Newspaper framing of indicted U.S. athletes: Evaluating orientation, prominence and proximity

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NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF INDICTED U.S. ATHLETES: EVALUATING ORIENTATION, PROMINENCE AND PROXIMITY

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The celebrity status that many athletes acquire presents an interesting dynamic to crime coverage, and newspaper coverage often puts more emphasis on criminal cases involving athletes than for similar cases that involve any other member of the public. When athletes are implicated and ultimately indicted for crimes, the national media turn their focus on the crime scene and scandal and begin to fill their pages and airtime with reports about the supposed wrongdoing (Mastro, Blecha & Seate 2011).

That conscious selection of newspaper content is an example of framing, one of the most widely used theoretical models for examining media coverage (Entman 1993). Framing is the process through which journalists determine public salience by elevating and focusing on certain facts while failing to mention others.

As a theoretical approach, framing can be applied to both crime and sports coverage, and it is especially applicable when the two intersect. Researchers such as Mastro, Blecha and Seate (2011) have examined how the concept of race acts as a frame in many cases involving indicted athletes. One famous example of this phenomenon is the well-publicized trial of former professional football player O.J. Simpson, a black man who was acquitted in 1995 of murdering two white people, including his wife. Scholars such as Grabe (2000) have studied how race acted as a divisive frame during Simpson's trial and in its aftermath.

Though Grabe (2000) and others such as Shipp (1994) have determined race to be a factor in some cases, few studies have examined the print media's framing of

multiple indicted athletes in the same study. Mastro, Blecha and Seate (2011) broadly examined race as a frame in criminal cases involving athletes, but they did not directly compare individual cases across a small range of newspapers. No case has risen to the prominence of the O.J. Simpson trial, so framing has been used sparingly — and definitely not comprehensively — to study how newspapers portray indicted athletes through conscious and/or subconscious framing.

Simpson's trial has been studied thoroughly, but many other cases allow for original research and fresh conclusions to be drawn. Some cases, such as the Duke University lacrosse incident where players were indicted for rape, have drawn the attention of scholars (Turnage 2009), but that research did not compare the case to others, and some studies only examined the frames used in the public relations battle between the prosecution and defense instead of newspaper framing (Barnett 2008).

This study aims to examine cases that have not been researched exhaustively or in a comparative manner. By using framing to compare cases that involve indicted athletes of various ages and races, this study analyzes content of how newspapers framed athletes amid allegations that they committed violent crimes. This can be accomplished by analyzing media coverage from a common national newspaper and through various newspapers local to the athlete's team or the area where the alleged crime took place.

The overarching research question of this study is the following: To what extent do prominence, proximity and orientation affect newspaper framing of indicted U.S. athletes? For the purpose of comparability, only violent crimes that implicate

famous athletes, or college athletes attending a prestigious institution, are examined in this study. “Violent crime” is defined as murder, rape or any type of assault or domestic violence.

“Celebrity status” also requires a working definition. This study uses that term to describe any athlete who is named in regional or national newspaper reports at least on a weekly basis within three months before his criminal indictment, or an athlete who is named in regional or national newspaper reports at least three times per week after the indictment is carried out. A “prestigious” university is one well-known for its athletics/and or academic success, and for those reasons appears multiple times per week when a student-athlete is implicated in a criminal investigation.

Using these terms, this study examines a case about murder, one about rape, and one about assault. One crime involves black defendants and black victims, one involves white defendants and black victims, and the third involves both white and black defendants and white and black victims.

This case examines the 2000 murder indictment of professional football player Ray Lewis of the Baltimore Ravens, the 2006 rape indictment of three members of the Duke University lacrosse team, and the 2004 assault indictment of professional basketball player Ron Artest, who contributed to a brawl between fans and players during a National Basketball Association game between the Detroit Pistons and the Indiana Pacers.

The Duke lacrosse case, as mentioned, has drawn some scholarly attention, but Lewis’ murder indictment and Artest’s assault charge have largely been forgotten,

underreported and less researched. That justifies the relevance of this study, which compares collegiate and professional athletes of differing ages and races who have been charged with different types of crimes. Time has elapsed since the criminal proceedings ended, and one of the premises here is that newspapers presented frames that either heavily emphasized or neglected to mention the criminal charges from the last decade.

This study is a content analysis of the *New York Times* for all three cases, as well as one or two other local or regional newspapers whose coverage is pertinent to each case. For the Ron Artest assault case, this study examines coverage in the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Indianapolis Star*, because the violent acts took place at a Detroit Pistons home game but involved many Indianapolis Pacers players, including Ron Artest. The Duke lacrosse case is analyzed according to coverage from the Durham, N.C. *Herald-Sun*. Lewis' murder indictment requires analysis of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* — because the murders took place in Atlanta following the Super Bowl — and the *Baltimore Sun*, the hometown newspaper that covers the Baltimore Ravens on a daily basis.

Examining coverage in the *New York Times* provides a better understanding of what frames were applied based on the nature of the alleged crime. The assumption here is that without a national news source, drawing conclusions from these content analyses would not be as widely applicable. This study involves the theoretical model of framing and resulted in comparative analysis among the cases being examined.

Few social phenomena have as great of an impact on the public as sports and crime (Mastro, Blecha & Seate 2011). These societal phenomena have clearly distinguishable attributes, and the media often invite the audience to participate in the discourse. When this takes place within the context of crime, newspaper readers become what Peelo (2006) calls "mediated witnesses." This study examines newspaper frames and attempts to draw inferences about how those frames influenced audience perceptions.

CHAPTER TWO

Framing: Broadly used but a "fractured paradigm"

Among the most commonly implemented theoretical models from the last half century is framing, which researchers have used in a wide array of disciplines to analyze the relationship between communicators and audiences (Entman 1993). Framing involve examining how a message is coded, transmitted and decoded in a way that uses certain keywords and themes that each party identifies as a marker of importance within the conveyed information. In this way, framing allows the parties to gain perspective and context from a piece of information (Scheufele 1999).

According to Entman (1993), framing involves selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and emphasizing them in a communicative text in a way that promotes the person receiving the communication to arrive at a desired interpretation of the text. This might involve his or her defining a problem, making a moral judgment or proscribing a course of action according to the frame that the communicating party chooses to use (Entman 1993).

Framing was formed within the context of the study of media effects, which first came about as a result of propaganda during World War I, according to Scheufele (1999). During that period, citizens feared that war propaganda would affect public opinion and that the power of the press was too great. But as time progressed, research demonstrated that such publications merely reinforced pre-existing notions. Few people's opinions swayed because of media representation, and even these people did not experience a vast change in attitude toward the subject at hand (Scheufele 1999).

With time, framing emerged as a theory that dealt with selection and salience instead of opinion formation (Entman 1993), though McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (1997) found that framing is an extension of agenda setting. Framing, according to Entman (1993), selects certain details to emphasize in an article — even through just a single mention — and thus makes them more salient for the recipient of the communicative text. Conversely, framing also involves the omission of potential problem definitions or recommended actions because the communicator diverts attention from them, either by attracting the recipient to other frames or by omitting the options from the text altogether (Entman 1993).

Framing does not always result from a conscious decision made by the communicator. Journalists, for example, often use framing as a manner to convey information in a way that makes it easily comprehensible for the recipient, but newsworthiness does not always entail the conscious omission of certain details or the careful selection of vocabulary that will convey a certain message (Entman 1993).

Framing is also a useful theory to use in qualitative research, such as the content analysis that Durham (1998) performed to examine the *New York Times*' coverage of the crash of TWA Flight 800. Durham analyzed reporter-source relations as the site of frame-making to try to determine what frames resulted.

Durham (1998) examined 668 news stories from the *New York Times* to try and determine what frames were used and what response those frames elicited from the newspapers' readers (p. 101). But he found that the paper did not frame the plane crash in any way because the reporters and the sources could not arrive at a conclusion

as to how the crash took place. Content analyses, therefore, can be used to determine whether or not framing is used at all, and if so, what concepts are framed and what questions and solutions are raised as a result of those frames.

Framing is not used synonymously in all fields of research. Entman (1993) points to a "fractured paradigm" in which scholars have a generally shared definition of framing but do not apply the theory identically in all situations. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that framing is a concept that is relatively easy to grasp, meaning that scholars have not felt a need to define it explicitly. This has led scholars to produce vastly different results despite approaching the same topic from the theoretical lens of framing (Scheufele 1999, p. 118).

Durham (1998) points to the limits of framing within the context of journalism when stories cannot be reduced to easily transmissible facts, such as the lack of resolution to the TWA crash. This takes place when reporters and their sources cannot agree on a frame through which to convey the story (p. 102).

But one could deduce that this lack of a resolved frame is a frame in itself, as the 668 *New York Times* stories published in the year after the crash emphasized the mystery surrounding the incident and the lack of closure for the victims' families. Framing appears to take on a different purpose in this situation, but frames are not absent from this story.

Scheufele (1999) also highlights a lack of data that links individual and audience frames to media frames. He suggests that researchers find a more-defined connection between the media's use of frames and the public's collective and

individual processing of information. Framing is likely to last as a theoretical approach to communication research, but implementing a unified approach could go a long way to making more substantiated discoveries.

CHAPTER THREE

Framing as applied to sports coverage

The broad applicability of framing has led researchers (Seltzer & Mitrook 2009, Byrd & Utsler 2007, Billings 2009) to use it as a theoretical model for analyzing concepts in many disciplines (Entman 1993). One of those areas of study is sports coverage by media in the United States. Content analyses of several topics within that discipline have shown that the model can be implemented to help examine conscious and subconscious framing about race, sex and the use of expert opinions (Seltzer & Mitrook 2009, Byrd & Utsler 2007). Through this lens, framing has proven to be a practical model for examining the effects of media portrayal of athletes according to their physical and mental attributes as well as their relative fame.

Framing is an especially powerful theoretical model when applied to sports coverage in newspapers because it involves a captivated audience. Although television shows such as ESPN's *SportsCenter* provide fans with general coverage of a wide range of sports, these sports followers frequently turn to print publications to obtain in-depth and specialized knowledge of their favorite teams (Seltzer & Mitrook 2009). Furthermore, this coverage can affect some aspects of the sports world, such as the voting results for prestigious awards such as college football's Heisman Trophy.

Seltzer and Mitrook (2009) hypothesized that the use of expert opinions within the context of framing would influence the outcome of the Heisman race. They examined the correlation between the expert poll of 10 Heisman voters conducted by *Scripps Howard* and *The Rocky Mountain News* and the results of the Heisman

Trophy ballots from 2001 to 2003. They also studied the correlation between the *Scripps* poll and the Associated Press rankings and the correlation between the AP rankings and the final Heisman vote (Seltzer & Mitrook 2009).

Through a quantitative content analysis, the study revealed that the *Scripps* expert opinion poll correlated most directly with the final Heisman voting. This was attributed to McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory and Entman's (1993) study of framing. Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) noted that public discourse about the Heisman race depended on which athletes were mentioned and omitted in the expert poll, as well as how they were described in weekly media reports.

Content analyses also help to determine the extent to which racial and ethnic descriptors play a role in the media' framing of athletes. Byrd and Utsler (2007) found that racial stereotypes about white and African-American quarterbacks are less pervasive than in the final three decades of the 20th century. They quantified an array of frames used by *Sports Illustrated* from 2002 to 2004 according to the players' ascribed leadership, personality, intelligence, physicality and on-field performance (Byrd & Utsler 2007).

The results showed some disparity between the representations of white and African-American quarterbacks, but this difference was much less pronounced than previous research, and the main discrepancies largely corresponded to quantifiable differences in the players' football skills. Whereas previous research revealed that the media mainly reserved positive descriptions of leadership and intelligence for white quarterbacks, the *Sports Illustrated* articles attributed these qualities to African-

American quarterbacks at a similar rate as their white counterparts. Conversely, the authors did not resort to mere physical descriptors to label the African-American athletes (Byrd & Utsler 2007).

The *Sports Illustrated* study gains credibility because the authors contextualized their research with facts that accounted for differences between the portrayal of each quarterback. Because only 12 players were analyzed in this case study, Byrd and Utsler (2007) went to great lengths to explain possible differences in characterization between Super Bowl champion white quarterbacks such as Peyton Manning and less decorated players such as African-American quarterback Kordell Stewart. Had the differences in characterization been attributed to race alone, the study would lack depth and credibility.

Billings (2009) also examined racial portrayal in the media along with classifications by sex and nationality. The author examined NBC's coverage of the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy, by interviewing 11 on-air and behind-the-scenes personalities who presented the games to millions of sports fans. Billings (2009) noted a disproportionate amount of coverage of American athletes compared to non-American athletes, even of the same skill level. Male athletes appeared almost twice as frequently as female athletes. NBC announcer Tom Hammond openly admitted that they discussed how often to air athletes of each sex and how to portray American athletes to its audience.

> "Television is a reactive media. We give the people more of what they want to see than what they ought to see. It's not perfect; it's not there yet. But we do give women the closest thing yet to equality with men in terms of coverage" (Billings 2009, p. 12)

Hammonds inherently ascribes the agenda-setting process to the audience, whereas McCombs and Shaw (1972) would argue that it is the media that control public discourse. Billings (2009) also notes NBC officials' lack of emphasis on race among Olympic athletes. The authors explains this as either an indicator that the media's conscious tendency to make race-based remarks is diminishing or that any comments made about race merely were subconscious processes.

> "The media should strive to cover athletes based on their individual talent and not perpetuate racial group stereotypes. Successful athletic performance incorporates so many attributes (drive, hard work, coaching opportunities, etc.), being just a good natural athlete is not enough to succeed at the professional level. This has always been understood for White athletes, but not so for African- American athletes" (Billings 2009, p. 22).

By employing content analyses to examine race, sex, nationality and the influence of expert opinions, Billings (2009), Byrd and Utsler (2007) and Seltzer and Mitrook (2009) demonstrate that framing clearly applies to the demographical study of athletes. Qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis through categorization and source interviews can shed light onto how variables such as race, sex and nationality affect the media's representation of athletes at the collegiate, professional and Olympic levels.

The studies are strongest when they include contextualization to provide meaningful extrapolation of the data, such as what Byrd and Utsler (2007) include in their research. Meanwhile, Billings' (2009) work provides a close examination of the consciousness of television reporters when framing a story to attract a specific audience. Seltzer and Mitrook (2009) largely ignore race but examine how expert

opinions can frame the national media and ultimately voters for a prestigious award. All of this research demonstrates the vast applicability of framing as a theoretical model within the context of studying sports.

Just as framing can be used to study athletic accomplishments, it also can be used within the context of legal proceedings of athletes with the same or a similar level of notoriety. Entman (1993) highlights the breadth of this theoretical model and suggests that a broad array of research can shed light onto a unified approach to framing.

CHAPTER FOUR

Celebrification and developing a public image

The concept of celebrity status has produced a variety of studies (Dyer 1979, Holmes 2005, Sassenberg, Verreynne and Morgan 2012) that explore how such popular stars reach their prominence. This process, which Rojek (2001) coined as "celebrification," can take many forms because celebrities do not fit a common mould. Dyer (1979) studied traditional celebrities, such as movie stars who rose to prominence for their roles on the big screen, but a 21st century approach to fame and celebrity status is much more diverse and complicated.

Hendrickson and Wilkins (2007) noted the broad range of famous figures that have little in common beside their society-driven notoriety. The Internet has led to the rise of YouTube sensations and instant celebrities, while the more traditional movie star still retains his or her role in the national stage. The concept of celebrity has become a business in which the famous are a form of currency that can be bought for a price and sold to consumers in the form of product endorsements (Hendrickson & Wilkins 2007).

What drives a person to become a celebrity? Hendrickson and Wilkins (2007) point to a "parasocial" connection between celebrities, such as politicians, and their audience that simulates a real-life connection. Celebrities embody certain estimable character traits with which the audience chooses to associate. In the eyes of the public, celebrities lose their innate personality and take on a certain role:

> Reconceptualizing parasocial interaction suggests that the qualities the media focus on may blur the distinctions between fictional characters and actual persons and between celebrities and those who receive media coverage for their public positions in life, in other words, political actors. (Hendrickson & Wilkins 2007, p. 9)

Reality television has helped to expand the realm of celebrities from movie stars to "ordinary" people with whom viewers can relate (Holmes 2005). Likewise, "fame" has expanded to include several origins, according to Rojek (2001): Ascribed, achieved and attributed. Ascribed fame comes from lineage, such as for members of the Kennedy family. Achieved fame results from conquest in competition, such as for athletes and tried-and-true musicians and actors.

Attributed success is particularly relevant within the context of media framing. Rojek (2001) identifies this kind of celebrification as that which results from concentrated media coverage that creates an inherent knowledge of a particular person without his or her having an attribution (i.e. lineage) or achievement (i.e. sports championship) upon which to base that fame. One example might be ESPN's continued focus on Tim Tebow, the professional quarterback who is average by professional standards, despite his being a backup on a losing team.

Hendrickson and Wilkins (2007) attribute both achieved and attributed celebrification to a desire to become known in the public sphere: Continually stepping into the spotlight is a way to attract attention, just as winning is the best way to stay relevant in sports. Holmes (2005) identifies the concepts of change and individuality as the driving forces behind celebrification. People who strive to change the cultural

landscape and who present themselves as one-of-a-kind individuals have an enhanced chance at establishing fame because of product scarcity and innovation.

Such a business-like model of celebrity also rings true within the realm of sports (Sassenberg, Verreynne & Morgan 2012). Athletes use their on-field skills and personal appeal to build a marketable commodity. The Brand Image Model, for example, states that consumers are more likely to view a product positively when they find the brand's attributes to be valuable. Athletes, in turn, link their positive attributes to those of the product (Sassenberg, Verreynne & Morgan 2012).

The study's authors also describe the Sport Celebrity Brand Image (SCMI), in which athletes convey a positive message to brand consumers at two levels: behavioral attitudes and affective attitudes (Sassenberg, Verreynne & Morgan 2012, p. 113). Affective attitudes include attraction and allegiance to the brand by way of the athlete, and those themes of desire and loyalty result in behavioral attitudes. Those actions include watching the athlete by subscribing to cable television, buying the products the athlete endorses and then spreading word of those products to others. Citing Erdogan (1999), Sassenberg, Verreynne and Morgan (2012) write, "A match of image and values occurs when there is a high degree of perceived fit between the endorsed brand image and the celebrity image."

Both Hendrickson and Wilkins (2007) and Sassenberg, Verreynne and Morgan (2012) note the difficulty of defining a class of celebrities in the 21st century social landscape. Media framing, either consciously through a prominently placed feature story about an "ordinary" person or automatically through millions of YouTube views,

can turn anyone into a celebrity. The authors note that many celebrities are defined by their influence beyond their area of expertise: recording artists endorse political candidates and campaign for social issues (Hendrickson & Wilkins 2007), while athletes step off the field but remain powerful through product endorsements (Sassenberg, Verreynne & Morgan 2012).

Rojek (2001) shrewdly labels celebrification as a process that goes beyond the analysis of individual cases: Gaining and retaining fame is a cultural phenomenon sustained by Western individualism (Holmes 2005), but individuals cannot become famous without a social structure that enables people to rise in the social hierarchy. Thus, fame must be examined holistically rather than through the microscope of a single singer or Internet sensation who suddenly is cast into the national or global spotlight (Hendrickson & Wilkins 2007).

Once a holistic model is created and studied, then the scope once again can be narrowed to focus on individual celebrities, such as athletes (Sassenberg, Verreynne & Morgan 2012). After all, each person's fame acts individually to create business and political opportunities. Fame is made possible by societal values and constructs that enable it, but it must function at an individual level for a celebrity to maintain and to profit from that notoriety (Sassenberg, Verreynne & Morgan 2012).

But fame often comes full-circle and is reduced back to the parasocial function that Hendrickson and Wilkins (2007) describe. Holmes (2005) states: "celebrities are relentlessly pursued doing mundane activities – loading up the car at a shopping centre, exiting a DIY store, or walking with their children or dogs at the

park." Celebrities most powerfully enter the spotlight when their superiority meets the public's normalcy, whether that be through endorsing a particular brand of laundry detergent or – in the case of the less-fortunate celebrities – finding themselves in legal trouble.

CHAPTER FIVE

Framing as applied to O.J. Simpson's murder trial

Although not many studies have examined media coverage of indicted athletes within the theoretical model of framing, the O.J. Simpson murder indictment and trial quickly gathered national interest and inspired studies such as Grabe's (2000) and Tucker's (1997). Simpson's trial became one of the most widely followed phenomena in the history of traditional news media, and the breadth of the coverage meant there was plenty of fresh content for scholars to analyze, (Tucker 1997, "Editor & Publisher 1994).

The Simpson murder trial served as a palatable platform upon which to examine the coverage of a famous athlete. But the case gained prominence for more reasons than Simpson's athletic talents (Maxwell, Huxford, Borum & Hornik 2000). Simpson was a black man with substantial wealth who did not associate himself primarily with his racial heritage. He had married a white woman, Nicole Simpson, and was not considered to be the prototypical hero in black culture. That led several black media outlets, such as *Emerge* magazine, to ignore covering Simpson's trial altogether because the editors did not feel Simpson's trial represented an issue of racial injustice that stood for the plight of black Americans (Shipp 1994).

But Shipp (1994) asserts that the mainstream media framed Simpson's trial as a traditional example of the black-versus-white mindset that often carries out in the American justice system. Whether this framing was the impetus or result of public opinion, polls soon showed that the trial led most black Americans to presume

Simpson's innocence while a majority of whites believed that he was guilty of murdering his wife and her white friend (Shipp 1994).

Tucker (1997) examined coverage between the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Defender*, a black newspaper, through the day after Simpson was acquitted of the murders. The study found a clear use of framing to juxtapose the white and black perspectives in each newspaper, though both also employed the competing frame of blind justice. Tucker (1997) notes that this approach alienates people whose opinions differ from a simple racial bifurcation and limits the extent to which discourse can exist on a more complex level. By reducing the case to a simple matter of racial tension, the media covered the trial using the same lens that had been used for decades (Shipp 1994).

Grabe (2000) found that lens to be particularly troubling because of its origins in racist tactics used during the age of slavery in the American south. Before the Civil War, states restricted the relationship between a black man and a white woman by implementing laws that prohibited marriage and sexual intercourse between them. A black man who raped or murdered a white women often was punished more severely than when a white man committed those crimes against any women of any race. After slavery was abolished, white men often lynched black men who were accused, indicted or convicted of any crime against a white victim. Newspaper coverage in the 1940s went as far as defending lynching as an instrument for protecting white women (Grabe 2000).

The perpetuation of this cycle led the media to create frames that often portrayed black men as the dominant, physical force that subjugated white women. A disproportionate level of broadcast media coverage involves black men accused of crimes (Grabe 2000).

Shipp (1994) viewed Simpson's case as a potential landmark for media coverage because Simpson was not the traditional black defendant. He had power, fame and money, and he had gained a public perception that prevented him from being cast as a faceless criminal. However, Simpson also was not a typical black hero in that he never received the affirmative treatment of the black media because of how he lived his life. He married a white woman, did little to reach out to the African-American community and lived a life separate from that of the black population in Los Angeles. He stood as his own person, not fitting into the prototypical molds of black defendants (Shipp 1994).

But Grabe (2000) found that these differences in Simpson's situation did not bring a change in media coverage. In her study of broadcast news magazines, Grabe (2000) notes that the media tend to perpetuate common narratives that have stood the test of time. One of these is the "criminality of African American males" (Grabe 2000, pg. 37), such as the longstanding scrutiny of relationships between black men and white women. The study found that a vast majority of broadcast news magazines portrayed Simpson as guilty of the two murders well before the verdict came in (Grabe 2000).

> "News magazine programs were quick to turn Simpson into a guilty and evil criminal. Simpson was, long before the end of his criminal

> trial, presented as guilty of murdering Nicole Simpson and Ronald Goldman. Character assassinations like this one are … part of contemporary society's mass mediated degradation ceremonies" (Grabe 2000, pg. 44)

The author determined that these ceremonies served to unite and to divide society simultaneously. It united society through the ancient ritual of watching the demise of a person who was determined to be guilty. People joined together in public outrage of a crime, but that outrage did not unilaterally transcend racial lines. In this way it divided the community and deepened racial tensions (Grabe 2000).

The simultaneous unification and division processes are even more powerful when the audience's ability to discern independent meaning is limited (Tucker 1997). Tucker (1997) notes that the frames used by the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Defender* offer little room for their respective readers to connote their own conclusions. This furthers the process of revisiting pre-determined notions about black defendants in cases involving violent crimes that Grabe (2000) also discussed.

Framing does not only apply to the news audience but also to the news producers. Maxwell, Huxford, Borum and Hornik (2000) state that the media's portrayal of Simpson as a traditional black defendant, thus invoking the black-versus-white social schism, limits the possibility of drawing further conclusions from the trial coverage. Domestic violence, for example, is another frame that could have been applied had the case's racial implications not been so dominant. Maxwell, Huxford, Borum and Hornik (2000) noted that domestic violence had been a consistent part of crime coverage on a case-by-case basis, but even the Simpson trial could not lead news organizations to extract a deeper meaning from a society that produces such

violence on a broad scale. Domestic violence coverage increased in frequency during the Simpson trial, but it quickly returned to its pre-trial level once the case resolved. The Simpson murder trial failed to realize frames that could bring a more profound social understanding of violence in the home (Maxwell, Huxford, Borum & Hornik 2000).

In fact, the Simpson trial might have limited coverage of some other notable developments during the 1990s. Health-care reform during President Bill Clinton's administration and the economy took a back seat to Simpson's coverage. Salience of the nuclear weapons developments in North Korea and the civil war in Bosnia were greatly overshadowed.

Most of the research conducted on the Simpson murder trial involves a content analysis that either quantifies (Maxwell, Huxford, Borum & Hornik 2000) or qualifies (Tucker 1997) the frames used by print and broadcast media. Most studies (Tucker 1997, Shipp 1994, and Grabe 2000) agree that race is the dominant theme in coverage of this trial, and that frame inherently omits other frames that could draw a broader sense of meaning from the case.

CHAPTER SIX

Perceived heroism and idealism of sports stars

Even when no crime has been committed, the media have a profound effect on the representation of athletes, especially to younger audience members (Lines 2001). This portrayal presents athletes as heroes, fools or villains according to their sex and public actions. The media use frames to depict athletes in a certain light that can lead to hero worship or rejection by sports fans (Lines 2001).

Decades ago, it was commonplace and relatively unquestioned that athletes could be role models for young fans, especially for boys. However, the recent upsurge of online media has created an environment that is no longer conducive to the deification of athletes (Strudler 2006). This has led to a change in the definition of "hero" from a holistic approach that featured moral responsibility to a sports-only angle that largely disregards personal problems in the hero-worshipping process (Lines 2001).

The change in what is considered to be heroic also has brought a division between worshipping the "real" athlete and the "ideal" athlete. Young sports fans tend to adore their favorite athletes according to their ideal characteristics — that is, the traits that make the athlete desirable but not necessarily relatable — instead of their real characteristics. This idealization of athletes persists even as more and more off-field incidents make their way onto websites and into newspapers (Strudler 2006).

Framing applies to the worship of athletes in that journalists portray certain attributes of each player while ignoring others. Thus, the athlete that is presented is not

truly "real" because only "ideal" characteristics are portrayed (Lines 2001). These ideal traits, such as financial success, physical attractiveness and athletic competence, do not cancel out the effects of negative behavior outside of competition, but even the youngest of fans are capable of disseminating between hero-like qualities that invoke worship and human shortcomings that can be ignored (Strudler 2006).

Another interesting aspect of the framing of athletes as heroes is the dichotomy of representation between male and female athletes. Lines (2001) notes that male athletes are expected to act with traditionally masculine qualities, such as honor, bravery and valor, while female athletes are adored for their sexual appeal and scorned for attempts to display "masculine" traits. The same apprehension arises when a prominent male athlete reveals his homosexuality or when a woman attempts to play in a male-only event, such as The Masters golf tournament (Lines 2001).

Rowe (2005) notes that young male athletes are given more of a benefit of the doubt when they commit moral errors than women receive. The notion that young men should be free to experiment, fail and learn extends to the world of sport, and that idea can lead to a self-developed sense of infallibility. When that happens, Rowe (2005) says that women can be victimized but blamed for their male counterparts' mistakes, and the men often do not see the consequences of their actions. Athletes of this nature are "real" in that they make the same mistakes that any other male can, but their inherent separation from the public leads to a different set of mores that are applied to their actions (Rowe 2005).

Strudler (2006) found that most young males have unique sports heroes, which contradicts the belief that only the super-famous can become objects of their fans' worship. Young fans are finding their favorite athletes to be less and less ideal, partially because they are dropping out of school at a faster rate and the media documents every misstep on and off the court (Strudler 2006). However, Lines (2001) found that fans desire to relate to a hero to fulfill the role of the protagonist, even if he happens to be a tragic hero.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Method

This study examines the framing of U.S. athletes who have been indicted for allegedly committing violent crimes. It focuses on sports news framing in newspapers that are proximate to the location of the alleged crime as well as one national newspaper that was used to compare framing across all three case studies.

The cases examined were chosen based on differences in prominence, proximity and orientation of the athletes, including but not limited to their race, sex, age, popularity and geographical location. Each alleged crime and the subsequent newspaper coverage took place during the first decade of the 21st century, allowing for a chronological comparison of newspaper framing.

The study analyzes coverage from one or two newspapers with local ties to the incident and a national newspaper. The *Detroit Free Press* and *Indianapolis Star* were examined for their coverage of Indiana Pacers basketball player Ron Artest's criminal assault case, which resulted from an altercation during a game in Detroit against the Pistons in 2004. The *Free Press* has a daily circulation of about 235,000, and the *Star* has a circulation of 255,000.

Ray Lewis' indictment for murder in 2000 will be examined through coverage from the *Baltimore Sun*, which is the local paper for Lewis' Baltimore Ravens football team, and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution,* which is local to the site where Lewis was arrested for allegedly committing two murders in 2000. Both newspapers have a circulation of about 196,000.

The study will also look at the coverage of the Duke University lacrosse players who were indicted for rape in 2006. Examining this incident involves coverage from the Durham, N.C., *Herald-Sun*. The paper's circulation is about 25,000.

The national newspaper used for examining all three of these cases is the *New York Times*, widely considered to be the newspaper of record in the United States and one that had the resources to cover each incident. The *Times* has a daily circulation of about 1,587,000.

This study will examine newspaper framing of indicted athletes through the lenses of prominence, proximity and orientation. These terms shall be operationalized in part from previous research (Tunez 2009, Myhre 2002, Kwon 2009) that linked framing to each of these variables. Tunez and Guevara (2009) examined criteria for newsworthiness through the frame of proximity. That term was used in a geographic context defined as "impact over the nation and the national interest" (Tunez & Guevara 2009, pg. 6). Under this framework, proximity can be geographic, social, psychological or ideological, where the geographical component is determined by the magnitude of an event that falls outside the normal zone of coverage. The further an event takes place from the typical coverage area, the stronger the connection between the audience and the story must be for it to be considered newsworthy (Tunez & Guevara 2009).

The authors studied the coverage of elections in Mozambique and peace in Angola from the perspective of newspapers in Mexico, Spain, Portugal and Galicia. Tunez and Guevara (2009) hypothesized that the historical context of these situations

would constitute newsworthiness on the grounds of proximity. Peace in Angola and elections in Mozambique, though geographically distant from the newspapers' audiences, had historical links to those areas and the ideological ties of peace and democratic elections were both types of proximity that would make the developments relevant to readers in those areas (Tunez & Guevara).

Prominence also has been linked to framing in scholarly research, such as the study that Myhre et al. (2002) conducted. Myhre and colleagues examined the frequency, prominence and framing of alcohol coverage in California newspapers and found that most coverage was related to current events, such as drinking-and-driving incidents or trauma caused by alcohol-induced accidents (Myhre et al. 2002).

This study defines prominence as story placement within a newspaper that affects how the audience relates to the news—front-page articles naturally garner more attention, while inside pages denote a lower level of importance (Myhre et al. 2002). Prominence also includes the percent of articles including some mention of alcohol and the circulation of the newspaper.

Myhre and colleagues (2002) found that newspapers with higher circulations included more alcohol-related coverage, but smaller newspapers were more likely to prominently display such coverage, particularly on the front page of a section. Thus, prominence referred to article placement and the depth of coverage. That operational definition was employed for this study of indicted athletes, as prominence will be operationally defined by the criteria of frequency of coverage and the placement within the newspaper of that coverage.

Meanwhile, Kwon and Moon (2009) focused on orientation as a cultural phenomenon that helps to shape a society's understanding of news from a specific perspective. The case that the authors use is the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings by a South Korean man. Collectively, the Korean population in the United States and abroad expressed remorse that one of their countrymen had committed that atrocity, thus raising questions about cultural orientation (Kwon & Moon 2009).

Entman (1993) included salience as one of the constructs of framing, and Kwon and Moon (2009) found that cultural orientation produced a higher level of issue salience than individualized orientation. Thus, orientation can be defined as a manner in which an issue is framed to elevate the salience of an individualistic or shared cultural viewpoint of a particular event (Kwon & Moon 2009).

This study uses "Black's Law Dictionary, Free Online 2nd Edition" as a touchstone for legal definitions. Black (2012) defines "murder" as:

> The crime committed where a person of sound mind and discretion (that is, of sufficient age to form and execute a criminal design and not legally "insane") kills any human creature in being (excluding quick but unborn children) and in the peace of the state or nation (including all persons except the military forces of the public enemy in time of war or battle) without any warrant, justification, or excuse in law; with malice aforethought, express or implied, that is, with a deliberate purpose or a design or determination distinctly formed in the mind before the commission of the act, provided that death results from the injury inflicted within one year and a day after its infliction (Black 2012).

Likewise, Black (2012) defines "rape" as: "The unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman by a man forcibly and against her will." The same source defines "assault"

as: “An unlawful attempt or offer on the part of one man, with force or violence, to inflict a bodily hurt upon another” (Black 2012).

The study examines the following questions:

> RQ1: What national and local newspaper frames based on orientation are used most frequently to portray U.S. athletes who have been indicted for allegedly committing a violent crime?
>
> RQ2: To what extent does an athlete’s prominence and regional proximity affect the framing of his trial in local versus national newspapers?
>
> RQ3: In what way does video or audio documentation of the alleged crimes affect how an indicted athlete is framed in local and national newspaper coverage?

In response to these inquiries, this paper premises that:

> H1: Orientation of an athlete generates more frames in local newspapers than national newspapers.
>
> H2: Orientation of an athlete elicits more negative frames in national newspapers than local newspapers due to the prominence and proximity of that athlete at the local level.
>
> H3: Video or audio documentation of the alleged crimes will expand the media’s willingness to frame athletes.

The hypotheses for this study were tested using content analysis of newspaper articles. Two independent coders were recruit to establish reliability of the data. After undergoing a training session to establish common definitions and interpretation guidelines, the coders examined articles to determine the presence of the hypothesized variables in a sample of articles.

The two coders had no ties to the research subjects and were not informed of the researcher’s hypotheses as a manner of controlling for potential bias. The

researcher also recused himself from conducting article analysis to control for potential bias. His only involvement in the coding process took the form of coder training with five articles that were not included in the sample body. Likewise, the researcher oversaw the training without suggesting answers but merely served to answer the coders' questions and to ensure that they interpreted the coding questions in a similar and consistent manner.

The sample articles were obtained via online databases in text-only format. Articles from the *New York Times* and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* came from LexisNexis, while the *Detroit Free Press*, *Indianapolis Star*, *Baltimore Sun*, and *Herald-Sun* articles were obtained via paid archives accessible through each newspaper's website. Each source provided information about the author and original publication date and presented the article with its original headline. This allowed the articles to be evaluated comparatively despite their differing sources of origin.

The sample was randomly selected, with every 10th article being included in the data to be coded. If a randomly selected article was an opinion piece, the next article published chronologically was then selected, and then the selection process continued. The study used a sample size of roughly 10 percent of all articles written during the established period. Columns, letters to the editor, and other opinion-oriented articles were omitted from the sample because such writings are intended primarily to persuade rather than to inform, and the framing mechanisms used in the writing style in the newspapers is inherently different from most other articles.

The sample articles included those written in the three months before the athletes were indicted to three months after the case was resolved. That time period allowed for the examination of frames used before, during and after the adjudication took place. Such a period allowed for a comparative analysis of newspaper frames to see how those frames developed or changed as more information became available during the course of each investigation.

The 10-percent randomization provided relatively even sample sizes for each of the three cases. From the three months before the indictment to three months after the resolution of the trial, each case study produced between 700 and 900 articles in the newspapers identified for this research. That produced a sample size of 65-85 articles once opinion pieces were identified and eliminated from the research body. Data were analyzed for the presence and types of framing that appeared in newspaper coverage of the three aforementioned cases involving indicted athletes. Evaluating only text presents a simplified study but also limits the breadth of potential analysis. For this study, limiting the scope to the article's text allows for an examination of how authors may or may not use framing in their work, whereas evaluating the use of photos, page placement and other artistic elements adds framing from page designers, photographers and graphical artists.

Framing in a visual sense takes on a completely different shape than analyzing text-only frames. For example, determining a frame of race becomes difficult because a photo often reveals one's race without the photographer's explicit desire to convey race as a message. With text-only content analysis, the researcher does not have to

account for such questions, for every word must be chosen specifically for the article in question.

The articles then were combined in a document with consistent formatting for analysis by the independent coders. The coders were chosen to remove any potential bias on the part of the researcher. The coders evaluated the body of sample articles by using a codebook that the researcher developed from a theoretical basis. The codebook provided a consistent framework that ensured comparable analysis for all sample articles. The coders analyzed each article while keeping four potential attributes in mind: Prominence, proximity, orientation and criminal culpability.

The coders were asked to read each article in its entirety and to answer questions that evaluated specific attributes of newspaper coverage. Each of the four questions had five multiple-choice response options labeled A, B, C, D and E. The alphabetical labels did not represent any type of scale but rather served as arbitrary labels to identify and to sort coding responses.

Prominence, proximity, orientation and criminal culpability are four lenses through which to establish the presence of potential frames. The coding question to evaluate prominence asked how the article presented the indicted athlete by mentioning his athletic accomplishments, suspected criminal involvement, both or neither, as a way to evaluate RQ2. The proximity question served to determine whether the story appeared in a local or national newspaper, and whether the author wrote for a local or a national news agency. The coding evaluation of orienting details served to determine the use of personal identifying details to label the indicted athlete.

Finally, the coding question to evaluate criminal culpability served to identify references to the athlete's guilt or innocence.

The coders noted their level of confidence in each answered they selected. Confidence was rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 signifying "strongly disagree" to 5 signifying "strongly agree." The coders' adherence to standardized definitions was then evaluated by the corroboration of their responses and relative confidence levels. The coders' responses then were compared to establish an acceptable level of coder reliability. Once the results were verified as consistent and reliable according to coefficients obtained through a Student's t-test, the data were correlated to determine if there were statistically significant differences among the variables.

For example, coders were instructed during the training period to refer to any newspaper from a location where the alleged crime took place as a "local" newspaper, but this instruction partially contradicted a poorly worded question in the codebook. Such a difference appeared after evaluating multi-coder reliability.

Measuring multi-coder reliability can be accomplished through a variety of analyses. Two of the more commonly used markers are Krippendorf's alpha (α), which is broadly applicable regardless of metrics and sample size, and Scott's Pi (π), which can only be used for nominal data with two variables and large sample sizes. Although either measurement system could suffice for this study, a simple percentage agreement was used. Scott's Pi and Krippendorf's alpha account for chance agreement. For example, coders might agree on the same answer for different reasons, or randomly selected responses would still align occasionally. The researcher relied

primarily on simple percentage agreement and Krippendorf's alpha to establish sufficient reliability.

A two-tailed Student's t-test was conducted to estimate significant differences among the three case studies. This form of t-test can be used to evaluate statistical differences when the standard deviation is not known in small or medium sample sizes. By using the number of responses that identified characteristics of prominence, proximity, orientation or criminally culpability, the data could reveal similarities or differences between national and local newspapers across those variables.

The T-test results served as the basis for accepting or rejecting the hypotheses. While a T-test cannot prove a hypothesis on face value, it can provide evidence based on a negligible probability of being false that some data are or are not statistically different than others. Those differences or similarities, in turn, can lead to accepting or rejecting the hypotheses that are based on correlations between national and local newspapers. The T-test can provide some important estimations and correlations for the coverage of sports athletes at the national and local levels.

Appendix A contains the codebook in full for reference. Answers A, B and C to the Orientation question indicated that an article included at least two orienting details, including but not limited to age and/or race. Therefore, to quantify the number of frames present, any response of A, B or C translated to a numerical value of 2. Response D indicated the presence of exactly one orienting detail, and this translated to a numerical value of 1. Response E indicated the absence of any orienting details, and thus was quantified as 0.

Likewise, Responses A, B and C for Criminal Culpability conveyed that the verdict in the athlete's case was guilty, innocent or pending. Any of these three answers would implicate the athlete as the defendant, and thus each such response received a numerical value of 1. Response D did not reveal the athlete's legal status within the investigation, and Response E did not mention the investigation at all. Because neither Response D or Response E indicated any direct involvement in the alleged crime, these answers were quantified as 0.

Once numerical values had been assigned to quantify the nominal evaluation system, the T-test could begin. The researcher executed these tests to compare framing at the national and local levels overall, and for each case specifically. The researcher also compared the presence of orienting details and references to criminal culpability among the case studies to serve as a basis for determining why some cases may or may not have elicited more frames than others. Determining a *p*-value greater than 0.05 does not automatically reject the hypotheses, but rather that value would infer a lack of proof. Such a finding is largely inconclusive, for a lack of proof is different than disproof.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Results

Drawing results from a content analysis evaluated by multiple coders first requires the researcher to establish a minimal level of reliability of the coding responses. The coders must independently reach a certain consensus level to verify that their answers allow for a veritable assessment of the hypotheses.

Percentage agreement does not calculate potential agreement based solely on chance, and for that reason Krippendorf and Bock (2009) list this method as an inaccurate measure of true agreement. However, for a simple, nominal procedure with only two coders, percentage agreement can suffice. The researcher established a minimum agreement threshold of 70 percent. Inter-coder agreement of at least 70 percent will be considered acceptable for drawing basic conclusions, and 80 percent agreement allows for stronger conclusions. Inter-coder agreement below 70 percent shall be considered too low to draw meaningful conclusions.

Inter-coder agreement was analyzed using the PRAM application to determine percentage agreement and Krippendorf's alpha. The researcher organized the data in pairs that the application could recognize and evaluate for agreement.

The highest level of agreement came from the proximity category, for which the coders agreed on 205 out of 239, or 85.8 percent, of their responses. That corresponds to an α value of 0.718, which is an acceptable level for drawing conclusions. The coders were asked to identify the source of the story as a local or national write for a local or national newspaper. This relatively high level of

agreement shows that the coders interpreted the question in a similar manner across both variables: newspaper location, and author's position.

One striking difference was each coder's response for proximity for articles about Ron Artest published in the *Detroit Free Press*. One coder identified the newspaper as a local news source because the alleged assault took place near Detroit, but the other referred to the *Free Press* as a national newspaper because it was not specifically local to Artest or the Pacers' home market. Most other response disparities did not appear in the data.

A high correlation level revealed that the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *Baltimore Sun* could be examined as local newspapers for the Ray Lewis case, the *Indianapolis Star* was local for the Ron Artest case, and the *Durham Herald-Sun* was local to the Duke lacrosse case. Likewise, the *New York Times* coverage was evaluated as a national news source as revealed by consistently high correlations. This study presents the *Detroit Free Press* as a local newspaper despite the disparity in coder responses explained in the previous chapter.

The data reveal an inter-coder agreement on 197 of 239 responses, or 82.4 percent, about the presence of orienting details in coverage of all three cases. That correlates to an α value of 0.490, which is low because Krippendorf (1980) accounts for random agreement. Because of the coder training, such randomness likely did not occur frequently in this study, and the data were interpreted as reliable. The data showed little systematic orientation in any newspaper across all coverage, with individual occurrences documented in all three cases.

The only true cluster came from *New York Times* articles about the Duke lacrosse case, in which the data revealed at least two orienting details in six of the eight sample articles. Of those six, the data showed mention of the athletes' race in four articles. Likewise, the data revealed four articles that mentioned at least one athlete's age.

Among local newspapers, orienting details surfaced in the *Durham Herald-Sun's* coverage than in local coverage of the Artest and Lewis cases. The data revealed 10 articles out of 57 as containing orienting details in Durham Herald-Sun coverage, and one coder identified five additional cases of orientation. Those articles contained references to both race and age.

For the other two case studies, orientation within local newspaper coverage is more sporadic than routine. The data did not reveal any instances of orienting details in *Detroit Free Press* coverage of Ron Artest. They identified four articles with orienting details among 61 printed in the *Indianapolis Star*.

Other than the dense pocket of orienting details that the data revealed for *New York Times* coverage in the Duke lacrosse case, similar details did not appear consistently across national newspaper coverage for the Ray Lewis and Ron Artest case studies. Only one *New York Times* article out of 15 included orienting details of those athletes, according to the data. That article mentioned Artest's past aggressive behavior. For Ray Lewis coverage, the data revealed orienting details in two of eight *New York Times* articles.

The data revealed agreement in 168 or 239, or 70.3 percent, of articles about criminal culpability. That correlates to an agreement coefficient of α=0.565. This level of agreement allows for drawing some conclusions, but those findings might not carry as much weight as those drawn from data with higher inter-coder reliability.

The Duke lacrosse and Ron Artest articles returned a relatively high percentage agreement during and after the resolution of criminal charges, while the Lewis case produced slightly lower correlations. Stronger conclusions may be drawn from Ron Artest and Duke lacrosse coverage than Ray Lewis articles.

The highest level of inter-coder agreement occurred when the data revealed that an article did not mention any criminal investigation involving the athlete in question. Some differences surfaced about the athlete's status within that case. For example, one coder might identify the athlete's involvement in an investigation and label his status as "indicted for allegedly committing a crime," while the other coder might have found the article portraying the athlete as a guilty perpetrator.

The Ron Artest articles included few references indicating that a criminal investigation was underway. The Duke lacrosse articles revealed the most responses indicating a criminal investigation. Many of the Ray Lewis articles referenced the criminal investigation, while some of the articles published later did not mention an investigation.

The remaining category, prominence, resulted in inter-coder reliability in only 93 of 239 articles, or only 38.9 percent. That low percentage equates to an α value of 0.059 and falls far below the minimum level of acceptability. Therefore, no

meaningful data can be extracted and interpreted from this category based on the coding system.

Providing ample data to support the hypotheses can be accomplished by using a T-test to examine the data. Employing Student's t-test produces a *p* value that represents the probability of obtaining data as extreme as that which was observed. Using this test requires the acceptance of the null hypothesis, which in this case would be, "The presence of framing in national newspapers is not significantly different from the presence of framing in local newspapers." When *p* is determined to be ≤ 0.05, then the null hypothesis can be rejected, allowing the test hypothesis to gain credibility. The *p* value indicates that the observed data were different enough to an extreme that significant differences are determined.

Once again, Prominence was not evaluated for statistical significance because the inter-coder agreement did not reach the minimum threshold. Proximity has established that the *New York Times*, is a national newspaper, and all other newspapers are local newspapers. Therefore, proximity was not examined using a T-test. That leaves orientation and criminal culpability as the two variables to be examined for potential frames.

A two-tailed Student's t-test of national articles and local articles for orienting details revealed statistically significant differences between the data sets. The data revealed a *p*-value of 0.01519, with national articles having a mean of 0.5807, a standard deviation of 0.8765 and a standard error of 0.1574. Local articles had a mean of 0.2861, a standard deviation of 0.5804 and a standard error of 0.0402. The *p*-value

and relative means indicate that national newspaper articles contained significantly more orienting details than local newspaper articles.

A two-tailed Student's t-test of national and local articles for references to criminal culpability did not reveal statistically significant differences. The data revealed a *p*-value of 0.4211, with national newspaper articles having a mean of 0.5968, a standard deviation of 0.4550 and a standard error of 0.0817. Local articles had a mean of 0.5240, a standard deviation of 0.4708 and a standard error of 0.0326. The *p*-value and relative means indicate that national newspapers included more frequent references to criminal culpability, but not at a level to establish a statistical significance between the data sets.

However, a statistically significant difference in references to criminal culpability was established between all Duke articles and all Lewis and Artest articles. A t-test of the two sets of articles revealed a *p*-value of 1.89×10^{-9}. The Lewis and Artest articles had a mean of 0.4249, a standard deviation of 0.4794 and a standard error of 0.0365. The Duke articles had a mean of 0.8182, a standard deviation of 0.2860 and a standard error of 0.0352. The *p*-value and relative means indicate that Duke articles contained statistically significantly more references to criminal culpability than Lewis and Artest articles.

Statistically significant differences also were established between Duke articles and Lewis and Artest articles for orienting details. The t-test of the data sets produced a *p*-value of 1.474×10^{-6}, with Lewis and Artest articles having a mean of 0.2052, a standard deviation of 0.5226 and a standard error of 0.0397. The Duke articles had a

mean of 0.6364, a standard deviation of 0.7773 and a standard error of 0.0957. The *p*-value and relative means indicate that Duke articles contained statistically significantly more orienting details than Lewis and Artest articles.

Exclusively among Duke newspaper articles, significant differences in orienting details also appeared. A two-tailed t-test revealed a *p*-value of 0.0002, with national articles having a mean of 1.5625, a standard deviation of 0.7289 and a standard error of 0.2577. Local articles had a mean of 0.5086, a standard deviation of 0.6977 and a standard error of 0.0916. The *p*-value and relative means indicate that Duke national newspaper articles contained statistically significantly more orienting details than local newspaper articles.

Across all three case studies, the T-test showed significantly more orienting details identified in national newspapers than local newspapers. The largest clump of orienting details came from the Duke lacrosse articles from the *New York Times*. The data did not show a significant difference in orienting details between national and local newspapers for the Ray Lewis or Ron Artest cases. The high level of orienting details and references to criminal culpability in national newspapers and the low level of framing in the Artest case lead to the rejection of the three hypotheses in this case.

The data also showed that Duke articles appearing in national newspapers contained significantly more orienting details than local newspaper articles. Ray Lewis and Duke articles in local newspapers also contained significantly more orienting details than Ron Artest local newspaper articles. The same was true for

references to criminal culpability in Lewis and Duke local newspaper articles compared to Artest local newspaper articles.

Among national newspaper articles, Duke coverage contained significantly more references to orienting details than either Artest or Lewis coverage. For criminal culpability, national Duke and Lewis coverage also contained significantly more references than Artest coverage.

The T-test revealed that Duke coverage contained the most orienting details and references to criminal culpability, with Lewis coverage containing some details and Artest coverage containing almost none. In many cases, these differences proved to be statistically significant.

For criminal culpability, Ray Lewis's national newspaper coverage contained more references to criminal culpability than Lewis' local coverage at a borderline-significant level of p=0.05879, with M=1, SD=0 and SE=0 for national articles and M=0.68, SD=0.4696 and SE=0.0542 for local articles. By T-test criteria, this result is not considered a sure sign of significant difference, and therefore this measurement shall not be viewed as basis for proof or rejection of the hypothesis.

CHAPTER NINE

Discussion and analysis

The results allow for the analysis of each of the three research questions and their corresponding hypotheses. Each query is discussed henceforth through a different lens.

To review, the hypotheses stated that: (1) Orientation of an athlete generates more frames in local newspapers than national newspapers; (2) Orientation of an athlete elicits more negative frames in national newspapers than local newspapers due to the prominence and proximity of that athlete at the local level; (3) Video or audio documentation of the alleged crimes will expand the media's willingness to frame athletes. The data did not support the first and third hypotheses and provided only partial support for the second hypothesis.

The first research question involved the frequency and variety of newspaper frames implemented in national or local coverage, and the corresponding hypothesis stated that framing by orientation would be greater at the local level than nationally. A T-test revealed that national newspaper framing by orientation occurred more frequently than local newspaper framing by orientation at a statistically significant level. No statistically significant difference was noted between national and local newspaper framing by references to criminal culpability. Those results, coupled with the inability to analyze prominence, led to the rejection of the first hypothesis, as restated above. National newspaper framing occurred more frequently than local

newspaper framing on the whole, with such framing being especially present in Duke lacrosse coverage.

Establishing statistically significant differences between data sets often requires the groups to be skewed in opposite directions. That was the case for national newspaper coverage, which included the Duke coverage, in comparison to the local newspaper coverage, which included next to no orienting details in Ron Artest articles.

The researcher based his hypothesis on the notion that local newspapers would implement frames based on age, race, or past criminal involvement as a regular part of day-to-day storytelling. More positive frames, such as references to career accomplishments, also could have been used. Likewise, the researcher hypothesized that national newspapers would not use these frames as storylines but rather would employ a straightforward approach that purely relayed information to a much broader audience with less interest in the intricacies of each case.

An important follow-up proposition is why national newspaper coverage implemented frames when local newspapers rarely did so. One possible reason for this phenomenon is the need to acquaint the audience with the athlete in question. A national audience might not be familiar with Artest or Lewis, and certainly it would not know the Duke lacrosse players. Orienting details can serve to introduce a subject to the reader, and references to career accomplishments or past criminal involvement can provide context for that athlete's celebrity status.

National newspapers also covered these three cases in a broader fashion that emphasized trends and major news updates rather than sometimes mundane court

proceedings or daily developments. That approach allowed for unique story angles that broke from the basic story mould. For example, national coverage of the Duke case examined the racial tensions between the supposedly privileged white student-athletes at a private university and black students — potentially rape victims — at a nearby historically black university.

Local newspaper coverage of the Duke case, contrarily, involved a much narrower focus that centered on evidence discoveries and daily court proceedings. That focus catered to a local audience that had a vested interest in the pursuit of justice in North Carolina. The lacrosse team did not maintain consistent media coverage before the criminal investigation, but local readers would be familiar with the Durham community, prosecutor Mike Nifong and the two universities involved. That required fewer orienting details to give the audience an adequate picture of how the investigation was proceeding.

In terms of framing via orientation, the Ron Artest case differed significantly from the Duke case. Artest coverage at the local and national levels rarely employed racial frames. Two potential explanations might account for this disparity. First, Artest appeared regularly in national and local newspaper coverage and could be considered a prominent athlete. This reduced the need for writers to orient their audiences. Second, Artest faced assault charges, which do not carry the social stigma of the murder charges or rape charges that Ray Lewis or the Duke lacrosse players faced. The incident and its fallout also lacked the racial tensions of the Duke case.

The potential outcome of the Artest case also was limited to a relatively minor conviction. Rape and murder charges could have put the Duke players or Lewis in jail for life, but Artest would never have faced much jail time. Another potential reason for the low level of framing, especially via orienting details, was that Artest was not the only alleged perpetrator in the case. Several of his teammates and many Detroit Pistons fans engaged in disorderly conduct, and some opinion articles not included in the analysis questioned whether Artest was the primary aggressor or rather equally a victim as much as a perpetrator.

Local and national coverage of Artest's involvement in the alleged assault also might have been limited by the fact that Artest was suspended for the remainder of the season shortly after the brawl. Instead of appearing in newspaper coverage several times per week for game recaps, Artest was introduced as a brief side note as an explanation for the Pacers' struggles. Eventually, he was traded, further limiting his exposure to Detroit and Indiana newspaper coverage.

National coverage of the Artest case also was limited plausibly due to his suspension, and the few articles published in the *New York Times* about the brawl focused on the entire situation rather than Artest's role in the feud. Artest was the Pacers' star player, and he was a divisive figure in Detroit. The *New York Times*, based in Artest's hometown, did not frame Artest as a heroic scapegoat or a villain, but rather examined the impact of the brawl holistically on the NBA.

The Artest case also contained significantly fewer references to criminal culpability than either of the other two examined cases. This has two potential

explanations. The first is similar to the reason that orienting details were lacking: Artest's case evolved slowly into an assault charge while the other cases burst onto the national scene.

The other potential explanation involves the role of video. Anyone who watched ESPN's footage of the brawl could see Artest's actions, so there was no doubt that he threw punches or was directly involved in confrontations with fans. Thus, the audience already knew that Artest had committed these actions. Whether or not he would be found criminally guilty of a violent crime was secondary, because he had already been punished by the NBA and had no basis on which to deny that the events took place.

The Lewis and Duke cases, on the other hand, did not involve video evidence, which left more questions than answers. The communities of Atlanta and Baltimore were incensed that a murder was committed and a celebrity was an alleged culprit. However, the lack of evidence against Ray Lewis led local newspaper coverage to establish Lewis' status merely as innocent, indicted or guilty to keep the readers informed. These details were sprinkled throughout the day-to-day coverage but were not mentioned in every article. The Duke case was similar in that little evidence tied the lacrosse players to the alleged crime. This required local and national newspaper coverage to affirm their standing within the legal process.

The results can be contextualized via comparison with previous studies that examined the framing of athletes, celebrities and criminal investigations. Determining

similarities and differences between the studies can help to establish this study's place within the broader context of celebrification and framing research.

The most extensive research about framing of athletes has focused on race and stereotypical perceptions (Seltzer & Mitrook 2009, Mastro, Blecha & Seate 2011). One important contribution to the literature unlike previous research that focused on coverage of framing of indicted athletes was the comparative nature of cases that took place under unique circumstances. Previous research most frequently examined high-profile trials involving black defendants and vast social tensions. The O.J. Simpson trial, for example, served as the focus for several studies (Tucker 1997, Maxwell, Huxford, Borum & Hornik 2000, Shipp 1994). Simpson's role as an affluent black male accused of killing two white women presented several clear storylines and allowed for racial framing. In this study, the Duke lacrosse case provides an equally intriguing example of racial and class conflict. Both cases consistently involved racial framing at local and national levels.

What's different between the cases is the status of each party. Some researchers (Shipp 1994) thought Simpson was portrayed as a stereotypical, black perpetrator, which had been a newspaper frame for decades (Grabe 2000). However, the Duke case pitted the privileged white males as the defendants and a black woman as the alleged victim. That led local and national newspapers to re-introduce race and socioeconomic inequality as frames.

The contrast between parties of different demographical backgrounds seemingly led to the racial frames introduced in the Duke coverage. That same

framing was not present in the Lewis or Artest coverage because the incident did not provoke such societal tensions. The fact that Lewis and Artest are black was not as important as their celebrity status as prominent athletes.

It is also important to consider that withholding information also is a form of framing, as Entman (1993) noted. Testing for a frame of omission could be accomplished by a comparative study, in which two sets of articles are cross-examined for differences in reporting techniques. Through this type of procedure, the presence of a particular orienting detail or personal characteristic could be considered framing by inclusion, and the absence of that detail in a corresponding article could be considered framing by exclusion. However, even that type of procedure cannot reveal the author's reasoning for omitting the detail.

Based on Entman's (1993) definition of a frame by omission, Lewis and Artest's national newspaper coverage featured racial framing by exclusion. That logic suggests that the reporters and editors made the conscious decision to omit race as a factor in each athlete's indictment and prosecution. However, an equally valid assumption could state that the authors subconsciously avoided discussing race in most articles. Omitting details sometimes can be attributed as a framing technique, but the differences among these three case studies present too many alternatives for the researcher to establish omission as the result of racial framing.

The discussion now turns to RQ2, which probes the rolls of prominence and proximity in the framing process. Here, there is a clear divide between two types of cases: Those in which the case gains national attention on its merits, and those in

which the case gains national attention for the parties involved. The Duke case belongs to the former, while the Lewis and Artest cases fall into the latter. The professional athletes' cases resulted from the prominence, while the college athletes' cases allowed them to obtain prominence. Again, prominence is defined herein according to the degree of newspaper coverage established before the criminal investigations began.

Durham (1998) found cases in which frames cannot be established neatly. One could also state that the three cases examined here fall into a similar category, in which the complexity of the events and the ensuing investigations dissuaded authors from employing frames such as race or age. For example, the Lewis case involved a black professional football player with a criminal history who allegedly committed a violent crime in the south in a city in which he did not live. Authors could have emphasized Lewis' race or criminal history, but they rarely did so, possibly out of fear of backlash for oversimplifying a case in which little evidence connected Lewis to the crime.

Artest's case all involved complications similar to those that Durham (1998) noted. Artest's involvement in the brawl was caught on tape, but Detroit Pistons fans helped to instigate and to prolong the fight in their own arena. Artest also had a history of violence, and the incident did not result from racial division. Reporters likely struggled to characterize the relative role of Artest and the players compared to the Pistons fans. In both of these cases, prominence led to media coverage, but frames were implemented moderately.

The Duke case, however, was more clear-cut because of longstanding racial and socioeconomic division between universities in a southern state. The case highlighted this division and served as a method by which to tell that narrative to the country, as the *New York Times* did in its coverage. With those frames established, confusing evidentiary revelations only fueled the orienting details, whereas such confusion did not produce more frames in the Lewis case.

The researcher hypothesized that national newspaper coverage would present more negative frames than local newspapers because of a local inclination to provide positive coverage of local athletes. This hypothesis cannot be proven conclusively because "positive" and "negative" attributes were not evaluated in this study, though national articles did contain more total frames than local articles.

If race is considered a negative frame in a similar manner to how Shipp (1994) and Grabe (2000) analyzed that frame in the O.J. Simpson trial, then negativity is present in those articles. However, those researchers identified racial framing as a manner of establishing Simpson as guilty before the jury returned its verdict. Such a connection between race and implied guilt cannot be inferred here, especially because racial framing was employed most frequently in this study in a case involving white defendants. The Duke coverage featured the same racial and social framing that was evident in the Simpson case, but that framing did not produce the second frame of inferred guilt. Therefore, the "negative" qualities of racial framing in the Simpson case do not carry over to the cases examined here.

The frames in Lewis and Artest local coverage also provide little evidence of positivity, which also would be hard to support with this type of analysis. Positive frames could include inferences that the athlete was innocent before the jury returned its verdict, and such frames did not appear in local coverage.

One type of audience orientation that could be considered positive framing is stories outside day-to-day coverage that list potential negative effects of a guilty verdict. One example is a Feb. 4, 2000 article published in the *Baltimore Sun* that highlighted Lewis' endorsement deals that had been jeopardized by his involvement in the murder investigation.

Ray Lewis has been one of the most popular players on the Ravens, a fierce competitor who became a familiar sight at luncheons and new business openings where he appears as a paid celebrity. But that thriving side business, as well as a growing base of corporate endorsement work, was in jeopardy along with Lewis' freedom, as the All-Pro linebacker sat in an Atlanta jail cell charged in a grisly double murder (Morgan 2000). In that article, Morgan (2000) subjected the audience to several frames: The author labeled Lewis as a "fierce competitor" in danger of losing his freedom and endorsements. Such a story would not appear in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, where letters to the editor expressed disdain for Lewis and the senseless murders of two people. Baltimore's hometown newspaper covered daily case developments but also took the time to humanize Lewis and to re-establish his status as a local celebrity.

The *Indianapolis Star* also took the time to follow up with Artest's personal pursuits after his involvement in the Detroit brawl. An article published April 5, 2005 featured Artest in his off-court role as a musician.

> "Decked out in all white, Artest took the stage for nearly 40 minutes, performing a number of raps he's written. The 6-7 basketball star bounced around the stage, a white hat with his record label, TruWarier, emblazoned in black letters, tilted on his head. Artest seemed as comfortable on stage as he is on the court defending an opponent's best player" (Rabjohns 2005).

The article framed Artest as a "star" defender who had been suspended. However, the author did not explicitly state that Artest was a key figure in the brawl and yet humanized him in spite of his suspension and pending charges. Omitting the reference to Artest's role in the brawl is a form of framing as well.

These examples were two of the more extreme cases of framing at the local level. Positive frames were employed sporadically, but not at a level that merits supporting the hypothesis. Prominence allows for some local story angles that are too specific for a national audience, while national coverage allows for a wider lens that takes issues such as race into account as an overarching theme.

Prominence led to media coverage for the Lewis and Artest cases, but the Duke case made the Duke players prominent. The defendants in that trial became celebrities overnight without having any past accomplishment to thrust them into the spotlight. This falls in line with research conducted by Hendrickson and Wilkins (2007)**,** who found that celebrities are not always famous for who they truly are, but often for who they are portrayed to be. That was the case for the lacrosse players, who gained notoriety by personifying the stereotype of white, privileged Duke students.

Though they were acquitted, they filled a role in a storyline that did not represent their true personas.

Newspaper coverage of the Duke case also supports Rojek's (2001) findings. The author found that some athletes gain celebrity status without accomplishing athletic feats. The lacrosse players did not appear in newspaper coverage before the investigation, but rather for their involvement in an alleged rape. No stories mentioned the lacrosse team's success before the allegations arose. The case also serves as an example of Hendrickson and Wilkins' (2007) findings that 21st century celebrities frequently enter the public realm in areas outside of their expertise. Just as many actors contribute political commentary that does not relate to their on-screen roles, the Duke lacrosse players entered media coverage in a manner unrelated to their athletic pursuits.

Part of the framing in the Duke case also might have resulted from the athletes' lack of prominence. Beyond merely introducing the lacrosse players, authors of national articles used their ambiguity to introduce generic frames of race and class conflict. Since multiple athletes of relatively little fame allegedly committed such an abhorrent crime, the authors took the liberty to generalize the case without mentioning many details specific to each defendant: Rarely were the lacrosse players named individually, and most orienting details involved their race, which was common to all three defendants. "The woman is black; the students are white. In Durham and in the Duke community, the case has touched historically tender nerves of race, sex and class" (Wilson and Glater 2006).

When the case began to unravel for the prosecution, local and national newspaper coverage did not focus more positively and personally on the soon-to-be-exonerated athletes. Instead, frames turned to the prosecution and the alleged victim whose story had been scrutinized.

> "Some critics of the case wonder why Mr. Nifong has taken it so far. Some think it was political: Mr. Nifong, a 27-year prosecutor who was appointed district attorney last year, was running in his first election campaign when the case surfaced. He narrowly won election to a new four-year term in May. [The defense attorneys] accused him of "zeal to make national headlines and win a hotly contested primary."" (Wilson and Glater 2006).

Labeling a specific instance of framing as "positive" or "negative" can be accomplished, but evaluating such labels statistically is difficult and was not the scope of this study.

The second hypothesis probed the roles of prominence and proximity in the local and national framing processes. Measuring prominence raises a special challenge because that question was omitted from analysis because the inter-coder reliability fell short of pre-established thresholds. Prominence shall be gauged by each athlete's presence in national and local media coverage before the alleged crime took place.

The study shows that prominent athletes are subject to more subtle frames than athletes who lack prominence. The Duke lacrosse players entered newspaper coverage for the first time as a result of the rape investigation, and authors defined the athletes by their race and age as a manner to introduce them to local and national audiences. Ray Lewis and Ron Artest required no such introduction, so frames did not occur as

frequently. Such a realization could only result from a comparative study such as this one.

The third hypothesis probed the role of video documentation of Ron Artest's brawl in the framing process. Regardless of how many frames the Artest coverage employed, video documentation must be viewed as a potential cause of framing rather than the definitive reason for that framing. Therefore, this hypothesis can be rejected because Artest coverage included significantly fewer frames than other cases, and because the role of video cannot be statistically evaluated among all frames employed.

The roles of prominence, proximity and video documentation add to existing research because of this study's emphasis on comparison. Each case could lead to different conclusions when evaluated independently, but cross-examining the cases reveals how each case compares to the others. Perhaps video evidence might lead to some frames, but compared to other cases, those frames are few and far between.

Results revealed that Artest's news coverage contained significantly fewer frames via orienting details and references to criminal culpability than similar coverage in the Lewis and Duke cases. Therefore, the hypothesis that the presence of video evidence would create more frames cannot be validated. However, the role of video still can be examined as a potential influence in the little framing that occurred in Artest coverage.

Artest's case hung in the balance before charges were filed: similar events, such as on-ice fights between hockey players or on-field brawls in baseball, rarely lead to criminal charges and are typically handled privately by the sports' governing

bodies. The Artest case, however, largely took place off the floor and involved fans as well as players. Here, the Artest case differs from the other two cases of violence at sporting events examined in this study. NBA and law-enforcement officials had to comb through the thoroughly documented incident to identify any and all punishable offenses.

Unlike most domestic disputes, Artest's punches were caught on camera with dozens of potential victims and perpetrators squaring off in instigation, retaliation and self-defense. That led to a mess for the police and prosecutors. NBA commissioner David Stern sifted through six minutes of footage to find all reprehensible actions, whereas most incidents last mere seconds.

That confusion also manifested in local and national newspaper coverage in a manner similar to what Durham (1998) discovered. Authors appeared hesitant to paint a portrait that condemned one party and uplifted the other, or even mentioned many specifics of the brawl out of a fear for presenting an incomplete picture. Local and national newspapers also appeared hesitant to label each player's actions because legal charges had not been filed. The gap between the availability of the video footage and the filing of formal charges created a difficult situation: As shown in the video, Artest and other players were involved in a fight with fans, but how could the newspapers describe their actions without presenting the players as guilty of criminal activity?

Those potential fears resulted in straightforward coverage devoid of many frames, including those about race and references to criminal culpability. The role of video evidence in this case was not quantified, but its presence appears descriptively

to have simplified some storytelling while complicating other facets of local and national coverage.

Finally, the researcher examined the methodology retrospectively to determine any potential weaknesses in the data. Identifying such flaws serves to rectify future procedures as well as to provide a possible explanation for any deviation from the hypotheses.

One weakness that appeared in several stages was the overlapping nature of the responses to coding questions. Some potential responses could fall into multiple categories, thus creating a burden for the coders. This was particularly true for the Prominence and Orientation questions, where each response included two variables. Sometimes, the coders would identify an orienting detail but would record different responses that nonetheless included similarities. For example, Coder 1 chose "B" to denote at least two orienting details including race but not age, while Coder 2 chose "D" to denote one orienting detail of any kind. Both coders identified orientation by race, but the differing responses weakened the inter-coder reliability and made sorting the data troublesome.

Another potential shortcoming was the coder training session. Both coders appeared to agree on standardized definitions, but hindsight reveals that five articles might have been too small of a sample size to address those issues adequately. Coder reliability remained acceptable for three of the four research questions, but the fourth question could have been salvaged with more in-depth training.

The potential flaws in this study do not affect the overarching integrity of the results, and the researcher's conclusions still carry weight. Some modifications should be made if this procedure is repeated, but the existing results shall be examined here to establish the plausibility of the hypotheses.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusions

This study was a seminal comparative content analysis of newspaper framing involving indicted athletes. The researcher examined how athletes of varying race, age and prominence entered newspaper coverage amid allegations that they allegedly committed crimes. Previous studies had examined individual cases but with different variables and not in a comparative manner.

The social phenomenon of celebrification leads the audience to follow celebrity-driven news even when it extends beyond that person's area of expertise (Hendrickson and Wilkins 2007). The same process attracts attention to athletes who are indicted for allegedly committing violent crimes (Mastro, Blecha & Seate 2011); they receive substantially more coverage than any other citizen would for a similar offense.

The intersection of crime and sports presents a platform to examine framing, the process by which media members guide the audience's perception of reality by including some details and omitting others (Entman 1993). Many studies (Barnett 2008, Grabe 2000, Mastro, Blecha & Seate 2011) have examined framing, including extensive research about the role of race in the O.J. Simpson murder trial (Shipp 1994). However, few studies have cross-examined distinct cases involving indicted athletes.

This study compared three cases in which athletes of varying prominence in three different sports were indicted for allegedly committing violent crimes in the

2000s. The researcher sought to evaluate the quantity of newspaper frames at the local and national levels across all three studies, and the types of frames that authors used most frequently. The researcher hypothesized that local newspaper coverage would contain more frames than national newspaper coverage, and that those frames would generate a more-positive image of the athlete in question than similar coverage at the national level. Finally, the researcher surmised that the introduction of video evidence would allow newspapers to pursue frames more freely because of the certainty that the alleged act indeed took place.

The data revealed significantly more framing at the national level, with more orienting details originating in the Duke lacrosse coverage than any other case at the local or national level. The Lewis case contained less examples of framing by orientation than the Duke case, but significantly more framing than the Artest case. Frames appeared constantly in Duke national coverage, consistently in Duke local coverage, occasionally in Lewis national and local coverage, and rarely in Artest national and local coverage.

Thus, the three hypotheses were rejected, leaving plenty of possible explanations for the high concentration of framing in the Duke coverage relative to all other studies. The Duke players did not have pre-established prominence, which required authors to orient them to local and national audiences. The Duke case also served as a metaphor for the larger racial and socioeconomic rift in the Durham community.

Meanwhile, authors covering black athletes who have attained celebrity status might have been more cautious with frames after seeing the fallout from the O.J. Simpson trial, or because those athletes did not need to be introduced to the audience. The Lewis and Artest cases involved prominent black athletes whose criminal culpability was in doubt, leading authors to use caution and to avoid using many frames.

National newspaper coverage of the criminal investigations did not focus on day-to-day events, but rather focused on theme stories that employed frames to introduce athletes to a national audience. Local coverage, however, contained mostly day-to-day developments without many stories summarizing all aspects of the case. The few instances of local newspaper framing in the Lewis and Artest cases took place when reporters wrote sidebars about potential consequences of a conviction, such as Lewis' endorsement deals and Artest's rap career.

Some potential shortcomings in this study limited the examination of the effect of prominence and complicated the analysis of orienting details and references to criminal culpability. Results were appropriately presented to ensure that the analysis and conclusions reflect only what the existing data revealed. Analysis with more sample articles or more empirical questions also may have yielded different results.

This study provided a comparative examination of three cases in which athletes of varying prominence, races, socioeconomic statuses and sports were accused of committing violent crimes. The next step in comparative newspaper framing research might involve studies across a broader time period. All cases in this study

took place during an eight-year period. However, a comparison of framing across multiple decades could reveal more trends. Future research also could control for race, sex, age, location or sport to isolate variables. The empirical effect of any specific variable cannot be reported using this content analysis because this study examined all five of those variables drawing from t-test analysis. Another potential step forward to advance this research might include examining images, photo captions and article placement as modes of newspaper visual and textual framing. This study focused solely on text-only content, but other elements of newspaper coverage could reveal other sources of prominence, orienting details or references to criminal culpability.

This study sets the foundation for future research that compares newspaper frames across multiple variables. Individual case studies might reveal trends true to that set of circumstances, but a comparative study revealed the breadth and limitations of framing across multiple cases. Such comparisons allowed for a proper understanding of each case within the larger realm of media framing research.

This study expands upon the basic framework for newspaper framing established through analysis of the O.J. Simpson case. Future studies may replicate this research to further expand the understanding of the role of mass media – beyond newspapers – in framing indicted prominent athletes. Future studies also may examine newspaper framing of indicted athletes with the understanding that local and national newspapers approach the subject differently depending on prominence and criminal history.

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APPENDIX A

Codebook

Prominence — How does newspaper coverage convey an athlete's relative fame or notoriety?

A. Article lists the athlete's accomplishments, including statistics and awards he has won, **and** his past involvement in crime or aggressive behavior.

B. Article lists the athlete's accomplishments but not his past involvement in crime or aggressive behavior.

C. Article details the athlete's past involvement in crime or aggressive behavior but not his athletic accomplishments.

D. Article identifies the subject as an athlete but neither lists his accomplishments nor past involvement in crime or aggressive behavior.

E. Article does not identify the subject as an athlete.

Proximity — To what extent is the newspaper coverage of the athlete generated from a local or national source?

A. Article appears in a local newspaper and is written by a staff reporter.

B. Article appears in a local newspaper and is written by an outside source, such as a wire service or a reporter from another medium.

C. Article appears in a newspaper based outside the athlete's and team's metropolitan area and is written by a staff reporter.

D. Article appears in a newspaper based outside the athlete's and team's metropolitan area and is written by an outside source, such as a wire service or a reporter from another medium.

E. Article appears in a local newspaper and is written by a staff reporter and reporters from other news services.

Orientation — To what extent are the athlete's personal identifying factors, such as race, age or physical appearance, mentioned in newspaper coverage?

A. Article lists at least two orienting details, including the athlete's race and age.

B. Article lists at least two orienting details, including the athlete's race but not his age.

C. Article lists at least two orienting details, including the athlete's age but not his race.

D. Article includes only one orienting detail of any kind.

E. Article includes no orienting details.

Criminal culpability — How is the athlete portrayed in newspaper coverage with regard to criminal investigations?

A. Article presents the athlete as the guilty perpetrator of a crime.

B. Article presents the athlete as someone indicted for allegedly committing a crime.

C. Article presents the athlete as someone not guilty of committing a crime.

D. Article presents the athlete as someone involved in a criminal investigation but does not reveal the athlete's status with regard to the case.

E. Article does not mention any involvement in a criminal investigation.

APPENDIX B

Sample articles

Artest rocks the house
Indianapolis Star – April 5, 2005
Author: Jeff Rabjohns
Page: D6
Section: Sports
Word Count: 606

A little after midnight Thursday, two security guards at the Vogue made their way to the back door and people in the crowd began to stare.

A few minutes later, the reason for the commotion came through the door. Indiana Pacers forward Ron Artest had arrived for his first local rap performance.

Decked out in all white, Artest took the stage for nearly 40 minutes, performing a number of raps he's written.

The 6-7 basketball star bounced around the stage, a white hat with his record label, TruWarier, emblazoned in black letters, tilted on his head.

Artest seemed as comfortable on stage as he is on the court defending an opponent's best player.

"Pacers won, yeah, yeah, yeah," he said as he grabbed the mike following his introduction to a crowd estimated at 500. "They say I can't play till next year, but I'll be back next year."

After that reference to his seasonlong suspension following a brawl in Detroit in November, Artest spent the rest of his time on stage going from one rap to the next, mixing in other singers and rappers at various points.

Around 2 a.m., in a good mood after his performance, he leaned against a railing with his arms wrapped around his wife, Kimsha, and discussed his first live performance in the city where he plays.

"It was good," he said. "During my songs, people were bouncing. I saw a couple people leaving at the start, but most people stayed and that was good."

Artest has been writing raps for five years. He has songs on three CDs. At the Vogue, Artest was the final act on a night of hip-hop that started with several DJs working turntables.

By the time Artest took the stage, the dance floor was nearly full. Members of his crew passed out CDs to the crowd.

Artest rapped with two others who go by the names Challace and Braska. DJ Paul B, who works Pacers home games at Conseco Fieldhouse, was on the turntables.

"It was cool. I liked it," Artest said. "It's a lot of fun. We were doing a lot of party music. No real performance. We were just having fun, trying to make a good song.

"I'm just starting to get better. It's still not where I want it to be, but my songs are getting better."

One of the songs Artest performed was "Henney," an ode to Hennessy cognac, which has an easy-to-remember chorus and had people bouncing on the dance floor.

Another performance had the look of a rap video. Several women dressed in skimpy bikinis, some with fishnet that left little to the imagination, wiggled around on stage.

Kimsha sported a white tank top that had Artest's number 91 airbrushed on the back and a pair of jeans with "Artest" on the backside. She danced on the side of the stage during another song.

Artest, who asked the post-concert discussion not focus on basketball, didn't say what he was paid for the performance. At least 50 percent of anything he makes from live shows goes to charity, he said.

Artest said he has already performed in Houston, Las Vegas, Atlanta, New York and Chicago.

His raps haven't had much commercial success, but that hasn't affected his love for music. He still spends time in the studio he had built next to his house on Indianapolis' Northside.

"I'm enjoying it," Artest said afterward. "When I get a chance, I'll do it as long as it doesn't affect my basketball, doesn't get in the way of my practice habits."

Lewis' endorsements in question
Raven's corporate work could be in jeopardy even if he's cleared
Baltimore Sun – Feb. 4, 2000
Author: Jon Morgan
Start Page: 1.D
Section: Sports
Text Word Count: 758

Ray Lewis has been one of the most popular players on the Ravens, a fierce competitor who has become a familiar sight at luncheons and new business openings where he appears as a paid celebrity.

But that thriving side business, as well as a growing base of corporate endorsement work, is in jeopardy along with Lewis' freedom, as the All-Pro linebacker sits in an Atlanta jail cell charged in a grisly double murder.

"Anytime something like this happens, it's pretty devastating for endorsement potential," said Noreen Jenney, president of the Celebrity Endorsement Network, a firm that lines up celebrity endorsements for corporations.

"Even if he is eventually cleared, it will always be a problem," Jenney said. "Most of my clients just don't want to get anywhere near controversy."

Lewis' role as a pitchman had been limited. For one thing, he is a linebacker, and most endorsers prefer players at more glamorous positions, such as quarterback.

Lewis' agent, Eugene Parker, did not respond to a request for comment yesterday on the player's commercial situation. But one source familiar with Lewis' business affairs said they had been on an upswing in recent months as the team improved.

Some corporate partners have called to ask about the situation, but none has dropped him or pulled ads in response to the charges, said the source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A few years ago, Lewis did some radio ads for PrimeStar, a satellite television service. His role ended when the company was purchased two years ago by DirecTV, according to spokesmen for both organizations.

Lewis has carved out a niche in the appearance business, where a player of his stature can command $5,000 for showing up at a store opening or golf tournament.

Among his recent appearances was as an "invited guest" of the Baltimore BayRunners at their opening game in November. He participated in an honorary jump shot with BayRunners co-owner Cal Ripken, and accepted a jersey during a halftime ceremony.

There were suggestions at the event that Lewis might join Ripken as part-owner of the team, but that never happened, according to Tim Richardson, spokesman for the Baltimore-based International Basketball League.

"He was very nice, very accommodating," Richardson said of Lewis.

Lewis was also among 22 NFL players named to "Team PostNet" last year to promote PostNet, a postal and business service franchiser.

He has also contracted to do appearances around the country on behalf of TSR Wireless, a New Jersey-based paging firm. About a year ago, he was on hand when the company opened a store at the Marley Station Mall in Glen Burnie. No company spokesman was available for comment yesterday.

"It's not a hugely lucrative opportunity, but it's not bad money for a few hours of work," said David Nevins of David Nevins & Associates, a local public relations firm that occasionally hires an athlete for clients.

Nevins said his firm had never used Lewis, but saw his appearances being promoted frequently. Lewis will probably lose most of that work, at least for a few years, even if he is cleared of the charges.

It wouldn't be too much of a financial blow to a player who became the highest-paid linebacker in the NFL when the Ravens agreed in late 1998 to pay him $26 million over four years.

Among Ravens, Lewis' jerseys have been among the best sellers, according to local sporting goods stores. Interest has grown somewhat in recent days as curiosity seekers have come in and asked about his No. 52 jersey.

Jimmy McClain, manager of the Sports Shop at Towson Town Center, said he's fielded more questions than purchases of Lewis jerseys in recent days. "I'm keeping a standoff approach. He's innocent until proven guilty. I'm hoping he's innocent," McClain said.

The murders came at a time when the Ravens, too, were gaining in popularity in Baltimore after their best season yet.

Robert Leffler, head of the Leffler Agency, the Ravens' advertising agency, and a former marketing executive with the Baltimore Colts, said fans generally don't hold it against a team when a player gets into trouble.

"The fans will give them the benefit of the doubt," Leffler said. "It's not a reflection on the organization."