

Thesis Proposal

All Lives Matter: Media Agenda

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In Completion of the Master's Degree of Strategic Communications

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Abstract

This thesis proposal addresses the role that the media play in influencing public opinion with specific attention paid to CNN and Fox News in the way that they covered the shooting of Mike Brown by officer Darren Wilson in August 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri. The research has been divided into several sections starting with an introduction which includes, a statement of the problem being addressed, the significance and purpose of this study, and a section about myself as the researcher. This is followed by a literature review which consists of explaining the Agenda Setting Theory to examine how the media might create agendas, a brief mention of the theory of Social Influence to explain how the public is influenced, some other studies on agenda setting and how those studies effect this one, an overview of both CNN and Fox News, and finally a history of race relations in this country from Civil Rights until present. This will be followed by the methodology. The research method that was chosen to work through this problem is a qualitative method that focuses on case studies. Five news articles on the Ferguson incident will be analyzed, from CNN and five from Fox News along with five interviews/broadcasts from each outlet. Merriam Webster defines agenda as, “a plan or goal that guides someone's behavior and that is often kept secret” (Merriam Webster, 2015). The exploratory purpose of analyzing these sources is to see if a media agenda can be detected and if so what that agenda is and how it influenced the public in regards to race relations after the shooting of Mike Brown.

Introduction

News outlets across the globe report daily on what is happening in the world around them. They give consumers of their medium a glimpse into events that otherwise they wouldn't be able to see, or have opinions on. Given that so much of people's knowledge about the world around them comes from impersonal news gathering sources instead of actually experiencing all the events in the news, it is important to investigate the outlets in which one gets their news for objectivity. Getting balanced information is key to getting the whole truth of any story. In order to be a diligent consumer of any product a person may test that product to see if it produces the desired results before making it a trusted brand in their home. The same should be true for the places that people get their information about the world around them.

This thesis is presented to hopefully make people more diligent consumers of media, by reminding them to fact check the stories that they read or hear because news outlets don't always get it right. This study is rather specific in that it only address two major news outlets, CNN and Fox News, and it only deals with one particular news story, the shooting of Mike Brown by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri.

The Problem

The research problem that is being addressed in this study is whether or not CNN and Fox News reported with a preconceived agenda in the 2014 shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and how that agenda, if there is one, influence the public in regards to race relations. One interesting question to ask in regards to the agenda, if there was one, is what worldview did it represent and what that means for the overall influential effect. Every day people turn to these news outlets for information, but are they just providing information or are they altering or presenting that information in a way that fulfills a separate agenda? If CNN and

Fox News do influence the public the question becomes how do they affect the public's opinion? Recently, racial tension has been brought back into the forefront of several conversations involving shootings by police officers.

In this particular study, a comparison of how CNN and Fox News handled the shooting of Mike Brown by Officer Darren Wilson is what will be focused on to see if an agenda can be discovered. When these news outlets decide what to cover they are telling the public what topics are important, and both CNN and Fox News made the Ferguson, Missouri incident top of their news from August through about November 2014. Maxwell McCombs (1977), one of the founders of the Agenda Setting Theory, writes the following.

The idea of an agenda-setting function of mass communication is an assertion that the audience learns these saliences from the mass media, incorporating a similar set of weights into their own personal agendas. Agenda-setting is a relational concept specifying a positive relationship between the emphases of the news media and the perceived importance of these topics to the news audience.

(p. 90)

The real problem is if they reported on the case with an agenda or not, and how that agenda could have potentially influenced the public into believing that this shooting was a racial issue.

If the media reports with an agenda to get more ratings they might be more inclined to exaggerate or make assumptions in order to get the public more interested in the story. In the case of Mike Brown, the real issue may have been police use of excessive force, or poor training methods, but that is not something that will be addressed in this study.

Significance of the Study

This particular study is significant in that it looks at the Agenda Setting Theory to see if the media does in fact set agendas, how those agendas affect the public opinion, and then why the media sets agendas. This study is also significant because it opens the public's eyes to the fact that viewers could be allowing the presentation of stories affect their attitudes about certain issues, in this case race will be addressed in regards to the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. One of the main things that makes this study so significant is that it is the only one of its kind that has looked at media agenda setting and the issue of race in this country. This study investigates the media to see if CNN and/or Fox News were responsible for lending credibility to the narrative out of Ferguson, Missouri that the shooting of Mike Brown by Officer Darren Wilson was a race issue.

For example, if the public simply believes everything the media reported about the shooting of Mike Brown, they may be lead to believe that the issue was a race related issue, whether it was or not. Specifically, this study attempts to link the CNN and Fox News coverage, via web articles and broadcasts, of the Ferguson, Missouri incident to whether or not the media sets agendas, and if they did in this particular case.

Purpose Statement

The whole purpose of this study is to help the public be more informed about the influence that media outlets such as CNN and Fox News have on the way that people form their opinions about certain issues, in regards to whether media outlets have agendas.

This proposal focuses specifically on CNN and Fox News in regards to their coverage of the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri because they are both widely known and respected across the world. Barrie Gunter (2008) encourages researchers to look for patterns as

to which stories are covered and how those decisions are made. In the news, for example, a number of decisions are taken each day by producers and editors about which stories to cover, how they should be presented, and where they should be located in the newspaper or bulletin. These decisions are not made randomly. “Content analysis can shed light on whether the presentation of news adopts regular patterns or follows standardized routines and practices. This then allows us to ask questions about why these patterns exist” (Gunter, 2008, p. 6). It is important to note patterns as they emerge and this study is focused on looking at several web articles and interviews from CNN and Fox News to see if there is an agenda presented that influences public opinion on race relations in the wake of the Ferguson, Missouri incident.

The significance of this proposal is that it informs the public to be diligent consumers of media, getting to the root of issues that are presented via CNN and Fox News, instead of simply believing that everything presented is fact. This proposal is also meaningful because it shows that the media can influence public opinion, and displays if it did, in this case study of Ferguson, Missouri. The hope of this study is to show the public that CNN and Fox News have the power to influence public opinion through their decisions of what to cover in the Ferguson, Missouri incident and how they chose to cover it. Harry Henderson (2004) wrote an article about how the news media can possibly be influenced by the larger conglomerates that they are a part of.

The news media, for all its great power and influence, finds itself under siege.

Newspapers and broadcasting are increasingly dominated by huge conglomerates that buy hundreds of outlets and marry together networks, cable systems, media producers, and online services. Beleaguered television and newspaper news departments often face great pressure to conform to corporate strategies seeking to maximize revenue while cutting costs. (p. 23)

When there is revenue involved, and pressure to be better than competing news outlets, sometimes media outlets chose the angle that will get the most attention from the public, not necessarily the most accurate depiction of an event. The purpose of this study is to find out the agenda, if there was one that CNN and Fox News had in regards to the Ferguson, Missouri incident.

This study consists of a literature review detailing the Agenda Setting Theory and explaining how the media can influence the public. It reviews race relations and the media dating back to the Civil Rights area until now. Thus I think it is important to reveal the influence that media has on public opinion and to identify an agenda if there is one that would influence how CNN and Fox News reported on the Ferguson, Missouri incident. It is important to first explain where I am coming into this study as a researcher.

About the Researcher

Coming into any study researchers themselves carry their own view of the world. I have a Biblical worldview in that all people were created by God for a specific purpose, and that everyone was created equally. Genesis 1:27 states, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (The Bible, 1998, p. 3). This means that God created everyone in His image, no matter your race or ethnicity. Creswell (2014) explains that, “world views [are] a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study” (p. 6).

I am a White middle class American female that grew up in Chesapeake, Virginia. I attended public school until attending Liberty University, a Christian University in the fall of 2008. Currently I work in the media industry and believe that all media has ‘a reasoning’ or a why behind what they chose to report and the way that they chose to present stories. I believe

that all lives matter because the Bible says in Galatians, “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (New International Version, 1998, p. 1256). What I am calling into question is, does the media set agendas, and if there was an agenda in the way CNN and Fox News reported on the shooting of Mike Brown.

Literature Review

In today's society people are constantly exposed to the media. From broadcast media on television to social media online, being consumers of media is something that everyone does. What people might not be aware of though is that broadcast media has the power to influence everyone in different ways. News outlets have the power to influence and sway the opinions of society, even though they cannot necessarily tell people what to think, they definitely tell people what to think about.

CNN and Fox News are both media outlets that have tremendous impact on what people think about in the United States. In this particular study these two news outlets reported on the Mike Brown shooting making it the forefront of their newscast from August through November of 2014, covering the shooting, the jury's decision not to indict Officer Darren Wilson, and the riots that followed. According to the Agenda Setting Theory news outlets like CNN and Fox News pick what to show and how it is presented, which has the ability to affect public opinion. Agenda Setting Theorist Maxwell McCombs explains it like this,

The power of the news media to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues, is an immense and well-documented influence. Not only do people acquire factual information about public affairs from the news media, readers and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news. (p. 1)

So, it is important as citizens to carefully pay attention to news reports and articles to identify the actual facts of the story in order to understand the true meaning behind what is going on. First, one must understand the theory of Agenda Setting, and how people are influenced through the

Social Influence Theory. Then one must take a look back at race relations in this country and previous media involvement in racially charged issues.

Agenda Setting Theory

The Agenda Setting Theory is not a new concept and it is an easy one to understand. According to the founders of the Agenda Setting Theory, Maxwell McCombs (1997), and Donald Shaw (1997), there are two levels that people should be aware of when it comes to agenda setting.

The first level of agenda setting deals with the transfer of object salience from the media to the public agenda, whereas the second level of agenda setting involves two major hypotheses about attribute salience: 1. The way an issue or other object is covered in the media (the attributes emphasized in the news) affects the way the public thinks about the object. 2. The way an issue or other object is covered in the media (the attributes emphasized in the news) affects the salience of that object on the public agenda. (p. 4)

Now it is important to understand the term *salience* in regards to this topic because otherwise people may be lost. The Oxford English Dictionary defines salience as “the state of being prominent, most noticeable, or important” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015). So the Agenda Setting Theory addresses the transfer of importance from the media to the public, and the way that prominent issue is covered effects public opinion and how important the public views that topic after the coverage.

People who work in the field of broadcast have a lot more power than they know. When a producer or news director decides what stories deserve to be covered and which don't, and the extent to which they are covered, they are telling the public what issues should be of importance. The media in a sense tells the public what to think about, but even more so, they could influence

what the members of the public actually think. People who lack knowledge on an issue are more likely to be effected by the media coverage on that issue because they take the news story for complete fact. McCombs (1972) and Shaw (1972) recognized the force that the media is and they addressed it in their study in *The Public Opinion Quarterly* by stating, “In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 176). This article provides a great foundation into the early interest of the Agenda Setting Theory and some of the first acknowledgment of the powerful force that the media is.

Whether the journalist, producers, editors, or news directors consciously chose to try and sway public opinion is not the issue here, because if asked most of those people would say that all they are thinking about is getting the latest information out there first in hopes to have the best ratings. Now that may not seem so bad, but choosing topics based on ratings can lead the public to think that certain issues are more important than others.

It is important to know what a journalist and news director are in order to understand their influence. Liz Chuday (2004) explains both. “A news director sets newsroom journalistic standards that govern who, what, where, when and why a particular news event is covered – or not covered. News directors make certain the journalistic integrity of the station remains uncompromised, map out coverage strategies and plan assignments that showcase the talent in ways compatible with the station’s image goals” (p. 13). So because the news director chooses what is or is not covered they have a great influence on the programming of the station. Journalist or reporters also have an important influence on the public through the way that they tell their stories. Chuday (2004) also explains that, “reporters write, produce and package their

own stories, with editing in the larger shops done in tandem with someone who actually holds the title of editor and is versed in both analog and digital formats” (p. 16).

Producers, editors, news directors, and reporters are just a few of the main people who have influence on the public’s opinion through their combine efforts in creating and delivering a newscast. Bushra Rahman (2014) discusses the influence that media can have especially when the coverage appears slanted. Number of studies testifies that when media coverage is slanted it has a strong influence on people's opinion. The media are expected to have considerable potential for influence on the opinions of individuals by providing the information on issues and indicating the options (p. 1).

CNN and Fox News also have the potential, like everyone to set agendas in their coverage and their wording when they present issues that may be controversial. The empirical study that is discussed in *Conditional Influence of Media: Media Credibility and Opinion Formation* by Bushra H. Rahman (2014) comes to the conclusion that the media really only influence people who consume media on a regular basis, which makes sense, however those people then spread what they hear via word of mouth and then public opinion is swayed into believing what the media presented as fact. On the simplest level the people that watch the news are then the ones that are typically actively posting on social media about what they saw and thus the media reaches further to people who don’t even watch the news and tells them what topics are important and should be at the top of the public agenda.

This study would do a disservice to those who read it if it didn’t mention the research that has come out to negate that claim that this very study is making, that the media influences the public agenda. Seung Mo Jang (2014) addresses the possibility of reverse agenda setting in which the public through social media actually influences news outlets.

The emergence of social media has generated renewed attention to the reverse agenda-setting idea. Interpersonal conversations about public issues have always been an important part of the dynamics of the public sphere. But now they are increasingly empirically accessible for analysis. Given the technical opportunity and most often the absence of enforced censorship, citizens of the industrialized and developing worlds, it appears, are ready and willing to speak out. (p. 4)

This study claims that the media reports on issues that the public agenda has presented to them, not the other way around. While this is somewhat true because it is people who are the news, the force of the influence on what is reported on, and how it is covered comes from the media to the people.

A study done to find out how much the public affects the mass media revealed that citizens still aren't considered expert reporters, and that most online chatter is feedback to a national news story. Russel Neuman, Lauren Guggenheim, Seung Mo Jang, and So Young Bae (2014), also address the possibility of reverse agenda setting.

The standing answer to the question "who sets the agenda" is that the traditional media set it. Online news sources which represent the online face of traditional broadcast and print media dominate public attention to news online. By one estimate only 5% of bloggers commenting on public affairs do anything approaching independent journalism and information gathering—it is mostly simply a reaction to mainstream media content. In language that often proposes to celebrate the new citizen journalists and community agenda-setters, lists of the "exemplary" cases of reverse agenda-setting are less than compelling. (p. 195)

Reverse Agenda Setting does happen occasionally, but it is definitely the exception not the norm. Daily CNN and Fox News are choosing the stories for the day and upcoming week that can possibly affect the attitudes of the public. By telling people what to think about they are deciding what issues are culturally important in the United States. How they report on those issues though can influence what people think.

If the media only shows one side of an argument people are led to believe that the side being shown is the correct side. This is the same with only showing partial video or not double checking eyewitnesses before putting them on air. When the media does things like this they are possibly manipulating the public by not telling the whole truth, which could sway public opinion. In the shooting of Mike Brown CNN and Fox News made this incident the top of their news coverage for months increasing its salience, but they also focused on the race of the people involved. This shooting may be because Officer Wilson, a white, was racist against Black people, Brown was an African-American, or it may have been just a police officer doing his job that had nothing to do with race. In order to understand how the Agenda Setting Theory works it is important to touch on how people are actually influenced.

Social Influence Theory

Many people have strong convictions and beliefs that are not easily swayed by a news report; however news reports spark debate between those people with strong opinions, and those debates aren't always peaceful as seen in the riots in Ferguson, Missouri. The sad part is that for those people who do not have strong beliefs or convictions the news can take advantage of them, not only telling them what issues are important, but also telling them what side of the issue is the correct side. Some people, for fear of being ridiculed or publically scorned, change their beliefs

and opinions or simply stay silent on controversial issues. How can the media have this power over public opinion? Well it all has to do with how people are influenced.

The Social Influence Theory explains how, for fear of being in the minority, people will change their opinions and attitudes to avoid ridicule. Social Influence has been used in therapy to explain how credibility is one of the main factors of influence. “Social Influence theory proposes that clients’ perceptions of their counselors as credible sources of information about their problems render clients responsive to counselors’ efforts to influence them and thus are crucial to the success of counseling” (Strong & Kazdin, 2000, p. 345). In the case of this study the credible source is the therapist, but CNN and Fox News are seen by many as a credible source, which can lead to a change in public opinion. In fact according to the “About Me” section of Fox News their network is seen as the trustworthiest network for reporting news. The question though centers on if these two outlets are doing right by the people, or are they reporting with an agenda, and if so how does that affect people? The answer to that question really depends on the person.

Some people are so afraid of being scorned by other members of the public that they will change their minds or adopt another view on an issue simply to fit in with the majority. The founder of the Social Influence Theory Solomon Asch (1951), created a test to see if people would conform to the group’s answer as to which line was longer even if the majority was obviously wrong. This was called the line experiment and it studied conformity among individuals when placed in a group of researchers who had been told to give an obviously wrong answer. Robert W. Rieber (2012) explained the line experiment in his writing on physiological theories.

These experiments commonly became known as the Asch conformity experiments. The experiment took 123 male participants and placed each

participant in a group with 5–7 confederates who, unlike the real participants, knew the true nature of the experiment but acted as though they were real participant's naïve to the true nature of the experiment. The participants were shown a line next to three additional lines. Of the three additional lines, which were labeled A, B, and C, one was of equal length to the first line shown, while the other two were of different lengths. In each trial, the participants, including the confederates, were asked to choose which of the three lines was of equal length to the first line. The real participant always answered last or near last. During the first couple of trials, the participants, along with the confederates, chose the obvious, correct answer. However, after the first couple of trials, the confederates began to all state the same wrong answer. The confederates stated the wrong answer in 12 of the 18 trials conducted on each participant. During these 12 critical trials, Asch studied whether the real participant would conform and state the same, obviously wrong answer as the confederates due to social pressure. Asch predicted that most people would not conform and state an obviously wrong answer. Asch found, however, that about 75% of participants conformed at least once and 5% conformed every time. A quarter of participants resisted social pressure and did not conform on any trial. Many participants became confused and upset when the confederates began answering incorrectly. Many participants who chose to conform did so believing the group was wrong but wanted to avoid being different or judged. (p. 91)

Once CNN and/or Fox News have affected the public opinion of their viewer's, attitudes can shift, and whether someone watches television and is exposed directly to the media or not, via word of mouth, they too become influenced, just like in the Social Influence Theory.

People can be influenced by CNN and Fox News based on how much they cover a certain story, and the issues that they connect to a particular incident. CNN and Fox News might have simply tied the issue of race into the shooting of Mike Brown in order to tell the public what to think about, or to have the public turn to them to find out the facts of the story. Different media outlets can have different reasoning behind how they cover certain stories, but they can also be guilty of embellishing and sensationalizing stories in order to gain readership or viewership. The problem is that when CNN and Fox News tied the issue of race into the shooting of Mike Brown there were consequences that they may not even be aware of such as the effect on race relations in the United States. So by using the Agenda-Setting Theory this study will reveal if there was an agenda in the reporting of CNN and Fox News on the shooting of Mike Brown, what that agenda was, and how it affected public opinion.

Recent Studies on Agenda Setting

One of the studies on media influence is the *Influence of Mass Media on Society* by Mohammed Abdulwasea (2008) that addresses how mass media (any of the means of communication, as television or newspapers, that reach very large numbers of people (Dictionary.com)) influences things such as what people buy and how they feel about things they are exposed to everyday such as violence and sex. Abdulwasea (2008) explains how the public, through reliance on the media for information, can possibly be persuaded.

What we need to be aware is that most of our decisions, beliefs and values are based on what we know for a fact, our assumptions and our own

experience. In our work we usually know what we have to do based on our experience and studies, however in our daily lives we rely on the media to get the current news and facts about what is important and what we should be aware of. (p. 1)

Throughout the day many people need the media to know what is going on in other places in the world, but that means the media has a responsibility to report facts and not interject their opinions.

The media can influence adults and children alike and based on interactions people have with other people, by mere word of mouth the media can influence the opinions of people who don't even read the articles or watch the broadcasts. "We have put our trust on the media as an authority to give us news, entertainment and education" (Abdulwasea, 2008, p. 1). Putting full trust in a news corporation can be a dangerous thing to do because one can assume that their main goal is to reach a profit or certain rating. According to Abdulwasea's (2008) research, there is correlation between ads and the brands people buy, so who's to say there isn't correlation between what news outlets report, and what people think or believe.

Another study that addresses the influence of media on the public is *Media Effects on Society* by Elizabeth M. Perse (2000). In her study she explains how the mass media can influence public opinion based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model. She chose to explain how the ELM model effects attitude change through persuasion on people who are generally interested and informed on the issues. Perse, (2000) details what the surveillance function of the mass media is, explaining that people who don't even watch or read the news are still exposed to it.

Because political events and issues in modern societies typically take place in specialized locations, most citizens experience politics vicariously. So they rely on the surveillance function of the mass media to monitor and report on important events and issues. For most, then, mass media content is the symbolic input for public opinion – informed or pseudo. (p. 93)

This study does a good job linking the development of public opinion to the mass media and describes how people who are less informed and engaged in news topics are more likely to believe whatever the media says on an issue.

Deficiencies of Those Studies

The deficiency of the first study is that it is too generic. Abdulwasea (2008) just makes a generic link between the mass media's persuasive powers influencing what the public buys. There also wasn't a particular theory that connected the link between the media to public opinion. Yes, the purchase evidence can be assumed to be a direct link between media influence and purchase decisions, but the way Abdulwasea (2008) came to that decision was lacking supportive material.

Perse's (2000) study was very thorough in explaining what theory she used to link the mass media to the formation of public opinion. There was significant background information about what public opinion is and how it is formed. She then used the ELM model to explain how the mass media can in fact influence the attitudes of the public. The deficiency in this study was the lack of acknowledgement by the media that they have the power to influence public opinion. I would have liked to see Perse (2000) dive into what the media does, knowing that what they report and how they report it can influence the public to a great degree.

How Those Studies Impact This One

These studies are important to this particular study in that they do show the link between media and consumers, by providing a look into what is already known about how the media can set agendas. Especially in the world of advertising a lot of research has been done to link what marketing strategies are effective in influencing consumer-buying tactics. So the studies above help this study by showing how what people see on television can in fact influence their behavior. Perse's (2000) study really helps this study in the fact that it links the media to the formation of public opinion, although using a different theory than this one.

The Media

The reason that this study will focus specifically on CNN and Fox News is because they are two prominent news outlets that are available everywhere in the country on most cable and digital providers. CNN and Fox News decide what stories to cover, and even more than that, the producers and editors chose how to present those stories, and how much time to give them on the air. The Producer's Guild of America provides a great working definition of what a producer does.

A Producer initiates, coordinates, supervises and controls, either on his own authority, or subject to the authority of an employer, all aspects of the motion-picture and/or television production process, including creative, financial, technological and administrative. A Producer is involved throughout all phases of production from inception to completion, including coordination, supervision and control of all other talents and crafts, subject to the provisions of their collective bargaining agreements and personal service contracts.

(p. 1)

Producers are highly involved with selecting the content that becomes part of a newscast, and where in the newscast that content is aired. Editors are also people who are heavily involved in newscasts. News editors are the people that select what shots to use in a news package and help the reporters tell their story.

Editors have the ability to decide what to include in their video and what to leave out, which could possibly shape the story differently from what actually occurred. Liz Chuday (2004) writes in the National Association of Broadcasters Guide to Careers in Television that, “Post-production editors take rough cuts (raw footage) and polish them into final, on-air promotional materials. This entails adding music, graphics and other sound and sight elements as necessary to make the finished product even more compelling. Post-production editors may work on a station commercial, a news package or a public affairs program” (p. 19). By adding specific effects or music they can change the tone of the story. It is important as a journalist to report with integrity because the news is a public service that functions to keep people informed. News outlets

Now this is not to claim that CNN and Fox News brainwash people and make them change their opinions, but how they report on stories can in fact have the potential to change the way people think. Just like someone shouldn't believe everything they read on the Internet they also shouldn't believe everything they see on television. To be a good consumer of media it is important to question the things the media presents and wonder if in fact they are showing the whole story and giving equal coverage to both sides.

CNN. Since CNN is constantly updating their stories, and has over 4,000 news professionals working different angles of a story they make a great news outlet to study. Not only that, but by studying several articles and broadcasts/interviews from CNN.com, it will be

interesting to see if one of the world leaders in online news has a specific agenda or not. CNN in their About Me section states,

CNN.com is among the world's leaders in online news and information delivery.

Staffed 24 hours, seven days a week by a dedicated staff in CNN's world

headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, and in bureaus worldwide, CNN.com relies

heavily on CNN's global team of almost 4,000 news professionals. (p. 1)

CNN was created in the 1980's and stands for, Cable News Network. Ted Turner created CNN as part of Turner Broadcasting System because people said that he couldn't. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Erickson (2014) defined CNN.

Maturing and expanding along with the cable industry itself, CNN maintained a loyal

following by offering what the major networks did not: full, continuous coverage of all

news events, both large and small. Its mantra throughout this period was "Go live, stay

with it and make it important." Endeavoring to accommodate its worldwide audience,

CNN adopted a policy of banning such exclusionary words and phrases as "foreign" and

"here at home" from its newscasts. (p. 1)

So from the beginning CNN sought to be people's source for continuous news everywhere, but especially for things happening in other parts of the world as well as here in the states. This concept of creating a 24-hour news network then begs the question of is there really enough going on in the world to fill that time? Knowing how CNN was formed helps to gain an understanding of the reasoning of how and why they report the way that they do. Next we will look at Fox News.

Fox News. Fox News channel is a little bit newer than CNN coming onto the scene in 1996. Interestingly enough Rupert Murdoch tried to purchase CNN first, but when that didn't

happen he decided to start his own news program. “Billing itself as the “fair and balanced” alternative to a media environment that it characterized as having a liberal bias (another slogan was “We Report. You Decide.”)” (Ray, 2015). So from its inception Fox News has labeled itself as fair and balanced, although their conservative leanings have been called into question over the years.

Fox News is a good outlet to study for many reasons, but especially because they blatantly claim to be fair and balanced.

FOX News Channel (FNC) is a 24-hour all-encompassing news service dedicated to delivering breaking news as well as political and business news. A top five cable network, FNC has been the most watched news channel in the country for more than ten years, and according to Public Policy Polling, is the most trusted television news source in the country” (Fox News, 2015, p. 1).

The interesting part in studying Fox News is their Public Policy Polling that listed them as the most trusted television news source in the country. By applying the Agenda Setting Theory to several articles from FoxNews.com the goal is to see if the public’s most trusted source of news has a specific agenda. Based on the way CNN and Fox News portrayed this shooting and the riots that followed they may have increased racial tension in this country. The main point of this study is to discover if the media sets agendas, did the media specifically set an agenda in the Ferguson, Missouri case, and if so did they make it seem like the shooting of Mike Brown was a race issue and why? First though it is important to take a look back at other racially charged historical events, as covered by different media outlets.

Race Relations

Dating back to the Civil War there has always been a significant amount of racial tension in this country. Even once slavery was abolished there was still a large division between the black and white communities, the races did not have much interaction and tension and violence still existed. Things like the Jim Crow laws kept blacks and whites segregated, which eventually led to the civil rights movement. The Jim Crow Laws were a result of Plessy v. Ferguson which stated, as referenced by Cornell University Law School (2015),

The statute of Louisiana, acts of 1890, c. 111, requiring railway companies carrying passengers in their coaches in that State, to provide equal, but separate, accommodations for the white and colored races, by providing two or more passenger coaches for each passenger train, or by dividing the passenger coaches by a partition so as to secure separate accommodations. (p. 1)

These laws claimed that separate accommodations based on race were constitutional as long as they were equal accommodations. Most recently though there has been several televised instances of police violence towards African Americans and the scenes that have been shown in the media seem to be similar to that of the 1960's. In order to understand the tension it is important to study the influence the media has had on public opinion from the civil rights era to now.

History. From the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's to present day 2015 race relations in this country have seen an ebb and flow across the decades. Recently though the country has seen race relations similar to that of the 1960's in the times of segregation and the Civil Rights movement, with police officers pitted against the public when protesters get out of hand. In an article titled *Race Relations Laboratory*, Doug Weaver (2013) talks about his first years in a desegregated school. He writes,

I have many memories, mostly good. Separate but equal was certainly a falsehood when it came to facilities. There was racial tension at the school at times; and the tragic shooting death of a friend was painted as racial by some--though it had to do with a boyfriend/girl-friend fight gone bad outside the school's front door. (p. 9)

Weaver (2013) illustrates a point in this article that sometimes media outlets run with the race angle because it makes a more exciting story. In this case it gets the public scared and when they are scared they turn to a news outlet that they trust. The news outlet knows that if they told the truth that the shooting was simply a fight between a boyfriend and girlfriend not many people would care. However if the story reads as a racial shooting both the blacks and whites in the community are looking to the media as their source of clarity.

Throughout the civil rights movement there was still a lot of racial tension even toward Martin Luther King Jr. and his peaceful protest. Rosa Parks even created tension just by refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white person. During this time there was an “us” versus “them” mentality, and today that opinion still exist as evident in the divisive chant that came out of the Ferguson protest, “Black Lives Matter”. When the court ruled to desegregate schools racial tensions again flared. Alan Sked (2014) discusses the court decision and the reactions that followed.

Brown v the Board of Education in 1954 ducked cases on interracial marriage, and 27 states prohibited it at that time. Little wonder that Gunnar Myrdal wrote in *An American Dilemma* in 1944 that sex was ‘the principle around which the whole structure of segregation of the Negroes [was] organized. The South’s reaction to Brown, which outlawed segregation in schools, was predictably

psychotic, since racially mixed schools were assumed to lead to racially mixed sex. What else would teenagers get up to? The aim of Brown was really 'to open the bedroom doors of white women to Negro men. (p. 447)

Many white people saw themselves as superior from the time of slavery on through the time of the civil rights movement. Even after segregation took place there was never really harmony between the races, but for the most part things seemed to deescalate a bit in the 80's. Then in '91 the beating of Rodney King was again a dividing force that brought race back to the forefront, flooding news feeds.

Rodney King was a black male that was beaten by the Los Angeles police force after a high-speed chase. The incident was recorded on amateur video and replayed all over the media outlets. The results of this media portrayal of the incident led to intensified race relations and when the officers were acquitted riots broke out. PBS Frontline interviewed then Chief of Police Daryl Gates and several others involved in the case, the riots, and the Rampart Scandal that followed. Gate's (2001) had this to say,

The media, particularly the electronic media, began giving that impression by playing that tape over and over again. And then, of course, everybody that had an opinion about what took place out there; they came in, they chimed in, and they gave their opinion; and it did look like racism. "My goodness, here is this black person who is being beaten. It looks like the Old South." That's the impression that was given, but a totally false impression, because there was nothing racist about it. No one knew what Rodney King had done beforehand to be stopped. No one realized that he was a parolee and that he was violating his parole. No one knew any of those things. All they saw was this grainy film and police officers hitting him over the head. (p. 1)

When the media simply shows amateur video from an eyewitness they are only getting the point of view of the person shooting it. In this case Rodney King was in violation of his parole and instead of complying with police officers he sent them on a high-speed chase. Was excessive force used, quite possibly yes, but was it because King was black? The point is though that the media showed only a part of the story, which could have led people to believe that this was a malicious act of violence based on race, and so when the officers, were acquitted at trial it led to riots in the streets much like what happened in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. In the shooting of Mike Brown there was a back story as well. Earlier that day Brown had been sighted as robbing a convenience store, and when Officer Wilson initially approached Brown and asked him to get out of the road he was reluctant to comply. Then a struggle ensued between Officer Wilson and Brown, before Officer Wilson ever got out of the car.

Another example of racial relations, post Civil Rights, and shortly after Rodney King was the O.J. Simpson trial. That incident highlighted the racial tension that still existed between blacks and whites. Bill Bradley (1996) a U.S. Senator from New Jersey in 1996 in his town hall address *Race Relations* draws attention to three then prominent figures in the black community at this time, O.J. Simpson, Louis Farrakhan, and Colin Powell. Bradley (1996) makes the point that even post Civil Rights era, whenever the media draws attention to an issue that they deem racial; division of the races is shortly after because it highlights the differences in people instead of reminding people that they are all human. Bill Bradley (1996) addresses how the highly publicized O.J. Simpson trial also divided the country along racial lines.

The O.J. case conveyed an almost irrevocable division between Blacks and Whites with the same disparate percentages of Blacks and Whites feeling he was guilty before and after the trial. Any person, Black or White, touched by the media becomes bigger than

life, so that as with the latest athletic virtuoso, the rest of us become spectators. Little of the media attention on these men recognized the kind of work necessary for individual Americans, Black and White, to bridge the racial divide. In each of their stories, the media, with its need to oversimplify, was crucial in building them up or tearing them down or both in sequence. Each of them became more a symbol than a human being. (p. 241)

When the media gets involved with the life and story of someone no matter who they are, the way they portray that person is the way the public thinks about them. When it comes to the story sometimes the focus is on what will get better ratings. By stating that an incident is a race issue, the public is led to believe that only because of the color of their skin this incident happened. That over simplification then has the potential to divide the races and increases racial tension.

Then on August 9th, 2014, 18 year old Mike Brown, an African-American, was shot by white male Police Officer, Darren Wilson, which led to riots in Ferguson, Missouri that reignited racial tension like that of the L.A. Riots over the beating of Rodney King. Several news outlets jumped on the story within the first few hours of the shooting taking eyewitness accounts that were later in court thrown out due to falsities. For the purpose of this study the focus will be on how CNN and Fox News handled this shooting.

The Media & Agenda-Setting. The media is a pretty powerful source, and one that several people turn to for news. Many consumers just blindly follow the media, accepting what they report as the whole truth when some times the other side of the story can get left out of the mix. The word *force* has several definitions according to Merriam-Webster, but for the purpose of this study we will use this one, “strength or power that is not physical, capacity to persuade or convince” (Merriam-Webster, 2015, p. 1). In most cases when breaking news occurs outlets

jump on it right away before they get the whole story, which will be evident in one of the fox news broadcasts, listed later in this study. This can then cause people to believe something that may not necessarily be true.

Ferguson. Several media outlets covered the Ferguson, Missouri shooting and the riots that followed. It is the way that they covered them that could have influenced race relations in this country. For the purpose of this study the focus will be on five web reports and five broadcast/interviews specifically from CNN and five web reports and five broadcast/interviews from Fox News. By analyzing these articles and broadcast/interviews, looking at how they were presented to the public, one can begin to understand how the media through agenda setting may have influenced public opinion. In their book, *Do the Media Matter. In Racism, Sexism, and The Media the Rise of Class Communication in Multi-Cultural America*, Clint Wilson, Felix Gutierrez and Lena Chao (2003) looked into the channeling effects of the media to see if media image reinforcement can affect how a person thinks.

Because of the wide range of social and psychological factors that affect how a person thinks and acts, it is difficult to pinpoint the specific effects of the media on individuals. However, what we know of the reinforcement and channeling effects of the media, when coupled with the content analysis of coverage and portrayal of minorities in the news and entertainment media, provide insight into the negative effects of one-sided media images on both Whites and the members of racial and ethnic groups portrayed. (p. 47)

Although it is hard to prove the actual effects of the media on the public it is easy to understand the influence the media has based on the Agenda Setting Theory. The media through agenda setting has the possibility to influence public opinion. Through agenda setting news outlets like CNN and Fox News are able to tell the public what stories are more important than

others, and even possibly what to believe about those stories. Ronald Jacobs (2002) touches on the two step flow of the media in relation to people.

Mass media do not produce a one-way flow from text to putatively passive audience but, rather, a “two-step flow” where individuals incorporate media texts into their existing social networks and social environment. And while they may not be successful in telling people what to think, the news media have been remarkably successful in shaping what people think about and what they talk about. (p. 24)

In the case of Ferguson, Missouri, the shooting, riots, and trial were in the forefront of the national news from August through November 2014 spurring debate and dividing the nation along racial lines. The public heard the news reports that said that a white police officer shot an unarmed black man and that story lead the public to believe that Officer Wilson should have been indicted so when he wasn't there were riots for weeks. What was left out of most stories is that before the altercation with Police Officer Darren Wilson, Mike Brown was suspected of robbing a convenient store. He also refused to listen to Officer Wilson's request to get out of the road while walking. So similar to the Rodney King situation, Mike Brown had a lot of other issues going on that lead up to the altercation with Officer Wilson that ultimately resulted in the loss of Brown's life.

The media also has a way of shaping stories so that people believe gross generalizations about people of other races. For instance many African Americans think that White people are racist, and many White people believe that African Americans are violent. Edward Everette and Dennis Pease (2000) discuss how media can actually sever to reinforce stereotypes.

[c]ontrary to the pathology projected by the popular media, the vast majority of black people have little tolerance for crime and violence – blacks understand all too well that

we are their principal victims. But so many TV programs and major films automatically focus on that tiny fraction of the African-American community that engages in drugs and violence. Most African American inner-city residents are not drug dealers or criminals, contrary to the impression promoted by the American media. (p. 13)

So not only through agenda setting and the ability of people to be influenced as evident in the Social Influence Theory, the media has a great responsibility on how they chose to present the news, and what they chose to be news.

CNN and Fox News have a responsibility every day to decide what to cover. In that lies the responsibility that hopefully their goal is to report the whole truth in order to benefit the people in the community they serve, not to simply have the best ratings by creating an outlandish story. Herman Gray (2013) also talked about how news coverage can strengthen stereotypes within communities that are highly dominated by a specific race.

The habitual repetition of crime stories in poor and disadvantaged communities in local news broadcasts can insulate audiences from actually seeing members of these communities and feeling empathy with their plight. The repetition of such stories may work more often to reinforce the normative ideals of white middle class circumstance rather than produce points of identification and empathy.

Television portrayals in scripted programming and news coverage of black and brown communities is often characterized by the persistence of stereotypes and associations with criminality, abjection, illegality, and suspect behaviors of one kind or another. Fortified with facts, accuracy, fairness, as the basis for critique, the media is charged with habituating us to not see racism even as we see race. (p. 253-258)

By not focusing only on the bad in crime ridden communities the news can do a lot to help racial relations and dispel many stereotypes.

Many African Americans feel that every time an officer goes unpunished their grief is felt all over again. In the case of Mike Brown, the Black community in Ferguson, Missouri started protesting when Police Officer Darren Wilson was not indicted on murder charges. “Families who have lost loved ones in fatal encounters with police officers said their pain and grief resurfaces each time it appears another officer won’t face justice for using lethal force on innocent U.S. citizens” (Morrison, 2015, p. 1). The term innocent was mentioned often by news outlets in this case, and that term can potentially give the connotation that the violence used by Officer Wilson was unwarranted.

In the case of the Mike Brown shooting several outlets reported protesters chanting and writing out ‘Black Lives Matter’ on their signs. The Bible is not silent on the issue of whose lives matter; it makes it very clear that all lives matter. The Bible says in Mark 12 verse 31, “The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (New International Version, 1998, p. 1322). By loving someone else as one does themselves they are looking at them without judgment and without the thought of racial stereotypes.

The shooting of Mike Brown led to protests that weren’t all peaceful, although many citizens claimed that they were simply using their civil rights to protest the lack of conviction of Officer Wilson. *Mike Brown’s Shooting and its Immediate Aftermath in Ferguson* (2014) paints the picture of some of the not so peaceful protest that took place after the shooting.

“We are Mike Brown! We have the right to assemble peacefully!” invoking the name of the 18-year-old fatally shot by the officer. Protesters toss at least one bottle rocket, according to the police, and at the apparent sound of gunshots, demonstrators scramble to

safety. The police fire smoke canisters and tear gas at the crowds, and officials later say it was in response to the shooting, in which one man is critically wounded, apparently by another protester. (p. 1)

Unfortunately the racial tension sparked by this incident led to riots all over Ferguson, Missouri that eventually spread to other areas where African Americans felt as though Whites in their communities were oppressing them too.

In order to fully understand the influence that CNN and Fox News had on public opinion during this time it is necessary to analyze several articles, broadcasts, and interviews that were written or broadcasted during in the time following the shooting. By reading and watching the coverage and how the shooting was presented from both outlets during the shooting and the lack of trial that followed one can see if there was in fact a specific agenda used in their reports. If there is an agenda revealed, what is the purpose of that agenda? There are several things that CNN and Fox News could gain from increased racial tension, so it will be interesting to see if they pushed for the issue of race to be the forefront of the conversation, or if they simply presented the facts as they unfolded. In order to see their agenda, if in fact there was one, research needs to take place in an organized method that can be followed throughout the study.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative approach will be used where the Agenda Setting Theory will be employed in order to see if there is an agenda in the reporting of the Ferguson, Missouri incident in regards to CNN and Fox News. If there is an agenda detected what is the purpose of that agenda, and how does that agenda affect public opinion? The specific qualitative design that will be used is a case study. “Qualitative methods demonstrate a different approach to scholarly inquiry than methods of quantitative research. Although the processes are similar, qualitative methods rely on text and image data, have unique steps in the data analysis, and draw on diverse designs” (Creswell, 2014, p. 183). Case studies involve using a bounded system and multiple cases in order to support an overall general theme.

Qualitative research is different from quantitative in that it does not focus on numbers and textual data. The purpose of using a qualitative method is to analyze five articles and five broadcast/interviews from CNN and five articles and broadcast/interviews from Fox News to see if an agenda can be discovered in their coverage of the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. By analyzing the articles and the broadcast/interviews one can piece together the reasoning behind the way things were written/shown and what their intended purpose was.

By following this method and comparing the articles and broadcasts to the report released by the Department of Justice if there is an agenda it will be detected. The need for a study like this is great, because a majority of the public is exposed to several different forms of mass media, and what most people don't realize is that the media affects their opinions based on the way they present things. If there was an agenda in the reporting of the shooting of Mike Brown by CNN and Fox News, what would the purpose be in writing and reporting things in such a

way? In order to know if there is an agenda presented it is important to compare the writing and broadcasting of these two news outlets with the facts from the Department of Justice report.

In this study several articles or cases will be observed and analyzed in order to determine if there was a specific agenda in the reporting of CNN and Fox News. This case study is collective in that even though there is only one central theme there are several cases or articles selected that deal with that theme. First, an embedded detailed approach will be conducted of all the articles selected and then a holistic analysis will be used to compare the article in its entirety to the Department of Justice's report of what happened on the day Mike Brown was shot and the instances that followed. Finally, the Agenda Setting Theory will be applied to CNN and Fox News to try and understand why they chose the stories that they did.

Introduction of Case Study

This issue will be addressed from a qualitative approach because it involves an analysis of several articles and broadcasts/interviews from CNN.com and FoxNews.com on their reports of the Ferguson, Missouri incident. The qualitative method that will be used is that of a case study. John Creswell (2006) in *Research and Design* explains what case study research is.

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 74)

This allows several different articles and interviews to be looked at in order to see if an agenda can be detected for how these outlets chose to present this incident to the public. There have been

a few other notable studies on the influence of mass media on the public that are worth mentioning.

Cases. The cases are the basis for this study in that they provide all the information that is needed to detect if there is an agenda in the reporting of CNN and Fox News about the shooting of Mike Brown. By analyzing five articles and five broadcasts/interviews from CNN and Fox News' website, their purpose for what they covered and why will be uncovered as it relates to this particular incident. This case study is instrumental in that the material helps to reveal a larger insight into the bigger issue of media agenda setting. When you do an instrumental case study the cases are used to shed light on a central theme. Robert Stake (1995) in *The Art of Case Study Research* explains what a case of secondary interest is.

The case of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, but because this helps us pursue the external interest. (p. 237)

These articles are bound by time in that they all have to do with the shooting of Mike Brown between August 2014 and now. Below is a diagram of how the cases relate to the questions in the research study in order to help draw an understanding between the cases and the external interest, which in this case is if a media agenda can be recognized in the reporting of CNN and Fox News on the Ferguson, Missouri incident.

Research Questions	Case Study
Does the media, specifically CNN and Fox News, set agendas?	5 articles and 5 broadcasts/interviews from CNN and Fox News between August 2014 and December 2015 on the shooting of Mike

	Brown in comparison with the Department of Justice Report.
Did the media set an agenda in the way in which they covered the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri?	General themes from the articles and broadcasts/interviews will be charted and organized into central themes revealing what the agenda is if indeed there is one.
If an agenda is detected, what was it and why was there one?	Media agenda can affect the public opinion on the issue of racial relations in regards to the CNN and Fox News reports on Ferguson, Missouri.

Strategy. This study then looks at five articles and five broadcasts/interviews, from both CNN and Fox News on the Ferguson, Missouri incident to determine if there was a media agenda, and how that agenda affected public opinion in regards to race relations in the United States. Thus I think it is important to reveal the influence that media has on public opinion and to identify an agenda if there is one that would influence how CNN and Fox News reported on the Ferguson, Missouri incident.

Each article will be analyzed in the following chapter focusing on syntax, vocabulary, and the general topic of the article. Then each article as a whole will be compared to the police report that was issued documenting the shooting of Mike Brown. The reason these four items were studied is because they are essential to understand the text as a whole. Syntax was chosen because the pacing of articles and the way things are said are often just as important as what was said. Then vocabulary was looked at because the choice of words, especially the mention of race

was hugely important to look at to determine if there was an agenda present. The use of intensifiers was also analyzed, that will be addressed in the research section and was borrowed from Christian Burgers and Anneke Graaf (2013), in their research called, *Language intensity as a sensationalistic news feature: The influence of style on sensationalism perceptions and effects* along with a language scale developed by Van Mulken and PJ Schellens, also referenced by Burgers and Graaf. Next the general topic of the article was hugely important because the angles that the articles and broadcasts followed are what was at the heart of what each organization decided to cover. Finally the last category, the comparison of the article to the Department of Justice Report allowed for a contrast of the articles to a factual document of what happened in the case. In addition each broadcast/interview will be analyzed for tone, word choice, and story selection. A link and title will be posted when referring to a broadcast or an interview and those too will be compared to the report by the Department of Justice. Tone was chosen because the way a person says something is just as important as what is being said. A person can say nice words in a mean or sarcastic tone and they take on new meaning so that was important to look at. Then word choice, like vocabulary, was chosen because the exact words that were said hold weight too. Story selection was also greatly important because the angle and the topic of the story is the basis for what was written and reflects the agenda of the writer or producer. Again the broadcast, like the articles were also compared to the DOJ report.

Below are samples from the articles and the broadcasts that were picked. The reason that these particular articles and broadcasts were picked was based on their title and their relevance to where they appeared when each news outlet was searched. In the cases of articles and broadcasts the ones that popped up first were chosen in most cases, unless they mirrored a similar article or broadcast from the same organization.

Cases From CNN. The first article from CNN that will be addressed is *Why Ferguson Touched a Raw, National Nerve*, it was written in November 2014 by Ray Sanchez. This article is about the anger that spilled out throughout the United States after the grand jury did not indict Officer Darren Wilson. After this happened there were riots and protests in several areas throughout the nation. The next article that will be addressed is a step-by-step account of what happened when Mike Brown and Officer Darren Wilson met on that August day as told by CNN writers, Rachel Clarke and Christopher Lett. The first line of the account reads as follows, “Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, was shot dead on August 9 by Darren Wilson, a white police officer. Some witnesses say the teenager assaulted the officer at the outset and tried to grab his gun; other witnesses say Wilson was the aggressor. All accounts agree that Brown ran and then turned back ... but to attack or surrender?” (Clarke & Lett, 2014, p. 1). This article parallels the accounts of law enforcement with the witnesses’ accounts in a timeline format of that day. This article includes interviews along with police sketches of Brown’s injuries.

Article 3 from CNN is, *Missouri teen shot by police was two days away from starting college*, by Catherine E. Shoichet (2014). This article is all about who Mike Brown was as a person and what people in the community had to say about him. “His parents and their lawyer say they don't believe the police account of what happened. They describe Brown as someone who steered clear of violence” (Shoichet, 2014, p. 1). Throughout this article the family and friends of Brown reflect on his life and who he was.

The fourth article, *Michael Brown family files lawsuit, seeks at least \$75,000 in Ferguson case* by Elliott C. McLaughlin and Ed Payne (2015) discusses the civil lawsuit that the Brown family filed against the city of Ferguson, Missouri claiming that their son’s right to life was violated. “Word of the lawsuit comes more than six weeks after the Justice Department

determined there was not sufficient evidence to charge Wilson in Brown's death but found in a separate investigation that the Ferguson, Missouri Police Department showed a pattern of racial bias” (McLaughlin & Payne, 2015, p. 1). The article discussed facts from the case and the Department of Justice’s findings in the case of members of the police department sending racist emails.

The fifth article is *One challenge for Ferguson grand jury: Some witnesses' credibility by Josh Levs (2014)* discusses the credibility of the people who claimed to have witnessed the incident between Mike Brown and Officer Darren Wilson. “Most of the dozens of witnesses who testified likely did their best to describe what they saw, but a review of thousands of pages of grand jury documents shows that untrustworthy testimony came from some witnesses on both sides” (Levs, 2014, p. 1). The article goes on to display some of the false accounts that were presented and draws into question why the prosecutors would allow witnesses with shaky credibility the opportunity to testify.

Next we will take a look at some broadcasts from CNN from the shooting of Mike Brown to the present to see how the television reporting was handled throughout the incident. As previously discussed when a newscast is involved there are several people that are involved in making the decision as to what to air and what to say about it. The following are some examples of broadcasts from CNN about the shooting of Mike Brown.

The first video, *Activist reflect on a year since Ferguson* is about a group of young African Americans that were forever changed by the shooting of Mike Brown and the events that followed. This segment found on CNN’s website is eyewitness accounts of the riots that happened in Ferguson, Missouri following the Mike Brown shooting. It is about activist organizing groups together to reform race relations in this country. It takes a look back at what

happened and a look forward into the movement that was spurred from the Ferguson, Missouri incident.

The next broadcast, *Ferguson's Ugly, Racist Emails Released* reveals the news about the emails that were uncovered by the Department of Justice from some of the former members of the Ferguson, Missouri Police force. Some of those emails contained comments that were derogatory towards President Obama and the First Lady. It goes on to show some of those racist emails that were being passed around from a few of the officers on the force.

The third broadcast, *What are the lessons of Ferguson* is a debate that CNN aired about what people can learn from what happened in Ferguson, Missouri. This video attempts to show both sides of what seems to be a race issue in this country that was brought to the surface in light of the Mike Brown shooting. The debate makes interesting points about this shooting and whether or not, it, and other acts of police violence are racially charged incidences.

The next broadcast, *Why the bar for federal charges in Ferguson is so high*, is a legal break down of the possibility of prosecution of Darren Wilson. It addresses the Federal Hate Crime statute and how and if it should be used. It does also mention the possibility of the civil suits that also came about after the lack of indictment on criminal charges. It gives an interesting perspective into how hard it actually is to know what exactly happened the day that Mike Brown was shot.

Finally, the last broadcast, *Ferguson witnesses admit to lying*, is about how the 'witnesses' that the prosecutors used admitted to lying. This gave the jurors nothing credible to go on. The only thing that witnesses could admit to is that they saw Wilson shoot Brown. One of the witnesses even admitted to making up their story with pieces that they gained from the news.

CNN after going through the documents admits that even those witnesses that were considered credible didn't have any consistent stories with each other.

After analyzing these five articles and five broadcasts/interviews in-depth and looking for common themes a conclusion will be drawn from what is discovered. Words, sentence structure, quotes that were included, and the purpose of the article will all be included in the research.

CNN is just one of the outlets that this study will cover. Fox News claims to be balanced, so they too will be included in this study. The following five articles and five broadcasts/interviews are from Fox News.

Cases From Fox News. The first article from Fox News is an article that outlined the details revealed by the radio call the day of the shooting. *Mike Brown shooting radio calls reveal less than 90-second encounter* by the staff at Fox News details the very short moments between the initial confrontation and the fatal shooting. There is also a reaction from the family about the reasoning behind the leaking of the audiotapes.

The second article *'Black Lives Matter' protesters block Boston highway during morning rush* addresses the protests that continued after the shootings in Ferguson Missouri. "Failure to indict police blamed for the recent deaths of black men at the hands of white police in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City have led to protests nationwide. The Boston protesters released a list of more than a dozen minorities they say have been killed by law enforcement in the city in the last 15 years" (Fox News, 2015, p. 1). This article addresses the cry of "black lives matter" that came out of the protest and how this incident sparked race debates.

The third article that was chosen is *Autopsy, toxicology report on Michael Brown reportedly reveal marijuana, cast doubt on witness claims he was running away* by the Fox News staff reveals that Mike Brown was not running away when shot. The newspaper had St.

Louis medical examiner Dr. Michael Graham, who is not part of the official investigation, review the autopsy report, and he determined that it “does support that there was a significant altercation at the car” including a shot that hit Brown’s right hand. Dr. Judy Melinek, a forensic pathologist in San Francisco who also reviewed the documents, concurred that the autopsy “supports the fact that this guy is reaching for the gun” and that it did not support claims Brown was shot while running away from Wilson, or with his hands up (Fox News, 2014, p. 1). Included in this article is a drug report that showed that Brown had used marijuana within just a few hours before the encounter with Wilson.

Article four *Violence Shakes Ferguson* by Clint Henderson (2014) describes the reaction of people after the Grand Jury chose not to indict Officer Wilson. “There was a night of violent protests, looting and fires in Ferguson, Missouri after a grand jury declined to indict a white police officer for the fatal shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown. Witnesses reportedly told the jury that the teenager charged the police officer before he was shot” (Henderson, 2014, p. 1). This article also includes a briefing of what Fox News is also covering later that day that is not relevant to the purpose of this study. The part that is relevant describes the less than peaceful protest that took place following the decision to not indict Wilson.

The last article from Fox News is *A closer look at Ferguson, Missouri, the St. Louis suburb where Michael Brown was killed*. This article is a makeup and history of how the town of Ferguson, Missouri got started and how it got to where it is today. “Before school desegregation, Ferguson and other parts of north St. Louis County were predominantly white. The racial makeup changed as many white suburban families moved to outlying areas such as St. Charles County, parts of which are more than 40 miles from St. Louis. Today, Ferguson is nearly 70

percent black” (Fox News, 2015, p.1). This provides insight into the racial makeup of the town and its history before the shooting occurred.

A lot can be gathered just from the articles alone, but it is also important to look into some actual television coverage from Fox News of the Mike Brown incident. By looking into actual coverage another whole element is added to the observation process such as tone, gestures, and facial expressions. Watching actual segments is also helpful because it gives insight into what Fox News thought was important to cover.

The first broadcast that we will look at is, *Your Buzz: Do media lead with race in arrests?*, is about how the mainstream media framed the arrested of a black male in Charlottesville, Virginia as an incident of police violence. It is about how the media may possibly lead with and frame stories as race incidents. There is a great addressing of how the media in the Ferguson, Missouri case and many other cases decided to cover stories, and how they jump to racial conclusion without addressing all the unknown facts.

Another broadcast from Fox News, *Breaking down media's 'hands up, don't shoot' narrative*, is about how much of the media failed to tell both sides of the story in Ferguson, Missouri and how the media helped to fuel this as a race issue. CNN and MSNBC are both called out in this story as being biased. It explains that the media by supporting and spreading the wrong side of the story led to increased racial tension in this country. This video does a great job of shedding light on the fact that the media can influence the public’s opinion.

The third broadcast, *Media lies in Ferguson*, is about a Wall Street journal article that discusses how the media drove the story that Police Officer Darren Wilson murdered Mike Brown. Many witnesses were afraid to go against the false reports that were perpetuated by the media, saying that Wilson murdered Brown, when in fact that wasn’t true. The article that Bill

O'Reilly is referencing is *Ferguson, Lies and Statistics Here's a story for the media: a community in which honest people are afraid to tell the truth*. The article calls out the media for basically spreading lies and scaring the public from speaking up about what they actually saw that contradicted the story that the media put out there.

The next broadcast, *Reaction to police handling of situation in Ferguson*, is about the way that the police department handled the protest in Ferguson, Missouri and their relationship with the media during that time. In this video Fox News Anchor Jeanine Pirro interviews former NYC Police Commissioner Bernie Kerik to get his opinion on how the police in Ferguson, Missouri should handle the violent outburst that flooded the streets days after the shooting. In the video he mentions how awful communication between the police and the press had been thus far.

Finally the last broadcast, *Ferguson overload?*, is about how some producers went about choosing what to show following the shooting of Mike Brown. It is also about how the media might have been a driving force behind the intense reaction in Ferguson, Missouri. It even addresses how the media has a responsibility to not become the story. Station credibility needs to be what the concern of the media is, not telling the most salacious news story and this broadcast brings to the light the fact that the media hung out in Ferguson, Missouri waiting for something to happen, and that might be part of the reason things began happening.

Fox News was chosen as part of this study because they always claim to be unbiased in their reporting so by looking at these articles and broadcasts/interviews in comparison to the police report one can see if there is a media agenda that is detected. These articles and broadcasts/interviews all relate to the shooting of Mike Brown and the story that developed out of Ferguson, Missouri following the shooting and the trial. By applying the Agenda Setting

Theory to these media sources general themes will be detected and an agenda either will or will not be revealed.

Police Report. In order to see whether the writings of CNN and Fox News about the shooting of Mike Brown and things that followed were presented in a way to fulfill an agenda or not there must be some factual record in which to compare these articles. Fortunately there is and for the case of this study the *Department of Justice Report Regarding the Criminal Investigation into the Shooting Death of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson* will be used as the statements of fact about the case. “At approximately noon on Saturday, August 9, 2014, Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson Police Department (“FPD”) shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old” (Department of Justice, 2015, p. 4). This is the first sentence from the police report released of the investigation of the shooting. The facts compiled by the Department of Justice serve as an unbiased factual backdrop for which to compare the articles to by using the Agenda Setting Theory to first see if an agenda can be detected. Then, if there is an agenda what is it, and finally how does that agenda influence people in regards to race relations.

Research

The following is the breakdown of each article and broadcast from both CNN and Fox News in regards to the shooting of Michael Brown by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson Missouri, in August of 2014. The article and broadcast date from that day up until present time and cover a wide variety of topics related to this incident. The purpose of this next section is to present the reviews of the articles and then the findings. The following chapter will then discuss the deficiencies of the study and areas for future research.

CNN

Article 1. The first article that will be broken down from CNN is, *Why Ferguson Touched a Raw, National Nerve*, it was written in November 2014 by Ray Sanchez. First the syntax was analyzed followed by the vocabulary chosen, and then the general topic or theme was discussed, followed by a comparison of the article to the Department of Justice (DOJ) report.

Syntax. There are several adjectives that are used in this piece to describe Mike Brown and Officer Wilson. Many of those adjectives deal with race and or the condition of Ferguson after the shooting. The sentences are lengthy and descriptive, but not really that informative leading one to get the sense that this article may just be a filler.

Vocabulary. Within the first paragraph race is already brought up, “white police officer” “black teenager”, so right off the bat the race of Michael Brown and Officer Wilson is brought up. Another word that is used within that first paragraph is “unarmed” in reference to Mike Brown. This could possibly lead the reader to believe that Michael Brown was an innocent bystander that was gunned down unlawfully. Further along in the article Sanchez uses the term “them”, which leads the reader to assume who he is talking about. From context clues one can guess that he is either talking about African Americans as a whole, or possible residents from

Ferguson, but either way the “them” is not clear. Another time in the article Sanchez references “George Zimmerman, who identified himself as Hispanic, in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, who was black”.

The vocabulary used here seems to take Sanchez on a tangent, where he seems to link together mixed race shootings to the Ferguson incident. The term identified could lead readers to think that Zimmerman wasn’t actually Hispanic; he just claimed to be, “identified” creates speculation. Not only that but George Zimmerman was not a law enforcement officer, so the relevance of that case to the Ferguson incident is minimal at best. Also, the vocabulary for the most part is very simplistic, until Sanchez uses “buttressing”, which means supporting, to discuss how the way that Officer Wilson described Brown supported their (again who is this them/their) view of how too many white (there is race mentioned again) police officers see and treat black men.

General Topic / Theme. The general theme seems to be that generalities are being attempted to be sown together to create this racial narrative. The article focuses on race heavily and is from the point of view of the African American culture. The reader is lead to assume that the “them” and “their” that are used throughout are referring to the African American culture, but never once is that stated. The article also takes on a historical theme bringing up lynching and the Jim Crow laws. Another word that was used was rage, claiming that the rage from the shooting goes far beyond the decision not to indict Officer Wilson, but does it? There are some interesting quotes in this article that seem to not have a documented source and or contradict other quotes. For example: “Some people compared the immediate aftermath of Brown’s death to a lynching in the old South. They drew parallels to a time of public hangings, when mobs killed blacks, sometimes for perceived infractions such as stealing, and left bodies in the public to induce fear.”

Who are some people? The next quote is about what happened in Ferguson and appears to directly contradict the parallels that “some people” drew. “Police said officials couldn’t reach the area where the body lay because a crowd had gathered, making it too dangerous. Ferguson’s police chief, Thomas Jackson, later apologized to Brown’s family.” This quote explains that the body wasn’t purposely left in the street, and contradicts the quote above.

There was also a story about Emmett Till a 14 black boy murdered in Mississippi in 1955 for apparently whistling at a white woman. In that story the boy was drug from his home at night and murdered. The fact that Sanchez chose to include this could cause the reader to think that Mike Brown was purposely gunned down for violating some trivial law; it makes Brown seem like a more innocent victim than he actually was. There are also several quotes that simply cite “experts”, “the editorial” and “a report by ProPublica”, but never does Sanchez name those sources specifically, which leads readers to possibly question his credibility all together. Sanchez does say, “[i]t was against that backdrop that people shared news on social media of what transpired in Ferguson, helping transform a local news story into a national conversation.” By writing that Sanchez could be admitting that what transpired on social media changed the way he covered the shooting, making it more about what the reaction of a few extremist instead of about the facts of the case. When emailed about it Sanchez never responded.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. The Department of Justice report that came out on March 4, 2015, does not mention the race of Officer Wilson or Michael Brown at all. This article although written before the DOJ report mentions race heavily throughout and makes that the main focus of the article instead of the incidents of the shooting. Sanchez also focused heavily on the fact that Brown was unarmed making him appear to be very innocent, but the DOJ report said, and the evidence confirmed that during the altercation Brown reached for his waistband,

which means that he could have had a gun giving Officer Wilson a reason to be afraid for his life.

Article 2. The second article from CNN is, *What Happened When Michael Brown Met Officer Darren Wilson?* This is a step-by-step account of what happened when Mike Brown and Officer Darren Wilson met on that August day as told by CNN writers, Rachel Clarke and Christopher Lett.

Syntax. This article is a step-by-step account of the timeline of when Michael Brown and Officer Wilson encountered each other. Thus the sentences are short, yet descriptive including several adjectives. The article depicts the incident from two points of view of supposed witnesses. The way it is broken up almost creates a divisive account right from first glance of what happened that day. Leading the reader to immediately recognize a differing of opinions.

Vocabulary. The first sentence again points out the race of the people involved in the shooting. “Michael Brown an unarmed black teenager, was shot dead on August 9th by Darren Wilson, a white police officer.” The use of the word unarmed is also important to note in that it could lead readers to believe that Brown was a passive bystander instead of a potentially aggressive threat. Also the sentence, “All accounts agree that Brown ran and then turned back... but to attack or surrender?” Is that true, that all accounts agree? Based on the evidence in the case Brown was facing Wilson when he was shot, but not all accounts agreed to that at first many witnesses claimed that he was running away. In fact the witness that Clarke and Lett interviewed from the point of view of Brown’s side said only 3 pages later, “(Brown’s) body jerked as if he were hit from behind...” so some people still speculated the he was shot from behind before he ever turned around. The way that it was worded at the beginning of the article can prove to be confusing.

General Topic / Theme. The general theme of this article is really just a basic account of what happened based on the point of view of two people, one from Officer Wilson's side, and one from the side of Mike Brown. It is interesting that this article was written in November, many months after the shooting in August, which poses the question of how good the memories of the witnesses were at the time of questioning.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This article was written before the DOJ report came out, but throughout it seems that Clarke and Lett didn't screen their interviews very well. There are some generalizations, but the DOJ report does confirm that Brown first ran away, and then turned back towards Officer Wilson. With the overwhelming evidence that was gathered from the scene though it was determined that Brown ran towards Officer Wilson, before Wilson shot him. The DOJ report took the witness testimony that was corroborated by evidence, it completely discredited the witness whose claims went directly against the evidence. The DOJ report was published 7 months later, it is interesting that the media outlets couldn't wait to make sure their witnesses were correct first.

Article 3. The third article from CNN is, *Missouri teen shot by police was two days away from starting college*, by Catherine E. Shoichet (2014).

Syntax. This article is divided into several paragraphs with one to two sentences. It is an easy read about who Mike Brown was. Some paragraphs are written in a cause and effect manner. "Monday was supposed to be Michael Brown's first day at technical college. Instead, his parents were planning his funeral." So the beginning of the paragraph was about what should be happening, and the second half was about what happened instead. This can be found throughout the article.

Vocabulary. In this particular article race is again mentioned early, but this time Mike Brown was listed as African American instead of black as in other articles. Also race wasn't mentioned until the third paragraph. The word unarmed was also mentioned again in this article. Also, the word ecstatic was used to describe how Brown felt about the opportunity to attend college.

General Topic / Theme. This article was a profile on who Mike Brown was and featured interviews from his friends and family. The theme seems to be sympathy. To make it seem like Mike Brown was a saint who could never do anything wrong and who always stayed out of trouble. However if you look at the events of the day of the shooting Brown had smoked pot, and stolen from a store earlier that day. Then when confronted by the cops Brown was disobedient and started a confrontation with Officer Wilson. The question here is why try to gather sympathy for Brown and in a way make Officer Wilson seem like he shot an innocent person making him seem like a monster.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. The DOJ report does not focus on who Mike Brown was as an individual prior to the shooting because it is not relevant to the events that led up to his death. The DOJ report is very cut and dry simply based on the facts that are backed up by evidence. Shoichet (2014) did not respond to an email asking her the intention of the article so one is only left to assume that she was covering the story from another angle. Interestingly though the person Brown was normally wasn't who he was that day since all three autopsies included in the DOJ report mention behavior altering amounts of THC in Brown's system.

Article 4. The fourth article by CNN is, *Michael Brown family files lawsuit, seeks at least \$75,000 in Ferguson case* by Elliott C. McLaughlin and Ed Payne (2015) discusses the civil

lawsuit that the Brown family filed against the city of Ferguson, Missouri claiming that their son's right to life was violated.

Syntax. Nothing too out of the ordinary about the sentence structure in this case, everything was pretty straightforward between quotes and commentary from McLaughlin and Payne describing the civil suit.

Vocabulary. There is a lot of vocabulary in here that needs defining. In the second paragraph the family is listed as seeking “punitive” and “compensatory” damages. Punitive according to the Webster dictionary means “intended as punishment” and compensatory means, “recompenses someone who has experienced loss”. Another word that was used was subterfuge, which means, “deceit used in order to achieve one's goal”. So in the context of the sentence it was used in it means, “Crump told reporters that the alleged subterfuge [deceit in order to achieve ones goal] with which investigators handled the Wilson probe is indicative of a national trend.” In other words Crump is claiming that in any of the recent instances of violence involving Police Officers and African Americans, the Police Officers do whatever they can to save their own. Another word that was used was “slain” which makes the death of Mike Brown seem like a gruesome murder.

General Topic / Theme. This article is pretty straightforward in that it simply addresses the concerns of Mike Brown's parents and their desire for compensation and their want to punish Officer Wilson in some way. It is mostly an interview with the lawyer and the family and very little filler writing. The theme is simply facts about the Civil Suit that was filed against Officer Wilson.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This article comes a little over a month after the DOJ report that provided evidence that backed up Officer Wilson's story enough not to lead to an

indictment. Given that fact his family still tried to seek out punitive and compensatory damages for their loss. Many people wanted Officer Wilson to suffer, and the community in Ferguson, Missouri spun the story of race before the Police had even removed the body, the problem is that some of the media believed that story without question in many cases, page 83 in the DOJ report supports this claim. Crump claimed in the article that Police Officers would do anything to just save their own, when in fact witness 103 from the DOJ report was a black male who was a convicted felon, and even his story supported Officer Wilson's statement of events.

Article 5. The fifth article is One challenge for Ferguson grand jury: Some witnesses' credibility by Josh Levs (2014), and it's about how many of the witness testimony was later found to be false.

Syntax. The beginning of this article was written with short sentences to move the story along and show all the issues that came with the witness testimony. The short quick timing of the story makes the story seem to add intensity as it progresses.

Vocabulary. Right at the beginning of the article race was mentioned. "white police officer Darren Wilson killed Brown, and unarmed black teenager." Another interesting word in this sentence is unarmed, which makes it seem as if Brown was completely innocent or in some way was free from blame for being shot because he wasn't armed. Also, in this article Brown is referred to as Black instead of African American. Levs also says that the case, according to prosecutors was purposely "jumbled". Meaning that in order to try and protect Officer Wilson they may have present false witnesses on purpose.

General Theme / Topic. The topic of this article was to address the many false reports from people who claimed to be witnesses. It is interesting that "Witness 40 changed her story about some of what she saw and admitted to having gathered some details from new reports."

This is interesting in that the news in this case affected the testimony of the people who claimed to have actually seen the shooting happen. Levs also sites CNN analyst Sunny Hostin who claims that the prosecutors didn't want to indict and so that is why they presented so many witnesses, even those whose testimony had proven false. One is to wonder if it would have been better to pick a legal analyst that wasn't with CNN to offer that professional opinion.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. Race was again mentioned right at the beginning along with the fact that Brown was unarmed, which was confirmed by the DOJ report although race was not mentioned. The DOJ report also mentions that is it easy to look back and judge Officer Wilson knowing that Brown wasn't armed, but in the moment Officer Wilson had no way of knowing that for sure. "Thus, under Graham, we must avoid substituting our personal notions of proper police procedure for the instantaneous decision of the officer at the scene. We must never allow the theoretical, sanitized world of our imagination to replace the dangerous and complex world that policemen face every day" (Department of Justice, 2015, p. 85). No one knows for sure what transpired that day other than Officer Wilson, but his testimony was heavily supported by the evidence that was uncovered in the DOJ report.

Video 1. <http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2015/08/04/ferguson-missouri-mike-brown-the-disruptors-origwx-bw.cnn> The first video, *Activist reflect on a year since Ferguson* is about a group of young African Americans that were forever changed by the shooting of Mike Brown and the events that followed.

Tone. The tone of the activist is sober and sad, but also angry. The music that was added to the piece created a dramatic effect in order to pull people in. There is a sense of hope in the voices of the activist who want to push for change.

Word Choice. There are many words used by these activists that stick out. I will divide the activist by the ones whose names were given in order to break down this piece by CNN. Patrisse Cullors, Black Lives Matter Co-Founder - Black America - Called the demonstrations of the Black Lives Matter movement “creative and bold actions”.

Maurice Mitchell, Movement for Black Lives Organizer - Called the response by police during the protesting that developed in Ferguson, Missouri, “militarized overreaction” and said that if they (the police) thought it “would quell the fire, what they did was build lifelong relationships and a solid sturdy commitment for justice”. He went on to say, “we aren’t interested in gradualism when it comes to our basic right to live, we want it today, we want it yesterday, we wanted it decades ago”. These seem to be just several bold statements that were used to entice the emotions of the American people to join the cause.

Umi Selah, Dream Defenders Mission Director - Mentioned that being in Ferguson Missouri was a “surreal experience”. He also went on to say that they want to “create a movement that is the opposite of everything that the American system represents”, which could be interpreted as a very bold and somewhat vague statement.

Crucible was also used to talk about how Ferguson, Missouri is the point where people came together and new relationships were built.

Story Selection / Topic. The topic of this video was activist for Black Lives reflecting back on a year since the shooting of Mike Brown. Why would a national news outlet like CNN lend credibility to a movement like Black Lives matter, and what was their reasoning for developing this story? Throughout the video the activist each reflect on Ferguson, Missouri and what it meant to the black community as a whole.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This video was a year after the shooting of Mike Brown and 5 months after the DOJ report that negated a lot of things that the activist gathered behind. The ‘hands up don’t shoot narrative’ that gained momentum from the shooting was proven by the evidence listed in the DOJ report to not have happened. Officer Wilson was not indicted because there was not enough to cast doubt on his story of self-defense and fearing for his life. So many of the things the activists mentioned in the video are based on the feelings and the division and the riots that affected the community after the shooting. This poses the question that if the media didn’t run with the narrative that they did, would there have been riots and activist groups that formed?

Video 2. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/03/us/ferguson-justice-department-report-emails/> The next broadcast, *Ferguson’s Ugly, Racist Emails Released* reveals the news about the emails that were uncovered by the Department of Justice from some of the former members of the Ferguson, Missouri Police force. Some of those emails contained comments that were derogatory towards President Obama and the First Lady.

Tone. The tone of the reporter in this interview is disgusted as she reads some of the emails that the Department of Justice found in their investigation of Ferguson, Missouri police department. John Gaskin a community activist has a very mellow tone, but harsh words in reaction to what was found in the email. Brianna Keilar is visibly disgusted by the captions that she is reading, even has a sense of concern in her voice as if she is not completely comfortable reading the captions. Tom Fuentes tone is angry and upset being former law enforcement himself he is also visibly angry and disappointed in the emails.

Word Choice. John Gaskins made the statement that “silence gives consent”, meaning that the people who knew about this emails and said nothing against them are by their silence

agreeing with what was written. Keilar states, “the idiocy of putting this on the work computer”, implying that these people had to be pretty careless about the horrible things that were said. Tom Fuentes says that he is, “embarrassed, ashamed, and appalled” at what was found in those emails.

Story Selection / Topic. This story was about the racist emails that were recovered by the Department of Justice when they investigated the Ferguson, Missouri Police Department. It features a few of the emails and talks about the things that were written in them referencing welfare recipients, Obama, and the First Lady.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. The DOJ report on the shooting only exonerated Officer Wilson from wrongdoing, another separate DOJ report did find that the Ferguson, Missouri police department, as a whole was guilty of sending racist emails. This video reads some of those emails and how derogatory they were in regards to President Obama, the first lady, and people on welfare. However the fact that the department as a whole might have had racist tendencies does not mean that Officer Wilson’s actions that day were fueled by Brown’s race.

Video 3. <http://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2015/03/20/ctn-ferguson-race-police-dept-of-justice-profiling.cnn> The third broadcast, *What are the lessons of Ferguson* is a debate that CNN aired about what people can learn from what happened in Ferguson, Missouri.

Tone. The tone of James Towey, Officer Darren Wilson’s Attorney in this interview is calm and rational as he tries to make a point that if individuals would obey law enforcement then they wouldn’t be shot. In response to that statement the Monifa Bandele a member of Communities for United Police Reform is becoming annoyed and agitated, as evident by her facial expression and eye rolling. Her tone when she does speak is aggravated at the fact that she is even addressing the issue. She and James then get escalated with James countering Monifa’s statement in an aggressive manner. Kevin Jackson comes into the mix in an angry tone

interrupting the mediator to make his point his finger is pointed indicating aggression. Van Jones, a democratic strategist also comes into the mix a little shaky but makes a good stern point by the end of it.

Word Choice. There are many people in this debate that all have points that they want to get across but here are some things that stick out. Bandele at one point says that “this whole conversation is a distraction” “we’re talking about widespread systemic police killings”, meaning that she feels certain groups are being unlawful targeted based on their race. Jackson makes the point that this is not just a black issue and says, “cops should not shoot anybody erroneously”, meaning that they should have a very good reason for even pulling out their weapon. Jones discusses his relatives that have been in the force and uses the term “blue wall of silence” to describe the lack of comments from police, saying there is “fear on both sides”.

Story Selection / Topic. This topic was a debate about what was learned in Ferguson, Missouri and it is clear that many people have differing opinions on what should be the take away from the shooting of Mike Brown. CNN assembled a panel to discuss this issue and include people on both sides of the story.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. The DOJ report supports Towe in that if people would abide law enforcement officials they would be less likely to get shot. Looking back many people tried to take the death of Mike Brown and make him a martyr for the black communities that are still feeling oppressed by law enforcement. However in this case Officer Wilson was proven to have acted lawfully, in shooting Mike Brown in self-defense and the community told the media the story they wanted told and instead of checking facts many in the media ran with the narrative of the community of Ferguson Missouri which was later negated by the DOJ report.

Video 4. <http://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2015/01/22/ac-ferguson-federal-case-discussion.cnn> The next broadcast, *Why the bar for federal charges in Ferguson is so high*, is a legal break down of the possibility of prosecution of Darren Wilson.

Tone. Jeffery Toobin is relaxed in his tone and facial expression showing that he is comfortable with the topic that he is addressing. Areva Martin addresses the Federal Hate Crime Statute and seems a little bit more aggressive in her tone. Neil Bruntrager weighs in as well about a civil suit being brought against Darren Wilson, he too seems calm and collected and very knowledgeable on the issue.

Word Choice. Jeffrey Toobin said that when you “superimpose the much tougher intent requirement, proving that the defendant really intended to violate someone's civil rights that’s a very high bar” meaning that it is very difficult in to prove that Officer Wilson intended to infringe upon Brown’s civil rights. Martin uses the word aggressive when discussing what U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder told his police department about how the investigation by the DOJ would be. She also uses the word “disappointed” and says that if there is no indictment, “that it will leave a lot of activist and people on the ground in Ferguson very disappointed” implying that the people in Ferguson want some charge to come against Officer Wilson.

Story Selection / Topic. The topic in this segment is whether a civil suit will be filed and if it will stick, and with several legal analyst weighing in they all seem to be on the same page that if no criminal charges are filed it will be very difficult to claim civil liberties were violated. This deals with the emotional and racial side of the shooting more so than the actions of the shooting itself. Neil makes the distinction that “negligence”, or carelessness is what is trying to be proven in most civil cases like this one.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. The DOJ report relieves Officer Wilson of criminal charges, which makes it really difficult to prove Brown's civil rights, were violated, leaving little basis for a civil rights case. This video happened before the DOJ report, which exonerated Officer Wilson, and in the video Martin mentions that people will be angry if Wilson is not indicted, but why is that, is it because the media presented the shooting in a way that made it a horrible racist act? When the DOJ report came out and proved that Officer Wilson acted justly riots broke out because the DOJ report was supported by evidence that countered the narrative that had until that point been perpetuated by the media.

Video 5. <http://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2014/12/16/ac-pkg-cabrera-ferguson-documents.cnn/video/playlists/michael-brown-death-investigation/> Finally, the last broadcast, *Ferguson witnesses admit to lying*, is about how the 'witnesses' that the prosecutors used admitted to lying.

Tone. Ana Cabrera in this story uses tone and inflection to emphasize certain parts of the story. Throughout the story the reporter does a good job changing her tone as she reads the story, you can hear the shock in her voice as she reads Facebook posts that are offensive, and the disbelief when she reads several false witness reports. She then in an urging tone asks questions about how the investigation was handled and whether too much witness testimony may have altered the results.

Word Choice. The two false reports Cabrera chose were ones that might have been "damaging" to Officer Wilson's story, or "lead to an indictment of Officer Wilson". The other witness testimony Cabrera chose "supported Officer Wilson's side of what happened, but she (witness 40) posted a racist comment online" and Cabrera also cited that witness 40 gathered much of her story from "news reports". Cabrera says all this "leaves critics to question was too

much information presented to the grand jury, should the process have been done differently, and if so could it have led to a different outcome?” Those questions can lead to lots of speculation.

Story Selection / Topic. This story is about the many eyewitness reports that later turned out to be lies. The package features interviews with CNN’s Josh Levs that talks about how even the people on the same side of the story didn’t have the same narrative. Not only that but it features several witness statements that were later changed or retracted proving that what people thought were eye witness accounts were in fact people just trying to get involved.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. Although this video broadcasted before the DOJ report was published Ana Cabrera does a good job of exposing the fact that many witnesses who were initially interviewed were in fact lying about what they saw. The DOJ report reveals that in that it lists pages of witness testimony that weren’t corroborated by the evidence. CNN did get it right in that they said that even people on the same side of the issue didn’t have the same the story, but that was after they pushed the ‘hands up don’t shoot narrative’.

Fox News

Article 1. The first article from Fox News is an article that outlined the details revealed by the radio call the day of the shooting.

Syntax. The sentences in this article are written simply and the paragraphs are relatively short. It is written in a timeline style in the order of the events that transpired that day.

Vocabulary. In this case the lack of race is a striking contrast to most of the other articles written about the incident. Since race isn’t mentioned it shows the story from a facts based perspective eliminating the emotional pull that may be made when race is added to the equation. Also words like “allegedly”, “claimed”, and “reportedly” are used to show that this is what someone else said and it may or may not be fact.

General Topic / Theme. The topic of this article was to simply present the radio call that occurred that day between Officer Wilson and dispatch concerning the shooting of Mike Brown. It talks about the progression of radio call and the reaction of the family when the tape came out.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This article surprisingly does not mention the race, just like the report released by the DOJ. It also matches the DOJ report with the radio calls and the sequence of events that were detailed in the report a few months later. Also, in reference to the ‘hands up don’t shoot’ narrative the article uses the word claimed in order to show that this is just what one witness said, not necessarily fact. Once the DOJ report was released it was proven to in fact that Dorian Johnson made up the ‘hands up don’t shoot’ story.

Article 2. The second article *'Black Lives Matter' protesters block Boston highway during morning rush* addresses the protests that continued after the shootings in Ferguson Missouri.

Syntax. This article is very short and divided by sentences making each sentence seem important on its own, and one that could stand alone instead of having to be lumped in with a paragraph.

Vocabulary. Activist is the word that was used to describe the protesters because they claim to be advocating for police to stop targeting minorities, which they believe, is the case. Another interesting thing to note is the capitalization of the black lives matter movement. By capitalizing these words it seems as if Fox News is giving legitimacy to the movement itself. Another word that was used was failure in the context that the juries on several cases have failed to do their job by indicting Police Officers. The sentence reads, “Failure to indict police blamed for the recent deaths of black men at the hands of white police in Ferguson, Missouri, and New

York City have led to protest nationwide.” This sentence makes it seem like the Grand Jury isn’t doing their job.

General Topic / Theme. The topic of this article is about the protest that followed the shooting of Mike Brown, not only in Ferguson, Missouri, but all the way to Boston. It talks about how this has just been someone of a final straw for activist to start taking action, some going as far as to chain themselves to barrels in protest.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. The DOJ report that came out a few months after this article does not mention the protesting or the black lives matter movement that was born out of this event. It does however give proof that Officer Wilson could not be found guilty for acting with criminal intent, or that his purpose that day was to kill Brown. The article above uses the word failure to indict when really by not indicting Officer Wilson the jurors were doing their jobs and making a decision based on the forensic evidence of the case, and not someone’s false account of what actually happened.

Article 3. The third article that was chosen is *Autopsy, toxicology report on Michael Brown reportedly reveal marijuana, cast doubt on witness claims he was running away* by the Fox News staff reveals that Mike Brown was not running away when shot.

Syntax. This article is lengthy with varying sentence lengths describing what happened on August 9th. Many sentences are broken up with commas to emphasize each part separately as important. For example, “Michael Brown, the 18-year-old black man whose fatal shooting by a white police officer in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson in August touched off weeks of racially-charged rioting, had marijuana in his system, was initially shot at close range and does not appear to have been killed while running away, according to experts who reviewed the official autopsy and toxicology report.” Each area of this long sentence is broken up by commas

emphasizing the important parts such as who was involved, that there was marijuana in Brown's system, and that it does not appear that Brown was shot while running away.

Vocabulary. Race is mentioned within the very first sentence although Wilson is not identified as the police officer at this time. Wilson's name isn't mentioned until the second paragraph. The second paragraph also says that documents obtained by dispatch were "analyzed by two experts not directly involved in the case" which raises the question of who these experts are. Also one sentence that uses strong vocabulary is, "Wilson fired the fatal bullets that sparked a national controversy." This statement is very emotionally charged and makes it appear the Wilson is solely responsible for the way that people reacted to him doing his job. Also words like allegedly and claimed were used a lot in order to not present things as facts at the time of the article, but more as assumptions. Another place in the article a source that was not identified apparently told the paper who then told Fox News that "Wilson claims he put his vehicle in park, and tried to get out, but Brown slammed the door shut and punched Wilson through the open window, sparking the struggle for the gun". Why include something that seems like mere speculation by an unnamed source in the article?

General Topic / Theme. The topic of this article is the autopsy and toxicology report that came out after the shooting of Mike Brown. It addresses how Brown was not shot while facing away from Police Officer Wilson and it also talks about the marijuana found in Brown's system during the time of the shooting. The surveillance video of the robbery was also mentioned in that it appears to be Brown who robbed the store minutes before his encounter with Wilson.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This article is about the autopsy and toxicology report that was done on Brown after the shooting and it matches the findings that are listed in the DOJ report as well. This article was good in that it talked about how Brown was not shot from behind,

nor were his hands up both of which were also listed in the DOJ report. Another thing that was mentioned in both is the traces of THC in Browns bloodstream meaning that he had smoked pot within a few hours of the altercation. The article does however mention the race of Officer Wilson and Mike Brown whereas the DOJ report does not.

Article 4. Article four *Violence Shakes Ferguson* by Clint Henderson (2014) describes the reaction of people after the Grand Jury chose not to indict Officer Wilson.

Syntax. This article is short, and the paragraphs are fairly large. Most of the sentences are fairly short quickening the pace and adding to the impact of the violence at the beginning of the story.

Vocabulary. The interesting part of this article is that Henderson mentions Officer Wilson's race but does not mention that Mike Brown was African American. In many articles either neither or both of the races are mentioned so it is interesting that only Officer Wilson's race was mentioned. The word "declined" in the first sentence is interesting too. "There was a night of violent protest, looting, and fire in Ferguson, Missouri after a grand jury declined to indict a white police officer for the fatal shooting of 18-year old Michael Brown." Decline is odd here because it seems like they simply just decided not to indict because they didn't want to not because there was evidence not to. Also this whole sentence seems odd based on the vocabulary. Not only is Officer Wilson's race not mentioned, but neither is his name, which seems very odd.

General Topic / Theme. The topic of this article is the violence that came after the grand jury's decision to not indict Officer Wilson. It is a pretty straightforward account of what happened in Ferguson Missouri the night following and even listed specifics about Fox News reporters getting their cameras broken.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This article was interesting in that the race of Officer Wilson was identified, but not that of Michael Brown. In the DOJ report the race of neither man is mentioned they are simply referred to by name. The article then discusses the protest that followed the jury's decision not to indict, which is backed up by the forensic evidence as reported in the DOJ report.

Article 5. The last article from Fox News is *A closer look at Ferguson, Missouri, the St. Louis suburb where Michael Brown was killed.*

Syntax. This article was divided in sections based on the different areas of the town of Ferguson, Missouri. It starts out with the history of the town followed by population and poverty, commerce, schools, and racial concerns. These sections help to separate what Ferguson, Missouri looks like in cultural snap chats. The sentences are simple and are simply written in a way to discuss the area from its beginning until now.

Vocabulary. Race is mentioned a lot throughout the article but one statement sticks out in the last paragraph. "The report could be released as soon as Wednesday and appears to bolster allegations from some Ferguson protesters who have said members of the city's predominantly white police force disproportionately target black motorists during traffic stops." This is interesting because earlier in the article it talks about how, "today Ferguson is nearly 70 percent black", which would make one think then of course they pull over more African American drivers, because they are the majority of the population in Ferguson, Missouri.

General Topic / Theme. The general topic and or theme of this article is the makeup of the Ferguson, Missouri community then and now. What overwhelming sticks out is that the community of Ferguson, Missouri is mostly poor, uneducated, and black according to this article

even though there are several large employers in the area and more revitalization projects underway.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This article came out the day before the DOJ report on the shooting, and is about the area in which Mike Brown grew up. There isn't much relation to the DOJ report here in that the two articles are about different topics but it is interesting that the majority of the residents are black, uneducated, and living under the poverty level. Based on witness testimony in the DOJ report there was already a distrust of police in the community, and a sense that the police officers treated black people differently.

Video 1. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/4131151184001/your-buzz-do-media-lead-with-race-in-arrests/?#sp=show-clips> The first broadcast that we will look at is, *Your Buzz: Do media lead with race in arrests?*, is about how the mainstream media framed the arrest of a black male in Charlottesville, Virginia as an incident of police violence.

Tone. In this video Fox News journalist Howard Kurtz is addressing that since the Ferguson, Missouri incident the media tends to lead with the racially charged part of the story first. Kurtz's tone is stern and a bit agitated with the way in which stories get covered this day where the media rushes to judgment about stories before they have all the facts. He uses his facial expressions to support his somewhat fed up attitude with the way things get misconstrued along with hand gestures.

Word Choice. Although this story mostly focuses on the University of Virginia student, Martese Johnson who was arrested for being drunk in public Kurtz relates it back to the case of Ferguson, Missouri in that it was also presented from the beginning as a racial issue. Kurtz says, "there was no evidence that I saw that this guy was singled out or treated more roughly because he was black even though that's the way many in the mainstream media framed the story as a

kind of a mini Ferguson”. This implies that many media outlets do in fact lead with race painting these stories as racial issues when in fact that may not be the case. The quote included by Paula from New Hampshire also backs up this claim, she writes, “It has become so very upsetting to see how the media presents a story. For police responding to a disturbance, the media leads with racial interest first then the “police brutality”. You will see nothing of what caused this to happen and what the victim did to provoke the police. That does not make a good story. You see only the end of the act, but not its beginning.” Kurtz then calls out his colleagues in the mainstream media for rushing to the judgment that it was “Michael Brown that was the victim, the unarmed black kid shot by officer Darren Wilson, and that this must have been a horrible over reaction by Darren Wilson, except that we now know about the struggle for the gun in the police car and the injuries to Wilson’s face and the two different investigations, the latest done by Eric Holder’s Justice Department, found that Wilson acted properly in self-defense”. He finishes with, “if recent history has taught us anything the media need not rush to judgment in these instances where so many facts remain unknown.

Story Selection / Topic. The topic of this broadcast was about the media leading with race in arrest. In recent cases according to Kurtz they have and they shouldn’t. He claims that when so little facts are known it is wrong to assume the incident was caused because of the race of the people involved.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This video aired after the DOJ report was published and focuses mainly on the arrest of Martese Johnson, but touches on the way that the media covered the Ferguson, Missouri shooting. In the video Kurtz calls out media outlets for leading with race in the shooting of Mike Brown and claims that once again they did that in this case at UVA. Even the DOJ report called out the media for running with the made up ‘hands up don’t shoot

story' on page 83 stating, "The media has widely reported that there is witness testimony that Brown said "don't shoot" as he held his hands above his head. In fact, our investigation did not reveal any eyewitness who stated that Brown said "don't shoot" (DOJ Report, 2015, p. 83). This is the thing that Kurtz was saying in his broadcast and he was supported by the DOJ report.

Video 2. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/4132111345001/breaking-down-medias-hands-up-dont-shoot-narrative/?#sp=show-clips> Another broadcast from Fox News, *Breaking down media's 'hands up, don't shoot' narrative*, is about how much of the media failed to tell both sides of the story in Ferguson, Missouri and how the media helped to fuel this as a race issue.

Tone. In this video Megyn Kelly is visibly upset while talking about the lie that some people in the media pushed about the racially charged events in Ferguson, Missouri. Trace Gallagher and Howard Kurtz also join Kelly in this package. Trace seems relaxed, but also very serious in the fact that the media got this story wrong. There is a clip of the CNN news desk with their hands up, where one of the people at the desk says, "we want you to know that our hearts are out there marching with them". Trace calls out the other news outlets that only showed the one side of the story and in a stern tone mentions that only on the Kelly file were people getting both sides of the story, and other news outlets were failing to report on the facts. Kelly then goes on to talk about the members of Congress misleading America and fueling the racial fire in an angry and aggressive tone. It also shows previous clips of her calling out several people for supporting the "hands up" narrative that was later found out to be a lie. Howard Kurtz then comes on and in an adamant manner applauds Kelly for standing firm and waiting for the facts of the case in Ferguson, Missouri instead of simply running with the rest of the mainstream media in believing Dorian Johnson's narrative that actually never happened. Kelly then gets fuming angry about the fact that Johnson now has a job with the city of Ferguson, and Wilson now has

no job. Kelly also calls out people for trying to use cases like this to prove that you are empathetic to the cause of racism because it misleads people.

Word Choice. In this video Kelly, Gallagher, and Kurtz call out several national news outlets for jumping on the lie of Dorian Johnson and presenting the shooting of Mike Brown as a racial issue. Gallagher sites CNN as calling the shooting a cold-blooded murder, and MSNBC as referring to it as an execution. Howard Kurtz accused the mainstream outlets along with prominent racial leaders such as Al Sharpton of creating a lynch mob mentality against Officer Wilson after the shooting. Kurtz states at the end, “we should never fall into the trap of turning a news story into a cause or a crusade, we have to look at the facts in each case and I think this is evidence of that”.

Story Selection / Topic. The topic of this story was to call out some of the mainstream media outlets for misleading the public in spreading the “hands up, don’t shoot” narrative. Kelly wanted to make sure that people knew that from the beginning Fox News showed both sides of the story and urged caution to its viewers to not believe everything that they were hearing about the shooting from other outlets. It did in fact turn out that the ‘hands up don’t shoot’ narrative never happened, which begs the question as to why so many media outlets would run with a lie.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This broadcast goes directly along with the DOJ report in that it is talking about the facts of the case. Kelly calls out several other news outlets including CNN for airing and supporting the false narrative that developed from false witness testimony. Kurtz also talked about how media stories should never be turned into causes, and should focus only on the facts of the case as they develop. The DOJ report does not mention the race of Officer Wilson, or Mike Brown, and Megyn Kelly addressed that in this broadcast saying that members of Congress and the mainstream media are responsible for fueling the racial fire.

Video 3. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/4104001826001/media-lies-in-ferguson/?#sp=show-clips> The third broadcast, *Media lies in Ferguson*, is about a Wall Street journal article that discusses how the media drove the story that Police Officer Darren Wilson murdered Mike Brown.

Tone. In this video Bill O'Reilly uses a stern facial expression and tone along with imploring gestures to encourage Americans to read an article in the Wall Street Journal about how the national press drove the deceit that Officer Darren Wilson murdered Brown. O'Reilly quotes the article using inflection that clearly implies his disbelief that the media could mislead the public so badly.

Word Choice. O'Reilly chooses words that create a sense of urgency to try and persuade the American people to read an article that reports on why some of the witnesses that supported Officer Wilson's story were afraid to speak out. At one point he says that all, "fair minded Americans should read it", and he calls it "an excellent column". Which most Americans would like to think that they are fair minded so they might be more inclined to read it. One of the witnesses in the article states, "witness 113 'gave an account that generally corroborated Wilson ... She explained to the FBI that... 'You've gotta live the life to know it,' and stated that she feared offering an account contrary to the narrative reported by the media that Brown held his hands up in surrender". By referencing this Wall Street Journal by Bret Stephens, O'Reilly is bringing the issue to people's attention that the mainstream media may even have had an impact on witness testimony in the case.

Story Selection / Topic. The topic of this short clip was to urge people to read an article that supported the claim that many media outlets pushed a narrative that simply wasn't true to the American public after the shooting of Mike Brown.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This broadcast refers to an article in the Wall Street Journal that sites witness 113 saying that she was afraid to speak out and give an account that was different from the story she was getting from the media. The mainstream media in some cases prevented some eyewitnesses from coming forward for fear their story wasn't what people wanted to hear, even if it was true.

Video 4. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/3736946901001/reaction-to-police-handling-of-situation-in-ferguson/?#sp=show-clips> The next broadcast, *Reaction to police handling of situation in Ferguson*, is about the way that the police department handled the protest in Ferguson, Missouri and their relationship with the media during that time.

Tone. Jeanine Pirro speaks in an urgent tone as she interviews former NYC Commissioner Bernie Kerik. Kerik has a claim tone and is also very serious in his comments. Pirro then gets more animated as she addresses the question of how an entire police force only has 3 people on it that are African American. This expression shows her disbelief that something like this could happen.

Word Choice. Jeanie starts the interview talking about how the police department in Ferguson, Missouri was criticized for using heavy-handed military tactics. Kerik, then calls out the lack of communication between the police department the public and the press, saying that they make inaccurate statements and that they are holding onto and sharing certain things that they shouldn't be. Kerik also talks about how the lack of minorities on the force "should have been dealt with" as the makeup of the community changed, saying that it would be beneficial to the community and help with communication. He called the pointing of M16's and assault weapons at unarmed citizens disturbing, but also said that they can't let thugs control the streets. Kerik also said that he saw what appeared to be gang colors, red bandanas that represent the

bloods. One interesting statement is when he said, “when these people turn into thugs”, the question is who is he referring to?

Story Selection / Topic. The topic of this interview was about the reaction to the way police were handling the violent protest that happened in Ferguson, Missouri following the shooting. It addresses how the cops handled the situation different on different occasions and what should have been done to improve relations on both sides.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This broadcast happened before the DOJ report came out and focuses mainly on the aftermath of the shooting not the shooting itself. It talks about how the police handled the case and how there could and should have been more communication between the police and the media during the crucial time after and all the way through to the decision not to indict. The other DOJ report on the Ferguson, Missouri Police Department does uncover racist emails being sent by some of the employees and does address, like this broadcast the disparity of minorities on the force.

Video 5. <http://video.foxnews.com/v/3916291087001/ferguson-overload/?#sp=show-clips> Finally the last broadcast, *Ferguson overload?*, is about how some producers went about choosing what to show following the shooting of Mike Brown.

Tone. This video features Bill Hemmer the co-host of America’s News Room and Howard Kurtz about how the media chose what to cover in the case of the shooting of Michael Brown. Hemmer’s tone begins calm and direct making sure to make his point exact. He also has a dramatic pause to emphasize his next statement about the responsibility the media has in cases like this. His tone and expression of disbelief is evident when he talks about a cable channel broadcasting from Ferguson, Missouri for two hours even though nothing had happened yet, he later mentions that outlet as CNN. Hemmer’s tone intensifies when he mentions that at the onset

of the events in Ferguson Missouri, that the media equaled the number of protestors present. As the interview goes on both Kurtz and Hemmer stay claim as they discuss the media's responsibility in how they cover sensitive issues. Then the final minute of the interview is unrelated to the issue in Ferguson, Missouri.

Word Choice. Kurtz immediately starts the interview with saying that most of the early reports from Ferguson turned out to be just flat out “wrong” and then asks Hemmer how you deal with reporting or not reporting those initial statements. Sensitivity is a good word that Hemmer uses in an effort to acknowledge that the news outlets have a responsibility to really analyze things before they report on sensitive topics where few facts are known. Hemmer also mentions responsibility, which was huge in the way that media outlets handled the situation. Hemmer and Kurtz both go on about how the media have a duty and responsibility to control how they may affect a story. Hemmer mentions that it is important to know “the power that we [the media] have” and Kurtz adds, “even just by showing up”. Hemmer claims to be judicious in the way that they chose what to air and how much to air about what was happening in Ferguson, Missouri. Hemmer also mentions that in early August it was “fifty-fifty”, “fifty percent protestors and fifty percent photographers and reporters”. Kurtz also brought up the worry about a one sided narrative emerging where Officer Wilson's side of the story wasn't being told to which Hemmer talked about how “unfortunate” it is that things like that happen more often than they should in many different cases and he called it “reality”. Hemmer really pounds home the media's “huge responsibility” especially when dealing with “the tender subject of race in America”.

Story Selection / Topic. The topic of this interview was the media too much of a driving force in developing the narrative in Ferguson, Missouri? Did the media create the narrative or did

they simply report on it and how to know what to cover and what not to cover? Bill Hemmer describes the discretionary precautions that they took because of the great responsibility that the media has to the public. He also called out CNN for an almost wall to wall news coverage when nothing had even happened yet.

Comparison to the DOJ Report. This broadcast is about how the media may have been part of the story in Ferguson Missouri instead of just there to report on the story. Bill Hemmer talks about the responsibility that the media had to report on the facts of the case and not embellish what happened or lead with things like race that weren't relevant as evident in the lack of mentioning it in the DOJ report.

Findings

Answers to the Research Questions

Question 1. Does the media, specifically CNN and Fox News, set agendas?

Answer. It appears that based on the research that the media, specifically CNN and Fox News do set agendas. Both outlets set agendas by deciding what to cover, and how to cover it. Each of the organizations decide daily what news to make the lead story of the day telling their readers and viewers what is the most important thing going on right now, according to them. Founders of the agenda setting theory, McCombs (1972) and Shaw (1972) recognized the force that the media is and they addressed it in their study in *The Public Opinion Quarterly* by stating, “In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 176). So by choosing what to cover they are setting agendas.

CNN. CNN specifically has a staff of several thousand people so although as an outlet they seem to have to agree on what to broadcast and publish article wise, much of the agenda setting is left up to the individual correspondents that come up with the content and the different angles from which to cover it. CNN as a whole appears to decide though which topic is the focal point of the day and which one they want their correspondents to focus on. As evident in the articles and broadcast listed above there are several different people who contributed to the Ferguson, Missouri story line. It does appear that the agenda of CNN was to make the shooting of Mike Brown a national platform to talk about race relations in America.

Fox News. Much like CNN, Fox News also appears to set their own agenda as to what to cover and which topic to make the top priority in their coverage. Unlike CNN though the agenda of Fox News seems to be more unified in that the Fox News staff write many of their articles, or

articles are republished from the Associated Press. Instead of having many contributing individuals Fox News seems more unified as an organization in covering whatever topic they deem important. Fox News' agenda appeared to be to show the facts of the case and warn the public of lies that may have been given credibility by news outlets like CNN.

Question 2. Did the media set an agenda in the way in which they covered the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri?

Answer. Again it appears that based on the research that the media set an agenda on the way that they covered the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Both outlets made it top of their coverage in the days following the shooting and both followed the story closely for several months after, reminding the public that this is the issue that they should be focusing on. Both CNN and Fox News had crews in Ferguson, Missouri to bring to the public's attention what was developing every step of the way.

CNN. CNN specifically seems to have developed an agenda of covering the story from multiple angles as evidenced in the articles about who Mike Brown was, the shooting itself, the credibility of the witnesses, the separate lawsuits that followed the initial choice not to indict Officer Wilson, and the social movement of Black Lives Matter. CNN also seems to have wanted to be constantly up to date on all those angles and appeared somewhat controversial in siding with the protestors in the 'hands up don't shoot narrative', as evidenced in the report that Megyn Kelly did as referenced in the above Fox News list of broadcasts. They also chose to do a follow up on the year anniversary with the activist for the black lives matter movement. CNN's agenda seems to tell the story of the Black Lives Matter movement and to follow a racial angle, with the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri as a background story that supposedly

created a topic that they found more interesting even though as based on the DOJ report it wasn't factual.

Fox News. Fox News also seems to have set an agenda in the way that they covered the Ferguson, Missouri shooting of Mike Brown in that they seemed as a network to approach the whole incident with caution as their priority. Megyn Kelly in several of the broadcasts reflects and even shows clips of her urging the viewers to have caution as more and more stories came out of Ferguson, Missouri. Based on the above Fox News chose to focus on the facts of the shooting itself more than the emotional, or political narrative that also came out of the shooting. However as evidenced in some of the articles they also took a look into the historical makeup of the Ferguson, Missouri community over the years, the protest that followed the grand jury decision to not indict Officer Wilson, and the media. Part of the agenda of Fox News in the covering of the shooting death of Mike Brown was how it was covered and what role the media played in the events that followed. The fact that Fox News made themselves and other media outlets part of the story follows the lines of their agenda to be fair and balanced. From the beginning Fox News urged caution to viewers as to what they should believe about the shooting of Mike Brown. They displayed journalistic integrity when they did follow-up pieces about how and why they covered certain things, and they even called out other news outlets, including CNN, for misleading the public.

Question 3. If an agenda is detected, what was it and why was there one?

Answer. The agenda of both outlets differs a bit but both obviously set the agenda to cover the Ferguson, Missouri shooting, making a local news story into national news. They both also made it the top of broadcast and article topics from the initial shooting through until the DOJ report and the eventual ceasing of the riots and protests months later. In any news story by

any outlet there appears to be an agenda, there almost always has to be a reasoning behind why an organization or individual chooses to research a topic, write about an event, or cover an event like the shooting of Michael Brown. That being said, what matters is what the agenda is behind that decision to cover a story and how that effects the telling of the story.

CNN. For CNN their agenda seemed to be to get as many angles of the story as possible, and the quicker the story was ready for public consumption the better. This potentially led to inaccurate stories about what actually happened when Mike Brown was shot, and false promotion of the ‘hands up don’t shoot narrative’. It seems that the agenda set by CNN was people like controversy and they like to support whoever they think is being oppressed in a situation. In the case of Ferguson, Missouri it appears that CNN was thinking about ratings and ways to grab viewers’ attention more so than the facts of the case. They wanted to be champions of the cause, in this case racial equality, and they wanted to be at the forefront of the race discussion even though that by the evidence in the DOJ report this shooting was not race inspired, but a reaction of an officer who just so happened to be white, to a lawbreaker, who just so happened to be black.

In many of their reports they seemed to portray Brown as an innocent victim who had the world in front of him as evidenced by the piece written by Catherine E. Shoichet (2014) entitled, “Missouri teen shot by police was two days away from starting college. This piece pulls on people’s emotions by using things like intensifiers and depicts Brown as a completely innocent young man who was unlawfully gunned down. Which was false as evidenced in the DOJ report, which included the toxicology report that listed THC in Brown’s blood meaning he had smoked marijuana prior to his run in with Officer Wilson. Not only that but the DOJ mentions that Brown was a suspect in a robbery not long before Officer Wilson had an encounter with him.

The factual importance of this case seems to have been secondary to the cause of what CNN deemed racial violence and injustice. Overall CNN lead with race in many of their stories or broadcasts and chose topics that made the activist and the people in Ferguson, Missouri the focal point.

Fox News. For Fox News their agenda seemed to be to lead more with facts instead of flash. In most instances the stories were covered based on the facts as they were presented. The organization of Fox News as a whole prides itself on being the number one most trusted news station as listed in the section about them in this document. With that reputation on the line Fox News chose not only to cover the facts of the shooting, but also they decided to make themselves and the media as a whole part of their coverage.

It is as if the reputation of Fox News drove a lot of their reporting, and on some of the pieces about media involvement they even called out other mainstream news outlets accusing even CNN of supporting and pushing a false narrative of what happened in the shooting of Mike Brown. The report released by the Department of Justice supported the narrative of Fox News in that it discredited Dorian Johnson's 'hands up don't shoot' story, and gave the forensic evidence that completely corroborate Officer Wilson's story.

Summary of Case. Overall though the shooting of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri was a self-defense case and not a malicious act of police violence, according to the DOJ report. Both CNN and Fox News appear to have had an agenda, and both reported on the events that transpired in Ferguson, Missouri based on that agenda. Why was there any agenda at all, well because in order to choose what to cover and how to cover it one has to have a reason behind it and a proposed outcome that drives or pushes the stories. Bringing race into the forefront of many of the stories like CNN did could have fulfilled an agenda to get people talking about

something that may be bigger than the shooting itself, like race issues in America, even if the correlation wasn't accurate. Choosing to only focus on the facts of the case and leave race out of it for the most part, like Fox News did could have supported their agenda to be the most trustworthy news station in the country.

Language Scale

In order to further support the above conclusions it is important to use a language scale to describe how some words intensify what is being said or written. It is also important to look at the frequency that certain words are used in these reports, along with a few select phrases so that one can understand how the above conclusions were drawn. Christian Burgers and Anneke Graaf (2013), published an article called, *Language intensity as a sensationalistic news feature: The influence of style on sensationalism perceptions and effects* in which they studied language to see what words had more of an impact on readers than others. They make the point that “one of the ways in which an article can refrain from using neutral language is the use of intensifiers” (Burgers & Graaf, 2013, p. 7). Intensifiers are, “words used to give force or emphasis” (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2015). In general some words carry different connotations than others and sometimes words can be added or omitted for impact. For their purposes Burgers and Graaf (2013), use a Dutch model of language intensity as an example that provides insight into this study. The TIM model developed by Van Mulken and PJ Schellens helps to categorize intensifiers, for example, “includes nouns (e.g., spectacle instead of trial), verbs (e.g., gobble instead of eat), exaggerations (e.g., I had to wait for a century) and repetition (e.g., very, very, very bad)” (Burgers & Graaf, 2013, p. 8). This is used here to look at words that added intensity to the reporting of CNN and Fox news in regards to the shooting of Michael Brown.

The following few paragraphs will look at the language and frequency of words used by CNN, Fox News, and the DOJ to see if a more sensational style of reporting was done by the news outlets than the DOJ. “After all, a sensationalistic style is also categorized by the degree to which the report differs from objective (non-evaluative reporting)” (Burgers & Graaf, 2013, p. 7). By comparing the non-evaluative language of the DOJ report to the reports and broadcasts by CNN and Fox News one can better see how they differ in their coverage.

CNN. When reviewing the articles and broadcasts for CNN a few common words stood out along with some key phrases. For example, in the reporting reviewed by CNN race was mentioned in 4 of the 5 articles and in 3 of the 5 videos, in contrast to the DOJ report where it wasn't mentioned at all. Another word that was very frequent in the print articles was unarmed which was used in 4 of the 5 articles, however none of the videos. The DOJ report did also use the word unarmed once in reference to the description of Mike Brown since that was a fact that was discovered after the shooting had taken place.

Now both the DOJ and CNN talked about the shooting being fatal, but in different ways. The DOJ report is non-evaluative reporting, meaning that it is simply factual with no further interpretation. Here are the different presentations of the same fact that the shooting of Mike Brown by Officer Wilson resulted in Brown's death.

- The DOJ language reads, “At approximately noon on Saturday, August 9, 2014, Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson Police Department (“FDP”) shot and killed Michael Brown, and unarmed 18-year-old” (Department of Justice, 2015, p. 4).

CNN has several instances where the fatality is mentioned, both in the printed articles and in several of their broadcasted reports. In the broadcasted reports however it was mostly mentioned by people that were being interviewed by CNN and not the network itself.

- “One side says the African-American teenager was surrendering, his hands in the air to show he was unarmed, when the officer opened fire” (Shoichet, 2014, p. 1). The words “opened fired” are more intense than “shot and killed”, meaning that Shoichet (2014) may have been trying to draw emotion out of the readers. “Opened fire”
- “The slain teen’s parents released a statement in March saying they were disappointed that Wilson would not face charges” (McLaughlin & Payne, 2015, p. 3). The use of the word slain here is an intensifier that was used to sensationalize the story and evoke emotion that the DOJ report did not. The root word slay means “to kill by violence” (Webster Dictionary, 1995, p. 624). Slay has a more violent and negative connotation than the DOJ wording that simply stated “killed”.

Fox News. When reviewing the articles and broadcasts for Fox News the frequency of some words again stood out. Much like the CNN, Fox News mentioned race in 4 out of 5 of the articles, but only 1 out of 5 videos. Again the DOJ report did not mention either Officer Wilson’s race, or the race of Michael Brown.

Another thing that stood out in the reporting of Fox News was the key phrase in article 3 above that was more sensationalized than the language found in the DOJ report.

- The Fox News staff in their article, *Autopsy, toxicology report on Michael Brown reportedly reveal marijuana, cast doubt on witness claims he was running away*, said, “Wilson fired the fatal bullets that sparked a national controversy” (Fox News, 2014, p. 1). In this sentence the word fatal is an adjective used to describe the bullets that were shot, so fatal is an intensifier. Also, sparked is an intensifier in that statement as well because it carries more emotion than started or created. In contrast the DOJ report uses very bland and dry language with no added intensifiers.

Comparison. When looking at CNN and Fox News it appears that CNN's reporting had more sensational elements than Fox News due to CNN's frequency in mentioning race, their sensational phrases explained above, and their lack to draw attention to the medias' potential influence like Fox News. Comparing the two news outlets wasn't the purpose of this study, but those findings should be reported as well. Both news outlets however contained more sensationalized language than the DOJ report.

Here is a chart listing out the words that make some of these reports more sensationalized than others in order of their intensity on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most intense. Intensity is based on context and frequency.

Word	Intensity	Why
Black and White (CNN and Fox News)	5	Race is mentioned so often that its frequency makes it more intense than any of the other words found. Not only that but the fact that the DOJ report doesn't mention race means that both CNN and Fox News chose to make it a point of their reporting.
Slain (CNN)	5	Slain is high on the intensity scale because by definition as mentioned above it means to kill with violence. Slay rather than kill, as mentioned in the DOJ report pulls more on the emotions of the reader because it

		implies an unlawful act and gives the implication of innocence of the victim.
Unarmed (CNN and Fox News)	4	Although the word unarmed doesn't carry with it a negative connotation its frequency makes it an intensifier because it intensifies the text. The word unarmed could potentially lead readers to infer that Mike Brown was an innocent victim simply because he didn't have a weapon.
Fatal (bullets) (Fox News)	4	The phrase "fatal bullets" in context of the article are an intensifier because they make the bullets seem to have more power than they do. The word fatal gives emphasis to the bullets that were shot by Officer Wilson because they did in fact take the life of Mike Brown.
Sparked (Fox News)	4	Sparked is a more intense word that started or began because it is illustrative in that it creates an image. The word sparked as listed in full context above allows readers to

		<p>visualize the spark from the bullets and morph it into the figurative narrative being what started the protest that followed. Started or began, even created don't create that powerful visual.</p>
<p>Opened Fire (CNN)</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Opened fire is also a more intense phrase than shot at because it creates a visual image of someone unloading several bullets rapidly at something or someone. This terminology is often used in mass shootings where gunmen are carelessly firing at many people. In this case the DOJ language just stated that Officer Wilson shot and killed Brown, not that he opened fire on him. That would imply that he just kept shooting until there were no more bullets left, and based on audio recording of the shot fired that wasn't what happened.</p>

Limitations

Quantity

This study was limited to only 5 articles and 5 broadcasts from each of the two sources CNN and Fox News. Out of all the coverage that both outlets did on the shooting of Mike Brown limiting the research to only twenty total sources 10 from each might have made the research too narrow. In order to get an even more accurate picture of the agenda of each outlet the research should be broadened to include more sources from each outlet.

Selection of Sources

The researcher chose the articles and videos that were selected in this research. This could create flaws in the true objectivity of the research meaning that a possible bias could have potentially affected what specific articles and videos were chosen. It would have been better to have a source outside the immediate research discussion chose the materials that were analyzed. This would have increased objectivity even more. It is also important to note that reading the DOJ report before reading the articles could have potentially affected what was looked for in the articles. By seeing what wasn't present in the DOJ report, such as race, it may have made those things stand out more in light of the DOJ report.

Timing of the Research

At this point in time the shooting of Mike Brown happened over a year ago and thus being able to determine how heavily each outlet covered the shooting is somewhat flawed as well. This story was national news for the weeks and months covering it, but this far removed from the incident it is difficult to go back online to see just how much it was front and center of each newscast. When an incident like this occurs the research should initially be done as soon as

possible in order to capture what is happening in the moment and then subsequent research should be added to it as the topic develops.

Lack of Response

Another hindrance to the research was the lack of response by many of the authors and broadcasters whose work was analyzed throughout this research. Without response from those who actually wrote the articles or participated in the broadcast it is hard to know the intentionality behind what was written or said. In the future knowing what the writers and broadcasters intended would significantly add to the study. Having first hand insight into the minds of the people behind the works would help also to determine if their writings or words were in any way influenced by CNN or Fox News as a whole.

Future Research

Source Expansion

As listed above as one of the flaws this research topic would serve better to be expanded to more sources. For example in the future it would be nice to develop a survey to give to different groups of people to see if they thought the shooting in Ferguson, Missouri was a race issue and why. Also it would be important to add a question to that survey about how people found out updates about the case, and what they were told by the media. It would be interesting to ask multiple-choice questions with the facts from the Department of Justice Report as the basis of the answers.

Another way to expand the sources and add credibility to this line of research would be to add interviews with the people who wrote the articles or appeared in the videos to find out from them what they were thinking when they said or wrote what they did. That way one could even ask them if there is a hierarchy of structure that may have pressured them into covering a certain angle or focusing on a specific part of the story. Adding both of these elements would add objectivity and credibility to the research because the writers and reporters would get to tell their side of the stories that they covered, and the public would get to weigh in on what they think happened and why they think that.

Other Outlets

Another area for future research would be into other news outlets. This research was narrow focusing specifically on CNN and Fox News, two sources that are national but markedly different. For future research into the media and the topic of agenda setting it would be nice to see this field expand into other news outlets, and to even look at how the local news covered the story verses the national news. With looking into other news outlets one can get a sense of where

they stand and the public can have a better idea of who to turn to for the facts and who to turn to for the social issues that are being linked to stories.

Adding other organizations gives the reader a wider perspective into the specific issue, like in this case the shooting of Mike Brown and it also highlights whatever social issues comes out of an incident like this, in this case the issue of race. By following other news outlets one can also look into the spin off stories that developed related to other aspects of the case.

Other Issues

Another possible area for future research is other social issues that the media has linked to incidents that are only loosely related. For example using the media still the agenda setting theory could be used to investigate how they cover instances where religion is involved. This area could be expanded in many directions based on whatever social issue the researcher chose to look into, but with the same basic format and concept.

Reverse Agenda Setting

Finally one area that deserves more research is the reverse agenda-setting proposal where the public is the one that sets the agenda or topic for the media. The job of news outlets is to tell the public what is going on in areas where they can't physically be, or to tell people what is happening right outside their door, they are simply supposed to be the source that relays information. In this case Fox News stuck to the facts of the case, but it appears that the community in Ferguson, Missouri swayed CNN when they claimed that the shooting was a white police officer murdering an unarmed black teen for no reason. The 'hands up don't shoot' narrative came from the people in the community and the black lives matter movement gained national attention as well because the community in Ferguson, Missouri took advantage of the spotlight that was on them. So by looking into how the community affected the narrative that

came out of Ferguson, Missouri one can see if the media outlet set the agenda on how the shooting was covered or if they were affected by the agenda that the public set.

The Nation Now

This goes back to adding interviews from people now about what they think about the incident in Ferguson, Missouri, but it goes beyond that to look at the subsequent incidents that followed Ferguson and how they were labeled as race issues too. For example the arrest of Martese Johnson who claimed he was discriminated against, or the death of Freddie Gray, who died in police custody. Many of these instances also gained national attention because of the precedent set by the Ferguson, Missouri coverage. It would be interesting to interview people now and see if they think that racism is still an issue in this country and why they believe that.

Longevity

This thesis in particular looked at media agenda setting in regards to race relations, but the overall concept of media an agenda setting can be used in regards to any issue, not just race. Much of the public agenda has been influenced and created by the media and what they chose to cover and why. I hope this is a lesson to journalist to serve the public above their organization, above their local and national law enforcement, and above monetary, or material gain. Journalist are supposed to bring the truth to light so that the public can be informed on issues across the world that they aren't immediately a part of. I think Howard Kurtz of Fox News said it best when he said, "we should never fall into the trap of turning a news story into a cause or a crusade, we have to look at the facts in each case and I think this is evidence of that". The this, was the shooting of Mike Brown, but the statement rings true for any topic, no news outlet should ever let a story snowball into a cause or a crusade without the facts to support it.

Summary

Overall this research was informative in assessing if CNN and Fox News reported with an agenda in the shooting death of Michael Brown by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri in August of 2014. Based on the findings from both outlets although their agendas were different it appears that they did both have an agenda when it came to covering the story. This topic has a wealth of ways in which it can and should be developed further in order to insure that the public becomes active consumers of the media instead of simply believing everything they see and hear from the news. It is also important that news outlets do not let the false cries from the public become their truths that they then spread to others. There needs to be diligence on both sides in order to insure that the facts are kept intact and that some miscellaneous unrelated cause isn't linked to a standard procedure as in this case.

The Agenda Setting Theory is of great importance in our society today as is the Theory of Social Influence. It is important to understand why the media outlets choose what they do, and report how they do, but it is also important to understand how those reports can have an effect on the public. The media can unite or divide the nation on polarizing issues if they aren't careful, and if the public isn't careful to consume their reports with caution especially when the story isn't fully developed yet. Always remember to fact check anything that may appear false against reliable sources like in this case the Department of Justice Report. When in doubt take that extra time and effort to figure it out by doing some research.

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