Article

Boy With Toy or Black Male With Gun: An Analysis of Online News Articles Covering the Shooting of Tamir Rice

Rebecca Stone[1] and Kelly M. Socia[1]

Abstract
The current study explores how online media framed the police shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland, OH. We conducted a qualitative content analysis of a large sample of online news articles published in the first 48 hours following the event. In doing so, we consider how online media outlets used headlines, narrative, quotes, and images to frame this emerging story. We find that the online news media framed the shooting of Rice in ways that largely supported the official police narrative of the event. Rice was projected as a noncompliant and threatening subject and the police as reacting out of concerns for public safety. Unlike international sources, relatively few domestic news sources linked this incident to the larger issues of race and police use of force in the United States. The dominant frame promotes a moral evaluation of the event that downplays police responsibility and promotes localized, nonsystemic solutions as opposed to wide-spread policing reform.

On Saturday, November 22, 2014, 12-year-old Tamir Rice was playing with a fake gun in a park near the Cudell Recreation Center in Cleveland, OH. Shortly before 3:30 p.m., another park visitor made a 911 call to report "a guy in here with a pistol, you

[1] University of Massachusetts Lowell, Lowell, MA, USA.

Corresponding Author:
Rebecca Stone, Suffolk University, Department of Sociology, 73 Tremont St, 7th Floor, Boston, MA 02108, USA.
Email: rjgstone@gmail.com

know, it's probably fake, but he's pointing it at everybody . . . . The guy keeps pulling it in and out of his pants. It's probably fake, but you know what, he's scaring the shit out of me" (Los Angeles Times Staff, 2014). The dispatcher relayed information to a pair of officers who were dispatched to the park. Soon after arriving on scene, one of the officers shot Rice, who was transported to a local hospital.

Police released audio of the 911 call later that Saturday evening. Cleveland Police Patrolmen's Association president Jeff Folmer informed the Northeast Ohio Media Group that the caller's statements about "probably a juvenile" and the weapon being "probably fake" were not relayed to the responding officers (Shaffer, 2014). On Sunday morning, November 23, the Northeast Ohio Media Group reported that Rice had died overnight as a result of his injuries. On Sunday afternoon, Rice's name was released to the public, and on Monday morning, November 24, Cleveland officials held a press conference and revealed that they have video of the incident but are not releasing it out of respect for Rice's family. His family later requested that the video be released and on Wednesday, November 26, police released the video and the names of the officers: Timothy Loehmann (who fired the shots) and Frank Garmback. The video shows the police car pull into the frame and come to a stop on the grass near a gazebo where Rice had been sitting. Within 3 s, Loehmann exits the vehicle with his weapon pointed at Rice, who doubles over and falls to the ground (Lee, 2014).

The death of Tamir Rice came at a time of heightened public attention to police use of force, particularly against unarmed African American men and women. Given this heightened attention to police use of force and interactions with the African American community, it is no surprise that the shooting of Tamir Rice quickly resulted in a proliferation of news articles, many published to the Internet just hours after the incident. The way this incident was framed in online news articles soon after the event occurred has implications for how audience members define and interpret this event within a larger context of police use of force and interactions with communities of color. Frames that oppose police actions in this incident (e.g., "Boy With a Toy") could incite public resistance to use of force and promote policing reform. Frames that support the police response in this incident as an unfortunate but inevitable outcome (e.g., "Black Male With Gun") could legitimize such use of force and uncouple this incident from other contemporaneous incidents involving African American victims of police shootings.

The current study is a qualitative analysis of online news coverage of the Tamir Rice story in the first 48 hr after the story broke. Using a sample of 160 articles from domestic and international digital news outlets, we analyze the media framing of the event in descriptions of the officers and Rice, the use of photographs alongside the article text, and the positioning of the story in relation to other high-profile incidents of police use of force. In doing so, we shed light on how the media begin to define a tragic event in the hours and days following its occurrence. We update the understanding of media coverage of crime, developed through studies of print and television news, to consider the rapid growth and globalization of online news and the resulting changes in journalistic practices.

Literature Review

The New News

The Internet has become the first place of publication for breaking news and a powerful shaping force for first impressions of newsworthy events. In 2016, the Internet was the dominant source of news for Americans in the 18–29 and 30–49 age-groups (Pew Research Center, 2016). The Newspaper Association of America reported that, in 2014, the audience engaging with digital content provided by newspapers reached an all-time high of 161 million unique visitors, with a large part of this increase attributed to adults aged 18–24 using mobile devices to access newspaper digital content (Conaghan, 2014). These websites include the online versions of traditional print news outlets as well as cable, network, international, and public television and radio broadcasting, and digital-only news sources. Where print news outlets once maintained daily or twice-daily deadlines, online news can be published 24 hr a day, 7 days a week. This is reflected in consumer habits: The American Press Institute (Media Insight Project, 2014) notes that 33% of Americans they surveyed reported following the news throughout the day. Visitors to online news websites spent less than 4 min on each page (Pew Research Center, Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2015), increasing the incentive for media outlets to capture visitors' attention quickly through headlines and images. Younger adults are more likely to seek out news online and were more likely to agree that "getting news online gives them a wider range of news than they would get otherwise" (Mitchell et al., 2016, p. 18), including both domestic and international news sources.

The shift to digital news has introduced new pressures for journalists and media companies. There is increasing pressure to publish faster, resulting in increased reliance on official versions of events. The Pew Research Center, Project for Excellence in Journalism (2010) found that official press releases often appear word-for-word in first accounts of events, though news outlets may not indicate this in the story. They also found "numerous examples of websites carrying sections of other peoples' work without attribution" (Pew Research Center, Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010, p. 2). Another analysis of international stories from major news websites finds a scarcity of original journalism, noting "a shift . . . toward less minor rewriting of wire stories," and news outlets "opting more often now to simply publish wire stories in their entirety" (Paterson, 2007, p. 58). A survey of members of the Online News Association found that the members were concerned that the growth in online news was threatening to the fundamental values of journalism, citing loosening journalistic standards, declining accuracy, and increased emphasis on speed (Pew Research Center, Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009). Newspaper newsroom staffing levels were estimated to be down 30% from 2000 to 2012, leading to a news industry that is "undermanned and unprepared to cover stories, dig deep into emerging ones or to question information put in its hands" (Pew Research Center, Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013).

There is also decreased emphasis on follow-up stories. One analysis of major U.S. newspaper online editions found that the ratio of first-day reports to follow-up stories

grew from 2:1 in 2001 to 16:1 in 2005, indicating a dramatic shift away from follow-up stories in favor of breaking events (Barnhurst, 2013). This suggests that stories published immediately after an event may be the only coverage of that event before another story breaks. This has implications for public understanding of social problems and support for proposed solutions. First impressions formed by news coverage of breaking events may have a lasting impact, even if this coverage is updated or corrected in later coverage.

Framing, Priming, and Agenda Setting

In a series of studies of media representations of crime and law enforcement efforts, Ericson, Baranek, and Chan describe how the news is a discourse of "morality, procedure, and hierarchy" (1991, p. 5) and, much like the justice system, is concerned with social order, assignment of responsibility, and the maintenance of legitimacy. The news focuses on the assessment of threats to social order and the minimization of these threats, especially by law enforcement actors. Through its reliance on official authorities as authorized knowers (Tuchman, 1978), the news maintains an appearance of neutrality and legitimacy while serving as "an influential vehicle through which the authority system can instruct people on what to *be* as well as what to *do*" (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991, p. 7). The selection of news items and the way these items are presented can have powerful effects on consumers' perceptions of social problems and support for proposed solutions.

In the study of media and communications, framing refers to the way that the media focus attention on news events. Framing involves the selection of some aspects of a story and making them more salient "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Goffman (1974, p. 21) referred to frames as "schemata of interpretation" that allow individuals to locate events and occurrences within a field of meaning. Framing may involve the use of metaphors, cultural myths, legends or traditions, or slogans and catchphrases to influence how the story is interpreted (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Thus, the framing of events by the media can affect how members of the audience come to understand the events and their meanings (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997), particularly during the confusing time soon after an event has occurred.

In their recent review, Scheufele and Iyengar (2014) acknowledge the immense popularity of framing research but criticize scholars for abandoning the narrower conceptualization of framing in favor of a broader definition that blurs framing with other content elements and forms of media influence. As originally defined, framing concerns differences in how equivalent information is presented. Framing effects, then, describe how we interpret the same piece of information differently depending on how that information is contextualized or framed. The more sociological approach to framing, described as "emphasis framing" (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2014; as opposed to "equivalence framing"), defines frames as central organizing story lines or narratives

that help journalists and their audiences to quickly identify and classify information (Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Gitlin, 1980).

By emphasizing moral assessment and assignment of responsibility, the news frequently constructs "moral character portraits" (Ericson et al., 1991, p. 9) of those involved in news events. These portraits place the emphasis on individual morality, personalizing conflicts and promoting an "event orientation" that suggests that "troublesome persons rather than troublesome social structures are at fault" (pp. 8–9). This framing approach has been described by Iyengar (1991) as "episodic," focusing on individual case studies and discrete events. Episodic framing stands in contrast to thematic framing, which emphasizes context and trends over time. The predominance of episodic rather than thematic framing of news stories influences how news consumers view social problems and whether they prefer individual-level or broader institutional solutions. Problems presented through episodic framing suggest we need better information to fix the person, whereas problems presented through thematic framing suggest we need better policies to fix the condition. Episodic, event-oriented news coverage of events promotes individual solutions and avoids systemic and structural explanations that might question the authority of social institutions (Ericson et al., 1991), decreasing the likelihood that news consumers will hold the government and other civic organizations accountable for solving the problem.

Scheufele and Iyengar (2014) argue that framing effects, which depend on the audience member's existing cognitive schemas, should not be confounded with salience- or accessibility-based effects like agenda setting and priming. Agenda setting refers to the correlation between the emphasis that the media place on certain issues and the salience of these issues to the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). If certain issues are made more salient, audiences may incorporate these issues into the standards by which they evaluate the performance of political leaders and governments. This effect is described as priming (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Thus, the way that issues are presented in the media influence the accessibility of information that people use to form attitudes about these issues.

Although Scheufele and Iyengar (2014) call for greater conceptual distinction between framing, agenda setting, and priming, Entman (2007) makes an argument for the systematic integration of these concepts for the purpose of theorizing about media bias and the media's role in distributing power. He argues that "agenda setting can thus be seen as another name of successfully performing the first function of framing: defining problems worthy of public and government attention" (2007, p. 164) and that priming is the intended effect of framing. In this way, framing, agenda setting, and priming achieve the "core business of strategic framing: to highlight the causes of problems, to encourage moral judgments (and associated affective responses), and to promote favored policies" (2007, pp. 164–165) of the elite. It is through this one-sided framing, which produces patterns of news slant may persist across time and media outlets, that the media may help distribute political power, particularly in favor of administration figures and elites in the upper tiers of the cascade (Entman, 2003) of frame activation and dominance.

Media and communications scholars have identified stereotypical frames used for news that promote general hostility toward African Americans. Entman (1992) argues

that representations of young African American men as threatening and deviant fulfill audience expectations and reinforce negative stereotypes. In his analysis of local television news, Entman (1992) finds that African American defendants are more likely to have their mug shots shown and to be shown in handcuffs. A later study of national television news found less overt stereotyping in national news than in local news, but African American defendants were still twice as likely as White defendants to be shown in the grasp of a law enforcement officer. The national news programs were also less likely to offer prodefense sound bites for African American defendants and were more likely to show African Americans loitering, engaged in drug dealing, and other negative depictions (Entman, 1994). African American defendants are more likely than White defendants to have prejudicial pretrial information aired on local news programs (Dixon & Linz, 2002). Finally, in network and local television news, African Americans are underrepresented as victims of crime and overrepresented as lawbreakers, while Whites are overrepresented as victims of crime and under-represented as lawbreakers (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Dixon & Linz, 2000). These negative stereotypes contribute to what Entman (1992) describes as "modern racism," which is characterized by general affective hostility toward non-Whites, rejection of political aspirations of non-Whites, and the denial that discrimination against non-Whites continues to be a problem. Modern racism has clear negative implications for efforts to use police violence against African Americans as impetus for criminal justice reform.

The Media and Police Use of Force

Media framing of police use of force incidents is shaped by three aspects: privileged official access to the news, the norms of professional journalism that necessitate a close working relationship between journalists and police (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Lawrence, 2000), and the larger cultural discourse of crime control and "the crime problem" (Lawrence, 2000). Past research has found that news coverage of use of force incidents is largely fleeting and structured around claims provided by official spokespeople (Hirschfield & Simon, 2010; Lawrence, 2000; Scraton & Chadwick, 1986). Hirschfield and Simon (2010) find that the emphasis on official versions of events is not due merely to the difficulty of locating and sourcing unofficial accounts, since even when counterclaims appear, they are subjectified or devalued in ways that official accounts are not. The official versions of events shared by police spokespeople and politicians tend to individualize the use of force incidents, mainly by focusing on the threat posed to the officers by the victim or occasionally on the mistakes or misconduct of rogue cops (Lawrence, 2000). Thus, while most murder victims are presented by the media in a sympathetic manner (Peelo, 2006), police killings are generally presented as "the logical consequences of victims' lawless or troubled behavior" (Hirschfield & Simon, 2010, p. 176), through the construction of victims as active and threatening, and the police as reactive and justified in their actions.

Ruggiero (2004) notes that journalists prefer government officials as sources because it helps maintain the objectivity norm, while at the same time meeting organizational

and economic pressures of timely, cheap information. Lawrence (2000, p. 5) labels this the "official dominance" model of the news, wherein public officials act as authorized knowers considered to be the most legitimate sources of news. Research has shown that crime and policing coverage often favors claims made by politicians and criminal justice officials (Chermak, 1995; Sacco, 1995) and that reliance on such official claims-makers reaffirms traditional criminal justice practices and promotes problem definitions and solutions favorable to those officials (Chermak, 1997; Ericson, 1989; Fishman, 1981). Consequently, the published news disproportionately reflects the views, concerns, and activities of the elite classes. Public officials, through their privileged access to the media, can authoritatively define "accidental events" and manage crises in their favor. However, some accidental events become "centerpieces of struggles to designate and define public problems" (Lawrence, 2000, p. 7), and other groups may contest the dominant media framing of these events. This is increasingly occurring on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, where eyewitnesses to these "accidental events" can share their perspective and reach large audiences. Twitter in particular has gained attention for its role in facilitating the spread of information about natural disasters and political upheavals (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). For example, during the police brutality protests in Ferguson, MO, and Baltimore, MD, Twitter users "on the ground" live-Tweeted police actions toward the protestors. "Crowdsourced" news from social media platforms is now appearing in mainstream news accounts (e.g., CNN's iReport). More recently, live-streaming social network applications like Periscope and Facebook Live have added another dimension to online news content, allowing users to record themselves or their surroundings and have these recordings viewed in real time by audiences around the world.[1]

Over 90% of journalists report that they are increasingly reliant on social media for sourcing stories (Middleberg & McLure, 2011), though print media journalists are more negative than website journalists about the reliability of information sources from social networking sites, citing concerns about lack of fact-checking, verification, or reporting standards (George Washington University & Cision, 2009). The use of social media for sourcing news information is a reflection of the increasing pressure for online journalists to prioritize speed over accuracy.

Current Study

Previous examinations of news coverage of police use of force have analyzed printed newspaper articles (Hirschfield & Simon, 2010; Lawrence, 2000; Ross, 2000; Scraton & Chadwick, 1986), largely from the year 2000 or earlier and using only domestic news sources. These analyses predate the meteoric rise of online news media and many of today's trends in news access as described above. Further, these studies typically examined news coverage of police use of force in general over a period of time, rather than coverage of one specific case shortly after its occurrence.

The current study contributes to our understanding of how modern-day news media covers police shootings by examining a large sample of online news articles published immediately following one high-profile incident (the shooting of Tamir Rice). This

event occurred during a time of heightened attention to police use of force, particularly against African Americans, and just days before a verdict was announced in the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO. Under examination is how online media outlets framed this emerging story in light of the existing police shooting coverage and the extent of blame being placed either on the police (Boy With a Toy) or on Tamir (Black Male With Gun). Using a sample of news articles posted online in the 48 hr after the incident, we ask (1) How was this incident described and contextualized in article headlines, text content, and through use of photographs and linkages to other cases? and (2) Did these articles frame the incident in a manner consistent with typical news coverage of police shootings, that is, prioritizing official versions of events, rationalizing police use of force, and subjectifying knowledge claims that run counter to the official narrative? In addition, we compare the framing of this incident in domestic versus international publications.

Method

Data Collection

The data for this study include 160 news webpages and online newspaper articles collected from online sources via searching https://bing.com, https://bing.com/news, https://google.com, https://news.google.com, https://yahoo.com, https://news.yahoo.com, and LexisNexis news archives.[2] Searches were conducted by the second author using the terms "Tamir Rice," "Rice shooting," "Cleveland shooting," and "police shooting." The search process was conducted over the course of several hours in the late afternoon of Monday, November 24, 2014, approximately 48 hr after the initial incident and just before the verdict was announced in the Michael Brown case. When possible, search results were date limited to return only results that were posted or updated on November 22 or afterward.

Individual results returned in the search process were examined to determine if they were news articles about the Tamir Rice shooting. This process continued until all search results had been examined. All news articles that referenced the shooting and were not behind a paywall were saved as optical character recognition (OCR) pdf formats. Articles that were clearly opinion pieces were not saved nor were results that simply linked to other original sources (e.g., an aggregator webpage that listed snippets of news articles with links to those articles). Of the 160 news articles in the final data set, 82 were from domestic (United States) sources and 78 were from international sources.

Data Analysis

As noted earlier, each of the 160 articles were saved in OCR pdf format and were then imported into NVivo (version 11) for coding and analysis. In the first step of the analysis, the authors read through a random sample of 10 articles to develop a coding scheme for article headlines and content. The open coding of the headline and article content was largely descriptive. The coding scheme developed through this open-coding

process includes the description of the victim, description of the police, description of the weapon, description of the event, and contextualization through imagery or mention of other cases. After coding this subset of the sampled articles, the authors went through several iterations of refining the coding criteria and recoding the subset of articles before moving on to code the remaining sample. The resulting coding is a descriptive account of which words or phrases were used in describing the incident as well as the types of photographs accompanying each article.

To tackle the more complex task of identifying ideological content and to build upon prior research, we adopted the coding scheme developed by Hirschfield and Simon (2010) to analyze ideological content in news coverage of police shootings. Drawing on Thompson's (1990) strategies of symbolic construction, Hirschfield and Simon (2010) developed a coding schema of seven "linguistic and symbolic techniques" (p. 161) and strategies used to legitimate police use of force as well as seven counterstrategies that challenge police killings. The strategies are briefly described below (for further detail, see Hirschfield & Simon, 2010).

Rationalization. Primacy given to explanations that make police actions appear logical and rational. The counterstrategy is *repudiation*, wherein the rationality or legality of police actions is questioned.

Expurgation of victim. The portrayal of the victim as evil, strange, or threatening (Scraton & Chadwick, 1986), particularly through reference to the victim's criminal history. The counterstrategy is *expurgation of the police*, wherein police officers are constructed as evil or threatening.

Inclusion of police. Inclusive statements bind the police "with the wider community and promote audience identification with the subject" (Hirschfield & Simon, 2010, p. 163). This is achieved through language praising or humanizing the police or associating them with positive roles. The counterstrategy is *inclusion of the victim*.

Euphemization. The use of euphemisms to depict lethal police action in place of words or phrases that are more harsh or blunt. The counterstrategy is *dysphemization*, for example, saying "gunned down" instead of "shot."

Passivization. Syntactic structures that deprive the police officers of agency, for example, "the suspect was killed" instead of "police killed the suspect." The counterstrategy is *activation* of the police, although Hirschfield and Simon note that activation is not always incriminating, as "Calling attention to the actor can unfold events through the actor's eyes which . . . may cast police as protagonists" (2010, p. 163).

Objectification. The transformation of claims about the event into apparent facts through the use of verbs like "indicated," "found," and "reported," the omission of quotation marks around statements, and through the obscuration of sources. The counterstrategy is *subjectification*, wherein claims are devalued through the use of

Table I. Variables Examined in 160 News Articles.

1. Coding for article headlines
    a. Description of Tamir Rice
    b. Description of officer(s)
    c. Description of Rice's weapon
    d. Description of Rice's actions
    e. Description of officer(s) actions
2. Contextualization of incident
    f. Photographs
    g. Connections to other cases
3. Hirschfield and Simon (2010) themes
    h. Rationalization or repudiation of police actions
    i. Expurgation of victim or of police
    j. Inclusion of police or of victim
    k. Euphemization or dysphemization
    l. Passivization or activation of police
    m. Objectification or subjectification of claims
    n. Anonymity and invisibility of police

quotation marks, personalization of sources, or verbs that stress subjectivity, for example, "alleges," "claims," and "contends."

Anonymity and invisibility. The withholding of the names of police officers or any information about them, especially in contrast to the naming and imaging of the victim. The counterstrategy is *naming and imaging of police officers* involved in the incident (Table 1).

Reliability

The reliability of the coding scheme for ideological content was assessed by having both authors independently code a sample of 15 passages from the news articles.

Agreement was calculated using Cohen's (1960 κ across 5,000 bootstrap replicates of the reliability sample. This procedure resamples the passages with replacement, recalculating the κs on 5,000 different replicates of the reliability sample. We achieved a κ of .748, indicating strong agreement between raters (95% confidence interval [CI] = [0.52, 1.00]). There is no firm standard for acceptable κ values. Cohen (1960) suggested that values of 0.61–0.80 indicate substantial agreement. The broad CI is likely due to the small number of samples in the calculation, but it should be noted that the interval ranges from moderate to perfect agreement.

Results

The results section is divided into different sections based on what aspect of the case is being described. The first section examines descriptions of the victim, Tamir Rice, and the second section describes the actions of Rice prior to police involvement,

including descriptions of Rice's actions and the weapon. The third section describes the police and their actions upon arriving at the scene. Within each of these first three sections, the headlines are examined first, and the articles' text is examined second. The final section takes a slightly different form than the prior three sections and describes ways the story was contextualized in terms of images used in the article and references other cases.

Describing the Victim

According to Hirschfield and Simon's (2010) coding scheme, articles that legitimize police use of force rationalize police actions by making them appear logical in response to a threatening subject. In describing Tamir Rice, we expect articles to rationalize the officers' response by constructing Rice as dangerous, threatening, or noncompliant. We also expect syntactic structures that construct Rice as active and agentic, especially in contrast to passive constructions of the officers. Finally, we expect official claims about Rice to be objectified as apparent facts in contrast to the subjectification of nonofficial accounts that resist the official narrative.

In headlines. Of the 160 articles in the sample, 159 had headlines describing the incident. Most typically, this involved Rice's age and sex. The most common word used to describe Rice in the article headlines was "boy" or "schoolboy" (n = 125, 78.6%). Rice's age was mentioned in 113 headlines (71.1%). Rice was most frequently described as a "12-year-old boy." He is named in just 17 headlines (10.7%) and was more likely to be named by international news outlets than domestic ones (n = 11 [14.1%] vs. 6 [7.3%], respectively). However, the difference in naming between domestic and international sources did not reach significance (p > .05).[3] Interestingly, Rice's race is mentioned in only three headlines (e.g., "Cleveland Police Kill 12-Year-Old African-American Boy Carrying Fake Gun"; Zapata, 2014). Rice's young age was also suggested by some headlines mentioning the location of the incident. While most headlines (n = 138, 86.8%) made no mention of the location, those that did used the words "park" or "rec center," "playground" or "play area," or "on swings" (Table 2).

In text. Expurgation, as used by Hirschfield and Simon (2010), is when articles portray deadly force victims as evil, strange, or threatening. Only two articles featured any expurgation of Rice. The first cast Rice as threatening by distinguishing his case from those of Trayvon Martin or Michael Brown because, in this case, Rice "was armed with what appeared to be a weapon" (Twelve Year Old Boy Killed by Police, Family Says Not a Racial Issue," 2014). The other article that expurgated Rice featured a quote from a 14-year-old bystander, who criticized Rice for playing with the BB gun: "It could have been prevented by him going home. We told him that he shouldn't be out playing with BB guns up there. I wouldn't want my life to end so young" (Kendrick, 2014). These examples demonstrate only mild expurgation, quite different

Table 2. Frequency of Selected Themes.

Theme	N	Percentage (%)	Domestic, n = 82 (%)	International, n = 78 (%)
Sources (n = 160)				
Domestic (United States)	82	51.3		
International	78	48.7		
Headlines (n = 159)				
Description of Tamir Rice				
"Boy" or "schoolboy"	125	78.6	59 (71.9%)	66 (84.6%)
Age	113	71.1	55 (67.1%)	58 (74.4%)
Named	17	10.7	6 (7.3%)	11 (14.1%)
"Child"	3	1.9	3 (3.7%)	0 (0%)
Race ("Black" or "African American")	3	1.9	2 (2.4%)	1 (1.3%)
Description of officer(s)				
Police or officers (plural)	113	71.1	50 (60.9%)	63 (80.8%)
Officer (single)	37	23.3	30 (36.6%)	7 (9%)
None	9	5.7	1 (1.2%)	8 (10.3%)
Description of Rice's weapon				
"Fake"	65	40.9	28 (34.1%)	37 (47.4%)
"Toy"	33	20.8	12 (14.6%)	21 (26.9%)
"Replica"	21	13.2	8 (9.8%)	13 (16.7%)
"BB", "pellet," and "airsoft"	19	11.9	16 (19.5%)	3 (3.8%)
Description of Rice's actions				
"With"	89	56	58 (70.7%)	31 (39.7%)
"Holding" or "carrying"	42	26.4	13 (15.9%)	29 (37.2%)
"Playing"	10	6.3	4 (4.9%)	6 (7.8%)
"Waving"	9	5.7	2 (2.4%)	7 (9%)
"Brandishing" or "wielding"	9	5.7	4 (4.9%)	5 (6.4%)
"Not pointing"	2	1.3	1 (1.2%)	1 (1.3%)
"Pointing"	1	0.6	0 (0%)	1 (1.3%)
Description of officer(s) actions				
"Shoot" or "shoot dead"	120	75.5	57 (69.5%)	63 (80.8%)
"Kill" or "shoot and kill"	35	22	23 (28%)	12 (15.4%)
None	4	2.5	1 (1.2%)	3 (3.8%)
"Gun down"	1	0.6	0 (0%)	1 (1.3%)
Contextualization (n = 160)				
Articles with photographs				
Of Tamir Rice	54	33.8	24 (29.3%)	31 (39.7%)
Of the crime scene	26	16.3	18 (22%)	11 (14.1%)
Of Rice's toy gun	23	14.4	11 (13.4%)	15 (19.2%)
Of an unrelated toy gun	6	3.8	3 (3.7%)	3 (3.8%)
Of a real gun	2	1.3	1 (1.2%)	1 (1.3%)
Other	23	14.4	10 (12.2%)	14 (17.9%)
Connections to other cases				
Michael Brown/Ferguson	47	29.4	15 (18.3%)	32 (41%)
Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams/ Cleveland Police Department, Department of Justice investigation	38	23.8	19 (23.2%)	19 (24.4%)

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Theme	N	Percentage (%)	Domestic, n = 82 (%)	International, n = 78 (%)
John Crawford III	21	13.1	4 (4.9%)	17 (21.8%)
Nonpolice violence	8	5	5 (6.1%)	3 (3.8%)
Trayvon Martin	3	1.9	0 (0%)	3 (3.8%)
Akai Gurley	3	1.9	3 (3.7%)	0 (0%)

Note: The quotation marks indicate where words are exactly as used in the article.

from the examples of adult victims of police shootings described by Hirschfield and Simon (2010).

Although Rice was not explicitly expurgated in the articles, his actions were frequently constructed as active and threatening, forcing the officers to react to him. Rice is described as "waving," "reaching for," "brandishing," "pointing," or "wielding" the toy gun in sentence constructions that suggest he was performing these actions *at the moment he was shot*, contrary to what video footage would later show. Articles also mention Rice's "failure" or "refusal" to comply with police instructions:

> When the Cleveland police officer drew their own weapons and told the 12yearold boy to raise his hands, he reportedly did not comply. Instead of raising his hands, Rice reportedly lifted his shirt, reached for the gun sticking out of his waistband, and pulled it out. (Dodrill, 2014)

Use of this information rationalizes the police officer's use of force by describing Rice as noncompliant and threatening and the officer as having no other safe choice but to fire his weapon. Video footage released later would challenge the police statement that Tamir was instructed to raise his hands or that he pulled out the toy gun.

The *inclusion* of Rice was more common, although still occurred in only a small percentage of the sampled articles ($n = 25$, 15.6%). Inclusive statements regarding Rice were featured as quotes from the family's attorney or Gregory Henderson, identified in some articles as Rice's father and in others as a "family friend." The inclusive quotes were more common in domestic sources ($n = 17$, 20.7%) than international sources ($n = 8$, 10.3%; $p > .05$) and emphasized Rice's innocence, respectfulness, and youth.

> 'That's my super hero,' said Henderson. 'He liked to play basketball. He's very artistic, he's a smart, young child. He's 12 years old. He was just big for his size. He uses his manners. He's not disrespectful. He respects his mom, he treats his mom as the queen.' (Aliyu, 2014)

Inclusive statements about Rice were subjectified by attribution to a nonofficial speaker and featured as direct quotes, not as objective statements.

Describing the Situation

According to the Hirschfield and Simon (2010) coding scheme, we expect descriptions of the incident to construct Rice as active, noncompliant, and threatening and officers as reactive or passive. Descriptions are expected to emphasize the dangerousness of police work and to rationalize the use of force against Rice by the officers.

In headlines. Most headlines (n = 137, 86.2%) mentioned Rice's weapon. The most common descriptor for Rice's weapon was "fake gun" (n = 65, 40.9%). Less common descriptors were "toy" or "toy gun" (n = 33, 20.8%); "replica gun" or "replica pistol" (n = 21, 13.2%); or "BB gun," "Airsoft gun," or "pellet gun" (n = 19, 11.9%).

Headlines were most likely (*n* = 89, 56%) to simply mention that Rice was passively "with" the gun (e.g., Probe Begins After Boy With Fake Gun Shot by Police Officer, 2014) or made no mention of his actions (e.g., Aliyu, 2014). A smaller number of headlines (*n* = 42, 26.4%) described Rice as "holding" or "carrying" the weapon, for example, "Cleveland Police Kill 12-Year-Old African-American Boy Carrying Fake Gun" (Zapata, 2014). In 10 (6.3%) headlines, Rice is described as "playing" with the weapon. Finally, in some headlines, Rice is described as "brandishing" or "wielding" the weapon (*n* = 9, 5.7%), "waving" it (*n* = 9, 5.7%), or, in one case, "pointing" it (Ispas, 2014). The description of Rice "pointing" or "waving" the weapon may come from the 911 caller's description, but the use of such language in the headlines suggest that he was pointing or waving the weapon when he was shot, which is incorrect according to the released video footage.

In text. At the time of publication, most articles were dependent on the official police account of the incident. The articles largely repeat the information written in the police statement and shared by official sources (police spokespeople and representatives). As such, the articles tend to follow the pattern of the police statement by constructing Rice as active, threatening, or disobedient and constructing the officers as passive or, in some cases, nearly invisible. For example, the following excerpt is from an article citing the released police statement:

> 'The suspect did not comply with the officers' orders and reached to his waistband for the gun. Shots were fired and the suspect was struck in the torso,' the statement said. (Palmer, 2014)

In this account, the "suspect" (Rice) fails to comply with the officer's alleged orders and takes action by reaching into his waistband. The passive construction "shots were fired" removes the officers from the description completely. The above quote subjectifies the information by placing it within quotation marks and noting that the information comes from a police statement. However, other sources made no such indications, allowing the statement's version of events to appear as an objective account of the event:

> When they arrived at the scene, the officers told the 12-year-old boy to raise his hands. He did not comply, but instead reached into his waistband to get the toy gun, at which point the police shot him twice in the abdomen. (Julious, 2014)

In this article, while the police are cast as active in shooting Rice, it is in reaction to his noncompliance. There is no indication in the text surrounding this excerpt that this information is drawn from the official police statement.

Almost all articles ($n = 156$, 97.5%) mention the 911 call, and of these, 137 mention that the caller expressed doubt about whether Rice's weapon was real or just a toy. Of these 137 articles, 82 specifically mention that the 911 caller's doubts were not communicated by the dispatcher to the responding officers. This information is always attributed to Jeff Follmer, president of the Cleveland Police Patrolmen's Association. However, 28 articles are written in a way that suggests officers knew the gun was fake or at least omit the information from police spokespeople that the 911 caller's description of Rice's age and his weapon was not communicated to the responding officers. Five articles suggest that the officers knew and shot Rice anyway, for example,

> Despite the 911 caller's prior warning that the gun was likely fake, the officer then fired two shots at the boy, at least one of which hit him in the stomach, according to Cleveland.com. (Evans & Reilly, 2014)

The use of the word "despite" suggests that the officers knew that Rice probably just had a toy. International sources were more likely to mention that the officers were not told that Rice might have a toy ($n = 47$, 60.3%) compared to domestic sources ($n = 35$, 42.7%; $\chi^2 = 4.94$, $p = .03$). Domestic sources were more likely to mention that the 911 caller said Rice might be a juvenile ($n = 21$ [25.6%] compared to 12 [15.4%] international sources; $p > .05$).

Describing the Police and Their Response

We expect the description of the police officers to render the officers "anonymous and invisible" by avoiding naming and imaging of the officers and constructing them as passive or reactive subjects. Where police are constructed as active agents, we expect these constructions to cast the police as protagonists. Descriptions of the officers' actions are expected to contain euphemisms for shooting or killing, and we expect inclusive statements that identify the police with the community and emphasize their service and compassion.

In headlines. Most of the 159 descriptive headlines ($n = 150$, 94%) mentioned who shot Rice. Although only one police officer, Timothy Loehmann, fired his weapon, headlines were more likely to describe the shooter in the plural (e.g., "police," "cops," or "officers"; $n = 113$, 71%). Of these headlines, just over half used a geographic modifier like "U.S. police," "Cleveland police," or "Ohio police." Only 37 headlines

(23.3%) identify the officer as an individual (e.g., 12-Year-Old Boy With Fake Gun Dies After Shot by Ohio Officer, 2014). While both domestic and international news outlets were more likely to use the plural "police" or "officers" than singular "officer," the use of the singular "officer" was more common in domestic sources (n = 30, 36.6%) than international sources (n = 7 of the 78, 9%; $\chi 2$ = 17.53, p < .001).

In text. Few articles (n = 12, 7.5%) featured the inclusion of the police officers. Inclusive statements were most likely to come from Cleveland Deputy Chief Tomba, Cleveland police union president Jeffrey Follmer, or other union officials. The quotes emphasized the dangerousness of police work, and that the police officers are members of the Cleveland community.

> Cleveland Deputy Chief of Field Operations Ed Tomba told Cleveland.com that the shooting of the 12yearold was 'very, very tragic.' 'We don't come to work every day and want to use force on anybody,' he said. 'That's not what our job is. We're part of this community.' (Police Shoot Dead 12-Year-Old Boy Waving Fake Gun, 2014)

> 'The officer had no clue he was a 12-year-old,' Cleveland Police Patrolmen's Association President Jeff Follmer told WKYC-TV. "He had no clue it was a toy gun, he was kind of shocked. He was concentrating more on the hands than on the age. It's not, 'Go shoot a 12-year-old with a good fake gun.' It's not that scenario at all. This is a compassionate officer." (Twelve Year Old Boy Killed by Police, Family Says Not a Racial Issue, 2014)

Expurgation of the individual officers was not possible, as the officers' names were not released until November 26, 2014, 4 days after the initial story broke. The most specific descriptions of the officers referred to their experience as officers, for example, "a first-year rookie and a 10-year department veteran," "a rookie and a veteran," and "in his first year in the force." It is possible that the word "rookie" could be interpreted as a criticism of the officer's abilities, but it may also be offered as an excuse, casting Rice's death as an accident of inexperience rather than a deliberate misuse of force.

Five articles mention that a woman in the crowd at the press conference yelled "It's a toy gun and a 12-year old" as reporters tried to ask questions. An article from *TruthDig* (Zapata, 2014) featured tweets from the #TamirRice hashtag that accused the police of racism, for example, "Blackness means not even a 12-year old, baby-faced child who's playing outside a recreation center gets the benefit of the doubt." However, the tweets do not directly attack the officers but rather the general problem of racially discriminatory policing.

In place of expurgation of the police, we find mild repudiation and an emphasis on taking a "wait and see" approach. For example, of the 74 articles (46.3%) featuring quotes from attorney hired by the Rice family, 60 (81%) are variations on the following:

> An attorney for the boy's family, Timothy Kucharski, said Tamir went to the park with friends Saturday afternoon, but he did not know the details of what led to his shooting. 'I don't want to make a rush to judgment,' he said. Kucharski said he wants to talk to

witnesses himself and get more facts. 'We're ultimately going to find out what happened,' he said. (Canadian Press, 2014)

Less commonly mentioned ($n = 9$, 5.6%) was Kucharski's statement that this case was not about race:

However, Kucharski said race wasn't the issue in Saturday's shooting. 'This is not a black- and white issue. This is a right and wrong issue. This is not a racial issue. This is about people doing their jobs the right way,' he told WOIOTV. (Bever, 2014)

The positioning of this quote in the articles varies depending on the particular frame of each piece. Interestingly, in seven of the nine articles where this quote appears, it immediately follows a mention of Michael Brown or John Crawford III. This information typically appears at the top or middle of the articles. However, one article places the quote at the end of the article, after featuring the witness quote criticizing Rice for playing with the BB gun in a public park and then mentioning the Crawford III case; this seemingly frames the Rice incident as an issue of realistic toy guns and not of race. The remaining article using this Kucharski quote also places it toward the end of the article, after quotes from police representatives about the "compassionate officer" and the dangerousness of police work. As such, it appears this quote from Kucharski is used to redirect the reader from the obvious and expected connection to other recent and high-profile incidents and instead frame this particular incident as one about children and realistic toy weapons.

It is important to note that while these tempered quotes by Kucharski are featured so prominently in the articles, the attorney also made several statements that were critical of the police. Only nine (5.6%) of the quoting articles featured Kucharski's repudiation of the officers' actions:

'You have to look at this in the context that this is a 12yearold boy, not a 35yearold man with a criminal history,' the family's attorney Timothy Kucharski told the Plain Dealer. 'You can't expect adult reactions out of children.' (Bever, 2014)

The articles featuring these quotes still placed a heavier emphasis on official accounts of the incident and most often positioned this quote below objectified statements from the incident report and quotes from police representatives.

The exception to this is an article from the Atlanta Blackstar, which states on its website that it was created to publish empowering narratives for all people of African descent. The Blackstar article is positioned strongly against the official narrative of the incident and relies more heavily on quotes from Kucharski and Rice's family that criticize the police. It also connects this issue to the larger context of policing and race, noting that

The case surely had many Black parents shaking their heads, remembering the warnings that have long been issued to Black boys in many communities to avoid playing outside with toy guns because a police officer might mistake it for the real thing. (Chiles, 2014)

Contextualization

Framing may be accomplished not just in the textual description of an event but through the use of images and connection to other events or facts. This is key to achieving a priming effect, whereby audiences build relationships between individual events or facts that shape their attitudes about social problems and proposed solutions. In keeping with the strategies for legitimization of police use of force (Hirschfield & Simon, 2010), we expect news articles to include images of Rice but not of the police officers. We expect the article content to create connections between this story and other crime incidents where police use of force may have been justified. However, considering the relevant current events at the time of Rice's death, we expect a strong counterframe that draws connections (through images and text) between this incident and other police shootings of unarmed African American men.

Images. Photographs appeared in 99 of the 160 articles (62%). The most common photograph was one credited to Rice's family that shows his smiling face. This photograph appeared in 47 articles (47.5% of articles using at least one photograph; 29.4% of all articles). Seven articles used an alternate photo of Rice that is credited (by only one source) to Facebook. This photograph is a close-up shot of Rice looking into the camera, which seems to be positioned slightly below his face. His expression is serious and he is not smiling.

Thirty-one articles (19.4%) included a photograph of a weapon. The police provided the news media with an image of the fake gun Rice was carrying when he was shot, and this image was the one used in most articles showing an image of a weapon ($n = 23$). However, in six articles, the photographs depicted other fake guns, and the picture captions did not always clarify that the fake gun depicted was not the same one carried by Rice. For example, in the article "12-Year-Old Boy With a Fake Gun Dies After Being Shot by US Officer" (2014), published by *The New Age*, a South African news outlet, the picture shows a (very obviously) fake plastic handgun. In another article, this time from Germany's *Deutsche Welle*, the featured photograph shows a Black pistol pointing directly at the reader (US Police Fatally Shoot 12-Year-Old Boy Holding Fake Gun, 2014). It is not clear if the pistol is fake or not. In fact, two articles used images of real weapons that were remarkably similar to the images of fake weapons in other articles.[4]

Articles also used photographs of the scene of the shooting ($n = 26$, 26.3% of articles with photographs). These photographs usually emphasized yellow "crime scene" tape in the Cudell Commons park, gathered police vehicles and personnel, and flashing patrol car lights. These photographs frame the story as a crime incident or police matter. Four images show stuffed toys and other items left as a memorial on the picnic table where Rice was sitting just before he was shot. Finally, 23 articles included an assortment of other images, including stock photography of crime scene tape and patrol cars, the Cleveland skyline, one stock photograph of a swing set, and photographs linking Rice to Michael Brown, including riot police in Ferguson, MO (Dearden, 2014), stuffed toys and cards left at the site of Michael Brown's death (US Police Shoot Dead Boy Carrying

Pellet Gun, 2014), and protestors in Ferguson, MO, holding "Justice for Michael" signs (Police Kill 12-Year-Old Boy Wielding Fake Gun, 2014).

Other cases. Of 160 news articles, 91 (57%) placed the Rice incident within a context of other cases. Some of these articles (38, 42%) included language from the Associated Press coverage that cited the U.S. Justice Department's (2014) ongoing investigation into the Cleveland police department's use of force. This information was the only link between Rice's case and the broader context of police use of force offered by the Associated Press and appeared at the end of the story.

The mention of the DOJ investigation frames the Rice story as one of police use of force issues that are limited to the Cleveland police department. It does not connect to the ongoing debate about use of force in other areas of the country, for example, New Mexico (Donaghue, 2014), South Carolina (Hanna, Savidge, & Murgatroyd, 2014), New York City (Ly, 2014), and Seattle, WA (Sullivan, 2014), nor does it reference the nationwide protests about police interactions with communities of color (e.g., Alcindor, Madhani, & Stanglin, 2014; Hart, 2014). It also does not mention the race of the occupants of the car involved in the chase (African American) nor that they were found to be unarmed. Instead, it localizes the problem to Cleveland and identifies just "use of force" as the issue, not use of force against unarmed people of color.

However, 71 articles (44.4%) explicitly mentioned other high-profile police shootings of African American men, with a further 8 articles making general reference to race. As expected, the most commonly linked case is that of Michael Brown from Ferguson, MO. At the time of Rice's shooting, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon had declared a state of emergency in Ferguson as the city awaited the grand jury's imminent decision about whether to indict Officer Darren Wilson. References to Michael Brown and Ferguson framed Rice's death as the latest in a series and were more likely to be made by international sources ($n = 32$, 41% of international articles) than domestic sources ($n = 15$, 18% of domestic articles; $\chi^2 = 8.89$, $p < .01$):

> Racial tensions in the United States have already been stoked by another fatal police shooting in August of an unarmed black teenager in the St Louis suburb of Ferguson in Missouri. The incident led to weeks of violence in the suburb and prompted a nationwide discussion about police treatment of nonwhite Americans. (US Police Fatally Shoot 12-Year-Old Boy Holding Fake Gun, 2014)

International sources were also far more likely than domestic sources (22% vs. 5%; $\chi^2 = 8.60$, $p < .01$) to link Rice's death to the highly relevant and recent incident of the death of John Crawford III. Like Rice, Crawford III was also shot and killed by police in Ohio after a fellow shopper in Walmart called police to report an African American man with a gun, which was later determined to be an unpackaged BB or pellet rifle sold in the store.

> [The shooting of Tamir Rice] comes after another black man with an air rifle was shot dead in Ohio in August. John Crawford III, 22, was killed after a man called 911 to report he was carrying a gun in a WalMart supermarket. (Dearden, 2014)

However, even in articles that mention Crawford III, the emphasis is often on a bill proposed by a state lawmaker to require all toy guns to be brightly colored or be otherwise prominently marked as toys. This contributes to the framing of Rice's death as a preventable accident due to his realistic toy gun and not as an example of excessive use of force by the police officers. This framing is consistent with the emphasis on the realism of Rice's toy gun due to the removal of the orange safety tip and the justification of the officers' actions because they must assume every gun is real.

Discussion and Conclusion

Journalism research has documented the increasing pressure on journalists and media companies to publish faster and capture the attention of an audience that may spend only minutes on a breaking news story (Pew Research Center, Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009, 2010). The pressure of the 24-hr news cycle increases journalists' reliance on official press releases and accounts of events, particularly shortly after these events occur. In cases of police use of force, this change in media culture exacerbates the existing tendency for journalistic coverage of police use of force events to give primacy to the claims of official spokespeople and government representatives (Lawrence, 2000; Ruggiero, 2004).

The online news coverage of the police shooting of Tamir Rice demonstrates the effect of this reliance on official accounts in the hours and days immediately following the incident. The official account of the incident constructs Rice as noncompliant and threatening, and these accounts are presented as objective fact in article headlines and text. At the same time, the accounts downplay the role of the police officers through passive language (e.g., "shots were fired") or by describing the officers as reacting to the threat posed by Rice. These accounts also emphasize the dangerousness of police work and that the officers "were doing their job" and are "part of this community." Where nonofficial sources are included, they are featured as direct quotes and attributed to nonofficial speakers, not included as objective information about the event. The selection of quotes from the attorney representing Rice's family emphasizes not making a "rush to judgment" and that "this is not a racial issue." Only a small number of articles included the attorney's statements that repudiated the officers' actions. Instead of emphasizing Rice's race, headlines and article texts emphasize his young age. Where attorney Kucharski's quotes criticizing the police are included, the focus is on the need for officers to respond appropriately to *children* in general, suggesting Rice's race was not a factor in his death. This may be a function of simply emphasizing what is considered most "newsworthy" about this incident (i.e., Rice's age), but this frame also avoids priming readers to connections between Rice's death and other police killings of African American men.

In positioning this incident within a larger context, the majority of domestic articles chose to link the incident to another use of force case in Cleveland and the ongoing Department of Justice investigation into the Cleveland Police Department. It is important to note that, unlike the Department of Justice investigation into Ferguson, MO, the Cleveland investigation was not intended to investigate issues of racial bias.[5]

The investigation was limited to general use of force issues. By limiting the context to Cleveland, domestic sources were able to avoid framing this story as part of a larger problem of race and policing and instead framed it as an unfortunate but isolated incident. Entman (2007, pp. 164–165) identified the "core business of strategic framing" as "to highlight the causes of problems, to encourage moral judgements . . . and to promote favored policies." The localized frame employed by domestic news sources promotes "favored policies" like adjustments to the Cleveland Police Department's car chase policy and legislation to mandate colorful safety markings on otherwise-realistic toy weapons. The frame employed by domestic news sources does *not* promote, for example, widespread reform of police use of force policies or the investigation of racial bias in policing.

In contrast to domestic sources, international sources were more likely to frame the story as further evidence of systemic problems with police use of force against African Americans. They were more likely to place Rice's death within the context of police shootings of African American men, specifically the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, and John Crawford III near Dayton, OH. It is not yet clear what drives this difference in framing, and further research comparing international versus domestic coverage of high-profile incidents of police use of force and police misconduct would help further our theoretical understanding of agenda setting and framing in digital media.

More broadly, our results have implications for understanding the public view of the justice system. Our analysis compared "domestic" to "international" sources, but what does this distinction mean in the age of online news, when international sources are just as easily accessed as domestic sources? Our results uncovered some differences in the framing of this incident in domestic versus international outlets. It is possible that, as those who get their news online are exposed to international coverage of domestic incidents, reader perceptions of the justice system will become more critical. A pessimist may expect that this is unlikely, however, given recent reports that news consumers struggle to differentiate "real" from "fake" news (e.g., Stanford History Education Group, 2016), let alone nuanced framing differences among real news outlets. It is possible that the rapid proliferation of news sources will lead to greater confusion rather than greater clarity.

Given the increase in availability of multiple news sources, it is important for those in policy positions to seek out a range of media sources. However, our analysis also revealed striking similarities in how this incident was framed across our sample of articles, likely driven by the pressure on journalists to publish quickly and seek out authoritative sources. This leads us to question where one might seek out a true counternarrative. This is perhaps where social media websites like Twitter and Facebook, especially with their new live-streaming services, may make their greatest contribution. It is possible that social media will have a democratizing effect on the news industry, although this effect will likely be limited by the fact that these platforms are owned by for-profit companies who are beholden to the demands of shareholders and advertisers. This suggests that even news "crowdsourced" on these platforms may still reinforce the narrative favored by those in power.

On Monday, December 28, 2015, more than 1 year after Rice's death, it was announced that the grand jury had declined to charge the Cleveland officers. The reasoning reported for the lack of indictment largely mirrors the immediate framing of the story that the officers acted reasonably and in the interest of public safety in response to the threat posed by Rice (Los Angeles Times, 2015; Shapiro, 2015; Williams & Smith, 2015). Prosecutors said that "Tamir looked large for his age, and that the neighborhood has a history of violence, and that other officers have been killed nearby" (Williams & Smith, 2015). Assistant prosecutor Matthew Meyer said "Tamir was big for his age—5 feet 7 and 175 pounds, with a men's XL jacket and size-36 pants—and could have easily passed for someone much older" (Los Angeles Times, 2015). The emphasis on Rice's physical size echoes recent research finding that African American boys are more likely to be perceived as older, less innocent, and more responsible for their actions than their White peers (Goff, Jackson, DiLeone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014). The emphasis also counters the focus of articles analyzed in this study, which promoted Rice's young age (and not his race) as the "newsworthy" angle to this story. Finally, the solutions proposed by Mayor Frank Jackson "to better ensure that an incident like this will never happen again" (Williams & Smith, 2015) are consistent with the problem solutions favored by the early framing of this story in that they are department-specific and do not focus on reform of police use of force, but instead on providing officer first-aid training and outfitting patrol cars with medical kits. The officers will remain on restricted duty until an internal review is completed.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our study is not without limitations. In particular, the use of online news articles that are not behind a paywall may miss important articles, either that are accessible to subscribers of a given newspaper or were available in a "printed" local paper, but not digitally. Future research may want to compare print and digital media coverage to determine if there are key differences in how stories are framed for each outlet.

Further, limiting the search results to the first 48 hours after the incident allowed us both to avoid media contamination from the Michael Brown verdict and to narrow our focus to the nature of "breaking news" coverage. However, this also means our data represent only a brief period immediately following the incident rather than a longer analysis of how coverage *changed* over time. Future research may want to examine whether and how news articles change their framing of high-profile events as more details emerge and as related newsworthy events occur (e.g., verdicts in similar, high-profile cases) as well as which types of coverage (breaking news or follow-up pieces) have the greatest impact on public perceptions.

Conclusion

Overall, we find that the online news media framed the shooting of Rice in ways that largely supported the official police narrative of the event. This meant Rice was

projected as a noncompliant and threatening subject and the police as reacting out of concerns for public safety. Relatively few domestic sources linked this incident to the larger issues of race and police use of force, which further highlights the framing of this story as a tragic incident that was not reflective of a larger problem facing America.

Clearly, the shooting of Rice had some differences from other recent cases of police use of force against African American men (e.g., Michael Brown, Eric Garner). Yet framing this case as unrelated to the larger debate may undercut the ability of both the public and policy makers to fully acknowledge and address the problems of policing communities of color with excessive use of force. While reporting in the age of instant digital content obviously contains pressures to publish as quickly as possible, it is important to be cognizant of how stories are being framed to the public and how such framing influences public support for proposed solutions.

Authors' Note

Rebecca Stone is now affiliated with Suffolk University. Her new affiliations are Suffolk University, Department of Sociology, 73 Tremont St, 7th Floor, Boston, MA 02108, USA. She can be reached at rjgstone@gmail.com.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. The popular live-streaming services Periscope and Facebook Live were launched in 2015 and 2016, respectively, so did not impact coverage of Tamir Rice's death, though these streaming services have certainly played a role in publicizing other police shootings.
2. While technically a sample, the data set can be thought of as the population of electronically available non-paywalled news articles that were posted between November 22 and 24, 2014, and accessible via major search engines or LexisNexis.
3. Statistical significance is determined by a nonparametric proportions test.
4. To determine whether the weapons pictured were real or fake, each photograph was checked through Google's reverse image search to see where the photograph originated.
5. The word "race" appears only once in the Department of Justice report. The report mentions the belief among African American members of the community that Cleveland police officers are more aggressive with them because of their race. The report otherwise states that "we are making no finding regarding racial profiling" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014, p. 49).

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Author Biographies

Rebecca Stone is a lecturer in the School of Criminology and Justice Studies at University of Massachusetts, Lowell. Her research focuses on a public health approach to criminal justice topics, with an emphasis on issues of gender, race, and

class disparities in health and justice. Her primary research interests include narrative criminology, substance use, identity change and desistance, and women and crime.

Kelly M. Socia is an assistant professor in the School of Criminology and Justice Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. His research interests include offender reentry and recidivism, registered sex offenders, public policy-making, environmental criminology, geographic information systems, and spatial analyses.