Making News in Milwaukee: Two Newspapers’ Coverage of Police Brutality
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Abstract

Through primary interviews, textual analysis and the use of framing theory, this paper examines how two Milwaukee newspapers—one geared at African Americans and one that serves a general audience—covered the biggest police brutality case to hit Milwaukee in 25 years. The papers took different approaches to reporting on the October, 24, 2004, beating of a biracial man by off-duty White Police Department officers in Milwaukee’s Bay View neighborhood. The Black-oriented weekly continued the advocacy tradition of the Black press and gave its readers a platform to discuss race and used sources from within the community to frame its coverage, while the mainstream daily took an aggressive watchdog approach and offered comprehensive reporting, utilizing a wide range of sources, in an effort to hold officials who wanted to keep the case from public view accountable. The victim’s multicultural background added a new dimension to this discourse as both papers grappled with the thorny issue of racial identification as America’s color line moves beyond just Black and White.
Introduction

On October, 24, 2004, witnesses found a naked Frank Jude severely beaten on a street in Milwaukee’s Bay View neighborhood. Some would later testify that they saw as many as a dozen men kicking the 26-year-old Jude repeatedly in the head and threatening him with a knife (Diedrich, 2005). The suspects? Off-duty white Milwaukee police officers who claimed that Jude (whom the mainstream paper called black but in later news accounts biracial) stole one of their badges and that they subdued Jude after he fought with them (Diedrich, 2005). Despite witnesses who said Jude did not steal anything, authorities did not file charges until more than three months after the incident (Diedrich, 2005).

Details would later emerge that said that Jude’s attackers put a gun to his head and a knife to his throat. His assailants kicked him in the groin and head repeatedly. One of them jammed a pen into his ears and someone cut his pants off and removed his underwear (Diedrich, 2005). Jude would later tell the Journal Sentinel, “They said the N-word so many times” (Diedrich, 2005, p. 1A). A state trial ended with the jury acquitting three police officers, news that prompted prompting community outrage and an April, 18, 2006, protest that drew 3,000 to 5,000 protesters to the Milwaukee County Courthouse with residents demanding a federal investigation (Diedrich, 2005).

This paper seeks to discern how two newspapers--the Milwaukee Community Journal, the state’s largest African American newspaper, and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the state’s largest general-circulation paper, covered the controversial event. The subject of police brutality continually emerges as a seemingly never-ending source of friction between police departments and the communities they serve (Lawrence, 2000). Members of African American communities across the nation consistently voice concerns about their treatment, or rather mistreatment, by police, with several brutality cases garnering national media attention over the past two decades to give credence to such claims (Lawrence, 2000).

Milwaukee’s African American community shares a fragile and strained relationship with the police. According to Jones (2009), police-community relations first showed overt signs of fracture in the late 1950s when White police officers shot Daniel Bell, a 22-year-old African American man, in the head after a car chase. The White officers claimed that Bell had lunged at them with a knife and that they believed he fit the description of a suspect.
wanted for a string of robberies (Jones, 2009). Two African American witnesses disputed the officers' accounts but the pair was cleared, and “the gunshot that killed Daniel Bell was the signal shot for the black freedom movement in Milwaukee” (Jones, 2009, p. 34). Thus the Frank Jude case represents the latest chapter in a series of police brutality cases involving minority residents to afflict Milwaukee.

**Overarching Research Questions**

1. What are the dominant themes/trends of coverage for each paper?
2. How and in what ways do the papers differ in coverage?
3. Did sources for the Black publication and mainstream paper differ?
4. How much space did papers devote to the issue?
5. How did stakeholders evaluate newspaper coverage? Did they see differences among the publications?

**Literature Review**

Minority residents in America’s inner cities and the police officers charged with protecting them share an uneasy relationship strained by years of conflict and complicated by the uncomfortable intersection of race and class issues that permeate U.S. society. Some of this friction stems from the issue of police brutality, which creates heightened emotion and tensions for both groups (Lawrence, 2000).

Members from minority communities, especially African American residents, consistently voice concerns about their mistreatment by the police (Howell, Perry & Vile, 2004; Jacobs, 1996; Lawrence, 2000; Nelson, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). Researchers say these perceptions stem from a long history of violent encounters with officers. Through the years, Blacks and police officers have shared many moments of hostility, particularly in the South, where officers brutally enforced oppressive Jim Crow laws. Of course, Blacks in the North did not fare much better. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders wrote in March 1968 that “Negroes firmly believe that police brutality and harassment occur repeatedly in Negro neighborhoods” (p. 19) and reported that “all the major outbursts (of civil unrest) of recent years were precipitated by arrests of Negroes by white police for minor offenses.” Russell (2000) notes that even when officers did not employ excessive use of force, they often turned a blind eye to White-on-Black violence.
Given this history of mistrust, African Americans find themselves having to navigate a delicate tightrope. They often reside in high-crime neighborhoods and need police protection, yet they harbor fears of their “protectors” based on previous experiences (Howell, Perry & Ville, 2000).

The relationship between African Americans and the police illustrate the racial gulf that afflicts America. According to Skolnick & Fyfe (1993, p. xv), “America is a divided nation and cops are perched perilously on the divide.” Weitzer & Tuch (2004) maintain that race plays a role in how the public perceives police and how it assesses allegations of brutality. Scholars say surveys constantly detect racial differences in perceptions of police, with minorities more likely than Whites to possess negative views (Graziano, Schuck & Martin, 2010; Howell, Perry & Vile; 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). For the most part, Whites favor aggressive policing and remain skeptical of any criticism of police, Weitzer & Tuch (2004) found. Moreover, they view Blacks as more likely to commit criminal acts or violent behaviors.

Since the mid-1960s, scholars and policy analysts have expressed concerns that issues of race cast a cloud over police-community relations and affect citizens’ attitudes toward the police and police behavior in general (Howell, Perry & Vile, 2004). Russell (2000, p. 137) asserts that because Blacks and Latinos have become the “public face” of police brutality, mainstream society questions the credibility of their allegations and almost always shows an allegiance to the police. Politicians, police chiefs and the media have framed the issue as a Black problem, and, as a result, “relegated it to the bottom tier of social problems. A clear reflection of this is the public’s yawning response to the escalating claims of police brutality offered by members of minority communities” (Russell, 2000, p. 137).

Other scholars acknowledge the structural complexities that can color perceptions of police mistreatment. Nelson (2000, p. 10) theorizes that racial segregation plays a role in how Blacks and Whites see one another and how they interact with police.

Their is a world of White privilege in which Whiteness confers not only power and opportunity but also a presumption of innocence and the right to protection. It is a world in which the police are, if not exactly friends, certainly not enemies, a world in which, more often than not, if the players are a Black person, and a policeman, the policeman will receive the benefit of the doubt.
Yet, while race plays a role in perceptions of police, it is not the only factor to consider. Lawrence (2000) maintains that officers do not exclusively prey on Blacks, adding that other ethnic groups also complain about excessive use of force, as have gays and the poor. Minority officers have also committed heinous acts of brutality and just like their White peers; they remain vulnerable to perceptions of brutality (Lawrence, 2000).

**The Rodney King Incident**

The fallout from the March 3, 1991, videotaped beating of Los Angeles motorist Rodney King made clear America’s racial divide as well as its fragmented views concerning policing (Lawrence, 2000; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993). Police pursued King, an African American, for speeding. After a brief chase, 21 police officers, from the California Highway Patrol and the Los Angeles Police Department captured King (Jacobs, 1996). Three White Los Angeles Police Department officers severely beat King as a sergeant and the remaining 17 officers looked on. An amateur cameraman captured the beating on tape and sold it to a local television station (Jacobs, 1996). According to Jacobs (1996), TV stations across the country played the video thousands of times, and Americans responded with shock, outrage and calls for police reform. Interest in the case began to die down but later re-emerged in April 1992 with the return of not-guilty verdicts for the four police officers implicated in the beating (Jacobs, 1996).

After the news reached Los Angeles residents, rioters wreaked havoc on the city and caused one of the most costly civil disturbances in the nation’s history (Jacobs, 1996; Kelley, 2000). Kelley (2000) estimates that property damage from the Los Angeles riots totaled $785 million. In addition, the riots inspired similar outbursts beyond Los Angeles, with cities such as San Francisco, Atlanta, Las Vegas, New York City, Seattle, Tampa, Washington, D.C., all experiencing smaller forms of civil unrest (Kelley, 2000). Moreover, Kelley (2000) posits, the Los Angeles riots symbolized to the world “the tragic plight of urban America and the racist and classist character of policing,” (p.50). For many victims of police brutality, particularly Blacks, the King videotape helped to document their experiences with police and to validate their allegations of misconduct to the mainstream public, which enjoyed more positive relations with police (Jacobs, 1996; Lawrence, 2000).
Weitzer & Tuch (2006, p. 25) argue that although police misconduct remains a serious problem in America, no one can accurately pinpoint its magnitude because the “hidden nature of much police work means that a great deal of misconduct is never observed or reported. What comes to light may be just the tip of the iceberg.” As police brutality cases enter the legal arena, however, we can gain a glimpse of how such cases affect a city’s bottom line.

Jacobs (1996) reports that the city of Los Angeles paid more than $20 million from 1986 to 1990 to cover judgments, settlements and jury verdicts against Los Angeles officers in more than 100 excessive use-of-force lawsuits. Meanwhile, Skolnick & Fyfe (1993) detailed an alarming rise in the amounts Los Angeles paid to settle police misconduct lawsuits, finding the city spent $9.1 million on such cases in 1989; one year later the figure had mushroomed to $11.3 million.

Yet until the Rodney King incident, politicians, police chiefs and reporters had little to say about police misconduct despite the massive amounts of money diverted to the issue (Lawrence, 2000). In fact, according to Chevigny (1995), New York City paid more than $50 million to settle police misconduct suits from 1987 to 1992, a figure equal to $400 per officer.

Although scholars and the media have devoted much attention on the Rodney King case, other incidents of brutality involving the police pop up on America’s radar so frequently that they become a public ritual, Russell (2000) maintains. This “ritual” (p. 144) operates thusly:

1. Alleged police violence against a person of color occurs.
2. Members of the minority community express outrage and then officials urge residents to stay calm.
3. Authorities attempt to portray the abuse victim as flawed, placing a special focus on his or her criminal record or any deviant behavior that occurs during the assault.
4. Authorities continue their call for calm amid community protests by the affected minority groups.
5. A grand jury declines to issue a criminal indictment, resulting in no trial or prosecution of officers involved in the assault.
To be sure, most police officers take their jobs of serving the community seriously, yet a subculture influences their interactions with citizens (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). Officers learn to put their faith in fellow officers and not to trust members of the public (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). Because of the nature of their work, street cops seldom see the good of society, as they deal mostly with problem citizens. As a result, they develop an “us versus them” orientation toward the public (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006). In sum, issues of police abuse often reflect the broader structural issues of race and class in society (Geller & Toch, 1995). Those who reside in poor neighborhoods bear a disproportionate amount of crime, and persons of color make up a disproportionate amount of those who live in impoverished areas. As a result, minority groups find themselves overrepresented among those arrested and convicted of crime (Geller & Toch, 1995).

**Police-community relations in Milwaukee**

Like their peers in other urban cities, Milwaukee’s African American residents maintain a fragile and rocky relationship with the Police Department. Some of this traces to the civil rights movement, when Blacks steadily voiced allegations of police brutality (Jones, 2009). One of the era’s most controversial cases occurred in 1958 when police officers shot Daniel Bell, a 22-year-old African American man, in the head after a car chase (The March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project, n.d.; Jones, 2009). Two White officers said they stopped Bell because he fit the description of a suspect in a string of robberies (Jones, 2009). One of the officers got close enough to Bell to grab him but instead chose to shoot Bell. The bullet entered Bell’s upper back, traveled through his neck and entered his head (The March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project, n.d.). To cover up the killing, one officer planted a large knife on Bell and then claimed that Bell lunged at him and his partner with the weapon (Jones, 2009). Despite the fact that two African American witnesses disputed the officers’ accounts, authorities cleared the pair. Bell’s family never wavered in their search for justice and in the 1980s they sued the City of Milwaukee to recover damages for the conspiracy to cover up the murder. In a case that garnered national media attention, a federal court jury awarded the family $1.7 million (The March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project, n.d).

Twenty-three years after the Bell shooting, in 1981, Milwaukee gained further notoriety for its Police Department’s treatment of Ernest Lacy (Coleman, 1997; Nash,
Bennett & Evans, 1981). Officers stopped Lacy, a Black man whom they suspected of rape. While Lacy walked along Wisconsin Avenue, he came face to face with three officers who tried to subdue him (Nash, Bennett & Evans, 1981). According to witnesses, one officer pinned Lacy to the street as another reportedly placed his knee against Lacy's neck. They handcuffed his arms behind his back and raised them high above his head. Later, in the police wagon, another arrested man noticed that Lacy had stopped breathing (Nash, Bennett & Evans, 1981). The coroner concluded that Lacy died from interruption of the oxygen flow to his brain because of pressure applied to his chest and to a nerve in his neck (Nash, Bennett & Evans, 1981).

Subsequently, community leaders, both Black and White, called for reforms and better relationships between the police and the community, but their demands were defiantly rejected by Police Chief Harold Breier (Nash, Bennett & Evans, 1981). Breier, who served as chief for 20 years, did not think much of the civil rights movement or its leaders (The March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project, n.d.) and would assign officers to harass protesters. During the open house marches, he ordered his officers not to wear their badges so that they could not be identified if they committed acts of police brutality (The March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project, n.d.). Called autocratic and likened by his detractors to J. Edgar Hoover, Breier would not even meet with representatives of black neighborhoods (Kelling & Kiesmet, 1995).

### The Role of Newspapers

Without a vibrant press we would not know about police brutality and other issues that concern society. Thus, the media as an institution plays a crucial role in keeping the public informed (Ansolabehere, Behr, & Iyengar, 1991). Some have argued that in “democratic societies, the most fundamental obligation of the media is the dissemination of information” (Ansolabehere, Behr, & Iyengar, 1991, p. 121). Yet scholars continue to emphasize how media help shape public opinion and set policy agendas (Zhongdang & Kosicki, 1996).

Newspapers, in particular, occupy a special place in the lives of Americans. According to Sorin (2001), newspapers have served as society's primary source of information. Newspapers offer rich snapshots of daily life and give historians the context to evaluate and illuminate on crucial periods in time (Sorin, 2001). Through the eyes of
newspapers, we learn how others lived in the past. This does not mean that newspapers hold a monopoly on all things good. As Dreier (2005) noted, the media can disproportionately shape our perceptions of problems, particularly in urban areas, as well as our ability to find solutions to them by magnifying some issues while ignoring others. In general, the media paint a negative portrait of urban America that misleads and distracts from creating common ground (Dreier, 2005).

Most newspaper reporters, according to White (1999), see their job as to act as a “watchdog” for the public’s interest, with the mission of holding institutions and the people who lead them accountable. Skolnick & McCoy (1984) argue that the media have the means to demand police accountability but sometimes miss the mark because of a focus on sensational events at the expense of offering more comprehensive coverage about policing and institutions. “Every crime story is a ‘whodunit.’ There is always a victim with whom the public can identify and an alleged perpetrator to be feared or reviled (p. 554).

Mainstream newspaper often shy away from openly discussing racism or racial conflict, along with the structural roots of inequality that impact the lives of racial and ethnic minorities daily (Squires, 2007). Ethnic minority papers fill this void by offering readers a different model for reporting and a vehicle for their audience to express their views in a public forum (Thornton, 2009). Moreover, relying solely on mainstream sources for news fails to capture the complexity of issues we face as a society (Thornton, 2009), and ethnic newspapers allow mainstream America the opportunity to hear and consider alternative voices.

The Black Press

Fraley & Lester-Roushanzamir (2004) posit that the general press and the Black press in addition to serving different audiences also have different missions. As Sorin, (2001) notes, the Black press serves as a mirror for America because it consistently reflects on the issues society does not like to face. In addition, Mislan (2009) asserts that Black papers provide an oppositional perspective that differs from the mainstream press. While the general press seeks to report from an objective lens, the Black press aims to educate, uplift and elevate its audience. Black newspapers enjoy a special relationship with its readers as well: Allen and Bielby (as cited in Mislan) found that Black Americas trust the Black print media more than majority print sources.
Huspek (2004) theorizes that the Black press appeals to readers who resent institutions that they feel oppress them while making visible groups or classes that remain invisible to mainstream society. In essence, Huspek (2004) argues that general newspapers still reflect the viewpoints of society’s majority, with reports written from the perspective of White men.

In sum, the literature shows that the issue of police brutality reflects the racial conflict that permeates America. Police brutality cases such as the Rodney King beating expose this delicate rift. Whites tend to trust and accept the word of officers, while Blacks and other minority groups remain conflicted as they seek protection from police while remembering the savagery inflicted by police officers in the past. Like their counterparts in other cities, Milwaukeeans can remember excessive use-of-force issues that resulted in agitation and unrest. Although experiences can shape perceptions, the media play a great role in molding public opinion and setting an agenda for change. Newspapers take pride in providing “watchdog” reporting that holds institutions and public officials accountable. Yet, some scholars argue, that mainstream papers reflect how the majority thinks and, as a result, society needs to listen to the alternative voices found in the Black press and in other ethnic minority papers.

**Methodology**

This research utilizes textual analysis as well as framing theory to assess how the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, a general interest daily paper, and the *Milwaukee Community Journal*, a weekly Black-oriented newspaper, covered the Frank Jude Jr. police brutality case. Textual analysis offers a critical tool in analyzing media content because it allows researchers to examine the construction of meaning through the text (Lester-Massman, 1989). As Tonkiss (as cited in Fraley & Lester-Roushanzamir, 2004) explains, this form of analysis focuses on how publications craft meanings through the overall organization as well as placement of headlines, size of display type, prominence of articles (accompanied by visuals), choice of words and descriptive devices. Just as important, textual analysis allows researchers to also focus on any omissions as well.

In addition, this paper relies on framing theory, a common research device used to study media effects. Media scholars identify framing as the second level of agenda setting, which may also be called “attribute agenda setting” (Sheafer, 2007). Schuefele (1999)
suggests media frames address “what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” as well as the frames that journalists use (p. 106). Entman (1993) states that communicators make “conscious or unconscious framing judgment” (p. 52) when deciding what issues to make more salient to the audience. For Entman (1993), communicators frame the text by emphasizing or omitting certain words, phrases, images, sources and sentences that “provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts of judgments” (p. 52). In addition, sizing serves as the foundation for framing theory, according to Entman (1993). This means paying attention to whether an issue becomes magnified or miniaturized and thus, made more or less significant. Researchers can assess an event’s importance by examining the prominence of the item depicted (Entman, 1991).

To test these frameworks I examined articles that ran in the Milwaukee Community Journal and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel from February 16, 2005, through March 15, 2005, focusing specifically on front-page news coverage of the Jude beating. Editors in both newsrooms granted me access to their internal archives. Articles from the Milwaukee Community Journal proved difficult to find through various databases and I found the paper’s in-house library inconsistent. To supplement my analysis, I conducted interviews with the editor of the Milwaukee Community Journal, the reporter who covered most of the Jude proceedings for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Jude’s attorney, Jon Saffron.

The Papers and Jude Coverage

The Milwaukee Community Journal is the largest African American weekly in the state and boasts a circulation of about 40,000 (T. Mitchell Jr., personal communication, November 15, 2010). The paper exists to “plead the case of the community,” (Mitchell, 2010) and it considers itself the best of the three Black weeklies that serve Milwaukee. The newsroom consists of two or three staffers at any given time and sees itself as a viable alternative to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, according to Mitchell (2010). “We focus exclusively on the African American community; we focus on stories ignored by the Journal Sentinel” (Mitchell, 2010). Its editors feel a special burden to highlight the positives of the community, and when the paper delves into problems in the community, it focuses on the reasons why an issue takes place and offers solutions to fix the situation (Mitchell, 2010).

Byers (2004) considers the Community Journal a politically moderate publication, saying that only the school choice issue prompted “much fire” from its editors (p. 207). Yet
the paper consistently challenges Milwaukee’s establishment, especially on job and education issues (Byers, 2004).

In its coverage of the Frank Jude Jr. case, the paper relied on Black leaders, particularly then-Alderman Michael McGee Jr., as its primary sources. In fact, the paper quotes the alderman in 70 percent of the articles analyzed. Most of the *Community Journal*’s news coverage revolves around community protests. Although the paper ran several front-page pictures of McGee, I did not find any of Jude. In addition, the paper did not quote police officials or the attorneys for the accused officers. It did, however, run pictures of and quote Doris Jude Porter, the victim’s aunt, several times. Mitchell (2010) says the paper did run pictures of Jude as well as quotes from him later as the case evolved.

While the paper had praise for Police Chief Nannette Hegerty’s leadership, the paper pulled no punches in a front-page column about the Jude case (Holt, 2005, pp. 1, 2, 10):

> Of course the defining controversy this year has been the public lynching of Frank Jude. And I use the word ‘lynching’ literally. As a journalist who has covered episodes of police brutality during my quarter century of service with the Black Press, the Jude beating was at best a vivid reminder of how little things have changed in Milwaukee.

An editorial in the same edition called for Milwaukee to “deal with the discrimination and bias that exists in business, employment, contracting, lending and education” (“Jude beating illustrates how far we still have to go,” 2005, p.2). Meanwhile, a front page Pulse of the Community feature asked readers to weigh in on the case.

According to Mitchell (2010), the *Community Journal* put “the focus on the victim” and gathered information the White press did not have because of its relationship to members of the community. The paper chose to focus on Jude family fund-raiser and to allow its writers to use a first-person perspective to add dimension to the story (Mitchell, 2010). *The Journal Sentinel*, according to Mitchell (2010), covered the story from an angle that would not anger officials from the Milwaukee Police Department because the paper depends on these sources for daily coverage.

The *Community Journal*’s news philosophy regarding the Jude case continues the traditional advocacy role that the Black press plays. Not only have Black newspapers sought to provide oppositional perspectives to the mainstream press, they have also
operated under different goals. Where the mainstream press seeks to report on public affairs through an objective lens, the Black press infuses opinions and offers its readers a forum to vent, to organize and to reflect (Mislan, 2009).

Comparing the Community Journal to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel sets up a David vs. Goliath scenario. With a daily circulation of 183,636 and a Sunday circulation of 331,171 (Gores, 2010), the Journal Sentinel, the state’s largest newspaper, has far more resources at its disposal. The paper takes its watchdog role seriously and boasts one of the biggest investigative reporting teams in the country (Kaiser, 2010). This showed in its exhaustive coverage of the Jude case.

The paper’s coverage began with a routine five-paragraph police brief that ran October 27, 2004, inside its Local section about a disturbance in Bay View. It did not mention that the case involved off-duty officers or any information about the victim. Coverage of the incident waned until February 4, 2005, when the paper published a front page picture of a battered Jude in a hospital bed, with the lead headline, “Police suspected in man’s beating: No charges, arrests in incident involving off-duty officers at party.” From that day forward, reporters wrote extensively about the case and, throughout the analysis for this paper, talked extensively with Jude (two front-page interviews); the district attorney’s office; the two women and man who accompanied Jude to the Bay View party; Jude’s attorney Jon Saffron; Alderman Michael McGee Jr., Police Chief Nannette Hegerty; Ralph Hollmon, president and CEO of the Milwaukee Urban League and a member of the Milwaukee Commission on Police and Community Relations; and Doris Jude Porter, Frank Jude’s aunt. In addition, the paper pored over court records and criminal complaints and filed open records request to get information it felt was the public’s right to know.

The paper also covered community protests (which usually ran inside the Local section and ran photos of McGee and Jude Porter). When not chronicling daily developments in the case, the Journal Sentinel devoted its front page to other topics, including a look into the police’s wall of silence and the history of other brutality cases. Although it gave Jude two chances to tell his side of the story, the paper also mentioned Jude’s criminal record, which included felony convictions for selling marijuana and bribing a police officer, and what he did for a living (a stripper). The Community Journal made no mention of his arrest record or occupation.
J. Diedrich (personal communication, November 29, 2910) says covering the Jude case created challenges because the “police kept it pretty quiet and Jude’s attorney did not want to get too far ahead of the story. He didn’t want to mess up the investigation.” Hoping to press the Police Department into providing more information on the case, Diedrich filed an open records request. The “game changer,” as Diedrich (2010) calls it, for the case came after the Journal Sentinel became the first media outlet to publish a picture of a bruised and disfigured Frank Jude from his hospital bed. That provoked public outrage and spurred the district attorney's office to take on the off-duty police officers (Diedrich, 2010), “I think there are people out there who never read the story but just looked at the picture. People demanded answers” (Diedrich, 2010).

Although the community sought answers, police officials, at times, were slow with providing them. The beat system and police control of information encourage news organizations to weigh their choices and think about future interactions with police officials when reporting on the use of force (Lawrence, 2000). After all, reporters do not want to jeopardize their relationships with a key source of news. Yet Diedrich (2010) rejects Mitchell’s contention that the paper could have been more aggressive if it was not afraid of losing sources. “Our coverage was risky. We were getting it (grief) from all sides” (Diedrich, 2010).

**Conclusions**

Lawrence (2000) argues that examining print media coverage in today’s multimedia world may seem antiquated, but studying how use of force is presented in newspapers offers many advantages. First, newspaper reporters, much more so than their television counterparts, stay in constant contact with police sources as the “police beat” remains an integral part of the daily newspaper coverage in a way that differs from television.

Both papers adhered to their missions with their coverage of Frank Jude Jr. The *Community Journal* provided a forum for its readers and limited its coverage to community protests, while the *Journal Sentinel* unleashed its watchdog reporting to hold officials accountable. Though scholars justify comparisons between African American and mainstream media coverage under the assumption that minorities provide interpretations
of events and identities that may run counter to mainstream representations (Squires, 2002), I did not find this to be true in my analysis. While the Community Journal’s primary sources were predominantly Black, the breadth of sources in the Journal Sentinel encompassed a plethora of voices that helped move the dialogue forward. The Journal Sentinel took advantage of its resources and followed every possible angle of the story. To do this, they detached a reporter to follow the case full time. Given the small staff of the Community Journal and the many demands of its editor, it would have been impossible for the publication to do the same thing.

The most obvious sign of divergence for the papers occurred in how they labeled Jude, whose father is Black and whose mother White. In every story, the Community Journal referred to Jude as Black, while the Journal Sentinel called him Black in five stories and biracial in four others. J. Saffron (personal communication, November 30, 2010) says his client refers to himself by both terms. Mitchell (2010) called this issue irrelevant, saying, “We called him Black. He was Black to the officers who beat the crap out of him.” Moreover, Mitchell (2010) maintains that labeling Jude as biracial is a ploy to garner White sympathy as society favors those with lighter skin compared with those with darker hues.

For his part, Diedrich (2010) wishes the Journal Sentinel had shown more consistency in how it labeled Jude. He sees the issue as more about accuracy. “I think I should have stayed with one or the other. I can see how some people could think we were minimizing the racial part of the story by calling Jude biracial, but there was no outside pressure” (Diedrich, 2010).

To some, the issue of how papers label groups might seem insignificant. Yet, Martin (1991) notes that names can convey powerful imagery. Just as in 1988, when Jesse Jackson spearheaded a movement for Blacks to be called African Americans (Martin, 1991), a shift in how America thinks about race is taking place. Just as that campaign led to replacing the term “Black” found immediate success among African American opinion makers and more gradual acceptance in the national press (Martin, 1991), a new multicultural movement continues to emerge. In a study of how White and Black newspapers tackle biracial labeling, Thornton (2009) found that Black newspapers do not accept this new race era, and that they take the same stance as the Milwaukee Community Journal: Black multiracial people are Black by definition. In comparison, White papers see Black hostility to a
separate category and consider this as an outdated focus on group welfare (Thornton, 2009).

**Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

I felt greatly constrained by the lack of consistent archiving for the *Milwaukee Community Journal*. After trips to the downtown Milwaukee Public Library, the King Public Library, the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison and the paper itself, I cannot say with confidence that I found every issue that contained Frank Jude coverage. The lack of access to the *Community Journal* also reflects structural inequalities. According to the Wisconsin Historical Society (n.d.), African Americans belong to a group in which libraries have not consistently collected publications. The ideal of a library means having information of all peoples equally accessible, yet the poor and the marginalized do not have the resources to make this possible. As a result, “libraries have an unfortunate bias to collect certain sections of a society in greater depth than others” (Wisconsin Historical Society, n.d.)

According to Dolan, Sonnett & Johnson (2009), only 200 Black newspapers continue to publish, and industry professionals assert that black newspapers may become a vanishing genre. If this is the case, who then will keep the mainstream press in check and “plead the case” for a community whose voices get shouted out of the mainstream?

In addition, as more and more newspapers close, who will have the resources to hold public officials accountable? Saffron (2010) expressed shock and a bit of dismay that more media did not follow the case. Not only did he not recall hearing from the Community Journal, but also he failed to win the attention of the national Black media either. This likely can be explained by a lack of resources, but issues such as police brutality deserve a public hearing. As he prepares for Jude’s civil lawsuit, he states no one seems interested in following up on the case even though new details about the beating and the MPD emerge (Saffron, 2010). With the high costs of settling excessive use-of-force cases, the potential for urban unrest and the moral prerogative to curb abuse, the public needs the Black press and mainstream papers more than ever to shine the spotlight on what is wrong and what is right in society.

Last, the subject of racial labeling by the media will continue to challenge newspapers and other media outlets. Lee & Bean (2004) say that currently 1 in 40 persons identifies himself or herself as multiracial, and this figure is twice as high for those under
the age of 18. By the year 2050, as many as 1 in 5 Americans could claim a multiracial background.

Media executives will have to formulate a plan for dealing with racial issues that goes beyond the traditional Black and White color line. The African American press will face even more of a challenge as younger multiracial members undoubtedly will question old ways of thinking and encourage new perspectives. All of these issues are ripe for exploration by academic researchers.
References


