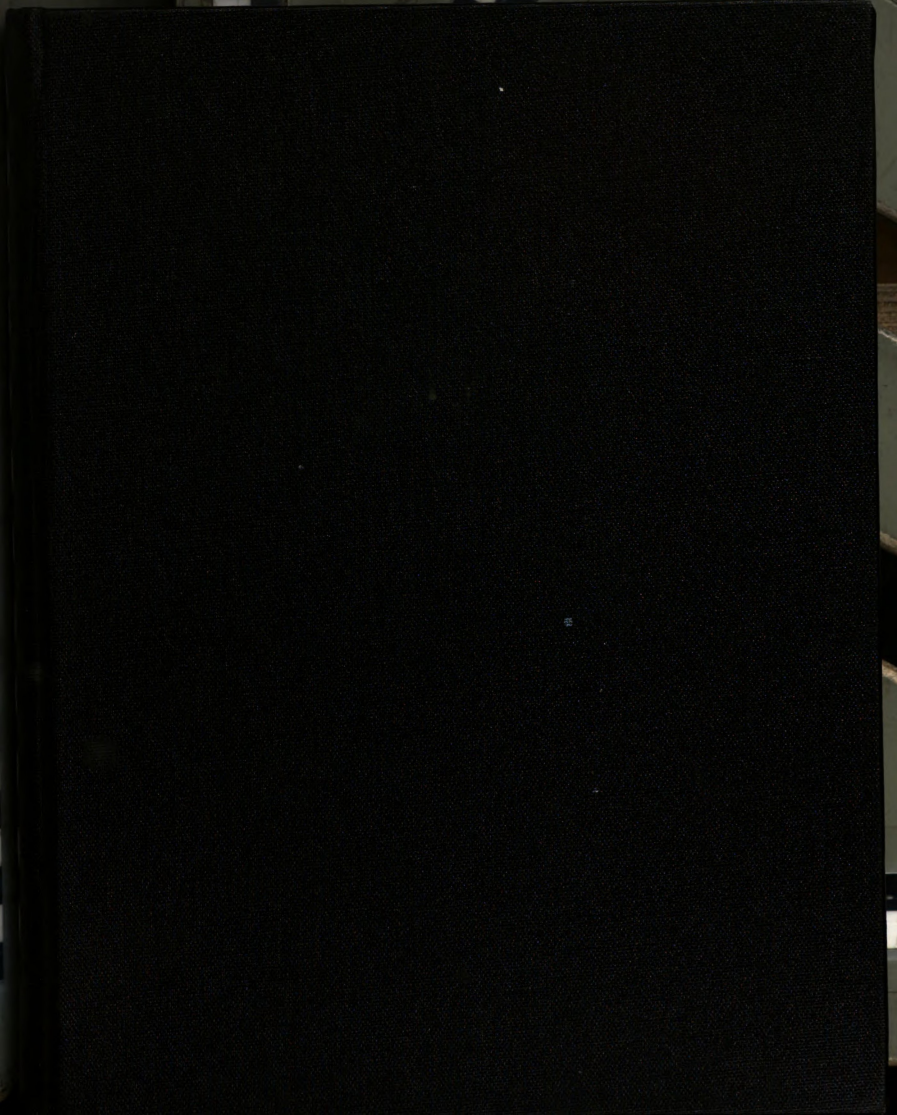






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The Relationship Between Detroit Newspaper
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Jennifer Elizabeth Frank

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DETROIT
NEWSPAPER REPORTERS AND THE DETROIT POLICE
PUBLIC INFORMATION UNIT:
AN OBSERVATION AND CONTENT ANALYSIS**

By

Jennifer Elizabeth Frank

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

Master of Arts

School of Journalism

1994

ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DETROIT NEWSPAPER REPORTERS AND THE DETROIT POLICE PUBLIC INFORMATION UNIT: AN OBSERVATION AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

By

Jennifer Elizabeth Frank

The relationship between the Detroit Police Department and beat reporters from the city's two newspapers often is strained. Officers and reporters say distrust and suspicion are customary.

This thesis uses observation and content analysis to study the relationship, reporting methods and the newspapers' dedication to crime and police news.

Detroit's suspicious climate causes reporters to use unconventional techniques to gain police trust. Reporters complain that DPD's Public Information Unit, established to take care of media requests, is merely a starting point and sometimes a hindrance to getting information.

Experienced police reporters from the *Detroit Free Press*, work closely with those new to the beat, helping them garner sources and credibility. *Detroit News* police beat

reporters were well connected with sources, but did not write as much as their counterparts at the *Free Press*.

Content analysis found that the *Free Press* devoted more space, photos, graphics and reporters to covering police news and used fewer wire stories about crime than the *News*. Police were the most popular source, but more than half the time, reporters attributed information to officers without naming them.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document would not have been possible without the emotional and financial support of my parents, Barry and Yvonne Frank. Their interest in the completion of this thesis never waned and their encouragement to that end was invaluable. They have always been my personal cheering section in an arena--police/media relations--with which few are familiar. I can never repay my gratitude, but I share with them my satisfaction at finishing this massive undertaking.

Credit is also due to Dr. John S. Clogston, professor of journalism at Northern Illinois University, who helped not only with inter-coder reliability checks, but with advice at every step in the research and writing process. His friendship, both personally and professionally, was the key to getting over many hurdles along the way.

Enormous thanks goes to John G. Jensen, a graduate student at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, and master of the Statistical Program for Social Science. Without his help, the content analysis data might never have been more than a jumble of numbers. He put an end to my computer headaches and made completion of this thesis possible. I also am indebted to my cousin, Samuel V. Frank, also a master's student at UCCS, for introducing me to John Jensen and for giving me access to his computers.

I also thank Dr. Steve Everett, a journalism professor at the University of Colorado in Boulder, who offered to help me in my data analysis and unknowingly encouraged me to learn more about the computer program I ultimately used to crunch my data.

Thanks also goes to Dr. Earl James, a retired Michigan State Police investigator whose knowledge, advice and freindship have expanded the scope of my career.

Finally, I thank the members of my thesis committee, Drs. Lucinda Davenport, Steve Lacy, Todd Simon and Bill Cote, for their patience in waiting for the completion of this document.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memories of *Detroit Free Press* reporter Brian Flanigan, Michigan State University criminal justice professor Zolton Ferency and my grandfather, Sam Frank, Sr.

Brian Flanigan passed away only two months after the research was completed. His death certainly was a loss to the *Free Press* and its readers. Flanigan's absence also was a loss to current and future reporters assigned to the Detroit Police beat. His expertise at gathering and maintaining sources was a valuable resource to the reporters who learned from him, including myself. Although I spent only a few hours interviewing and observing Flanigan, I have spent many years observing other police beat reporters and working as one myself. Flanigan was the master of his craft. He could get just about any information any time he wanted it and he knew how to present the truth in a way that even the people exposed by the story could swallow.

Zolton Ferency, who died in 1993, taught the criminal law block at MSU's School of Criminal Justice during my graduate school years and also served on the East Lansing City Council while I was a reporter at the *Lansing State Journal*. Zolton was a character and a controversial politician, but he believed in truth, honesty, in stirring up a good discussion and most especially in civil rights. He was genuinely caring, both toward the people whose rights he defended in the courtroom and to the students whose minds he shaped in the classroom. He always singled me out with a warm smile as I sat in the crowd of reporters covering East Lansing City Council meetings and without fail he was a source for eloquent, well-informed quotes, a bonus for any reporter covering municipal government meetings. His passing is a huge loss to MSU, East Lansing and the state of Michigan. The "marketplace of ideas" will not bustle with as much enthusiasm and passion as it did when Zolton Ferency was contributing to it.

Finally, this thesis ultimately would not be possible without the lifelong influence of my grandfather. Since his death on February 7, 1994, everyone in my family has felt the impact that he had on our lives. Through pure genetics, my grandfather blessed me with an outgoing personality, good communication skills and a sense of humor. He also taught me to be honest and generous and to look people in the eye when I speak to them. Although my grandfather's presence will always be missed, his memory lives on in the hearts and faces of his family and brings a smile to everyone who knew him.

INTRODUCTION

Reporters who cover police and crime news use various methods to obtain their information. Much of a reporter's method depends on the relationship and the level of cooperation between the law enforcement organization and his or her media agency.

On one hand, a good relationship with a police department often will make it easy for a reporter to obtain the information needed to write stories about daily crime, to gain sources within the department necessary for more in-depth issue or crime feature stories, and to cover police corruption or departmental error. Police sources will be more willing to grant interviews to reporters they have known and trusted in the past. Reporters create their own destinies by conducting fair interviews, writing accurate stories, and respecting the source's wishes to keep "off the record" information--that which would jeopardize a victim or the integrity of an investigation--out of the paper.

On the other hand, a bad relationship may create a sort of paranoia or apprehension between the agencies that makes cooperation difficult or even impossible. Police may be paranoid about the motives of the media agency or that the reporter tries to make corruption a part of every story.

The two major daily newspapers in Detroit, the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*, assign beat reporters to cover the Detroit Police Department on a daily basis. The relationship between the two newspapers and DPD is strained sometimes, and positive at others. The objectives of this thesis are to examine the working relationship between Detroit newspaper reporters and the Detroit Police Department and assess coverage of police news by the papers.

Specifically, it outlines the machinery of the association, methods by which information is gathered, what information is sought and how it is used

within a story. The study also offers some projections for the state of affairs between police and Detroit reporters based on their past relationship. The findings include some recommendations which reporters can use when assigned to the police beat. An additional chapter that examines the history of both police and the media and plots a timeline of key developments in both areas is included to provide a larger perspective on the state of the working relationship between the Detroit police and newspaper reporters.

Background

Crime and police news reporting in the United States dates back to the days of the Penny Press in about 1833. *The New York Sun* was the first American newspaper to employ a full-time police beat reporter. The *Sun's* crime coverage became so popular that other papers quickly imitated. (Dominick 1978; p. 107)

The *National Police Gazette* was founded in New York in the 1830s. Nicknamed "Barber's Bible" because of its popularity in barbershops and saloons, the paper advertised in one of its first issues that:

We offer this week a most interesting record of horrid murders, outrageous robberies, bold forgeries, astounding burglaries, hideous rapes, vulgar seductions, and recent exploits of pickpockets and hotel thieves in various parts of the country. (Hughes 1940; p. 171)

Sensationalizing its crime stories made The Gazette so popular that in 1864 during the war with Mexico, the U.S. Army ordered a large number of subscriptions for its troops. (Hughes 1940; p. 170)

Crime reporting reached a height of sensationalism in the 1920s, perhaps because radio and motion pictures were becoming popular. (Dominick 1978; p. 107) Most noted was the *New York Daily News* which featured copy that was "simply written and often luridly illustrated." The *News* quickly became the

newspaper with the highest circulation in the United States. (Dominick 1978; p. 107)

Although the amount of crime and violence in newspapers had decreased by the 1960s (Haskins 1969; p. 499), the large amount of crime news is still magnified in its impact, 30 years later, by the high readership that crime tends to have. Researchers have found that between 3 and 15 percent of available news space is devoted to crime news (Deutschmann 1959; Stempel, 1962, pp. 88-90; Otto 1962, pp. 19-26; Ryan and Owen 1976, pp. 634-640).

Crime reporting is still a staple for American newspapers and crime is the third largest category of subjects covered by newspapers. In a nationwide study, Johnstone (1976) found that of the 70,000 American reporters, 13.7 percent cover police and crime exclusively and another 1 to 2 percent exclusively cover courts. The only other topics receiving more coverage are sports and local government. (Johnstone 1976)

Why Crime News?

There may be several reasons why readers are interested in crime news: 1) because of a natural human interest in deviant behavior; 2) because they fear the reality of crime news, for example, that crime is happening in their neighborhoods; and 3) because crime news fulfills their right to know what goes on in the government.

In the 1950s, a common criticism of crime news was that it was lurid, racy and encouraged deviant behavior. Dewey (Dewey 1951, p. 296) offered the following response to such criticism:

Is there not, after all, a strong possibility that crime news and other such outlets for primitive, sadistic impulses rather than inflaming the instincts, serve instead to keep many a near-defective within the pale of respectability and the ranks of worthy members of society? I will venture the assertion that no one was ever corrupted by a

newspaper story. I will venture further to assert that anyone who could be corrupted by a newspaper story is not worth saving, and that any effort to save him must inevitably fail. Certainly nothing but a cracked brain could ever be incited to crime, however copiously the news columns may spread the saga of the malefactor. There is a vast difference between finding crime stories interesting or entertaining and being incited to criminality by them. There may be criminals who treasure their press notices, but no intelligent person will argue that they committed their crimes in order to get their names in the paper.

Some members of society may possess voyeuristic tendencies toward deviant behavior, but a more likely explanation for why readers are interested in crime news is that they fear crime. Einsiedel, Salomone, and Schneider (1984; p. 136) found by comparing content analysis to actual crime statistics that newspapers give a distorted image of types of crime. Crimes involving persons as victims are mentioned more frequently (36 percent) than property crimes (21 percent).

In a subsequent survey, Einsiedel, et al, (1984; p. 133) found that in media coverage, an individual is more likely to be exposed to crime in the form of serious personal and physical harm whereas in reality the individual is more likely to be exposed to crime involving loss or damage to property.

If one accepts the proposition that damage to, or loss of life is more personally threatening than loss or damage to property, then it is reasonable to infer that individuals exposed to a high amount of crime news would more likely be concerned with crime victimization and the importance of crime as an issue, regardless of actual crime trends in reality. (Einsiedel, et al 1984; p. 136)

Thus, people are interested in reading crime news because they are interested in what happens to other people, and although property crime is more prevalent, it is not nearly as interesting to the reader as is personal crime.

Crime news fulfills third public need: the right to know what goes on in the government.

The opportunity for the press, as partner to the people in witnessing what happens in the law, is an obvious one. But it is as much obligation as it is opportunity...But the press nevertheless retains its own obligation to provide a professional check upon the legal system on behalf of the people. (Denniston 1980; p. 4)

The media act as a check on government because it reports information that people need and have a right to know, but may be unable to obtain. Most people do not witness the crimes they read about in the papers, nor do they attend public trials.

If the citizen cannot, will not, or simply does not watch the processes of the law for himself, he has every right to expect that the news media who watch in his place will be faithful to his interest in what takes place there. (Denniston 1980; p. xx)

Summary

This thesis illustrates the relationship between newspaper reporters and the Detroit Police Department and it measures the amount of space and attention devoted to crime and police news. Its purpose is to examine the effect of the reporter-public information officer relationship on the news itself. The study also shows how each newspaper assigns its reporters and covers police and crime news in Detroit.

The press, now called the news media, historically has uncovered stories of corruption and crime, has represented its readers/viewers at public and government meetings, has provoked discussion over issues of public concern and occasionally brought to light a positive story or two.

Police, historically, have protected public safety by solving crime, apprehending criminals and by maintaining a presence in society that is meant to

deter deviant behavior and encourage citizens to abide by the law. In police efforts to protect the public, information often can be the ultimate weapon. Disseminating certain information to the public via the media, though often necessary, can be detrimental to individuals' rights to privacy or to an investigation and subsequent prosecution of a crime.

The periodic conflicts between police and the media are an integral part of their relationship because the news media often seek to uncover the very information police are inclined to protect. Neither the police, nor the media are going anywhere. Society depends too heavily on both.

This and other studies of the working relationship between police and the media are necessary because of the effect that relationship may have on the news or information that is available to the public.

JUSTIFICATION

The working relationship between law enforcement and the media has become a favorite issue of debate among police and reporters because the alliance is extremely weak.

Kelly (1987; p. 130) noted that the three major catalysts which contribute to the breakdown of police/media relations are:

1) the naturally adversary function of the media's objective to disseminate information to serve the public's right to know and a law enforcement agency's often juggled objectives to protect the privacy of the victim and the victim's family, the welfare of the informant and complainant, the rights of the accused and the integrity of an on-going investigation; 2) the preconception, historically deep-rooted and widely-held on both sides, that values and attitudes of police and press are mutually exclusive; and 3) the negative stereotypical views that police officers and journalists hold of one another's professions.

Researchers consistently have found that the media provide a distorted view of violent crime when compared with its real-life occurrence. (Einsiedel, et al 1984; Graber 1980) Part of the dispute may be over the understanding or misunderstanding of police work by the media as demonstrated by its distorted coverage.

Sociologist Doris Graber (Graber 1980; p. 38) found that "murder, the most sensational crime, constitutes 0.2 percent of all crimes on the police index." Murder constitutes 26.2 percent of all crimes mentioned in the *Chicago Tribune*. "By contrast, non-violent crimes like theft and car theft constitute 47 percent of all crimes on the police index, but only 4 percent of all crimes mentioned in the *Tribune*." (Graber 1980; p. 38)

In addition to its distortion of violent crime, the media give an unrealistic picture of the type and amount of cases on which police work.

Crime news does distort the realities of crime commission by disproportionate emphasis on street crime as compared to white-collar crime. It also presents a distorted image of the relative incidence of various types of street crimes by exaggerating murder, rape, and assault and underrepresenting robbery, burglary and theft. (Einsiedel, et al 1984; p. 40)

Mark Fishman (1987; p. 103) described crime news as unusual, which may explain the distortion of reality. Certain crimes in certain precincts are usual while in other precincts they are not. Disruptions of public order, like bombings, looting, riots, demonstrations, attacks on police, and civil disasters are always unusual. Fishman suggested these three criteria for deciding what's unusual: 1) frequency with which police encounter a type of incident; 2) police estimation of the incident's seriousness; and 3) police estimation of the incident's newsworthiness. (Fishman 1987; p. 103-104)

Any incident which police anticipated the news media might want to report is considered unusual, regardless of whether the incident met criteria of frequency or seriousness, thus implying that police choose the information to release based on their own definition of newsworthiness.

Fishman suggested that police play a role in selecting crime news. Indeed, many police departments employ a public information unit to help select and filter information for the media. Police often work to protect the very information the media wish to disclose. Disagreement over which types of crime information should be disseminated may be a major factor in the breakdown of police/media relations.

The Detroit Police Department (DPD) has its own public information unit which keeps a daily file of "write-ups" or news releases that is open for all

reporters and citizens to read. The book contains records of incidents that were either suggested for release by a commanding officer from the investigating unit or were brought to the attention of the unit by reporters or members of the public who had knowledge of the incident. Reporters who listen to the DPD frequencies on their scanners may hear something of interest and call the Public Information Unit (PIU) for confirmation.

A daily "case draft" file, or individual reports on crime incidents, is also kept by the Public Information Unit and is open to reporters and citizens. Case drafts are copies of the actual report filed by the investigating officer. Certain information is omitted from the case draft book in the PIU, including certain addresses, victim names, or information that would harm a victim or jeopardize an investigation.

During this author's preliminary observation at a meeting with officers in the office of the PIU, reporters had access to the write-ups and the case drafts and the unit had an open door policy. Print and broadcast reporters were frequently in the office waiting for updates. The working relationship between the DPD public information unit and newspaper reporters appeared friendly, although officers and newspaper staff expressed their private suspicions about each other.

During interviews conducted in preparation for this study, editors and reporters suggested that DPD withholds information as part of its media policy. Officers in the public information unit said that reporters too often get in the way of an investigation and that it is not uncommon for them to misquote or use information incorrectly.

Police and Information

Public safety is the first priority of officers at the scene of the crime who also protect the integrity of the investigation. Disseminating information to the media or public is a low on the priority list, however, if there is enough media

interest, an officer from the PIU is dispatched to the scene to assist reporters and photographers.

Police possess the primary information about crime news. While secondary information may be available from victims, witnesses, or neighbors, for example, Detroit newspaper reporters admitted during preliminary interviews that the most credible information comes from the investigators at the crime scene. Investigators are supposed to have the knowledge and objectivity to process evidence and data from a crime scene, a trait most members of the public do not have. In addition, the evidence gathered at a crime scene, which is compiled and written up by the investigator, is the primary record used by prosecution in the subsequent legal process. Because they are the primary source, police can choose which information to make available and the manner in which it is released.

The dissemination of police information in Detroit could be described as a filtration process. A crime event occurs, officers investigate and a large pool of information is gathered. From the large pool of information, investigators remove certain facts so as not to hurt their investigation. They give the releaseable information to the PIU for the write-up or news release, which is made available to reporters. During the write-up step, the PIU officer makes sense of the available information and then writes the release. At this point, the information may again be filtered by the writer for ease of writing or because of misinterpretation and human error. As a consequence of this refining process, once- and sometimes twice-filtered information may be the published result, unless the reporter is able to actually go to the scene of the crime.

Reporters and Information

Reporters who go to the scene of the crime are able to interview witnesses, victims or neighbors, as long as they stay behind the police lines. Interviews

with witnesses and neighbors can add color to the reporter's story because the information they give is often rich in emotion. As sources, however, witnesses and neighbors often lack in credibility because of the emotion that colors their statements. Victims offer more credibility because they may have more knowledge of the actual event and because the crime's effect on the victim is a fundamental reason for writing the story.

The reporter must seek the more credible information from investigators for two reasons: 1) As explained above police are supposed to have the knowledge and objectivity to process the evidence and that knowledge and objectivity is usually not possessed by outside sources; 2) Information from police is later used by prosecution in the subsequent legal process and eventually becomes a matter of public record.

Research Objectives

Research into the relationship between the two major Detroit dailies and the DPD public information unit would be beneficial to both groups because at times the relationship can be tense. Outside observation would provide an overview of the entire machine and could be used by either group to repair defective or non-working cogs.

The study is directed at answering the following questions regarding police information:

- 1) What information do reporters want to obtain from the police?
- 2) What information do police provide for reporters?
- 3) How do reporters obtain information from the police?
- 4) How do police provide information for reporters?
- 5) What information do reporters use in police stories?
- 6) How do reporters use information in police stories?

Part of the answers to these questions may lie in the following hypotheses:

1) Reporters obtain only the information set by the police on their agenda. Often that agenda imposes a format in which the information is used.

2) Police provide information that does not jeopardize crime victims and witnesses nor the integrity of the investigation. This information is further limited to an amount with which police trust the reporters.

3) Reporters develop their own police sources, both overt and covert, and develop trusting relationships in order to obtain information.

4) Police officially provide information to reporters through the public information office. High-ranking officers in the chief's office provide some on-the-record interviews. Other officers provide interviews that are unattributable.

5) Reporters use information provided by the police public information unit, seek unattributable information from sources within the department, and use other interviews with various members of the public.

The research focused on the information Detroit newspaper reporters obtain and use in their stories. The study revealed patterns and nuances in the relationships between Detroit newspaper reporters and the DPD as well as the mechanics of the information-gathering process used on the DPD beat.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gaye Tuchman (1978, p. 183) noted that society's definition of news depends on social structure. A change in the social structure can change society's definition of news. It follows that in a society that is continually exposed to deviant acts reported in the news, the social structure may change and thus modify the news definition so that the acts are no longer considered deviant. Stories about both positively and negatively sanctioned social acts define deviant and normative behavior.

Crime Content

Since the middle of the 19th Century, when acts of deviance became a staple in American newspapers, readers have criticized both the amount and treatment of crime and violence by the media. Researchers have measured and analyzed newspaper crime stories to determine the amount, placement and content of those stories. Some have also compared newspaper reporting of crime with actual crime occurrence statistics to determine whether or not the newspapers paint an accurate picture of deviance in society.

In his report to the U.S. government, Jack Haskins (1969) noted that one-tenth of all non-advertising content in U.S. dailies was devoted to stories of violence during the 1939 to 1950 period.

Edward R. Cony (1953) compared accounts of conflict to cooperation in his analysis of five major dailies and found that only 38.9 percent of the paragraphs studied were devoted to conflict while 39.6 percent involved cooperation. The largest subdivision of the conflict category was crime which was evident in 27.3 percent of the analyzed paragraphs. Crime and politics accounted for 47.2 percent of all conflict stories. Cony's most significant finding was that all five newspapers devoted considerable space to cooperation.

Similarly, H.A. Otto (1962) found that a representative segment of the American press is *not* preoccupied with sex and violence themes as other mass media. He measured the amount of violence in 10 major daily newspapers and found that 5 percent of the total column inches devoted to news dealt with descriptions of incidents of violence. He separately analyzed paperback books and magazine for their violent content. The *Detroit News*, which was among the papers analyzed, devoted 8.8 percent of its news content to violence.

The *Detroit News* was also among the eight papers analyzed by Michael Ryan and Dorothea Owen (1976). The *News* was found to devote 9.5 percent of its space to social problems, including 3.2 percent of space to crime-law news. In their study, Ryan and Owen measured the amount of space devoted to social problems in eight daily newspapers with circulations of more than 300,000. They found that 8.8 percent of the combined news holes contained news about social problems. The eight papers devoted 3.1 percent of their news holes to crime-law, the largest category under social problems.

Guido Stempel analyzed both Detroit dailies in his study of eight Michigan dailies (1961) and found that the *Detroit News* devoted 3.6 percent and the *Detroit Free Press* 4.1 percent of their respective news holes to crime stories.

The amount of newspaper space devoted to crime stories does not necessarily represent the actual amount of crime. F. James Davis (1952) analyzed crime news in four Colorado newspapers and compared the results with actual crime statistics from the Department of Justice's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) and a statewide public opinion poll. Davis found no consistent relationship between the amount of crime news in the newspapers and the local crime rate. Public opinion reflected trends in the amount of crime news rather than in actual crime rates.

E. Terrence Jones (1976) also found that newspaper coverage of crime in metropolitan St. Louis substantially distorts reality, in comparison with the UCR. In his content analysis of two principal St. Louis newspapers, Jones also noted: 1) an increase or decrease in a particular crime had no bearing on any increase or decrease in coverage; 2) the section of the city had a lot to do with the attention given the story; 3) certain crimes, particularly murder, received more attention than others. Greater attention given a story was just as likely to indicate that there has been less crime as more.

Mark Fishman (1980) described a similar trend in his case study about a "crime wave" in New York City in the 70s. He found that a curious reporter can actually assemble a non-existent crime wave with the help of the police. Coincidence might lead the reporter to write stories on similar events and when he or she notes and questions that similarity police are apt to confirm it as a trend. When the trend is reported in the newspaper and other news agencies pick up on it, a crime wave has been assembled, often without the more valid confirmation of actual crime statistics.

Sanford Sherizen (1978) analyzed four Chicago dailies and found a clear shrinkage from all crime events found in official statistics as compared to all events reported as crime news, especially when compared to victim statistics. Murder and manslaughter made up 70 percent of the newspapers' reported crime, indicating that the more prevalent the crime, property crime for example, the less it was reported.

Sherizen noted that suspects, victims and witnesses were rarely interviewed or described in stories and police were the most often quoted source. If any physical description was given, it was usually the race of the suspect or victim. Events involving high status individuals as either victims or witnesses were described as unusual or unexpected.

In his study of placement of crime news, Sherizen found that more than 50 percent of crime stories were in the first three pages. Thirteen percent were on the front page, 33 percent on the top of the page, 70 percent had banner two- to four-column headlines and 35 percent were eight to 13 column inches or longer.

Newspaper coverage of crime instills more fear in its readers than actual crime victimization. Edna F. Einsiedel, Kandice L. Salomone and Frederick P. Schneider (1984) found that exposure to crime news has a greater influence than personal experience with crime on an individual's concern with crime victimization and salience of crime as an issue. The researchers combined a six-week content analysis of the two Syracuse dailies with a random survey of 488 adults to study the effects of media exposure to crime news on salience of crime as an issue. They explained that most victims are victims of property crime, but the public is more concerned with crimes against persons.

Walter B. Jaehnig, David H. Weaver and Frederick Fico (1981) also found that both newspaper emphasis on crime and people's fear of crime are correlated more closely with the occurrence of violent crimes than with the occurrence of crime in general. The researchers interviewed three 45-person panels in three different-sized communities about their fear of crime. People's fear of crime was associated more closely with newspaper emphasis on violent crime than with the actual frequency of occurrence of such crimes as compared with the UCR.

In their survey of 610 registered voters, Carolyn A. Stroman and Richard Seltzer (1985) found few significant relationships between fear of crime and use of the media. Those who read the newspaper less frequently were more likely to be afraid of crime, possibly because of the lack of in-depth treatment of the causes of crime in contrast to the emphasis on the occurrence of crime events.

Sources and beats.

Tuchman (1978) described a frame as a format which turns non-recognizable happenings or amorphous talk into a discernible event. Without a frame, events are merely events and talk is merely talk. In the coverage of crime events, reporters look to police, public documents and others close to the event for information that gives a frame or a context to their story. Without the interpretation or confirmation of events and facts by police, the reporter would be unable to write an accurate story.

In their interviews with 25 police chiefs, Jerome H. Skolnick and Candace McCoy (1984) found that 60 percent worked for departments that employed a public information officer while 40 percent did not. The police chiefs were all from cities with populations of more than 100,000 and belonged to PERF, Police Executive Research Forum. Asked to rank from 1 to 10 the importance of communication with the media, with 10 as most important, all of the chiefs ranked the issue at seven or higher.

Reporters and police chiefs shared many criticisms of the media, but diverged on the issue of the police department as a credible source. The police chiefs said that although they deplored the emphasis on crime news, they had the responsibility to manage the information so that their departments were depicted in a favorable light. The researchers concluded that reporters don't need to exert as much effort when dealing with a good public information officer. However, there is a fine line between a reporter using information from a PIO as a starting point for a more in-depth story and total dependence on the PIO.

Jeremy Tunstall (1971) found that reporters used a police public relations source in fewer than 40 percent of their crime stories. He conducted a massive study of reporters at 19 newspapers, two national news agencies and two broadcast agencies in Great Britain. Reporters complained specifically that the

public relations officers at Scotland Yard usually did not have the information the reporters were seeking.

Reporter dependence on the police organization for information is a key issue in the study of crime reporting because, as stated by the police chief in the Skolnick and McCoy study, police often manage or organize the information to present their department in a more favorable light.

In their study of story idea sources at four Texas newspapers, Stephen Lacy and David Matustik (1983) found support for the criticism that the media are heavily dependent on organizations and beats for story ideas. Two reporter traits contributed to organization and beat use: 1) experience and 2) time on the beat. Experienced reporters may gain the ability to develop their own story ideas independent of sources or the reporter might assimilate the values of the organization and develop similar ideas to what the sources suggested. Organizations and beats contributed largely to story ideas, but accounted for only 7 percent of non-advertising space. About 25 percent of all the copy analyzed came from news releases.

Steve Chibnall (1975) said that crime reporters spend much of their time cultivating sources, but noted three ways in which the source relationship can sometimes complicate the reporter's work: 1) the reporter has an obligation not to interfere with ongoing investigations; 2) complexities are introduced by source attempts to insert information into the reporter's final account which would normally be rejected according to the rules of relevancy; 3) there is a direct conflict between source interests and journalistic obligations.

Robert P. Judd (1961) observed reporters at a suburban newspaper and described two major pressures on reporters: 1) what the city editor wants, or rather what the reporter perceives the city editor wants; and 2) deadlines. The reporter must learn to manipulate the two pressures in order to get the job done.

In their observational study of a city hall reporter in a small city, Walter Geiber and Walter Johnson (1961) found that sources prefer young reporters with less experience to older reporters who are more independent and crafty. Reporters regarded sources as poor judges of what is news. Despite their verbalized differences, reporters and sources are mutually dependent and share a common interest in the purpose of communication.

In their massive study of Toronto police beat reporters, Richard V. Ericson, Patricia M. Baranek and Janet B.L. Chan (1987) found that it is the organization of news, not world events, which create news. The spatial arrangement of the newsroom provided by the Toronto Police Department gives reporters an opportunity to become part of police socialization. Their selection of news and sources helps reporters shape the political culture.

The researchers also noted in a second volume (Ericson et al, 1989) that Toronto police beat reporters can be divided into two groups: inner- and outer-circle reporters. Those reporters in the inner-circle occupy space provided by the police department and become well known and trusted by its officers. As they join police socialization, they often lose their journalistic edge and act almost as a public relations arm for the department.

Outer-circle reporters work out of their organizations' newsrooms and tend not to be accepted as readily as inner-circle reporters. Those working in the outer circle are more likely to plunge into a story that puts the department in an unfavorable light because the spatial arrangements protect them from the police socialization. The authors noted that the inner-circle reporters worked for the "popular" news organizations while those in the outer-circle represented "quality" news organizations.

Other sources. Two other observational studies were helpful and interesting in relation to the research.

Steve Chibnall (1977) outlined five sets of informal rules of relevancy in the reporting of violence. Crime reporters can measure the elements of their own stories for the following relevance factors: 1) visible and spectacular acts; 2) sexual and political connotations; 3) graphic presentation; 4) individual pathology; 5) deterrence and repression.

Patricia A. Kelly (1987), a journalism professor at Northeastern University, found that the daily tasks performed by reporters and investigators are similar, including working beats, interviewing, gathering information and writing. In a police and media relations class she taught to journalism and criminal justice students, Kelly devised a list of ideal traits for the "perfect police officer and the perfect reporter." (p. 139) The shared traits included a highly-defined sense of responsibility to the public, good writing, interviewing and verbal skills, a strong sense of fairness, compassion and concern for people, the ability to remain clear-headed under adverse conditions and perform well under pressure.

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to learn how reporters obtain information from the Detroit Police Department and how the information is used in the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. The case studies used content analysis, interviews and field observation.

Content analysis of the *News* and the *Free Press* was used to determine 1) what information is used in crime and police stories and 2) how it is used. Field observation of how reporters interact with the DPD officers was employed to learn how reporters obtain crime and police information.

Content Analysis

Bernard Berelson provides the classic definition of content analysis:

Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. (Stempel, 1989, p. 120)

Stempel further defines the ingredients of content analysis: Objectivity is achieved by "having the categories of analysis defined so precisely that different persons can apply them to the same content and get the same results" and "the results depend upon the procedure and not the analyst." Systematic means that "a set procedure is applied in the same way to all the content being analyzed." Quantitative means "the recording of numerical values or the frequencies with which the various defined types of content occur." Manifest content means the "content must be coded as it appears rather than as the content analyst feels it is intended." (p.120)

Crime and police coverage by the *News* and *Free Press* was analyzed using several units of analysis, including: stories, paragraphs and sentences within those stories, and the newspapers from which the stories were taken.

Entire stories were used to determine length and placement of stories, and in some case the mere presence of a particular story or type of story. Paragraphs and sentences were utilized to analyze what information is used and how it is attributed.

Stories selected for content analysis included any story that mentions police or crime, including follow-up court stories. Civil disputes were not included unless police intervention was part of the story. Several different types of police or crime stories occurred in the sample. A measure of space devoted to news in each issue from which stories were taken, was used to measure the amount of space devoted to crime news. Past research determined that an average of 3 to 15 percent of available news space is devoted to crime news. Stempel (1962) determined in a 1961 study of major Michigan dailies, that about 5 percent of their available content space was devoted to crime news.

This analysis did not examine the entire paper, only the sections where crime news was likely to be found. It omitted the sections where crime news would not be found, such as the sports, business, classified advertising and entertainment sections. In the *News*, sections A and B contain national and local news. The *Free Press* labels its news section as A. On a heavy news day, the second section, which would normally be called B, is labeled A for "More News." Both the A and B sections of the *News* were examined as well as the A and "More News" sections of the *Free Press*. Not every issue of the *Free Press*, had two sections to be analyzed, although there were always two in the *News*.

The procedure used for measuring space devoted to crime news was to first calculate the total square inches for the sections of the paper that were to be examined. Once available space (N) was obtained, all space devoted to advertising was measured and that total was subtracted from (N). The difference was the total news hole for that paper. The total number of square inches

devoted to crime news was calculated and that number subtracted from the total news hole. The result is the total square inches of space devoted to crime news.

Type of story. This study evaluated stories written by reporters or staff writers for the *News* and *Free Press*. Unattributed briefs, including those that may have come from a wire service, were also included as neither paper was particularly good at crediting wire services. A coding sheet was filled out for each bylined or local newsbrief story having to do with crime or police. (See Appendix B--Coding Sheet). The newsbriefs in both papers were attributed to "staff" or "wire reports" or a combination of both. Only staff or combination newsbriefs were analyzed.

Stories about crime incidents, arrests, criminal court proceedings and features about crime or police were examined. Key words to determine a story's inclusion in the study were crime and police. Crime incident stories were likely to have come from the daily write-ups or case drafts prepared and provided by the public information office at DPD. Story length depended on whether a reporter went to the scene of a crime and included direct observation, interviews with victims, witnesses, investigators or others at the scene.

The arrest or court proceeding story sometimes was a follow up to a write-up or case draft story which would have run in a previous issue. Arrest and court proceeding stories were longer or more detailed if sources other than police were used: the prosecutor, court clerk, victims, for example.

Crime features about new investigative techniques or programs, legislation or political action on crime issues also were analyzed. The stipulation to be included in the analysis is the involvement of police or the commission of a specifically named crime in the story. Crime feature stories also were included although often they did not fit into the categories on the coding sheet such as

arrest, court procedure, witness identification. Where not applicable, the coding sheet was marked n/a.

Stories were taken from the *News* and the *Free Press* for the weeks of August 14-19, 21-26, and August 28 to September 1, 1989. The time period was chosen because approval was given by both newspapers and DPD for observation during those three weeks. Saturdays and Sundays were included in the sample, although no observation was done on those days. The magazines included in the Sunday edition were not considered because not all of the magazines were published by the two papers. Inclusion of Sunday magazine stories could have misrepresented the presence of features on a daily basis.

The sample includes 21 days of each newspaper, or 42 total papers. From those papers, 328 stories were coded, including 155 from the *Free Press* and 173 from the *News*.

Categories. To learn what information was used, and how it was used, in crime and police stories in the two Detroit newspapers, coding categories included story/picture size, lead type, crime or step in the criminal justice process, number of sources, type of story, crime location, and source information including name, title, and whether a direct or indirect quote was used. Bylines, either by individuals or pairs of reporters or wire services, were coded as was the lack of reporter or wire service attribution (See Appendices A and B: Coding Book and Coding Sheet).

Story length, including headlines, pictures pull-out quotes or graphics, was measured in square inches: the length of the story by the width of the column. Picture size also was recorded separately from the overall story length, measured by square inches, excluding the cutline. If there was no picture, the category was coded with a 0. When a story was accompanied by one or more

pictures or drawings, the picture size was indicated by combining the sizes of the individual pictures, (Graber, 1980).¹

Paper, day, date, page number, section. For the purpose of organization, in case spot checks were necessary or the study was to be replicated, each coding sheet noted the newspaper, day, date, page number and section. The category for newspaper proved invaluable as a cross tabulation tool during data analysis. Day and date categories illustrated differences in staffing or coverage of crime and police on different days of the week. Page number and section also demonstrated how prominently police and crime stories were played in each newspaper.

Budd Attention Score. The Budd Attention Score was used to further measure prominence of police and crime stories in the Detroit newspaper sample. Richard Budd developed an attention score which "is thought to be well suited for use in comparisons of publications similar in physical size" (Budd, 1964, p. 260). The attention score compares the placement or attention given individual stories or issues in the newspaper. Budd's system was used in this study to measure the two Detroit dailies' treatment of crime as an issue and determine which places more importance on it. Budd used the following categories:

1. One point was assigned to any article with a headline two columns or more in width, except that an article carrying a headline that occupied horizontally more than half the number of columns of the page was assigned two points.
2. One point was assigned to any story appearing above the fold or above the measured center of any page. To be considered above the fold, the first line of the body text of the story had to appear above the fold.

¹Graber considered columnists' pictures contained in the headline with headline length. Columnists' pictures distinctly apart from the story were considered as pictures. For the purpose of this study, only pictures used to illustrate a story will be considered.

3. One point was assigned to any article occupying three-fourths of a column or more (based on the column length of the newspaper concerned). For purposes of assigning the attention score, pictures accompanying articles were measured as part of the over-all length of the story.

4. One point was assigned to any article appearing on page one, the editorial page or the sports page.

Leads. The type of lead used in each story was coded to demonstrate different writing styles of different reporters. Fred Fedler (1989, p. 73) described the traditional lead as one which summarizes the entire story so that "readers can decide at a glance whether they want to read it."

Newspaper editors prefer the use of summary leads because their readers tend to be skimmers who glance from one story to another and read only what interests them. If a lead fails to interest readers--if it is too confusing or dull--they will move on to another story rather than read any of the following paragraphs. Thus, a lead must do more than simply summarize the story; it must also arouse the readers' interest and lure them into the story. (p. 73)

Newspapers used to encourage the use of leads which answered the six questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how. The current trend for writing summary leads is to answer only the most important of the six questions, including most recent developments, facts most likely to interest the reader, or most unusual facts.

Fedler also described nearly a dozen variations on the alternative or "soft" lead which most often begin with a story's most interesting detail, including quotes, questions, anecdotes or descriptions. The summary of the story's most important details may not appear until the third or fourth paragraph or "the soft lead may move directly into a story without any attempt to summarize it."

George Hough (1988, p. 65) described several variations of the summary lead. The blind lead answers the same questions as the summary lead except that the "who" in the story is not named until later in the story, usually in the second paragraph. The alternative or "creative" lead incorporates all other forms of the lead, including questions, imperative statements, and direct address.

In this content analysis, leads were coded as either summary, blind or creative.

Crime. Greenwood et al (1977) used the following list of crime categories in their table on "Clearance Rates for Worked-on Crimes": homicide, robbery, sex crimes, other crimes against persons, auto-related crimes, nonresidential burglary, residential burglary, vandalism, fraud/embezzlement/bunco, and juvenile crimes. Certain specifications were made regarding categories to be used for this research.² The category of homicide should also include: voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, child abuse resulting in death, sex-related murder,³ vehicular homicide, euthanasia, deadly force by a police officer, suicide and murder-suicide.⁴

The crime of robbery is generally defined as the taking of property by use of force or threat of force (Inbau, et al, 1987). For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that all robbery involves threat and when a weapon is specified in the story, the category armed robbery will be used.

² Some specifications are taken from guidelines provided in Inbau, et al, Cases and Comments on Criminal Law, 1987.

³ Sex assault and murder are known to occur in combination. Rather than code the event under two crimes, a separate category will be used.

⁴ Murder and suicide are known to occur in combination. Rather than code the event under two crimes, a separate category will be used.

The category of sex crimes includes "rape," now called criminal sexual conduct in Michigan,⁵ unconventional sexual conduct, public indecency, and prostitution.

The categories of assault and assault with a deadly weapon were added to other crimes against persons.

Juvenile crimes should be coded under the actual crime. (i.e., murder, armed robbery) If the suspect was a juvenile, that description was noted under the category "suspect information," although no specific measure of juvenile crime was done for this study.

Procedure and process stage. There are several steps in the criminal justice process and at any stage of the process, a story could be written. Thus, a set of categories was defined to specify when in the process the story occurred.

The first category under this heading the crime occurrence, during which police may--or may not--have a suspect, whom they may--or may not--not have apprehended. The next step is investigation, still prior to the arrest, but not necessarily the first story about the incident. Arrest follows when the suspect is finally apprehended. The procedure after arrest includes the preliminary hearing, when the accused appears before a magistrate who decides if detainment is necessary. Arraignment, when the suspect enters a plea, is the next step in the process. At some point before the trial, the suspect may confess or the defense attorney might plea bargain and those steps should be noted. There are several steps during the trial process, including pre-trial motions, jury selection, continuance, prosecution, defense, closing arguments, jury deliberation, verdict, and sentencing (Denniston, 1980)⁶.

⁵ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, several states, including Michigan reviewed their sex offense statutes to bring them more in line with the currently prevailing concepts about sex offenders and their victims (Inbau, 1987).

⁶ If a date is given for any upcoming court proceeding in a story, that fact will also be noted.

Attribution. Information that is attributed, either directly in quotation, or indirectly, was noted for the source. According to DPD policy, every officer in the department is allowed to talk to the media if he or she has the correct information. However, there is some concern among rank officers or investigators about actually being quoted. "Unnamed sources" or "sources who wish to remain unidentified" or "unidentified sources" often are used as attribution. A comparison of attributable and unattributable information was one of the key points of this study.

The number of sources and identification by name or title was separated into 43 source categories. Source references also were analyzed for direct or indirect attribution and direct and indirect quotes.

Suspects and victims. A tally of how many victims and suspects mentioned in the story population was kept. Categories for classifying information on victims and suspects included name, age, race and any descriptive words that would further identify the person.

Location of crime incident. Often exact addresses are not made available to the media. Therefore, location could be referred to in nebulous terms such as the city or county name or a particular area of the city. Categories included those general location descriptions as well as public building, neighborhood, street intersection, block number, or specific address. Locations described in this study were categorized as such.

Coder reliability. The coding in this study was done by the researcher, although reliability was tested by several others. Changes were made to the coding instrument and a final verification was made by John Clogston, a journalism professor at Northern Illinois University.

Stempel (1964, p. 127) recommended:

If you are doing all the coding for the study yourself, the reliability problem remains every bit as real, although perhaps not so complex. If possible, you should have a second person work with you initially and also have that person do some spot checking with you. By working with another person, you will have to clarify some definitions and procedures and you will have to develop an objective approach.

Observation and Interviews

Wimmer and Dominick (1987) describe case study as a technique of qualitative research which uses as many data sources as possible to investigate systematically an individual group, organization or event. Case studies are used to understand or explain a phenomenon. An advantage of the case study method is that the researcher can obtain a wealth of information about the research topic. That advantage can also be a drawback as the case study may produce massive quantities of information that are hard to summarize. Wimmer and Dominick's five stages of a case study include design, pilot study, data collection, data analysis, and report writing.

In the design stage, the concerns were what to ask and what to analyze. The object of this study is to find out how the Detroit newspaper reporters get information from DPD. It will be necessary to learn how DPD and the police beat from both newspapers are staffed and how each conducts its operation. Other possible sources of information that reporters used in addition to DPD was analyzed. The working relationship was observed on a day-to-day basis. History, policies and procedures for both newspapers and the police department were helpful in the analysis as well.

In the pilot study stage, was conducted for this study through preliminary interviews, the protocol is developed. The procedure for the research was as follows. The week of August 14 through 18 was spent at the public information unit for DPD at 1300 Beaubien in Detroit. Both newspapers share an office in the

building from which they file their police stories. The week of August 21 through 25, was spent at the *Detroit News* at 615 W. Lafayette in Detroit or with the paper's current and former police beat reporters. Finally, the week of August 28 through September 1 was spent at the *Detroit Free Press* at 321 W. Lafayette or with its current and former police beat reporters. During the last two weeks, much of the time also was spent in the press room at DPD.

Logistically, the project was convenient since both newspapers and the police department are within about a mile of each other. Reporters, editors and officers were available for extensive interviewing and observation. The newspapers operate on a 24-hour basis while DPD's public information unit is open from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m. All shifts were approved for observation. Policy and procedure documents were provided where needed.

Data collection utilized three different tools: documents, interviews and observation. Documents include the write ups and case drafts, reporter's stories, policy and procedure documents.

Both focused and open-ended interviews were used. Focused interviews were aimed at background, training, job description and duties, opinions about the media/police, opinions on current policy/ideal policy, procedures, and ethics. In the open-ended interview, anecdotal information was obtained. From observation, the operations and procedures could be described, as well as the relationship between the reporters and police. Reactionary statements or actions made outside of the interviews also were observed.

Data analysis was done using pattern matching, looking for similarities and differences between reporters and officers, their jobs, their opinions, their experiences, etc. Explanation building will also be used, with the expected result that there is little or no friction between most reporters and officers on a personal

level. Any disputes were over information and at that point the fundamentally different roles of information gatherer and information protector clashed.

The final step of report writing took the form of a chronology of the observation followed by a comparative analysis of the reporters and officers observed and interviewed. The report was done in conjunction with the content analysis and was used to infer about the results of that analysis.

POLICE BEAT HISTORY

Today's reporter covers the police beat not only to inform readers of deviant behavior, but also because crime fighting is a major financial expenditure for city and state governments. News of crime is as old as humanity, but organized police agencies in the United States have been around for less than 200 years.

Newspaper journalism began in earnest with the invention of the printing press in the 1450s. Both journalism and policing have evolved over the past 500 years and continue growing and changing. To fully understand the state of police/media relations today, a study of that evolution and the major developments in both policing and reporting is necessary.

Some of the earliest written coverage of crime was published in pre-newspaper newsbooks as early as the 1400s. The crimes selected for publication rarely had any direct impact on the readers' lives, but the stories were newsworthy because they contained human drama. (Stephens, 1988)

Mitchell Stephens found that the most intriguing crime stories shared four common qualities, beyond mere heinousness: 1) a woman or child as a victim or suspect; 2) a highborn or well-known victim or suspect; 3) some doubt about the guilt of the suspect; 4) intimations of promiscuous behavior by the victim or suspect.

Sensational events were described in graphic and sometimes gory detail. Stephens offered the following example from a 1624 newsbook:

The victim was probably Mr. Trat, the curate of a Somerset church; however, it was not possible to firmly establish the victim's identity. Three men and a woman were convicted of the crime, which--according to what the author of this pamphlet says was 'intelligence which I have received from credible persons, engaged

in their trial'—went beyond the murder:...these butchers, with their hands already smoking in his blood, did cut up his carcass, unbowel and quarter it; then did they burn his head and privy members, parboil his flesh and salt it up, that so the sudden stink and putrefication being hindered, the murderers might the longer be free from [discovery]. The body of Mr. Trat, or whoever it was, was found all saving the head and members, disposed in this manner and form following. His arms, legs, thighs and bowels were powdered up into two earthen steens or pots in a lower room of the house..., the bulk of his carcass was placed in a vat or tub... (p. 113)

Although crime was of interest to newsbook readers, crime control had not yet become standard in American cities. The first organized police force in the United States was not established until more than 200 years after Mr. Trat's violent demise.

History of Police

In 1833, Philadelphia was the first U.S. city to pass a law that allowed policing, but only three years after its force was established through a \$33,000 private grant, the city repealed the law. That same year New York City rejected a measure to form its first police force, citing the same problems England had in founding its police force, Scotland Yard, (Swanson, Chamelin, Territo; 1988) namely public distrust for organized law enforcement.

Almost a century before the United States began organized policing, the Bow Street Runners started patrolling the streets of London in 1748. The Runners were a group of volunteer, non-uniformed homeowners who responded to crime scenes to investigate. In 1752, Henry Fielding, then head of the Bow Street Runners, began publishing the *Covent Garden Journal* which contained descriptions of wanted persons. The *Journal* was later renamed *Quarterly Pursuit*. Bow Street became a clearing house for information on crime and by 1785 four of the Runners were paid government detectives.

Scotland Yard finally was established in the Metro Police Act of 1829 after nearly 15 years of rejection by Parliament. Some members believed that a police force was a direct threat to personal liberty. Others argued that no police force was a greater threat to personal liberty.

Streets were patrolled by uniformed constables, or "bobbies," so named for Sir Robert Peel who headed the effort to establish the Yard. Plain clothes bobbies were seen as much more of a threat to personal liberty. Unlike the British, Americans distrusted and harassed uniformed police officers. Uniforms finally became accepted after the Civil War.

The growth of American cities forced New York City to create its first unified police force in 1845. In 1857, more than a century after the birth of the *Covent Garden Journal*, New York City police distributed descriptions and photos of wanted criminals in "Rogue's Gallery," although outlaws often distorted their faces when photographed to avoid later recognition.

Police organizations reaped the benefits of sharing information and photos from their respective Rogue's Galleries and soon state police forces were established to assist local constabularies with investigations. In 1908, the U.S. Attorney General's Office launched what later became known as the FBI.

Towards the close of the 1800s, police departments supplemented the Rogue's Gallery information files using two relatively new technologies to identify criminals.

Anthropotemy, a technique developed in France by Alphonse Bertillon in 1883, is a system of eleven physical measurements taken with the belief that every human being differs from every other one in their exact body dimensions. The calculated accuracy of the system was four million to one. Bertillon measurements, combined with a photo, became the pioneer of today's mug shots.

Dactylography, or fingerprinting, was actually discovered as early as the 1600s, but its use in police work was not applied until the 1890s. Many police departments combined the Bertillon system with fingerprinting for a complete record of wanted criminals. However, dactylography, which was found to be far more accurate than anthropotemy, replaced the Bertillon system only 10 years after it was first used.

Police Publications

Shrewd businesspeople quickly discovered that information about criminals and their deviant acts was a commodity that readers were eager to buy. Several police publications were already popular in England, including the *London Police Gazette*, a government-sponsored sheet used as an agent of law enforcement and *Cleaves Weekly Police Gazette*, a radical working class paper oriented to crime news. Inspired by the success of such British newspapers, George Wilkes and Enoch Camp launched the *National Police Gazette* in New York City in 1845. (Smith & Smith; 1972)

In 1857, Wilkes and Camp sold the paper to former New York City Police Chief George Washington Matsell, who sold it that same year to Richard Kyle Fox. Fox owned the paper until his death in 1922. The paper had already begun to fail by 1922 because the dailies were using the sensational news, theater reviews and sports stories on which the *National Police Gazette* was founded. In 1932 Harold Roswell bought the paper, which had been sold for bankrupt, and published it as a monthly. A Canadian firm later bought and occasionally published the paper which has since quietly died.

The subscription rate for the *National Police Gazette* was \$2 per year, payable in advance. The ad rate was \$1 for the first insertion for one 20-line square and half price for each subsequent one. For 10 lines or less, the price was

50 cents and 25 cents for each additional insertion. The *National Police Gazette's* advertising policy clearly favored the stability of the long-term advertiser.

Advertising was confined to two pages at the end of the newspaper. Most ads were for mail order products, especially medical cures for such ailments as "sweaty odors of the feet and armpits," drunkenness, syphilis and "male weakness" caused by gonorrhea, nervousness, "youthful errors" and "self abuse."

Although it appears that most of the advertising was devoted to remedies for sexual problems, Fox printed this important notice from the publisher in 1892:

The *Police Gazette* will not under any circumstances publish advertisements of a lewd, obscene or fraudulent character. All advertisements of this class will be rejected, and money, if sent us for same, returned. The proprietor will not hold himself responsible for the advertiser's honesty.

Fox apparently worried about the reputation of his newspaper in light of the yellow journalism of the era. In the same 1892 edition of the *Police Gazette*, Fox printed the following mission statement below an advertisement for a series of French novels, each "daringly unique in its spiciness":

The Real Newspaper

The *Police Gazette* is a newspaper in the real sense of the word. It prints the news of the week, but eliminates the filth. It selects the events with due regard to their importance from a news standpoint, and presents them to its readers in entertaining and readable shape. In addition to printing the news, the *Police Gazette* illustrates it. In that respect it has the advantage of the daily newspapers. But it never publishes anything that could give offense to the most punctilious person. Of a necessity it prints the offenses committed against the laws of society and State by men and women, but then the *Police Gazette* is a newspaper. It is needful for the public morals that the violators of the laws of man should be condemned and held up to public scorn and ridicule. Were their offenses overlooked crime would be rampant, society rotten, and virtue would be at a premium. It is the fear of public condemnation that keeps many in the straight and narrow path.

The electric light of the press holds them in check. If they sin in the dark and their offense is known only to themselves, they continue to pose before society as models of virtue. but on the other hand, if their crime is made known they are punished and society is benefited. It is not the function of the newspaper to excite the appetite for scandal, but to expose all frauds and shams with a view of correcting them. Such is the mission of the *Police Gazette*.

While many newspapers are ever on the alert to supply their readers with filth, the *Police Gazette* prints only such news as is good for the public health.

A clergyman recently made the rounds of the houses of ill-fame in this city, and then described in court the disgusting scenes he witnessed. Such testimony was never before listened to in a courtroom. It was shocking in the extreme; but some of the newspapers made capital out of it. For many days they were teeming with the disgusting details of the orgies described by the clergyman in question. The *Police Gazette*, however, would not offend the nostrils of its millions of readers by printing the filthy stuff. It failed to see where any good could be gained by it. The public knew that these places existed, and the publication of the scenes enacted within their doors would not aid in the least the cause of moral reform. Rather it would tend to create a desire in the young to go and see for themselves. Therefore the *Police Gazette* refrained from making any mention of the affair, and many of its readers have expressed their approbation of the fact.

The first two pages of the *Police Gazette* were devoted to the "Lives of the Felons" series which was a biography of one particular criminal or crime. Three middle pages contained newsbriefs, court stories, sports and theater reviews. The remaining pages were used for advertisement.

Both the front and back pages and at least one in the middle were devoted to illustrations of the people involved in the stories. The cover drawings often followed the theme of a woman in distress and often wearing disheveled or torn clothing. Women not in distress were depicted wearing tight clothing and always with a full bosom.

The *Police Gazette* used simple and conversational language and emphasized the difference between criminals and the rest of society by using

their slang. Information was attributed to official records, private police memoranda, criminal confessions, trial reports and even at times, the prison conversation of felons as overheard by keepers and others. The paper prided itself on accuracy and did not print rumors.

Sensationalism

Many historians believe that graphic description was not so much a tool of sensationalism, but a vehicle by which to transport morality lessons. Marvin Olasky (1985) noted in his analysis of late 19th-Century Texas newspapers that the Bible is rather graphic in places. "Editors who were orthodox Christians would read the Bible regularly, and would see that it includes gory sensationalism designed to show the difference between God's holiness and humankind's depravity." (Olasky, 1985; p. 97) The difference, Texas editors noted, between Biblical and yellow journalism sensationalism was contextualization. They applied the following criteria: "Would the gory specific detail point readers toward a Biblical moral? Would they be instructed to 'go and sin no more'?" (Olasky, 1985; p. 97)

Not all sensationalism has been given the latitude of contextualization.

Complaints about sensationalism date back to Ancient Rome and:

are as universal as the appeal of materials focusing on death, gore and scandal. In every nation, most of the public will choose the breezy, racy novels, newspapers and television fare over the sedate alternatives. And they feel guilty for doing so. Neither laws nor moral admonitions have done much to stem the supply. (Stevens, 1985; p. 78)

Professor John D. Stevens, who chaired the 1986 Midwest Journalism History conference at the University of Michigan, noted an elite bias among those who denounce sensationalism. Many people believe that sensationalism cannot hurt themselves, but worry about those less sophisticated than themselves.

According to Stevens, "the real reason for anger at the mass media for sensationalism is that most adults realize they are morbidly fascinated by sex and violence and they wish they were not." (Stevens, 1985; p. 79) Stevens echoes Tuchman's societal deviance theory:

There is the possibility, of course, that media portrayals of crime and social deviance may serve a positive social benefit. By testing the boundaries of acceptable behavior, the deviant forces of society to re-evaluate its standards. Society participates in the legal or other sanctions applied; most of this participation comes vicariously. (Stevens, 1985; p. 79)

Donald L. Shaw and John W. Slater named the 1830s as a crucial period in the development of sensationalism in the American press. During that decade, pressrooms welcomed the steam engine which enabled them to produce thousands of newspaper copies per day. Railroad lines expanded and made it possible for publishers to expand their circulation beyond the city limits. Also during that decade, Benjamin Day founded the *New York Sun* in 1833 and two years later Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald* was born.

Both the *Sun* and the *Herald* set themselves apart from the newspapers which preceded them. The cost of each paper was cheap--only a penny--and their style was to use dialogue, short paragraphs and stories about average people. Bennett broke new ground by putting correspondents in Washington, Europe and on Wall Street. However, the moral war between Day, Bennett and preachers threatened advertising and circulation support.

Shaw and Slater defined sensationalism as it conflicts with newsworthiness:

Today, as then, sensationalism is regarded as interesting, but not especially respectable. The feeling that common topics, like police-court cases, lacked community "importance" characterized the view among some then, as today. Sensational news was about murders, rapes, horse thieves, brides left at the altar, cows with two heads. This was entertaining news, to be sure, but not news about

government, community, literature, business, trade or foreign affairs. Serious people were expected to be repelled by these lighter topics, at least publicly. (1985; p. 87)

The birth of sensationalism was a circulation blessing to many publishers and a curse to serious, god-fearing citizens. Sensationalism, however, may also be attributed to editors' morality lessons, reporting techniques and poor newsroom working conditions in addition to profitability.

Reporting

Warren Francke attributed much of 19th Century sensationalism to the development of reporting techniques. Prior to the 1830s, reporters had depended largely on documentary sources for their information. In the period between the 1830s and 1880s, reporting evolved with the application of two other basic techniques: observation and interview. (Francke, 1985; p. 82)

Eyewitness reporting was not new, but the application of observational writing to police and court stories became widely used during this 50-year period. Police court reporters borrowed from their colleagues at the travel journals and took readers on tours of crime scenes, prisons, slums, asylums and brothels. Rarely was observational detail used to scrutinize proper places of business and government buildings. (Francke, 1985; p. 82)

James Gordon Bennett is credited with conducting and using the first formal interview. He used the court interrogation techniques to obtain information from Madame Townsend while police investigated the hatchet murder of one of her "girls." As they developed their interview technique, 19th Century reporters often had to interview low-status sources who often provided information which fueled sensationalism.

Ted Curtis Smythe studied reporters between 1890 and 1900 and found that newsroom working conditions affected the news. During that decade,

reporting was a young man's job; reporters worked long hours and were poorly compensated.

If reporting were not yet a profession, a long-term job for qualified men and women, then it was perfectly logical to pay inadequate salaries, especially for the majority of the staff, to use happenstance procedures in finding and hiring personnel, and to create a climate of tension and fear among employees in hopes that they would produce more copy and more interesting copy. (Smythe, 1980; p. 8)

Sensationalism was a byproduct of poor newsroom working conditions. Reporters were paid according to the number of column inches they produced, but because some editors saved money by using a practice of bill cutting, reporters were never guaranteed compensation for all their copy. During tight financial periods, editors disallowed part of the total inches a reporter accumulated during a pay period. "There was no logical or legal basis for doing so, but reporters often were in no position to vigorously complain; they needed their jobs." (Smythe, 1980; p. 3)

To combat the practice of bill cutting, reporters would pad their stories with extra inches of description and flowery language. Some reporters supplemented their income by dropping names of people or products into their stories and by favoring certain politicians who later might return the favor. Reporters from competing papers sometimes shared copy so that each could pad his accumulated column inches. Smythe quoted Allan Forman, one editor who did not blame the reporter for padding:

It is easy for a man with ample salary to say that a newspaper writer should state facts just as they are with no exaggeration, but when the reporter knows that the plain "fire" is worth a dollar and the "conflagration" will make him a possible ten, the fire is very apt to conflagrate if ingenuity can persuade the city editor to allow it to do so. It is the natural result of the space system where the worker is paid not for work but for frequently padding. (Smythe, 1980; p. 7)

None of these researchers has attempted to rationalize or defend sensationalism. Indeed, there may have been other symptoms of that disease, especially the benefits of increased circulation among readers who would not admit that they liked the racy and gory detail.

Selection and Writing of Police/Crime Stories

Selection of news depends on the editor's definition of newsworthy. Tuchman said that news reflects society and that "society's definition of news is dependent upon its social structure. The social structure produces norms, including attitudes that define aspects of social life which are of either interest or importance to citizens." News continually shapes and reshapes the boundaries of acceptable behavior in society. Selection of police and crime stories, therefore, depends upon which behaviors are considered unacceptable by society at the time of publication.

The newspaper at the present time touches the lives of people at more points than any other agency of communication with the exception of radio. It is an agency which subtly influences public opinion. It is the readers' most important contact with the world of crime and crime problems. Everyone is affected by crime. At any time he may become a victim of a robber or murderer. He is always a taxpayer, supporting a police department and federal, state and local prisons and reformatories. The newspaper could be the most important agency in keeping him accurately informed about this vital and costly problem. (Kobre, 1939, p. 166)

Stevens argued that sensationalism has more to do with the writing and display of news than with the selection of it. "Little attention is given the vital distinction between material that is made sensational by its manner of display and material that is inherently sensational. Sex crimes, murders and wars are among the latter." (1985, p.78)

Newsbook and early newspaper writing was flowery and descriptive. Shaw and Slater found that in the period between 1820 and 1860, journalists

began to use shorter sentences and paragraphs to make their stories more readable. During that period of the cheap penny press, newspapers emphasized stories about common life. Long, detailed accounts of sensational events gave way to brief one-paragraph accounts. The use of the telegraph in the newsroom also contributed to shortened accounts. Sidney Kobre discussed the selection and writing of crime news in the textbook he wrote more than 50 years ago. "The public becomes aroused. The story is filled with conflict, jealousy, drama and finally murder, always a sure-fire hit." (Kobre, 1939, p. 151-152)

A reporter working on a typical murder story would talk to anyone who appeared to know anything about the crime. It was the story of the day and would appear under a banner headline. "Depending upon the degree of atrociousness of the crime, the amount of money involved, and prominence of the people concerned, the story is featured with varying amounts of emphasis." (p. 153)

Kobre suggested that, whenever available, pictures of the room where a murder took place and an interview with the criminal's anguished old mother, as she cries of her son's innocence, should be included in the crime story. Kobre criticized reporters of the era for not informing the reader about why the crime was committed. He said that readers were left with the impression that the criminal committed his evil act simply because he was a "bad man." (p. 152)

The newspapers do not treat the criminal and his activity as a product of certain hereditary and environmental influences acting in his life. They are not led to see the criminal's act as an end product, a result, or manifestation of a long series of preceding events in the life of the criminal. He just appears out of nowhere, commits the crime and is caught. To the reader, the criminal and the crime are isolated, unique phenomena, unrelated to other criminals and other crimes. (Kobre, 1939, p. 153)

Early 20th Century crime reporters created an air of mystery around the outlaw which led the reader to believe the offense was committed for a mysterious reason or because the criminal was the victim of circumstances.

The science of criminology, meanwhile, had advanced a number of explanations on the nature of crime. Researchers began to see the criminal as a product of his environment and economic situation. The economic status of the individual was found to bear a close relation to the probability of criminal behavior. However, newspaper reporters all but ignored the experts and continued to emphasize the pre-scientific causes of crime.

Police and reporters also digressed in their treatment of crime as a problem in society. While police thoroughly studied the background of the criminal, the reporter incidentally mentioned it in his story. The story was usually a chronological account of the event and called quickly for the blood of the criminal without much consideration for crime prevention.

Summary

Crime reporting is still a staple for American newspapers and crime is the third largest category of subjects covered by newspapers. In a nationwide study, Johnstone (1976) found that of the 70,000 American reporters, 13.7 percent cover police and crime exclusively and another 1 to 2 percent exclusively cover courts. The only other topics receiving more coverage are sports and local government. (Johnstone 1976)

After the *Police Gazette's* demise, crime became an integral part of the daily news diet. Crime was no longer a niche product, although there are police trade magazines, a few local crime-/police-oriented newsletters and certainly the network magazine and talk shows present a regular diet of crime and law enforcement. The memory of crime news as yellow journalism and the *Police Gazette's* resemblance to supermarket tabloids may have reduced the credibility

of any future crime-specific publications. (See Appendix I--History of Police News: Time Line)

OBSERVATION RESULTS

The observation took place during the first three weeks of August, 1989. Arrangements were made to spend one week each with the officers in the Public Information Unit of the Detroit Police Department at 1300 Beaubian St. and the police beat reporters from both the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press*. Both newspapers share an office in the DPD building where reporters Jim Schaefer and Roger Chesley from the *Free Press* and Monroe Walker and David Grant from the *News* had their desks and computer terminals.

Most of the reporters and police officers who were included in this study readily consented to interviews and observation, although a handful delayed appointments until the last possible minute or were vague or unresponsive in their answers. Only one police officer refused to be interviewed.

Seven police officers were interviewed at length, including five from the PIU, DPD's deputy chief, James Bannon, and former DPD narcotics inspector, Bill Dwyer, who had since become chief of the Farmington Hills Police Department just outside Detroit. While with DPD, Dwyer served as a commander in then-Chief William Hart's office and his duties included supervising the PIU between 1981 and 1985. Although Sgt. Chris Buck, of the PIU was not interviewed as extensively as others because he left for vacation, he was observed extensively and questioned at length about procedures in the unit during the first week of the study. Buck also was the officer who arranged for the research to be done and got his department's approval. All of the officers who work in the PIU and the others who were interviewed as well were sworn police officers, not civilians.

Of the police officers interviewed, five were black, three white and one female. Five are referred to generally as officers or PIU officers while the other

three often are called "administrators" in this document to demonstrate the point of view from which their opinions came.

Sixteen reporters from both the *News* and *Free Press* were interviewed and/or observed as they worked on stories about police or crime. Most of those reporters had worked the DPD beat, substituted on it, or had covered suburban law enforcement some time during the last 20 years--a few even longer. Both papers regularly staff DPD with two reporters, one during the day and one at night with a brief overlap in the afternoon.

Of the 16 reporters interviewed for this study, there were three women and 13 men. Four of the reporters were black and 12 were white. Ten reporters, referred to as "veterans" in this document, had worked on the DPD beat either regularly or periodically at some time in the past four decades, but were not permanently assigned to the beat at the time of the study. Several of the "veterans" had other areas of expertise including investigative reporting and the Freedom of Information Act. All had worked for their respective newspapers for more than a decade and in most cases for at least 20 years. The other six reporters were younger and had been with their newspapers for less than a decade. All but two of had been permanently assigned to the DPD beat within the last five years. One was an investigative reporter who had done periodic stories about city government or DPD and whose forte was the Freedom of Information Act. The other was a city desk reporter who often filled in on the DPD beat on weekends or vacations for the DPD reporter, but had never been permanently assigned there.

1300 Beaubien St.--DPD Headquarters

The headquarters of the Detroit Police Department occupies a dusty old building in the heart of downtown Detroit, only blocks from historic Greektown where the air is thick with the smell of roasted lamb. Inside the building, the

corridors are wide, elevators ancient and the walls rich with decades of stories about Detroit's finest and not-so-fine citizens who have walked its halls.

The Public Information Unit works in three large, smoky, cluttered rooms where the chatter from the police scanners on every desk is barely audible over the noise of the television and the constantly-ringing phones. Six officers were assigned to the unit during the period of observation. Most picked up the newspaper as soon as they came to work, reading, clipping and filing every story about DPD and the city administration. The officers also recorded and carefully monitored all the local newscasts for stories about DPD. They also watched several daytime talk shows, soap operas and movies.

The PIU maintains notebooks filled with daily case draft information on crime incidents that were handled by DPD officers. Reporters are free to look through the book and are also provided with copies of the daily case drafts. PIU officers black out certain information, especially names and addresses of crime victims, on the case drafts the media see. The officers also provide news releases on certain crime incidents deemed newsworthy by the PIU. Officers also write news releases on incidents that are of interest or when reporters request specific information. Those releases are then made available to all the news media.

Reporters who share an office in the building stop by the PIU to chat several times each day. TV and radio reporters also check in periodically, although not on a regular basis. The mood in the room, especially when people stop in to visit, is jovial and the banter between officers and reporters appears very friendly and familiar. Reporters with whom the PIU officers seem to be the most comfortable are also the ones who are offered information. Those who aren't familiar with PIU officers ask more questions than reporters who fit in with the banter.

The large, one-room office shared by the newspaper reporters is furnished with lockers, file cabinets, several old desks and chairs and a ratty naugahyde-covered lounge chair that is rumored to be riddled with history too seedy for an academic paper. At the time of the observation, the *Free Press* kept a computer, scanner and mobile phones at its DPD office. The *News* kept a laptop computer that communicated with the main newsroom through modem at DPD, but for one week of the observation it was locked in reporter David Grant's locker while he was on vacation. The reporter who filled in for Grant had to return to the newsroom in order to log into the paper's computer system.

DPD's Public Information Unit

In an effort to let officers at crime scenes better concentrate on their work, the Detroit Police Department formed its Public Information Unit in 1969. Two officers and an inspector staffed the unit in its early days. At the time of this study, the unit was made up five officers headed by Inspector Fred Williams, the only original member of the unit. Williams holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Wayne State University.

DPD Deputy Chief James Bannon said that 20 years ago, officers in charge of investigations were too busy with the media to get anything done. When the PIU was formed, the media were unhappy because reporters wanted to get their information first hand, rather than through the PIU. Bannon said some members of the media still see the PIU as an obstruction and want it abolished, although department administrators like having the PIU to handle routine information.

During interviews and observation, many reporters referred to the PIU as the "misinformation unit," expressing frustration that officers in the unit usually were unable or unwilling to provide information about specific incidents unless they had a news release. The unit also provides incident reports with names of victims or off-limits information blacked out.

PIU officers usually work from their office at 1300 Beaubian St. and infrequently show up at crime incidents to organize information, locate interview subjects or answer media questions. Because PIU officers witness many events only via a telephone conversation with an investigator or commanding officer from a crime scene or via an incident report, they are rarely able to elaborate on a news release.

Bannon said reporters complain about the PIU's function as gatekeeper of information, saying officers withhold too much. Bannon said he feels it's the reporter's duty to fill in the color for a story by finding other sources for information. When reporters want officers to fill in the color for their stories, Bannon said the department faces the same problems it was trying to solve when the PIU was created.

Since its formation, Bannon said the PIU has not worked the way it was intended. He said he takes calls at all hours of the day and night, even at home, from reporters wishing to bypass the PIU in favor of information from the department's second in command. At times when he didn't know the information the reporter sought, he said reporters often have written, "Bannon wouldn't comment." He suggested that the unit might function better for all concerned if it was headed by a professional journalist.

Several reporters suggested that Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer, a former DPD commander who worked closely with the PIU, be interviewed about the purpose and usefulness of the unit. Dwyer said that when he worked with the unit between 1981 and 1985, the PIU had a good relationship with the media. He said in recent years the unit had fallen more under the political control of Detroit Mayor Coleman Young. Dwyer, as well as several reporters, said the PIU often must clear things through Hart's or Young's office and that sometimes

even good work by officers goes unnoticed because of hesitation on the part of the PIU.

Robert Berg, Young's press secretary, denied that the mayor's office works with the PIU daily, but said there are certain decisions that are made by the mayor. Berg described a built-in conflict between the media and DPD because of rules about pre-trial publicity or other sensitive matters that would require police to withhold information. Berg said the job of the PIU is not to tell reporters everything they want to know.

Dwyer suggested that reporters who regularly cover DPD develop their own sources and treat the PIU as preliminary source. In his experience, he said, police have always been suspicious of the news media. He said he has known reporters he felt he could trust and others he could not. Some of those reporters were effectively blackballed by officers. In his department, Dwyer said, individual officers can be interviewed and a public information officer usually will field the reporter's call to the appropriate person rather than disseminate the information himself.

Criteria on Dissemination of News

With the formation of the PIU--called the PIC or Public Information Center in 1969--DPD set up a task team to develop criteria for disseminating information that would be available to all the department's officers. Before the criteria became mandate, the department held a series of conferences involving 65 Detroit Police command officers and 20 representatives from Detroit newspapers, radio and TV stations to make sure that the criteria reflected the broad practical experience of both the officers and the reporters.

Those criteria originally were published in a 1970 pamphlet. The PIU provided this author with an updated version of those rules, which were being

used at the time of the study. No information was available as to when the current rules were written. (See Appendix J—Criteria for Dissemination of News)

Police Observation and Interviews

Police officers generally were asked many or most of the following questions, depending on the length of the interview and responsiveness of the subject:

- 1) Do reporters have the same public interest as police officers and the same right to releasable information?
- 2) How do you avoid being misquoted or taken out of context by a reporter?
- 3) What information should be released and what shouldn't? What information are you uncomfortable about releasing?
- 4) Regarding complaints against the Detroit Police Department or individual officers, what information should be released or withheld?
- 5) In reference to a *Free Press* in-depth project about the number of police patrols on the streets of Detroit, who is to blame for the department's unhappiness about the leaked information that was the source of the story? Reporters Jack Kresnak and Brian Flanigan, who researched and wrote the stories, or the police personnel who leaked the information? What is your reaction to reporters' ability to dig up the story?
- 6) Is crime underreported by the Detroit media? What about violence?
- 7) Should the media have access to police communications via scanners or a proposed computer dispatch system?
- 8) How should the "Blue Curtain" be used?⁷
- 9) How do reporters from the different media (television, newspaper and radio) compare? Are any better or more professional than the others?

⁷Inspector Fred Williams, who has headed the Detroit Police Department's Public Information Unit since it was formed in 1969, refers often to pulling down the "Blue Curtain" or shutting off information from the media.

- 10) Does the PIU act as a gatekeeper? Do you select information to disseminate?
- 11) What is your definition of newsworthy?
- 12) Regarding the Lawrence DeLisle case in which the Detroit media reported on the confession of a father to State Police polygraph examiners that he had driven his station wagon into the Detroit River near Wyandotte with the purpose of killing his wife and four children, how would DPD's Public Information Unit have handled the information?
- 13) How does the media get in the way of the police?
- 14) How do you feel the climate of police/media relations are in Detroit right now?

Reporters' right to releasable information

All the officers who discussed the media's right to information agreed that reporters do have a right to releasable information although most agreed the public's right to know is not always consistent with the police goals.

One officer stressed that journalists' right to know is no greater than the public's. He said many reporters abuse the public's right to know as a justification for demanding information. Abusive reporters often don't understand what to do and therefore resort to using the public's right to know, he said. He would be more willing to cooperate with an aggressive reporter than an abusive one.

Another officer said it's impossible to equate the police and the media's right to information because protecting the public is a distinctly different interest than informing it. Both interests must stand on their own merits. He noted that the journalists' job of informing the public is clearly protected by the First Amendment. The job of protecting the public is not so clearly outlined in the

Constitution, although the Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable police power and statutes have inferred police power from that amendment.

How to avoid misquotes and being taken out of context

All the officers who discussed the subjects of misquotes and information taken out of context said there is no exact method of for avoiding such situations. Several discussed bad experiences with misquotes or reporters who used off-the-record information attributed to an anonymous source in the same story where information was directly attributed to another officer.

An administrator said some reporters make a point of not attributing information or using unattributable information. He said sometimes when he's asked a question to which he doesn't know the answer he has seen his response as "wouldn't comment" in print the next day. Some reporters use speculation to hide their own opinions in stories, he said. Some police executives are uncomfortable or don't trust the media because they lack the ability to articulate their thoughts. Mistrust of the Detroit media, he said, comes from at least 15 to 20 years of consistently negative coverage of DPD.

That administrator said using unattributable or unquotable information has closed doors for many reporters. He advised that reporters shouldn't put police officers in their "trickbag." Doors open and shut for reporters, both formally and informally, based on their years of experience and consistency of their work, he said.

One officer said she had had the experience of being quoted on information obtained from another source. Reporters want to say things in a certain way and attribute the information to the PIU. The problem, she said, is "we aren't writing the stories."

The best way for officers to protect themselves against misquotes and bad context is to compile the information and commit it to paper in the form of a

news release, another officer said. All questions can then be answered consistently using the news release as the only source for information, he said.

He has found that keeping a friendly attitude when dealing with reporters can help break down the wall of mistrust between officers and reporters. He said most officers would consider their careers a success if they could get through it without having to talk to reporters. Reporters, he said, can be very forceful in their demands and don't always understand the police rules. He said many officers' mistrust comes from ignorance of the reporters' mission and that dealing with reporters is a learning process that officers learn as they move through the ranks. Officers learn as they move up because the higher their rank, the more visible they will become to the media.

Another officer used an example of a story about an arson fire that he handled in the middle of the night. He had already given a joint statement to all the reporters when a TV reporter who had missed the group interview asked if the officer would consent to making another statement. The officer said the first question the reporter asked was, "Where did the fire originate?" He said his response was that he couldn't give a proper answer to that question because he was not an arson investigator. He then told the photographer to turn the camera off. In retrospect, he said he should have asked the reporter for the questions before the interview and that he now uses that procedure with that reporter. The officer said he was mostly angry because his answer was on videotape and he thought he would look dumb.

Information that should or shouldn't be released

Sensitive information about sexual assaults or names of murder victims whose families have not been notified are clearly off limits according to most of the officers interviewed. Two other strict guidelines for PIU officers were clear: the only releasable information is what is contained on the news release and

there should be no speculation otherwise. No officer should ever attempt to answer a question unless he or she has the correct information.

The PIU disseminates what information they have and it's debatable whether it's the same information the media would like, one officer said. The PIU gives out what it can, but it can't give away the store, she said. Another said revealing basic facts is no problem, but speculating by answering hypothetical questions could damage a case.

One administrator said officers should never answer "how does it feel?" questions or reveal information from an investigation. He said information obtained away from police worries investigators, especially if it is not attributed. Reporters should always attribute information from outside sources so the reader is not misled into thinking an officer said something he or she did not.

The same administrator said he has learned never to lie to a reporter or "you're gone." The reporter's job is to ask questions and even if the questions anger an officer, he or she should always be truthful when answering, he said.

One officer said that sometimes whether or not information is released depends on who the reporter is. He said, for example, if a Detroit reporter calls for information over the phone, he will be happy to provide it. However, he once got a call from a Miami reporter who wanted information about a drug story. He said he had no idea who he was talking to or what the reporter's story was about and with a sensitive issue like drugs, the officer was worried about making the department look bad to Miami readers.

He instructed the reporter to send a letter on company letterhead stating the story objectives and listing specific questions. The officer explained that if the reporter sends such a letter, he or she will receive the most accurate information in return because the PIU could spend time thoroughly researching the answers.

That same officer noted that personal information about officers and the department should not be released and officers should not be asked for their opinions. He explained that officers' opinions can get them in trouble because they are highly visible and will be reported to their superiors. Personal information about police officers and DPD should not be any more newsworthy than similar information about the average citizen.

Several officers said they would answer questions from a reporter with whom they have built up trust. Trusted reporters will almost always be provided some explanation for why certain information cannot be released where others will simply be denied any answers at all. In the PIU, no "off the record" information is given to any reporter, trustworthy or not.

Good reporters report facts without sensation and seek only accurate information from police, not necessarily from witnesses or bystanders who may not be credible sources or who see talking to the media as their chance to be on TV, one officer said.

One officer said the best information comes from commander or a PIU officer at the incident scene. Often commanding officers will not talk to reporters, although policy allows them to do so, and will call the PIU with the information. One PIU officer noted that waiting for a commander to call takes much longer and during major incidents, someone from the PIU should be at the scene. When PIU officers show up at the scene, she said, the information is better because the officer can talk directly to investigators or observe the activity him or herself. Also, if one officer is handling media requests and questions, investigators and other officers can get their work done, she said.

Another administrator said it's a legitimate problem that sometimes the PIU doesn't have the information the reporter seeks. Many reporters sidestep the PIU because they've developed other sources, either anonymous city and police

department employees or state and federal law enforcement officials, and see the PIU as a useless step in their information search, he said.

Information about officers or the department

The problem with reporters, one officer said, is that they look for too much information about police. He said it's not newsworthy when a member of the public cheats on his wife or on her husband, but if a police officer does it, for some reason it's newsworthy. Police officers and the department should not be under that kind of scrutiny. He stipulated that the opinions of individual police officers are not important and should not be given.

Another officer said that problems with police officers usually don't come to the attention of the PIU except through the chief's office or the commissioners' weekly meeting where members of the public might formally register or discuss a complaint. Citizens' complaints are investigated internally, he said, although he feels some complaints are valid and some are unfounded. DPD is a highly visible agency and its officers come into contact with the public more than any other public agency so there may be more opportunity for complaints. The department does release information on complaints about officers. For example, he noted, the department had recently released the results of police drug testing in which several officers were fired or ordered into drug rehabilitation programs.

One administrator noted that during a political year, like 1989 when Detroit Mayor Coleman Young was in the middle of a re-election campaign, the department and its officers are often as highly criticized as the mayor. He said that Young has a "hands-on" administration and that the mayor closely supervises DPD. For that reason, Young's press secretary, Bob Berg, said criticism of the police department upsets the mayor's office. He said people believe what they read and hear and it's easy for the media to criticize city government. Berg said it's not as easy to get the media to admit their mistakes.

Who's to blame for the leak?

Most of the officers agreed that Brian Flanigan and Jack Kresnak had done nothing wrong by publishing a series of stories and pages of statistics about how many DPD officers were patrolling the city's streets. Much of the information in the stories was attributed to documents leaked to the reporters and computerized analysis of that information. The widely held opinion of the officers interviewed was that Kresnak and Flanigan were excellent reporters with good sources. The confidential sources who leaked the information were the ones to blame for the department's dissatisfaction.

Berg said the mayor wasn't upset with the story because it was surprisingly accurate, although he would have liked it better if the information would have come from attributable sources, like the PIU. Regarding confidential sources, Berg said, "People have an ax to grind, but don't want to leave their fingerprints on the ax."

Another officer said she didn't like the story because she said it didn't have any purpose other than telling readers how many officers were patrolling the streets. She would have appreciated the story if it had offered a solution or if the reporters had compared their numbers with statistics from 10 years ago to show how bad the crime problem in Detroit has become. She also wanted to see how Detroit compared to other cities, although the reporters explained in their stories that the data was both unavailable and inappropriate because so many factors—economics, population and race, for example—contribute to the crime rate in cities.

From a reporter's standpoint, the story was great, but both the good guys and the bad guys read the newspaper, another officer said. The story was lousy from a law enforcement standpoint because bad guys might be interested in knowing about the lack of patrol officers on the street. Still, he said Kresnak and

Flanigan were two of the best in the business and their depth of knowledge and writing was extremely professional.

Reporting or overreporting Detroit's crime and violence

One of the officers who answered this question said the Detroit media focus more on crime and violence in the city but virtually ignores crime in the suburbs. She said she suspected editors had told their reporters not to look for or report stories about violence in the suburbs.

Another officer said reporters from different newspapers, TV or radio stations place different priorities on crime. For example, he said, Detroit's Channel 2 has an insatiable appetite for crime and violence while Channel 7 only reports on serious crimes. He said reporters from the two newspapers read all the case drafts then pick and choose what they will cover. He said the newspaper reporters do a pretty good job of covering crime, but the beat reporters leave the in-depth stories to reporters like Flanigan and Kresnak.

Media access to police communications

Although only two of the officers interviewed addressed the subject of reporter access to police communication via scanners during interviews, most were observed reacting to calls from reporters about transmissions heard over the scanner.

One officer said there's a common misconception among members of the media that events they hear about over the scanner actually happen. Many of the people who call DPD, she said, give false reports of serious crime so officers will respond more quickly. She said reporters call the PIU day and night asking about transmissions they heard on the scanner which often cannot be traced.

Another officer pointed out that the PIU hears the same transmissions as the reporters listening to scanners and usually cannot answer any questions

about a call until officers have arrived and reported their situation back to dispatchers. Again, the reporters will hear the same transmissions as the PIU.

Several scanners are on at all times in the PIU office, however during the observation period scanner transmissions were barely audible, drowned out by talking, telephones and especially the television. Anyone wanting to follow an incident via scanner transmission would be hard pressed to find a PIU officer monitoring that or any other incident.

Using the "Blue Curtain"

In a 1980 article he wrote for *Law Enforcement Communication*, Inspector Fred Williams, who heads the PIU, discussed police secrecy:

The public's fascination with crime news never ends and this means that, for better or worse, every police department's personnel and performance are constantly under scrutiny.

Too often inquiries to police departments on sensitive issues are answered by pulling down the "Blue Curtain," and shutting off all information. This is a mistake. Information—both good and bad—should be released within legal limits. A free press is essential. It puts a microscope on law enforcement and assures the public that no official lawlessness will occur.

During interviews, Williams expressed the same belief that using the Blue Curtain to keep the media away was always detrimental to the department.

Other officers agreed that using the Blue Curtain was a bad idea, and one said the PIU was designed to lift the veil of secrecy. He said he felt all inquiries about the department and its officers should go through the PIU including information on crimes and accidents as well as speaking engagements and public appearances for officers.

Another officer said he thinks the department is fairly open to the public and the media, so he doesn't see the Blue Curtain being used. However, reporters he has worked with would find a way to see behind the Blue Curtain if it was used because they have all developed their own confidential sources within the department. Reporters would not let the department shroud itself with a veil of secrecy, he said.

Different media, different reporters

None of the officers interviewed said they favored one medium over another, although many said they were more acquainted with the newspaper reporters who had their office in the DPD building. The differences they saw in reporters had more to do with intelligence, integrity, experience and trustworthiness than whether they worked in broadcast or print.

One officer said reporters should have a strong educational background and should be people of their word. They should be honest and objective in their reporting and writing and should not necessarily try to influence their readers or viewers.

Another officer said she knows some reporters who are fair and others with whom she feels she should be on guard. She said she's careful not to be unfair to any reporters and that her good and bad experiences are not limited to one reporter or one medium. Both TV and radio reporters made her a little uncomfortable, she said. Vanity played a part in her dislike for being interviewed for television and with radio, she always wanted to be absolutely sure of her information because it's recorded on tape. Good reporters, she said, report the facts as they are and don't sensationalize.

An administrator said he noticed that competition among the local media makes each reporter want his or her own angle to each story. Therefore, he said, competition makes reporters dislike the PIU as an information source because

those officers disseminate the exact same information to everyone. He said reporters want more than just the straight news and he gets requests all the time for ride-alongs or other information to help illustrate feature stories.

That administrator said problems between reporters and the PIU go away with continuity and that many of the "old-timers" were unable to get information until they became trusted. He described some reporters as having "Pulitzer syndrome," meaning they like to see their name in print and use color and observation in their writing.

He said the editors should assign better reporters to the DPD beat. People on the police beat are either misfits or new, he noted, and some are lazy. Flanigan, he said, was one of his favorite reporters and noted that a good reporter like him will not feel the fallout effect of his newspaper's stories because he's so popular among the ranks and administrators. A reporter with Flanigan's popularity may have a detrimental effect on beat reporters who may be asked by the "super reporter" to get information that the beat reporter has no control over.

One PIU officer said newspapers are the best medium to work with, although their accuracy leaves something to be desired. He criticized TV and radio reporters who often don't even come to the PIU. He said he likes to know who he's talking to and likes to learn who has integrity and who can be trusted. He would be more inclined to offer information freely without being asked if he was dealing with a reporter he trusted. A reporter who could not be trusted wouldn't even get an explanation from him for why information could not be released because that reporter would then know that information existed and might print that and attribute it to the PIU.

He said officers in the PIU test the trustworthiness of reporters who have not been on the beat regularly, sometimes by giving them "off the record" information to see if they publish it. Jim Schaefer, who had been on the beat a

few months, was trustworthy, he said. They were still working on Roger Chesley, who had been on the beat about a month. He said Chesley was still in the "get acquainted" or initiation period of his DPD assignment.

Another administrator said Watergate had changed journalism and that in recent years every reporter wants to be an investigator. Still, he said many reporters don't know what they're doing and many ask stupid questions. A good reporter can work within the confines of the DPD policy, he said, stressing that the reporter's line of communication with the department--the PIU--was always open. That administrator also mused that the PIU wields a lot of power over reporters because officers in that unit have control over information the reporters want. Those officers could "really screw things up" for a reporter, he said.

He described some reporters as aggressive and others as abusive. Aggressive is good, he said, and that reporter will get the story. An abusive reporter will not get the story, especially if he or she asks the wrong questions.

Another officer described one of the newspaper reporters who was no longer on the beat as an extremely aggressive person. When pressed for an explanation, the officer said that if he has an agreement with a reporter that he or she is to consult with the PIU before going to a crime scene or elsewhere to get information, he expects the reporter to check in with the PIU. This reporter apparently had not followed this procedure and had made him mad. He said the next time that person needed something she was not going to get it or she was going to get as little as possible. Some reporters, he said, are capable of having a good relationship with police. Others try to stab police in the back, he said in describing this particular reporter.

During the researcher's conversation with this officer, he mentioned that he had a daughter a couple of years younger than this reporter and the researcher. He had warned the researcher not to get "eaten up in this business"

which he said is what had happened to the reporter. His comparisons between the reporter, the researcher and his daughter could be interpreted to mean that he did not expect young women to be capable of surviving in the police culture. In conversation he hinted that one's innocence and femininity would disappear after prolonged exposure to the ugliness of crime and law enforcement. He stressed that the conditions of working the DPD beat were not the same for men and women and were in fact, much more difficult for women.

Several officers mentioned the same reporter's aggressive style, although few complained as vehemently. Another officer said that reporter had "made the mistake of sleeping with a cop." The reporter had been dating and has since married a Detroit Police officer she met while working on the beat, although her then-boyfriend was not regarded negatively for "sleeping with" a reporter. The officer said as a result of her relationship, she was perceived as a "tramp" by other officers and that her boyfriend was perceived as leaking information to the media. It did not matter, he said, what really happened because the perception was already in place.

Gatekeeping and newsworthiness

Most of the officers interviewed saw themselves as gatekeepers of DPD's information and some noted the power of that position. Most said they felt it was important for the public to know what goes on in their city, although each had a different definition of newsworthy with which to measure information for release to the media. A few officers pointed out that the PIU makes the judgment calls and releases whatever information it deems newsworthy.

One officer defined newsworthy as events with extenuating circumstances where the community could help the police solve cases. If tips from readers or viewers could help solve a case, an incident would definitely be newsworthy. He said there is certainly a need to define newsworthy because there must be a

selection process to screen events for coverage. The media can't possibly report on everything or the news would be muddled and hard to understand. He said he thinks readers want stories they can learn from, not voyeuristic stories. That officer also saw the role of the PIU and the media as reminding the public that there's "scum out there and it's dangerous."

He and several other officers pointed out that once a month the chief holds a special ceremony to commend officers, but that the media rarely cover the good news side of DPD. One administrator even provided the researcher with a stack of news releases outlining the details of cases for which the officers were receiving awards. One officer said it's human nature for people to care more about dirt than good, but the PIU was there to provide information on both good and bad stories.

Another officer said news was information that would concern the general public. She said both tragic and positive information were newsworthy. News is something of widespread importance to the public, another officer said. He added that news is something that people will want to know about and that newsworthy events are not common events.

Another officer said newsworthy has two definitions: 1) what the police and the media perceive the readers and viewers will want to know and 2) what people actually want to read about or see. He said people have personal reasons for why they want to read about or see certain events or crimes. He said the Detroit newspapers were more likely to select gory events as newsworthy.

One administrator said there is no departmental definition of newsworthy and that's why his home phone never stops ringing with both reporters and PIU officers discussing newsworthiness of events and releaseability of information. His personal definition of newsworthy is whatever makes the news. Therefore,

he said, he prefers to know generally about all events so that he is prepared to answer questions if a reporter decides something is newsworthy.

That administrator said reporters invite the police to gatekeep when they call and ask an open question like, "What went on last night?" He said reporters would do better to ask specific questions if they want information provided to them. Information usually is not offered and reporters still have to dig for it.

As a DPD administrator, he said his role as gatekeeper often has political overtones. Releasing or not releasing certain information is sometimes more a business decision than a newsworthy decision. Part of his job, he said, is answering to the mayor and the police chief. For example, a story providing a box score for how many juveniles were murdered in the city in a given year would be a great for the reporter and the reader, but would make DPD look bad. The department would therefore not readily provide that information. That administrator said wouldn't be possible to design a gatekeeping system to satisfy everyone's needs--despite the paranoia over making the department look bad.

Another officer said gatekeeping works two ways in the PIU. If an inquiry is made about an event, a write-up or news release will be provided. He said the media don't like to do their own work and often just takes whatever is given them without asking for more. He said Detroit's electronic media follow the newspapers' lead on most stories.

The PIU's function as gatekeeper for the department is essential, another officer said, because if there wasn't this office, reporters would have to call everywhere for information and would disrupt work. He said it is more effective and efficient therefore to speak with one voice to assure that everyone is getting consistent information.

The Wyandotte case

The week before the study began, Lawrence DeLisle drove his family's station wagon into the Detroit River at the end of Eureka Street in the down river suburb of Wyandotte. His wife, Suzanne barely survived the plunge into the river, but the couple's four children, Bryan, 8, Melissa, 4, Kathryn, 2, and Emily, 10 months drowned. The accident was widely reported in the Detroit media and all over Michigan. As the case further unfolded, State Police questioned DeLisle during a polygraph exam and obtained a confession. The fact of that confession and its contents were released to reporters and also was widely reported in the media. DeLisle was later tried and convicted of killing his children and attempting to kill his wife and is now serving a term of life in prison.

Stories about the DeLisle case make up a large part of the content analysis portion of this research. DPD officers interviewed for this study were questioned about the DeLisle stories, in particular whether they thought it was newsworthy and whether the same information would have been released to the media if DPD had handled the case rather than the Wyandotte Police Department.

Most of the officers said that the fact DeLisle had confessed to murder would not have been released to the media by DPD because under the restrictions on the release of prejudicial information, "Police may not comment on the existence of a 'confession.'" That information might have been made available by confidential sources, State Police or the prosecutor's office, but it would not have come from DPD, they said.

A PIU officer said that if the case had happened in Detroit, DPD would have released the original accident information because it was a tragedy. If the police had sought a warrant, DPD would have released the warrant information as well. The confession would have been clearly off limits in Detroit, however, because the crime should not be tried in the media, she said. Releasing

information about the confession would have gone against DPD policy and would have been unfair to DeLisle.

Another officer said it's better to be careful about giving information in a case like the DeLisles because what may seem like innocent information can backfire. He said DPD had been burned enough times by reporters that PIU officers are wary about releasing certain kinds of information. Regarding the DeLisle case, that officer blamed the Wyandotte Police—not the reporters—for releasing information that could have severely hurt their prosecution. He said the reporters could not be blamed because it was their job to obtain and print or broadcast the information.

Another PIU officer said he would have not released the victims' names, especially the parents' names, until they were exonerated from any possible involvement in the deaths. He said he would not feel bad withholding that information because reporters could easily find it elsewhere.

Polygraph tests have no probative value in court, he said, and therefore the fact that one was done and a confession made should not have been released. Clearly the word confession implies guilt, he said, and a better choice of words would have been "elicited a statement." Information about the polygraph exam would have appeared on the arrest warrant as probable cause to incarcerate and thus eventually would have been released to the media anyway.

Those officers who said in their definitions of newsworthy that the public was not interested in voyeurism or that publicizing someone else's tragedy was wrong unless a crime was involved quickly redefined the term when speaking of the DeLisle case. Even without the subsequent murder prosecution of Lawrence DeLisle, the deaths of four children, they said was obviously newsworthy.

Media problems and the climate of police relations in Detroit

Officers who addressed the last two questions said that although individual stories may be come into question, they didn't see any major problems with police/media relations in Detroit. Throughout the interviews, officers repeatedly said Detroit reporters often misquote, take information out of context or misattribute facts. These mistakes have led to disciplinary action for the officers involved, many said. Doors have been opened and slammed shut for reporters over the years. Still, at the time of the study, the climate basically was fine, most officers said.

One administrator said the Detroit media "self destruct" because of competition between reporters and the different media, particularly during TV sweeps weeks. He said the media have conditioned their readers and viewers to violence in the community.

Another officer said the reason for the lack of problems is that reporters who deal with DPD understand the PIU and its limitations. If their information requests cannot be met, reporters seek other sources. Communication between the PIU and the media usually is open, officers said.

The Detroit News and Free Press

At the time of the study, both the *Detroit Free Press*, a Knight-Ridder newspaper and the *Detroit News*, a Gannett newspaper, were published in the morning. The *Free Press*'s average daily circulation was 629,182 and 702,192 on Sunday. The *News* had an average daily circulation of 675,171 and a Sunday circulation of 823,797.

About three months after the study, the newspapers began working under a joint operating agreement in which the *Free Press* remains the morning paper, but the *News* publishes in the afternoon. On weekends, the newspapers publish combined editions under the name *Detroit News and Free Press*.

Reporters who were interviewed for the study frequently referred to the JOA with regard to the effect it would have on coverage of DPD. Most said that because it would be published in the morning, the *Free Press* would become the "news" paper while the *News* would have more time to develop news features for its afternoon edition. Although it had not yet been approved, reporters often assumed that both newspapers were taking different directions in their coverage of DPD because of the JOA.

At the time of the study, the regular dayside DPD reporter for the *News* had recently resigned and the beat temporarily was being covered by Monroe Walker who had worked the police beat at various other times in his 14 years at the *News*. At the time of the study, David Grant had worked the nighttime police beat for the *News* for 18 years.

Both reporters readily consented to being interviewed and observed, although Walker withdrew his consent to be observed halfway through the second week of the study. He said he wanted to be sure his editor approved his participation in the research, but continued to resist despite the assurance of his editor. Many of those observation hours were then spent with the *Free Press* reporters or interviewing officers and other reporters from both papers.

Roger Chesley and Jim Schaefer, who cover the beat day and night respectively for the *Free Press*, had only been assigned to DPD for a few months at the time of the study. Both were in their mid-20s and had worked at the *Free Press* for less than five years.

At the time of the study, the *Free Press* utilized an unofficial system for initiating Chesley and Schaefer to the DPD beat by keeping them in close contact with reporters Jack Kresnak and Brian Flanigan who had been partners covering the regular DPD beat for at least six years. Both Kresnak and Flanigan had covered other police and crime issues for the paper as investigative reporters not

regularly assigned to the beat. Throughout the observation, both Chesley and Schaefer regularly called or sought advice from Kresnak and Flanigan on story ideas, writing and developing sources.

Kresnak and Flanigan's contribution to DPD coverage was significant as Chesley and Schaefer utilized their knowledge and experience frequently. Shortly after the study was concluded, Kresnak took a leave of absence to work on a fellowship at the University of Michigan. Flanigan died suddenly of a heart attack just two months after the study ended.

Reporter Interviews

Although a handful of the reporters interviewed for this study had worked the DPD beat temporarily or only for a short time, most had been with their respective papers and covered DPD on and off for more than a decade. Some had known DPD before the formation of the Public Information Unit in 1968. Others had known DPD only in recent years during the "new ice age," as one reporter called it, when the PIU began clamping down on information.

Without exception, reporters said that since the PIU's inception, information became more and more difficult to obtain. At the time of the study, the relationship between DPD, the PIU and the Detroit media was at its all-time worst, reporters said, contrary to statements made by the officers interviewed. Each reporter theorized which story or incident had closed DPD's doors one by one over the years. Many took credit for reporting stories that put the department in a bad light and angered city administrators. Almost without exception, reporters blamed the bad relations and lack of openness on Mayor Coleman Young's administration, calling it paranoid and secretive.

A veteran investigative reporter called DPD a "5,000-man private palace guard for Coleman Young." Another said DPD used to provide comprehensive

information that often amazed reporters from other cities. During recent years in Young's administration, the mayor has had no use for the media. Young, he said, has issued a city-wide clamp down on information. Newer command officers carefully enforce Young's wishes so as not to anger the mayor while older, more experienced commanders are often more cooperative with the media.

One veteran reporter said the situation between DPD and the Detroit media reminds him of a cowboy movie in which the Indians are encircling. He said he's been in Detroit for so long that he has no idea what police/media relations are like in other cities, but the situation at the time was the worst he'd ever seen it. In the 1950s, he said, detectives were very interested in media accuracy and usually would invite reporters to the crime scene and go out of their way to give information. In recent years, reporters don't get to talk to eyewitnesses because officers won't let them near. Reporters end up getting information from people more removed from the situation like neighbors who like to get their names in the paper.

Several reporters said they had seen DPD clamp down on information givers and have watched at least one homicide commander removed from his post and reassigned because of his open media policy.

One reporter—who at the time of the study worked in Detroit for 14 years—said he remembered a time when investigators would share information, including some that they didn't want published, so the reporter could understand the whole story. The media respected the investigators' wishes, he said. Occasionally at crime scenes, reporters would locate and interview witnesses before officers had a chance to question them. Reporters always shared their information with investigators, he said. At one time case draft information was also available to the media before the reports had even been printed, he said.

Another reporter who had covered DPD on and off for more than a decade said she used to like working with the PIU because it was a challenge to gain the officers' trust. It's no fun anymore, she said; 20 years of the PIU system has formalized the channels of information and thereby limited them.

The media used to have access to arrest warrants before arraignments, another reporter said, but because some reported such unreleaseable information as confessions, DPD pulled back and now withholds warrants until after formal charges are filed. Because of the current relationship between the PIU and the Detroit media, reporters should only have to work the DPD beat for two years, the reporter said. He was on the beat for about six and got so tired and frustrated he tried everything including blaming health problems on his work to get reassigned elsewhere.

Another reporter remembered a time when DPD may have been too open to the media--when reporters could walk unrestricted through the squadroom when suspect and witness statements were being taken. Reporters also contributed to the coffee fund in the homicide unit and had nearly unlimited access there. He said that since about 1979, DPD had gone from being one of the most open departments to one of the most closed. He said the PIU used to be the place reporters stopped to socialize. They used the PIU as a reference point, not a resource. The reporter gave several examples of stories he and his partner had done that made the department and the mayor look bad. With each bad story, the department became a little less open.

Several reporters mentioned the story of a reporter who was banned from the detective bureau because he read a report as it was being typed by a clerk who was mentally handicapped. The clerk--who had worked in that department for a number of years--was transferred and died unexpectedly a few weeks later. Reporters who told that story used it as a blatant example of an unnecessary

tactic used by a reporter that closed another door for the media. They blamed the clerk's death on the disturbing job transfer caused by the unethical tactics of a reporter.

A reporter who had covered DPD in the mid-1970s, said his paper used to staff DPD 24 hours a day, including three dayside reporters who also covered recorder's court. During that time, Detroit's homicide rate was at an all-time high, street crimes were increasing because of the city's heroin problem, affirmative action was being enforced at DPD and the Young administration was in its early days. During a time when the city and the department were at their worst, communications officers in the PIU were competent, held college degrees and knew their job was to give out information, the reporter said. Now their job is to guard or hide information. Back in those days, the PIU was harmless, but not now, he said. Now the function of the PIU is to "spoonfeed information that is palatable" to DPD.

The PIU's purpose changed, that reporter said. It didn't used to censor the news about the city's image. The city became more concerned about its image after the nationally-publicized rioting when the Detroit Tigers won the World Series in 1984, he said.

At least one *News* reporter complained that his paper used to staff DPD full time, but in recent years had used the beat as a "dumping ground" where reporters were sent to work when there was nowhere else to send them. Reporters from both newspapers discussed the impending joint operating agreement with the *Free Press*. Most said they thought the *News'* involvement at DPD would decrease when the paper returned to afternoon delivery. They said they assumed the *Free Press* would monitor day-to-day incidents and report them as news of the day for the morning read. The *News* would utilize its space and position as an afternoon read to enterprise longer news features.

Reporters from both papers also said they thought the *News* editors required less from their DPD reporters. One said there was a time when DPD reporters from both newspapers were required to write six or seven stories a day. He said in recent years, *News* DPD reporters had become reactive and that people assigned to that beat were mainly caretakers because editors did not require a story from them every day. The same reporter said the *Free Press* is proactive in its coverage of DPD and that editors there did require something from their DPD reporters every day.

One *News* reporter said editors should consider putting interns in the DPD office or that the newspaper should hire neighborhood informants and people to monitor DPD's scanner communication, rather than staffing DPD with a reporter. He compared the DPD reporters to the Maytag repairman who waits endlessly for something to break so he can fix it.

Secrecy and Coleman Young

Reporters overwhelmingly said city hall and the police department operate under a shroud of secrecy. Most followed that opinion by attributing the secrecy to Young, who, one reporter said, constantly questions the motives and intentions of reporters. City employees, including police officers, are afraid to talk to the media for fear of losing their jobs, most said.

Both officers and reporters are citizens of Detroit and both are interested in the future of the community, one reporter said. The adversarial relationship between the city and the media has gone to the extreme.

One reporter called the PIU the mayor's press agent, but said the unit is not doing a very good public relations job for the city of Detroit. Another reporter said Young's shroud of secrecy often backfires on him because many city employees who dislike the mayor and police chief and willingly become secret information sources for reporters. Just because the city withholds information

doesn't mean reporters won't get it, he said. Although Young's press secretary, Robert Berg, denied that the mayor's office plays a large role in the police department, several reporters said Young's ability to hire and fire top police personnel is well understood by all DPD officers.

Many officers and city officials, including those in the PIU, evaluate information release to the media based on how the statement will affect Coleman Young. Most are unwilling to risk their losing their jobs or being reassigned and tell the reporter to call the PIU whose purpose is to talk to the media. One reporter said that while talking to the media might not be firm ground for dismissal, the city and DPD have a number of legitimate ways to "put the squeeze" on employees.

Free Press reporter Brian Flanigan said DPD would not have released the statistics he and Jack Kresnak used for their special series about the number of officers patrolling Detroit's streets because the department doesn't want to tell criminals where its officers are. Flanigan said he doesn't buy that excuse because he didn't believe crack addicts read the paper or care where police are. If they need crack, they'll commit the crime regardless of the risks.

Reporters from both newspapers and area TV and radio stations for several years have actively pursued information the city has denied them by utilizing Michigan's Freedom of Information Act. Records that should be considered in the public domain are frequently withheld from reporters although they should be and often are released to average citizens who request the information.

Under Michigan's FOIA, information is exempt from release if it is an invasion of privacy or if it interferes with an ongoing investigation. One reporter said DPD usually uses the second exemption to deny the media information. He said the city and the department exploit the law's time frame to delay

information release until it is no longer useful or until the reporter's interest in it subsides. Under the law, agencies are supposed to respond within five days to an information request unless there are extraordinary circumstances. He said in most cases DPD uses the extra time to its advantage. After the 15th day of a denial, the case immediately can go to court where the news agency must file and appeal stating why the denial was in error.

Those who are active with the FOIA cause say every reporter and member of the public should file a lawsuit each and every time the city withholds information that is supposed to be in the public domain. By nickel and diming the city with frivolous lawsuits, some hope the courts will become stricter with city agencies and Detroit will be forced lift its shroud of secrecy.

The pass system

Shortly before the observation research started, DPD began issuing blue passes to members of the media. The pass system was designed to readily identify news people in DPD's building, especially broadcast reporters and photographers who weren't as familiar to officers as the print reporters whose office was in the building.

Discussion of the badge system drew shrugs and rolls of the eye among some of the PIU officers and jokes among many of the reporters. Although speculation was common during the three-week observation period, no one could actually say how long the pass system would be in effect. Some took the credit for having written the story that angered the department enough to restrict reporters' access to different parts of the building. Regular beat reporters say the pass system was devised to keep David Grant, the evening reporter from the *Detroit News*, away from the homicide unit. Reporters from both newspapers keep their own careful records of crime statistics in Detroit because such numbers likely would not be released from the department without an FOIA

request. Grant himself said he had spent quite a bit of time in the homicide unit over the 18 years he'd been on the beat and that he often compared his own records to the "homicide book" kept by the unit.

Some reporters said the pass system was meant to be limiting, but probably would have no effect on reporters who are in the building on a regular basis. One reporter said the blue passes were a political power game being played by DPD to let the media know the limitations of police cooperation.

Usefulness of the PIU

One reporter said she would feel like a failure if she depended on the PIU exclusively for her information. Almost all the reporters interviewed for this study agreed that the PIU can be used as a resource, but that it should never be used exclusively. Reporters are "dead in the water" between midnight and 8 a.m. because the PIU is closed during those hours, said one reporter.

Officers in the PIU often are the last to know the information about incidents of immediate interest. The newspaper or television news is often the PIU officers' best source of information one reporter quipped. The PIU is given very little information and then told to keep the media away.

Regardless of its usefulness, the PIU sometimes is the only source, said one reporter who had worked the beat for about two and a half years. He said the PIU officers' helpfulness goes in cycles: sometimes they help; sometimes they don't. He said that getting information from PIU officers is not as good as getting it from the investigator, but he needs sources he can quote and he can't quote investigators. A good reporter can gain an investigator's trust, but it's the PIU's job to keep the reporter away from the investigation.

PIU officers may be unable or unwilling to dig for requested information. One reporter said asking the PIU for information on a feature story he was

writing was like pulling teeth. He said the PIU appears to be serving a function, but there is no trust between it and the media.

Some reporters speculated that officers enjoyed working in the PIU because it was a safe assignment, off the streets, and without many expectations. At least one officer noted that the PIU is a good assignment for someone who wants to move up in the ranks because officers there are very visible to top police administrators.

Those reporters who specifically described PIU officers and their usefulness or dependability as sources named the same officer as their favorite. That officer—whom one reporter said was from the "old school"—always returned calls, even after hours and sometimes just to explain why the information was unavailable. One reporter said that officer always returned calls "just to let you know he's not a jerk." They appreciated the officer's friendly attitude and trusted that he was working to help them or at least being honest if he couldn't. That same officer also was very helpful and informative during the research project.

At the same time reporters were unified in their praise for one officer's hard work, they also were unified in their criticism of another PIU officer whom they said always worked from the news release and never made calls for reporters. Most also said they viewed him as unfriendly and uncooperative. One reporter said DPD supports that officer's lack of helpfulness, which "says something about the department." That same PIU officer was the only one to refuse an interview with the researcher.

Gathering and using sources

During both the interviewing and observation periods, reporters shared some of their conventional and unconventional methods of gathering police sources. The more conventional methods included chatting with officers in the public information unit several times a day, having friendly conversations with

police when making cold calls and arranging interviews with top police commanders through the PIU. A few of the veteran reporters get story ideas by calling top police administrators for a friendly, daily chat, whether or not they have legitimate questions to ask about stories that are in the works.

Reporters also employed unconventional methods like stopping to chat while delivering newspapers to various departments in the DPD building, eating dinner in restaurants frequented by police officers or having a cigarette outside the newspaper building at scheduled times during the day when Detroit Police or federal law enforcement authorities could stop by for a "spontaneous" chat.

One reporter said the newspaper delivery system is somewhat unethical as a means of cultivating stories but acceptable if there is a genuine need to distribute papers or to make oneself visible in the DPD building. Officers recognize the truth, one veteran reporter said, and many are discontented with the rosy picture of the department painted by the PIU. Often those officers will seek reporters out and will be fair and accurate. He also said different reporters should be acquainted with one another, not to share or steal story ideas, but to be aware of how their competitors operate. Armed with that awareness, reporters can avoid tactics that have angered sources or employ methods that pleased them. Another reporter said he knew of a DPD inspector who sometimes planted information with various officers to find out which ones would leak it to reporters.

A few reporters said that being a familiar face usually is beneficial, but putting a byline on a story leaked by someone who is regularly visited by a reporter usually will get that officer in trouble. Attributable information usually is available through the PIU, the chief, deputy chief or other top commanders. Reporters who do obtain unattributable tips from officers they visit in the DPD

building said they often turn the information over to colleagues to avoid putting their own bylines on stories and thus making it obvious who leaked the tip.

One reporter said "people know who you talk to" and therefore he can't be obvious about cultivating stories from sources or he will arouse suspicion. He said having his byline on a story is not worth risking a friendship or getting a valuable source fired.

Veteran reporters said many of their best sources are cultivated from being around the department for a number of years and knowing officers as they move up the ranks. One veteran reporter said he was happy to share his sources with the younger beat reporters and was especially willing to share story ideas that would help them cultivate their own police sources.

Another veteran reporter said 70 percent of his job is sources. Therefore, he must be very careful--sometimes even withholding information from an editor--so as not to burn his sources. Over the years, he said, most editors have learned not to ask him where he got his information. He said he was once banned from the homicide department when he refused to reveal the source of his story to the unit's commander.

Sometimes a reporter's relationship with a source is professional and it may even be friendly, but it should not be social, another veteran reporter said. Personal relationships with sources can be gratifying, but it's too easy for a reporter to accidentally burn a friend. He said even when the reporter avoids attributing information to save a source, usually only a limited number of people would have access to those facts and the source's identity could be easily detected.

Above all he advised new reporters and those temporarily covering the beat to avoid the mentality that they will never see that officer again, so it's okay to burn him. Burning a source is burning oneself, he said. It's to the reporter's

advantage to treat sources well because officers socialize and they will share information about bad reporters.

Source development requires more time than 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., that reporter said. The job is easier if reporters understand what officers do and treat them like individuals without assuming that any police stereotypes automatically apply. Most previous non-journalistic encounters with officers are bad: traffic tickets and accidents, burglary or property crime reports. Reporters must put those experiences aside to do their jobs well, although they must avoid going to far in the other direction where their stories become biased toward police, he said.

During the observation, the researcher accompanied one young reporter to the Highland Park Police Station where the reporter had scheduled an interview with a homicide investigator. The reporter said he had not gotten enough information over the phone to write a decent story about a murder in that city and he thought an in-person interview was necessary. He was correct in his assumption that the detective appreciated the reporter's willingness to drive to the station for the interview. The detective offered detailed information--without using a news release--about the weapon used in the shooting, the crime scene, the evidence gathered there and even offered the reporter his home phone number in case there were any more questions.

Later that day, the reporter did have to call the detective for the victim's birthdate and middle initial so his police record could be located. That reporter, who had been advised by another veteran on how to find more information for the story, said he hated bugging the detective because he already had been so accommodating. The veteran advised him, "That's what we do."

Another valuable source used by both papers is computer data compiled from case drafts and news releases distributed by the PIU. Reporters said that

when they asked for crime statistics from the department, their requests usually were denied. In some cases reporters might file their records requests under FOIA, but some data--like the number of teenagers murdered in a year--could be easily accessed through the reporters' own computer filing systems. Several reporters said computerizing their own data based on case drafts provided by the PIU is one way reporters have fought back against DPD's policy of not releasing crime statistics.

Computer analysis is a good source, but by itself does not present the whole picture, said *Free Press* reporter Brian Flanigan. The special series he and Jack Kresnak did about the number of officers on the street was a combination of computer analysis supported by real life anecdotes, he said.

Real life anecdotes have never been provided by the PIU, although several reporters said that before the unit was established they often were invited to see crime scenes close up and were permitted to talk to eyewitnesses and victims. If the reporter happened to interview a witness before investigators had the chance, the journalist would share his or her information with the officer.

City officials from the prosecutor's office or the courts often are helpful sources, reporters said. One gave an example of a time when he was working in another state and a city attorney who was having a dispute with the police chief left open files on his desk and invited the reporter to peruse them while he stepped out to lunch.

While officers who were interviewed said they believe most sources outside of DPD are less than credible on the facts of a particular case, reporters said each story and each source is different. One reporter said he can't be sure of anyone but a journalist has to weigh sources against one another to measure their importance to the story. A lazy reporter, he said, takes and uses any quote without thinking about its credibility. The reporter said that while judging a

source's credibility can be difficult, some people are interviewed simply for the role they play in the story. Reporters interview mothers of victims or suspects simply because of who they are and their reactions to the crime.

Another reporter said colorful information that a reporter gathers from sources outside DPD distinguishes his or her story from others on the same incident. Finding extra information is a challenge, but it adds color and personality to both the story and the newspaper, she said.

Accuracy and consistency in writing are essential to the process of gathering sources and gaining their trust, another veteran reporter said. A reporter should make every effort to talk to a person who will be presented in a bad light or accused of wrongdoing in a story. Reporters should not "sweeten quotes," "put a spin" on their stories or put information in a context that supports an unobjective agenda, she said. Editors and reporters should not try to meet their own agendas by printing a story now instead of later just to get back at DPD for being difficult.

Another standard method of obtaining sources is through the daily "cold calls" in which reporters call a list of police and fire departments to ask generally what is happening and specifically if the department has any news releases to read to the reporter.

One veteran said it's essential to make cold calls once a day to know what's going on, but it's better to make them twice because people on the other end of the phone get to know and trust the reporter through these calls.

Another veteran said she didn't like the term "cold calls" because she tried not to make them cold. She tried to get to know her sources over the phone and develop a friendly relationship with them. She said reporters should be able empathize with the dispatcher or officer who answers the phone and should joke with them or give them the latest scoop on the news of the day.

Reporters also get information from monitoring communication over the police scanner. Even when the reporter or editor aren't able to listen to the scanner, citizens who monitor police communication often call in with news tips. At the time of the study, DPD was looking into a new communication system that would computerize much of their chatter and nearly silence the scanners. Reporters said a change to this type of system would virtually cut them off from the day-to-day news in Detroit as it is happening and that they would be forced to depend more on the case drafts provided by DPD.

Available and unavailable information

The most important duty the reporter has is to get the facts right, the same reporter said. Inaccuracies are common in the Detroit media, she said. She said she has gained the respect of DPD officers and administrators because of her efforts to get the information right. She recalled a story in which a homicide inspector misinformed her that the murder of a young boy was because of a dispute over a T-shirt when it was actually because of drugs. When she learned the truth, she went back to that officer and scolded him for giving her the wrong information just to comply with her request.

This reporter and others said they don't mind being denied information if the denial is accompanied by an explanation—brief or lengthy—of why those details are unavailable. Reporters said they'd rather not give any information than write something that is untrue.

Another reporter said he had wanted to do a story on the successes of an investigative squad that had closed all but one of its open cases. He said he was denied the information to do that story because an inspector said he didn't want other units in the department to look bad.

Other reporters said that sometimes information is omitted from releases, either accidentally or on purpose. Missing facts can leave stories with gaping

holes, one reporter said, especially if what's lacking is an address or location. Without that basic information, the reporter can't even find other sources to flesh out a story.

During the observation, a reporter called the PIU to ask what time a family reported their 8-year-old daughter missing and when the investigators found the girl's body. The PIU officer who spoke to the reporter said she legitimately did not know the information. It was not on the news release and she didn't have the report. The reporter said she felt she was being denied the facts and that the PIU officer could have called the precinct to get those times. The reporter complained that PIU officers will not, for the most part, volunteer information and that they always adhere to what is printed on the news release.

Officers and reporters said one commonly given reason for denying a media request is that releasing certain information will compromise the integrity of the investigation. One veteran reporter said when it comes to police stories, reporters often get in officers' way. To the police, however, getting in the way means observing what they're doing and they don't want reporters seeing what they're doing. He said he doesn't know of any reporter whose goal is to mess up an investigation.

DPD also provides information for the media at news conferences and at a weekly police commissioners' meeting during which public comment and responses from the chief are heard. While the officers who were interviewed complained that media attendance at such events is inconsistent, reporters complained that information was limited and questions discouraged. One reporter said he avoids news conferences except those put on by the narcotics unit because news conferences have a preset agenda. Officers complained that as soon as a news conference ended, reporters quickly pulled key speakers aside to get individual quotes or soundbites. Reporters said that in a media market as

competitive as Detroit, they must go the extra mile to make sure their stories don't look the same as every other journalist's.

Sharing office space; competition and camaraderie; differences between news organizations, and reporters

Police reporters from both the *News* and *Free Press* share office space in the DPD building at 1300 Beaubian St. No walls or barriers separate the desks and thus it is easy for reporters to monitor one another's phone conversations. One reporter, who had covered the police beat on and off for four decades, said the newspapers' office used to be in a bigger room where there was more space between their work areas. In recent years, reporters from different papers work in such close proximity, secrecy is practically impossible.

Despite the disadvantage of lacking privacy, the DPD reporters said they enjoyed having their own offices away from the main newsroom because it gave them autonomy--at least physically--from their editors.

One veteran said the bottom line for reporters is not money, but pride in their byline. Editors take more pride in beating the competition on day-to-day news events, but the true difference between the newspapers is the personality demonstrated in enterprised feature stories, he said.

Different media

Most of the print reporters said they had had at least one negative encounter with TV crews on spot news stories. One said he has almost punched TV reporters for putting their microphones or cameras between him and the person he was interviewing. On one recent occasion, a TV crew even pushed him out of the way, telling him that as long as he could hear, he didn't need to see the person to whom he was talking.

Another reporter accused TV reporters and photographers of stealing information from the print people. She said she felt that when the TV crews

arrived, they looked for her immediately so they could listen in on her interviews and steal her information.

Young reporters vs. veterans

Free Press reporters Jack Kresnak and Brian Flanigan said their paper used an informal system of training new DPD reporters. Kresnak and Flanigan spent time, both on the phone and in person, helping Jim Schaefer and Roger Chesley get acclimated to the beat and meet sources. While Kresnak and Flanigan worked on longer features about city issues including DPD, they often passed on back burner story ideas to Schaefer and Chesley. Kresnak and Flanigan often read Schaefer's and Chesley's stories before they were sent to the editor.

The two veteran reporters theorized separately that with their help and knowledge of the inner-workings of city government, they could help the younger reporters get on their feet without making too many big mistakes. Most of the reporters interviewed said DPD puts new people through an initiation process during which they trick and test reporters, then evaluate their mistakes. Under the supervision of Kresnak and Flanigan, new beat reporters not only had help passing their initiation tests, they also carried the credibility of two veterans who are favorites among DPD officers and administrators. Kresnak said even their good names do not help young reporters avoid the initiation process all together.

One older reporter said PIU officers put reporters through a "hazing" period during which they test for trustworthiness and accuracy. Officers often withhold or avoid offering information to see if reporters ask the right questions. Younger reporters agreed, saying DPD had an especially tough initiation, though some argued that all beats take time to learn. A few veteran reporters said the initiation usually takes six months to a year. One said all beats have an initiation process, but the DPD beat is tougher because police officers are more guarded

than sources on other beats. Another veteran said he often socialized with officers outside of work to improve his standing and allow them a chance to become acquainted with him.

Kresnak said he was happy to turn the DPD beat over to younger reporters because "there's only so much you can see before you're sick of it." After a while, he said, the stories are all the same but with different players. He said younger reporters have fresh ideas, more energy and a fresher attitude because they haven't "seen it all." DPD reporters burn out after they have been on the beat for a few years. When he and Flanigan left the beat, they decided to carry on the traditionally good relationship with DPD by helping younger reporters learn their way around.

Kresnak said his style is very laid back, compared to his partner, Flanigan whom he described as hyper at times. Kresnak said he likes to relax and make calls, then go talk to people. He said both he and Flanigan were jaded from their years at DPD and that very few stories excited either one of them, although because of their expertise they sporadically turned out very good in-depth stories about scandals in city government.

When either of the two talked about their work, they often referred to "we" as though they were a team. Kresnak was the shirt-and-tie man while Flanigan sported flowered Hawaiian summer shirts, jeans and comfortable shoes. During the observation, the reporters were discussing an upcoming project on drugs, talking about the issue from every angle and dividing up the workload. They had a unique way of communicating that affirmed the notion that the two worked with and thought of each other as a team.

Kresnak was interviewed just prior to an eight-month leave of absence during which he worked on a journalism fellowship at University of Michigan.

He admitted that he needed some time away from the newsroom to improve his attitude about stories and work in general.

Flanigan said that he and Kresnak had become so well acquainted with their DPD sources that on major crime stories they usually knew exactly who to call and often had more information than officers on the scene.

Flanigan said most encounters with police officers are negative during a reporter's first few months on the beat. Young reporters also might have jaded attitudes about police because of past bad experiences with officers outside of work. He advised young reporters not to automatically assume that all officers jerks just because of their line of work. Flanigan said that as young reporters become better acquainted with the beat, they go through a transition after which they appreciate law enforcement and are well positioned to cover their beat. He warned that some reporters go too far in their transition to the point which they can no longer cover police with an open mind and thus become a public relations tool rather than a journalist.

Flanigan said he had recently given Schaefer a story idea about police communication that he couldn't get done himself. Flanigan said he makes a special effort to find stories for new reporters that they can use to sink their teeth into the beat and acquire sources on their own.

He said he had advised Schaefer and Chesley to read carefully the case drafts DPD provides and hang on to any that strike their interest. On days when they are not busy, they can go back to that case draft file and sometimes dig up a good news feature. He gave an example of a story he once enterprised from a case draft about a 67-year-old woman who was mugged and murdered and her surviving son was mentally handicapped. Flanigan said "a story is never as dead end as a case draft if you know what you're doing" and can enterprise off the paper or "out of the air for that matter."

Free Press reporter Sandy McClure, who was assigned to the Oakland County bureau at the time of the interview, said when she started the DPD beat, she was not fond of the police but decided to learn how officers did their jobs. She said she often acquired story information when she demonstrated her curiosity about how officers work. McClure said reporters need to consider the officers' feelings and be careful about barging in at deadline time and demand information. She said the police don't care what the reporter wants because they have seen generation after generation of police reporter. A good journalist should stand out by being friendly and trying to learn about police, even when he or she does not need the information. Police are more likely to talk when information is needed if reporters ask questions all the time. McClure said police are more likely to give information to reporters who care about police. Rather than say, "My deadline is," McClure said reporters should say, "I'm going to need information. Can I just have two minutes before about ____? That's my deadline."

News reporter David Grant has worked afternoons on the DPD beat since 1971. He said his style, like Kresnak's, is laid back and he tries hard to fit in and identify with his sources. Although he spends part of his evenings writing and updating the *News* computer with crime data, Grant also spends time visiting with sources, both inside and outside the DPD building.

Grant said during his time at DPD, he had outlived 37 *Free Press* reporters, including Kresnak, Flanigan and McClure, all of whom made him work harder when they were on the beat.

Open and shut doors

Newspaper reporters interviewed for this study constantly referred to doors opening and shutting because of certain stories they reported. The stories reporters referred to either were unfavorable to DPD, Coleman Young, the city of

Detroit or got a particular officer or officers in trouble for talking to the media. Almost every reporter interviewed claimed to have written at least one story that so angered DPD administrators that "doors" to information were shut for a period of time or permanently.

For the most part, reporters took pride and responsibility for shutting doors for the principle of reporting the news. They did not blame DPD for being unfair, but said it's part of the game for reporters to redeem themselves by consistently reporting both the bad and the good stories about DPD.

One veteran DPD reporter said it's difficult to have close sources in the department because stories enterprised from their tips arouse suspicion among officers and administrators. Often, reporters are left with only two sources: the PIU and Deputy Chief James Bannon, the reporter said, because other officers are afraid of attribution in all but for "feel good" stories that lack controversy.

Several veterans said reporters who are new to the DPD beat should get their feet wet with a few "feel good" stories in the beginning and periodically throughout their time on the beat. News features that make the department look good diffuse the anger generated by stories that put DPD in a bad light.

One veteran gave an example of a "feel good" story that he had passed on to a new DPD reporter. The story was about a Detroit officer whose parents were both officers in the department. Another veteran reporter said he had wanted to what he thought would be a "feel good" story about a detective squad that had closed 35 of its 36 cases, but an inspector would not allow him to do the story because he thought it would make the other squads look bad.

Another reporter noted that although DPD would like to see more positive stories about the department, selling "feel good" stories about police to editors was a nearly impossible task. He said that although editors don't want

the positive stories, reporters have to keep pitching them and writing them when possible to gather sources and keep in the good graces of the department.

Gatekeeping and newsworthiness

With the designation of DPD's Public Information Unit, the department streamlined its task of "gatekeeping" information by assigning it to one constant group of officers. Reporters said the department's dependence on the PIU to disseminate facts effectively shut off other units as quotable sources.

One young reporter said the only way to avoid the PIU's gatekeeping is to seek information from other sources, although some others said they thought the PIU influenced some outside sources as well.

One of the veteran reporters said that 20 years of the PIU system has formalized channels of information and thereby limited them. "If they could control the public, they would," she said. At the suggestion that gatekeeping decisions are made at a higher administrative level than the PIU, the same reporter responded, "How much do you want to bet they (administrators) don't even know?" She said couldn't understand why the Detroit Fire Department had clamped down on information about Devil's Night. On that night before Halloween, the 1980s began the ugly tradition of vandalism and arson fires that put Detroit in the national media spotlight each year. The reporter said she couldn't understand the fire department's paranoia about information she saw as clearly newsworthy. She said when she talks to someone at DFD during her cold calls and asks, "What's going on? Any fires?" the response is usually, "None that are newsworthy." She said she wanted to know who made that decision of what was newsworthy.

One reporter said the criteria most police officers and other city employees use to gauge newsworthiness is "How will this information affect Coleman Young?" That reporter complained that DPD doesn't know anything about

journalism. He said many administrators' idea of newsworthiness is to herald their units' successes and make the department look good. "Feel good" stories often are appropriate, but more controversial stories are also newsworthy and more what editors like to print.

One veteran said sometimes it is necessary for reporters to gatekeep their own information, or withhold certain facts from editors, in order to protect a story or source. He said his sources know he often is able to bypass editors and therefore they give him all the information and have faith he will withhold the facts that will get them in trouble.

Gender and racial problems

One young reporter who had spent more than two years on the DPD beat said her looks were one major strike against her when she reported on police. She said at least one DPD administrator told her she was too pretty to work around police officers because they couldn't concentrate with her around. She said she could never really crack the shield completely, just a little here and there. Her goal, she said, was to be the female Brian Flanigan, but the rumors that spread about her because she was young and very pretty made it impossible for her to establish credibility within the department.

That reporter, who is white, said that once she had accepted the invitation from a group of black DPD officers to have a drink with them at a restaurant near the police station. After that evening, a white officer told her the rumors were flying that she had been sleeping with black officers. During her time on the beat, this reporter also met, dated and has since married a DPD officer. Both officers and other reporters said that relationship seriously harmed her reputation among other officers in the department. She said that she requested a transfer off the beat several times and finally had to quit her job to get away from DPD.

She said that while she was assigned to DPD she cultivated about 10 sources on her own and got the rest from Flanigan. She said Flanigan, a white reporter who was called "both black and white," by several colleagues and sources, crossed racial boundaries where other reporters could not. She said he had both black and white sources. Some white reporters complained that they were not able to cultivate black officers as sources or pointed to black reporters whose only sources were black.

OBSERVATION ANALYSIS

The relationship between the media and the Detroit Police Department is in many ways the best worst-case scenario a researcher could find. Detroit, a city of more than four million people, has a history rich with industrial triumph, racial discord and, in recent years, poverty and crime.

For all its negatives, Detroit has unbelievable character as do the people who live and work there. T-shirts sold in downtown boutiques boast sayings like "Detroit: Where the weak are killed and eaten." Detroiters take great pride in their city, often embracing its rough image.

City leaders would rather focus on the Motor City's positive offerings: the Tigers and the Red Wings, the Detroit Institute of Art, the Museum of African American History, the Detroit Symphony, Michigan Opera Theatre, cultural diversity and the birthplace of Motown music.

The two daily newspapers would rather focus on news and, in Detroit, that's not always positive. It's no secret that Detroit has one of the highest murder rates in the country and that the crack cocaine problem is as bad or worse than similar-sized American cities, although Mayor Coleman Young may prefer to hide that part of the Motor City's image.

Many Detroit neighborhoods house working families living the American Dream. Others house crack addicts and prostitutes living the American nightmare. Sometimes the divisions between safe and unsafe neighborhoods are obscure. City leaders have been slow to remove condemned or burned-out houses and buildings that can turn even the best neighborhood into a crack dealer's haven. Boarded-up buildings quickly become crack houses until the drug users accidentally or neighbors purposefully torch the structures.

Detroit's historic downtown has stores and restaurants for a variety of income levels. The mirrored glass towers of the Renaissance Center offer an incredible view of the Detroit River and the Windsor, Ontario skyline. The Detroit People Mover, an elevated train known for its cleanliness and safety, connects downtown business and visitor attractions.

In a city so rich with tradition, stereotypes between police and the media flourish, especially in the manner DPD and city administrators view the media and the negative publicity that often is synonymous with a high-crime city like Detroit.

Still on another level, rank-and-file reporters and police officers get the job done. Police officers protect the public and solve crimes while journalists report the news. Reporters use both conventional sources like high-ranking police and city officials and the DPD Public Information Unit. They also talk to "anonymous" sources—officers who have an ax to grind or who simply believe that publicity and freedom of information are important parts of American culture. These "anonymous" officers don't seek the publicity for themselves and could not be interviewed for this study because reporters keep their identities a secret..

On this level, the relationship between Detroit police officers and reporters is friendly and personal. Individual reporters and officers who befriend one another no longer represent the giant law enforcement or media organizations that employ them. On this level, the individuals care about their city, care about their work and, day after day, go about the business of informing or protecting the public.

More specifically, the relationship between DPD's Public Information Unit and the newspaper reporters who share an office in the DPD building usually is a friendly one. PIU officers, however, play by very strict rules and they understand

the consequences of breaking with departmental procedure. The administrative structure and the written policy limit the openness of the relationship. The strained alliance is a breeding ground for negativity that often ends up in print or over the airwaves. A change in the outdated departmental policy and in the attitudes and stereotypes DPD officers and reporters have toward each other would greatly improve their working relationship. When the police, the city and the reporters begin to share information and communicate more effectively, the news will be better in the sense that it will be more realistic. Although some news about the city will be "bad," at least it would be honest and accurate and possibly could improve the city's negative image.

The newspapers and DPD's Public Information Unit

The two daily papers, the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* reflect much different characteristics of the Motor City. At the time of the study, the *News*, was a fatter paper with more readers than its competitor, and it seemed to have more of a suburban mood while the more traditional *Free Press* captured the flavor of the urban inner city. Content analysis of police news in the two papers, which will be discussed later in this thesis, more accurately illustrates the differences in the two papers.

Observation of the Detroit Police beat reporters also demonstrated these differences. At the time of the study, the *News* had been slow in replacing the regular daytime DPD reporter who had resigned. The beat temporarily was being covered by a veteran general assignment reporter, Monroe Walker, who had covered DPD at various times in his 14 years with the paper. The *News's* evening DPD shift was staffed with a regular reporter, David Grant, who had covered that beat for nearly two decades. The overlap between day and night shifts was covered by a regular veteran reporter, Jean Gadowski, who also worked general assignment.

From all appearances, not much was expected of the *News* reporters in the way of story quota. Each covered the daily crime incidents and also wrote other stories periodically, but none wrote longer bylined stories during every shift they worked. There were several shifts, in fact, where the *News* reporters didn't seem busy at all. Content analysis will illustrate the low story output of the *News* DPD reporters.

It was difficult to tell through observation if Walker, the temporary daytime reporter, was working on long-term stories when he wasn't busy with day-to-day news and he was never questioned about this because he declined the second-day's interview. Walker did stop by the PIU periodically and often stayed to chat. He was a very familiar and popular face in the unit and several of the officers there spoke highly of his work.

The *News's* nighttime DPD reporter, Grant, worked on updating crime data in the computer during part of his shift when he wasn't covering the day-to-day news. He did appear to be constantly cultivating and maintaining sources whenever he walked the halls at 1300 Beaubien St. and even when he took his dinner break in nearby Greektown. Grant seemed to know everyone in uniform and many without and everyone knew him as well. He talked briefly, waved or acknowledged many people while he was being observed, but the presence of the researcher may have discouraged longer conversations. The reporter did not watch Grant in the PIU because he did not stop there during the time he was observed. Because of slow news circumstances and Walker's resistance to being observed, the researcher did not have an opportunity to observe any of the *News* reporters in the field doing interviews or covering spot news.

Gadomski, who covered the overlap hours between shifts and also filled in for Grant when he was on vacation, made the afternoon "cold calls" to area police and fire agencies to find out if any had news releases. The researcher did

not observe Gadowski, other than during the interview session, because she did not work her regular shift in the DPD newsroom.

The *Free Press* reporters, in contrast, always appeared to be busy, regardless of whether it was a slow news day. Roger Chesley, who worked during the day, and Jim Schaefer, who worked evenings, both stopped in to the PIU several times each shift, but neither stayed there long. Both asked specific questions or picked up news releases, but neither spent any extra time chatting. In the office at DPD, both Schaefer and Chesley constantly were on the phone with sources or with the *Free Press* newsroom. Both frequently worked at their computer or went to crime and accident scenes.

Both reporters frequently consulted with veteran reporters Brian Flanigan and Jack Kresnak in the main *Free Press* newsroom. Flanigan and Kresnak were unofficial police beat story editors and mentors to the young reporters on the DPD beat. The researcher, who for two years after the observation was completed was a police reporter herself, looks back in envy at the mentoring relationship between these four *Free Press* reporters. The researcher has never seen or worked in such a helpful and learning situation. There was no evidence of competition in the relationship which appeared more to be a strong and supportive friendship, both between Flanigan and Kresnak, who had been partners for many years, and the two newer reporters.

During the observation period, Schaefer followed up on a scanner transmission about a woman whose neighbor's pit bull was blocking her door so that she could not leave for work. Schaefer went to the address and did a short story on the woman's plight and how she ended up talking the fierce animal off her porch. The story, which in the researcher's opinion was a non-event, ended up on the front page. The story's strong writing made the non-event an

interesting front-page piece. The story also demonstrated Schaefer's initiative and ability to turn a non-event into an enjoyable story for the reader.

Both Schaefer and Chesley also were observed covering the story of a barricaded gunman who had broken the windows out of a neighbor's car before threatening her with a gun and taking cover in his own house. Both reporters went to the scene because the crime happened during their shift change. The incident appeared to be routine and there were no stark differences between the two newspapers' accounts of it. The incident occurred during the week the researcher was to have observed *News* reporters, but because of Walker's resistance to having his methods studied, the researcher rode out to the scene with Schaefer.

The researcher also had the opportunity to observe Chesley outside of the DPD newsroom interviewing a homicide investigator at the Highland Park Department of Public Safety. Before the in-person interview, Chesley had been frustrated with the lack of information he had about the shooting death of a Highland Park teenager. He told this researcher that showing his face in the department, rather than handling the story by phone, probably would get him better results. He was right. The investigator spent several minutes with Chesley and readily offered information. He also called to verify or get further information in response to Chesley's questions.

The investigator's willingness to share information was in stark contrast to most Detroit PIU officers. During much of the time they were observed, the PIU officers were friendly and helpful when reporters asked questions. Still, the Detroit officers never appeared to go out of their way to find answers or to describe an event in such detail as to give the reporter a complete understanding of the incident.

The Highland Park investigator made several calls and gave Chesley specific information about the rare weapon that was used in the killing. The researcher never observed that kind of detail in a news release from Detroit's PIU, although a couple of officers in the unit were observed making calls to verify information for reporters.

The fact that Chesley had the opportunity to interview the Highland Park officer who investigated the shooting also was in stark contrast to the operation at DPD. Detroit's homicide unit is off limits to reporters, unless a meeting with an individual investigator is scheduled and approved by the PIU and the inspector in charge of the homicide division. During the time of the observation, all members of the media had to obtain blue passes before even walking into that unit for a scheduled interview. Unscheduled interviews were not allowed. Several reporters took credit for their stories having "slammed shut" the "door" to the homicide unit.

Grant, from the *News* seemed to be the most likely target of the action, according to both him and other reporters. His presence and his ability to find officers willing to talk secretly about DPD operations apparently angered one too many administrators. The result was the pass system which, during the time of the study, was the subject of both questions and jokes among both reporters and PIU officers. Neither seemed to take the system seriously, but the officers did enforce it.

The researcher never observed Walker, Schaefer or Chesley with a pass. Most likely, their faces are familiar enough around the halls of DPD that they did not need the special designation. TV and radio reporters who do not regularly appear at 1300 Beaubien St. were required to stop in the PIU to pick up a pass. The system did not seem to deter Grant, who was an even more familiar face

than the other beat reporters, from doing his job, although he was not observed interviewing anyone or requesting a meeting with anyone.

Although most of the PIU officers were friendly and accommodating to both the researcher and the reporters, there appeared to be limits to their helpfulness. Most were as cooperative as they felt they could be, although their knowledge of certain events truly was limited. If a reporter looked through the case drafts and found an incident about which he or she requested more information, PIU officers may or may not have been able to comply. Often the investigating officer who took the report was unavailable to expound on the case draft information. PIU officers usually relied on the written news releases and rarely strayed from them, explaining that if they weren't at the crime scene and couldn't talk to anyone who was, then they honestly did not know any more information.

If PIU officers did know something more about an incident than was on the case draft or news release, they were most likely to share that information with Walker. Schaefer and Chesley appeared to still be in their "initiation" period during which PIU officers made them work harder and ask more questions before giving them information. All the reporters referred to or discussed in detail their initiation to the DPD beat, including Walker who denied the existence of an initiation "process" at DPD. He said that a similar procedure would take place on any beat, not just the police beat. Walker had been a friendly face at DPD for so long, he did not appear to be affected by the traditional unspoken rules. Other reporters who talked about the initiation process for beat reporters said that the system definitely was in place at DPD.

Several reporters spoke highly of Sgt. George Anthony, whom they said was always as helpful as he could be and was gracious enough to offer a brief explanation when he could not provide the requested information. Some also

spoke highly of Sgt. Chris Buck, who helped the researcher tremendously in arranging to do the study. During the observation period, other PIU officers who were asked by the researcher or other reporters to set up interviews with DPD administrators often were denied access.

The researcher had requested a meeting with then-Chief William Hart during the first week of the study. By the third week, an interview with Deputy Chief James Bannon finally was arranged. No explanation other than lack of time was given for the refusal to interview Hart. Bannon was extremely accommodating. It also appeared both from observation and reporter interviews that Bannon is the administrator who most often deals with reporters one-on-one. Several reporters claimed to have good relationships with him and some spoke highly of his willingness to help.

Shortly after the observation was completed, Hart was convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison for diverting several million dollars of police money for his own personal use.

Function and necessity of DPD's Public Information Unit

A public information unit or, at the very least, a public information officer is a necessity for any public safety agency. Police officers and firefighters have a primary responsibility to maintain or return safety in crime or emergency situations. Dealing with the media is at best a tertiary responsibility.

An agency as large as the Detroit Police Department can't possibly disseminate all its information without the consistency provided by the PIU. However, DPD's reliance on the PIU to disseminate information to the public via the media has given the unit the sort of autonomy that benefits neither it nor the public.

The concept under which the PIU was formed was good. It was supposed to save investigators and other officers the time and trouble of answering

reporters' questions so they could get their police work done. However, what exists today is an office that distributes case drafts, writes up brief news releases and arranges interviews with administrators for reporters. While these are necessary functions because they help reporters get a cursory idea of crime incidents that happen on a daily basis, the office is not proactive where department publicity is concerned. The PIU performs the reactionary function of defending the department from publicity rather than advocating and promoting the department.

Inspector Fred Williams, who heads the PIU, gave the researcher an envelope stuffed with positive news releases the media rejected. In the packet was information about 64 police officers who had earned lifesaving citations and medals, some at great risk to their own personal safety. Williams expressed disgust that the media had more interest in what the department did wrong than what its officers did right.

Through observation and interviews, the researcher concludes that Williams is correct, to a certain degree. Controversy, especially when it involves a public agent or agency doing something unethical or illegal, is always newsworthy because the media have a responsibility to inform the public about how its tax dollars are being spent.

Crimes and emergencies also are newsworthy because the public is always concerned about safety. Knowledge of crime and law enforcement activity helps people define the boundaries between tolerable and deviant behavior, thus indirectly reinforcing public perception of what conduct is socially acceptable. Crime and safety are always newsworthy topics because the public is always interested them.

Perhaps the Detroit media should write more "feel good" stories that herald the positive aspects of the city and its police department in order to

improve their shaky working relationship. Perhaps readers and viewers also would be served by knowing both the positive and negative events that occur in Detroit. Police officers do more than give speeding tickets and most do not use deadly force when they arrest people. Perhaps the public's sense of security would be heightened if the media also reported the good things officers do, like saving lives and solving crime.

Reporters know that a good mix of controversy and "feel good" stories will help them maintain their standing with DPD sources. Still, the inevitable truth of journalism is that once the gates are opened, negative stories pass through easily and don't always leave room for positive stories. People should know the bad information so they can protect themselves and help make their communities better. Sometimes there isn't enough time and space for a balance. Detroit reporters perceive a veil of secrecy by city and police administrators. Their duty is to make sure information the public should know is not shrouded by that veil.

The public information unit would serve the public and DPD more effectively by removing the perception of that veil. Crime and departmental statistics and information that in most cities is public should be readily accessible to reporters and the general public. The unit should readily allow reporters to talk to departmental supervisors who possess the best, most accurate information, rather than trying to answer questions or write news releases on events about which they have little or no knowledge.

Written departmental policy and an unwritten paranoia force PIU officers to question the motives of reporters seeking information or interviews. During the observation period, much time was spent by PIU officers scrutinizing the reasons reporters wanted the information. It almost seemed like the officers' assumption was that the media always had some motive other than reporting the

news--as though kudos were handed out in the respective newsrooms to journalists who could make DPD or Mayor Coleman Young look bad.

The researcher concludes that a false sense of reality exists in Detroit between the police and the media. DPD administrators and PIU officers generally assume that the media's agenda is to make the department look bad. Reporters and editors generally assume that DPD's agenda is to downplay its shortcomings by releasing as little information as possible and by making it difficult for reporters to obtain it. Somewhere between the two presumptions lies reality.

The role of the media is to inform the public. Period. Traditionally, journalists are supposed to keep a neutral agenda unless otherwise indicated, as in the case of editorials or columns. The researcher has no reason to believe the newspaper reporters in Detroit have any other agenda, although they are suspicious of DPD's unwritten policy to hide as many facts as possible.

The role of the police is to protect the public. Period. Often protecting the public includes protecting information that might hurt individuals or the prosecution of a crime. The police should not have the added responsibility of being a public relations arm of the city administration. Crime is a reality in Detroit and any attempt to disguise that is a disservice to its citizens. Making information difficult to obtain is like sending an embossed invitation to reporters to dig for facts. When reporters dig, the information they find often becomes newsworthy simply because it was a secret. Making information readily available gives reporters a chance to pick and choose what is newsworthy. Secrecy is no longer a criteria for newsworthiness and events are judged on their own merit, rather than the department's failure to keep them hidden.

PIU officers complained that when they made information readily available to reporters through news conferences or releases, their efforts were never enough to satisfy the hungry journalists. Following the police

commissioners' and chief's weekly news conference, reporters swarm the podium to ask more questions. Just as the chief and commissioners had their own agenda in what they discussed, so do the reporters have an agenda on what they ask. Although the meeting offered a question and answer period, reporters tended not to share their story angles with each other by asking questions publicly.

Similarly, news releases satisfy the agenda of the department but do not always answer the questions reporters might have about the incident. Journalists not only like to ask questions, but they have to because they don't want their stories to look too much like their competitors'.

Competition between different media is not and should not be the concern of the police department. However, competition is a major concern for journalists who, in order to make their stories different from the competitors', must take the information given to them by police and mix it with "color" or detail gained through observation at a scene or interviews with victims, witnesses, bystanders or experts outside of the police department.

"Color" was a concept most of the officers interviewed for this study did not understand. Journalists know that they must always look for more than one side to a story and that to make the story interesting to the reader, they must find the best, most eloquent and fascinating quotes or details to tie in with the basic facts surrounding the incident.

Case drafts provided for reporters by the PIU sometimes were a good source for finding color because although most had the victim or victims' names blacked out, the person reporting the incident often was listed. Officers said the information was blacked out in order to protect the victim, but often the victim also was the person reporting the incident. At the very least, the case draft information generally provided locations, brief descriptions and times of

incidents that reporters could use to seek out witnesses or victims for color comments.

Sources who do not understand the concept of two or more sides to a story need to be more informed about the basic rules of journalism. The media is not supposed to be a place where one person or agency's agenda is presented without argument or comment from an opposing viewpoint. Journalists know this and should be very clear to their sources that they will be checking all sides of a story.

Some officers complained about information in stories that came from sources outside of DPD, saying that what a witness or victim has to say is not as credible as a police report. The reporter is responsible for weighing the source's credibility and using information accordingly. For police, a crime victim or witness might seem to police like a terrible source for a news story because of his or her emotional involvement in the incident and the potential for exaggeration or misinterpretation of the facts. However, for the reporter, the victim or witness is a gold mine for information that will add color or a human side of the story that the reader wants to know. If the readers wanted only to see police reports, they wouldn't buy newspapers, they would go to the department and see the reports for themselves.

In the researcher's own experience as a reporter, sometimes an event is extremely newsworthy and therefore deserves a prominent space in the newspaper. Big events that are sure to have some impact on the community should not be displayed as briefs in a newspaper. Readers easily could conclude that three inches of space given to a fatal fire gives the appearance that the newspaper does not care about the victims or does not think their deaths are newsworthy.

Still, if facts are sketchy, incomplete or unavailable, it is nearly impossible for the reporter to fill the six-, eight-, or ten-inch space the editor has allotted for the story. With that space consideration in mind, the reporter must explore every possible avenue to find the information to fill that space. In some cases, for example, homicides, the reporter will fill the space with description of where it happened or how a body was found and might include statistics about other crimes in that area--anything to fill the space so the story can be displayed more prominently.

Several police officers marveled at the reporting skills of Brian Flanigan and Jack Kresnak in their series of articles about the number of police officers patrolling Detroit's streets. An information leak of departmental statistics led to the series which several officers regarded as well-written and intriguing, but not very important. The series didn't meet their criteria of newsworthiness and perhaps it was not newsworthy. However, had the information been readily available to Flanigan and Kresnak, a different evaluation of the story might have been possible. The reporters and the *Free Press* editors might have concluded that the information was not newsworthy. The lack of accessibility to the statistics made them like a carrot to a rabbit and quite possibly was the reason the numbers became news.

Both the public and the police department would be better served if the information that was made available to reporters gave them a realistic view of the city's problem. In Detroit, lifting the so-called veil of secrecy probably would lead to better news about the city because reporters would not be as inclined to dig for dirt. Newspapers and broadcast stations might make more room for a mix of good and bad news where now the negative seems to steal the spotlight. Removing suspicion on both sides of the police-media relationship would

promote a better understanding and perhaps a unified agenda, rather than two completely opposite programs.

Secrecy and Mayor Coleman Young

Unspoken paranoia seems to keep Detroit employees and administrators on their toes. Nearly every reporter interviewed for this study pointed a finger at Detroit Mayor Coleman Young as the cause of paranoia among DPD officers and other city workers who fear that giving information to the media somehow will lead to punishment or termination from their jobs.

Reporters said DPD officers felt that talking to the media might mean working a graveyard shift "walking Belle Isle," the city's island park in the middle of the Detroit River. Some said other city employees withheld information that should have been public record to reporters because they didn't want to be responsible for negative publicity about the city.

In response to this paranoia about the media among city employees, reporters from several TV and radio stations and the two daily newspapers have banded together to fight the system by filing requests for public documents under Freedom of Information Act. Whenever necessary, reporters take the city to court to get information under the FOIA, in hopes that the court costs will deter the city from continuing its practice of denying reporters access to public records.

Reasons for this paranoia are tough to confirm. The mayor's press secretary denies that Young is involved in city or police matters to the extent that reporters say he is. PIU officers and the mayor's office point to the "Criteria on Dissemination of News" and say the city is much freer with information than reporters have described.

Although the city officially denies the unspoken threat that those who talk to the media will be punished or fired, the paranoia does exist, according to

reporters. The researcher gives the city credit for its assistance in this study. However, the observation did conclude that the city and its police department are extremely conservative in the dissemination of information to the media. In particular, DPD seemed to prefer that all media requests be handled by the PIU and interviews with other officers, except for the deputy police chief, usually were not permitted. Even the researcher's own request for an interview with the police chief received a slow response and the interview eventually was scheduled with the deputy chief.

This study does not attempt to analyze Detroit politics or city government. However, it was impossible to conclude from this observation that the media are wrong in their opinion that DPD, and other city employees are paranoid about releasing information. Reporters were consistent in their complaints about the city and DPD and some were taking action against the city's unwritten media policy through the Freedom of Information Act.

Perhaps less important than the consistency of the reporters' opinions, the researcher also observed a comfortable, relaxed interview with a Highland Park detective in which information was freely shared with a reporter. Observation of the interaction between PIU officers and reporters did not appear quite as comfortable. No conclusions about the city, DPD or the PIU officers, however, should be drawn from that one observation.

Beat initiation and cultivating sources

In the Public Information Unit at DPD there is nothing written in stone about initiating new reporters. Still, nearly all the reporters described learning the police beat as a process during which they gained the trust of officers both inside and outside the PIU. Even the PIU officers who were interviewed said they needed a little time to get used to new reporters before they felt comfortable with them. There are no rules in the process, however.

Observation of the interaction between *Free Press* reporters Jim Schaefer and Roger Chesley and officers in the PIU subtly demonstrated an initiation process. Officers were almost always friendly toward Schaefer and Chesley, but the banter between them as compared to when the *News's* Monroe Walker was in the room was quite different. Walker was a very well-known and welcome face in the DPD building who had been assigned there at various times over a period of 14 years. Schaefer and Chesley had been around only for a few months.

Although PIU officers at the time of the study were still becoming acquainted with and learning to trust Schaefer and Chesley, the *Free Press* reporters had a distinct advantage in the department in their association with reporters Jack Kresnak and Brian Flanigan. That advantage seemed to work in their favor, as officers at every level of DPD respected and spoke very highly of Kresnak and Flanigan. Because of their mentors' popularity, Schaefer and Chesley could have seen Flanigan and Kresnak as a handicap because of the inevitable comparison that both other reporters and police officers made between them. No such jealousy or competition was observed, although Schaefer and Chesley clearly had a lot to live up to in the minds of everyone who had ever worked with Kresnak and Flanigan.

Veteran reporters like Monroe Walker and David Grant from the *News* and Jack Kresnak and Brian Flanigan from the *Free Press* had a much easier job. They already had gathered and developed sources at all levels of the police department and the city government. Their job was not to gather sources, but to cultivate them by keeping in friendly contact with them.

Sometimes this entailed delivering newspapers to various offices in the DPD building and stopping in each for a friendly chat. Source cultivation also included phone calls or visits during which veteran reporters were able to

discuss more than just the story at hand because they were more personally acquainted with their sources.

Perhaps the most interesting observation of source cultivation was Flanigan's subtle method of taking his smoking breaks outside the *Free Press* building at what appeared to be scheduled times each day. Regardless of whether the breaks were at the same time each day or whether Flanigan called and arranged for people to casually meet him there, he was observed on at least two occasions talking to sources during those smoking breaks. In a letter to the editor that two of Flanigan's sources wrote after his death, they commented on how many times each had walked by the building at 321 Lafayette and seen the reporter standing at its entrance. That letter is reprinted later in this chapter.

Gatekeeping and newsworthiness

At every step in the communication process is a gate at which some information is held back while some passes through. In the news business, editors are seen as the traditional gatekeepers of information. They decide which stories go in the paper or on the air and which do not. Reporters seeking to uncover information meet with other gates and gatekeepers as well. The keeper of the gate in the Detroit Police Department is the Public Information Unit.

Without the PIU, reporters would be forced to call all over the department until they found the officer or administrator who had the information they sought. The volume of calls from every newspaper, TV and radio station in Detroit could seriously disrupt the work of officers and investigators. The PIU was formed under the belief that it is more efficient for the department to speak with one voice to assure that information is released in a consistent manner.

The PIU, as that one voice, is responsible for selecting incidents that are important or newsworthy enough for release to the media. Officers in that unit select certain incidents out of literally hundreds of case drafts each week and

write news releases on those events. Although reporters do have other means of learning about crime or public safety incidents, including police scanners, phone calls from readers or viewers and other police or fire sources, case drafts and news releases from the PIU are a good, consistent, primary source. Most of the reporters interviewed for this study said they would feel like failures if they depended solely on the PIU for information. However, most also said they saw the PIU as a starting point.

Veteran reporters said they had learned through the years how to get past the gatekeepers in the PIU and had found other reliable sources of information. Newer reporters were still learning the size and shape of the gate and finding the holes in it. Journalists in all media understand what "news" is because it is their job to report it; "news" is second nature to a reporter. Journalism textbooks define news in a variety of ways including: "anything you didn't know yesterday," "what people talk about," "what readers want to know," "what a well-trained editor decides to put in his or her paper," "anything timely," "the report of an event," and "tomorrow's history."⁸

Police officers usually do not have formal journalism training or experience. Their definitions of newsworthy--which often come from reading and viewing, rather than participating in the media--can differ greatly from that of a police beat reporter. PIU officers interviewed for this study defined news as the following: events with extenuating circumstances where the community could help the police solve cases; information that would concern the general public, including both tragic and positive details; something of widespread importance to the public and that people would want to know about. Newsworthy events are not commonplace. One officer gave two definitions of

⁸Fedler, Fred; *Reporting for the Media*; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers; Orlando, Fla.; 1989; p. 176.

newsworthy: 1) what the police and the media perceive the readers and viewers will want to know and 2) what people actually want to read about or see. One administrator said there was no departmental definition of newsworthy and that his home phone often rang off the hook with PIU officers seeking guidance in what information should be released. That same administrator said he left the question of what is news up to the journalists. Whatever they print or broadcast is news.

The officers seemed to have a firm grasp on the concept that "news" is what readers and viewers want. The definition doesn't work because some officers said they think the readers and viewers want something other than what the media currently give them. Several said they thought readers and viewers would rather see more good news; others conceded that the public wants to see gore and violence.

Theoretically, if an officer who believes the public doesn't want to read about violent crime day after day uses his or her own criteria for newsworthiness, only non-violent incidents that favor the department would be selected as important for media release. Unless the reporter finds out about a violent incident from some other means, he or she may miss a legitimate news story because the PIU officer did not think the information was worthy of release. PIU officers, therefore, wield quite a bit of power over the Detroit media.

One officer noted that when reporters made their "cold calls" they were inviting police to gatekeep. Generally, the call consists of the reporter asking, "What's going on?" With that, or a similar question, the reporter is actually asking the officer to employ his or her own definition of newsworthy in selecting which events to mention.

In the researcher's own experience, particularly on busy shifts when "news" might be more likely to happen, most officers and dispatchers will

answer that question with, "Nothing," unless the reporter probes further, perhaps making casual conversation. Often if there is a news release already written, the person who answers the cold call will offer to read that, but some might not even go to that effort unless the reporter specifically asks if there are any news releases. After a few months on any beat, most reporters develop a rapport--either good or bad--with their sources. Those sources with whom that rapport is good actually will offer information and in some cases might even call the reporter to notify him or her of an event.

Although it's true, as one administrator said, that there is no way to devise a gatekeeping system to satisfy everyone, it is possible to communicate some general ideas about which events are newsworthy and which ones are not. Through this study and personal experience, the researcher has concluded that if beat reporters are missing important newsworthy events, the likely causes are: 1) the reporter has not effectively cultivated police sources; 2) the reporter has written or said something to annoy or anger his or her sources; 3) officers or dispatchers who answer the phones on cold calls or who write news releases employ different definitions of newsworthy than the reporter's. In the researcher's opinion, substitutes for police beat reporters can be a real danger to their newsrooms because sources may or may not respond to anyone other than the regular reporter.

To live within the power of police as gatekeepers and to prevent being victimized by that power, reporters should work hard to become familiar faces and names to their sources, both in person and over the phone. If a reporter feels he or she is going to write something that might anger or annoy a good source, he or she should consult with the source to double check that the information is not only correct, but clearly written. The reporter also should discuss any criticism the angry sources have to offer.

On the police beat, few sources are dispensable, as noted by several reporters in this study, especially Brian Flanigan. While the reporter should not be the public relations arm of the police department, he or she also should try not to burn too many bridges for his or her newsroom. Reporters often have to write bad news stories, but a good reporter can do so with such finesse as not to lose valuable sources in the process. Several officers and administrators interviewed for this study noted the talents of Flanigan, Kresnak and Sandy McClure of the *Free Press* and Norm Sinclair and Monroe Walker of the *News*, to name only a few.

A reporter should discuss news and newsworthiness with police sources often to remind them of his or her newsroom's definition. In the researcher's opinion, police sources are not responsible for a reporter missing a story. If, in the officer's opinion, an event was not worth reporting, it will be missed. The reporter's efforts at ongoing communication about the qualities of news and newsworthy events could prevent some of those stories missed because of differing opinions on news value.

Behavior and demographics of reporters and officers

Several times during the study, officers and reporters alike either made reference to or discussed in detail a former DPD reporter who was young, female and quite pretty. Her success on the beat, or lack thereof, was widely attributed, both by herself and others, to her looks and gender. In interviews with police officers, that reporter often was held as the example of exactly how a reporter should not be.

One officer said the woman was too pretty to do the job because she served as a distraction and confused the officers she was supposed to interview. Another officer said that her behavior went beyond aggressive to abusive. He suggested that neither his own daughter, nor the researcher, should behave in

such an abusive manner. The reporter took that comparison to mean that females in general should not behave this way. Several officers said they had heard rumors that this female reporter had been "sleeping around" in the department. One said that it didn't matter if the woman had or had not had sex with DPD officers because the perception was that she had.

The reporter told the researcher that she had started the DPD beat with the goal of being another Brian Flanigan. She was young and smart and looked to Flanigan as a mentor. Even his connections in the department, which had helped several other reporters, did not help her gather and cultivate her own sources. She realized and plainly stated that her looks made doing her job much more difficult. That, coupled with her meeting and dating the man she later married, a DPD officer, created a miserable climate in which for her to work.

A highly-respected veteran female reporter, who was several years older than the much-talked-about young reporter, said the only reason she survived on the beat and earned the respect of DPD officers is because she was not pretty. The researcher cannot render an opinion here because the woman was interviewed by phone, but her comment supports the theory that some DPD officers do not give credibility to young or pretty female reporters. In fact, one officer warned the researcher to avoid becoming as abusive as the pretty young reporter. The warning was taken as an indication that the officer felt the researcher had some credibility and was nice, but that her looks could become a problem for her as they had for the reporter.

The researcher concluded that the young female reporter probably started out with an assertive attitude that became gradually more aggressive as she became frustrated with the way officers treated her. Other DPD reporters over the years have been aggressive, digging for stories and sources and working with the seedier side of life. For them, the behavior was a natural means of doing their

jobs. For a young, pretty, female reporter, that attitude was seen as unbecoming. Rumors flew and the reporter could not dispell the stereotype. The job became such a nightmare and the reporter had to quit for several months until the paper could assign her to a different beat.

Only four females, one PIU officer and three reporters, were interviewed for this study. At least one female secretary also worked in the PIU and was therefore observed, but her role did not appear to affect the relationship between that office and the reporters who frequented it. Gender was not discussed with or by the female officer and one of the reporters. The other two talked fairly extensively about their success on the job with respect to their gender. For one, being female meant not being a good DPD reporter. For the other, gender was not as much of a problem, but she perceived that her success on the beat was because she was not as pretty as the younger, less successful reporter. No specific gender based incidents or comments were witnessed by or directed toward the researcher, other than the PIU officer who continually compared her to his own daughter.

Any preference for male reporters may have been caused by years of nearly all-male reporting staff in the DPD newspaper office. Only three women had covered the beat for any length of time in the last two decades. Female reporters, although quite common in the main newsroom, are not yet a familiar sight at DPD. Familiarity seemed to work in the favor of reporters in general at DPD. However, to become familiar, one must also be inconspicuous and someone with whom officers can identify. Female reporters at DPD are still outnumbered both by male reporters and male officers. At the time the PIU was observed, the officers possibly should have been exposed to more female officers and reporters as compared to those women in less traditional roles, such as support staff and secretaries.

The attitudes among officers and reporters about race were not nearly as obvious or openly discussed as those about gender. All but one of the PIU officers was black and only one other white officer, Deputy Chief James Bannon, was interviewed. The reporters were a more racially mixed bunch and only a handful of them discussed race as an issue with covering the DPD beat. Most said black reporters seemed to mix well with DPD officers, particularly in the PIU, but white officers with the right attitude fared just as well.

Several times the researcher observed reporters from all media, both black and white, enter the PIU office seeking information. She attributed the friendliness and familiar banter with their experience and time at DPD rather than their race, although most of the apparently popular reporters were black. Still, Flanigan and Kresnak, who are white, seemed to be extremely popular and well respected among DPD officers. Some reporters noted that Flanigan had worked for the *Michigan Chronicle*, Detroit's biggest minority newspaper, and that he mixed well with all races.

Criteria on Dissemination of News

When the researcher asked officers in the PIU to provide a copy of the department's media policy, they quickly obliged and handed over the "Criteria on Dissemination of News." The policy, which did not include a date of issue, is an updated version of the original that was included in a 1970 pamphlet called "Meeting the News Media: A Guide for the Detroit Police Officer."

That pamphlet was published after a series of meetings between 65 DPD command officers and 20 local "newsmen," presumably reporters and editors, from all media. Those meetings resulted in the writing of the departmental media policy which is essentially the same one that currently is used. An introduction to the 1970 pamphlet written by then-Police Commissioner Patrick

V. Murphy, justifies the meetings and the resulting policy with the following quote attributed to the founders of the London Metropolitan Police in 1829:

...the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.

The commissioner went on to explain that for DPD, doing a good job comes first.

But second comes effective communication between police and citizens. The purpose of this pamphlet is to increase public acceptance of the work of the Detroit Police Department by improving communication between police and citizens through the news media. We think better communication through the news media will not only help to inform citizens, but it should help to stimulate police officers to do a better job.

Nowhere in the updated "Criteria" nor in the pamphlet is there any mention of the benefits the media can provide a police department, including: publicizing information that empowers the public either to protect themselves or to come forward with information or tips that can help solve cases; boosting morale of individual officers and the department through good publicity; or better positioning the department with the public, thus garnering more public funding for law enforcement equipment and training.

Instead, the pamphlet focuses on the traditional police/media dispute problems:

There are some legitimate restrictions on information that police may disclose. Most news media accept and agree with these legitimate restrictions. These are limitations established by laws and courts, not by the police themselves. They deal mainly with provisions to protect the rights of the accused, and to assure a fair trial.

Police have little discretion in such matters.

Sometimes, courts and attorneys themselves disagree. In preparing criteria for the Detroit police, we have tried to comply with the most recent relevant decisions and opinions, as far as we understand them. Most of these have tended toward greater freedom and fewer restrictions on the release of information.

Other factors affecting the dissemination of information are the questions of public or individual safety, aiding the solution of a crime or the capture of a criminal, and propriety or "good taste." In these matters the police do have discretion. But so do the news media.

Criteria covering such situations have tried to make room for a sharing of responsibility between police and press, so that police themselves are not left in the role of arbitrary censors.

As far as principles are concerned, conflicts that arise over the distribution or withholding of crime news most often are based on the principle of fair, unprejudiced trial vs. "freedom of the press"--both Constitutional guarantees.

Deciding this conflict is a matter for the people, their courts, and the press. The police role is to recognize the validity of both principles, and to base police action on the decisions that are passed down through the courts.

Apart from this conflict of principle, which is up to others to resolve, police have every reason--and in fact an obligation--to look upon the prompt public release of "releasable" information as an essential part of their total job.

The Criteria at best needs to be updated. When it was created, it was a forward-thinking document that helped the department take a pro-active approach to improving its image through the media. Nearly 20 years later in 1989, when the observation was conducted, the media, the city and the department had changed to the point of outdating the criteria.

One blatant example of changing times are the document's references to journalists as "newsmen" and officers as "he" or "him." In this new, politically-correct era, male-only references in a policy document of this nature are inexcusable. It is not surprising that some of the PIU officers spoke with disgust about a female reporter, given that their own policy excludes women from covering news at DPD. That policy also excludes the one female PIU officer, as well as other women at all levels of administration at DPD.

In Commissioner Murphy's introduction to the pamphlet, he said the news media understand limits on the release of information that might deprive the accused of his or her right to a fair trial. While it is true that the public might

tend to convict someone of the crime with which they are accused based on media reports, juries are carefully selected with that fact in mind. Jurors are screened to avoid prejudiced opinions caused either by media exposure or from the juror's own background.

The police can and should withhold information that would infringe on the accused's civil rights, but fair trial may be too common an excuse. Withholding information could infringe on the accused's rights in a different way by not allowing the media to fulfill its duty as government watchdog. Theoretically, without the watchful eye of the media, the accused could be subjected to any number of atrocities at the hands of the police and courts.

Officers who are concerned about potential fair trial problems should communicate with the prosecutor's office and coordinate information release. Reporters usually can depend on the court officers and documents as another information source on a crime incident that has progressed to the prosecution stage. Officers can take quite a bit of heat off of themselves by referring a reporter to the appropriate officer of the court or obtaining prosecution information for the reporter him or herself. At the very least, if specific information is withheld, police and the courts should be careful to provide reporters with an adequate explanation for the decision to withhold.

Murphy pointed out perhaps one of the most important arguments in the issue of police/media relations when he said that whether or not to withhold information comes down to the "free press" vs. "fair trial." Murphy leaves the solution of that argument up to "the people, their courts and the press," although he does not specify how that decision is made or what police officers and reporters are supposed to do in the meantime. He also does not say who decides that the "free press" vs. "fair trial" argument is appropriate. Neither the public nor the media is in a position to make that argument unless they possess the very

information that is being withheld. Therefore the police and/or the courts have the obvious advantage in being able to make their argument.

Murphy also said in his introduction that "good taste" was a factor in dissemination of news, although nowhere in the document does he define the term. He said that in matters of "good taste," both police and the media have discretion. The omission of a departmental definition of "good taste" is similar to the unclear meaning of "newsworthy." Reporters who leave the work of defining "good taste" up to the police are inviting officers to use their own discretion for releasing information. If the reporter never gets the facts because they are withheld, he or she cannot use his or her own definition of "good taste" in deciding whether to report them.

The "prompt release of 'releasable' information" is "an essential part" of their DPD's job, Murphy said in his introduction. He did not say that the media offer police the benefit of good publicity in addition to the sting of bad news. Murphy does not credit the media with the ability to help police solve crimes by disseminating information that garners tips from the public. He did not mention that officers might enjoy taking the credit for good acts by being quoted in the paper or interviewed on television or radio. The media do not and never have gone away, no matter how strained their relationship with law enforcement has been. However, in the researcher's opinion, working with individual members of the media—reporters and photographers—is not necessarily always a negative experience, as Murphy suggests in his introduction.

Although the actual criteria are fairly detailed, a number of important definitions were left out. Under the first section of the document, which is included in the previous chapter, the department charges the General Information Section, now called the Public Information Unit, with identifying newsworthy information, encouraging other units of the department to report

newsworthy ideas or events to the PIU. As previously discussed in this chapter, there is no departmental definition of newsworthy and thus no guidance for either the PIU officers charged with identifying news or other units that come across newsworthy ideas or events that would "otherwise escape attention."

PIU officers also are charged with assembling newsworthy information into a workable form, presumably disseminated either through a news release or news conference. No direction is given for what information an officer should include when compiling facts for release. The traditional elements for a news story include: who, what, when, where, why and how. A written reminder of those elements can be found under the Plexiglas cover of at least one desk in the PIU. Still, neither those elements, nor any others that might interest reporters, are included in the Criteria.

For example, an important element of many crime stories is the suspect's description which would empower the public to come forward with tips identifying the perpetrator of a crime. Help from the public in assembling information in a case can be a tremendous advantage for investigators. The fact that a witness gave a detailed description of a suspect could even be a selling point for the reporter in trying to convince an editor of an event's newsworthiness. Some crime events might otherwise be ignored by the media, but a good description might garner attention and tips from the public for a case that otherwise is not newsworthy.

Given that the media policy for the department doesn't provide specific instructions on what facts should be compiled for release, reporters on the DPD beat must be sure to be specific when requesting information. In the researcher's own experience as a police beat reporter, she has found it easier to prepare known sources and contacts by discussing or clarifying her own definitions of news and its elements. A good relationship with a source also helps insure that

information will not be withheld simply because the reporter did not think to ask about it. In the researcher's experience, well-cultivated sources will provide many such details without being asked.

The Criteria also charges the PIU with distributing and informing officers of the department's media policy and "providing whatever counseling and interpretation may be necessary." Training in media relations is an essential part of good public relations and preserving the department's image. It is crucial for the department that officers either deal with the media themselves or refer reporters to the appropriate departmental expert or authority. Given the lack of definition in these criteria for important issues like newsworthiness and the elements of news conferences or releases, counseling and interpretation of the media policy would have to be essential.

One potentially serious problem with the Criteria is that the lack of definition lends itself to different interpretations by different PIU officers and administrators. Rank and file officers and investigators who have no clear understanding of the media policy may fear interpreting it or talking to the media, even when news coverage could help solve a case.

The Criteria generally leaves too much interpretation of departmental policy and newsworthiness up to the PIU and department administrators. Where the rules lack clarity, they exclude rank and file officers and investigators—even when they have the direct personal knowledge the reporter seeks—from any benefits of media communication. Through its mistakes the Criteria puts the responsibility of responding to the media back onto the PIU and the administrators who enforce the rules, not with the officers whose expertise reporters seek.

The Criteria does allow for officers who have expertise or personal knowledge of an incident or investigation to speak to reporters as long as they

are factual and accurate in their answers and do not offer opinions. Officers who are at the scenes of civil emergencies or natural disasters also are allowed to share "personal on-the-spot experiences" with reporters, again only if their answers are factual and accurate.

Through the observation, the researcher became convinced that officers feel paranoid about the factuality and accuracy of their information and about their interpretation of the departmental media policy. Most officers, therefore, were unlikely to freely talk to reporters "on the record."

Conclusions and suggestions

The researcher has developed a list of suggestions for improving the police/media climate in Detroit, based on her observation of DPD and the newspaper reporters who work there, and from her own experience as a police reporter for the *Lansing (Mich.) State Journal* and a consultant and trainer on police/media issues.

To begin with, 1993 may be high time for another "Meeting the News Media" conference to discuss problems the department has with local journalists. The current criteria also should be updated to reflect the results of such a meeting as well as changes in the demographics of police officers and DPD beat reporters over the last two decades since the last meeting.

DPD should take a pro-active role in its media relations by familiarizing PIU officers, dispatchers, administrators and other officers with the inner-workings of the newsrooms. If officers understand how a reporter works and the pressures of his or her job, including deadlines and story or picture requirements, they might better understand reporters' aggressiveness and tenacity.

Both DPD and the local media should develop cross training for officers and journalists so that both are familiar with each other's respective duties and

territories. In the researcher's experience, sometimes just knowing where an officer's office or phone are located can help a reporter understand such things as why phones go unanswered or why an officer is unable to answer questions about a scanner transmission. Both officers and the journalists who cover them must understand the confines of each other's jobs in order to work together effectively.

In rewriting its "Criteria," DPD should consider designating officers other than those in the PIU as sources for reporters. For example, if there is an officer in the dispatch area who monitors DPD radio traffic, he or she should be allowed or assigned to answer media questions about incident locations. Other officers should have the option of talking or not talking to reporters, either with or without a PIU officer present. In the current rules, such an option apparently is available, although reporters universally were denied access to officers other than the PIU, the deputy chief and a handful of administrators or experts.

This study is only a cursory view of the working relationship between DPD and the Detroit newspaper reporters. However, she concludes that a communication breakdown and widespread paranoia was easily observed and discussed by the newspaper reporters and police officers interviewed for the study. More discussion or perhaps a summit conference like the one held in 1969 are needed to ease the tension. The researcher predicts that reopening the lines of communication between the city and DPD and the local media obviously would benefit journalists, but might also bring more favorable media attention to the city and improve its image.

Brian Flanigan

A major change in the daily routine at the *Free Press* was the loss of Brian Flanigan, who died about two months after the observation. Flanigan's untimely passing was a tragedy both for his friends and family, and also to future DPD

reporters who would have benefited greatly from his knowledge and expertise. Although the researcher only spoke to or observed him a handful of times, he seemed to be a very warm, friendly and genuine individual.

He told the researcher one story about a federal agent who had refused Flanigan's requests for information or interviews. Flanigan said he had been working for a long time trying to get this officer to become a source, and had become frustrated with his failure to do so. When the officer's wife became seriously ill, Flanigan said he sent her roses. He said he sent the gift spontaneously with an accompanying card that said he would feel terrible if his own wife were ill and he wished them the best. Flanigan said he did not expect the officer to ever come around, but the two had been friends ever since.

Flanigan's daily smoking breaks outside the *Free Press* building often were chances for sources to stop and chat, either with information or just a friendly conversation. Flanigan seemed to be the master of gathering and keeping sources. Everyone who was interviewed for this study praised Flanigan both personally and professionally.

Flanigan's partnership with Kresnak also was unique on both their accounts. According to Kresnak, Flanigan had been covering the DPD beat for the *Michigan Chronicle* when they first met. Flanigan was such a good reporter that Kresnak decided he'd rather work with him than compete with him. Kresnak said he encouraged his editors to consider hiring Flanigan and eventually they did. The two had been unofficial partners up until Flanigan's death.

Again, the researcher was envious listening to their conversations about upcoming stories because the two reporters shared their ideas easily, with automatic understanding and very little explanation. They were such good friends that each knew what the other was thinking. As reporters, they combined their respective journalistic skills and knowledge to turn out several lengthy,

hard-hitting projects that were interesting and informative to the reader. Together, Flanigan and Kresnak also demonstrated for young reporters just how it's done: how to ethical, professional, inquisitive, informative and communicative.

Perhaps the best tributes to Flanigan were the front page stories about his death and his funeral and the positive comments made by his friends and coworkers-workers. The following letter to the editor, written by William R. Coonce, special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration in Detroit and James G. Huse Jr., special agent in charge of the U.S. Secret Service in Detroit, depicts better than the researcher's own observation the type of reporter Flanigan was:

We have come to understand, over the years, that despite the popular convention that there is a natural antagonism between those who enforce the law and those who report the news, in fact both are kindred souls. Both live reactive lives swayed by crises and mayhem over which they have no control. Both are witnesses to the foibles, failures and occasional triumphs that mark the progress of a day in any place. Because of this, it is not strange that we both came to know and befriend Brian Flanigan.

For us both, Brian epitomized our ideal of a big city newspaper reporter: brassy, aggressive and irreverent; yet, as honest and fair a person as either of us have ever had dealings with. Brian's comic cynicism and Celtic disdain for pretense and hypocrisy endeared him to ears abused by bureaucratise. We relished the opportunity to witness Brian scythe through the posturing that pervades so much of daily life. Brian's tenacity on a story was compelling. He left no doubt that you were dealing with a complete professional, a reporter whose skills were at their zenith.

When we learned of Brian's death while attending the International Association of Chiefs of Police convention in Louisville, we were stunned and saddened. During the day we met many of our metropolitan Detroit area chiefs of police colleagues who were equally grieved by this tragic news.

It is clear to both of us that we will indeed miss Brian Flanigan. Would that we had one more chance to talk with him again, and laugh. Each time either of us walks by the entrance to

321 Lafayette we will recall the scrappy Irishman who was often in the door. The Irish (and we both qualify) often concluded an encounter with a blessing for the departing. We both offer that now to our friend Brian Flanigan: "Safe home, Brian, safe home."

CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

The content analysis portion of the study covered police- and crime-related stories in the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* published between August 14 and September 1, 1989. Stories were selected for analysis: if the local or state law enforcement were mentioned or information was attributed to them; or if they were about police, crime or safety issues. Accident stories were omitted unless a criminal violation like drunken or reckless driving was mentioned.

All the coding and data entry was done and checked by the researcher. A coder reliability check was done by John Clogston, professor of journalism at Northern Illinois University with 10 sample stories not in the population. Clogston's coding agreed with the researcher's, except for some disagreement over description words used to identify victims and suspects and classifying some of the source categories. For instance, the term "authorities said" was interpreted by the researcher as a nebulous reference that belonged in the "other" category while Clogston assumed authorities were police.

At the time of the coder reliability check it became obvious to the researcher that not enough source categories had been identified and more were added later. The researcher then went back through the story population and recoded sources previously identified as "other" using the new categories. No further reliability check was done.

Data was input first in December 1992, but problems with the analysis program forced the researcher to re-enter the data a few months later. Final analysis was done using SPSS with the assistance of John Jensen, a research assistant at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Further calculation and analysis of the SPSS data was done by the researcher.

"Briefs," for this document defined as unbylined stories measuring less than 10 square inches, were included in the study because neither paper attributed the authors of those stories and therefore could not be ruled out as being written by someone other than a newspaper staff writer. The *Detroit News* usually placed police- or crime-related briefs on the third page of either the A- or B-sections and attributed authorship to "staff and wire reports." Briefs in the *Free Press* also were found on page three or another inside page of the A-section as that paper did not use two separate sections for national and local news during the time of the study.

During the three-week period, both papers ran a combined total of 328 police- or crime-related stories, including 111 with no byline, 32 with a combined byline of two reporters and 131 stories that were at least partially attributed to a wire service. (Table 1, 1.1 & 1.2)

Table 1
Frequencies: Stories

Newspaper(s)	Both Papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
No. of Stories	328	155	173
No Byline	111	52	59
CombinedByline	32	20	12
Wire Stories	131	50	81
Section A	193	155	38
Section B	135	0	135

Table 1.1
Frequencies: Stories by Percent

Newspaper(s)	Both Papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
No. of Stories	100	47	53
No Byline	100	33.5	34
Combined Byline	100	13	7
Wire Stories	100	32	47
Section A	100	100	22
Section B	100	0	78

Table 1.2
Frequencies: Wire Stories

Newspaper(s)	Associated Press	Other	Staff and Wire	Not Attributed
Both papers	2	4	75	50
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Detroit News</i>	1	4	75	1

Both papers were nearly equal in the number of crime- and police-related stories they ran each day of the week. (Table 1.3)

Table 1.3
Frequencies: Stories per Day of Week

Newspaper(s)	Both papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
Sunday	46	23	23
Monday	28	12	16
Tuesday	47	21	26
Wednesday	65	33	32
Thursday	41	22	19
Friday	50	23	27
Saturday	51	21	30

Overall, 14 percent of the stories in the study were found in the Sunday edition; 8.5 percent on Monday; 14.3 percent on Tuesday; 19.8 percent on Wednesday; 12.5 percent on Thursday; 15.2 percent on Friday; 15.5 percent on Saturday. Of the stories taken from the *Free Press*, 14.8 percent ran on Sunday; 7.7 percent on Monday; 13.5 percent on Tuesday; 21.3 percent on Wednesday; 14.2 percent on Thursday; 14.8 percent on Friday and 13.5 percent on Saturday. Of the *News* stories in the study, 13.3 ran on Sunday; 9.2 percent on Monday; 15 percent on Tuesday; 18.5 percent on Wednesday; 11 percent on Thursday; 15.6 percent on Friday and 17.3 percent on Saturday.

Total column inches analyzed for this study was 10,711 square inches, divided almost equally between the two papers with the *Detroit Free Press* dedicating 5,452 square inches or 49.1 percent and the *Detroit News* 5,259 square inches or 50.9 percent to police- and crime-related stories. (Table 2)

Table 2
Frequencies: Story Size by Column Inches

Column Inches²	Both papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
> 10	698	296	402
11-30	1629	962	667
31-50	2313	1008	1305
51-100	3526	1828	1698
100-150	1330	848	482
151 or <	1215	510	705
Total	10,711	5,452 / 50.9%	5,259 / 49.1%

Of the total population of stories, 128 in the study measured 10 square inches or less; 135 stories measured between 11 and 50 square inches; 48 measured between 51 and 100 square inches and 17 were 100 or more square inches. (Table 2.1)

Table 2.1
Frequencies: Number of Stories by Size

Column Inches²	Both papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
> 10	128	48	80
11-30	75	46	29
31-50	60	27	33
51-100	48	25	23
100-150	11	7	4
151 or <	6	2	4

Of the total 328 stories, 193 ran in section A and 135 in section B. Pictures and graphics including pull-out quotes were used in 97 stories from both papers. (Table 2.2) Total space devoted to pictures or graphics in both papers was 2,281 square inches. The *Free Press* gave 28 percent more space to pictures or graphics than the *News* with 1,461 total square inches. The *News* devoted only 820 square inches to photos or graphics.

Table 2.2
Frequencies: Pictures, Graphics & Text

Newspaper(s)	No. of Pictures or Graphics	Pictures or Graphics/ Column Inches²	Text Only / Column Inches²
Both	97	2,281	10,711
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	57	1,461	3,991
<i>Detroit News</i>	40	820	4,439

Forty-seven percent or 155 of the stories used in the study were published in the *Free Press*. Of those stories, 52 had no byline, 20 had a combined byline and 50 credited a wire service for part of the story. All of the *Free Press* stories used in the analysis were found in the A-section and 57 included pictures or graphics. (Table 2.2) The *Free Press* ran 48 briefs; 73 stories measuring 11 to 50 square inches; 25 were between 51 and 100 square inches and 9 were more than 100. (Table 2.1)

Fifty-three percent or 173 of the stories in the study came from the *News*. Of those stories, 59 had no byline, 12 had a combined byline and 81 credited a wire service for part of the story. Twenty-two percent, or 38 stories ran in the A-section and 135 or 78 percent were in the B-section. Forty *News* stories were accompanied by pictures or graphics. (Table 1) The *News* ran 80 briefs; 62 stories

were between 11 and 50 square inches; 23 measured between 51 and 100 square inches and 8 were more than 100 square inches. (Table 2.1)

Police and crime coverage landed on the front page of a section 28 percent of the time in this sample. (Table 2.3) Overall, 91 stories appeared on the front page of either the A- or B-section, 109 on page 3, 69 on page 4 and 59 on other inside pages of the paper. The *Free Press* put 30 police- or crime-related stories, 19 percent, on its front page; 40 stories, or 26 percent, were on page 3; 52, or 34 percent, appeared on page 4 and 33, or 21 percent, on other inside pages. The *News*, which has front pages for both its A- and B-sections, put 61, or 35 percent, police- or crime-related stories on page 1; 69 stories, or 40 percent, ran on page 3; 17 stories, or 10 percent were on page 4 and 26 stories or 15 percent ran on other inside pages.

Table 2.3
Frequencies: Page Number

Page #	Both papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
1	91	30	61
3	109	40	69
4	69	52	17
5	13	7	6
6	10	6	8
7	3	0	3
8	2	2	0
9	5	2	3
10	1	1	0
12	1	1	0

Page #	Both papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
13	3	3	0
14	10	4	6
15	6	6	0
16	4	4	0
18	1	1	0

Using the Budd Attention Score⁹ as a tool for analysis, the *News* gave slightly more attention to police and crime news with regard to placement in the paper. (Table 2.3)

Table 2.4
Budd Attention Score

Budd Score	<i>Free Press</i> Score Frequency	<i>Free Press</i> Total Score	<i>News</i> Score Frequency	<i>News</i> Total Score
0	28	0	37	0
1	49	49	54	54
2	47	94	36	72
3	18	54	28	84
4	10	40	13	52
5	3	15	5	25
Total		252		287

Using the Budd measure, the *News* scored 287 points to the *Free Press*'s 252 points. The *News* had five stories that scored the maximum five Budd points

⁹Richard W. Budd; "Attention Score: A Device for Measuring News 'Play'"; *Journalism Quarterly*; Spring, 1964; p. 259-262.

compared to three in the *Free Press*. Conversely, the *Free Press* had only 28 stories that scored zero Budd points compared to 37 in the *News*. Despite the differences in score, the papers probably were about equal with regard to placement attention given to crime and police stories because the *News* had 18 more stories in the sample than the *Free Press*.

Location. Reporters for both papers tended not to be specific when referring to the location of a crime. Most often, they were no more exact than just the name of the city or the county where the crime occurred. In both papers, 124 location references were as general as the name of the city or county. *Free Press* reporters used city or county locations 53 times and *News* reporters were as non-specific 71 times. Intersection of two streets ranked second in most common location reference with 42 mentions overall. (22 in the *Free Press* and 20 in the *News*) (Table 3)

Table 3
Frequencies: Location

Location	Both papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
City/County	124	53	71
Neighborhood	13	2	11
Intersection	42	22	20
Block Number	38	25	13
Specific Address	16	5	11
Public Building	8	1	7
Missing	87	47	40

Reporters also described locations by block number 38 times overall (*Free Press* =25; *News*=13); by specific address 16 times overall (*Free Press* =5;*News* =11); by neighborhood13 times overall (*Free Press* =2 ; *News*; =11); and by public building eight times overall (*Free Press* = 1;*News* = 7). Location was missing all together in 87 stories from both papers (*Free Press* = 47;*News* = 40) Not all the

stories included in the study were about crime incidents, and thus many did not contain specific locations.

Leads. Three types of leads were identified using criteria outlined by Hough.¹⁰ The summary lead answers the most important of the six questions: who, what, when, where, why and how. It includes the most recent developments in the story, facts most likely to interest the reader or the most unusual facts. The most common was the blind lead, which answers the same questions as the summary, except that the "who" in the story is not named until later in the story, usually the second paragraph. The blind lead was used 152 times overall (*Free Press* = 65; *News* = 87). (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1
Frequencies: Lead Type

Lead Type	Both papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
Summary	118	52	66
Blind	152	65	87
Creative	54	34	20
Missing	4	4	0

Reporters used the summary lead 118 times (*Free Press* =52; *News*.=66) Least common was the creative lead, used 54 times overall (*Free Press* =34;*News* =20 The creative lead incorporates all other forms of the lead including questions, imperative statements and direct address, but does not necessarily answer any or all of the six questions.

Story type. Stories in the study were categorized by five different types including first day, follow up, court, event-related features and non-event-related features. (Table 3.2)

¹⁰George A. Hough; *Newswriting*; Fourth Edition; (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988).

Table 3.2
Frequencies: Story Type

Story Type	Both papers	Detroit Free Press	Detroit News
First Day	84	45	39
Follow Up	78	35	43
Court	57	21	36
Event-related Feature	35	12	23
Non-event-related Feature	74	42	32

The newspapers covered 84 first day stories (*Free Press* =45; *News*. =39). Seventy-eight stories in the study were follow up stories, or subsequent to the first day (*Free Press* =35; *News* =43). The papers published 74 non-event-related features (*Free Press* =42 ;*News* =32). There were 57 court stories in the study (*Free Press* =21; *News* =36). Thirty-five stories from both papers were event-related features (*Free Press* =12 and 23; *News* =23)

Crime. Categories for crime were derived from the table of contents in the criminal law text by Inbau, Moenssens and Thompson.¹¹ Originally 27 crime categories were identified, but seven were added later because drug crimes, misdemeanors, felony weapons, drunken driving, prison escape, pornography, arson and explosives crimes appeared in the stories, but not on the original list. Not surprisingly, homicide was the number one crime mentioned in the study population with 63 stories overall (*Free Press* =26; *News* =37). (Table 3.3)

¹¹Fred E.Inbau, Andre A. Moenssens, James R. Thompson; *Cases and Comments on Criminal Law*; Fourth Edition; (Mineola, NY: The Foundation Press, Inc., 1987).

Table 3.3
Frequencies: Crime

Crime	Both	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
Homicide	63	26	37
Voluntary Manslaughter	2	1	1
Involuntary Manslaughter	3	1	2
Child Abuse Resulting in Death	4	0	4
Sex-related Murder	2	0	2
Vehicular Homicide	2	2	0
Deadly Force by a Police Officer	4	2	2
Murder-Suicide	1	0	1
Suicide	3	1	2
Criminal Sexual Assault	15	6	9
Assault	4	3	1
Assault with a Deadly Weapon	22	8	14
Kidnapping	1	1	0
Other Crimes Against Persons	30	19	11
Robbery	1	0	1
Armed Robbery	11	7	4
Auto-related Crime	4	2	2
Non-residential Burglary	1	1	0
Residential Burglary	1	1	0
Vandalism	4	1	3
Fraud/Embezzlement	11	3	8
Unconventional Sexual Conduct	1	0	1
Prostitution	1	0	1
Drug Crimes	43	22	21
Theft	7	4	3
Misdemeanor	9	3	6
Explosives	5	2	3
Felony Weapons	1	0	1
Arson	6	6	0
Drunken Driving	4	3	1
Pornography/Child Pornography	1	0	1
Prison Escape	1	0	1

Drug crimes, added to the original crime list as an afterthought, ran a close second to homicide with 43 stories (*Free Press*=22;*News* =21) Some of the other often-mentioned crimes included 30 crimes against persons, 22 of assault with a deadly weapon, 15 criminal sexual assault, and 11 each of armed robberies and fraud/embezzlement. The remaining crimes on the list were mentioned in the study fewer than 10 times each.

Criminal justice process step. Reporters from both papers most often covered crime in the early stages of the criminal justice process. (Table 3.4)

Table 3.4
Frequencies: Criminal Justice Process Step

CJ Process Step	Both papers	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Detroit News</i>
Incident	54	32	22
Investigation	54	25	29
Arrest	27	11	16
Preliminary Hearing	32	18	14
Arraignment	28	11	17
Plea Bargain	2	1	1
Pre-trial Motions	5	1	4
Prosecution	2	0	2
Verdict	5	1	4
Sentencing	16	6	10
Appeals	7	1	6
Missing	96	48	48

Thirty-seven percent of the stories that involved incidents that could be plotted on the time line of the justice system took place during the incident or investigation stage; 12 percent covered the arrest phase and 26 percent covered the early court proceedings of preliminary hearing and arraignment.

Both newspapers had reporters assigned to cover courts nearly full time-- Jim Finkelstein for the *Detroit Free Press* and Dave Kocienewski for the *Detroit*

News--and both were quite busy during the study period, however only 16 percent of the stories covered the plea bargain, pre-trial motions, prosecution, verdict and sentencing stages of the court process. Both papers were missing data in 48 stories for the criminal justice step category. The missing data indicates features, both event- and non-event related, where the category did not apply.

The DeLisle murders. At least two story topics may have affected the overall amount of police and crime news in the two Detroit papers during the study period, although random fluctuations in crime during a non-random time period also could affect any analysis of such coverage. In this sample, the *Detroit News* dedicated 1,514 total square inches including 331 square inches of pictures and graphics to the DeLisle murders which were first reported just days before the study began. The *Free Press* ran 615 square inches including 153 of photos or graphics on the quadruple murder case. (Tables 4 & 4.1)

Table 4
DeLisle Stories

Detroit Free Press

Story	Story Size	Picture Size	Reporter	Number Sources	Section	Page Number
1	72	27	David Crumm	2	1	1
2	108	46	Dennis Niemic	4	1	1
3	29	2	Dennis Niemic	4	1	3
4	24	0	Joel Thurtell	3	1	1
5	34	0	Joel Thurtell	4	1	1
6	42	10	Dennis Niemic	4	1	3
7	36	2	Dennis Niemic	9	1	3
8	20	0	Dennis Niemic	5	1	4
9	62	2	Joel Thurtell	6	1	1
10	68	1	Jack Kresnak & Jacquelynn Boyle	8	1	3

Story	Story Size	Picture Size	Reporter	Number Sources	Section	Page Number
11	131	46	Dennis Niemic	7	1	1
12	61	17	Joel Thurtell & Dennis Niemic	5	1	1
Total	615	153		61		

Table 4.1
DeLisle Stories

Detroit News

Story	Story Size	Picture Size	Reporter	Number Sources	Section	Page Number
1	89	2	Dave Farrell & Jim Mitzelfeld	5	1	1
2	188	46	Kathleen Bohland & Greg Lopez	12	1	1
3	95	26	Jim Mitzelfeld	8	1	4
4	43	0	Charlie Cain	4	1	5
5	44	22	Greg Lopez	4	1	5
6	89	0	Jim Mitzelfeld	3	1	1
7	25	0	Jim Mitzelfeld & Fred Girard	3	2	1
8	50	5	Jim Mitzelfeld	7	2	1
9	79	40	Jim Mitzelfeld	7	2	1
10	172	43	Jim Mitzelfeld	2	1	1
11	78	21	Tarek Hamada	3	1	1
12	143	45	Jim Mitzelfeld	2	1	1
13	28	0	Jim Mitzelfeld	3	2	3
14	78	8	Jim Mitzelfeld	9	1	1
15	28	0	Jim Mitzelfeld	2	1	9
16	31	0	Jim Mitzelfeld	5	1	9
17	154	61	Jim Mitzelfeld	9	1	1
18	90	12	Jim Mitzelfeld	9	1	1
19	5	0	brief	1	2	3
20	5	0	brief	1	2	3
Total	1514	331		99		

All 20 of the *News* stories on Lawrence DeLisle, a man who has since been convicted of murdering his four young children and attempting to murder his wife, Suzanne, by driving their family station wagon into the Detroit River, ran in the newspaper's A-section. Seven of those stories were on the front page, especially including extensive coverage of the children's funerals and later, stories about Suzanne DeLisle who agreed to be interviewed exclusively by the *News* (Table 4.1).

Reporter Jim Mitzelfeld wrote or co-wrote 14 of the newspaper's 20 stories included in the study for a total of 1,151 column inches squared. He also was the reporter who landed the exclusive telephone interview with Suzanne DeLisle who was staying with relatives in Tampa, Fla. The DeLisle assignment made Mitzelfeld the "star" reporter in this study with nearly twice as many column inches published as his next highest competitor.

The *Free Press* didn't give quite as much attention to the case as the *News*, although the topic ranked near the top for total number of stories and column inches dedicated to one subject. In fact, the *Free Press* devoted less space than the *News* coverage of DeLisle to any topic. Reporter Dennis Niemic wrote the most, seven stories and 427 square inches on the DeLisles followed by fellow reporter Joel Thurtell who wrote four stories and 181 inches on the family. All but three of the *Free Press* stories on the murders were accompanied by photos or graphics. Seven DeLisle stories made the front page of the paper's A-section. (Table 4)

Flanigan-Kresnak project. Although seemingly outdone on DeLisle coverage by the *News*, the *Free Press* received attention from DPD and the mayor's office with its special project, "Detroit Cops: Stretched Thin," written by reporters Brian Flanigan and Jack Kresnak. (Table 5)

Table 5
Flanigan-Kresnak Stories

Topic	Story or Graphic	Story Size	Picture Size	Number of Sources
DPD Project	1	214	108	18
"	2	22	0	4
"	3	54	0	8
"	4	296*	296	1
"	5	25	0	6
"	6	31	0	6
"	7	59	27	3
"	8	19	0	5
"	9	16	0	0
"	10	30	0	3
"	11	45	21	3
DPD Softball	1	36	0	6
Total		735	452	63

*Entire page of graphics

In one day the paper published 11 stories or 699 square inches about the number of police officers patrolling the streets. Of the total project's space, 452 was devoted to pictures and graphics. One full page or 296 square inches of the project included a map and a precinct by precinct breakdown of the number of officers on the street at any given time. Much of the project was attributed to exclusive documents obtained by the *Free Press* and analyzed by Flanigan and Kresnak.

As was mentioned in the observation chapter of this document, the project stirred some tempers at DPD, but most of the anger was directed toward the unknown source who leaked the exclusive documents and not to either Flanigan or Kresnak. The "Stretched Thin" project plus several other individual or co-written stories combined to make Flanigan and Kresnak the "star" reporters

ranking first and second for most *Free Press* column inches in the study with 799 and 617 total square inches respectively.

Flanigan and Kresnak also teamed up during the study for one story about Detroit Police officers providing security for a national police officers softball tournament. (Table 5) In addition to the stories they wrote together, Kresnak wrote two single-byline stories measuring a total of 66 square inches and Flanigan wrote five for a total of 248 square inches. Flanigan also contributed his weekly "Detroit's Most Wanted" column, a sometimes-bylined story featuring pictures and descriptions of known criminals being sought by local police departments or federal officers. The main sources of the column were indictments and arrest or search warrants.

Reporters. The police beat reporters for the *Free Press*, Roger Chesley and Jim Schaefer, ranked fifth and sixth for their paper for most column inches written during the study. The same paper's regular court reporter and substitute on the police beat, Jim Finkelstein, ranked fourth behind DeLisle reporter, Dennis Niemic. (Table 6 & 6.1)

Table 6
Frequencies: Reporters, Stories & Column Inches

Detroit Free Press

Reporter	# Stories	Sub-Total Column Inches	Comb. Byline Stories	Column Inches/ CB Stories	Total Column Inches/ Reporter
Missing	5	387	0	0	387
No Byline	52	388			
Combined Byline			20	1055	1055
Jim Schaefer	4	230	1	75	305
R. Chesley	4	186	1	75	261
Jack Kresnak	2	66	13	619	685

Reporter	# Stories	Sub-Total Column Inches	Comb. Byline Stories	Column Inches/ CB Stories	Total Column Inches/ Reporter
B. Flanigan	5	248	14	661	909
J. Finkelstein	6	406	0	0	406
D. Niemic	7	447	1	61	508
L. Matthews	6	214	0	0	214
Joe Swickard	4	98	3	153	251
M. Williams	4	208	0	0	208
C. Prater	1	41	1	53	94
W. Kleinknecht	6	169	1	28	197
J. Zablitz	1	14	2	45	59
Darryl Fears	1	33	0	0	33
S. McClure	1	23	0	0	23
C. Christoff	2	73	0	0	73
Joel Thurtell	5	180	2	78	258
A. Cruden	1	79	0	0	79
D. Crumm	1	72	0	0	72
S. Jones	1	20	0	0	20
D. Maynard	2	36	1	37	73
Bill McGraw	1	25	1	37	62
M. George	2	77	1	20	97
John Castine	1	23	1	20	43
M. Betzold	2	160	0	0	160
J. Howard	1	149	0	0	149
G. Kovanis	1	59	0	0	59
Dan Gillmor	1	22	0	0	22
Cecil Angel	1	33	0	0	33
M. Dozier	1	35	0	0	35
W. Gerdes	1	88	0	0	88
D. Noriyuki	1	81	0	0	81
D. Ashenfelter	1	27	0	0	27
J. Boyle	0	0	1	68	68
C. Cook	0	0	1	94	94
G. Huskisson	0	0	1	53	53
Total	155	4,397			5,452

Table 6.1
Top 10 Reporters Ranked by Number of Stories & Column Inches

Detroit Free Press

Rank	Reporter	# Stories	Sub-Total Column Inches	Comb. Byline Stories	Column Inches/ CB Stories	Total Column Inches/ Reporter
1	Brian Flanigan	5	248	14	661	685
2	Jack Kresnak	2	66	13	619	909
3	Dennis Niemic	7	447	1	61	508
4	Jim Finkelstein	6	406	0	0	406
5	Jim Schaefer	4	230	1	75	305
6	Roger Chesley	4	186	1	75	261
7	Joel Thurtell	5	180	2	78	258
8	Joe Swickard	4	98	3	153	251
9	Mike Williams	4	208	0	0	208
10	Lori Matthews	6	198	0	0	198

Joel Thurtell, who also covered DeLisle, ranked seventh. The *Free Press* also ran 52 stories, mainly uncredited briefs, that had no byline and five "missing byline" stories that were part of the massive Flanigan-Kresnak project and presumably written by them as well. *Free Press* reporters teamed up for combined byline stories 20 different times, including 12 stories written by the Flanigan-Kresnak duo.

Police beat reporters for the *News* did not seem nearly as productive as their competitors. None, other than substitute Jean Gadomski, ranked in the top ten for column inches included in the study. (Tables 7 & 7.1)

Table 7
Frequencies: Reporters, Stories & Column Inches

Detroit News

Reporter	# Stories	Sub-Total Column Inches	Comb. Byline Stories	Column Inches/ CB Stories	Total Column Inches/ Reporter
Missing	21	94	0	0	94
No Byline	59	282	0	0	282
Combined Byline			12	794	794
M. Walker	3	126	0	0	126
David Grant			0	0	
D. Kocienewski	7	467	1	32	499
D. Tschirhardt	1	28	0	0	28
Fred Girard	1	60	1	25	85
N. Sinclair	1	96	0	0	96
C. Bailey	2	87	0	0	87
Mike Wowk	1	21	1	60	81
Joel J. Smith	1	38	1	77	115
Rob Zeiger	1	22	0	0	22
J. Mitzelfeld	14	1100	1	89	1189
R. Ankeny	2	52	0	0	52
N. S. Vance	4	256	0	0	256
D. Marchetti	1	44	0	0	44
G. Schabath	4	91	0	0	91
R. Reynolds	1	36	0	0	36
B. DeSimone	2	64	1	35	99
Y. Woodlee	1	50	0	0	50
B. Ingersoll	2	61	0	0	61
D. Crittendon	1	108	0	0	108
J. A. McClear	7	216	1	21	237
V. S. Toy	1	25	0	0	25
Greg Lopez	1	44	2	260	304
Charlie Cain	1	43	0	0	43
M. Martindale	5	240	1	50	290
R. Powers	2	88	1	72	160
T. Hamada	8	338	0	0	338

Reporter	# Stories	Sub- Total Column Inches	Comb. Byline Stories	Column Inches/ CB Stories	Total Column Inches/ Reporter
Liz Twardon	1	27	0	0	27
K. Trent	1	63	0	0	63
C. McGinnis	1	13	0	0	13
S. Gruber-Belloli	1	39	0	0	39
Dave Farrell	1	49	1	89	138
K. Bohland	0	0	2	246	246
J. Tittsworth	0	0	1	88	88
J. Gadowski	0	0	3	183	183
E. Freedman	0	0	2	71	71
John T. Wark	0	0	1	77	77
P. McCaughan	0	0	1	32	32
D. Mulqueen	0	0	1	58	58
Total	173	4,465	12	794	5,259

Table 7.1**Top 10 Reporters Ranked by Number of Stories & Column Inches*****Detroit News***

Rank	Reporter	# Stories	Sub- Total Column Inches	Comb. Byline Stories	Column Inches/ CB Stories	Total Column Inches/ Reporter
1	Jim Mitzelfeld	14	1100	1	89	1189
2	D. Kocienewski	7	467	1	32	499
3	Tarek Hamada	8	338	0	0	338
4	Greg Lopez	1	44	2	260	304
5	M. Martindale	5	240	1	50	290
6	N. Scott Vance	4	256	0	0	256
7	K. Bohland	0	0	2	246	246
8	J. A. McClear	7	216	1	21	237
9	Jean Gadowski	0	0	3	183	183
10	Rebecca Powers	2	88	1	72	160

Monroe Walker had three stories in the study for a total of 126 column inches and David Grant had one 71-inch story. After DeLisle reporter Jim Mitzelfeld, David Kocienewski, the *News*'s court, reporter contributed the most to the police and crime coverage with eight stories and 499 total column inches. Several others who ranked in the top 10 for column inches also wrote or co-wrote DeLisle stories. (Table 4)

Reporters from both papers teamed up to write combined byline stories, as in the case of the Flanigan-Kresnak project, to ease the workload of such a massive endeavor. (Tables 6.2 & 7.2)

Table 6.2
Combined Byline Stories

Detroit Free Press

Number of Stories	Reporters	Story Topic	Column Inches
12*	Brian Flanigan & Jack Kresnak	Project on number of officers on the streets / DPD softball	551*
1	Bill McGraw & Dori Maynard	Mayoral campaign	37
1	Maryanne George & John Castine	Councilwoman's son arrested for armed robbery	20
1	Christopher Cook & Joe Swickard	Kwiatkowski murder	94
2	Joe Swickard & Brian Flanigan	Mayoral scandal / Huey Newton murder	59
1	Joel Thurtell & Jocelyne Zablit	Monroe County murder	17
1	Jim Schaefer & Roger Chesley	Barricaded gunman in Detroit	75
1	William Kleinknecht & Jocelyne Zablit	Barricaded gunman in Port Huron	28
1	Gregory Huskisson & Constance Prater	Mayoral candidate's crime plan	53

Number of Stories	Reporters	Story Topic	Column Inches
1	Brian Flanigan & Chris Christoff	National Guard and the war on drugs	51
1	Jack Kresnak & Jacquelynn Boyle	DeLisle murder case	68
1	Joel Thurtell & Dennis Niemic	DeLisle murder case	61

*See Table 5

Table 7.2
Combined Byline Stories

Detroit News

Number of Stories	Reporters	Story Topic	Column Inches
1	Dave Farrell & Jim Mitzelfeld	DeLisle murder case	89
1	Kathleen Bohland & Greg Lopez	DeLisle murder case	188
1	John T. Wark & Joel J. Smith	St. Cecilia's shooting	77
1	David Kocieniewski & Pat McCaughan	St. Cecilia's shooting	32
1	Jim Mitzelfeld & Fred Girard	DeLisle	25
1	Rebecca Powers & Greg Lopez	Sheila Covington murder	72
1	Dennis B. Mulqueen & Kathleen Bohland	DPD softball	58
1	Jim Tittsworth & Jean Gadowski	Barricaded gunman in Detroit	88
1	Eric Freedman & James A. McClear	Life terms for drug cases (Lansing)	21
1	Eric Freedman & Mike Martindale	State Supreme Court decision on rape case (Lansing)	50

Number of Stories	Reporters	Story Topic	Column Inches
1	Bonnie DeSimone & Jean Gadomski	Boys Republic	35
1	Jean Gadomski & Mike Wowk	west side power outage	60

Other combined efforts may have been started by one reporter and finished by another because of a shift change, as was the case with the Chesley-Schaefer and Tittsworth-Gadomski stories about a barricaded gunman in Detroit. The researcher accompanied Schaefer to that crime scene as he relieved Chesley at the end of the day shift.

The number of stories and/or column inches, or lack thereof, written by reporters in this study is not a reflection of the reporters' overall contribution to their newspapers. Several bylines appear only once in the study because the reporters are either assigned to a different beat or just happened to be assigned a police- or crime-related story. Similarly, the police beat reporters may also have written stories outside of their beats that did not fall into the criteria of this sampling. This study is not meant to be an accurate measure of reporter zealousness or laziness.

Victims and suspects. Perhaps the most significant part of this study was the individual accounting of victims, suspects and sources and how reporters referred to them. Although there were only 328 stories analyzed, reporters referred to 433 victims and 293 suspects in their accounts. Victims or suspects usually were not mentioned in non-event-related features or in stories about "non-victim" crimes like drug use.

On the coding instrument, information on victims and suspects was separated into four different categories including name, age, race and description. Answers for all four categories were either "yes" or "no." If the name,

age, or race of the victim or suspect was used, the correct code was "yes" or "no." Description was a very generous category in that any adjective or word that further categorized the victim, such as "brother," "father," "auto worker," or a hometown was counted as a "yes" under description.

The researcher's theory when coding stories for victim and suspect information was that a person is identified by his or her name or age, but any further descriptive words might help the reader to better distinguish that person, especially in a metro area the size of Detroit. For example, the reader whose co-worker is a 40-year-old named Bob Smith from Sterling Heights would be greatly relieved to read the murder victim was identified as Robert Smith, 40, of Huntington Woods. Any extra adjectives or sentences other than race or age were counted as a "yes" in the description category.

In the computer analysis of the data, the four categories containing victim information were transformed into patterns of four numbers each then measured for frequency of occurrence in the population. In the most frequent pattern, which occurred in more than 43 percent of victim references, the reporter used name, age and description, but not race. Race, in fact, was used only three times in the study when referring to victims.

To make further sense out of the numbers, the four-digit patterns were recategorized to show whether the victim was named or unnamed, described or not described. Any "yes" answers for age race or description were classified as "described" where "not described" required "no" answers for all three of those categories. Condensing the patterns in this manner leaves four possibilities for victim references: named/described, named/not described, unnamed/described and unnamed/not described.

Of the 433 victims mentioned in the story population, 252 (58 percent) were named and described. Race was used in only two of those citations. One

victim (0.2 percent) was named but not described. There were 131 victims (30 percent) who were unnamed and described and 49 (11 percent) who were neither named nor described. Perhaps most significant in these findings is that 88 percent of victim references included some degree of description, even when the name was omitted or unavailable.

Victims appeared most often in non-bylined briefs and in stories about the DeLisle murders and sparsely elsewhere in the study. Court and police beat reporters tended to have more victim references than other reporters who wrote features rather than incident-related stories. More than half the victims in both *Free Press* and *News* briefs were named and described.

In the 32 DeLisle stories published in both papers, several made vague references to the couple's four children who died when their father drove the family station wagon into the Detroit River. (Table 4) The *News* reporters made named and described references to the DeLisle's four children, Bryan, 8, Melissa, 4, Kathryn, 2, and Emily, 9 months, in 10 of their stories. References in other stories were unnamed and in two cases not described. The victims often were called, "the DeLisle's four young children," rather than named or described separately. The children's pictures also were used several times with their names and ages in the photo cutlines which were not analyzed in this study.

In the *Free Press*, the DeLisle children were named and described in only four references, unnamed but described in seven and neither named nor described in four. They were commonly referred to as the "couple's young children." In both papers, the eldest DeLisle child, Bryan, 8, was described separately from his sisters several times because of the special relationship friends said he shared with his father.

News DeLisle reporter Jim Mitzelfeld named and described victims in about 50 percent of victim references and omitted the names the rest of the time.

(Table 7.3) Dennis Niemic, who covered DeLisle most often for the *Free Press*, used names and descriptions in 15 of his 27 victim references while his colleague Joel Thurtell named and described victims in only nine of 25 references. (Table 6.3)

Table 7.3
Reporters: Victims

Detroit News

Reporter	No. of Victims	Named & Described*	Not Named & Described	Not Named or Described
Missing	20	12	8	0
No Byline	53	32	21	0
Combined Byline	20	19	1	0
David Grant	0	0	0	0
Monroe Walker	4	4	0	0
D. Kocienewski	6	3	3	0
D. Tschirhardt	1	0	1	0
Fred Girard	0	0	0	0
Norm Sinclair	0	0	0	0
Chauncey Bailey	5	0	0	5
Mike Wowk	1	1	0	0
Joel J. Smith	1	0	1	0
Rob Zeiger	0	0	0	0
Jim Mitzelfeld	67	34	24	9
Robert Ankeny	0	0	0	0
N. Scott Vance	0	0	0	0
D. Marchetti	3	3	0	0
Gene Schabath	7	1	6	0
Rachel Reynolds	0	0	0	0
Bonnie DeSimone	0	0	0	0
Yolanda Woodlee	0	0	0	0
Brenda Ingersoll	1	1	0	0
D. Crittendon	0	0	0	0
James McClear	3	3	0	0

Reporter	No. of Victims	Named & Described*	Not Named & Described	Not Named or Described
Vivian S. Toy	0	0	0	0
Greg Lopez	5	1	0	4
Charlie Cain	5	1	4	0
Mike Martindale	5	1	3	1
Rebecca Powers	1	1	0	0
Tarek Hamada	12	12	0	0
Liz Twardon	0	0	0	0
Kimberly Trent	9	0	2	7
Dave Farrell	0	0	0	0
S. Gruber-Belloli	1	1	0	0
Carol McGinnis	1	1	0	0

*No victims in the *Detroit News* were named but not described.

Table 6.3
Reporters: Victims

Detroit Free Press

Reporter	No. of Victims	Named & Described*	Not Named & Described	Not Named or Described
Missing	5	1	4	0
No Byline	50	31	16	3
Combined Byline	16	8	1	7
Jim Schaefer	8	7	1	0
Roger Chesley	6	5	1	0
Brian Flanigan	7	0	7	0
Jack Kresnak	1	1	0	0
Jim Finkelstein	11	7	4	0
Dennis Niemic	27	15	4	8
Lori Matthews	6	5	0	1
Joe Swickard	3	1	2	0
Mike Williams	9	9	0	0
Constance Prater	1	1	0	0

Reporter	No. of Victims	Named & Described*	Not Named & Described	Not Named or Described
W. Kleinknecht	3	2	1	0
Jocelyne Zablit	0	0	0	0
Darryl Fears	2	1	1	0
Sandy McClure	0	0	0	0
Chris Christoff	0	0	0	0
Joel Thurtell	25	9	12	4
Alexander Cruden	0	0	0	0
David Crumm	4	4	0	0
Stephen Jones	2	0	2	0
Dori Maynard	0	0	0	0
Bill McGraw	0	0	0	0
Maryanne George	2	1	1	0
John Castine	0	0	0	0
Michael Betzold	5	5	0	0
Johnette Howard	1	1	0	0
Georgea Kovanis	5	5	0	0
Dan Gillmor	0	0	0	0
Cecil Angel	0	0	0	0
Marion Dozier	0	0	0	0
Wylie Gerdes	2	2	0	0
Duane Noriyuki	1	1	0	0
D. Ashenfelter	0	0	0	0

*No victims in the *Detroit Free Press* were named but not described.

Of the 293 suspect references in both papers, 201 (69 percent, were named and described compared to only four (1.4 percent) who were named but not described. In 77 (26 percent) of references, suspects were not named but were described, consistent with the plea for public assistance many police departments make of the media when trying to identify a criminal. Eleven references (3.8 percent) were both unnamed and not described.

Results in the suspect category were not significant for individual reporters, although Lori Matthews had 15 suspect references, more than twice as many as her colleagues at the *Free Press*. (Table 6.4)

Table 6.4
Reporters: Suspects

Detroit Free Press

Reporter	No. of Suspects	Named & Described*	Not Named & Described	Not Named or Described
Missing	5	3	2	0
No Byline	46	25	17	4
Combined Byline	9	9	0	0
Jim Schaefer	6	3	3	0
Roger Chesley	6	3	1	2
Brian Flanigan	8	6	2	0
Jack Kresnak	3	2	1	0
Jim Finkelstein	2	2	0	0
Dennis Niemic	6	6	0	0
Lori Matthews	15	14	1	0
Joe Swickard	4	4	0	0
Mike Williams	2	1	1	0
Constance Prater	1	1	0	0
W. Kleinknecht	6	4	2	0
Jocelyne Zablitz	0	0	0	0
Darryl Fears	0	0	0	0
Sandy McClure	1	1	0	0
Chris Christoff	0	0	0	0
Joel Thurtell	7	7	0	0
Alexander Cruden	0	0	0	0
David Crumm	1	1	0	0
Stephen Jones	2	0	2	0
Dori Maynard	0	0	0	0
Bill McGraw	0	0	0	0
Maryanne George	3	3	0	0
John Castine	1	1	0	0

Reporter	No. of Suspects	Named & Described*	Not Named & Described	Not Named or Described
Michael Betzold	0	0	0	0
Johnette Howard	0	0	0	0
Georgea Kovanis	1	1	0	0
Dan Gillmor	0	0	0	0
Cecil Angel	0	0	0	0
Marion Dozier	0	0	0	0
Wylie Gerdes	1	1	0	0
Duane Noriyuki	0	0	0	0
D. Ashenfelter	0	0	0	0

*No suspects in the *Detroit Free Press* were named but not described.

Matthews's high number of suspects is attributed to one story which named nine suspects who were running a drug ring out of a Detroit car wash. Dave Kocienewski and Jim Mitzelfeld had the highest number of suspect references other than briefs for the *News*, although that number was not surprising given Kocienewski's court beat assignment and Mitzelfeld's coverage of the DeLisle murders. (Table 7.4)

Table 7.4
Reporters: Suspects

Detroit News

Reporter	No. of Victims	Named & Described*	Not Named & Described	Not Named or Described
Missing	21	9	12	0
No Byline	61	42	18	1
Combined Byline	9	6	2	1
David Grant	0	0	0	0
Monroe Walker	2	2	0	0
D. Kocienewski	10	10	0	0

Reporter	No. of Victims	Named & Described*	Not Named & Described	Not Named or Described
D. Tschirhardt	1	1	0	0
Fred Girard	0	0	0	0
Norm Sinclair	0	0	0	0
Chauncey Bailey	0	0	0	0
Mike Wowk	0	0	0	0
Joel J. Smith	0	0	0	0
Rob Zeiger	0	0	0	0
Jim Mitzelfeld	14	13	0	1
Robert Ankeny	2	1	1	0
N. Scott Vance	0	0	0	0
D. Marchetti	1	1	0	0
Gene Schabath	4	1	3	0
Rachel Reynolds	0	0	0	0
Bonnie DeSimone	0	0	0	0
Yolanda Woodlee	0	0	0	0
Brenda Ingersoll	0	0	0	0
D. Crittendon	0	0	0	0
James McClear	3	3	0	0
Vivian S. Toy	0	0	0	0
Greg Lopez	1	1	0	0
Charlie Cain	1	1	0	0
Mike Martindale	5	4	0	1
Rebecca Powers	1	1	0	0
Tarek Hamada	10	9	1	0
Liz Twardon	6	0	6	0
Kimberly Trent	3	0	2	1
Dave Farrell	0	0	0	0
S. Gruber-Belloli	1	1	0	0
Carol McGinnis	1	1	0	0

*No suspects in the *Detroit News* were named but not described.

It may be important to note that suspects are not always known to police whereas victims usually are. Names and descriptions of suspects in news stories

may indicate that crimes are being solved, suspects are being identified and cases are being tried. References that lack names may suggest that police are still trying to identify a suspect or are withholding the name until the suspect is arraigned or because the suspect is a juvenile.

Sources. Reporters talked to 1,111 sources in the population of 328 stories. When coding, sources were identified by words of attribution like "said" or "according to" or where it was obvious that the information was told to or observed or obtained by the reporter. Originally eight categories were identified for sources including: police, court workers, victim family, suspect family, neighbor friend, witness, victim and other. After the coding was completed, it was obvious that "other" was the most frequent source and thus a total of 44 categories were identified and the stories listing "other" as a source were recoded. (Appendix H)

On the coding instrument, source information was sorted into four categories including: direct or indirect attribution, the source's title or relationship to the story, and whether the source was quoted directly or indirectly. For computer analysis, the source information was transformed into four-digit patterns and then examined for frequency in the entire story population.

As was expected, police officers, either named or unnamed, were by far the most commonly used source. More often than not, references to police were indirect, or unnamed. "Police said," "investigators said," or some nebulous equivalent, was used in 146 references while direct attribution using an officer's name, rank or position was used in 121 references. (Table 8 & 9)

Table 8
Number/ Percentage of Sources

Source Title	Number	Percent
Police	267	24
Court Worker	135	12.2
Victim Family	45	4.1
Suspect Family	20	1.8
Neighbor/Friend	86	7.7
Witness	35	3.2
Victim	45	4.1
Clergy	15	1.4
Fire Officials	8	0.72
<i>Free Press</i>	12	1.1
<i>News</i>	3	0.3
Coleman Young	10	0.9
Bob Berg	5	0.45
Police Documents	21	1.9
Jail/Prison Records	4	0.36
City Records	1	0.09
"Experts"	19	1.7
Police Organizations	16	1.4
"Officials"	26	2.3
Crime Plans	2	0.18
Federal Statistics	2	0.18
DPD Statistics	1	0.09
Detroit City Council	6	0.54
Political Candidates	40	3.6
Politicians/Workers	11	0.99
St. Cecilia's	22	1.98
Spokespeople	21	1.89
Court Records	26	2.3
City Workers	10	0.09
Suspect	15	1.35
Warrants	9	0.81
Congress	2	0.18
Legislature	7	0.63
Autopsy	2	0.18
Social Worker	15	1.35
Misc. Documents	12	1.1
Governor	6	0.54
Juvenile Records	3	0.27
Federal Officers	9	0.81

Source Title	Number	Percent
Government Agency	24	2.16
Polls	2	0.18
Organization/ Assoc.	38	3.42
Other	53	4.77

Table 9
Police Sources

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	57	5
Direct Quote Only	11	4
Indirect Quote Only	47	134
Neither Direct or Indirect*	6	3

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of police sources cited: 267

Reporters, including the beat reporters from both papers, talked to police consistently throughout the story population. Frequency of police attribution was not significant for any particular reporter. A larger population of stories written exclusively by the DPD beat reporters is needed for a thorough study of source accessibility and attribution with reporters covering suburban crime.

More interesting than the number of times police were asked for information is the manner in which information from law enforcement sources was attributed. In the entire story population, police sources were named in 45 percent and unnamed in 55 percent of the references. Reporters used both direct and indirect quotes from sources in 62 police references (23 percent), direct quotes exclusively in 15 and indirect quotes exclusively in 181 (68 percent) of references. Police sources were both unnamed and indirectly quoted 134 times (50 percent). Most often that reference was worded as "police said," or "investigators said." Police sources were unavailable for comment, as indicated by the code for neither direct nor indirect quotes, in 9 references.

The second most frequent source was court workers, including prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges and other officers of the court. (Table 9.1)

Table 9.1
Court Workers

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	72	0
Direct Quote Only	12	1
Indirect Quote Only	38	12
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of court worker sources: 135

Reporters referred to 135 court workers which made up 12.2 percent of the entire source population. Neighbors and friends ranked third in frequency, (7.7 percent). (Table 8.1)

Table 8.1
Top 10 Sources

Source Category	Number	Percentage
Police	267	24
Court Workers	13.5	12.2
Neighbor/Friend	86	7.7
"Other"	53	4.77
Victim	45	4.1
Victim Family	45	4.1
Political Candidates	40	3.6
Organization/Association	38	3.42
Witnesses	35	3.2
Court Records & Officials (tied)	26	2.3

The other most frequently used sources by rank include: fourth, "other sources close to the story" (4.77 percent); fifth, victim (4.1 percent); sixth, victim family (4 percent); seventh, political candidates (3.6 percent); eighth, organization or association spokespeople (3.4 percent); ninth, witnesses (3.2 percent) and tied for tenth were court records and "officials." See Appendix H and Tables 9.2-9.42 for a further breakdown of source references.

Table 9.2
Victim Family

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	2	0
Direct Quote Only	6	0
Indirect Quote Only	3	9
Neither Direct or Indirect*	2	3

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of victim family sources: 45

Table 9.3
Suspect Family

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	7	2
Direct Quote Only	3	0
Indirect Quote Only	4	1
Neither Direct or Indirect*	3	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of suspect family sources: 20

Table 9.4
Neighbor/Friend

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	29	5
Direct Quote Only	16	3
Indirect Quote Only	5	28
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of neighbor/friend sources: 86

Table 9.5
Witness

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	17	1
Direct Quote Only	1	0
Indirect Quote Only	3	13
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of witness sources: 35

Table 9.6
Victim

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	24	5
Direct Quote Only	5	0
Indirect Quote Only	7	1
Neither Direct or Indirect*	3	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of victim sources: 45

Table 9.7**Clergy**

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	9	0
Direct Quote Only	1	0
Indirect Quote Only	1	3
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	1

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of clergy sources: 15

Table 9.8**Fire Chiefs/Officials**

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	2	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	6
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of fire sources: 8

Table 9.9**Free Press Statistics/Analysis**

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	1
Indirect Quote Only	0	11
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of *Free Press* sources: 12

Table 9.10
News Statistics/Analysis

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	3
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of *News* sources: 3

Table 9.11
Coleman Young

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	6	1
Direct Quote Only	1	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	0
Neither Direct or Indirect*	2	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of Coleman Young attributions: 10

Table 9.12
Bob Berg, Mayor's Press Secretary

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	1	0
Direct Quote Only	1	0
Indirect Quote Only	2	0
Neither Direct or Indirect*	1	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of Bob Berg attributions: 5

Table 9.13
Police Documents

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	2
Direct Quote Only	0	1
Indirect Quote Only	0	18
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of police document sources: 21

Table 9.14
Prison/Jail Records

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	1	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	3
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of prison/jail record sources: 4

Table 9.15
City Records/Documents

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	1
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

Total number of city records/documents sources: 1

Table 9.16**"Experts"**

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	7	1
Direct Quote Only	2	0
Indirect Quote Only	4	5
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of "expert" sources: 19

Table 9.17**Police Organizations**

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	6	1
Direct Quote Only	1	0
Indirect Quote Only	4	4
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of police organization sources: 16

Table 9.18**"Officials"**

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	1	24
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	1

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of "officials" sources: 26

Table 9.19
Crime Plans

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	1
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	1
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of crime plan sources: 2

Table 9.20
Federal Statistics

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	2
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of federal statistics sources: 2

Table 9.21
Detroit Police Department Statistics

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	1
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of DPD statistics sources: 1

Table 9.22
Detroit City Council

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	3	0
Direct Quote Only	3	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	0
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of Detroit City Council sources: 6

Table 9.23
Political Candidates/Campaign Workers

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	22	0
Direct Quote Only	8	0
Indirect Quote Only	5	4
Neither Direct or Indirect*	1	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of political candidate or campaign worker sources: 40

Table 9.24
Politicians

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	9	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	2	0
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of politician sources: 11

Table 9.25
St. Cecilia's

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	9	1
Direct Quote Only	1	2
Indirect Quote Only	0	9
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of St. Cecilia's sources: 22

Table 9.26
Company Spokespeople

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	7	0
Direct Quote Only	1	2
Indirect Quote Only	4	6
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	1

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of company spokespeople sources: 21

Table 9.27
Court Records

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	1	6
Direct Quote Only	0	2
Indirect Quote Only	2	15
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of court records sources: 26

Table 9.28
City Workers

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	5	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	4	1
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of city worker sources: 10

Table 9.29
Suspect

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	7	1
Direct Quote Only	1	0
Indirect Quote Only	5	1
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of suspect sources: 15

Table 9.30
Warrants/Indictments

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	9
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of warrant/indictment sources: 9

Table 9.31
Members of Congress

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	1	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	1	0
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of Congressional sources: 2

Table 9.32
State Legislators

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	4	1
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	1	1
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of legislative sources: 7

Table 9.33
Autopsy

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	2
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of autopsy sources: 2

Table 9.34
Social Workers

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	6	0
Direct Quote Only	4	0
Indirect Quote Only	1	4
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of social worker sources: 15

Table 9.35
Miscellaneous Documents

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	1
Direct Quote Only	0	6
Indirect Quote Only	0	5
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of miscellaneous document sources: 12

Table 9.36
Governor

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	3	0
Neither Direct or Indirect*	3	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of governor attributions: 6

Table 9.37
Juvenile Records

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	3
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of juvenile records sources: 3

Table 9.38
Federal Law Enforcement

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	1	1
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	2	5
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of federal law enforcement sources: 9

Table 9.39
Government Agencies/Spokespeople

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	5	0
Direct Quote Only	2	0
Indirect Quote Only	8	7
Neither Direct or Indirect*	1	1

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of government agency sources: 24

Table 9.40
Polls

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	0	0
Direct Quote Only	0	0
Indirect Quote Only	0	2
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of polls attributed: 2

Table 9.41
Organizations/Associations Spokespeople

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	8	3
Direct Quote Only	17	0
Indirect Quote Only	5	5
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	0

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of organization or association spokespeople sources: 38

Table 9.42
Other Sources Close to the Story

Attribution	Named	Unnamed
Direct/Indirect Quote	9	2
Direct Quote Only	10	7
Indirect Quote Only	8	16
Neither Direct or Indirect*	0	1

*Usually indicated "source could not be reached for comment"

**Total number of other sources: 53

Contrary to their police references, reporters directly attributed information to court sources 90 percent of the time and used both direct and indirect quotes more than 50 percent of the time. No court sources were unavailable for comment. Like police sources, neighbors and friends often were nebulously attributed. They were unnamed and indirectly quoted--"neighbors

said"— 33 percent of the time. Just as reporters used vague references such as "police said" or "neighbors said," they also attributed information to "officials" and "authorities" 26 times. All but one of those references was unnamed and one was unavailable for comment.

Other law enforcement or criminal justice sources included police organizations, 1.4 percent; police records or documents, 1.9 percent; jail records, 0.36 percent; DPD statistics, 0.09 percent; court records or documents, 2.3 percent; warrants or indictments, 0.81 percent; autopsies, 0.18 percent; juvenile records, 0.27 percent and federal law enforcement sources, 0.81 percent. (Table 8.2)

Table 8.2
Other Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Sources

Source Title	Number	Percent
Police Organizations	16	1.44
Police Records or Documents	21	1.9
Jail/Prison Records	4	0.36
DPD Statistics	2	0.09
Court Records or Documents	26	2.34
Warrants or Indictments	9	0.81
Autopsies	2	0.18
Juvenile Records	3	0.27
Federal Law Enforcement	9	0.81
Total	92	8.2

In the spirit of the election that took place two months after the story population was published, the governor, legislators, members of Congress, Mayor Coleman Young, his press secretary, Bob Berg, political candidates, city council members, elected officials and crime-fighting plans put forth by candidates were used as sources 89 times or 8 percent of all references. (Table 8.3)

Table 8.3
Political Sources

Source Title	Number	Percent
Governor	6	0.54
Legislators	7	0.63
Members of Congress	2	0.18
Coleman Young	10	0.9
Bob Berg	5	0.45
Political Candidates	40	3.6
City Council Members	6	0.54
Politicians/Workers	11	0.99
Crime Plans	2	0.18
Total	89	8

Most of the references to political players were directly attributed using the person's name and most were directly quoted as well. Few were unavailable for comment, except for both Coleman Young, who was re-elected that year, and his press secretary Bob Berg. Young was directly quoted seven times and unavailable for comment twice while Berg was both directly and indirectly quoted twice, and unavailable for comment once.

Reporters from both newspapers also made reference to their own published work or analysis: the *Detroit News* referred to itself as a source three times (0.3 percent) while the *Detroit Free Press* was its own source 12 times (1.1 percent.) Documents, including crime plans, court, jail, juvenile, city and miscellaneous records, were credited as sources 78 times. Statistics and polls were mentioned five times. (Table 8.4)

Table 8.4
Documentary Sources

Source Title	Number	Percent
<i>Free Press</i> Analysis	12	1.1
<i>News</i> Analysis	3	0.3
Crime Plans	2	0.18
Police Documents	21	1.9

Source Title	Number	Percent
Court Records	26	2.3
Jail/Prison Records	4	0.36
Juvenile Records	3	0.27
City Records	1	0.09
Misc. Documents	12	1.1
DPD Statistics	1	0.09
Federal Statistics	2	0.18
Polls	2	0.18
Warrants/Indictments	9	0.18
Total	89	8

Most documentary source attributions were classified as indirect because the actual name of the report or record was not used. The references usually were "according to court records" or "according to the search warrant," without the name, case number or any other details that would help a reader go to the court, city, or county office to obtain a copy of the document.

The ongoing story of the shooting of a basketball coach in the St. Cecilia's league accounted for 22 sources who were difficult to classify otherwise and therefore were lumped together as one category. (Table 8) Reporters also talked to spokespeople for government agencies 24 times, company or hospital spokespeople 21 times, "experts" 19 times, suspects and clergy 15 times each and fire officials eight times. (Table 8)

CONTENT ANALYSIS DISCUSSION

While the content analysis did support much of what the researcher observed in the other half of this study, the experiment left more questions than it answered and opened the door for more research. The population of stories, 328, was sufficient. The even larger population of sources in those stories, 1,111, was admirable. Still, the populations of stories and sources are insufficient for a thorough study of the reporters who were interviewed during the observation, particularly those regularly assigned to the Detroit Police beat. There simply were too many stories in this study written by non-DPD beat reporters.

Comparisons between the two papers. Differences between *Free Press* and the *News* were almost too close to track. The *Free Press* covered crime and police more often with longer stories rather than briefs of less than 10 square inches. Although it published only 155 stories compared to the *Detroit News*' 173 stories, the *Free Press* devoted more space, 5,452 square inches to police and crime coverage, compared to its competitor which had 5,259. Only 31 percent of the *Free Press* stories were briefs compared to 46 percent from the *News*.

This study found that the *News* ran more police and crime stories, but used less space and more text to tell those stories. The *Free Press* used 57 pictures or graphics (37 percent) to illustrate its police- and crime-related stories compared with 40 (23 percent) by the *News*. The *Free Press* gave more space for crime and police stories, but used more of that space for pictures or graphics than for text. It is somewhat surprising that the *Free Press* used more pictures because Gannett, the company that owns the *News*, also owns *USA Today*, a paper known for its splashy color photos and graphics.

Using the total square inches of crime and police news from both papers divided by the number of stories, the *Free Press* averaged 35.2 square inches of text and graphics per story compared to 30.4 square inches in the *News*.

Both papers used stories from wire services which either were attributed to staff and wire reports or were not attributed at all. (Table 1.2) The *News* used 81 wire stories compared to 50 by the *Free Press*. The remaining stories were written by one or more reporters or were missing a byline.

Evidence from the Budd Attention Score variable had the *News* scoring a winning 287 points to the *Free Press*'s 252. That score, however, was based on an uneven number of stories. The *News* had 18 more stories in the sample population than did the *Free Press*. The average number of Budd points per story is 1.63 for the *Free Press* and 1.65 for the *News*. Using this Budd average, there is hardly a difference in how prominently either paper displays police and crime news, although the number of photos and graphics used in the *Free Press* may indicate that the paper views crime and police stories as issues that deserve reader attention.

These numbers seem to show a little more dedication on the part of the *Free Press* to police and crime coverage, although the *News* lagged only slightly behind. Certainly these conclusions support the observation part of the research which showed beat reporters from the *Free Press* staying busy and visible and their counterparts at the *News* being less so.

Reporters. As was stated in the observation analysis chapter, beat reporters from the *Free Press* seemed to keep busier than those from the *News*. That observation bore out in the content analysis as Jim Schaefer and Roger Chesley from the *Free Press* contributed more copy to this study than either of the regular beat reporters from the *News*, Monroe Walker or David Grant, or their regular substitute Jean Gadomski.

The conclusion drawn here is not that either paper employs fastidious or lazy reporters, but possibly that each city desk has different expectations of its workers. The *News* certainly was not lacking in police or crime news and in fact devoted nearly twice the space to the DeLisle murders as did the *Free Press*. Certainly Jim Mitzelfeld, of the *News*, who contributed far more copy than any other reporter in the study, could not be described as lazy, at least not during this three-week period when the DeLisle murders were the hottest story in town.

Beat reporters from the *Free Press* were busier, according to the analysis, than their counterparts at the *News*, but they didn't have bylined stories to show for every day they worked, either. Chesley and Schaefer both demonstrated during the observation that they also wrote unbylined briefs and both had "back burner" projects in the works that received their attention when the DPD beat was not keeping them busy. Beat reporters from both papers may also have written stories that were not police- or crime-related, and therefore were not included in the study.

Brian Flanigan and Jack Kresnak, who wrote the most copy for the *Free Press* in this study, kept a high profile throughout the story population, not only with their project about DPD officers on patrol, but with other stories as well. Flanigan wrote five stories outside of the project as well as two combined byline stories. He also kept up with his weekly sometimes-bylined feature, Detroit's Most Wanted. Both Flanigan and Kresnak also spent considerable time working with Chesley and Schaefer as they became oriented to the DPD beat.

Victims. The population of victims in the study was high, 433, although many of the stories had no mention of victims. Unlike suspects, victims usually are known to police, often because some crimes aren't crimes without victims. If no one dies, it's not a homicide. If no one is injured when a gun is fired, it's possible that no crime, or certainly a lesser offense has been committed.

In other crime categories there are certainly victims, but those victims may also be the perpetrators as in drug crimes and prostitution. One could certainly argue on a more philosophical level that everyone from the user to the dealer to society in general is a victim of the drug problem, however, for the purpose of this research, only "tangible" victims--ones that could be counted--were included. Stories in this study showed serious concern for the drug problem in Detroit, especially because of the pre-election mood which caused politicians at every level of government to campaign against drugs and crime. Still, many of the stories about drugs did not include victims.

In more than half of victim references, reporters both named and described victims using age and/or other descriptive words including hometown, occupation and familial relationship. Race was used only twice to describe victims. Thirty percent of the victims in the study were unnamed, but described.

One might conclude that reporters or their police sources were showing sensitivity by withholding the names, possibly to address privacy concerns or until family could be notified. One might also conclude that police were withholding public information to which the public has a right. No issues of that sort were evident from the stories in this study. Victims did not seem to be neglected or ignored by either police or reporters.

The DeLisle children. The four children who died when their father drove their family station wagon into the Detroit River were the most commonly mentioned victims in the study. Bryan, Melissa, Kathryn and Emily DeLisle were named and their photos appeared numerous times throughout the three-week sampling as reporters followed the progress of the investigation.

Over the course of three weeks, the children were eulogized and buried, their father was charged with their murders and their mother secluded herself,

unable to face the reality of her husband's charges. Lawrence DeLisle was taken to East Lansing where he confessed to the crimes while being questioned by Michigan State Police polygraphers. His wife, Suzanne DeLisle, in an exclusive interview with Jim Mitzelfeld from the *News*, said that she would stand by her husband and that she did not believe, as did most police officers or Michigan citizens, that her husband intentionally killed their children and tried to kill her.

Detroit newspaper readers, radio listeners and TV news viewers were fed a very hearty and steady diet of DeLisle news during the three-week study. Surely the names and ages of the DeLisle children were in the front of everyone's mind and readers did not need to be reminded that four individual lives were taken that night in the Detroit River.

As a reporter, the researcher was initially appalled at the number of times that the children's names and ages were omitted while their father and killer, was fully identified in every story. It's difficult to read about the DeLisle family without wanting to cry over the empty deaths of Bryan, Melissa, Emily and Kathryn. Omitting their names from stories about the crime that caused their deaths belittles the loss of the four children, especially when each and every story included detailed information about their parents.

However, as a reporter, the researcher will stop short of condemning writers from either newspaper for leaving out the names of the DeLisle victims. Readers, viewers and listeners had heard the names and seen the faces almost every day. They knew every intimate detail of the family's troubles, so perhaps reminding them of the names in story after story was not necessary. Time and space constraints also are a reality of the news business and repetitive information often becomes extraneous. Without a study like this one, perhaps no one would have noticed any victim neglect, but perhaps the topic is one which should be discussed—often—by reporters and editors alike.

Suspects. Fewer suspects than victims were included in the study, possibly because police are not always able to identify perpetrators as easily as victims. Thirty-seven percent of stories that involved a crime incident, and thus were likely to involve a suspect, were published during the incident or investigation stages of the criminal justice process. Quite frankly, interest in some of those crime incidents may have died out before police were able to identify, arrest or try a suspect. Regardless of reader interest, some crimes just can't be cleared and thus information about suspects may not be as available as it is for victims.

In 26 percent of the references included in this study, suspects were not named but were described. Police may have been asking for public assistance in identifying the 77 unnamed suspects by releasing their descriptions to the news media. Further study would be necessary to determine how helpful public response to the descriptions in the study were to the police investigations, but TV crime stopper shows have proved that tips from the public solve crime.

In his text book, *Catching Serial Killers*,¹² retired Michigan State Police investigator Earl James found that in 61 percent of the serial murder cases he studied, the information that resulted in the perpetrator's arrest came from witnesses. Most of those witnesses had nearly been victims themselves, but without their testimony, many of those cases would not have been solved. Given that statistic as well as the success of such TV shows as *America's Most Wanted* and *Unsolved Mysteries*, police should be striving to get more unnamed suspect descriptions that might garner tips from the public into the newspaper.

Sources. Not surprisingly, police officers were the largest category of the 1,111 sources in the study, followed by court workers, the next step in the

¹²Earl James, J.D., Ph.D.; *Catching Serial Killers*; (Lansing, MI: International Forensic Services, Inc., 1991) pp. 305-306.

criminal justice process. Two significant findings from the research are the resourcefulness of reporters to interview a variety of sources in addition to police and court workers and the sometimes casual nature in which sources are identified.

During the observation period, reporters complained again and again about the resistance by the Detroit Police Department and the city government to release information to the media. They complained about having to file Freedom of Information requests in order to see documents they'd have no trouble seeing if they were regular citizens and not reporters.

Police officers who were interviewed called the lack of openness a "blue curtain" or a veil of secrecy, but they said reporters usually developed their own sources within the police department who would help them obtain information they were officially denied. Officers also lamented that when reporters combined officially released and inside source information in one story, they often used such nebulous references as "police said." Such general attributions in combination with directly named officers, they said, leave the reader with the impression that only one officer was interviewed. Some of the officers in the Public Information Unit complained that they had been victimized by reporters using secret sources and had actually been reprimanded for giving out information that should not have been released.

More than half of the police references in this study were unnamed and indirectly quoted, usually worded as "police said" or "investigators said." A less popular category of nebulous attribution was "officials said." Several explanations are possible. First, reporters are sloppy in their writing and don't care if their information is correctly attributed or who gets hurt if it isn't. Second, reporters deliberately attribute off-the-record information to "police," even if other officers are named in the stories and therefore "police said" always

indicates a secret source. Third, certain nuances of newswriting make it difficult to directly attribute every source every time. Using the same name over and over is repetitive and if the story is more clear without extraneous repetition, then direct attribution can be sacrificed to make reading easier.

As a reporter, the researcher believes the reason for overuse of nebulous references lies somewhere in the last paragraph. She hopes the explanation is that the job of newswriting makes being specific in every reference difficult. Newspaper stories, unlike books, are written and edited quickly and are intended to be read easily and efficiently. Flawless writing is unlikely; however, the reader should not be left wondering where the reporter obtained information or exactly who the reporter interviewed. Avoiding general source references like 'police,' "investigators," "officials" and "authorities" adds credibility to the news story and to the media in general. That is not to say that reporters in this study were sloppy, but perhaps more care should be taken to be specific.

No other source category was unnamed in the same proportion as "police," except for documentary sources where the exact citation is neither required nor necessary in the newspaper as it would be in an academic writing. Reporters sought information from warrants, indictments, police, court, jail, prison, juvenile and city records 64 times. Based on the reporter interviews during the observation, the researcher expected a higher percentage of documentary sources because of a lack of human sources willing to be interviewed. This was not the case. Reporters apparently were able to use warm bodies as sources most of the time.

Political sources vying for re-election appeared, from the study, to be available and responsive as most were named and often directly quoted as well. Even Mayor Coleman Young and his press secretary, Bob Berg, both of whom came under fire by reporters interviewed for the observation, were interviewed

and quoted a dozen times. Young could not be reached for comment twice and Berg was unavailable once.

Both newspapers indirectly quoted their own past stories or analyses 15 times. *Free Press* reporters attributed their own newspaper 10 times and exclusive stories from the *News* twice. One might assume, as did the researcher, that those attributions were a mistake in the analysis data, but both references to the competition were verified, including one mention of *News* reporter Jim Mitzelfeld's exclusive interview with Suzanne DeLisle.

Location. Reporters also lacked specificity when describing where crime incidents occurred, most often opting for the general city or county location rather than the more specific block number or exact address. In a metro area the size of Detroit where the readership stretches an hour's drive in all directions, exact addresses probably are meaningless to most. However, intersection or neighborhood descriptions might also help the reader who is familiar with the area.

Writing. Overwhelmingly reporters used summary or blind news leads with straight news off the top of the story. Creative leads were used only 54 times, 34 by *Free Press* reporters and 29 by their counterparts at the *News*. If *Free Press* reporters got creative more often than their competitors, it follows that they also covered more non-event-related features about police and crime which might lend themselves to more creativity. The *Free Press* also had more first day stories, but the *News* covered more follow up, court and event-related features.

Crime. Homicide topped the list at both papers for most-covered crime with drug crimes coming in a close second. The researcher was unprepared when initial coding was done and the drug crime category was added later to accommodate the popular topic. Crimes against persons and criminal sexual assault also were widely covered. Traditionally violent personal crime makes

headlines every time, and therefore the frequency of coverage of non-violent drug crimes was a bit surprising.

The popularity of drug stories could indicate a serious drug problem in metro Detroit, an assumption with which few would argue. However, the accessibility and proactive stance that Rudy Thomas, commander of the DPD narcotics squad, takes with the media also could explain the statistic. Reporters often were notified of crack house raids or of padlocking of drug houses in advance and media coverage was encouraged. A larger population of stories over a longer period of time may be necessary to examine this topic further.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Detroit may have been the best worst-case scenario the researcher could have selected for study. The city, the police department, the newspapers and all the people connected to those institutions are steeped in the rich tradition of the Motor City. At the time of the research, Detroit also was deeply devoted to the leadership of Mayor Coleman Young. It was the researcher's conclusion that these people, these institutions and this city were not very open to change, and some were especially closed to an exchange of ideas.

Although Detroit was a perfect laboratory for this study, the researcher does not believe the city, the police department nor the media is terribly unique compared with other major metropolitan areas. When the media does its job correctly, every law enforcement agency in the country is under close scrutiny. The spotlight on police in Detroit and other large cities often is brighter because crime and violence usually are more prevalent in highly populated places. Detroit gained a national reputation for high crime because of racial violence in the 1960s, and the city almost always takes a position at or near the top of the list of large U.S. cities for murder, drugs and other violent crime. Certainly the media help direct that spotlight in Detroit and other large cities.

For police beat reporters in large cities more crime means more stories, more work, more contact with law enforcement sources and thus more chances for a messy relationship like the one that exists between the Detroit media and DPD. In smaller cities, like Lansing, Mich., where the researcher worked, crime often is less prevalent and police news can be dull. The news diet includes property and personal crimes that would not even be considered newsworthy in a big city. The police still are under heavy scrutiny, but there are fewer officers to monitor.

In cities with police departments the size of Detroit's or Denver's, the media barely have the time or resources to uncover all of the crime and corruption. It is the researcher's theory, having taught police/media seminars in rural areas, small cities and large metropolitan areas, that problems in the police/media relationship are likely no matter what the size of the city is.

Research on law enforcement and the media has consistently found a friction between the two groups because of their naturally adversary roles of protecting the public and informing the public. In larger cities where there is more crime, more people, more officers and more reporters, there also is less of an opportunity to cultivate and maintain good reporter-source relationships. Suspicion breeds and eventually the climate often becomes negative, just like the situation the researcher found in Detroit.

This research was consistent with other studies of its kind, especially the study by Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987), which found that the spatial arrangement of the newsroom provided by the Toronto Police Department gave reporters an opportunity to become part of police socialization. Certainly the reporters who had their office at DPD headquarters were more familiar with officers from the PIU and other departments. The Toronto study also found that reporters belonged either to the inner circle or the outer circle, depending on where they worked. Those who kept an office at the police department were considered to be in the inner-circle. They usually worked for the "popular" news organizations while outer-circle reporters, who worked out of their own newsrooms, tended to work for the "quality" news organizations.

In Detroit, only reporters from the two daily newspapers, the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* maintained an office at DPD. The researcher would classify both papers as both quality and popular news organizations. TV and radio reporters did not keep an office at DPD and therefore could be considered

outer-circle reporters in this case. The researcher has not studied the broadcast media in Detroit and is therefore unable to put a "quality" or "popular" label on those news organizations.

This study also was consistent with Kelly's (1987) general description of the police-media relationship. The relationship in Detroit was troubled by the naturally adversary function of protecting the public and informing it. Often the very information the media wish to disclose is what law enforcement so vehemently protects. This phenomenon is not new, as is illustrated by Kelly and the history of police and the media.

Tunstall (1971) found that reporters used a police public information source in fewer than 40 percent of their crime stories. While the present study did not quantify how often reporters used the PIU, the observation certainly showed that Detroit reporters consistently sought information elsewhere because PIU officers did not know anything that was not on the news release.

The present study also was consistent with the Jones (1976) and Sherizen (1978) studies that found that newspaper coverage of crime is not necessarily representative of actual crime statistics. News coverage tends to focus more on violent personal crime, which makes up only a small percentage of all police work, while it also tends to ignore property crime. That certainly was the finding in Detroit, although the researcher noted quite a bit of coverage on drug crimes and drugs as an issue. Drugs tend to inspire many property crimes, and certainly are major cause of violent crime. Crimes relating to drugs often don't fit easily into the violent or non-violent categories. Their coverage of showed that the Detroit media recognized the importance of drugs as a cause of crime.

This research also proved several hypotheses set forth earlier in the study, including:

1) Reporters obtain only the information set by the police on their agenda. Often that agenda imposes a format in which the information is used.

As expected, the format was the news release and the case drafts made available to the media by the Public Information Unit. Reporters generally do not "flesh out" their stories or find more in-depth information through PIU sources because those sources don't have more than what is on the case draft. PIU officers rarely go to crime or emergency scenes, so at best, the PIU is only a source of second- or third-hand information that is presented using the consistent format of the case draft and news release forms.

2) Police provide information that does not jeopardize crime victims and witnesses nor the integrity of the investigation. The information is further limited to an amount with which police trust the reporters.

In the PIU, officers black out information on case drafts to maintain victim and suspect privacy. Names, addresses and other information not released by DPD may be available through court documents at a later time, but at the police department level that information is protected. In the unusual situation where a Detroit reporter is able to interview an investigator to learn more about a particular case, the release of information not contained in the news release depends on the trust between the officer and the journalist. Some reporters can find out anything they want; others may get nothing. This study confirmed that, ultimately, availability of information depends on the strength of the police officer-journalist relationship.

3) Reporters develop their own police sources, both overt and covert, and develop trusting relationships in order to obtain information.

The researcher observed reporters cultivating and maintaining sources in a variety of situations that are outlined earlier in this thesis. The "unwritten" departmental policy that reporters must get their information through the PIU or

interviews with administrators that are set up by the PIU, has made it necessary for reporters to find their own covert sources. Regardless of whether the source is covert or one that is acceptable to the PIU and the department, the reporter must work hard to develop a trusting relationship. Even in the PIU, which is set up to be the first place the media go for information, reporters must work to develop trust or officers may not be helpful.

4) Police officially provide information to reporters through the public information office. High-ranking officers in the chief's office provide some on-the-record interviews. Other officers provide interviews that are unattributable.

DPD's policy said that any officer who has firsthand knowledge about an incident may talk to the media; however, that is not what generally happens in Detroit. Only a handful of officers who are either administrators or who work in the PIU are ever quoted and named. Perhaps this point is best illustrated by the massive project on police patrols that was done by Jack Kresnak and Brian Flanigan. DPD administrators and even the mayor's office marvelled at the reporters' accuracy and were only slightly annoyed at their tactics in doing the story. The information and documents obviously were leaked to the *Free Press* by an anonymous source who, of course, was never named in any of the stories. Throughout the study, the department's tendency to allow some officers to talk while restricting others was carried out. Unapproved interviews were not quoted and named.

5) Reporters use information provided by the police public information unit, seek unattributable information from sources within the department and use other interviews with various members of the public.

Not surprisingly, this hypothesis held true. In addition to police sources, both overt and covert, reporters spoke to a variety of different sources including politicians, court officials, documents, witnesses, victims, neighbors, community

leaders and even their own analysis of police data or past stories. Reporters in Detroit work hard to circumvent the PIU because the information the unit provides is minimal.

As a reporter observing other reporters in their own environment, the researcher concluded that being assigned to cover DPD is an unnecessarily frustrating game. A thick cloud of suspicion hangs over the city, engulfing both the journalists who cover DPD and the readers/viewers who need to know and have a right to know what their city officials and police officers are doing. No one in the city administration seemed anxious to dissipate that cloud, neither during the observation period nor in the five years the researcher lived in Michigan.

A different definition of newsworthy. What makes this city and this study particularly interesting is that suspicion and outdated media policies were a way of life. People on both sides of the fence complained about the poor relationship between police and the media and everyone talked about wanting change. However, no one seemed particularly optimistic that change would ever be possible. Suspicion and the "blue curtain" were such a familiar part of covering DPD that reporters actually thrived on the challenge of getting information from the department and the city. The very definition of "newsworthy" was contrary to the traditional journalism standards the researcher has known and used both professionally and academically.

For example, Brian Flanigan and Jack Kresnak won a major victory in reporting how many officers patrol the streets of Detroit at any given time. The project was complete with statistics, victim accounts and confirmation of department secrets by unnamed police sources. DPD did not deny the accuracy of the reporting and some told the researcher that it was remarkably true. Journalists were impressed by the reporters' skill in opening the "blue curtain," if

only a crack, and annoying the police department. Whether the project actually was newsworthy, however, was debatable. Officers and journalists alike discussed their opinions candidly. Most said the only reason the project was news was because it uncovered information the city would not release.

The project was not necessarily timely as it was not pegged on any particular crime or series of crimes. It did not offer suggestions to its readers on how to stay safe nor did it empower them to do anything about crime. It simply told them where the police were at any given time. In fact, PIU officers complained that the reason the data were not made available for public release was because those criminals who read the paper would get ideas on how to avoid the police or move into neighborhoods where fewer officers patrol. In retrospect, the project was newsworthy mainly because of the reporters' ability to get the information, not because the information was terribly useful or compelling.

Although the PIU officers complained about the Flanigan/Kresnak project, they also said the accuracy of the information was impressive as was the reporters' ability to find anonymous sources within the department. Several of the officers interviewed for this study said that reporters could always find an anonymous source in officers who "had a beef" with the department and there were plenty of those officers to choose from in all ranks. Flanigan, Kresnak and most of the other veteran reporters like Grant and Walker had honed their skills for finding those disgruntled employees, gained their trust and then turned them into reliable, untraceable sources. Newer reporters assigned to DPD had to develop that skill, but quickly learned that having good unnamed sources was what the DPD beat is all about.

The researcher concluded that the reason reporters were able to get around the obvious obstacles that DPD and the city put in their way, was

because they were good reporters who knew how to work within the limits. They were not in a hurry to make changes because they knew how to get their jobs done, despite the problems. They were used to the problems and although improving the situation might make their work easier, it might not be worth the effort.

A more thorough observation of the newer DPD reporters over a longer period of time would be interesting. At the time of this study, there seemed to be only two groups of reporters: cubs and veterans. Of the reporters interviewed for this study, none who were between these two stages were regularly assigned to the DPD beat. Much was said about the "initiation period" through which DPD puts new beat reporters. An observation of that initiation period from start to finish would show how reporters moved from cub to veteran status and would certainly be an interesting study.

On the other side of the observation, the researcher was unable to interview any police officers who were not veterans. At DPD and most other police agencies, the job of public information officer is not offered to rookies. Because the image of the department is on the line, trusted veterans usually fill that role. In recent years departments have found that the PIO job sometimes is best performed by a civilian who can answer the easy questions, write news releases and arrange interviews with administrators who can answer the tough questions.

Problems at DPD. In the researcher's observation, few officers in the PIU were destined for better assignments. Most seemed to behave like old horses put out to pasture, biding their time until retirement. Career goals were not apparent and their level of enthusiasm for their work was as low as one would expect it to be. They had nothing else to do, nowhere else to go and nothing to lose by being

stubborn and non-responsive to reporters. They complained about the assignment, the system, the department and the media. Who could blame them?

The PIU assignment has little to do with police work and is, by comparison, boring. Although the desk job is much safer than patrolling the mean streets of Detroit, it lacks the excitement and adrenaline of catching criminals, curbing crime and protecting citizens. Furthermore, police officers are trained to "protect and serve," not to write news releases and deal with lofty journalism concepts like newsworthiness and gatekeeping. As PIOs working in a department with such outdated policies and the "blue curtain," they were bound to receive a lot of complaints and were unlikely to make anyone happy.

The officers who were enthusiastic about their work and who had plans beyond their PIU years also were popular among reporters. Those officers were responsive, thorough, helpful when they could be and apologetic when they couldn't. They saw their job in the PIU as a stepping stone to a larger, more visible role in the department. One of the officers had a law degree and political aspirations. He appreciated and even enjoyed the opportunity for media exposure.

The need for change. PIU officers and the media have given strong indicators that change is needed. In only a few minutes in the PIU office, even the most casual observer can sense the bad moods and unhappiness prevalent in those who work there. DPD administrators complain about the bad press the department receives, another blatant indicator that something is wrong with the PIU. Still, the whining continues on both sides of the police/media relationship.

The researcher concludes that most of the problems start with the PIU and that is where the repairs should start as well. DPD could make a number of changes that would improve the relationship between the PIU officers and the media.

Consider using civilians. Assigning civilians who have both media experience and law enforcement expertise in the PIU would free veteran officers to do police work. The office still should be overseen by a police commander, but could be staffed with people who are trained specifically to be the department's spokespeople. They should be capable of doing on-camera interviews, but also should pass along interviews to police administrators or ranking officers whenever possible. They should be good writers and speakers and should be enthusiastic representatives of DPD. A little enthusiasm would go a long way to perk up the department's image. That trait, coupled with a knowledge of journalism and how to use media access to the department's advantage, would make an extremely effective public information officer.

Make the PIO job attractive. In lieu of hiring civilians to staff the PIU, the unit should not be a punishment, a last resort or a quiet place to count the days until retirement. Those who work there should want to be there. The job offers a great opportunity for an officer to improve DPD's image and to further his or her own career because of the visibility of the department spokesperson. Officers who staff the PIU should be good writers and good communicators. Training for PIOs is widely available, as are books with instructions on how to be interviewed and how to write effective news releases.

Look at the media as an opportunity, not a burden. More often than not, it seems, dealing with the news media is a burden that many police departments and city administrators would rather not carry. The news media, however, are a direct conduit to the public that is free of charge. Working with the media also could be seen as an opportunity to better position the department with voters in the community. News stories about investigations are an opportunity to ask for public assistance. Positive feature stories about the department can raise morale in the ranks and let readers and viewers see what their department is doing for

them. The media can inform people that they are safe or warn them about precautions to take if they are not safe. As long as police departments assume the media are a burden or that they never report any positive news about police, then that assumption will be a reality.

Get acquainted with the media. The very dynamics of the police/media relationship usually put the reporter in the officer's environment. The officer rarely is familiar with the reporter's environment. PIOs should ride along with reporters or photojournalists and observe how they work, just as reporters often do to familiarize themselves with the police environment. At the very least, PIOs should visit all the local newsrooms to become acquainted with the editors who make the decisions and the changes. PIOs should make the effort to understand newsroom operations and deadlines and, perhaps most importantly, meet the reporters personally before encountering them professionally.

The analogy of the police/media relationship as an "us vs. them" battle is used often, especially when describing a climate like the one that exists in Detroit. Using that analogy, the best offensive strategy would be to know the enemy, understand its capability and its habits. The players in the Detroit scenario are clearly on an uneven field. The relationship takes place on police grounds and on the media's terms because ultimately the media have the last word with the public. PIOs could even the field by making it standard operating procedure to be as familiar as possible with the media.

In reality, the working relationship between police and the media is not a battle. Protecting and informing the public should not be mutually exclusive duties, although occasionally they might clash. In Detroit, everyone knows they would be better off if they could get along. Their biggest problem is the willingness to make the changes to improve the relationship between DPD and the media.

Don't wait to react. The PIU should concentrate on being proactive, rather than reactive, with the media. If the PIO responds to reporters' questions immediately and thoroughly, the stories that result from the interaction are more likely to be positive. But that's only the beginning. The PIU also should concentrate on the "feel good" stories that would regularly put the department in a good light and assure readers/viewers that they are safe and well-protected. In every news release, the positive aspects of the department's work should be emphasized. Instead of saying, "The incident is under investigation," perhaps the better approach would be to say, "Investigators are collecting evidence and interviewing witnesses," or some other generic, but active sentence that lets the reader/viewer know that the police are working on cases, not letting them sit in an in-box on the commander's desk.

Think creatively about good news. Inspector Fred Williams gave the reporter an envelope filled with news releases on "feel good" stories that didn't make the news. He complained that the media ignore positive stories about the department, but perhaps he would do better to look at what he is offering. The envelope contained mostly awards for heroic officers and citizens, something to which the media perhaps should pay attention, but those can't be the only good stories about the department. PIOs must be creative when looking for good news.

The researcher encountered a perfect example of police creativity when she was a reporter in Lansing. During her regular phone rounds, an officer from the Department of Public Safety at Michigan State University laughingly told her about a group of baby ducks he rescued from a sewer. He described in great, and humorous, detail about how the baby ducks, who were following their mother, dropped one by one through the holes in the sewer grate and into the muck. A student called DPS after hearing the distraught mother duck squawking

near the sewer. Two DPS officers responded and one climbed down in the muck to lift the babies out one by one.

The story, though barely more than a brief, was picked up by the wire services all over Michigan. Readers all over the state were left with a positive image of MSU police officers. They care about animals. Readers may also have pictured the MSU campus as a safe place where police are so efficient in fighting crime that they have time to save baby ducks. The officer who thought to release that story was just being friendly, but perhaps other departments could learn from the positive results that story received.

Emphasize expertise. In the researcher's own newsroom experience, she relied on the expertise of officers in all levels of police work. Accident investigators, polygraphers, forensic experts, canine officers and a number of specialized officers have stories that would fascinate readers and viewers. The public is always interested in crime and police work, especially in a city the size of Detroit where crime touches so many people. Police and crime features, both event- and non-event-related, make good reading. PIOs may have a hard time selling feature stories to reporters, but if the working relationship is positive, reporters will be much more receptive to story ideas.

PIOs should emphasize the department's expertise whenever possible. At incident scenes, they should make their experts available for interviews to explain the complicated work investigators do. Interviews with high-level administrators like the chief, captains, lieutenants or sergeants should be arranged whenever their perspective or expertise would promote the department.

Train everyone to be a spokesperson. A good PIO also will be a good spokesperson, willing and able to do on-camera interviews. That officer should, however, be careful not to steal all the department's limelight. The reader/viewer

should know that there are other officers in the department and that the PIO does not necessarily deserve all the credit/blame. One problem is that many administrators or "experts" in the department may not have the communication skills necessary for on-camera interviews. To alleviate that problem, all officers should be trained specifically to do media interviews, to speak well on their feet and communicate effectively.

Inspector Fred Williams, who heads Detroit's PIU, has a journalism degree and thus was an obvious choice to head the unit when it formed in the late 1960s. At the time of the observation, he was not in the main part of the office writing news releases or dealing with media inquiries.

Always be responsive. Even when there's no information available, the PIO or some other department representative should respond promptly to media inquiries. As a journalist, the researcher demands, somewhat selfishly, that police and all sources respond as quickly as possible to media questions. Reporters must meet their deadlines. From the PIO's point of view the reporter's deadline is a secondary reason for being responsive. His or her primary reason should be that the only way to prevent wrong or bad information from being broadcast or published is to get the right information to the media in time for reporters and editors to make their deadlines.

As has been suggested throughout this thesis reporters can and will find other sources to obtain or confirm information if the police are not available. That information may not be as accurate and may make the department look inefficient. Often in the discussion of police/media conflicts the public is forgotten. The media are merely a conduit for the ultimate receiver of information, the reader or viewer. The PIO's main concern should be the public's perception of the information. "Police were not available for comment" couldn't leave a more negative perception. "The information is still unclear but a police

spokesperson has promised to talk to us in a few minutes" is much better. That sentence suggests that police are working on the case and are being forthright, rather than secretive, about information.

Understand media deadlines. Deadlines still should motivate a PIO to gather the facts and prepare a response. Broadcasters can go "live," and thus their deadline is potentially immediate. Except for emergencies, most media deadlines are more predictable and they are not a secret.

The PIO should ask for and keep a list of all the print deadlines, for all editions, and should understand the paper's policy on "chasing" a story that is already on the presses to add new information. The PIO also should ask broadcasters how much time they need to make their deadlines, including driving, writing and tape editing time. Complying, or at least attempting to comply, with media deadlines is a very simple step toward a positive public image, or at the very least, not getting stung with "police were unavailable for comment."

Don't play favorites. The fastest way a PIO can become alienated from the media is to single any journalist or news organization out as a "favorite." Police administrators should be careful when scheduling news conferences that the timing of the information release does not make it either easier or more difficult for any news organization to make its deadline. PIOs should not call an individual reporter to release information unless they plan to call other reporters as well. Some reporters are better, friendlier or more experienced than others. Still, favoring a journalist because he or she is friendly or has been on the beat for a long time could create suspicion among other members of the media. Suspicious journalists are likely to "retaliate" against favoritism by seeking out other information sources and/or putting forth a bad image of the department.

In Detroit, the PIU seemed to come alive when Monroe Walker, who is black, stopped by for a visit, whereas Jim Schaefer, who is white, did not inspire such camaraderie. At first blush, it appeared that there may have been some racial favoritism because most of the officers also were black. That assumption fell apart when officers treated Roger Chesley, who is black, the same as Schaefer and when all the officers praised the work of Brian Flanigan and Jack Kresnak, both white. The only conclusion the reporter was able to make about favoritism in the PIU was that Walker, Flanigan, Kresnak and others may have been "favored" because they had spent many years gaining the trust and respect of the PIU officers whereas Schaefer and Chesley were fairly new to the beat. Familiarity, not race, appeared to be the advantage for reporters visiting the PIU.

Detroit officers did not appear to provide more or better information for any one reporter or news organization, although during the interviews several implied that they may deny or be less than helpful to reporters who had proven they could not be trusted. Several officers noted that some reporters asked more or better questions than others and that they were happy to respond to those questions without feeling they owed identical information to other reporters.

Exceptions to the "anti-favoritism rule" is independently-obtained information that a reporter calls to confirm or a story idea he or she is exploring. PIOs should respond to those questions, respecting the exclusivity of the reporter's work. Reporters don't like to be "scooped," nor do they like to share story ideas with reporters from other newsrooms. PIOs do have a responsibility, however, to release new information universally, giving each journalist an equal chance at making a good story out of it.

Update policies and consider creating parallel policies. At the time of the study, the Detroit media were operating under a policy so outdated that it referred to journalists as "newsmen," a throwback to the time the policy was

written when few, if any women, worked on the city desk. Politically incorrect language aside, far too many years had passed without updating that policy. The duty of re-working that policy should not fall solely on the Detroit Police Department. Newsrooms usually do not have written policies on what they will or will not cover and how they will do it, but perhaps they should.

Both the police and the media's policies on working with one another should agree, point by point, with careful thought as to what problems or concerns might arise. In particular, the issue of what is newsworthy should be defined and continually updated as the meaning of that word changes. Rules about photos, lighting, crime scene perimeters, access to officers and information are all subjects that should be discussed around a conference table, well before and away from situations in which the policy is implemented.

Members of all branches of the Detroit news media had formed a joint committee to fight abuses of the Freedom of Information Act. They said that the city routinely denied the media information that was clearly public and readily available to any non-media person. It was the hope of the committee's founders that each and every time the city or DPD violated the FOIA, the news organization would file a lawsuit forcing compliance. If police and city administrators would not listen to reason, perhaps the frequent cost of going to court would get their attention. The mere existence of such a committee makes obvious the need for a meeting between news directors, editors, DPD and city administrators to iron out differences.

Consider what happened in Ann Arbor. When a similar situation arose in Ann Arbor in 1986, the *Ann Arbor News* filed a lawsuit against the police department. In the suit, the newspaper complained about the Ann Arbor Police policy of providing limited, verbal information of newsworthy events to the media. The department was operating under a policy in which, according to the

lawsuit, "pending investigations including a series of burglaries in the city of Ann Arbor, will be kept from the public and it will have no available means to gauge the efficiency of its law enforcement officials." ¹³

More specifically, the *Ann Arbor News* alleged that the police department's media policy violated the Freedom of Information Act by: "suppressing daily incident reports and other documents from the media and general public; prohibiting individual officers from speaking with the news media; and channeling information to the media through verbal reports from an information officer."¹⁴

The settlement provided that, "Police daily summaries, incident reports and supplemental incident reports shall be made available to representatives of plaintiff (*The News*) except to the extent that a portion of the material is specifically exempted from disclosure by the Michigan Freedom of Information Act."¹⁵

After the settlement, each of the two organizations wrote policies and guidelines for how the police department and the newspaper would work with one another and how information would be released and used. The police policy outlined the specific duties, as well as a schedule for the job of public information officer. *The News'* policy outlined what police or crime information reporters would collect and use. A list of instructions for covering courts and writing police and court stories also was written. Eight years later, the policies are still in place and although there still may be some tension between Ann Arbor police and the newspaper, the solutions to problems already have been argued in court and hammered out into a written policy. The concerned parties have

¹³Smith, Amy; "News suit against Ann Arbor police challenges press-release 'shroud';" *The Ann Arbor News*; Booth Newspapers, Inc.; Ann Arbor, Mich.; March 20, 1986.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Cain, Stephen; "Suit settlement gives News access to police reports"; *The Ann Arbor News*; Booth Newspapers, Inc.; Ann Arbor, Mich.; June 14, 1986.

already opened themselves up for discussion and are far more prepared, therefore, to deal with new issues. The traditional police/media problems like building trust and clashing personalities still exist in Ann Arbor. Information actually is plentiful because the lawsuit demanded access to certain reports that now are organized and readily available to reporters every day.

As a result of the police department's forced compliance with the newspaper's information requests, the *Ann Arbor News* runs a weekly neighborhood watch map that shows department statistics of where crime has occurred in the city. That feature is in addition to daily coverage of crime and court incidents and features. No content analysis or other academic study has been done to examine the police/media relationship in Ann Arbor or determine whether or not it has improved, although this researcher did briefly interview the PIO, a veteran police beat reporter and the managing editor, all of whom said the policy seemed to be working.

Policy vs. philosophy. Ann Arbor Police Capt. Paul Bunten told the researcher, "A good policy should inspire a philosophy...If you inspire a philosophy, you don't need 100 pages for a policy. You only need a few."¹⁶ Written policy determines what actions will and will not be allowed. Philosophy is a much loftier concept that deals more with setting boundaries for good taste, newsworthiness and deciding what the public has a right, need or desire to know. Media policy must be evaluated as it is applied on a case-by-case basis, but where police are concerned, the rules are pretty much black and white. Philosophy is a gray area, especially in the discussion of newsworthiness and good taste.

The most common police complaints the researcher has heard, both in Detroit and as a reporter, are that journalists harass crime victims and that

¹⁶Interview with Capt. Paul Bunten at the Ann Arbor Police Department, February 1993.

photojournalists routinely take pictures of scenes that are inappropriate for publication or broadcast because they show blood and gore or violate victim privacy. While police do have control over the information they release, they cannot mandate good taste in how information or news photos are used. The appropriate time to discuss police/media philosophy is not after a story or photo that is aired or printed offends someone. Instead, philosophy should be the first item on the agenda when police and newsroom administrators sit down to iron out a policy. In a news market like Detroit, the best time to have that meeting is yesterday.

Know who's in charge. Too often readers, viewers and news sources let "mistakes" in the news pass without calling the newsroom to offer a correction or a complaint. Law enforcement sources could alleviate future headaches by knowing who makes the decisions in the newsroom and calling those in charge when reporters or photojournalists behave inappropriately or when wrong information is published or broadcast. When a source allows an inaccuracy to go uncorrected, the information will be wrong in the archive. In the future, writers who refer to the archived story for facts will continue the mistake.

Denying a bad reporter information as a punishment for past mistakes is not an option because police departments should not play favorites, especially when public information is involved. An unresolved disagreement only leads to a weaker and more destructive working relationship. For the news media, a bad relationship with police only makes their jobs more difficult. That relationship could be devastating for a police department. When the PIO is not helpful or denies information, the media become suspicious and must seek other sources. Journalists may write inaccurate stories or may seek out stories that will harm the department's image.

Editors and news directors are the only ones in a position to formally discipline employees whose behavior is bad, but not illegal. News crews will never change their work habits unless they are aware that there is a problem. Police administrators, as well as other sources, must call the newsroom and tell somebody when they are unhappy.

News media could change a little, too. Journalists working the Detroit Police beat have incredibly difficult jobs. Limited information and DPD's suspicion of media motives have made the job unbearable for some and a constant challenge for others.

This researcher finds it difficult to criticize some of the actions of the Detroit newspaper reporters, perhaps because of her perspective having reported on the police beat herself. As a journalist, she admires their ability to persevere under such adverse working conditions. She was in awe of the pros like Flanigan, Kresnak, Grant, Sinclair, and McClure. She was somewhat jealous of Schaefer and Chesley, wanting to know firsthand the challenge and excitement of their jobs. This researcher would love to say that the problems in the relationship between DPD and the Detroit media are entirely the fault of the city administration and the police department and in no way do the media contribute to the friction. However, that would not be entirely true.

Much of the police/media problem in Detroit is caused by the traditionally secret city government and its mistrust for the media. The researcher concludes, however, that the media have responded to the secrecy and suspicion by consistently and persistently reporting "bad" news, uncovering scandal and, as in the case of the Flanigan-Kresnak project on street patrols, annoying the administration by proving their own power to poke holes in the city's foundation. As a believer in journalism and the First Amendment, the researcher does not think the Detroit media's response is entirely bad. It may not

have been beneficial for the public, which relies on the services of both DPD and the media.

Both law enforcement and journalism are highly visible institutions. Interviews with people in both professions showed a history of each wielding its own power over the other. DPD, with its media policy and its blue pass system, shows its muscle by selecting the information to which the media will have access. Not to be outdone, the media spend much of their time finding sources and doing stories that prove they have the ability to get the inaccessible information and the power to make it public. Surely readers and viewers in Detroit are not oblivious to this DPD/media struggle to control public information.

The attitudes of many reporters interviewed for this study about DPD had deteriorated to the point where they boasted about writing *the* story that finally angered the department so much that the blue pass system was initiated and areas that had previously been accessible now were off limits. The feeling that retaliation for DPD's poor treatment of the media is necessary perhaps is the first change the beat reporters should make. However, without DPD's cooperation and a mutual desire for a better police/media relationship, change may be impossible.

The researcher is hesitant to give advice or suggestions to reporters who are veterans of the DPD beat. That handful of journalists has learned to survive in an environment that does not welcome newcomers. Some of the work habits of those reporters and police beat reporters in general are worth noting because they may make the job easier and more enjoyable for those newly assigned to the beat.

Get acquainted with everyone. Detroit newspaper reporters, even those who were new to the DPD beat, had done an excellent job of becoming

acquainted with members of all ranks in the department. The researcher is not necessarily suggesting change in this area, but pointing out that it is crucial for the reporters to know their sources and be known.

One beat reporter made morning rounds of the building delivering copies of his newspaper to different DPD units. Another reporter criticized the first one's delivery system, saying it was an unethical method of getting around the department. The researcher disagrees. At the time of the observation, DPD was half-heartedly enforcing its blue pass system, and thus not allowing reporters access to certain areas of the department without proper clearance. Who needs clearance to deliver a newspaper? The reporter's motive probably was not to hand out copies of the paper, but to be visible in areas of the department to which he had been blocked. He was not greeting people and then conducting interviews or asking for information, but merely giving DPD employees an opportunity to chat with him.

None of the reporters specifically outlined their methods for finding those DPD employees who "had a beef" with the department and who were willing to be unnamed sources. Obviously the reporters were finding those sources, however. The blue pass system was an attempt to shut off friendly chit chat that could lead to an information leak. Strategies like newspaper delivery and Brian Flanigan's well-timed smoking breaks in front of the *Free Press* building were brilliant methods of getting around the blue pass system.

Ride along. The researcher did not ask about a ride-along program at DPD during the observation period. However, she assumed such an opportunity was available to reporters because she rode with DPD's narcotics squad a year before. Whenever possible, reporters should take advantage of ride-along programs. As was suggested for PIOs, reporters should take the time to experience police work and meet officers in their own environment. For the

reporter new to the beat, a ride-along experience offers a chance to see the city from a different perspective. Editors may require the reporter to write a story to justify the time spent riding along, but in the researcher's experience the best way to learn is to leave the notebook in the newsroom and observe without thinking about writing.

Be proactive, rather than reactive. More experienced reporters also should look for ride-along opportunities including feature stories about different aspects of police work--the canine unit, the dive team, the narcotics squad, the S.W.A.T. team--always interest viewers and readers. Working on those stories exposes reporters to the "experts" in the department and the work that they do. The reporter who has learned about the narcotics squad by researching and writing a story is in the best position to interpret information and write about narcotics cases. Not only does that reporter understand how the unit works, he or she has the advantage of familiarity with officers in that unit. Good feature stories are a way for inexperienced reporters to impress sources on the police beat who may be needed for future stories.

Just as the researcher suggested that PIOs be proactive by offering feature story ideas to the media, so should the media seek out those "feel good" features. By working together on positive stories, both the source and the reporter are able to have a positive experience before the inevitable "bad" story arises and the natural police/media friction occurs. Beat reporters must avoid being reactive, or jumping all over a source or story unprepared, and editors must help them as well. News that is thoroughly and accurately researched and written should be the priority in any newsroom. However, beat sources must be preserved whenever possible. Editors should consider assigning the "bad" stories to reporters not on the beat if there is any risk that a source will shut off communication with that newsroom.

One veteran reporter interviewed for this study told the researcher that he had obtained information from a source who could be severely disciplined if his or her identity were revealed. In order to protect that source's anonymity, the reporter gave the information to another reporter who fleshed out the rest of the story which carried a single byline, identifying only the second reporter.

Some may see this practice as unethical. Information must always be attributable, if not to the source, at least to the reporter who obtained it. However, in the situation outlined above, no harm came to the source and the public, presumably, learned important information that otherwise would not have been revealed. The researcher notes that while this practice of reassigning a story to another reporter to protect a source may save a few sources and stories, it should be used with extreme discretion. Reporters always should be attributable for their information.

Utilize expertise. Reporters interviewed for this study said they preferred interviewing officers other than the PIOs because they would likely find more information by going around the PIU. They claimed the PIOs either did not have the information reporters needed or were unwilling or unable to answer any questions. This situation is not limited to Detroit. Police beat reporters everywhere would do well to look for interviews outside the department's public information office whenever possible. In some cities, the PIO becomes such a reliable source that the reader or viewer may believe that officer is the department's only employee. For the sake of variety, reporters should quote or use soundbites from administrators or "experts" in the department. A good PIO still is a reliable start both for basic information and to set up interviews with other officers.

Deadlines. The researcher recommended that PIOs keep a list of deadlines for the newsrooms they deal with most often. However, the PIO who keeps track

of deadlines is doing the media a favor. It is the responsibility of the reporter to tell officers, both PIO and otherwise, about their time constraints. At emergency scenes where the officers' priority is not working with the media, it is especially important to capitalize on every opportunity to talk with a police spokesperson. Journalists should always be up front about what information will be needed and how soon.

Don't play favorites. Just as PIOs should not play favorites among members of the media, reporters must be careful not to ignore a good story because it might bother or offend their buddies in the police department. Objectivity is the golden rule of journalism. If a beat reporter feels he or she is too close to his or her police sources to be objective about looking into departmental corruption, then the editor should assign someone else to the regular beat or have a general assignment reporter do the scandal stories while the beat reporter works on the daily police coverage.

From the observation as well as her own experience on the police beat, the researcher has learned that a trusting relationship develops over time between a reporter and a source. If the journalist is consistently thorough in his or her reporting and writing, the level of trust eventually will build to the point where the journalist learns "inside" departmental information. The reporter will become familiar with the relationships between officers and administrators and will understand department politics, without being given information about specific people or incidents. The reporter will be trusted to interpret information or situations based on the experience of observing how the officers and the department works. A good reporter can even write the scandal stories without alienating any source groups. If this is the criteria for a good reporter, certainly Kresnak, Flanigan, Grant and Walker fit into that category.

Get an education in addition to on-the-job training. On nearly every other beat at the average newspaper, reporters would be expected to know or be trained in the area in which they are assigned. No self-respecting editor would ever send a reporter to cover a football game if that person were unfamiliar with the sport. Legislative reporting has become such a specialty that some journalism schools offer graduate programs in state government. Editors would be thrilled to hire business reporters who have a business degree or experience.

Often, however, the police beat is reserved for the new kid on the block, almost literally. Covering police and emergencies is a good crash course for the new reporter on writing about human drama, digging for information, learning about municipal government and becoming familiar with the city. The police beat often is the most exciting and fast-paced beat and perhaps the one that readers and viewers talk about most. For a new reporter, working the police beat is trial by fire and a great way to build solid reporting skills. Rarely, however, is the police beat reporter required to have any background or education in law enforcement, courts, criminal justice, corrections, sociology or psychology. Generally, the only prerequisite for working the police beat is some knowledge of journalism.

Although it is possible to learn about police and emergencies simply by covering the beat, the very subject of public safety, it seems, is too important to trust to a novice. The subject of crime and law enforcement tops the list of concerns of everyone from the president on down to the average citizen and yet the information the public reads or sees in the media often is written by someone who is barely out of journalism school or who has no expertise in the subject area.

Police officers, firefighters, doctors, nurses and people in a number of other professions are required to keep up their education and skill through in-

service training. Journalists certainly are not required to seek any outside training although some do. This researcher did seek a criminal justice education, but was warned by her last employer that her knowledge and familiarity with law enforcement might be a "conflict of interest" in covering the police beat. The opinion that too much knowledge of a subject may lessen the reporter's objectivity may not be widely held. Yet none of the reporters interviewed for this thesis had specific law enforcement training or education. All were very experienced journalists who had become streetwise while covering DPD.

The researcher concludes from this study that some background, experience or education about police work would help the reporter in two ways. First, prior knowledge would help the reporter understand and interpret events correctly to provide the best possible coverage for readers and viewers. Second, a criminal justice education would give the reporter more credibility with his or her sources, possibly reducing the amount of time and effort it now takes to become initiated to the beat.

Make the job desirable. The police beat, like any other beat, can be interesting and extremely lucrative, in terms of story output. The researcher recommends that editors and news directors look more seriously at the police beat and assign reporters who are most capable of covering it. If the beat is to be used as a "training ground" for a new reporter, editors should take a lesson from the *Detroit Free Press* as detailed in this thesis. That newspaper assigned its new reporters, who already had several years experience working for a newspaper, to the most difficult beat this researcher can imagine: covering the Detroit Police Department. The assignment, like any other police beat assignment, is exciting and busy. But in Detroit, that beat is more than a challenge. It's a real headache. However, to enhance the experience of the newer beat reporters, the *Free Press* assigned them to work with two veterans of the DPD beat.

The veterans mentored the newer reporters through the initiation period and beyond. They were available for story ideas or consultation, help in finding sources and even proofreading stories. The bonus for the two young reporters was the level of expertise and respect their trainers had. Every newspaper beat should work that way.

Suggestions for further study. Several times in this document, the researcher had recommended that more research with a larger story population should be done. The population of stories in this study was respectable and the subsequent source, victim and suspect populations proved large enough to draw meaningful conclusions. However, a larger sample of stories from the reporters interviewed in the observation phase would have made this study even more meaningful. The researcher wishes now that the sample had been taken over a longer period of time or at varying times so the habits and tendencies of the beat reporters could have been thoroughly analyzed.

The interviews proved to be extremely informative and meaningful for the researcher, both for academic and professional pursuits. In retrospect, however, questions were omitted or topics arose that should have been more thoroughly researched. The question of how racial makeup affects the relationship between the public information officers and the reporters might have been better examined by providing interviewees with a questionnaire. The role of young women as reporters was discussed quite a bit, but if the research could be redone, more specific questions would have been asked of every person interviewed.

Detroit Mayor Coleman Young did not seek re-election this year, a choice that has surely excited the media. His administration was so tightly woven and impenetrable that his successor probably has found change difficult. A much more detailed study of Young, his administration and the city would have

helped make sense of what reporters and police alike said about the difficulty of working with administrators. Tackling this study would take an analysis of Freedom of Information requests and denials, personalities and experiences of those in city government and perhaps a sociological overview of the city and its residents as well.

A detailed examination of Detroit Police records and news releases over a longer period of time might reveal that officers' report writing is the cause of some reporter mistakes. Reporters have to be good writers to keep their jobs. Good writing is not always a requirement of police officers, however. There are no criteria based on writing skills or journalistic expertise for being assigned to the Public Information Unit.

In addition to a report writing analysis, a quantitative study of the actual information contained on reports and news releases might give police officers a better grasp of how reporters use information and what their intentions are. The "blue curtain" comes down whenever the public information officers become suspicious of reporters, which is most of the time. Neither group in Detroit, however, has studied the other with the intent of reducing that suspicion. The public information unit studies the media every time its officers read, watch or listen to the news. The media study the police department when they are digging for news stories. Neither devotes much time to studying how and why the other does its work. Further academic research in this area might help make covering Detroit Police a more desirable and even enjoyable job.

Epilogue. This study is very much the product of a newsroom journalist, albeit one with academic interests. In the five or so years it has taken to complete, the researcher took at least half the time off to pursue other professional interests such as the media management fellowship at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and a job reporting on police for the *Lansing (Mich.) State Journal*.

The delay in completion may have had some effect on the results: the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* entered into a joint operating agreement only months after the observation period; Brian Flanigan, who was both an inspiration and a major player in the Detroit Police beat scenario, died about two months after the reporter interviews were completed and several of the reporters included in the study have moved on to other jobs in other cities. Still, just as things change, some stay the same. Covering crime and police in Detroit is still a nightmare at times, but the city remains an exciting and vibrant place to work: a perfect sociology laboratory, according to Inspector Fred Williams of the police public information unit.

During the two years the researcher worked at the *Lansing State Journal*, she gained a new and different perspective from which to interpret both the observation and the content analysis data. The information presented here is purely academic, but the analysis and conclusions are quite practical as they were written by someone who until recently was part of a busy newsroom. While there is criticism, there is also understanding.

Reporters aren't perfect, but neither are police. In Detroit, the relationship between the two is like none with which the researcher has worked. The job of covering Detroit Police is steeped in tradition which seems to suit players on both sides of the field. Still, that tradition is not always fair, especially to young female reporters, new reporters, and police officers who dare to speak off the record, or not at all. The power of the media is evident all over the country, but the police certainly put up a good fight in Detroit.

ENDNOTES

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Appendix A—Coding Book

Variable	Name	Code	Explanation
1	Story Number	01-400	For organizational purposes, all coded stories will be assigned an identifying number.
2	Newspaper	1-2	1 = Detroit Free Press 2 = Detroit News
3	Day	1-7	1 = Sunday 2 = Monday 3 = Tuesday 4 = Wednesday 5 = Thursday 6 = Friday 7 = Saturday
4	Month	8-9	1 = August 2 = September
5	Date	1-31	Date
6	Byline	01-43	See Appendix D for coded list
7	Wire	1-8	1 = AP 2 = UPI 3 = Gannett 4 = Knight-Ridder 5 = Other 6 = Combined 7 = Staff and wire reports 8 = Not attributed
8	Section	1-2	1 = A 2 = B
9	Page	01-99	Page number within section
10	Story Size	001-999	Measured in square inches
11	Picture Size	001-999	Measured in square inches.

12	Lead Type	1-3	1 = Summary 2 = Blind 3 = Creative See Appendix E for definitions
13	Story Type	1-5	1 = first day 2 = follow up 3 = court 4 = event-related feature 5 = non-event-related feature
14	Crime	01-34	See Appendix F for coded list
15	CJ Process Step	01-16	See Appendix G for coded list
16	Dismissal	1-2	1 = yes 2 = no
17	Confession	1-2	1 = yes 2 = no
18	Crime Location	1-6	1 = city/county 2 = neighborhood 3 = intersection 4 = block number 5 = specific address 6 = public building
19	Suspect Name	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used
20	Suspect Age	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used
21	Suspect Race	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used
22	Suspect Description	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used
23	Victim Name	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used
24	Victim Age	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used

25	Victim Race	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used
26	Victim Description	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used
27	Number of Sources	01-99	Direct and indirect attribution
28	Attribution	1-2	1 = named 2 = indirect
29	Title or Relationship	01-44	See Appendix H for coded list
30	Direct Quote	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used
31	Indirect Quote	1-2	1 = used 2 = not used

Appendix B--Coding Sheet

1	Story Number	_____
2	Newspaper	<u>Free Press 1</u>
3	Day	_____
4	Month	_____
5	Date	_____
6	Byline	_____
7	Wire	_____
8	Section	_____
9	Page	_____
10	Story Size	_____
11	Picture Size	_____
12	Lead Type	_____
13	Story Type	_____
14	Crime	_____
15	CJ Process Step	_____
16	Dismissal	_____
17	Confession	_____
18	Crime Location	_____
19	Suspect Name	_____
20	Suspect Age	_____
21	Suspect Race	_____
22	Suspect Description	_____
23	Victim Name	_____
24	Victim Age	_____
25	Victim Race	_____
26	Victim Description	_____
27	Number of Sources	_____
28	Attribution	_____
29	Title/Relationship	_____
30	Direct Quote	_____
31	Indirect Quote	_____

Appendix B--Coding Sheet

1	Story Number	_____
2	Newspaper	<u>News 2</u>
3	Day	_____
4	Month	_____
5	Date	_____
6	Byline	_____
7	Wire	_____
8	Section	_____
9	Page	_____
10	Story Size	_____
11	Picture Size	_____
12	Lead Type	_____
13	Story Type	_____
14	Crime	_____
15	CJ Process Step	_____
16	Dismissal	_____
17	Confession	_____
18	Crime Location	_____
19	Suspect Name	_____
20	Suspect Age	_____
21	Suspect Race	_____
22	Suspect Description	_____
23	Victim Name	_____
24	Victim Age	_____
25	Victim Race	_____
26	Victim Description	_____
27	Number of Sources	_____
28	Attribution	_____
29	Title/Relationship	_____
30	Direct Quote	_____
31	Indirect Quote	_____

Add Page--Source Attribution

32	Attribution	_____
33	Title/Relationship	_____
34	Direct Quote	_____
35	Indirect Quote	_____
36	Attribution	_____
37	Title/Relationship	_____
38	Direct Quote	_____
39	Indirect Quote	_____
40	Attribution	_____
41	Title/Relationship	_____
42	Direct Quote	_____
43	Indirect Quote	_____
44	Suspect Name	_____
45	Suspect Age	_____
46	Suspect Race	_____
47	Suspect Description	_____
48	Victim Name	_____
49	Victim Age	_____
50	Victim Race	_____
51	Victim Description	_____

Appendix C--Coding Instructions

The following numbered items, which correspond to the entries on Appendix B--Coding Sheet, should answer any questions the coder has. Some of the coding items may not be applicable to some features. The coder should mark n/a for not applicable, but should circle the story number and write a brief description of the problems in the margin or on an attached sheet.

1. **Story Number.** Each story to be coded will have a pre-assigned story number in the upper right corner of the page. The story number should also be written in the top right hand corner of every add sheet.
2. **Newspaper.** Coders should make sure that newspaper listed on the pre-printed sheet correspond with the story being coded.
3. **Day.** The day of the week comes first and should be numbered as the single digit, 1 through 7, according to Appendix A--Coding Book.
4. **Month.** The month either August or September, should also be written as a single digit, 8 or 9.
5. **Date.** The date must be assigned two digits, 01 through 31.
6. **Byline.** Coder should consult the list of reporters in Appendix D. The number entered on the coding sheet needs to be two digits. If there is no byline, enter 01. If there is a combined byline, enter 02, then in parentheses enter the codes for each reporter on the story. Also for combined bylines, circle the story number at the top of the coding sheet.
7. **Wire.** If the story has a byline and no wire service is attributed, enter n/a. If there is no byline or attribution to a wire service, enter 8 in the blank, according to Appendix A--Coding Book's list of wire service codes. If a wire service is mentioned, it would probably be at the beginning of the story in the dateline or at the end of the story in italics. Enter a 1-digit number. If the wire service is mentioned as a contributor to a bylined story, enter the code for the wire service and circle the story number at the top of the coding sheet.
8. **Section.** Section A, B and sometimes C for the *Detroit News* and Section A and More News for the *Detroit Free Press*. Enter 1 for A and 2 for B/More News and C when it is the second news section in the paper. The section should be written on the sheet to which the article is attached.
9. **Page.** Enter a two digit number for the page which should be written on the sheet to which the article is attached.

10. **Story size.** Measure the area of the entire story using the edge of the print for a border. Include headlines, pictures, and graphics. Enter a two-digit number for square inches.

11. **Picture size.** Measure the area of all the pictures or graphics alone without including the story. Use the edge of the print for a border. Enter a two-digit number for square inches.

12. **Lead type.** See Appendix E for the definitions of the different types of leads. Enter 1 for summary lead, 2 for blind lead and 3 for creative lead.

13. **Story type.** Enter 1 for a first day story, probably the first newspaper mention of the crime event. First day stories are usually reported the day after a crime event is reported to or discovered by police and becomes part of the criminal justice process. Enter 2 for a follow up story to the crime event which is reported sometime after the time period for a first day story, but before the case reaches court story. Enter 3 for a court story. Enter 4 for a feature story that relates to a crime event and 5 for a story about some aspect of law enforcement or criminal justice not necessarily relating to a crime event.

14. **Crime.** See Appendix F for the list of crime codes. Enter a two-digit number. If more than one charge is mentioned, code for only the most serious crime category. Personal crime is always more serious than property crime. Felony is more serious than misdemeanor. If there is a question about which crime to enter in a multiple-crime story, the coder should look for what is implied by police to be the main crime they are investigating. For example, in an armed robbery, an assault that does not cause death is incidental to the robbery. Armed robbery, rather than assault, should be listed as the crime. On multiple crime stories, the coder should enter the codes for the lesser crimes in parentheses.

15. **CJ Process Step.** See Appendix G for the list of steps in the criminal justice process. Enter a two-digit number. If more than one step is mentioned, code only for the last one in sequential order. The only exception to sequence is a story about an ongoing investigation where the investigation and not the legal proceedings is the main point of the story.

16. **Dismissal.** Enter 1 for yes and 2 for no if a case or charges were dismissed any time in the process.

17. **Confession.** Enter 1 for yes and 2 for no if there is mention of a suspect confessing to a crime any time in the process. Any mention, even second-hand information from police, of a suspect admitting or confessing to being part of or committing the crime should be counted as a confession, even if it does not halt the prosecution procedure.

18. **Crime location.** Enter 1 if only the name of the city, town or county is given to describe the location of the crime. Enter 2 if a specific neighborhood is identified as the

location of the crime, for example the Cass Corridor or the city's east side. Enter 3 if the intersection of two streets describes the crime location and 4 if a block number is given, for example 1300 block of Woodward Avenue. Enter 5 if the specific building number is provided for the crime location, for example 1367 Woodward Ave. Enter 6 for public buildings, such as airports or shopping malls. In the case of multiple crimes, note how the locations were written. For example, if a suspect is accused of robbing three banks, code 5 if the exact addresses are used; code 6 if the bank names are used with any description that would help the reader find the building like the National Bank of Detroit downtown; or code 1 for city in a reference like "three Detroit banks."

19. **Suspect name.** Enter 1 if the suspect's name was used in the story and 2 if it was not. If there is more than one suspect named in the story, use an add sheet, write the appropriate story number at the top and attach it to the coding sheet and story. Code multiple suspects in the order they appear in the story.

20. **Suspect age.** Enter 1 if the suspect's age was used in the story and 2 if it was not.

21. **Suspect race.** Enter 1 if the suspect's race or nationality was used in the story and 2 if it was not.

22. **Suspect description.** Enter 1 if any descriptive words were used with the suspect including clothing, physical attributes, job titles, addresses, home towns or other identifying traits.

23. **Victim name.** Enter 1 if the victim's name was used in the story and 2 if it was not. If there is more than one victim named in the story, use an add sheet, write the appropriate story number at the top and attach it to the coding sheet and story.

24. **Victim age.** Enter 1 if the victim's age was used in the story and 2 if it was not.

25. **Victim race.** Enter 1 if the victim's race or nationality was used in the story and 2 if it was not.

26. **Victim description.** Enter 1 if any descriptive words were used with the victim including clothing, physical attributes, job titles, addresses, home towns or other identifying traits.

27. **Number of sources.** Enter two digits for the number of sources named or implied in the story either by direct or indirect quote. Some sources won't have direct attribution, but the story may imply that the information came from that source. Don't code "police said" references separately if the name of the police agency or an individual officer is also used and it is clear that both references refer to the same agency. Code separately any unclear or vague references that do not refer to individual officers or a specific police agency. Second-hand information attributed to a particular officer should be coded as only one source. For example, "Sgt. John Smith said the suspect

admitted that..." would be coded for the officer and not the suspect because the information was given to the reporter by the officer. Information taken from a documentary source, such as a search or arrest warrant, should be included.

28. Attribution. Items 27-31 deal with source attribution. If more than one source is used in the story, use an add sheet, write the appropriate story number at the top and attach it to the coding sheet and story. The number of add sheet entries should correspond with the number of sources listed in 27. Each source listed in 27 should be coded for direct and indirect attribution. Code 1 for a reference that uses the name of an individual or document. Code 2 if the name of an agency or a general reference like "police said" is used but no person or document is named.

29. Title or relationship. Use the two-digit codes from Appendix H-- Source List for the source's title or relationship to another person in the story. For instance, "Sgt. Chris Buck from the Public Information Unit of the Detroit Police Department" would be coded as 1 for police. "Mary Jones, the rape victim's mother" would be coded as 3 for victim's family.

30. Direct quote. Enter 1 for yes or 2 for no if the source's comment is quoted directly (in quotation marks).

31. Indirect quote. Enter 1 for yes or 2 for no if the source's comment is quoted indirectly (no quotation marks). A source who is quoted directly may also be indirectly quoted in the same story. Similarly, a source might only be quoted indirectly.

Any additional details or problems to which the coder wants to call attention should be noted in the margin or on an attached sheet.

Appendix D--Reporter List

Detroit News

01 no byline
 02 combined byline
 03 Monroe Walker
 04 David Grant
 05 Jean Gadowski
 06 David Kocienewski
 07 Don Tschirhardt
 08 Fred Girard
 09 Jim Tittsworth
 10 Norm Sinclair
 11 John T. Wark
 12 Chauncey Bailey
 13 Mike Wowk
 14 Joel J. Smith
 15 Rob Zeiger
 16 Jim Mitzelfeld
 17 Robert Ankeny
 18 N. Scott Vance
 19 Domenica Marchetti
 20 Gene Schabath
 32 Mark Hornbeck--Lansing
 22 Rachel Reyn olds--Lansing
 23 Bonnie DeSimone
 24 Yolanda W. Woodlee
 25 Brenda Ingersoll
 26 Denise Crittendon
 27 Pat McCaughan
 28 James A. McClear
 29 Vivian S. Toy
 30 Dave Farrell
 31 Greg Lopez
 32 Kathleen Bohland
 33 Charlie Cain
 34 Mike Martindale
 35 Rebecca Powers
 36 Tarek Hamada
 37 Liz Twardon
 38 Dennis B. Mulqueen
 39 Kimberly Trent
 40 Sheila Gruber Belloli
 41 Carol McGinnis
 42 Eric Freedman
 43 Hamdee Attallah

Detroit Free Press

01 no byline
 02 combined byline
 03 Jim Schaefer
 04 Roger Chesley
 05 Brian Flanigan
 06 Jack Kresnak
 07 Jim Finkelstein
 08 Dennis Niemic
 09 Lori Matthews
 10 Joe Swickard
 11 Mike Williams
 12 Constance Prater
 13 Stephen Jones
 14 William Kleinknecht
 15 Jocelyne Zablit
 16 Darryl Fears
 17 Sandy McClure--Oakland County
 18 Chris Christoff--Lansing
 19 Joel Thurtell
 20 Jacquelynn Boyle
 21 Gregory Huskisson
 22 Alexander B. Cruden
 23 David Crumm
 24 Christopher Cook
 25 Stephen Jones
 26 Dori Maynard
 27 Bill McGraw
 28 Maryanne George
 29 John Castine
 30 Duane Noriyuki
 31 Michael Betzold
 32 Johnette Howard
 33 Georgea Kovanis
 34 Dan Gillmor
 35 Cecil Angel
 36 Marion Dozier
 37 Wylie Gerdes
 38 David Ashenfelter
 39 Zachare Ball
 40 John Lowe

Appendix E--Lead Types

The lead is always the first paragraph of the news story. A creative lead could also include the second paragraph.

1. Summary lead. A summary lead answers only the most important of the six questions: who, what, when, where, why and how. It includes the most recent developments in the story, facts most likely to interest the reader, or the most unusual facts.

Example:

Audio and videotapes of Lawrence DeLisle's statements to police, scheduled to be released today, show a confused man who claims to love his wife and children but comes close to admitting he deliberately drove them into the Detroit River.

2. Blind lead. A blind lead answers the same questions as the summary lead, except that the "who" in the story is not named until later in the story, usually in the second paragraph.

Example:

A Detroit woman was shot Tuesday when she opened her door to a man posing as a Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. employee, the third apparent robbery in two months by utility company imposters, a company spokesman said.

Mary Smith is in critical condition, etc.

3. Creative lead. A creative lead incorporates all other forms of the lead including questions, imperative statements and direct address. The creative lead does not necessarily answer any or all of the six questions.

Example:

From behind a locked cage at the Humane Society of Huron Valley, Bruiser the pitbull stared balefully into the eyes of the Ypsilanti District Court judge who will decide his fate.

Appendix F--Crime List

01=homicide
02=voluntary manslaughter
03=involuntary manslaughter
04=child abuse resulting in death
05=sex-related murder
06=vehicular homicide
07=euthanasia
08=deadly force by a police officer
09=suicide
10=murder-suicide
11=criminal sexual conduct
12=assault
13=assault with a deadly weapon
14=kidnapping
15=other crimes against persons
16=robbery
17=armed robbery
18=auto-related crime
19=non-residential burglary
20=residential burglary
21=vandalism
22=fraud/embezzlement
23=unconventional sexual conduct
24=public indecency
25=prostitution
26=drug crimes
27=theft
28=misdemeanor
29=explosives
30=felony weapons
31=arson
32=drunk driving
33=pornography/child pornography
34=prison escape

Note: If more than one charge is mentioned, code for only the most serious crime category. Personal crime is always more serious than property crime. Felony is more serious than misdemeanor.

Appendix G—Criminal Justice Process Step

01=incident
02=investigation
03=arrest
04=preliminary hearing
05=arraignment
06=plea bargain
07=pre-trial motions
08=jury selection
09=continuance
10=prosecution
11=defense
12=closing arguments
13=jury deliberation
14=verdict
15=sentencing
16=appeals

Note: If more than one step is mentioned, code only for the last one in sequential order.

Appendix H—Source List

- 1= police
- 2=court worker
- 3=victim family
- 4=suspect family
- 5=neighbor/friend
- 6=witness
- 7=victim
- 8=clergy
- 9=fire chiefs/officials
- 10=*Free Press* statistics, interviews and past stories
- 11=*News* statistics, interviews and past stories
- 12=community or neighborhood organizations
- 13=Coleman Young and/or documents written by Coleman Young
- 14=Bob Berg, Coleman Young's press secretary
- 15=police investigation records, documents, memos, interviews
- 16=prison/jail records or spokespeople
- 17=city records, documents, memos
- 18=professors, forensics and other "experts"
- 19=police organizations, private detectives, retired officers, etc.
- 20="officials," "authorities," and other non-specific references
- 21=crime plans
- 22=federal statistics
- 23=DPD statistics
- 24=Detroit City Council members
- 25=political candidates and campaign workers
- 26=politicians already in office and political workers
- 27=St. Cecilia coaches, players, fans and officials
- 28=spokespeople for individuals, companies, hospitals, etc.
- 29=court, prosecution, defense records, documents, testimony
- 30=city workers
- 31=suspect, suspect's statements, letters, etc.
- 32=warrants, indictments
- 33=U.S. Representatives or Senators
- 34=State Legislators
- 35=autopsy
- 36=social workers, DSS spokespeople, officials or documents
- 37=miscellaneous other documents, records, signs
- 38=governor or the governor's office or spokespeople
- 39=juvenile records
- 40=federal law enforcement spokespeople, records, interviews
- 41=government agencies, spokespeople, state workers
- 42=polls
- 43=organizations, programs, associations spokespeople or members
- 44=other sources close to the event, investigation, suspect, victim, etc.

Appendix I--History of Police News: Time Line

Press

1450s--invention of printing press. Known fact that crime news was prime news both before and after press.

post-American Revolution to 1820s--political parties backed newspapers

1820s--many American newspapers began publishing popular news, including police/crime news

1830s--first steam presses meant publications could be mass produced.
--reporters began using observational reporting techniques
--Penny Press started

1833--birth of *New York Sun*

1835--James Gordon Bennett published first *New York Herald*. Revolutionary publisher because he was first to put correspondents in Washington, Europe, and Wall Street. *Herald* became early model for yellow journalism of late 19th century.

1836--Bennett conducted what was thought to be the first interview at Madame Townsend's large yellow house "devoted to infamous intercourse."

1840s--Reporters began using tighter sentences and grafts in writing sensational news.

Police

1748--(England) Henry Fielding founded Bow Street Runners, a neighborhood watch group which became the first police force.

1752--(England) Fielding began publishing the *Covent Garden Journal* with descriptions of wanted persons.

1772--(England) Similar publication called the *Quarterly Pursuit* was first published.

1829--(England) Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 was finally passed in London after being rejected in 1816, 1818 and 1822. Police force was established by Sir Robert Peel and named Scotland Yard after the building in which it was housed. Uniformed "bobbies" (named after Peel) began foot patrol in London.

--Scotland Yard established its first detective branch in 1842 and then because of a scandal in the department the Central Investigation Division was established in 1878.

1833-36--(US) Philadelphia established the first city police force in the colonies. It folded after only three years.

1836--NYC rejected notion of a police department as a violation of Constitutional rights.

1845--NYC created the first uniformed police force in the U.S.

Press (cont.)

1845--George Wilkes and Enoch Camp start the *National Police Gazette* in New York City.

1857--*National Police Gazette* sold to former NYC Police Chief George Washington Matsell.

1857--Matsell sold *Police Gazette* to Richard Kyle Fox. Fox owned it until his death in 1922. By that time the paper began to fail because dailies were using the sensational news, theater reviews and sports stories on which the *Police Gazette* was founded. In 1832 Harold Roswell bought the paper, which had been sold for bankrupt, and published it as a monthly. A Canadian firm later bought it and it is occasionally on the news stand today.*

1896--Hearst and Pulitzer covered crime more extensively and dramatically. Their reporting and imitation of the *Police Gazette* brought about the paper's demise.

Police (cont.)

1846-1850--Development of private investigation agencies. The most famous, Pinkerton, was established in 1850 and was the only national police force until the FBI was established in 1908.

1851--Chicago established its first police department.

1857--Baltimore and Newark formed their first police departments.

--NYC Police Department began using Rogue's Gallery.

1880--Virtually every city in the United States had a police force.

1883--French police employee Alphonse Bertillon's system of cataloguing criminals according to physical measurements was implemented by police agencies worldwide.

1891--Fingerprints, which had been studied and tested for centuries, replaced the Bertillon system as a method of identification. "Mug shots" including fingerprints were widely used.

1903--Secret Service established after McKinley assassination.

1908--Embryo of FBI started by Attorney General's office.

1924--J. Edgar Hoover named as head of FBI

Appendix J--Detroit Police Criteria for Dissemination of News

This criteria is for the benefit and guidance of the police, not the news media. The material is for the guidance of all officers of the Detroit Police Department in their contacts with representatives of the news media.

I. General

A. Role of the General Information Section

1. The General Information Section exists to assist the Detroit Police Department and the news media in the prompt dissemination of complete and accurate information to the public on police operations and services.
2. The General Information Section shall act as the official news agency of the department in the release of information initiated by the department. The GIS is charged with:
 - a. Identifying newsworthy information.
 - b. Encouraging other units of the department to report to the GIS newsworthy ideas or events
 - c. Assembling such news in workable form.
 - d. Either disseminating it or assisting the unit or individual involved in the impartial dissemination of the news to the media.
3. The General Information Section shall, to the best of its ability:
 - a. Respond quickly, fully and accurately to inquiries initiated by the news media.
 - b. Respect the "exclusive" character of a news story originated by an individual reporter.
 - c. Assemble essential information as quickly as possible from police on the scene in "breaking" news stories.
 - d. Refer newsmen to the appropriate individuals or units when the newsmen need access to eyewitness or responsible officers who have the most authoritative information on a particular situation or query.
4. The General Information Section shall act as the "clearing house" and coordinator of news dissemination in major events such as a civil emergency or natural disaster, dealing with overall facts and figures. This does not preclude any individual officer from reporting to any legitimate newsman on request his personal on-the-spot experiences, as long as he is factual and accurate to the

limit of his own knowledge.

5. The General Information Section is responsible for ensuring the distribution of these criteria throughout the department and providing whatever counseling and interpretation may be necessary.
6. The General Information Section shall act as liaison between news media and the Police Department on any matters on
7. The General Information Section shall advise and assist police officers on all matters of public information and specifically when newsmen are seeking information.

B. Role of Command Officers

("Command Officer" includes precinct and other command officers and subordinates with temporary acting command responsibility).

1. Any Detroit police command officer has the authority as well as the responsibility to respond directly to legitimate news inquiries without prior approval, on operations of his command and matters of fact of which he has direct personal knowledge. If time permits, he is encouraged to, but not obliged to confer with the General Information Section. If in doubt, however, by all means he should counsel with his superior or the General Information Section.
2. Command officers are expected to be fully aware of any specific restraints placed by the laws and courts on the release of information held to be prejudicial to building a case or conducting a fair trial.
3. Command officers are responsible for seeing that no arbitrary or unnecessary obstacles are created within their units to the open dissemination of legitimate news.
4. Command officers are responsible for seeing that all men in their command understand their responsibility to respond as fully and accurately as possible to legitimate press inquiries, as well as the specific restraints on certain types of information required by laws and courts.
5. Command officers are responsible for clarifying and interpreting these criteria to their men, as needed, and for setting a personal example of courtesy and cooperation in

relations with the press.

6. When questions of personal opinion are raised by the news media, rather than matters of fact, command officers are expected to exercise good judgment as to whether to offer an opinion or not, as circumstances may dictate.
7. A decision to withhold information requested by the press must be confirmed with higher authority; that is, with an on-duty superior, or the field duty officer. If still in doubt, these officers should consult with the commanding officer of the General Information Section.

C. Role of the Individual Officer--All Ranks

1. All Detroit police officers have the right to answer questions from newsmen on matters of personal experience of which they have direct personal knowledge. Police officers must abide by the Police Manual Code of Ethics provision which states: "Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confided to me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty." However, part of the purpose of these criteria is to define as narrowly as possible in subsequent paragraphs the information an officer must hold confidential, so that this provision is not used broadly as a pretext for denying legitimate information to public news media.
2. Police officers who have ideas for feature stories that would generate favorable publicity for the department should not present such material on their own initiatives to personal friends among the news media. Such story ideas should be passed on to the General Information Section for development and release on an orderly and impartial basis to all media.
3. Detroit police officers who are uncertain about the application of these criteria to a particular press query should seek advice from higher authority, starting with their immediate superior if available. Alternate sources of help are the General Information Section and the field duty officer. If officers are reluctant to answer because of doubt, they should say so, and not attribute their silence to a non-existent departmental policy restriction.

4. Detroit police officers who are under the pressure of a fast-breaking crime situation have the right to postpone responding to a news inquiry until the urgency has passed. However, such action should be based on a genuine emergency, the newsman should be told it is an emergency, and he should be answered promptly when the emergency is over.
5. Detroit police officers who are asked for information beyond their range of knowledge are expected to say so, and to refer the newsman to the correct source. The newsman will understand that lack of response is related to the facts of the situation and not to police unwillingness to cooperate.
6. When questions of personal opinion arise, there is always an element of judgment. Police officers when off duty and not in uniform are always free to express their personal opinions on matters of general concern, as individual citizens, like any other citizens, as long as they make clear they are speaking as private citizens and not as representatives of the Police Department. To exercise informed judgment in police matters, police officers need to study and understand these criteria, and pertinent provisions in the Police Manual. Informed and expert newsmen will rarely if ever ask a police officer for an opinion on a matter in which he is not the logical and appropriate source for such an opinion. In the rare instances in which such might occur, the police officer is best advised to stick to the facts that are releasable, and to keep his personal opinion of the implications of those facts to himself.
7. In thumbnail brevity, answer when you're sure you're right. Consult when you're not. If you feel you personally must remain silent, refer the newsman to the General Information Section. But don't let him think all the doors are closed.

II. Crime News

A. Telling it Like it is

1. Information on initial crime reports may be released verbally to the news media on demand, by officers having access to the reports. However, media as well as police authorities agree that the identity of

witnesses, juvenile suspects and victims of certain types of crimes should not be generally released (see following criteria). If in doubt, release of such information should be cleared with the General Information Section. In addition, reporters new to police assignments should be cautioned by the responding police officer that initial crime reports are preliminary in nature, taken in haste, and are not necessarily the "last word" as to the facts in the case.

2. Police may release essential factual information about a crime and experience: what happened, when, how, description of the crime scene, description of any evidence found at the scene, unless a higher command decision has been made that temporary secrecy is essential to the investigation. Officers below the command level should check with their superiors to make this determination. The police officer should present his facts in common "layman's" language, avoiding technical police terms. If a suspect is arrested at the crime scene, evidence on his person may also be described. The victim or victims normally may be identified after the next-of-kin are notified, except in cases of rape or child molestation.
3. After an arrest, but before a warrant is issued, police may report that a suspect is in custody, without further identification. After a warrant is issued, police may release basic factual information about the accused, including his name, age, address, occupation and family status, and photograph, if requested, unless the suspect is a juvenile. However, any police identification numbers on photos must be deleted. If the suspect is a notorious individual with a widely publicized record of prior convictions, that record may also be released as being already a matter of broad public knowledge. If the suspect has not been arrested, police may also release any additional identifying information that would contribute to his arrest. After arrest, police may release the factual circumstances of the arrest, including time, place, and any pursuit, resistance or use of weapons.

4. If evidence is found away from the crime scene linking a suspect with the crime, the fact that such evidence was found may be released, without describing the actual evidence.
5. Police may release the names of investigating officers, the length of the investigation, and what disposition has been or will be made of the case.
6. Police may release the fact that suspect has made a "statement"

B. Restrictions on the Release of Prejudicial Information

1. Police must avoid dramatizing the details of a crime through inflammatory language or highly-colored description, always allowing the objective facts to speak for themselves.
2. Police must avoid prejudging or classifying the nature of a crime, always allowing the facts to speak for themselves.
3. Police must avoid offering opinions or interpretations, particularly about the nature of any evidence and what it may suggest as to the guilt or innocence of a suspect.
4. Police may not comment on the existence of any tests offered to, or taken or refused by a suspect, leaving such disclosure to the discretion of the prosecutor's office.
5. Police may not comment about the possible guilt or innocence of a particular suspect. The fact of arrest presumes the existence of evidence justifying an arrest. If a statement must be made, the prosecutor's office suggests this: "Our investigation has uncovered sufficient evidence to submit to the prosecutor for prosecution."
6. Police should not identify suspects who are juveniles.
7. Police may not comment on the existence of a "confession."
8. Police may not release the prior conviction record of a suspect, when such information is not already a matter of public information through widespread publicity, until a warrant is issued.
9. Police should not obstruct the legitimate freedom of operation of news photographers and TV cameramen. However, police should not deliberately pose suspects in custody for photographing or television by the news media.
10. Police may not permit interviews of suspects in custody, without the written permission of such suspects, after they have been officially notified of their legal rights to counsel and to refuse an interview.
11. Police may not release the statements or comments of prospective witnesses, or discuss their credibility.

12. Police may not comment on the possibility of a plea of guilty to the offense charged, or any lesser offense.

III. Civil Disturbances

Police should report the facts as they know them, promptly, clearly and objectively, avoiding personal opinion, evaluation, or inflammatory language. Calling a disturbance a "riot" is a matter of judgment to be avoided; describe the events, and let the news media make the judgment.

IV. Complaints Against the Police

A. Informal Complaints

Police should report the facts as they know them, promptly, clearly and objectively, avoiding personal opinion, evaluation or inflammatory language.

B. Formal Complaints Filed with the Professional Standards Section

On occasion the Police Department has been left in an unfavorable light when police officers have declined to release the basic facts leading up to the point at which police misconduct investigation."

Police release of information in such circumstances should follow the same criteria applied to the release of information on crime news, keeping in mind that prompt release of the police version of facts is important to balanced coverage by the media. If the identity of the officer involved in the complaint is known, he is free to make a statement of his own behalf.

C. Legal Action Involving Civil Suits

If a civil action has been filed in the appropriate court, all inquiries should be handled through the City Corporation Counsel's Office.

V. Other General Provisions

A. Some "Do's" for the Police Officers:

1. Regard all properly identified representatives of the news media as competent professionals who have a public service interest and responsibility similar to that of the police, and an equal right to releasable information.
2. Treat all inquiries from properly identified representatives of the press as part of the legitimate function of their profession.
3. Respond to press inquiries objectively, as completely as the facts permit, and at all times with patience and courtesy.

4. If honestly doubtful, tell the newsman why you cannot answer his question, so that he will at least respect your integrity, and not suspect you of "having something to hide."

5. No criteria can possibly cover all eventualities. The police officer in doubt should exercise his common sense, keeping in mind that discretion involves not only protecting the right of suspects to a fair trial, but also preserving the right of citizens to know all the facts that are not prejudicial to a fair trial. Both considerations serve the public interest.

B. A "Don't"

Police officers should never arbitrarily deny news media representatives access to legitimate public information.

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