

A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF CULTIVATION THEORY AND MEDIA
EFFECTS IN PRINT MEDIA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One knows that friends, family, and school all influence individuals greatly; however, there is one significant source of influence to also consider -the mass media. Many of the studies conducted on the cultivation theory attribute the public's skewed perception of crime in the real world to the amount of television viewed and media consumed.

Hungarian-born poet, Dr. George Gerbner, established and has intensely researched cultivation theory since 1967. The cultivation theory focused on the influence of mass media on the attitudes and perceptions of reality on the public.

According to Romer, Jamieson, and Aday (2003) the cultivation theory suggested that widespread fear of crime is fueled in part by heavy exposure to violent programming on prime-time television, especially local television news shows.

Much research has been conducted on the effect cultivation theory has on heavy television viewers; however, very little research has been conducted on the

effect this theory has on heavy newspaper readers and other print media audiences.

The researcher believed this study would add to the body of knowledge of public relations by providing industry professionals with a measure of how print media effects its audiences' perceptions.

If an organization received adverse press, it is difficult to change the public's point of view if they have never had a positive or neutral opinion of the organization in question.

If the organization is admired by the public and has sustained a positive image within the media, then the cultivation theory can act as a proponent and will make adverse situations less of a threat on the organization's public image. As a public relations professional, especially in media relations, it is pertinent that one knows and understands their audience.

This particular study will explore the application of the cultivation theory and media effects theory in print media. Research will include a literature review, as well as a quasi-experimental survey design that will test the proposed hypotheses.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much research has explored how television and other mediums produced heightened perception and greater awareness of crime in society.

Cultivation Theory Models

During the turbulent 1960s, many researchers focused on the amount of crime and law enforcement in the U.S. Dominik (1973) implemented a study that assessed the relative accuracy of television's portrayal of the real world, evaluated the amount of violence on television programs, and recorded its influence on individuals' perceptions of real life events.

Results from the study suggested that television overrepresents violent crimes directed at individuals whereas real world crimes are usually non-violent and directed at property; violent crimes between family members are underrepresented; and television criminals, a majority of the time, are apprehended. In the real world, the legal system is not as successful or fluid.

According to Severin and Tankard (1988) when subjects in their study were asked identical questions about crime on television, the heavy television viewers gave answers

that reflected the world they viewed on television, a more violent one.

The cultivation theory has evolved and now focuses heavily on the amount of crime reported on local television news programs. Reber and Yuhmiin (2000) conducted a telephone survey to strengthen the theory that television news programs affect the perception that crime is a major problem, and to determine subjects' attitudes toward coverage of crime and violence on local television news programs.

Forty-five percent of the readers agreed with the statement, "Crime is higher than the media says it is" (Reber and Yuhmiin 2000, 7). Other media-related variables gave evidence that the more fearful respondents were, the less likely they were to think the media was guilty of sensationalizing violent crime stories.

In response to the additional research concerning the cultivation theory, Gerbner later developed the "mean/scary world" theory as an extension to his previous theory. This extension suggested that people who viewed more television viewed the world around them as a mean or frightening place. These people tend to be more cautious in real-world surroundings.

Cultivation Theory Opponents

Even though Gerbner was a very well-respected researcher, not everyone supported the cultivation and mean/scary world theories. Michael Hughes (1980), cultivation theory opponent, challenged Gerbner's study of cultivation analysis. Hughes proposed that Gerbner's work did not hold true due to the lack of control variables.

Hughes argued that findings were inaccurate when sex, age, and education were introduced. Hughes acknowledged in his study that there were a few problems with this method; sex, age, and education are not simultaneously control variables, and the variables do not exhaust all possibilities.

According to W. James Potter (1990), another opponent of the cultivation theory, the "television world" has created so many messages and images that the public ignores it; therefore, determining what constituted an effect is not exactly clear. Another reason for the difficulty in determining what made up the "television world" was, "The degree of interpretation that must be employed in determining what the 'television world' should be" (Potter 1990, 843).

Like Hughes (1980) Potter suggested that Gerbner and his colleagues did not exhaust all variables and made the hasty assumption that the television world is a mean and violent place. Potter pointed out the way in which violent acts are portrayed would make a difference in perception. Many viewers saw crime on television; however, the crime was usually solved by the end of the series. Even with opponents, the cultivation theory has lived on and evolved. The majority of research conducted on the cultivation theory supported Gerbner's original hypothesis.

Researchers like Nabi and Sullivan (2002) examined the amount of television viewing as it related to viewers' beliefs, prevalence of crime and violence in society, and the belief that prevalence of crime will increase the attitude among people that the world is a mean and scary place. Fifty-one percent of the respondents reported they or someone close to them had not been a victim of a violent crime.

Unlike past studies, Nabi and Sullivan evaluated the cultivation and media effects process through which television viewing might influence behaviors. Forty-one percent of the respondents believed that prevalence of

crime and violence on television lead to the "mean/scary world" attitude.

Romer, Jamieson, and Aday (2003) conducted various studies to strengthen cultivation and media effects theories. Due to saturation of crime on local television news programs, 49 percent of the study's subjects believed crime was the number one problem in their area and that crime was an important local issue. This study measured the public concern toward crime as a function of local violent crime rates rather than television news coverage of crime.

Hetsroni and Tukachinsky (2006) proposed an updated method for cultivation based on measures of television viewing and the relationship between heavy television viewing and prevalence of crime.

The content analysis and a survey questioned subjects about television reality and the real world. As a result, 52 percent of respondents over-estimated crime prevalence. The study also concurred with previous studies that misguided perception of the social world is related to the amount of television news and reality program viewing.

The Effects of Television on the Elderly and Youth

Researchers have tested the cultivation theory in various audiences, ranging from young adults to the elderly, as well as with minorities. The cultivation theory has grown beyond television and violence. For example, researchers have begun to study how sex on television can affect the perception of relationships and body image in young adults, or how video games have contributed to increased violence.

Busselle (2003) surveyed college freshmen and their parents about fear of safety for themselves and their families, the frequency of parents' warnings to children about crime, and their television viewing habits.

The survey's results suggested that students believed 48 percent of Americans have been a victim of a violent crime in the past year. Parents believed 27 percent of Americans have fallen victim to crime in the past year.

According to the data collected, viewing crime-related television content in news television programming increased parents' and students' estimate of the prevalence and frequency of violent crimes. However, violence on television does not influence students' fear of safety for themselves or their family members.

Goidel, Freeman, and Procopio (2006) completed research that explored the relationship between television programming and viewing to the publics' perceptions of juvenile crime rates and the effectiveness of the justice legal system.

The results supported the study's hypotheses; television programming and the amount of television viewing gave false perceptions that juvenile crime had increased. Reality-based programming, such as the crime show COPS, was also associated with increased crime.

The study overall supported greater exposure to television news and reality-based programming led to inaccurate perception of crime, nature of crime (violent vs. non-violent), and the racial characteristics of juvenile criminals.

In addition to reviewing the effects of television on children's behavior, Weber, Ritterfield, and Mathiak (2006) conducted a study that researched the effects of video games and increased aggressive behavior.

New-aged video games contain a substantial amount of realistic portrayals of violence. Kaiser Family Foundation (2002) reported that over 90 percent of all U.S. children play video games an average of 90 minutes a day.

Though long-term viewing of television could demonstrate relationships between television viewing and aggressive behavior; playing video games and increased aggressive reactions is still controversial.

Results supported an association between "virtual violence in a violent video game and brain activity, with suggested causal relation between the two" (46).

Rockler (2006) also researched the possibility of increased aggression due in part to the amount of time children spent playing video games. The subjects' responses suggested a "lack of sociological information in three ways: (a) They understood the impact of media violence in personal, but not political, terms; (b) they understood media "effects" in simplistic and unsophisticated ways; and (c) they understood themselves to be passive media consumers, as opposed to active media citizens" (39).

Results supported the hypothesis that students were subject to a lack of social imagination. Rockler reported that students contextualized violence as a behavioral problem. The study reported those most affected by the media are children and dysfunctional adults. Television and media also have a significant effect on children and adolescents' views of relationships and life.

Bradford, Rhodes, and Edison (2005) examined the effects of typical television viewing on the unrealistic portrayal of marriage and relationships on young viewers. Eighty-four percent of the respondents, who reported having more exposure to relationship-themed media, had significantly increased their idealistic expectations of marriage. The results supported the hypothesis that exposure to media portrayals of relationships leads to idealistic expectations of future relationships.

Research has shown support that television affects the everyday attitudes and psychological well-being of all human beings. Hammermeister, Brock, and Winterstein (2005) researched the hypothesis that television-free individuals display a more positive psychosocial view of life compared to heavy television viewers.

The results of this study proposed that 10 percent of the subjects who were heavy television viewers were more likely to be depressed and experience weight gain. The results of this study supported the thought that television-viewing status does not affect nor has little impact on the psychosocial health of men; therefore, the hypothesis of heavy television viewing by men has little effect on their psychosocial attitude.

For women, however, it is a very different story. Women who are heavy television viewers showed an increase in loneliness, shyness, and weight dissatisfaction.

Rahtz, Sirgy, and Meadow (1989) found little research about the elderly populations' television intake and its possible consequences. This study reviewed the relationship between the amount of television intake of the elderly and addressed a variety of demographic and social psychological variables.

The results reported the following; the typical elderly person, who was dependent on television for entertainment and information, tends to experience a host of negative social-psychological effects, such as low morale and a greater concern for personal and financial well-being.

The Effects of Television and the Media on Foreign Culture

Researchers took the cultivation theory global by exploring its affects in different cultures. Kapoor, Kang, Kim, and Kyu (1994) conducted a study that explored, identified, and assessed the most recurrent and stable patterns of television content and cultivation analysis.

The study's results suggested that Korean television was not as violent as American television. Less than 7 percent of all leading characters were involved in some type of violence, and men were more likely to become involved in crime than women.

The most popular viewing categories were news and drama; students from uneducated, low-income homes were more likely to be heavier viewers. The findings in this study proposed that violence is not a frequent or consistent feature of television drama in every country.

Woo and Dominick (2001) suggested television exposure to international students studying in the U.S. was more influential due to the lack of personal contact with their host culture.

When compared to American students, international students had different experiences because they were new to U.S. culture and their U.S. experiences primarily consisted of information and perceptions gleaned from television images.

The questionnaires focused on the attitudes and perception of interpersonal relationships of American and international students.

The study supported the main hypothesis: international students showed more of a cultivation affect than did American students, even though international and American students watched the same amount of television.

Because international students watched more daytime talk shows, it was suggested they received a skewed view of interpersonal relationships due to their lack of actual experience with relationships in the foreign society.

Cultivation Theory and Print Media

The majority of research found regarding the cultivation theory has been conducted in using the medium television. Very few researchers have explored the theory's effect on the print media and heavy news readers.

Higgins (2005) conducted a study that analyzed crime stories in one of the largest and oldest newspapers in Sao Paulo, Brazil, *O Estado de S. Paulo*. The researcher focused on how the paper covered crime and violence, and whether the coverage reflected the true reality of crime.

Higgins suggested two hypotheses; violent crime stories are more likely to be reported than property crime stories, and the percentage of violent crimes reported in newspapers will exceed official crime statistics. The study also evaluated the correlation between the geographic areas

covered in crime news and the emotional elements, which tend to be more frequently used in violent stories.

Crime in Sao Paulo, is a major problem with 34,290 murders reported in 2001 and 2002. The results suggested that 33 percent of the crimes mentioned were considered violent crime articles.

Although there was an intense coverage of crime the study suggested that coverage was concentrated in areas of the city with money; therefore, focusing on the population with a higher income. The crime stories published in the newspaper relied heavily on official sources and featured very little dramatic writing.

Similar to Higgins' (2005) research on the media effects of newspapers, Vergeer, Lubbers, and Scheepers (2000) tested whether exposure to certain newspapers led people to perceive ethnic minorities as more threatening than the causation of the crime. With the majority of studies focused on the effects of violence on television news, Vergeer, Lubbers, and Scheepers researched the nature of news reports and headlines in the population's perception of ethnic minorities. The study supported the thought that exposure to more newspaper messages does not always lead people to believe minorities are a threat.

This study led to interest in the primary researcher to further explore the cultivation theory as it pertains to print media. The researcher established two hypotheses to test the application of the cultivation theories in print media:

H₁: Readers of violent news articles published in print media, will perceive their world as more violent than readers of neutral and non-violent news articles.

H₂: Readers of violent news articles published in print media will be more fearful of their world than readers of neutral and non-violent news articles.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The method performed in this research study was a quasi-experimental survey analysis. The quasi-experimental design was applied because the researcher did not have access to a database that would provide a true random sample.

The cultivation theory mainly focused on human attitude and behavior. By using this method the researcher was able to assess the subjects' behavior and/or change in behavior when exposed to crime in print media.

The independent variables in this study were three crime articles read by subjects after a pre-test survey and before a post-test survey. The pre and post test surveys measured the reader's change in attitude and/or behavior. The dependent variable is the reader's perception of increased local crime and their fear of crime in reality.

To analyze the effects newspaper articles have on the subject's perception of increased crime, a random sample of subjects from the researcher's network of friends and colleagues was studied.

A sample of middle-class to upper-class subjects ages 18-65 was tested in this study. Subjects were divided into

two groups: control group and experimental group. Groups were divided according to their last name. Those with a last name beginning with A through N were placed in the control group. Those with a last name beginning with O through Z were placed in the experimental group.

Subjects were contacted by email and encouraged to complete two questionnaires: pre-test and post-test. Both questionnaires were divided into three sections. The survey questions and format were derived from review of corresponding studies and survey research performed by the principle investigator.

The first section of both surveys included six questions designed to measure the subjects' preferred type of media outlet and the frequency they viewed that media. For example, subjects were asked to choose from a provided list; which media outlet they utilized most, how often they utilized this media and what sections they read the most.

The second section varied slightly by survey; both questionnaires provided a series of statements to explore the subject's perception, opinion, frequency, and fear of local crime. The pre-test survey asked subjects about their perception of crime in print media, and if crime was more of an issue because of the material written in the media.

This section of the pre-test survey also asked questions concerning the subjects' perception of personal safety. Subjects were asked to mark their level of agreement (strongly agree to strongly disagree) for the following statements: majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on local crime; rate your feelings of safety in your community (very safe to very unsafe).

The post-test survey asked subjects to rank similar questions after they read the provided news articles to measure change in perspective or attitude from the pre-survey. Examples of statements include: after reading the provided articles, do you believe the majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on local crime (strongly agree or strongly disagree); did your feelings of safety change after reading the news articles (yes, no, or undecided)? Finally, both surveys ended with demographic questions that asked subjects about their age, gender, and ethnic background.

Subjects were asked to complete the pre-test questionnaire, read three articles provided to them from the 2008 and 2009 editions of *The Indianapolis Star*, and then complete the post-test questionnaire.

The control group reviewed three articles that were classified as positive or neutral in crime content. The researcher defined positive or neutral crime articles as samples that depict local crime as improved.

Conversely, the experimental group was provided articles from recent editions of *The Indianapolis Star* that were heavily saturated with graphic details of local crime scenes and/or included heavy crime statistics. The study was conducted in this manner to measure the subject's perceptions and attitudes following the treatment.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The study's sample included the researcher's 50 friends and colleagues that were notified of this study via email. The pre-test and post-test questionnaires, as well as the six chosen news articles were sent to the aforementioned groups in July 2009. Out of 50 requests, the researcher received 40 responses. The study had an 80 percent response rate.

The Control Group

The control group, comprised of 20 subjects was given a pre-test questionnaire, three positive and/or neutral articles from *The Indianapolis Star*, and asked to complete a post-test questionnaire to evaluate their perceptions and attitudes.

In determining which type of media, hardcopy newspaper or online version, subjects utilized and how often they received news information, 12 subjects (60 percent) utilized *local news television*. *Local newspaper* and *local entertainment radio* were both utilized by 3 subjects (15 percent). Seven subjects (35 percent) said they did read the newspaper *sometimes*.

The control group was comprised of professionals between the ages of 18 and 65: 14 females (70 percent) and 6 males (30 percent). Seventy-five percent of subjects (19) were classified as *White or Caucasian* with 1 (5 percent) subject classified as *Other*. The majority of subjects resided in Indianapolis; however, Greenwood, Brownsburg and McCordsville were also listed.

Subjects overwhelmingly felt *very safe* (6 subjects, 30 percent) or *somewhat safe* (13 subjects, 65 percent) in their communities. Seventy-five percent of the subjects (15) tested had not been personally affected by local crime; however, 65 percent (13 subjects) did say they had a close friend or family member affected by crime.

Finally, there was a split result when subjects were asked if they believed they would personally be affected by crime in the future; 35 percent (6 subjects) of the group *agreed*, and 35 percent (6 subjects) *disagreed*.

When asked if the majority of news articles in the local newspaper focused on crime, 8 subjects (40 percent) *agreed* and 6 subjects (30 percent) *disagreed* according to the pre-test results. The post-test survey reported 9 subjects (45 percent) *agreed* and 1 (8 percent) person *disagreed*.

When asked if the subject felt local newspapers focused on national crime news, 4 subjects (20 percent) *agreed* and 10 subjects (50 percent) *disagreed* on the pre-test; however, the post test reported 11 subjects (55 percent) *agreed* and 4 subjects (20 percent) *disagreed* with the statement.

Subjects *agreed* (10, 50 percent) and zero *disagreed* with the statement that there had been an increase in local crime in the past two years. The post- test reported different news, 3 subjects (15 percent) *agreed* and 14 subjects (70 percent) *disagreed* with this statement.

The majority of control group subjects *agreed* (12, 60 percent) that petty crime, classified as home invasion, check fraud, etc. occurred most locally on both the pre and post test surveys.

Subjects in the control group *disagreed* (11 subjects, 55 percent) with the statement that major crime, classified as homicide, rape, etc. did not occur locally. The post-test showed 13 subjects (65 percent) *disagreed* with this statement.

Finally, the last four questions of the survey focused on perception of the media and its influence on personal safety. Fifteen subjects (75 percent) reported their feeling

of safety did not change after reading the articles; however, 13 subjects (65 percent) *agreed* that heavy news readers are more fearful of crime in their area, and 13 subjects (65 percent) *agreed* that heavy news watchers are more fearful of crime. Finally, 8 subjects (40 percent) *agreed* that media contributed to an unnecessary fear of crime.

The Experimental Group

The experimental group, a group also comprised of 20 subjects was given a pre-test questionnaire; three newspaper articles heavily saturated in crime statistics from *The Indianapolis Star*, and asked to complete a post-test questionnaire to evaluate their perceptions and attitudes following the treatment.

In determining which type of media, hardcopy newspaper or online version, subjects' utilized and how often they receive news information, 9 subjects (45 percent) utilize *local news television*. *Local newspaper website* was utilized by 4 subjects (20 percent). Nine subjects (45 percent) said they did read the newspaper on a regular basis, but only 5 subjects (20 percent) said they read the newspaper frequently.

The experimental group was comprised of professionals between the ages of 18 and 65:17 females (85 percent) and 3 males (15 percent). One hundred percent of the subjects were classified as *White or Caucasian*. The majority of subjects resided in Indianapolis; however, Plainfield, Brownsburg, Fishers, and Franklin were also listed.

Subjects overwhelming felt *very safe* (25 subjects, 30 percent) and *somewhat safe* (13 subjects, 65 percent). Twelve subjects (60 percent) had not been personally affected by local crime; however, 12 subjects (60 percent) did say they had a close friend or family member affected by crime. Seven subjects (35 percent) were *undecided* when asked if they believed they would personally be affected by crime in the future; 5 subjects (25 percent) *agreed*, and 4 (20 percent) *disagreed* with this statement.

When asked if the majority of news articles in the local newspaper focused on crime on the pre-test, the experimental group *agreed* (11 subjects, 55 percent) with this statement; however, the post-test reported 2 subjects (10 percent) *disagreed*, and 12 subjects (60 percent) *agreed*.

When ask if the subjects felt local newspapers focused more on national crime news on the pre-test, 2 subjects (10

percent) *agreed* and 7 subjects (35 percent) *disagreed*; however, the post-test reported 11 subjects (55 percent) *agreed* and 3 subjects (15 percent) *disagreed*.

Ten subjects, (50 percent) *agreed* and 3 (15 percent) *disagreed* that there had been an increase in local crime in the past two years. The post- test reported a difference, 1 subject (5 percent) *agreed* and 15 subjects (75 percent) *disagreed*.

The majority of experimental group subjects on the pre-test *agreed* (13 subjects, 65 percent) that petty crime, classified as home invasion, check fraud, etc. occurred most locally. Ten subjects (50 percent) *agreed* on the post-test 5 subjects (25 percent) *disagreed* with the statement.

The majority of subjects in the experimental group *disagreed* (7 subjects, 35 percent) with the statement that major crime, classified as homicide, rape, etc. did not occur locally. The post-test showed 9 subjects (45 percent) *disagreed* with this statement.

The experimental group *disagreed* (9 subjects, 45 percent) when asked if their view on crime had changed after reading the provided news articles. Eleven subjects (55 percent) *disagreed* when asked if crime had increased in their area after reading the articles.

The experimental group's post-test survey included profile questions, like the control group, to gage perception of crime in local media.

Sixteen subjects (85 percent) did not experience a change in safety concerns after reading the news articles; however, 9 subjects (45 percent) *agreed* that heavy news readers are more fearful of crime in their area. Ten subjects (50 percent) *agreed* that heavy news watchers are more fearful of crime in their area. When asked if the media contributed to the unnecessary fear of crime, 6 subjects (30 percent) *agreed* and 6 subjects (30 percent) were *undecided*.

Hypothesis one stated that readers of violent articles published in print media will perceive their world as more violent than readers of neutral and non-violent new articles. According to survey results, the experimental group believed there was less violence after their treatment.

The experimental group's pre-test survey reported 10 subjects (50 percent) felt "local crime had increased the past two years," and 7 subjects (35 percent) *agreed* that major crimes occur the most locally. The post-test survey found that after reading three heavily saturated local

crime articles, 15 subjects (75 percent) *disagreed* with the statement "crime had increased in the past two years", and 9 subjects (45 percent) felt major crimes were less likely to occur than locally petty crimes.

The control group experienced similar results. According to the control group's pre-test survey, 10 subjects (50 percent) *agreed* that local crime had increased over the past two years, but thought petty crimes were more prevalent in local media versus major crimes. However, after reading three positive/neutral local crime articles, subject's attitudes changed according to the post-test results.

Fourteen subjects (70 percent) *disagreed* that crime had increased the past two years and petty crime occurred more locally than major crimes.

After evaluation, the researcher concluded that hypothesis one: Readers of violent news articles published in print media will perceive their world as more violent than readers of neutral and non-violent news articles, was not supported.

Hypothesis two stated that readers of violent news articles published in print media will be more fearful of the world than readers of non violent new articles.

According to survey results, both groups had similar attitudes regarding print media and local crime. The majority of both groups agreed the articles in the local newspaper focused on local crime; control group 9 subjects (45 percent), and experimental group 12 subjects (60 percent).

Nine subjects (45 percent) in the experimental group *disagreed* when asked if reading the heavily saturated crime articles changed their view of local crime. Eight subjects (40 percent) *disagreed* when asked if they were concerned about being personally affected by crime, and 11 subjects (55 percent) *disagreed* when asked if crime had increased in their area. Twelve subjects (60 percent) in the experimental group said their feelings of safety did not change after reading the articles.

Therefore after evaluation, the researcher has concluded hypothesis two: readers of violent news articles published in print media will be more fearful of their world than readers of neutral and non-violent news articles, was not supported.

Table 1 on page 32 illustrates and compares the results from the control and experimental group's pre-test questionnaires. Table 2 on page 33 illustrates and compares

the control and experimental group's post-test attitude survey questions.

Table 1. Control & Experimental Group Pre-Test Comparison.

<u>Control Group Pre-Test Questions & Responses</u>		<u>Experimental Pre-Test Questions & Responses</u>	
The majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on local crime.		The majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on local crime.	
Strongly Agree	3 (15%)	Strongly Agree	1 (5%)
Agree	8 (40%)	Agree	11 (55%)
Undecided	3 (15%)	Undecided	7 (35%)
Disagree	6 (30%)	Disagree	1 (5%)
Strongly disagree	-	Strongly disagree	-
The majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on national crime.		The majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on national crime.	
Strongly Agree	-	Strongly Agree	-
Agree	4 (20%)	Agree	2 (10%)
Undecided	5 (25%)	Undecided	10 (50%)
Disagree	10 (50%)	Disagree	7 (35%)
Strongly disagree	1 (5%)	Strongly disagree	1 (5%)
There has been an increase in local crime the past two years.		There has been an increase in local crime the past two years.	
Strongly Agree	3 (15%)	Strongly Agree	-
Agree	10 (50%)	Agree	10 (50%)
Undecided	7 (35%)	Undecided	7 (35%)
Disagree	-	Disagree	3 (15%)
Strongly disagree	-	Strongly disagree	-
Petty crimes (i.e. car thefts, home invasion, check fraud, etc.) occurs the most locally.		Petty crimes (i.e. car thefts, home invasion, check fraud, etc.) occurs the most locally.	
Strongly Agree	3 (15%)	Strongly Agree	-
Agree	12 (60%)	Agree	13 (65%)
Undecided	4 (20%)	Undecided	6 (30%)
Disagree	1 (5%)	Disagree	1 (5%)
Strongly disagree	-	Strongly disagree	-
Major crimes (i.e. homicide, rape, etc.) occurs the most locally.		Major crimes (i.e. homicide, rape, etc.) occurs the most locally.	
Strongly Agree	-	Strongly Agree	-
Agree	3 (15%)	Agree	7 (35%)
Undecided	6 (30%)	Undecided	6 (30%)
Disagree	11 (55%)	Disagree	7 (35%)
Strongly disagree	-	Strongly disagree	-

Table 2. Control & Experimental Group Post-Test Comparison.

<u>Control Group Post-Test Questions & Responses</u>		<u>Experimental Group Post-Test Questions & Responses</u>	
I believe the majority of articles in the local newspaper focus on local crime.		I believe the majority of articles in the local newspaper focus on local crime.	
Strongly Agree	3 (15%)	Strongly Agree	-
Agree	9 (45%)	Agree	12 (60%)
Undecided	2 (10%)	Undecided	6 (30%)
Disagree	1 (8%)	Disagree	2 (10%)
Strongly disagree	-	Strongly disagree	-
The majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on national crime.		The majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on national crime.	
Strongly Agree	2 (10%)	Strongly Agree	-
Agree	11 (55%)	Agree	11 (55%)
Undecided	2 (10%)	Undecided	6 (30%)
Disagree	4 (20%)	Disagree	3 (15%)
Strongly disagree	1 (5%)	Strongly disagree	-
I believe there has been an increase in local crime the past two years.		I believe there has been an increase in local crime the past two years.	
Strongly Agree	-	Strongly Agree	-
Agree	3 (15%)	Agree	1 (5%)
Undecided	3 (15%)	Undecided	4 (20%)
Disagree	14 (70%)	Disagree	15 (75%)
Strongly disagree	-	Strongly disagree	-
I believe petty crimes (i.e. car thefts, home invasion, check fraud, etc.) occurs the most locally.		I believe petty crimes (i.e. car thefts, home invasion, check fraud, etc.) occurs the most locally.	
Strongly Agree	2 (10%)	Strongly Agree	2 (10%)
Agree	12 (65%)	Agree	10 (50%)
Undecided	1 (5%)	Undecided	3 (15%)
Disagree	5 (25%)	Disagree	5 (25%)
Strongly disagree	-	Strongly disagree	-
I believe major crimes (i.e. homicide, rape, etc.) occurs the most locally.		I believe major crimes (i.e. homicide, rape, etc.) occurs the most locally.	
Strongly Agree	-	Strongly Agree	-
Agree	4 (20%)	Agree	5 (25%)
Undecided	3 (16%)	Undecided	6 (30%)
Disagree	13 (65%)	Disagree	9 (45%)
Strongly disagree	-	Strongly disagree	-

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Gerbner's cultivation theory and media effects are well-researched concepts. There are numerous facets to this theory; using this theory, one can understand how television and the mass media effect the population's perception of crime, the elderly dependence on the mass media, and shared fear for personal safety.

Even though there is a vast amount of data that supports the cultivation and media effects theories, the research explored in this study did not exactly support effects of cultivation theory in print media.

The researcher's findings were contrary to the results that were expected. For example, when asked if the control group subjects felt the majority of news articles focused on crime, the pre-test results showed 40 percent *agreed* and 30 percent *disagreed* with this statement.

On the contrary, after reading three positive/neutral local newspaper articles, the post-test reported 45 percent *agreed* and one percent *disagreed* with the statement.

Why did those who disagreed before reading the articles become undecided after reading positive/neutral media? The researcher believed awareness or lack of

awareness of crime in local media played a part in this discovery.

The researcher felt that when subjects completed the pre-test, awareness of crime was not forethought; however, after reading the three articles, although categorized as positive/neutral, subjects began thinking and analyzing the amount of crime in local media; thus, this topic became a major concern and the subjects' attitudes were modified.

Another interesting discovery derived from the study included measuring the prevalence of national crime news in local media. Both the control group and experimental group findings were unexpectedly similar in nature.

The control group pre-test reported 20 percent of subjects *agreed* and 5 percent *disagreed* that local newspapers focused on national crime news. However, the control group post-test reported that 55 percent *agreed* and 20 percent *disagreed* with the statement. The experimental group pre-test reported 10 percent *agreed* and 35 percent *disagree* with the statement; however, the post-test reported the opposite. Fifty-five percent *agreed* and 15 percent *disagreed* that the majority of newspapers focused on national crime news after treatment.

Why did the subjects' opinion of national news in local media differ greatly between the pre and post tests? The researcher believed that the chosen articles were the factor that changed the subjects' attitudes.

After evaluation, the researcher would have included crime articles from national newspapers or national crime articles from local newspapers. The subjects did not receive enough information; a fuller scope of literature would have improved consistency and may have produced a more desired outcome.

Another discovery from both groups was the unexpected difference in attitude when asked if local crime had increased the past two years.

Control group pre-test results reported 50 percent *agreed* and zero percent *disagreed* when asked if local crime increased over the past two years. However, post-test results reported that 15 percent *agreed* and 70 percent *disagreed* with the statement. Experimental group pre-test results were similar. It was reported that 50 percent *agreed* and 15 percent *disagreed*; however, the post-test reported 5 percent *agreed* and 75 percent *disagreed* that local crime had increased the past two years.

These findings were interesting because the control group was subjected to articles that were positive/neutral in content, and the experimental group reviewed articles that were heavily saturated in crime statistics. The results were opposite of what the researcher expected.

The researcher expected the control group to believe crime had decreased in nature after reading articles that reported new law enforcement requirements and government programs focused on reducing crime in Indianapolis.

The researcher expected the experimental group to have a heightened perception of crime because subjects were exposed to articles with graphic language and filled with crime statistics. According to results, the experimental group changed their attitudes after treatment. The experimental group felt crime had decreased after reading crime news articles.

The researcher had a few opinions concerning this surprise finding. It is a concern that the articles utilized in this study had an adverse effect on subjects' perception of local crime. The articles the researcher perceived as positive or negative news, subjects perceived the opposite; therefore, providing a false assessment of safety or attitude towards crime in print media.

The researcher also thought awareness or lack of awareness of local crime played a role in the subjects' attitudes. When the subject took the first survey, crime would not have been in the forefront of their mind, but after reading the articles and taking the post-test, their awareness of local crime, no matter the article's nature, was heightened and may have caused an adverse result.

After reviewing the data, the researcher also realized that even though the proposed hypotheses were not supported by the conducted surveys, research results suggested that subjects supported the cultivation theory in the general public.

According to the profile questions for each group's post-test, their individual feelings of safety, or perception of crime did not waiver after reading the provided news articles.

For example, 65 percent of experimental group pre-test subjects answered *somewhat safe* when asked to rate their feelings of safety in their community. The experimental group's post-test results revealed 55 percent of subjects felt *somewhat safe* and 20 percent were *undecided* after reading the news articles.

In contrast, when asked if heavy news readers or television news viewers are more fearful of crime 45 and 50 percent of subjects *agreed*. Twenty percent of the subjects reported they were heavy news readers, but they weren't affected by the crime articles.

The subjects believed the theories were prevalent, but they didn't believe they were affected; they were the exception. The researcher found this concept very interesting. This discovery leads the researcher to realize the lack of education, social-economical status, and demographic variations missing in this study.

Study Limitations

This study presented some limitations in implementation and design. For future research, the sample size (40 participants) should utilize a larger database. The sample of subjects for this study were chosen from a small database of colleagues and friends of the researcher. Employing a larger sample in a future study would result in better representation of views on crime and its effects in print media.

An additional limitation was the survey was voluntary and an incentive was not offered. The survey was also distributed through email, as opposed to being sent through

the mail or administering the survey in person. This gave the sample the option not to participate in the study.

The study could have included additional survey questions to obtain a better or different range of data. The researcher was very careful to omit loaded and leading survey questions; however, construction of the questions could have lead to different results.

Finally, the most significant change to this study would be to re-evaluate the articles. In hindsight, the researcher would have chosen articles from both national and local newspaper bureaus, as well as, composed a more random method of article selection. The researcher would have also chosen crime articles from different time frames to increase the number of articles for each group to review.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research in the cultivation theory and media effects would benefit from adjusting a study according to the aforementioned limitations. In addition, future research should include a funding component. This would be beneficial to improve in-depth exploration and additional opportunities to probe individuals through focus groups or in-depth interviews.

To add to the cultivation theory's body of knowledge, it would be important to research its effects on other communication theories like the third person theory.

Results from this study showed that subjects did not feel they were affected by the cultivation theory, but felt the general public was affected by this theory. This would be an interesting exploration to find a correlation between the two theories and how it affects the public relations profession.

Another suggestion for future research is to explore the cultivation theory as it effects more than just people's perception of violence. The researcher promotes additional research on the effects of television on young people and their skewed perception of relationships, sex, depression, and body image.

Further research would probe the question; are young adults that are heavy television viewers more likely to have relationship problems than those who watch moderate or no television? Or do young men or women who are heavy television viewers, feel pressured to engage in sexual intercourse at a younger age? It leads us to ask the question, how powerful is television? How powerful is the media, and what kind of effect does it have on us.

Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Good afternoon colleagues,

As many of you know, I am in the final stages of completing my master's degree in public relations. I have finished the course work and I am currently working on my final independent research paper.

I have chosen to research and test the Cultivation Theory. This communication theory suggests that those who are heavy television viewers, especially heavy television news viewers, are more likely to have a skewed sense of reality and real fear of crime. I have chosen to test the validity of this theory as it applies to print media (i.e. newspapers and online newspapers).

A section of my paper relies on some type of research method. I have chosen a survey method and would like to request your assistance in completing this task. This task would include two 30 minute surveys.

This survey is completely voluntary. If you are interested and available to participate in this task contact me directly, by phone or email, by July 15, 2009. If you do accept this request, please sign and fax or email a scanned copy of the attached consent form to me at the number or email below by July 20, 2009. If you choose not to accept this request, thank you so much for your time and consideration.

I appreciate your assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Sherry Sutton
ssutton@rileykids.org
C: 317.519.4979
F: 317.634.4478

Appendix B

**A Quasi-Experimental Study of Cultivation Theory
in Print Media Pre-Test Questionnaire**

Directions:

*Please place an **X** next to the answer that best completes the question or statement.*

Organizational Questions

1. Which outlet do you utilize the most to receive local news: (Check all that apply)

Local newspaper

Local newspaper Web site

Local news television

Local news television Web site

Local news radio

Local entertainment radio

I don't read or listen to local news *(If you chose this statement, please skip to question #7)*

2. Do you read the local newspaper? (If no, skip to question #4)

Yes

No

Sometimes

3. How often do you read the local newspaper?

Very Often
Twice a Week

Often
 Never

Sometimes

Once or

4. Do you read the local newspaper online? (If no, skip to Question #7)

Yes

No

Sometimes

5. How often do you read the local newspaper online?

Very Often Often Sometimes Once or
 Twice a Week Never

6. Do you read the Crime & Courts section of the local newspaper?

Yes No Sometimes

Attitude Questions

7. How often have you read news articles stating increase in local violence?

Very Often Often Sometimes Once or
 Twice a Week Never

8. The majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on local crime.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

9. The majority of news articles in the local newspaper focus on national crime.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

10. There has been an increase in local crime the past two years.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

11. There has been a decrease in local crime the past two years.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

12. Petty crimes (i.e. car thefts, home invasion, check fraud, etc.) occurs the most locally.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

13. Major crimes (i.e. homicide, abduction, rape, etc.) occurs the most locally.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

14. The United States is currently experiencing an increase in crime.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

15. Which of the following best describe your feelings of safety in your community?

Very Safe Somewhat Safe Neither Somewhat
Unsafe Very Unsafe

Profile Questions

16. I have been personally affected by local crime?

YES NO

17. A close friend or family member has been personally affected by local crime?

YES NO

18. I believe I will be personally affected by crime in the future.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

19. What is your gender?

Female

Male

20. How old are you?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-65

21. Which describes your ethnic background?

White or Caucasian

Hispanic or Latino

Black or African-American

Asian

Other

22. Current city of residence:

Thank you for completing the pre-test questionnaire. Please read the attached articles and complete the post-test questionnaire.

Appendix C

A Quasi-Experimental Study of Cultivation Theory in Print Media Post-Test Questionnaire

Directions:

*Please place an **X** next to the answer that best completes the question or statement.*

Organizational Questions

1. Which outlet do you utilize the most to receive local news: (Check all that apply)

Local newspaper

Local newspaper Web site

Local news television

Local news television Web site

Local news radio

Local entertainment radio

I don't read or listen to local news *(If you chose this statement, please skip to question #7)*

2. Do you read the local newspaper? (If no, skip to question #4)

Yes No Sometimes

3. How often do you read the local newspaper?

Very Often Often Sometimes Once or
Twice a Week Never

4. Do you read the local newspaper online? (If no, skip to question #7)

Yes No Sometimes

5. How often do you read the local newspaper online?

Very Often Often Sometimes Once or
Twice a Week Never

6. Do you read the Crime & Courts section of the local newspaper?

Yes No Sometimes

Attitude Questions

7. After reading the provided news articles, which of the following best describe your feelings of safety in your community?

Very Safe Somewhat Safe Neither Somewhat
Unsafe Very Unsafe

8. After reading the provided news articles, my view on crime in my area has changed.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

9. After reading the provided news articles, I am concerned I will be personally affected by crime.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

10. After reading the provided news articles, I believe crime has increase in my area.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

11. After reading the provided news articles, I believe the majority of articles in the local newspaper focus on local crime.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

12. After reading the provided news articles, I believe there has been an increase in local crime the past two years.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

13. After reading the provided news articles, I believe there has been a decrease in local crime the past two years.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

14. After reading the provided news articles, I believe petty crimes (i.e. car thefts, home invasion, check fraud, etc.) occurs the most locally.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

15. After reading the provided news articles, I believe major crimes (i.e. homicide, abduction, rape, etc.) occurs the most locally.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

16. Did your feelings of safety change after reading the new articles?

Yes No Undecided

17. Heavy news readers (i.e. newspapers and online news) are more fearful of crime in their area.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

18. Heavy news viewers (i.e. local and national news broadcasts) are more fearful of crime in their area.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

19. I think media contributes to unnecessary fear of crime.

Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Profile Questions

What is your gender?

Female

Male

How old are you?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-65

Which describes your ethnic background?

White or Caucasian

Hispanic or Latino

Black or African-American

Asian

Other

Current city of residence:

Thank you for assistance with this project.

Appendix D

Control Group Article #1

City's bold goal: Stem the killing

Vic Ryckaert and Francesca Jarosz

January 12, 2009

Marion County recorded 123 homicides in 2008, one fewer than the previous year but not nearly enough of a drop to satisfy a city administration that came to power with promises of reducing crime.

Public Safety Director Scott Newman and Police Chief Michael Spears have set an ambitious goal to reduce the number of homicides to fewer than 100. How ambitious? The county has not had a double-digit total in any year since The Star began tracking homicides in 1997.

A key to achieving that goal will be increasing the number of police officers and ensuring they're used effectively.

The previous administration had promised to use tax increases to pay for an additional 100 officers, but the Ballard administration insists the city needs the money to pay existing police whose salaries had been covered by federal grants.

Instead, the city expects to spend about \$1 million this year to hire 38 public assistance officers who could take reports by phone on nonemergency crimes such as vandalism and petty theft. The plan is to give the city's roughly 1,600 sworn officers more time to fight crime.

In addition, Spears has said he hopes to recruit 50 to 75 more reserve officers -- part-time volunteers who work mostly on weekends and patrol no differently from full-time cops -- during the next 12 months, which would bring their number to nearly 200. The ultimate goal, Newman said, is to improve officers' ability to prevent crime, rather than simply respond to it.

"Officers are not just run-takers; they must try to impact crime rates," Newman said. "We have to stick

around (crime scenes) to ask questions: 'What's happening?' not just 'What happened?' If officers are stretched too thin, they can't do that."

The city's strategy includes cracking down on drug buyers in open-air drug markets and combating burglaries, which often lead to homicides. The city also is looking at high-tech solutions such as Shot Spotter, a system of microphones that detects gunshots, in high-crime neighborhoods.

But community leaders say the solution has to go beyond putting more police on the streets and focus not only on catching the bad guys but also on dealing with the issues that cause crime.

They call for more efforts to help steer children away from bad influences and to re-integrate young men into society after they're released from prison.

That's essential in a sagging economy, when jobs can be scarce even for those without a criminal record.

The number of homicides in 2008 is well below the recent spike of 151 in 2006 and the record of 162 in 1998. Even so, the pattern is remarkably similar to that of previous years:

Most victims were young, black males who died of gunshot wounds. About 65 percent of the victims were black; 71 percent were age 34 or younger; nearly three-fourths died by gunshot.

Poverty, drugs and other social problems are devastating within the black community, Leslie said. Young black men, she said, can fall into a cycle of dropping out of school, running the streets, selling drugs and committing crimes.

Demographics of local homicides are similar to the nation's, said Kenna Quinet, a criminal justice professor at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

The high homicide rate among young black males wasn't the only familiar pattern in 2008.

As in past years, a disproportionate number of deaths occurred in a wide swath between 16th and 56th streets on the city's Near Northside and Northside. Quinet, who co-wrote a textbook on homicides, doesn't find that surprising. Crime tends to be concentrated in certain areas, she said, because criminals often repeat crimes there.

Jimmie Harrington said drug abuse and poverty are fueling crime in his Westside community. Harrington, 56, lives near 10th Street and Pershing Avenue, a neighborhood that also had four homicides last year.

Public safety officials say they plan to improve relationships with neighborhoods as part of their effort to bring down the homicide rate. Spears has been using crime trends to place officers where they are most needed and continues to strengthen IMPD's relationship with the community.

Source: *The Indianapolis Star*, March 1, 2009

Appendix E

Control Group Article #2

Fighting roots of crime takes collaborative effort

August 3, 2008

Byron Alston works the toughest streets in the city, trying to reach children and teens and lure them back from the brink.

Alston, who runs the Save the Youth program near several violence plagued Eastside apartment complexes, was a first-hand observer last month as a surge of violence claimed 18 lives, the city's deadliest July in five years.

"Indy's just going nuts, man," he told The Star's Vic Ryckaert. "We can't blame the police no more. It's up to us."

"Us," as in community, business and religious leaders supporting efforts to find jobs for ex-offenders and organize teams of mentors. "Us," as in ordinary people choosing to get involved in everything from tutoring programs to neighborhood Crime Watch.

Without that broad community effort, the city's push to reduce violent crime won't succeed over the long term. The city simply can't afford to hire and retain enough police officers, build enough jail cells and add enough judges and prosecutors to counter deteriorating social trends.

One sign of hope is the growing network of business, social and religious organizations that are attacking the roots of violence.

Alston runs one relatively small program that tries to reach at-risk youth. Larger organizations such as United Way and the Chamber of Commerce have launched initiatives that rely on hundreds of mentors to help students secure a good education. The mayor's office is working with churches and other faith-based organizations to help more families meet their physical

and emotional needs.

Those efforts, as promising as many appear to be, will take time to make a difference.

In the interim, it's left to the police to combat the current reality of rampant violence.

There's fresh hope there as well.

Public Safety Director Scott Newman, in a recent meeting with Star staff members, outlined a thoughtful strategy to pour resources into the hardest-hit neighborhoods. As criminals are pushed out of those areas, police move on to other troubled neighborhoods while maintaining a heightened presence in the initial targeted zones. The formula has shown early signs of success.

Newman readily admits that crime "continues absolutely to be unacceptably high." But he also says that internal data indicate a recent drop in aggravated assaults and rapes. Homicides, however, continue to mount at a rapid rate, and property crimes continue largely unabated.

Newman said police also have started once again to use reverse stings to push drug dealers off the streets and scare off buyers who drive into the urban core from the suburbs.

A heightened police presence, as Newman noted, is critical to reducing the violence. So is a heightened presence from the community. As Byron Alston said, it really does take all of us.

Source: *The Indianapolis Star*, March 1, 2009

Appendix F

Control Group Article #3

Anti-crime push resonates at rally

VIC RYCKAERT

March 22, 2008

Mayor Greg Ballard wants "Peace **in** the Streets" to become the city's new catchphrase **in** a marketing campaign he hopes will **reduce** crime.

Ballard joined clergy, business leaders and civic groups at Christamore House, 502 N. Tremont St., on Friday morning as he launched his new street-level crime-fighting effort.

"Working together, as one community, we can bring about peace in the streets," Ballard told the crowd of about 200.

Ballard said law enforcement, government agencies and the community must work together with a shared vision for public safety. He urged citizens to band together and keep crime at bay in their neighborhoods.

The message resonated loudly for Karen Davis, who lives in the Haughville area.

"I'm very concerned with the violence, especially when it comes to the children," Davis said. "I'm here to fight for the children and our community." Davis shook the mayor's hand and took several "Peace in the Streets" yard signs.

"I'm hoping that we will be able to start getting the community together," she said. Homicides are down this year compared with the same time last year. Marion County has had 21 homicides in 2008, compared with 28 at this time last year.

Other violent crime is on the rise. In 2007, aggravated assaults jumped 38 percent, robberies increased 25 percent, and residential burglaries went up 21 percent.

Ballard said the changes he is making in the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department are just beginning to make a difference.

"I don't think what we've done has taken hold yet," he said. "This is the start. It's going to be a haul. It's going to be a protracted engagement."

Source: *The Indianapolis Star*, March 1, 2009

Appendix G

Experimental Group Article #1

No easy answer explains city's wave of killings

VIC RYCKAERT, JON MURRAY AND JEREMY HERB

July 24, 2008

Indianapolis police are at a loss to explain what has spawned a wave of killings that will make July one of the deadliest months in at least two years, but they remain optimistic they can stem the violence.

In the past few months, department brass have started using daily crime report data to pick out emerging trends and flood trouble spots with officers, a strategy they expect to make a difference eventually. Also, come September, the city's public safety director expects to add 40 civilians to handle mundane tasks so more officers are free to tackle serious crime.

Scott Newman also wants to lease 200 more jail beds to make room for people rearrested while out on bail but often set free to avoid jail crowding. Still, the violence that has left 16 people dead this month -- the latest was a 67-year-old man found slain in a Far-Southside apartment late Tuesday -- may not signal crime is out of control.

"This is not a trend. It's a blip," said Kenna Quinet, a criminal justice professor at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. "Homicide is a rare event and often clusters together. Later on, we'll see declines, and we shouldn't overdiagnose the decreases either." Blip or not, police say they are taking the situation seriously.

"It's just really been a rough month for the county and our investigators," said Indianapolis metropolitan police Deputy Chief William Benjamin. "We're not going to quit. We're going to keep man-hunting until we find every last killer."

He added that the department has continued initiatives it started in 2007 that may have helped reduce the pace of killing, including stepped-up undercover work and flooding high-crime neighborhoods with uniformed officers during the late night and early morning hours when criminals are most active.

Marion County has seen 69 homicides so far this year, up two from this time in 2007.

But reports of violent crime declined in Marion County for the first four months of this year. Killings dropped 11 percent, rapes declined 13 percent, and robbery dropped 2 percent from January to April.

July's spike in killings is reminiscent of the summer of 2006, when 48 people were killed in June, July and August. "Summer spikes happen," said James Alan Fox, a criminal justice professor at Northeastern University in Boston who tracks homicides across the country.

Summer often is the most volatile crime season, experts say, because people have more contact with strangers on the streets than they would at other times of the year. Family-related violence goes up around the December holidays, when families are cooped up together.

Fox and Quinet cautioned against reading too much into an uptick. Still, the numbers are hard to ignore, and several cities have shared Indianapolis' unease. The surges aren't across the board, Fox said, and they come in cycles.

Indiana criminals typically serve half the sentence a court hands them, earning good behavior credit at a rate of one day for every day they are imprisoned. Marion County Prosecutor Carl Brizzi long has argued that ending that practice would keep many potential killers off the streets. That could have made a difference in at least one case this month.

Calvin Foster, 37, charged in the July 7 domestic violence killing of Melissa Parksey, was sentenced to four years in prison by a Morgan County judge on a

robbery conviction in May 2006. He was released in July 2007 but would still be in prison today if the state had reduced the "good time" credit.

Brizzi pressed a failed measure during the 2007 General Assembly to require offenders to serve roughly 85 percent of their sentences, in line with the federal prison system.

Newman thinks adding 200 beds to the roughly 1,600 available now at the county jail and its annexes would make a big difference. But first the public safety director wants to ensure the courts can move defendants more quickly through the system to avoid jail crowding.

Meanwhile, the new civilian staffers, many of them retired police officers, would allow the department to concentrate more patrols on the 50 beats that account for 80 percent of Marion County crime. Experts say homicides are among the most difficult crimes to prevent because they often are crimes of passion or spring out of other crimes.

Source, *The Indianapolis Star*, March 1, 2009

Appendix H

Experimental Group Article #2

July was deadliest in county in 5 years

VIC RYCKAERT

August 1, 2008

A young man was found shot to death in Indianapolis on Thursday morning -- the last day of an especially violent month during which police investigated 18 homicides.

That is the most homicides for July in the past five years and pushes the yearly homicide total in Marion County to 71, up one from this time last year.

The latest confirmed victim was 18-year-old Clois R. Goldsmith. Police found Goldsmith shot in the head and lying on the pavement in the 5200 block of Butler Terrace shortly after 2 a.m.

Goldsmith, 3800 block of North Temple Avenue, died at Wishard Memorial Hospital at 5:22 a.m.

No arrests had been made Thursday evening. Police said a witness told them two men dressed all in black, with black hoodies, were heading east on foot about the same time the gunshot was heard.

"Indy's just getting nuts, man," said Byron Alston, director of Save the Youth, an Eastside neighborhood social services program. "We can't blame the police no more. It's up to us."

Alston said he is calling on area pastors to spend more time in crime-ridden neighborhoods. He is urging local clergy to hold a summit and plan a strategy to counter the violence.

"We got to step out there," Alston said. "They need to put the money in places that can actually help these dudes break the cycle."

As in previous years, the majority of victims, so far in 2008, are black, younger than 30 and died by gunfire.

About half of the victims were killed on the Eastside. Metropolitan Police Deputy Chief William Benjamin said officers are continuing techniques that have been successful in stemming the violence in the past, including warrant sweeps and overtime patrols in high-crime neighborhoods.

"In some neighborhoods, people are not getting the message that violence is not the answer," Benjamin said.

Police, Benjamin said, also have identified the most violent offenders on the city's streets and are watching them closely, stopping them and arresting anytime they have cause.

"Those people are being targeted and watched, and when they do commit crimes, they go to jail," Benjamin said.

Homicides tend to increase in the summer, when more people interact outside the home, experts say. In 2006, there were 48 homicides from June to August. The 153 killings in 2006 was the most the city has seen since 1998, when there was a record 162 homicides. St. Louis, Chicago and Kansas City, Mo., also have experienced increases in homicides this year.

Kenna Quinet, an Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis professor and close observer of IMPD, said the police can do very little to prevent homicides.

"It makes me angry when people try to hold police accountable for homicides, " Quinet said. "This is a family problem."

The department is using modern strategies and proven techniques to attack the violent crime problem, Quinet said.

"If we can continue our efforts to help people coming out of prison to find jobs and establish positive social networks, we'll be ahead of the curve and prevent lots of future violent crimes," she said.

Source: *The Indianapolis Star*, March 1, 2009

Appendix I

Experimental Group Article #3

Killings raise questions about abuse investigations

HEATHER GILLERS

July 25, 2008

Carl Wills never had to answer for slashing his ex-wife's tire, kicking in her door or punching her in the face. He never had to pay for giving his ex-girlfriend a bloody lip and a swollen cheek.

A single conviction might have been enough to put him in prison -- and keep April Wills alive. But Tuesday morning, Carl Wills killed April's boyfriend and then dragged her and her 13-year-old daughter into his car. Minutes later, he killed April as the girl watched from the backseat. As police approached, Carl Wills shot himself. Carl Wills had never been prosecuted for any of the domestic violence incidents, a decision advocates for abuse victims say happens frequently -- and too often with tragic consequences.

April Wills could have pressed charges against her ex-husband in three domestic violence cases, but she would have no part of it. Such reluctance is so common among domestic violence victims that Indiana law allows police and prosecutors to build cases and prosecute without their help.

But victim advocates say Marion County prosecutors almost always abandon such cases. Prosecutors see it another way. Without cooperation from the victim, they say, other evidence, such as tapes of 911 calls, photographs of black eyes and missing teeth, or testimony from neighbors, is not always enough to clinch a case.

"It's not the reality that we live in that in every case where domestic violence occurs, we can get domestic violence convictions," said Linda Major, executive director of domestic violence affairs for the Marion County prosecutor's office.

In the first half of 2007, prosecutors dismissed more

than half of the 1,150 cases handled by the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit, according to an analysis by the Julian Center, the largest domestic violence shelter in Indianapolis. Most cases are dismissed because they are too weak, especially without the victim's cooperation, Major said.

But testifying is not an easy decision for many abuse victims. Some are financially dependent on their abusers. Women who have children with their abuser might be reluctant to send their child's father to prison.

April Wills repeatedly said she was afraid to leave Carl Wills or press charges against him. After police arrested him in connection with an incident in January 2006, a spokesman for the Marion County prosecutor said April Wills walked into the office and told authorities she had made up the attack.

An abuse case against Carl Wills involving another woman never made it to trial, either. Police had photos of Shawna Murray's cut lip and swollen cheek after an incident in 2007. They had a willing witness in Murray's cousin. But when Murray did not show up on the day of the trial, prosecutors dropped the case for lack of an "essential witness," court documents show.

Police take such cases so seriously that they station officers in the Julian Center. They meticulously photograph swollen faces, overturned tables and broken glass.

Prosecutors can try to combine those photos with 911 recordings and neighbors' testimony to put abusive husbands and boyfriends in prison even when women do not want to take the stand.

And sometimes it works. Symons said one prosecutor won a conviction against a man who had stabbed his wife on their wedding day -- even though the woman testified for the defense and claimed someone else had attacked her.

Another prosecutor reported opening at least 21 domestic violence cases since the beginning of 2007 without victims' cooperation.

As relatives of April Wills spent this week planning her funeral, they also wrestled with lingering what-ifs. Her sister, Lori Shirley, can't understand why prosecutors didn't just pick up the case and move forward without April's testimony.

"If it's a matter of life and death," she asked, "wouldn't you pick it up?"

Source: *The Indianapolis Star*, March 1, 2009

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