanings: How do people become emotionally engaged with news stories? Do emotions affect decisions? For example, democracy theory suggests that emotions lead to irrational thinking, and are thus problematic, so emotional activation should be avoided (Kühne, 2012). Given that research on the relationship between emotions and news framing is relatively new, a clearer analysis of the positive and negative influence of emotions can be better established through focus groups and interviews.

## **Conclusion**

The topic of gun crime in the media is certainly no stranger to debate. Gun crimes occur on a daily basis across the nation, in homes, in schools, and in numerous

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public spaces (Nocera, 2014). In December of 2013, almost exactly one year after the fatal elementary school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, a teenage student opened fire at his Colorado high school, wounding two students, one of whom later died of her injuries (Johnson, 2013). In January 2014, one patron fatally shot another patron in a Florida movie theater after an interpersonal dispute over texting during the movie (Almasy, 2014). In February 2014, a woman opened fire in a Native American tribal office in California, killing four people and wounding two others (Ford & Hassan, 2014).

Despite these incidents, statistics indicate that gun crime has experienced a steady decline over the past two decades. In May of 2013, the U.S. Department of Justice released a special report showing the year-to-year statistics of gun crimes. In 2011, firearm homicides totaled 11,101, which was down from 18,253 in 1993 (Planty & Truman, 2013). Further, of all fatal and nonfatal gun crimes committed in 2011, only 2% were homicides (Planty & Truman, 2013). This decrease in gun violence should be highlighted in an attempt to reduce the potential for individuals to become fearful of crime, as fear is linked to perceived risk of victimization.

As a general rule, it is useful for citizens to work toward seeking information from multiple sources and be critical consumers of news, knowing that sensationalism and shock tactics are simply a part of the human experience. Yet the preceding statistics provide evidence that it may be time for journalists and newscasters to develop a new way of reporting and writing about the human condition. In the current study, there were no significant findings between episodic and thematic news framing techniques and affective responses. However, there was a significant relationship between emotions and



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intentions for future action, including the way individuals intend to vote, volunteer, and move through their daily lives. Previous studies (Goodall et al., 2013; Kühne, 2012; Lecheler, 2012; Nabi, 2003; Solloway et al., 2013) have supported the relationship between discrete emotions and specific behavioral intentions. This is a telling sign that the way people feel about what they read is affected not only by their cognitive elaborations (as found in seminal framing research; e.g., Price & Tewksbury, 1997), but also by their emotions.

Print news may be a dying art, but writing style still seems to matter; words can shock, delight, and surprise. Though specific frame types may not define emotions, style and substance of news reports are bound to enter the minds of readers and conjure up discrete emotions. Nonfictional narratives that focus on describing one event may be particularly vulnerable to affective engagement, and focus groups and interviews may be able to demonstrate this relationship where quantitative measures otherwise fall short. I postulate that the impact of writing style on audience members is especially strong for articles mass published within reputable sources like *The New York Times*, which is often regarded as the leading agenda-setting model in the news world. Articles showcased on Sundays, whose circulation typically yields the highest number of readership out of any other weekday, may be the most powerful.

The article by Barron (2012) presented in the introduction of the current study is one such example of a mass published nonfictional narrative. Using descriptors like “*sprayed* the children with bullets,” and “ammunition designed for *maximum* damage” (italics added), may increase the potential for emotional engagement. Here, the import of

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Barron's message seems clear. Something unexpected and tragic has been executed by human hands and assisted by handmade devices, and the public should be aware of this misfortune. The call to action, then, is to diminish the potential of a similar event happening again. Alain de Botton (2014) likens this journalistic style to Greek tragedies, which appeal to emotions in an effort to inform and lure change. Ultimately, it seems plausible that behavior change can be achieved in a multitude of ways, on both individual and societal levels. Centripetal goals, not unanimous decisions, are likely key.

Crime coverage can be better approached, as both journalist and viewer, by engaging readers' emotions in an honest attempt to produce pro-social behavioral intentions that lead to mobilizing actions. Psychologist Carroll E. Izard (1977) argued that emotions are one of the primary tools humans possess that stimulate action. Empathy and anger are two specific emotions that can motivate individuals to act on behalf of the greater good. These actions, whether it be voting or donating time and resources, can lead to pro-social community involvement and altruistic behavior. This process may begin on a micro level but can eventually reach a macro level. As such, encouraging these types of behaviors can ultimately improve the political climate and the health and stability of the nation.

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Episodic Frame

## **Shooting at Grant Park Kills 1 and Injures 7**

### **Denver residents are shaken by what police describe as a violent attack that took place at the Grant Park Jazz Festival Sunday evening**

DENVER, Colo. -- A place of music and dance turned into a scene of bloodshed and mayhem when two masked gunmen opened fire in Denver's popular Grant Park Jazz Festival on Sunday evening, killing one woman, and injuring 5 adults and 2 children, leaving members of the community shaken and confused.

Sometime after 8 p.m., multiple shots were fired at the northern end of the park, and as people began fleeing the scene, chaos erupted. Many people tripped, and lawn chairs and blankets were abandoned.

At least two dozen rounds were fired, eyewitnesses said.

It is unclear how the violence began and police have yet to identify the perpetrators, but multiple suspects are in custody. Officers continue to scour the area, including the nearby Denver Zoo.

Drew Thompson, who has lived in the area his whole life and was attending the festival, said he does not feel safe anymore. "I was shocked watching people that I've seen in the park gunned down in front of me. The gunfire was loud and went on and on, as my family and I ran away as fast as we could," he said.

At a news conference, Mayor Ralph Johnson released the name of the slain woman, Erin Campos, who recently gave birth to her second child. She was an off-duty police officer described as a loving mother and tremendous leader. She was a seven-year veteran of the police force. Her two children remain in critical condition at Grey Memorial Hospital, as do five other adults who were attending the festival.

## **Gun Control Debates and the Issue of Safety Arise Again**

### **Public shooting occurs**

DENVER, Colo. -- Masked gunmen killed one off-duty female police officer, and injured two children and five adults at a jazz festival on Sunday evening, adding Denver to the list of places plagued by gun crime this year.

In the wake of this event that has shocked the community, concern over public safety has increased.

However, despite Sunday's fatal circumstances, officials point out that crime has not surged in the area overall. Several auto break-ins have been reported, but this is the first public shooting since 2007 in Denver.

At a news conference, Mayor Ralph Johnson said Denver is still "a safe city" and that he will not let anyone destroy public safety or public events attended by thousands of people, including his wife and children.

"We will not surrender this city to anyone," he said.

Rates of violent crime, specifically murder, in Denver have decreased nearly 50% over the past 8-10 years. Nationwide, violent crime rates are also decreasing, with the lowest amount of crime occurring in the Western states.

Judith Carmen, director of the Department of Criminal Justice at University of Denver, said that random mass shootings are rare and that city parks tend to be safe locations, due in part to population density.

Last year, less than 3% of the population was the victim of any type of violent crime, and the vast majority of these victims were victims of attempted or threatened violence but suffered no actual violence. Additionally, police forces have increased in most cities.

In Denver, suspects are in custody, but officials have yet to release any names.

## **Gun Control Debates and the Issue of Safety Arise Again**

### **Public shooting occurs for the second time this week**

DENVER, Colo. -- Masked gunmen killed one off-duty female police officer, and injured two children and five adults at a jazz festival on Sunday evening, adding Denver to the list of places plagued by gun crime this year.

In the wake of this event that has shocked the community, concern over public safety has increased. Similar public shootings have taken place at schools, movie theaters, and shopping malls.

In July of 2012, neighboring Aurora, Colorado was the scene of a mass shooting when a masked gunman opened fire in a movie theater, killing 12 people and injuring 70 others. In December of 2012, 20 young children and 6 adults were killed in their classrooms at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. This took place just three days after a fatal shooting in a shopping mall near Portland, Oregon.

At a news conference, Denver's Mayor Ralph Johnson said that measures need to be taken to improve public safety. "Something more needs to be done," he said.

Judith Carmen, director of the Department of Criminal Justice at University of Denver, explained that mass murders are considered massacres when the perpetrator has complete control of the situation, and the victims are helpless.

Carmen also stated that two-thirds of annual deaths by gun violence occur in large metropolitan areas or inner city neighborhoods. In 2011 at a meeting held in a grocery store parking lot in Tucson, Arizona, Congresswoman Gabby Giffords was shot by a spectator, resulting in the death of 6 bystanders.

In Denver, suspects are in custody, but officials have yet to release any names.



BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

Appendix B - Survey Questions

Q22 The following items ask about your level of engagement with the news story. Please indicate how engaged you were on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Not at all and 5 = Very much.

	Not at all 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	Very much 5 (5)
At points, I had a hard time making sense of what was going on in the news story. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My understanding of the people involved in the story is unclear. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a hard time recognizing the theme of the story. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found my mind wandering while the news story was displayed. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
While the news story was displayed I found myself thinking about other things. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a hard time keeping my mind on the news story. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
During the news story, my body was in the room, but my mind was inside the	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

<p>world created by the story. (7)</p> <p>The news story created a new world, and then that world suddenly disappeared when the story ended. (8)</p> <p>At times during the news story, the story world was closer to me than the real world. (9)</p> <p>The news story affected me emotionally. (10)</p> <p>During the news story, when the main people involved in the story succeeded, I felt happy, and when they suffered in some way, I felt sad. (11)</p> <p>I felt sorry for some of the individuals in the news story. (12)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Q3.1 The following items ask about how often you associate particular feelings with gun violence. Please indicate how often you make these associations on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Not at all and 5 = Very much.

When you think about gun violence, do you feel...

## BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

	Not at all 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	Very much 5 (5)
angry? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
irritated? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
annoyed? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
frustrated? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
irate? (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
pissed off? (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
mad? (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
frightened? (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
anxious? (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
tense? (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
fearful? (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
uneasy? (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
alarmed? (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
nervous? (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
afraid? (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

Q3.2 The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, think about how well each statement describes you. Then, mark your level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree.

	Strongly disagree 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	Strongly agree 5 (5)
My friends' emotions don't affect me much. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After being with a friend who is sad about something, I usually feel sad. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get frightened when I watch characters in a good scary movie. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get caught up in other people's feelings easily. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't become sad when I see other people crying. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other people's feelings don't bother me at all. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often become sad when watching sad things on TV or in films. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeing a person who has been angered has no effect on my feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

(8) I tend to feel scared when I am with friends who are afraid. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often get swept up in my friends' feelings. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friend's unhappiness doesn't make me feel anything. (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**BLACK AND BLUE NEWS**

Q3.3 The following questions inquire about your level of support for policies related to crime. Please indicate how likely you are to support each policy with 0 = Strongly oppose and 10 = Strongly support.

	Strongly oppose 0 (1)	1 (2)	2 (3)	3 (4)	4 (5)	5 (6)	6 (7)	7 (8)	8 (9)	9 (10)	Strongly support 10 (11)
Mandatory background checks for gun purchases (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stricter gun control laws (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Major restrictions for gun purchases (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Complete ban on guns (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Second Amendment rights for all citizens (citizens have the right to own a firearm for recreational shooting or personal defense) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expansion of the police force (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase in implementation of programs to get guns off of the streets (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Institution of harsher punishments for perpetrators of crime (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Early intervention programs for troubled youth (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

Funding for mental health research and support services (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

Q3.5 The following is a set of crime scenarios. Please estimate the likelihood you would be victimized by certain crimes on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 = Not at all likely and 10 = Very likely.

	Not at all likely 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	Very likely 10 (10)
Someone breaking into your home and taking something or attempting to take something. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone stealing or attempting to steal a motor vehicle belonging to you. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone stealing items that belong to you without using force. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone taking or attempting to take something from you by force or threat of force. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone beating you or attacking you with a club, knife,	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

<p>gun, or other weapon. (5)</p>										
<p>Someone threatening you with their fists, feet, or other bodily attack. (6)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>Someone forcing or attempting to force you to have sexual intercourse with them against your will. (7)</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

Q3.4 The following is a set of statements about your feelings toward events that can potentially occur. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree.

I am afraid...

	Strongly disagree 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	Strongly agree 5 (5)
Someone will break into my house while I am away (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Of being raped or sexually assaulted (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Of being attacked by someone with a weapon (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To go out at night because I might become the victim of crime (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Of being murdered (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Of having my money or possessions taken from me (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

Q3.6 The following is a list of activities related to future individual behaviors. Please estimate the likelihood you would engage in each specific activity on a 5-point scale, with 1 = Extremely unlikely and 5 = Extremely likely.

In the next 12 months, I will...

	Extremely unlikely 1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	Extremely likely 5 (5)
Donate blood to the American Red Cross (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Donate money to emergency support funds (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer my time at a local nonprofit organization (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit an injured victim in the hospital or a victim's family (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q4.1 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q4.2 What year were you born?

Q4.3 What is your race?

- White/Caucasian (1)
- African American (2)
- Hispanic (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native American (5)
- Pacific Islander (6)
- Other (7)

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Q19 How would you describe your political ideology?

- Very liberal (1)
- Liberal (2)
- Moderate (3)
- Conservative (4)
- Very conservative (5)

Q4.4 Are you registered to vote in the United States?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)

Q4.5 If you had to choose, how would you describe the area where you live?

- A big city (1)
- A small city (2)
- A suburb of a big city (3)
- A suburb of a small city (4)
- A town (5)
- A rural area (6)
- Other (7)

Q20 Have you ever been the victim of gun crime?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (3)
- Rather not say (4)

## BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

### Appendix C – Consent Form

#### Black and Blue and Read All Over: News Framing and the Coverage of Crime

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kalistah Cosand from Portland State University, Department of Communication. The researcher hopes to learn more about how news framing affects readers' emotions and policy decisions. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree in Communication Studies under the supervision of Dr. Lauren Frank at PSU. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your age.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to read a news article and respond to a series of questions. All questions will be answered online via Qualtrics survey platform, and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. This questionnaire can be accessed from any computer with internet access and printing capabilities. While participating in this study, it is possible that you may become uncomfortable with the topics discussed, as they relate to crime. However, the examples and locations discussed were developed solely for the purpose of this study. The study may help to increase knowledge in this area, which may help others in the future. Additionally, those taking part in this study are given the opportunity to receive extra credit as compensation for their time and effort.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential. This information will be kept confidential by only asking for your name on the sheet which you turn in for extra credit.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, and it will not affect your course grade or your relationship with those in the Department of Communication. You may also withdraw from this study at any time without affecting your course grade or relationship with your instructor. If you wish to receive extra credit but do not want to take part in this survey, an alternative assignment is available upon request.

If you have questions or concerns about your participation in this study, contact Kalistah Cosand by e-mail at [kalistah@pdx.edu](mailto:kalistah@pdx.edu), or telephone at (541) 591-2932. If you have concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact The PSU Office of Research Integrity, 1600 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave., Market Center Building, Ste. 620, Portland, OR 97207; phone (503) 725-2227 or 1 (877) 480-4400.

By completing the survey, you are giving consent to participate in the study and you are certifying that you are 18 years of age or older. If you would like to print a copy of this consent form for your records, please print this page from your browser now. If, at this point, you choose to continue in this research study, please click "Next" to continue to the survey. Thank you very much for your participation.

# BLACK AND BLUE NEWS

## Appendix D – IRB Approval Document



Post Office Box 751 503-725-2227 tel  
Portland, Oregon 97207-0751 503-725-8170 fax  
Human Subjects Research Review Committee  
hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu

Date: November 26, 2013

To: Lauren Frank / Kalistah Cosand

From: Karen Cellarius, HSRRC Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Karen Cellarius'.

Re: HSRRC approval for your project titled, "Black and Blue and Read All Over: News Framing and the Coverage of Crime"  
HSRRC Proposal # 132838

Approval-Expiration: November 26, 2013 – November 25, 2014

Review Type: Expedited, Categories 7

In accordance with your request, the Human Subjects Research Review Committee has reviewed your proposal referenced above for compliance with PSU and DHHS policies and regulations covering the protection of human subjects. The Committee is satisfied that your provisions for protecting the rights and welfare of all subjects participating in the research are adequate, and your project is approved. Please note the following requirements:

**Training:** All investigators involved with this protocol must complete either the CITI or NIH human subjects training courses as soon as possible. The links are available on the Office of Research Integrity/Human Subjects website. Please provide copies of the training certificates to the ORI as soon as the training is completed.

**Approval:** You are approved to conduct this research study only during the period of approval cited above; and the research must be conducted according to the plans and protocol submitted (approved copy enclosed).

**Consent:** Waiver of signed consent is approved for all participants in this study; written statement of research is required.

**Changes to Protocol:** Any changes in the proposed study, whether to procedures, survey instruments, consent forms or cover letters, must be outlined and submitted to the Committee immediately. The proposed changes cannot be implemented before they have been reviewed and approved by the Committee.

**Continuing Review:** *This approval will expire on 11/25/2014.* It is the investigator's responsibility to ensure that a *Continuing Review Report* on the status of the project is submitted to the HSRRC two months before the expiration date, and that approval of the study is kept current. The *Continuing Review Report* is available at [www.rsp.pdx.edu/compliance\\_human.php](http://www.rsp.pdx.edu/compliance_human.php) and in the Office of Research and Strategic Partnerships (RSP).

**Adverse Reactions and/or Unanticipated Problems:** If any adverse reactions or unanticipated problems occur as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Committee immediately. If the issue is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending an investigation by the Committee.

**Completion of Study:** Please notify the Committee as soon as your research has been completed. Study records, including protocols and signed consent forms for each participant, must be kept by the investigator in a secure location for three years following completion of the study (or per any requirements specified by the project's funding agency).

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Research Integrity in the PSU RSP at 503-725-2227.