

## **ABSTRACT**

TITLE OF THESIS: The Washington, D.C. 1991 riots in  
Mount Pleasant: An Analysis of local  
Press Coverage.

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Studies in the field of communication have found that the U.S.A. mainstream (English-language) news media coverage of minorities is characterized primarily by the portrayal of minorities only in the context of the problems or difficulties that they pose to society. In addition, because of cultural values and customs, the media, when covering minorities, tend to focus on the event itself rather than on the underlying causes of the event. Thus the coverage tends to be stereotypical.

In order to address these issues, this thesis analyses the content of coverage of the 1991, Washington, D.C. Mount Pleasant civil disturbances in two English- and two Spanish-language newspapers. A quantitative content analysis was employed in order to determine the extent and type of coverage provided to Latinos two weeks before the disturbances, the week of

the disturbances, and the week after the disturbances.

For the same period, a thematic content analysis was used to contrast the frameworks used by the English-language press in comparison to the Spanish-language press. The assumption was that by having cultural proximity to and understanding of the Latino Community, the Spanish-language press provided a more thorough coverage of the event.

The results, however, show that both presses failed to provide a comprehensive coverage of the event. In fact, the results seem to indicate that both presses followed journalistic news values and patterns more closely than they followed cultural values. The most notable difference between the two presses was that they incorporated the news values and patterns into their own cultural bias.



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Mount Pleasant: An Analysis of  
Local Press Coverage**

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## Dedication

To Irene, Luzia and Michael  
because you cared

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### I. PERSPECTIVE

On the evening of May 5, 1991, violent civil disturbances erupted in the streets of the nation's capital after a black, female police officer shot an El Salvadoran man, Daniel Gomez. According to the police, Gomez resisted arrest for public drinking, and attempted to assault the officer with a knife. According to some eyewitnesses, however, the officer shot Gomez while he already had one hand handcuffed. Thus, believing that the episode had been one of too many cases in which the police "abuse" and "mistreat" Latinos, some members of the Hispanic community went to the streets to protest.

What seemed to have begun as a non-violent protest soon became a melee of looting, torching of squad cars, and ravaging of property across the neighborhoods of Mount Pleasant, Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan, in Northwest of Washington, D.C. The Mount Pleasant riots, as the news media have come to call the event, caused damages of about one million dollars for the city government alone, and they did not end until a two-night curfew was imposed.

The dominant (English-language) news media

coverage of the Mount Pleasant riots became a prominent issue for the local community. The press criticized television news for having live-news coverage which supposedly attracted gang members from various parts of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to the location of the rioting. The theory was that the gang members were only coming to the area in order to take advantage of the situation. In turn, the local Hispanic community criticized both the press and television news for not covering the event in an accurate fashion.

This was not the first time that the mainstream news media had been criticized for its coverage of Latinos. Since the 1960s social scientists in the field of communication have displayed an ongoing interest in the dominant news media coverage of Latinos. It has been argued by several researchers (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985; Murphy & Murphy, 1981; and Lewels, 1974) that the dominant media have failed to cover Hispanics in an objective and balanced manner.

In fact, studies such as Shaw (1991) contend that the amount of news media coverage accorded to Hispanics in comparison with non-Hispanics is not only disproportional, but it also instigates growth in creating and perpetuating distorted images of the general Latino population.

In order to better understand the mainstream news



media coverage of Latinos, this study compares the news coverage content of the Mount Pleasant riots in two English- and in two Spanish-language newspapers: The Washington Post and The Washington Times, and El Diario de la Nacion and EL Tiempo Latino.

The paramount strategy used in this research was that of a thematic content analysis. The aim was to explore the frameworks used by the English-language press in comparison with the frameworks used by the Spanish-language press during the coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances. It is assumed that by having cultural proximity to the Latino community, the Spanish-language press provided a more thorough and balanced coverage of the event in comparison to the coverage provided by the English-language press. This is because the English-language press has been accused of portraying minorities or deviant groups in an unfavorable light.

The significance in the possibility of different frameworks used by the English- and Spanish-language presses during their coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances lies within three important factors. First, it is through the news media that most of the public comes to know about the world in which they live. Second, news-media coverage of Latinos is intrinsically within the context of a much broader

issue: that of news-media coverage of minorities in general. Third, the various minority groups in the United States have been growing, and continue to grow dramatically; nonetheless, it seems that the mainstream news media have failed to maintain or keep up in reflecting the diversity of the United States' population in their news staff.

In a media-dominated society such as the United States, the mass media of television, radio and the press constitute an important, if not the most important, source of information for the community. Therefore, the combined effect of the news-media coverage of minority groups, where members of the majority population have no, or infrequent, direct contact with members of minority groups, is that media images of minorities are internalized and taken as reality (Lewells, 1974); (Tuchman, 1978). This is well described by Shoemaker and Reese (1991):

The importance of differences between the media content and other sources of information about the world lies in the fact that our views of the world, and resulting actions will be molded by our predominant source of information: the mass media. If you have never traveled to the Soviet Union or talked at length with someone who has,

most of what you know about that country  
-- your "social" reality of that country --  
comes from the mass media in your country,  
(p. 49).

The public's dependency on the media as a basis for information may be attributed to two factors of the modern age. First, highly advanced communication systems such as satellite, have an almost limitless power to transmit simultaneous events to viewers around the globe. Second, people who lead busy lives are dependent on the news media for information about the world which they inhabit. For instance, if an individual has never lived with, known, or had any close relations with a member of a minority group, it is very likely that the knowledge this person has about minorities was acquired through the media. In fact, Hartman and Husband (1974), in studying children's perception of blacks in England, found that dominant media definitions are absorbed as reality particularly where personal experience is lacking.

As an entity transmitting information that eventually may guide, shape and transform the way people view and perceive the world, the news media are not only expected to report on major events, but are also expected to provide adequate and objective coverage of those events.



An important factor that the news media face when reporting an event is that, similar to individuals, the media have their own limitations; that is, they cannot be everywhere at the same time, and they cannot report everything that is happening. Therefore, the media have to select. By doing so, the news media are filtering out what people say, do, and think. They are defining what is important, normal, acceptable, and not acceptable. In this manner a newspaper or television news program acts as a "window on the world through its frame" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 1).

Furthermore, by selecting and emphasizing certain facts and attributes, the news media help to shape the public's opinion of events. Thus, critics of the U.S. mainstream news media maintain that the labels journalists apply to minority groups, and the extent to which a minority group such as Latinos is covered by the dominant news media, will affect the readers' perception of that group. As Tuchman (1978) writes, this phenomenon is clearly apparent in news-media coverage of riots:

In disseminating such particulars as the numbers of participants, the number of wounded or killed, the amount of property damaged, and the sequence of activities (that is, a man was arrested and then a



mob of citizens congregated at the police station), news reports transform a riot as an amorphous happening into the riot (this particular riot) as a public event and public concern. Through their reports of specific riots, news reports help to shape a public definition of what a riot is (pp. 190-191).

Thus, the news media may not only shape the public's opinion of an event, but they may also give more prominence to the event than it originally had.

For the purpose of this study, the concept of minority should be clarified. The following section explores the characteristics of minorities as deviant groups in relation to the dominant culture.

## **II. MINORITIES, CULTURE AND SOCIAL DEVIANCE**

Historically, minorities have been small groups of people whose race, gender, or religion differ from that held by the dominant population. Minorities traditionally tend not to adhere to the dominant culture, and they often live within their own cultural norms and habits, such as speaking a different language or by having a different religion. Thus, by following non-traditional norms and values minorities are perceived as deviant.

Cohen (1980a), in explaining social deviant behavior, maintains that deviant behavior is deviant not for what it is but because of the labels society has imposed upon -- the judgement of deviance is ultimately one that is relative to a particular group which has, within society, delineated what is acceptable and not acceptable. He says the term of deviance carries the question of "deviant to whom?" or "deviant from what?" (p. 12). That is, the concept of something being embarrassing, threatening, dysfunctional, or dangerous should not be assumed to have intrinsic value, but rather it is a label or creation imposed or defined by society.

The defining of behaviors, norms and values of a society is what delineates that society's culture. To better understand deviance, the concept of culture should be defined. Yun-Kim (1979) defines culture as:

... the mass of life patterns that humans beings in a given society learn from their elders and pass on to the younger generation. Culture is imprinted in the individual as a pattern of perceptions that is accepted and expected by others in society (p. 435).

Therefore, it is assumed that there are various cultures within a society. The dominant culture is the

one whose values, norms and behaviors are followed by the largest number of the population -- the majority. So, the behavior and actions of those who do not adhere to the culture of the majority are perceived as deviant. In explaining deviance, Cohen (1980) quotes Becker (1963), who says:

...deviance is created by society. I do not mean this is the way that it is ordinarily understood, in which the causes of deviance are located in the social situation of the deviant or in 'social factors' which prompt his action. I mean, rather, that social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and by applying those rules to particular persons and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a 'consequence' of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender.' The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label (p. 12-13).

Thus, in the case of Hispanics, for instance, they are considered deviant primarily on the basis of the language they speak and their own customs. The American culture has defined that English should be the



language to be spoken in the United States; thus those who live in the United States and only speak Spanish are perceived as deviant as they are not assimilating to the dominant culture's values.

Furthermore, Latinos in general do not seem to be willing to adhere to the dominant American culture. In fact, Hispanics have proven not to assimilate well into the mainstream culture and have very much resisted shedding their language (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1988; McCuglage). In cities such as Miami, with a large Hispanic population, residents think of themselves not as part of a "melting pot" but rather as part of a large "tossed salad" (Cobb, 1991). In other words, the Spanish language is widely used, and home-country traditions and customs are still preserved.

In addition, minorities in the United States have traditionally been a small percentage of the population and they have had little political, economic, and social power in society. However, as these various minority groups, such as Latinos, grow in number and gain access to jobs and to political, social and economic power, their cultural influence becomes more obvious. Currently, a minority may be defined not by the number of people within an ethnic group, but by the amount of political, economic, and social power held by that group. If certain groups in particular areas of



the United States are no longer minorities in terms of their number, they still are minorities in the amount of power they have. For instance, the majority population of Washington, D.C. is African-American, representing 62.3 percent of the total population. However, their social, political and economic power is marginal compared to that of the white minority population.

Therefore, the argument used by several researchers is that, when covering minority issues, the mainstream news media tend to emphasize the very elements that are most likely to pinpoint minorities as deviant groups.

In order to better understand the Latino population as a deviant group in the United States, the following section briefly explores the issue of Latinos and stereotypes.

### **III. STEREOTYPES AND LATINOS IN THE UNITED STATES**

Dahlgren and Chakrapani (1982) and Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) attribute stereotypes of Latinos in the United States to two factors. First, many Latinos, whose ancestors are a mixture of Spaniards and native Latin-American Indians, physically resemble the United States' own native Indian population (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985). Second, the U.S. news media have

tended to present a distorted image of Latin America in the news.

Vogel (1972) maintains that the initial image that Europeans had of Indian Americans was that of a "savage and brutish men" (p. 28). This and similar stereotypes have prevailed to the present day and news media output still reflect those early values (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985).

In addition, after analyzing American television coverage of Latin American nations, Dahlgren and Chakrapani (1982) concluded that the U.S. English-language news media have presented a distorted image of Latin America. They argue that the coverage tends to concentrate on accounts of disorder, violence, poverty and primitivism, without offering a balancing view of more positive news.

Furthermore, perhaps one of the major misconceptions in the United States about the Hispanic population has been the misuse of the very term "Hispanics." The media, the government, and private institutions define all Latin-American immigrants as part of one race and one culture. A similar, and equally erroneous practice, would be to refer to Americans, Canadians, and Australians as Anglos, all belonging to the same culture and race.

Petersen (1985) explains that the misuse of the

term Hispanic was started by the U.S. Census Bureau in the 1950s, when the Census began to classify people who had a Hispanic surname under the same umbrella because it was easier for "tabulation" (p. 112).

Today the U.S. Census still classifies Latin Americans and Spaniards under the single term of Hispanics. However, the Census does mention that the term Hispanic is an ethnic, not a racial classification (U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census). Thus a Hispanic person can be of any race.

For instance, any person originating from countries that at one point or another, were colonies of Portugal or Spain, are considered Hispanics. However, Brazil and Argentina's populations, for instance, are perhaps as different from each other as they are from the American population (Gunther, 1941).

Some of the few traits shared by people from Latin America include a common language and religion. Except for Brazil, (Portuguese), Guyana and Belize (English), French Guiana, and Surinam, (Dutch and English), all other Latin-American countries at one point or another were Spanish colonies; thus they inherited the Spanish language and the Roman Catholic religion (Gunther, 1991). However, a large part of the population of Brazil comes from Africa, Italy, Portugal



and Spain; meanwhile a large sector of the population of Argentina is from Italy, Spain and Britain. In addition, the native population of Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico had not only different cultures but also spoke different languages. Furthermore, there are the subgroups that came to exist after the mixing of races, such as the mestizos and creoles.

Therefore, the population of Latin America reflects a multiplicity of cultures. Julius Rivera (1971), in his book Latin America: A Sociocultural Interpretation, wrote:

Whoever becomes acquainted with Latin America soon comes to realize the tremendous complexity of the continent: ethnic variety, the cultural heterogeneity, the political scramble, the religious mixture, the linguistic plurality, and the multiplicity of nations, the institutional mosaic, the social-class crisscross, and the economic puzzle (p. xiii).

Because of the limited scope of this study, the terms Hispanic and Latino will be used interchangeably in this research. The term refers to any person who has originated from Latin America. Nevertheless, to provide the reader with a better understanding of the diversity and characteristics of the Latino population in Washington, D.C., following is a brief overview of

the Hispanic population.

#### **IV. HISPANICS IN THE WASHINGTON, DC METROPOLITAN AREA**

The Washington, D.C. metropolitan area has experienced a substantial growth in its Hispanic population over the last 10 years. This immigration influx has been the result of the prolonged Central-American civil wars and the chaotic economic and political situations in many Latin American nations.

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the District of Columbia experienced a Hispanic population growth of 85 percent from 1980 to 1990; meanwhile its suburbs of Virginia and Maryland witnessed 169.3 percent and 126.3 percent increases respectively (see Table 1). This data, however, may not be completely correct. Some Hispanic organizations argue that for fear of deportation, many undocumented immigrants did not participate in the Census. This would make the Latino population much higher than what the Census reports it to be.

The U.S 1990 census counted 32,710 Hispanics in the District (see Table 1). However, the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs believes that there was a Census undercount, and it estimates that Hispanics number 65,000 in the District, while Latino community-based organizations estimate that at least 85,000

Hispanics live in Washington, D.C. (Washington, D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force, 1991, p. 2). If this last figure is correct, Hispanics account for 12 percent of the District of Columbia's total population.

Another important aspect of the Washington Hispanic population is that it is the fastest-growing group in the area. From 1980 to 1990, the Latino population in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area grew 61.5 percent faster than the total non-Latino population (see Tables 1 and 2).

Two distinctive trends mark the Washington metropolitan area Hispanic population: its youth and its diversity. It seems that the young tend to immigrate more readily, and that immigrants come from various parts of Latin America. Thus, one important characteristic of this population is that although people of Hispanic origin may share the same common language, they have come from various countries which share different customs and cultures (see Table 3).

The major influx of Hispanics into the District metropolitan area began in the 1960s and while it was mostly Cuban in the beginning, no single group has yet enjoyed "clear ascendancy" (Murchie-Beyma, 1991). Hispanics in fact have marginal political and economic power in the community. Nevertheless, in terms of population size, El Salvadorans seem to be the



predominant group, representing up to 23.8 percent of the total Latino population. Mexicans are the second largest group, accounting for 12.9 percent of the total Hispanic population in the Washington metropolitan area (see Table 3).

Three major factors have contributed to the rapid growth of El Salvadorans in the area. First, the 1990 Congressional Temporary Protected Status Act (TPS) ensures that foreign nationals will not be sent back to countries where armed conflict poses a danger to their safety (The Human Impact of Immigrants and Refugee Law on the District of Columbia's Latino Population, 1990). TPS' initial expiring date of June 30, 1992 has been extended at least until June 30, 1993 through the Deferred Enforced Departure Act. Until then, El Salvadorans can remain in the United States and work, without the threat of deportation.

Second, unlike other U.S. cities, Washington, D.C. gives undocumented residents the freedom to enjoy any service funded by the District government without being questioned about their immigration status. In June 1986, former Mayor Marion Barry issued an order stating that "No District of Columbia government office can deny services or make any inquiry about a persons citizenship or U.S. residency status when that person is applying for services funded by the District



government" (The Latino Community: the District of Columbia Experience p. 4).

Third, similar to other immigrants, El Salvadorans tend to follow their fellow countrymen. Thus, Washington, D.C. has become "home to one of the largest communities of Central American refugees in the world" (The Latino Community: The District of Columbia Experience). According to Murchie-Beyma (1991) Washington immigrants tend to rely on each other for survival by establishing "a supportive social network, with the support of friends, family and acquaintances, a newcomer's orientation to a new way of life is simplified" (p. 2).

Indeed, a report prepared by the Comprehensive Technologies International Corporation in 1981 (Hispanic Population and Characteristics in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area) states that "as many as 80 percent of the former population of the small city of Entipuca, El Salvador, now resides in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area" (p. 5).

One of the characteristics of the Hispanic population, and especially of the El Salvadoran population in the Washington Metropolitan area, is that it is one of the poorest groups in the area. Salvadorans come to Washington, D.C. from rural areas in their country. They have very little education;

some, besides not speaking English, cannot even read in their native language. Due to their economic situation they tend to live in crowded housing. Because many of them are undocumented immigrants, some are exploited by unscrupulous employers. Many have left families back home and suffer from war-related traumas. As a result of these multiple stresses the community is threatened by increasing alcoholism and drug-abuse problems (The Latino community: the District of Columbia experience).

Furthermore, according to a report by the D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force, most of the illegal immigrants currently in Washington, D.C. do not plan on returning home. "They [El Salvadorans interviewed] were unanimous in stating that if TPS is allowed to expire at the end of June, they will stay here and live with that fear" (The human impact of immigration and refugee law on the District of Columbia's Latino population, p. 5).

In fact, Hispanics seem to be trying to integrate into their new society by making an effort to learn the English language. According to the Washington Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, only 23.42 percent of Hispanics are linguistically isolated. In contrast, 28.02 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders are linguistically isolated (see Table 4).

Data collected by the D.C. Public Schools'

Division of Bilingual Education show a dramatic increase in the number of Hispanics enrolled in local schools. From 1980 to 1990 Spanish-speaking students' enrollment in the District's public schools increased 373 percent -- from 1,792 in the 1980-81 school year to 6,585 in the 1989-90 school year (The Latino community: the District of Columbia experience). The number of adults enrolling in English-language classes has also increased.

Therefore, both the growth of the Latino community in the Washington, D.C. area and its determination to remain are important factors with which the government and social organizations such as the news media must contend.

The next chapter briefly reviews existing studies about the coverage of minorities in general and of Latinos in the U.S. news media.

TABLE 1

Total Washington Metropolitan Area Hispanic population  
by county 1980-90

Name	Population		Hispanic Population 1980-90 Difference	
	1980	1990	Number	Percent
Maryland county	39,479	89,345	49,866	126.3
Calvert	502	260	(242)	-48.2
Charles	940	1,705	765	81.4
Frederick	826	1,713	887	107.4
Montgomery	22,790	55,684	32,894	144.3
Prince George	14,421	29,562	15,562	107.9
Virginia county	38,052	102,489	64,437	169.3
Arlington	8,863	23,089	14,226	160.5
Fairfax	19,535	51,874	32,339	165.5
Loudon	853	2,156	1,303	152.8
Pr. William	3,272	9,662	6,390	195.3
Stafford	502	1,252	750	149.4
Alexandria	4,042	10,778	6,736	166.7
Fairfax	379	1,159	780	205.8
Falls Church	315	604	289	91.7
Manassas City	194	1,601	1,407	725.3
Manassas P.C.	97	314	217	223.7
Washington, D.C	17,679	32,710	15,031	85.9
Total	95,210	224,544	129,334	135.8

Source: 100% Count of Population, PL 94-171, 1990 U.S.  
Census of Housing and Population Data.



TABLE 2

Total Washington Metropolitan Area non-Hispanic  
Population by County 1980-90

Name	Population		Total Population 1980-90 Difference	
	1980	1990	Number	Percent
Maryland County	1,426,826	1,699,684	272,858	19.01
Calvert	34,136	51,112	16,976	49.07
Charles	71,811	99,449	27,638	38.48
Frederick	113,966	148,495	34,529	30.29
Montgomery	556,263	701,343	145,080	26.08
Pr. George	650,650	699,285	48,635	7.47
Virginia County	1,107,414	1,425,156	317,742	28.69
Arlington	143,736	147,847	4,111	2.86
Fairfax	576,648	766,710	190,062	32.95
Loudon	56,574	83,974	27,399	48.43
Pr. William	141,431	206,024	64,593	45.67
Stafford	39,968	59,984	20,016	50.01
Alex. City	99,175	100,405	1,230	1.24
Fairfax City	19,011	18,463	(548)	-28.82
Falls Church	9,200	8,974	(226)	-24.56
Manassas City	15,244	26,356	11,112	72.89
Manassas P.C.	6,427	4,420	(07)	-0.11
Washington, D.C.	620,654	574,190	(16,402)	-2.64

Source: 100% Count of Population, P.L 94-171, 1990  
U.S. Census of Housing and Population Data

TABLE 3

Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area Person of Hispanic  
Origin by Country

Country	Number	Percentage
Mexicans	28,104	12.9
Puerto Ricans	20,092	9.2
Cubans	9,206	4.2
Dominican Republicans	4,685	2.1
Guatemalans	9,396	4.3
Hondurans	3,525	1.6
Nicaraguans	8,000	3.7
Panamanian	3,779	1.7
El Salvadorans	51,893	23.8
Other Central Americans	1,934	0.9
Colombians	7,989	3.7
Ecuadorians	4,718	2.2
Peruvians	11,619	5.3
Other South Americans	22,762	10.4
Other Hispanics	30,554	14.0
Total	218,256	100.00

Source: Census of population and housing, 1990. Summary  
tape file 3, p 1. (Department of Metropolitan  
and Information Resources, Metropolitan  
Washington Council of Governments).

TABLE 4

## Household Language and Linguistic Isolation

	Number	Percent
ENGLISH	1,212,297	
SPANISH		
Linguistically Isolated	20,668	23.42
Not Linguistically Isolated	67,567	
ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER LANGUAGES		
Linguistically Isolated	13,573	28.02
Not Linguistically Isolated	34,866	
OTHER LANGUAGES		
Linguistically Isolated	11,650	10.00
Not Linguistically Isolated	100,164	

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1990.  
Summary Tape File 3, p 5. (Department of  
Metropolitan and Information Resources,  
Metropolitan Washington Council of  
Governments).

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

Studying the portrayal of Latinos in the news media means that several different areas of social research must be drawn upon. This can provide a better understanding of minorities and their relation to society and the news media. This study will discuss research that provides a brief historical overview of the portrayal of minorities, in particular Latinos, in U.S. news media. In addition, the research examines work on Hispanics' usage of the news media in an attempt to explore the depth of Latino interest in the news media. The research into mass media coverage of African-Americans, American Indians, and women is intrinsically related to the portrayal of Latinos in the mass media because as minorities they have all struggled for civil rights and a place in American society.

#### **I. OVERALL SCOPE**

Throughout the years the dominant news media have been blamed for failing to cover minority issues adequately, and for failing to provide minorities their due share of news coverage (Park, 1922; LeRoy, 1973; Traves, 1985; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985; Wolseley,



1990). These studies claim that minorities such as Latinos, Asians, African-Americans, American Indians and women (who have been discriminated against on the basis of gender) have been victims of the mainstream news media's lack of knowledge, sensitivity, and understanding of their achievements, failures and needs.

Unsatisfied with the unbalanced and distorted manner in which the news media portray them, minorities tend to seek information in publications which are aimed solely at them (Lewels, 1980; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985). For instance, Murphy and Murphy (1981) explain that the explosive growth of the American-Indian press during the 1960s was due to the lack of coverage of American Indians in the dominant press, and to the fact that when the news media covered Indians the images projected were inaccurate and stereotyped.

Experienced researchers in the field of news media coverage of minorities, Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) argue that when the mainstream news media cover minorities, they tend to depict them as "problem people." That is, the media project an image of minorities as "people who either have problems or cause problems" (p. 139).

A recent study of the news media coverage of minorities, conducted by The Los Angeles Times, found

that despite the large increase in the minority population, the news media continue to portray minorities inaccurately. The Los Angeles Times researchers interviewed more than 175 reporters, editors and publishers from more than 30 newspapers nationwide over a period of six months. The results, which were published in a series of articles (December 11 to 15, 1990) found that the press continues to play a pivotal role in "perpetuating the ethnic stereotypes" and "fueling the prejudices and ethnic conflict that increasing polarize our increasingly multicultural society" (Shaw, Dec. 11, p. A30).

In their book Minorities and Media: Diversity and the End of Mass Communication, Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) contend that the news media go through five stages when covering minority issues. These stages are: (1) exclusionary stage, (2) threatening issues stage, (3) confrontation stage, (4) stereotypical selection stage, and (5) integrated coverage stage.

During the exclusionary stage, minorities are ignored by the news media because they are not considered to be important enough to receive news coverage. In the threatening issue stage, minorities are "perceived as a threat to the social order." This stage is followed by the news media exposing and covering the "threat" posed by the minority, such as

rioting, crime or drugs; this is the confrontation state. In their words:

The American news media generally approach confrontation coverage of minorities related issues from the perspective of 'us' versus them... news people think of minorities as outside the American system, the actions of minorities must be reported as adversarial because they are seen as threats to the social order (p. 137).

After the conflict has been exposed, the news media then proceed to restore the social order and make a transition into the post-conflict period. Thus, the stereotypical selection stage begins as the media aim at reducing "white apprehension of minorities while accommodating the ethnic presence in the community" (p. 138). This is accomplished by the use and reinforcement of stereotypes which are "items that conform to existing white attitudes towards minorities" (p. 138).

Therefore, during the stereotypical selective stage the media "reassure the majority audience that minorities 'are still in their place' and that is the reservation, the ghetto, or whatever, and those who escape their designated place are not a threat to the society because they manifest the same values and



ambitions of the majority" (p. 139). The final stage, that of integration, has yet to become reality in the U.S. news media. In this stage, the news media treat minorities or ethnic groups in the same manner that they treat other groups in society.

Following is a brief overview of academic research on the news media coverage of minorities.

## **II. DOMINANT NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF MINORITIES**

Several studies have found that the dominant media do not cover minorities or deviant groups in the same manner with which they cover non-minorities or non-deviant groups. Shoemaker (1985) for instance, in assessing news media portrayal of deviant groups, found that the overall impression of the deviant groups is unfavorable. She concluded that coverage tended "to emphasize and accentuate differences and ignore similarities" between deviant groups and the dominant culture (p. 82).

One of the most significant and well known studies of the English-language news media coverage of minorities has been The Kerner Report, which strongly condemned the news media for their coverage of the 1960s riots. After the 1960s civil disorder, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson created the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders to investigate



the reasons behind the violence that swept across several U.S. cities.

Among other things, the report by the National Advisory Commission, which became known as the Kerner Report (Otto Kerner, then governor of Illinois, headed the Commission) investigated the role of the news media in the riots. The Committee analyzed the news content of stories in 3,779 newspapers, and 955 network and local television stations, in 15 U.S. cities, during the period from three days before to three days after the disorder in each city. They concluded that the news media:

...did work to create incorrect and exaggerated impressions about the scope and intensity of the disorders... Some newspapers printed scare headlines unsupported by the mild stories that followed. All media reported rumors that had no basis in fact. Some newsmen staged riot events for the cameras... the press obtained factual information about the scale of the disorders -- property damage, personal injury, and deaths -- from local officials, who often were inexperienced in dealing with civil disorders... Reporters uncritically accepted, and editors uncritically published

the inflated figures, leaving an indelible impression of damage up to more than 10 times greater than actually occurred (p. 202).

The Commission also interviewed African-Americans in order to find out how they felt about the media coverage of the riots. The results showed that most African-Americans distrusted the media and were unsatisfied with the way the media covered the 1960s riots. The Commission concluded that the news media covered the event "from the standpoint of a white man's world" and that it failed to report the "ills of the ghetto, the burning sense of [black] grievance" (p. 203).

In a more recent study about the 1960s riots, Wolseley (1990) confirms the failure of the dominant press to cover African-Americans adequately. He wrote that "the white press and news services earned the suspicion of black citizens in the first half of this century because they could not be trusted to tell the truth about blacks" (p. 10).

On the other hand, however, Drummond (1991) maintains the opinion that the news media coverage of the 1960s civil disorder actually helped to publicize the civil rights movement, and "gave its leaders and its rank the file legitimacy within the black community as well as among whites" (p. 5).

According to an editorial published in the Columbia Journalism Review, "One Nation Still Divisible" (1980) the amount of African-American coverage in the mainstream press has noticeably decreased since the late 60s and 70s "when protest commanded frequent press attention" (p. 24). Thus, several studies seem to support Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) argument that the dominant news media only cover minorities when they are involved in some deviant situation such as crime or rioting.

Several recent studies have concluded that since the Kerner Report was published, the news media have been trying to improve their coverage of minorities. However, because the visible signs of the racial unrest of the 1960s seem to have dissipated with time, newspapers have retreated to some of their pre-Kerner report practices resulting in inadequate minority coverage.

"One Nation Still Divisible" (1980) maintains that while the press has indeed "instituted affirmative action" when covering minorities there is still a lot of tension and that African-Americans in particular do not trust the news media. Examples given by the editorial include black ministers in Detroit who called for a boycott of The Detroit News in April 1980. The ministers were protesting what they saw as



"inaccuracies" and "sensationalism" in a series of articles alleging irregular practices by some black judges and lawyers. And in Birmingham, Alabama, the local black lawyers association picketed The News and The Post-Herald for their coverage of two blacks nominated for federal judgeships charging that these black nominees had been treated much more harshly by the papers than had three white nominees. Other African-American organizations have registered similar protests against The Atlanta Constitution and the Memphis Commercial-Appeal.

The Miami Herald was criticized by the African-American community in Miami for its coverage of the 1980 Miami riots. The riots began after four white police officers were acquitted by an all-white jury. The officers had allegedly beaten to death Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance salesman ("One Nation Still Divisible" 1980).

Despite the criticisms and protests described above, the media seemingly continue to fail to properly cover minority issues. A recent example is provided by Drummond (1991) who claims that even recently, "the image of African-Americans as the main purveyors and consumers of drugs in America is a thread in the black-pathology storyline that the news media have forged and won't let go" (p. 9). He adds that in data produced by



the National Institution on Drug Abuse for the Department of Health and Human Services, it is reported that "blacks are no more likely than whites to have used any illicit drug in a lifetime" (p. 9).

In addition, Drummond emphasizes his point by providing data compiled by the Justice Department which reports that 59 percent of the nation's arrests for drug violations in 1988 were of whites, and only 39 percent were of African-Americans. Thus, Drummond holds that "by constantly portraying blacks as the main purveyors and users of drugs, television is providing a distorted picture" (p. 9).

Similarly, Shaw (1990) claims that minorities have suffered attacks from non-minority groups because of misinformation that the media have published about minorities. He argues, for instance, that no one would know from press coverage that most violent criminals, drug-users, prostitutes, drunks, illiterates, high school dropouts, juvenile delinquents, jobless and poor people in the United States "are neither black, nor Latino but white. Or that the vast majority of blacks and Latinos are none of the above" (Dec. 11, p A30).

In addition, Wolseley (1990) explains that the existence of a large African-American press is due to the fact that blacks feel they must turn to their own press in order to find out what has really happened

when there are events involving them. The same explanation holds for other minority presses.

Another group which has been discriminated against by the media is women. Davies et al (1987) say that the media not only do not cover women adequately or accurately but also perpetuate many myths about females. One of the examples they mention is the press coverage of older women:

The media's discrimination against older women seems to be successfully effected by ignoring them completely or when represented, devaluing them. It also creates and reinforces many wrongful assumptions about their interest and abilities (p. 29).

Likewise, Branett-Solomon (1991) found similar results when she conducted a content analysis of five leading newspapers in their 1964-72 coverage of Fannie Lou Hammer, one of the most influential and respected crusaders in the Civil Rights movement in the South. She reports that early coverage of Hammer "often mentioned physical attribute" (p. 519), and that newspapers published more event-oriented articles on Hammer (80.6 percent) than background-oriented articles (19.3 percent).

American Indians have also been the target of

media stereotypes. Murphy and Murphy (1981) say that distorted and stereotyped images of American Indians can be found in the dominant press coverage of the Ghost-Dance Indian movement in 1890-91, and the media coverage of the Wounded Knee confrontation. Coverage of both events misinterpreted Indian culture and caused distrust and resentment among the Native-American population towards the news media.

On the other hand, in defense of "insensitivity" rather than "invisibility," Alexander (1983) argues that it is better for a culture to be inaccurately portrayed than to not be portrayed at all. This argument is based on two assumptions. First, by not portraying minorities, the press is actually transmitting a message that as a culture or a group, minorities are of little value and consequence within the society in which they live. Second, if the media provide coverage of minorities, even when the image is stereotypical minorities can "scream out against the unreal, distorted portrayal" (p. 212). Thus, Alexander argues that the lack of minority coverage can be more harmful than no coverage at all.

However, because of the social implications of increased news media coverage of minorities, the press must be careful when portraying minorities, as misinformation can sometimes be more harmful than no



information at all. Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) argue that the news media have served to reinforce and perpetuate minority stereotypes; for example, by constantly portraying minorities "as violent people."

In fact, studies on the mainstream press coverage of minorities show that "negative, one-sided, or stereotyped media portrayals in news coverage does reinforce racist attitudes in those members of the audience who have such attitudes and channel mass actions against the group that is stereotypically portrayed" (Wilson & Gutierrez 1985, p. 43).

In another instance, Shaw (Dec 11, 1990) says that there is an increasing number of "attacks against" Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino and Vietnamese people. This could be "attributed to the press images of Asian-Americans as successful, wealthy, polite and passive people, which are synonymous for people who make good targets for a mugging" (p. A31).

Furthermore, contrary to what the press has reported, poverty rates among Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese families "are much higher than for whites," and because they generally are "perceived as being successful, they may be denied access to affirmative-action programs" (p. A31). An example, given by the Los Angeles Times study, are headlines taken from page one of The New York Times: "Japanese Portables Threaten



American Lead in Computers," and "Japanese expected to Take Over Another Major Hollywood Studio." This type of coverage, Shaw argues, can lead to hostility and aggressive behavior against Asian-Americans, causing incidents such as the shooting of five Asian children by a white man at a Stockton, California elementary school; a black boycott against Korean stores in Texas, and clashes between white and Vietnamese fishermen in California.

### **III. DOMINANT NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF LATINOS**

Studies concerning the news media coverage of Hispanics also show that Hispanics are dissatisfied with the press coverage of their community and that the dominant media do not provide enough coverage to Hispanic issues (Trayes, 1982; Korzeny, Griffis, Greenberg, Burgoon, & Burgoon, 1983).

In order to find out what Hispanic leaders thought of the mainstream news media coverage of the Latino population, Korzeny et al (1983) interviewed Hispanic community leaders and media personnel in eight cities in California, Arizona, and New Mexico. They concluded that Latino community leaders believed that "stereotypes... cause an overemphasis on negative news and an underemphasis on positive H-A [Hispanic-American] news" (p. 64-65). The excessive coverage of

crime would exemplify their point.

Furthermore, Hispanic community leaders in the three states were said to believe that the mainstream press not only "polarize" Hispanics and non-Hispanics, but also "polarize" Hispanics among themselves. An example they provide is the spotlighting of one gang group over another. Similar results were also found by Wilson and Gutierrez (1985).

Nicolini (1987) interviewed Puerto Ricans leaders about their perception of the mainstream press coverage of Hispanics. Like Mexican-American leaders, they expressed "great dissatisfaction" with the way the mainstream press covered the Latino population.

Historically, the Hispanic-American community began to express their dissatisfaction with the dominant news media in the late 1960s with the beginning of the Chicano Movement (Lewels, 1974; Garcia, & de la Garza, 1977; Sowell, 1981). The 1968 Chicano movement, which staged several strikes across the nation, began with a group of Mexican-Americans attempting to make society aware of the Hispanic population needs. The movement sought to bring social, economic, and political changes to the Hispanic community (Lewels, 1974; Garcia, & de la Garza, 1977; Sowell, 1981). Lewels (1974) explains that a member of the Chicano movement went as far as highjacking an

airplane with the purpose of gaining access to the nation's mass media.

On the other hand, it was also during the 1960s that media management began to notice "the advertising potential" of the Latino population (Emery & Emery, 1984). Thus, noticing the large size of the Hispanic population in the United States, advertisers began to invest in the Spanish-language media. With advertisers' investments and the possibility of a large audience, the Spanish-language media simply "burst" (Gutierrez & Schement, 1979; Astroff, 1988). In fact, Guernica and Kasperuk (1982) in assessing the Hispanic market in the United States reported that the United States is the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, with a Spanish-speaking population that is 40 percent larger than that of Venezuela and about 70 percent larger than that of Chile. Furthermore, Tack (1979) reports that the U.S. Spanish-language population is larger than the entire population of Canada or Argentina.

In comparing pre-twentieth century news media to today's media, Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) argue that immigrants arriving in the United States in the eighteenth century were greeted by a news media which "sought and built an audience based on common interests rather than differences" (p. 234). However, they claim



that today "the media, rather than trying to find commonalities among diverse groups in the mass audiences, look for differences and ways to capitalize on those differences through content and advertising" (p. 234).

Wilson and Gutierrez attribute this to two factors: first, the large increase in minority demographics and, second, a media that is segmented due to advertising. In their words, "Advertising agencies continue to favor media that deliver the specific audience segments they want to reach", and today the media "seek, find and reinforce the distinction between groups in the society... playing segments of the audience and reinforcing differences between the segments to enhance the delivery of the advertising message" (p. 228).

Thus, the news media, by being segmented and aimed solely at Hispanics, will serve Hispanic needs better. However, the "socialization function of the media in developing and transmitting the common culture of the society will be less important" (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985, p. 234).

Examples of successful Spanish-language media are Univision television, and Telemundo television, which are nationwide, El Nuevo Herald (published by the Miami Herald) and the various journals and magazines



nationwide. Hispanic magazines and journals climbed from 677 in 1970 to 1,536, in 1989 (Pomice & Moncreiff Arrarte, 1989). Furthermore, popular American shows which over the years have had top evening audiences such as the "Wheel of Fortune," are reported to be losing audiences to Spanish-language shows such as "El Sabado Gigante" (Giant Saturday) in cities like Miami and Los Angeles (Pomice & Moncreiff Arrarte, 1989).

Pomice and Moncreiff Arrarte (1989) reported that U.S. companies spend a fortune each year investing in ads for the Hispanic news media. In 1988 companies such as E & J Gallote and PepsiCo spent some \$550 million on Spanish-language advertising, double the total for 1983. Furthermore, advertising investments are expected to increase by 25 percent annually for the next few years, at a rate three times more than that for general market ad buys (Pomice & Moncreiff Arrarte).

On the other hand, some studies have reported that non-minority owned stations are luring bilingual, second-generation viewers away from Hispanic media (Pomice & Moncreiff Arrarte, 1989). A 1988 A.C. Nielsen study, for instance, found that 68 percent of Hispanics in Miami watch English-language shows, an increase of 5 percent over two years.

Astroff (1989) in assessing the content of ads in the Spanish-language media, argues that the "U.S. Latino population was transformed from an 'invisible market' into 'Spanish gold' through the redefinition, but not the elimination, of traditional stereotypes" (p. 155). For instance, the diversity of the Latino population is ignored, and very frequently advertising companies simply create ads which carry many of the stereotypes present in other media. However, the Spanish-language news media tend to do a fine job in reporting on events which are relevant to Latinos, they say. In other words, Hispanics find the news and information they need, and which they do not find in the English-language press, in the Spanish-language press.

A newspaper which has been successful in covering Hispanic issues is La Opinion (Diaz, 1984). As one of the oldest and largest Spanish-language newspapers in the United States, La Opinion was described in an article by Tom Diaz (1984), as "a daily newspaper of general interest and content, which covers local, national and international news, with emphasis on news of particular interest to the Spanish-speaking community" (p. 26).

In short, despite advertisements said to be "stereotypical" in the Spanish-language press, the

press seems to be publishing news stories which are relevant and of interest to the Latino population.

#### **IV. REASONS TO IMPROVE COVERAGE OF MINORITIES**

In his book, The Uses of the Media by the Chicano Movement, Lewels (1980) argues that the reason the English-language media provided little coverage of Hispanic issues until the 1960s was because they believed that Hispanics only listened to and read Spanish-language media. However, this was not the case. For instance, a study done in 1962 which surveyed a sample of 500 Mexican-American families in twelve of the largest geographical concentrations of Mexican-Americans found that 78 percent of the participants read English-language newspapers daily.

The news media habits of Hispanics are relevant to the dominant press for several reasons which are explained in a study done by the Task Force on Minorities in the Newspaper Business, Cornerstone for Growth: How Minorities are Vital to the Future of Newspapers (1988).

The report emphasizes that the minority audience is rising while the non-minority population is on the wane. For example, between 1961 to 1988, the proportion of non-minority adults reading a daily paper dropped from 79 percent to 60 percent. This was due to



the death rate of the older population which made up the most stable audience. At the same time, the non-minority part of the population has a lower birth rate which is causing that population to decrease.

Thus, Cornerstone for Growth: How Minorities are Vital to the Future of Newspapers (1988) reports that immigration is the "most probable source of future population growth" (p 9), first, because of immigration growth patterns and second because of the high birth rate which is prevalent among minorities. Therefore, they conclude that the minority population is younger than the non-minority population; the median age among Hispanics is 25.5 years, among blacks 27.5 years, and among Asians 28.4 years compared with the 33.2 year median age of the non-minority population. In addition, the minority population is growing five times faster than the rest of the population.

Cornerstone for Growth: How Minorities are Vital to the Future of Newspapers also points out that 1) the children of today's immigrants from Latin America and Asia will be the readers of tomorrow's newspapers; 2) minority newspaper readership can be expected to increase as their education and income level rise; 3) as the population ages, newspapers must attract younger readers. Older readers, often quite loyal to their newspapers, will gradually have to be replaced by new



generations of readers in the coming decade.

According to the report, managers of English-language newspapers believe that "pursuing the minority market is futile because minorities don't read newspapers" (p. 5). However, this is not correct. The following review of studies about Hispanic habits and access to mass media reveal that in fact Latinos do read the newspapers and watch the news.

#### **V. MASS MEDIA HABITS OF HISPANICS**

The cultural, economic, social, and educational diversities within the Latino population have led researchers to conclude that "empirical research" often has drawn "conflicting and confusing conclusions" about mass media usage, preferences, attitudes and habits among Hispanics (Burgoon, Burgoon, Greenberg, & Korzeny, 1983).

Ethnicity, though important, is not the only element affecting the way the Latino population uses the news media. Age, education, income level, and length of residency in the community do play a role in Latinos usage of the news media (Burgoon et al, 1983; Hsia, 1973). For instance, regardless of ethnicity, younger people tend to read less than older people; thus, given the high number of young people in the Hispanic subgroups, one would expect that Hispanics

read fewer newspapers than non-minorities.

In addition, the more educated a person is, and the higher the income that he or she has, the more likely it is that he or she will read the newspaper. Therefore, because Hispanics in general tend to be less educated and have lower incomes than the non-minority population, it is natural that there are fewer newspaper readers in the Latino population. Burgoon et al (1983) express their findings, which are similar to those found by other researchers (Batt & Urban; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985) by saying that "to focus exclusively on ethnicity or to assume it is the primary determinant of differences [habits of Hispanic usage of media] can be misleading" (p. 89).

Burgoon et al (1983) interviewed 1,703 people (765 whites and 820 Hispanics) in several Southwestern U.S. cities, about their news media usage, preferences, and habits. They found that whites are significantly more likely to read newspapers than Hispanics. However, they reported that Hispanics who read the newspapers on a given day spent as much time as whites reading the paper.

In addition, a study by Hsia (1973) in Texas, found "no ethnicity differences" among Chicanos, blacks, whites, and affluent whites on their news media habits. Pasqua (1975) reported that Chicano adults

spent an average of 20 minutes a day reading the newspaper and Marshall et al (1974) found that half of the Latino respondents in his survey read a newspaper daily. Similarly, Justin (1973) reported that 45 percent of whites and 38 percent of Chicanos read a paper every day.

The use of magazines by Hispanics tends to be lower than that of non-minorities (Hsia, 1973; Burgoon et al, 1983). But those who read magazines spent the same amount of time as whites do (Burgoon et al, 1983).

According to a literature review by Rosenthal (1978) several studies have shown that Hispanic viewing of television is similar to that of the general public. Hsia (1973) reports that 59 percent of his Latino respondents watched television from two to six hours a day. And a very large number of respondents found television to be the most important source of information.

In addition, Burgoon et al (1983) found that the percentage of Hispanics who watch the news daily does not differ from that of whites; neither does the number of minutes each group spends watching the news<sup>1</sup>.

In assessing the use of radio by Hispanics, Hsia (1973) found that radio was the second most relied-upon

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<sup>1</sup> However, they reported that ethnicity does make a difference in the amount of time spent with TV entertainment.



source of information for Hispanics (the first being television). Similarly, Korman and Valenzuela (1973) reported that, unlike non-minorities, Hispanics have a tendency to trust the broadcasting media more than the print media. Gutierrez and Schement (1979) in examining Spanish-language radio in the Southwest, found that Hispanics use radio more, particularly those who only speak Spanish.

According to Greenberg, Heeter, Graer, Doctor, Burgoon, Burgoon, and Korzeny (1983) very few differences exist between Hispanic-American access to mass media and that of the majority groups, particularly for broadcasting media.

Burgoon et al (1983) however found that only 50 percent of the Hispanics who read the newspapers daily subscribed to the paper, compared to 77 percent of whites who not only read the paper daily, but also subscribed to it. On the other hand, the number of TV sets and radios owned by Hispanics was close to that of the general public.

In a literature review about Hispanic usage of newspapers, Greenberg et al (1983) found that the Hispanic usage of English-language newspapers is lower than that for whites, with a subscription rate of about 50 percent. This is not surprising as non-minorities are more likely than Hispanics to identify with the



English-language press.

In assessing the functions that newspapers play in the life of Latinos in comparison to non-minorities, Burgoon et al (1983) reported that Hispanics ranked the functions in the following order: 1) provide immediate knowledge of major local news events, 2) give the day's headlines, 3) inform about the local community, 4) provide full details on major national and international news events, 6) provide immediate knowledge of national and international news events, 7) offers a wide variety of local news, 8) offers a wide variety of national and international news. The white respondents named the same eight functions as the most important, but the ranking order was different. Hispanics, unlike whites, give more priority to local than to national news stories.

Regarding television functions, six of the eight functions ranked in importance by Hispanics were also ranked by white respondents, but in a different order.

In terms of news preferences, Hispanics are interested in the same topics as are whites, excluding business coverage, editorials, and humorous stories. In addition, Latinos were reported to be most interested in news about social problems, and show little concern for government and political issues (Burgoon et al, 1983).

A similar study conducted by Batt and Urban (date unknown) as market research in several U.S cities with a large number of Hispanics found that there are few substantial differences between the news need of Hispanics and whites. The two groups rated the importance of national, international, and local news, as well as news about professional and amateur sports at the same level.

Hispanics' evaluation of newspapers is more positive than that of whites and they are more satisfied that the newspapers fulfill their needs than are whites (Burgoon et al, 1983). Nevertheless, Hispanics still find that the newspapers' managements have a lot to learn and to improve upon (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1988).

As the above scholars have shown, Hispanics do need and use the news media in similar manner as non-Latinos. The existing differences seem to be due to socio-economic factors rather to ethnicity per se.

## **VI. PROBLEMS IN NEWS MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS INFLUENCING COVERAGE OF MINORITIES**

As the above mentioned studies have found, the mainstream news media lack adequate understanding and sensitivity toward minority issues. The underlying causes of this lack of sensitivity may be linked to three factors. First, minorities are not part of the

mainstream news media (Cornerstone for Growth: How Minorities are Vital to the Growth of Newspapers, 1988). Second, journalism schools have failed to attract minority students, and to train non-minority students to cover minority issues (Escalante, 1990). Third, the news media tend to deliver messages which are framed in traditional, consensual and common ways of perceiving and understanding the world (McQuail, 1988).

Studies such as Shaw (1990) and Stein (1990) contend that the dominant news media have failed to reflect in their news room the diversity in the audience they serve. Shaw (1990) argues that while minorities make up nearly 25 percent of the total U.S. population, minority journalists account for only 7.86 percent of all newsroom professionals. In addition, 54 percent of the nation's daily newspapers do not have a single minority on their professional staff (Shaw, Dec. 13, 1990). In fact, a survey conducted by Weaver and Wilhoit (1986a) about the characteristics of U.S. journalists found that "'the typical' U.S. journalist is a white, protestant male" (p. 12).

A recent newspaper accused of having low minority representation in its news room is the Los Angeles Times. Even though minorities in Los Angeles are a majority -- one third are Latinos, 15 percent are



African-Americans, 10 percent are Asians, and whites are 41 percent -- "The Times is still an overwhelmingly white institution, especially at the upper levels" (Shaw, 1990, Dec. 14, p. A1).

Furthermore, many of the few minority journalists seem to want to get out of the journalism profession because of a lack of career advancement. A 1990 survey of Latino journalists in California, for instance, showed that nearly 60 percent of them plan to quit their jobs within 10 years because of the lack of advancement opportunities (Stein, 1990).

In addition, journalism schools throughout the United States have been accused of failing to recruit minorities and to train non-minorities to cover minority issues. Escalante (1990) says that journalism schools "have not recruited or trained enough minorities....," and journalism schools have failed to establish "effective programs to prepare reporters, regardless of ethnicity, to cover all segments of society" (p. 82).

The need to train non-minority journalists for covering minority issues is urgent, because journalists who are not well-educated about minorities and lack understanding and sensitivity to minority issues are said to have pre-conceived ideas about minorities, "and they show that in their work" (Escalante, p. 82.)



These pre-conceived ideas are embedded in the social structure of which the news media is part.

The news media operate within the ideological and normative cultural values held by society. Thus, when reporting on everyday affairs the news media tend to use cultural symbols to report in ways that the audience can understand (Carey, 1989; McQuail, 1987).

The process of communication does not occur within a vacuum. Acts of communication such as writing the news can be described as a process of culturally constructing narratives. Carey (1989) holds that, "If we are to engage in this activity -- writing essays, making a film, entertaining an audience, imparting information and advice -- we must discover models in our culture that tell us how this particular miracle is achieved" (p. 31). In other words, in order to communicate, human beings seek cultural symbols and values to express a message or write a narrative.

Therefore, journalists act as transmitters or reinforcers of culture. Journalists who have been raised and received their education while immersed in the dominant culture, may find it difficult to write a story beyond their own familiar point of view. Thus, it is very likely that elements of journalists' cultural legacy will shape their views of an event. Furthermore, Bird and Dardenne (1988) maintain that

"the journalist-storyteller is indeed using culturally embedded story values, taking them from the culture or re-presenting them to the culture" (p. 80).

Thus, it is assumed that the news media content not only reflects the values of the dominant culture, but that it also reinforces those values. Thereby, the news media help to maintain the status quo and refute the values, behavior and views of those who defy that status quo and the dominant culture.

McQuail (1988) refers to this mass media theory as the cultivation theory. According to him, the term was originated by Gerbener (1976) who first called the theory, "the cultivation of dominant image patterns" (p. 99).

Furthermore, Murdock (1973) attributes this theory to the fact that "the news media stories cannot be presented in a vacuum. The journalist must therefore, situate the event within a framework which is already familiar to the reader" (p. 164).

Although the journalistic profession requires that writers be objective, studies such as Hackett (1984), McQuail (1988), Shoemaker and Reese (1991) have shown that this is an impossible task. Journalists are just human beings; like everyone else they have been influenced by the culture in which they live and they will reflect their beliefs and values in what they

write. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) contend that "objectivity remains more a goal than a fully realized idea of the media..." (p. 132). Also, McQuail (1988) maintains that the concept of journalistic objectivity is "necessary to maintain credibility" (p. 130).

Thus, journalists can impose their culture on media output, not necessarily intentionally but because of the cultural traditions in which they have been brought up. Media output can reflect cultural values in the emphasis the media give to certain events and to issues surrounding those events; another example would be giving a certain group greater coverage than it is giving to another group.

### **Summary**

Overall, it seems clear that the English-language media has frequently failed to cover minorities appropriately. Serious criticism of the news media coverage of minorities began in the 1960s when the Kerner Report blamed the media for failing to portray the civil disturbances and the black community adequately. Other studies, such as Wilson and Gutierrez (1985), Wolsely (1990), Shaw (1990) have also revealed that, despite efforts, the media still do not do an adequate job in covering minorities.

This situation has led minorities such as African-



Americans and Hispanics to seek information in media published especially for them (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985; Wolseley, 1990; Diaz 1988).

The rapid growth of the Latino population has prompted advertisers to invest large sums of money in ads for Spanish-language media. In turn, with advertisement investment and a potential audience, the Spanish-language media have simply "exploded" in the last ten years (Pomice & Moncreiff Arrarte, 1989).

Unfortunately, this segmented media, while providing minorities with the information they need, have contributed to the gap between ethnic groups and the dominant culture (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985).

The dominant news media have argued that the reason they do not provide enough coverage of Hispanics is because Hispanics do not read the newspaper or watch the news in English. Several studies, however, have shown that Hispanics do read the newspapers (Burgoon et al, 1983; Justin, 1983).

The mainstream media should improve its coverage of Hispanic issues if only because Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the United States, possessing a growth rate that is much higher than that of the non-minority population. Furthermore, as the typical, white audiences disappear, newspapers will be losing readership. Therefore, they need to attract



audiences beyond the typical, middle-white class  
(Cornerstone for Growth: How minorities are Vital for  
the Growth of Newspapers, 1988).

In addition, the news media also have the problem of dealing with their own involvement with the dominant culture. Thus, several researchers in the field of communication have argued that the news media's failure in covering minorities is due to a lack of minority journalists. They have recommended that the news media improve its coverage of minorities by training non-minority journalists about minority issues, and by hiring more minority journalist and giving them positions beyond simple reporting (Shaw, 1990; Traves, 1983).

The next chapter describes the process used in selecting the media for this study, and the method applied. The three research questions addressed in the study are: 1) how much news coverage did the dominant news media provide Latinos in times of non-crisis versus crisis-times? 2) In comparison to the Spanish-language press, was the English-language press coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances more event-oriented, or more background-oriented? 3) What differences there were in the thematic frameworks used between the English- and Spanish-language presses?

## **Chapter III**

### **Research Method**

The last chapter reviewed previous studies on the portrayal of minorities in U.S. news media. Using that background, two research methods were used in this study: a brief content analysis and an in-depth qualitative content analysis.

#### **I. CONTENT ANALYSIS AS A METHOD**

Krippendorff (1980) holds that content analysis of communication text has been in use since the 1600s when religious groups were concerned about the dissemination of non-religious issues through newspapers. It has since spread through various sciences such as sociology and communications. The use of content analysis in newspaper text, in the United States, began around the late 1800s (Krippendorff, 1980).

In its early days, content analysis was mostly quantitative in nature, concentrating on numbers rather than meanings. Conventionally, it concentrated on "the frequency of appearance of different textual elements without an accompanying concern for the potential diversity of meanings carried in these elements" (Barkin & Gurevitch, 1991, p. 6). For instance, a quantitative content researcher would measure the

column inches that a newspaper devoted to a particular subject without considering its content, or measure the number of times a certain word appeared in the text without accounting for its particular application.

While quantitative content analysis is highly significant to communication research, social scientists seeking diversity of meaning in a text have advocated a more qualitative-oriented content approach. To be more specific, quantitative analysis may be limited in use when the study seeks to discover variety of meaning in a text.

As Krippendorff (1980) maintains, "Although quantification is important in many scientific endeavors, qualitative methods have proven successful particularly in extracting intelligence [meanings] from propaganda" (p.21).

In addition, Hackett (1984) contends that merely counting repeated components in a text does not reveal the "underlying coders which place the signifiers" (p. 242). In other words, quantitative content analysis tends only to record the speech or act, not the underlying meaning; qualitative content analysis meanwhile, is a search for meaning in a text. Furthermore, Lasswell et al (1965a) argue that objective observations can be misinterpreted in quantitative content analysis form.

Pauly (1990) holds that the importance of seeking the purport in a communication text lies in the fact that it is through communication that people come to understand and make sense of the world in which they live. He based his finding on three philosophical assumptions:

- 1) First, humans are creatures who symbolize. Like animals, humans communicate; unlike animals, humans also engage in endless talk about their talk. Culture -- the whole ensemble of meaning-making practices -- constitutes a second nature without which humans as a species could not survive.
- 2) Humans fabricate rather than discover reality. They use symbols to construct the worlds in which they live.
- 3) Symbolic acts are public and social, not merely private and individual. Only by and in communicating do groups recognize themselves as groups and enact distinctive styles of being in the world (p. 2).

Pauly concludes that mass communication is a portrayal of "symbolic action" by society. And, "the study of such symbolic practices constitutes the distinctive domain of qualitative research" (p. 2).



Because this research aimed at examining both the number and the type of articles published in the English- and Spanish-language presses during the Mount Pleasant disturbances, and at determining the diversity of frameworks used in the stories, both a quantitative and qualitative content analysis were used. Each of these research methods will be further explained later.

## II. SELECTING THE MEDIA AND THE SAMPLING PERIOD

The Washington Post and Washington Times were selected mainly because of their prominence. They are the most widely known English-language newspapers, and most of the English-language speaking newspaper readers in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area obtain news and information from those two newspapers.

The Spanish-language papers also were selected for similar reasons. At the time of the civil disturbances in Mount Pleasant, there were no daily Spanish-language newspapers published in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Among the four weekly Spanish-language newspapers only El Diario de la Nacion and El Tiempo Latino were located in Washington, D.C. both having the largest circulation of any Latino paper in the area (20,000 each).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Information obtained from a telephone interview by the Hispanic Link (May 20, 1991).

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When selecting the sampling period for this analysis, a few factors were taken into consideration. First, in order to contextualize the manner in which the English-language press had been covering the local Latino community prior to the Mount Pleasant disturbances, two weeks of coverage in 1991 (April 22 to May 5) were examined in the Washington Post and in the Washington Times. The intent was to determine whether the local Hispanic community was receiving any coverage in the local English-language press, and if so, what type of coverage.

Coverage prior to the riots was not examined in the Spanish-language newspapers because these papers were to be specifically published for and about the local Hispanic community. By reading the Spanish-language papers it can be easily noted that their coverage concentrated mainly on the local Latino community, even though they also provide some world news and some news about non-Hispanic issues.

The dates for the stories published during the disturbance week, were as follow: May 6 to May 12 in the Washington Post and May 6 to May 10 in the Washington Times. (At the time of the disturbances the Washington Times was not published on weekends.) El Diario de la Nacion May 8 issue corresponded to the week of the riots, as did El Tiempo Latino May 10

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issue.

The post-disturbances stories were published on May 13 to 19 in the Washington Post, and May 13 to 17 in the Washington Times. The corresponding issue in El Diario de la Nacion was published on May 15, and in El Tiempo Latino on May 22.

The basic units of analysis were the individual stories. The sample stories in the Washington Post and Washington Times were selected through a search in the Nexis computer data base. In selecting stories published during the two weeks prior to the disturbances, the data base search requested every article appearing after April 21 and before May 6, 1991, that contained any of the following words: Hispanic, Hispanics, Latino, Latina, Latinos, Latinas, Chicano, Chicana, Chicanos, Chicanas, Salvadoran, Salvadorans, immigrant, immigrants.

In selecting stories for the weeks during and after the riots, the Nexis computer search was conducted by requesting a list of all stories dated after May 5 and before May 20, 1991, having the above identified words plus: Mt or Mt. or Mount Pleasant.

At the time of this research the Spanish-language papers were not carried by the Nexis data base, thus the researcher sampled the articles by reading every story in the issues published in the selected period



for the study.

To eliminate stories irrelevant to the Mount Pleasant disturbances or to the local Hispanic community, all articles were reviewed. The articles selected for this study comprised only those whose primary focus were the Mount Pleasant disturbances or local Hispanics. Examples of articles that were discarded included stories published in the period of April 22 to May 5, 1991, about the United States free-trade agreement with Mexico, and stories about a Hispanic agent who was suing the Drug Enforcement Administration. In addition, stories about the news media coverage of the event, of which there were a few were not examined as they were judged not to be about the local Latino community, but about the local news coverage of the event.

### **III. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD**

A quantitative method was employed to provide a descriptive account of the total coverage each newspaper gave to the event. This method attempted to find the amount of coverage, and the types of news stories that were written in the selected periods in each respective newspaper. This quantitative research method was divided into two sections:



In the **first section** the number of articles in the respective weeks, concerning local Hispanics and the Mount Pleasant disturbances in each newspaper, were counted. Since the number of stories can be misleading as they can vary by length (a story may be one, two, three paragraphs, and so forth), the number of words in each story was counted. For the English-language press, the Nexis data based provided an approximation of the number of words for each story. The method used by Nexis applied an algorithm system which counted the number of characters in a story then divided it by 6, assuming that each word had 6 characters. It did not include commas, periods, headlines and captions. The words in the Spanish-language press were manually counted by averaging the number of words per square inch.

Because each newspaper had a different time frame for publication, (the Washington Post: daily; the Washington Times: business day only; and El Diario de la Nacion and El Tiempo Latino: weekly), it would be erroneous to compare the amount of coverage among the four newspapers. Thus, the total number of articles and the total number of words each individual newspaper had in a day were counted for the weeks during and after the disturbances. In this manner, the total number of articles and words were counted and compared

to the total number of articles and words concerning the disturbances for each paper in every issue. An important factor is that the Spanish-language papers were not only weekly, but much smaller than the English-language papers. Each issue of both Spanish-language papers averaged 11 pages measuring 12 inches wide and 22 inches long.

The **second section** attempted to find out how much coverage each newspaper gave to contextualization, that is, how much coverage was event-oriented versus background-oriented. This was accomplished by classifying the newspaper stories into six types: 1) Hard news stories, 2) Feature stories, 3) Editorials, 4) Columns, 5) background-oriented, and 6) Event-oriented. Following are definitions of each category.

**Hard news stories:** Concentrate on the what, when, where, who, and how. They simply describe the event rather than explain why the event occurred.

**Feature stories:** In addition to providing the what, when, where, and how, they elaborate on the background of the event. Feature stories are usually "softer" than hard news stories, they explain how people coped with an event, and often elaborate on details. These types of stories try to explain the reasons behind an event, while seeking to put the event in some kind of context.

**Editorials:** The importance of editorials lies in the fact that they are opinion makers, or at least they are intended to influence people's opinion. Their ultimate goal is to convince. By providing opinions about an event, editorials aim to persuade an audience to agree with their message. Thus, it is vital to look at how often the newspapers attempted to convey opinion about the Mount Pleasant disturbances and Hispanics.

**Columns:** Are closely related to editorials, the major difference being that the column carries the by-line of the writer. It is the writer's name and style that attracts readers. Columnists usually have loyal readers who look forward to reading what he or she has to say about an event.

The categories for background-oriented and event-oriented were added to the research process because several of the stories, particularly in the Washington Post and in the Washington Times did not adhere to hard-news or feature designations. Thus, a story was considered **background-oriented** when most of the content concentrated on explanations of the event rather than on the description of the event. In contrast, a story was counted as **event-oriented** when it offered mostly descriptions, rather than explanations. Although there was a fine line between event-oriented and hard-news stories, the event-oriented stories had more than just



a description of facts; they also offered some brief analysis of the event.

By counting the number of times individual newspapers used each of these four types of narratives, the research attempted to determine which of the four newspapers tried to contextualize the event more -- by providing more feature and background-oriented stories -- and to form opinions by providing more editorials and columns.

The purpose of counting the number and length of articles was to find out how much coverage each newspaper gave to the Mount Pleasant disturbances and when it did so. Several studies, (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985; Wolseley, 1990; and Shaw, 1991) have indicated that when the dominant news media show interest in minorities they are often shown in an unfavorable light, with emphasis placed on crisis, strikes and riots. Thus, the importance of examining how much minority coverage the English-language press provided in the weeks prior to, during and after the disturbances.

In addition, these studies also claim that, when covering minorities, the dominant news media tend to concentrate on the form rather than on the substance. That is, the news media are much more likely to emphasize an event per se, rather than explain why the



event took place. The purpose of examining the types of news articles published in the English-language press in comparison to those in the Spanish-language press is to provide further depth to this theory.

#### **IV. QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

The method used for this qualitative content research was a thematic analysis. The goal was to measure the diversity of framework structures in news stories, and whether the frameworks used manifested the values of the Spanish-speaking community or that of the English-speaking society. In this case, it is assumed that the English-language press and the Spanish-language press gave different meaning to the event; they defined and shaped the disturbances in Mount Pleasant from a culturally different point of view.

A thematic content analysis was chosen because it enables the researcher to study various aspects of society and media. Researchers can delineate the characteristics of a particular culture by investigating the content of its mass media. "The purpose of cultural indicator analysis is often to test propositions about effects from media on society over time, but it is also a method for the study of social change in its own right and for the comparison of different national societies and cultures" (McQuail,

1988, p. 178).

Studies on the international flow of news (Hachten, 1981 & Peterson, 1979) for instance, have found that reporters in different countries "localize" the account of events to better suit their audiences. That is, cultural values, customs, and habits influence the selection of what will "make the news," and influence the framework -- the forms, images and manner in which an event will be portrayed.

In addition, by searching for reflection of culture in the content of the news media, content analysis can be used to assess the performance of the media. For instance, few stories are written about Latinos in the mainstream news media, although Latinos are a significant segment of society. They only receive a significant amount of coverage when they stage riots such as the Mount Pleasant disturbances. Cohen (1972) contends that deviant groups (those who do not behave according to society's expected manner) tend to receive unfavorable news media portrayals based on their perceived level of deviance. This study for instance, examines how a socially deviant group, (Hispanics) was portrayed in the dominant press in comparison with its own press.

Thus, Janis (1965) classifies thematic content analysis as "assertation analysis." By this he refers

to analysis of a particular way in which a theme is alluded to in the text, such as, Hispanics as perpetrators.

A more detailed definition is offered by Barkin and Gurevitch (1991, p. 6), who defined thematic content analysis of media text as "specifically concerned with narrative patterns, the broad outlines that establish a context for determining the significance of the elements [within the text]."

In other words, the text of media reports contain themes that exist within certain frameworks. These frameworks supposedly represent the way in which the journalist or society perceives the event. The themes can be identified and decoded through close examination of the text. The decoding process then helps to explain the type of framework the media used while reporting the event.

Thematic content analysis has been successfully used by Dalhgren and Chakrapani (1982), who identified themes in their analysis of news regarding developing countries on Western television.

In their examination of television news stories, they identified three major themes: violence, flawed development, and primitivism. Each of these themes had a number of sub-motifs, and each main theme had bipolar opposites. The reason for bipolarities was

based on the fact that they would "capture some specific touchstones within the Western culture's perception of itself and its relation to the Third-World" (p. 48). They also counted how often these themes appeared in each story and provided examples.

Similar to Dalhgren and Chakrapani's study, this thesis sought to find the various frameworks used by the dominant press in comparison to the frameworks used by the Latino press when covering the Mount Pleasant disturbances. The following chapter will report the findings of this news media content analysis.



## Chapter IV

### Findings

Using the methods described in the previous chapter, the stories were counted and tabulated. In addition the content of all stories was examined and a list of their themes was compiled. The number of appearance of themes were input in SPSS in order to obtain numerical information about the stories. The results are discussed in this chapter which is divided into four sections: overall findings, the two weeks before the disturbances, the week of the disturbances, and the week after the disturbances.

#### I. OVERALL FINDINGS

A total of 141 newspaper articles, containing 102,619 words, from the period of April 22 to May 17, were selected from the Washington Post, Washington Times, El Diario de la Nacion, and Tiempo Latino (see Table 5). During the week of the Mount Pleasant disturbances, both English-language newspapers drastically increased the amount of coverage about Latino-related issues in the community. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the amount of coverage in both newspapers reached its highest level on May 7 and 8, the period when the disturbance reached its peak. The

coverage rapidly decreased during the week after the disturbances. During this second week, the highest level of coverage in the Post occurred on May 16 accounting for approximately 2.04 percent of the total news coverage. On all other days, the coverage went no higher than 0.8 percent, except on May 19 when the Post published a survey which explored how Mount Pleasant area residents felt about the event. Other than on May 13, the daily coverage in the Times, did not exceed over 1.78 percent.

As Table 6 reveals, from May 6 to 12 the Washington Post published 43 stories about the disturbances out of a total of 1,102 stories, representing 4 percent of the total news coverage published in the Post for that week. In contrast, during the post-disturbances week, the Post published 11 out of 1,126 stories about the Mount Pleasant disturbances. Thus, the Mount Pleasant coverage represented 1.3 percent of the total news articles published in the Post during May 13 to 19.

The Washington Times in the period of May 6 to 11, published 34 stories about the Mount Pleasant disturbances, out of a total of 791 stories overall. This represents about 7.25 percent of the total news coverage published in the Times for that week. In contrast, during the post-disturbances week, the Times

published 13 stories relating to the Mount Pleasant disturbances out of 808. This means that 1.95 percent of the Washington Times total news stories were related to the local Latino community.

In contrast, El Diario de la Nacion during the week of the Mount Pleasant disturbances, published 10 out of 33 stories that directly related to the disturbances. This represents 28.92 percent of total news coverage in this issue. On the other hand, during the post-disturbances week, El Diario published three stories out of 30 about the disturbances. This means that 10.20 percent of the total news coverage was dedicated to the Mount Pleasant disturbances.

El Tiempo Latino, for the week when the disturbances occurred, published 10 out of 36 stories that related to the Mount Pleasant disturbances. This represents a 24.08 percent of the total news coverage in this issue. In addition, during the post-disturbances week, El Tiempo published 7 stories out of 41 relating to the Mount Pleasant disturbances. This represents 22.54 percent of the total coverage in this issue.

In summary, these results confirmed what previous studies have found concerning the mainstream media coverage of minorities. In times of social disturbances, the English-language media provide an



increased amount of coverage to minorities. Once the event loses its intensity the coverage of minorities drastically decreases. Surprising, El Diario also decreased its coverage in a drastic manner.

#### THEMES FOUND

As explained in the methodology chapter, a thematic content analysis was conducted in order to find out the various frameworks used by the media when covering the Mount Pleasant disturbances. This research usage of thematic content analysis follows the model used by Barkin and Gurevitch (1991) when examining television news coverage of unemployment. Their study focused on the explicit explanations of unemployment and the thematic structures of television news stories. Thus, by using Barkin and Gurevitch's model in order to identify the possible themes presented in the presses while covering the Mount Pleasant disturbances, every news article that mentioned the civil disturbances in Mount Pleasant, or local Latinos, during a period of four weeks was carefully examined.

This examination identified twenty separate themes. Many of the stories had no more than one theme, and many of the themes were diametrically opposite from one another. The twenty themes, with



examples given for each theme, are described in the following brief statements.

#### **01. HISPANICS AS VICTIMS**

Hispanics are victims of a social system that does not understand their unique problems, habits and customs. The social system does not easily tolerate a non-English speaking community; the society's accepted notion being that English should be the one and only language for all members of society. As a result, Hispanics are considered outsiders and are ostracized by the society in which they live.

A typical example of this theme was found in El Tiempo Latino, May 10, page 4, in a story titled, We need a leader in the Latino community:

The violent disturbances of the past few days, which have caused personal injuries, arrests and damage to both private business and public institutions are not without explanations. The Hispanic community understands this. Hispanics live each day in a hostile world, suffering discrimination while trying to overcome both economic difficulties and misunderstanding.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This paragraph was translated from Spanish.

## 02. HISPANICS AS PERPETRATORS

Hispanics are seen as people whose actions are dominated by passion rather than by reason. Therefore, small problems (which others would resolve with calm and self-restraint) induce Hispanics to lose their temper and act with impetuosity, even to the point of rioting. This type of behavior not only disturbs the peace but also causes enormous financial loss to the established community.

A quote which neatly summarizes this theme comes from the Washington Times, May 6, page A1, in a story titled, Shooting by police ignites violence in Mt. Pleasant:

Members of the crowd were throwing bottles and bricks, breaking out car windows, and setting fire in the area around 17th and Lamont streets NW, where the shooting took place. Several were arrested. The largely Hispanic crowd chanted, "Justicia," or justice, as the protest grew.

## 03. HETEROGENEITY AMONG RIOTERS

Hispanics were not the only ethnic group to participate in the riots. Many of the rioters were African-Americans, Asians and whites.

Samples of this theme were found in several stories. A story in the Washington Times, May 6, page

A1, titled, Rioters Rampage Again in NW, contained the following paragraph:

Hundreds of people, including non-Hispanic whites and blacks, demanded justice in the Sunday night shooting of Daniel Enrique Gomez, 30.

Also, an article in El Tiempo Latino, May 10, page 12, titled, When the Latino neighborhood became a war zone, had the following quote:

Gangs of young men, both Hispanic and African-Americans, participated [engaged] in the looting.<sup>4</sup>

#### **04. ACCULTURATION FAILURE**

The problems that afflict the Hispanic community are due to their lack of knowledge and understanding of the English language, the American culture, the political and economic systems of the United States, and the laws under which Americans live. Instead of trying to adapt to the system and mingle with locals, Latinos tend to congregate in Hispanic enclaves, and continue to conduct their lives according to their native traditions and customs.

An article in the Washington Post discussing the foundations of the local Latino community, published on

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<sup>4</sup> This paragraph was translated from Spanish.

May 11, page A21, titled, Mount Pleasant, had this paragraph:

Communities were formed, re-creating the social culture from which they had emerged. Silently a thriving subculture was born, with independent system and networks, obviating the necessity to learn English, which most found not only erroneous but also dispensable. Assimilation, traditionally a goal of new immigrants, is not embraced by this population. Habits and customs acquired in the place of origin remain fixed, with little adaption to the new environment.

#### **05. ACCULTURATION SUCCESS**

Hispanics who have succeeded and are doing well are those who have integrated themselves into the American society, learned English, and associated with locals. They have tried to achieve the American dream and have succeeded.

A story in the Washington Times, May 8, page B2, titled, Fear gone but life still tests Hispanics, details in-depth information about the life of a Latin-American woman who had immigrated to the United States 13 years ago and since then, had struggled to assimilate into the American community:



"When I came here, I was scared. Now, I'm feeling like I'm one of the people doing [constructive] things here..." Her American struggle has given her confidence, she said. She knows her worth on the job market, but also knows where to find public assistance in times of need. She also knows English, and her children know it even better....Richard, confident and well-spoken has his eyes on the future. So does her second son, 10-year old Christopher. "That one says he's going to be a lawyer," she said.

#### **06. WILLINGNESS BUT INABILITY TO INTEGRATE**

Hispanics would like to learn, to adopt the American culture, and to integrate themselves into their new home country. Yet society does not facilitate this process; on the contrary, it makes it difficult by not providing the proper guidance and training, and in many instances, by treating Hispanics as outsiders.

A paragraph illustrating this category was published in El Tiempo Latino, May 10, page 4, titled, Violence and democracy in the District of Columbia:

What also separates democracies from other societies is the principle that minorities

will be protected -- in the words of James Madison, "against a self interested and overbearing majority." Like those who came fleeing religious persecution.. and like those who more recently came from Cuba and Vietnam, this last wave of Central American refugees is also here in quest of the "American dream." In the District of Columbia in 1991, they constitute a minority which the system has failed to protect.<sup>5</sup>

#### 07. POLICE AS PERPETRATORS

The police force verbally and physically abuses Hispanics whenever it has an opportunity to do so, and without any legitimate reason. It intentionally discriminates against the Hispanic community.

A story in El Tiempo Latino exploring the dimensions of alleged police mistreatment of Hispanics, published on May 17, page 4, titled, Catholic Center denounces police brutality, had this statement:

The Catholic Center has been witness to the consequences of the aggressions suffered by area Latinos... Some of the victims, with serious injuries, have required hospitalization. The nun explained: "On one occasion a person came to us to beg for medical assistance and

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<sup>5</sup> This article was published in English and in Spanish.

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information after having been beaten to unconsciousness by a police officer during a confrontation over a traffic-related incident.<sup>6</sup>

#### **08. POLICE AS VICTIMS**

The police force is treated as a scapegoat and target of violence by Latinos who are frustrated with the system.

A story in the Washington Times May 7, page A1, titled, Hispanic infusion outpaces services, had this quote which summed up the general tone of the story:

"What happened was not the people against the police," Beatriz Otero, a community leader, said yesterday. "It's the community saying, 'We're here.'"

#### **09. SUCCUMBING TO COMMUNITY'S DEMAND**

The financially secure, affluent, non-Hispanic residents of the community pressure the police to force Hispanics into leaving the streets; to ensure that the streets are not being used as a place to socialize. Thus, by attending to the non-Hispanic residents' request, the police, who lack the ability to speak Spanish and any understanding of the Hispanic culture, misconstrue motives and ultimately fail to build a good

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<sup>6</sup> This paragraph was translated from Spanish.

rapport with the Latino community.

An example of this theme was published in the Washington Post, May 9, page C1, titled, Mount Pleasant: a melting pot:

Homeowners, who include lawyers, college professors, architects and other professionals, repeatedly complained in interviews that District police have not done enough to enforce laws. They cited in particular the concerns about public drinking, litter and petty vandalism in the neighborhood's business strip.

#### **10. ATTENDING TO THE MAYOR'S DEMANDS**

A police force which must follow orders from higher authorities, such as the mayor even if the police feel the order may not be the proper one.

An illustration of this category was found in the Washington Post, May 8, page A1, titled, Dixon moved cautiously:

The policy [curfew alone] left her [Dixon] open to criticism. Gary Hankins, chairman.... echoed a complaint of many rank-and-file officers, neighbors and merchants. "I hesitate to criticize," he said, "but officers on detail didn't like the idea that they had to retreat and



watch cars burn, and buildings be looted... But absent the curfew, there wasn't much else they could do."

#### **11. A FAILING DEMOCRACY**

Despite their large share of the population, Hispanics have no political representation in the local community. This lack of political power hampers Hispanics from growing and from assimilating into the local community. This is not what the Founding Fathers envisioned the American society to be.

A sample of this theme was found in El Diario de La Nacion, in an article titled, We all need a Latino leadership, May 8, page 6:

The recent outbreaks of violence which began in Mount Pleasant have underscored the lack of an effective leadership representing the Hispanic community. The fact that the community has clearly demonstrated its frustration and that until now there has been no leadership able to understand its concerns and present its demands before the corresponding authorities is deplorable. Within the Hispanic community there is a marked absence of leadership able to communicate with those persons who demand

justice on neighborhood streets.<sup>7</sup>

## 12. RESPONSIBILITY OF CITIZENSHIP

In order to have any political representation you must first "pay your dues" in "the system," you will have to work for it. Nothing will be handed to you; any profit comes only after some investment.

A typical example of this theme was found in an editorial titled, No wet nurse for rioting punks, published in the Washington Times, May 8, page A4:

The loafers and scoundrels in the Spanish-speaking community, who despoil by day and occasionally riot by night, should be told that something is required of them too: you came here seeking a better life, and welcome, but America owes you nothing as it owes us nothing, and as immigrants you are expected to give something back because you, like us, owe America everything. This means first of all learn our language... You won't get a decent job until you do these things, and after coming all this way you deserve something better than to be busboys all your lives.

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<sup>7</sup> This paragraph was translated from Spanish.

### **13. AN INEXPERIENCED AND SYMPATHETIC MAYOR**

The mayor's inexperience in governing and in handling the riots was shown by the slow and cautious way she handled the crisis. She should have put an end to the disturbances sooner and should have been tougher with the people who were breaking the law and causing chaos in the city.

This theme was well summarized in an editorial in the Washington Times, May 8, titled, No wet nurse for rioting punks:

Ever the compassionate liberal, Mrs. Dixon forgot that she was elected mayor, not psychiatric wet nurse. She pledged more Spanish-speaking cops, better housing, more job opportunities and harder work to redress the "legitimate grievances" of the vandals who were at the moment trashing her city.

### **14. AN INEXPERIENCED AND UNSYMPATHETIC MAYOR**

The mayor failed to handle the crisis appropriately because she lacked knowledge, understanding, and sympathy toward the Hispanic community's needs and problems. She had been imprudent by neglecting the large Latino community living in the city she governs. She demonstrated this by having ineffective policies concerning the Hispanic community.

A quote from El Diario de la Nacion, May 8, page 2, titled An overview of the violence, described this theme well:

Sharon Pratt Dixon, stating that she has had a "very tight agenda..." in a press conference from her office, without recognizing the guilt of her subordinates, who in this case were the members of the Metropolitan police department, said that it was necessary to return the city to a state of law and order from which it had been interrupted "by a handful of vandals" that are intimidating the members of the neighborhood.<sup>8</sup>

#### **15. A RECESSIONARY TREND**

The economy is in a recession and the government has no control over it. As a result, there is nothing the government can do to provide financial aid for the improvement of the Hispanic community.

This theme was summarized in the two following paragraphs. The Washington Post, May 12, page A1, titled, The painful lesson of Mount Pleasant, quoted the mayor saying:

"I don't think I fully appreciated the depth of their frustrations, of not being part of the

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<sup>8</sup> This paragraph was translated from Spanish.



mainstream... and in those financially difficult times, that means you have to make an effort to find alternate methods to stay connected to that community."

A quote by Washington, D.C., council chairman John Wilson in the Washington Times, May 7, titled, A cautious Dixon responds to crisis, had the following:

"Everybody wants more money, but there isn't any," Mr. Wilson said. "I'm aware of the depth of anger of low-income people in this entire city. I don't think we have the money to give the services that are needed."

#### **16. HISPANIC VERSUS BLACKS**

One of the reasons for the frustration among Hispanics, which led to the riots, is the racial conflict between them and Blacks who are competing for the same government services and are in conflict with each other.

A quote illustrating this category appeared in the Washington Times, May 7, page B3 titled, Hispanic groups split on riots' implications:

"People are not calling it what it was -- it was a race riot," Mr. Yzaguirrez said of the Mount Pleasant rioting... "Blacks are way overrepresented in local politics.. There's

a lot of resentment in the community."

Also an article covering a meeting between Jesse Jackson and local Hispanic leaders, in El Diario de la Nacion, May 8, page A1, titled, A Wave of Violence, had this paragraph:

The Reverend Jesse Jackson... insisted on the necessity of overcoming the hostilities between Latinos and African-Americans, and of working peacefully to improve conditions in the city.<sup>9</sup>

#### **17. HISPANICS AND BLACKS UNITED**

Hispanics and Blacks have an alliance. They are working together against the "system" which discriminates against them and hampers them from attaining power and wealth, and from social integration.

A paragraph summarizing this theme came from an article titled, After the violence, young voices united, published in the Washington Post, May 16, page J5:

In the aftermath of the violence that erupted in Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan last week, a group of 25 students from two D.C. neighborhoods have launched a youth task force to call attention

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<sup>9</sup> This paragraph was translated from Spanish.

to the very real concerns of young blacks and Hispanics, which they say have been shoved aside by the city for years.

#### **18. THINGS WILL GET BETTER**

Other ethnic groups, such as African-Americans, have gone through this type of problem before, and eventually they succeeded in gaining their place in society. Therefore, Latinos eventually will succeed and play a greater role in the community.

This theme appeared in an article in the Washington Post, May 12, page C1, titled, Black power's dilemma:

In just 20 years, blacks, long the disadvantaged minority fighting for social and political rights have become the people in power coping with the anger of a different minority.

#### **19. THINGS WILL STAY THE SAME**

Other ethnic groups have encountered similar problems before, and despite all their efforts and struggles they still face social discrimination and misrepresentation as well as a lack of understanding on the part of the ruling groups of society.

A paragraph that representing this theme was found in an article in the Washington Times, May 8, page B4.

The article compared recent race riots in Miami to the Mount Pleasant disturbances:

In 1990 the acquittal of four white police officers on charges of beating to death a black insurance salesman touched off an immense weeklong race riot that killed 18 persons in the predominantly black Liberty City area.

## **20. OTHER**

Two articles in the Washington Times carried two themes which did not appear anywhere else. One story explored the opportunities that Washington, D.C. offered to foreigners, particularly to undocumented residents who were eligible to use any city services without being questioned about their immigration status. The other story's theme concerned the conciliatory relationship between Latinos and the police in one afternoon in Mount Pleasant, after the riots had occurred.

El Tiempo Latino had the highest number of themes which were absent from other newspapers. One article's primary theme compared the type of services the governments of suburban Virginia and Maryland provided to Latinos in relation to the services provided by the District's government. Another story claimed that the Mount Pleasant riots opened the channels of



communication between the Latino community and the local government. A story explored the effect of the Mount Pleasant disturbances on the Latino business community.

Two coders reviewed the articles and recorded the primary and secondary themes in each story. One of the coders was a journalism graduate student, and the other a young professional. The reliability of the coder's judgement was assessed according to the coders' agreement on a theme. After discussion of definitions of themes, fifteen stories, randomly selected, were ciphered by the coders. The coding sheets then were compared and the results showed that the coders agreed approximately 98 percent of the time.

As expected, the themes and their frequencies varied among the four newspapers, even more so between the English- and Spanish-language papers. Following is a description of the themes by week in the English- and Spanish-language presses.

## **II. WEEKS BEFORE THE DISTURBANCES**

As explained in chapter 3, the news coverage concerning Latinos was assessed in the Washington Post and Washington Times, two weeks prior to the disturbances. The goal was to find out if Hispanics were receiving coverage in any of the newspapers, and

if so what type of coverage.

The findings during the two weeks prior to the disturbances reveal that the number of stories was scarce, even though both the Post and the Times were publishing at least one story a week about the local Latino community. In the week of April 22 to April 28, the Post published two hard news stories and two feature stories (see Table 7). One of the hard news stories was about a crime committed by a Latino man, and the other was about a Hispanic woman resigning from a local government job. Both feature articles concerned successful Hispanic businesses and families in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

As Table 8 indicates, the primary themes in these stories were Hispanics as perpetrators and acculturation success, which scored 25 and 75 percent respectively. Only two of the stories had secondary themes; the themes were acculturation failure and a failing democracy.

The week prior to the riots, April 29 to May 5, the Washington Post had two hard news stories. One of the stories concerned safety for Latino workers in the construction field, and the second story examined the Hispanic community's attempts to elect a Latino person to one of the local school boards (see Table 9).

As presented in Table 8, one of the stories' primary themes was Hispanics as victims, and the other story's primary theme was a failing democracy. Both stories also had secondary themes which were acculturation success and willingness but inability to integrate.

The Washington Times, during the week of April 22 to April 26, published two hard news stories. Like the Post, one of the stories concerned a crime committed by a Hispanic man and the other story concerned a Hispanic woman resigning from a local government job (see Table 10). Those stories had only primary themes, Hispanics as perpetrators and acculturation success. Both themes in the Washington Times scored an equal 50 percent each.

As shown in Table 10, during the week of April 29 to May 3, the Washington Times again published two news articles relating to the local Hispanic community. Like the Post, one of the stories was about safety for Latinos in the construction workplace, and the other story concerned the murder of a Latin-American woman. Hispanics as victims was the only primary theme in these articles, and only one story had a secondary theme, acculturation failure.



## **Summary**

From the data collected, both the Washington Post and the Washington Times were providing coverage about the local Latino community prior to the disturbances in Mount Pleasant. Even though the number of articles was small, the Post had an average of approximately 3.5 stories with 2,304 words per week, and the Times had an average of about 2.3 stories with 801 words per week. The Post had a larger variety of themes than the Times. None of the newspapers indicated in their coverage whether there was a possibility for a riot within the Hispanic community; however, the Washington Post did carry the theme of a failing democracy not only as secondary but also as primary. This may indicate that the paper was aware of the marginal political power Latinos had in the community.

## **III. WEEK OF THE DISTURBANCES**

As the methodology chapter explains, the news articles were classified into hard news, features, event- and background-oriented, columns and editorials. This method was used in order to find out how much of the coverage was aimed at providing background information versus event information, and how many opinion articles were written.



The results show that during the week when the event occurred the English-language press acted as it was predicted: they concentrated on the event rather than in explaining the underlying causes for the disturbances. For this period, the Washington Post published eight hard news stories which carried 13.13 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage for that week, and one feature story having 2.46 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage (see Table 11). Event-oriented stories surpassed background-oriented in the number of stories and percentage of coverage. Event-oriented coverage accounted for about 41.09 percent of the total coverage compared to 27.08 percent dedicated to background-oriented coverage.

In addition, the Washington Post published more opinion columns than any other newspaper. For this week, this paper devoted three editorials and seven columns to the disturbances. Although these narratives were few in numbers, columns accounted for 12.70 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage, and editorials 3.87 percent.

The Washington Times for this week published four hard news stories representing 9.31 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage, and one feature story accounting for 2.38 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage (see Table 12). Six stories representing

48.58 percent of the total coverage were event-oriented, while only seven articles representing 18.90 percent of the total coverage were background-oriented.

In terms of opinion narratives, the Washington Times devoted four columns to the issue which took 11.80 percent of the total coverage, and three editorials which accounted for 9.03 percent of the total words dedicated to the Mount Pleasant disturbances.

The Spanish-language press concentrated slightly more on the background than on the foreground for the stories during the period in which the Mount Pleasant disturbances occurred. As shown in Table 13, El Diario de la Nacion published one hard news story containing 2.53 percent of the total words about the Mount Pleasant disturbances, and it did not have any feature stories. There was one event-oriented story and three background-oriented stories accounting for 18.91 percent and 22.68 percent of the total amount of coverage about Mount Pleasant respectively.

Like the Post, El Diario published several columns: there were three columns accounting for 44.19 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage. El Diario published two editorials having 11.69 percent of the total words relating to Mount Pleasant.

The number and types of stories in El Tiempo Latino

differ greatly from those in the other three newspapers. It published two hard news stories accounting for 28.34 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage, and it did not publish any feature stories (see Table 14). There were two event-oriented stories carrying 13.23 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage. On the other hand, it had four background-oriented stories representing 41.59 percent of the total words. Unlike the other newspapers, El Tiempo had no columns, but did have two editorials accounting for 16.84 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage.

In summary, the Spanish-language press seems to have provided more background information than the English-language press. It appears that there was not much of a difference in the number and type of stories between the SLP (Spanish-language press) and the ELP (English-language press). The most notable difference was that the SLP concentrated more coverage on background-oriented stories and opinion stories.

Following are the results of the thematic content analysis of the stories examined. The themes were counted as primary and secondary and compared in both presses.



## **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY THEMES IN THE SPANISH- AND ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESSES**

### **Hispanics as Victims and Hispanics as Perpetrators**

Results on Tables 15 and 16 indicate that this dichotomy captured the largest percentage of the themes in both the English- and Spanish-language presses. As expected, the presses perceived the role of Latinos from different perspectives. As a primary focus, the ELP portrayed Hispanics as perpetrators 25.6 percent of the time compared to 10 percent in the SLP. Furthermore, while as a secondary theme this category did not appear in the SLP, it accounted for 7.7 percent of the total secondary themes in the ELP.

In contrast, 30 percent of the primary and 15 percent of the secondary themes in the SLP concerned Hispanics as victims. This category accounted for a mere 9 percent and 3.8 percent of the total primary and secondary themes, respectively, in the ELP.

### **Heterogeneity Among Rioters**

The SLP emphasized the ethnic diversity among the Mount Pleasant riot participants slightly more than the ELP. As a primary and secondary theme in the SLP, this category accounted for 10 percent and 3.8 percent respectively. As a primary theme in the ELP, this category received 3.8 percent, and as a secondary theme



5 percent.

### **Hispanics and Blacks United and Hispanics versus Blacks**

The SLP perceived the conflict between Latinos and Blacks to be a strong element in the Mount Pleasant disturbances. Appearing only as a primary theme, the theme of Hispanics versus Blacks accounted for 5 percent of the total primary themes in the SLP.

Both unity and conflict between blacks and Hispanics were presented in the ELP. As primary themes, Hispanics and Blacks united, and Hispanics versus Blacks, each scored an equal 1.3 percent; whereas Hispanic versus Blacks appeared only as a secondary themes comprising 5.1 percent of the total primary themes.

### **Acculturation Success and Acculturation Failure**

The SLP did not view acculturation as a primary theme. However, as a secondary theme, this theme appeared in 5 percent of the SLP stories. In contrast, in the ELP, acculturation success and acculturation failure comprised 5.1 percent and 6.4 percent respectively of primary themes. However, only acculturation failure appeared among secondary themes, totaling 6.4 percent.

### **Willingness but Inability to Integrate**

Neither press attributed much importance to this category as a primary focus; it was not present in the SLP, and it merely achieved a 2.6 percent in the ELP. As a secondary theme, however, it uncovered a distinctive disparity in the way the ELP and the SLP reported the event. As a secondary category, the SLP had 15 percent of its total secondary themes in this category, while the ELP had a mere 2.6 percent.

### **Police as Perpetrators and Police as Victims**

The presses generally agreed in their perceptions of the role the police played during the disturbances. As a primary theme, police as perpetrators appeared in the ELP 6.4 percent, whereas the SLP perceived the police as perpetrators 10 percent of the time. Furthermore, as a secondary theme, the SLP perceived the police as perpetrators 5 percent of the time compared to 3.8 percent by the ELP.

In contrast, the SLP did not have, as a primary theme, the police as victim, only as a secondary theme capturing 5 percent of the total themes. On the other hand, the ELP perceived the police to be victims, giving this view 3.8 percent of the primary themes and 2.6 percent of the secondary themes.

### **Responding to Mayor's Demands and Succumbing to Community's Demands**

The two presses emphasized different theories as to why the police failed to have a good rapport with local Latinos. The SLP argued that the police failed to do a good job because they were primarily paying attention to the needs of the non-Hispanic population in the area. The theme of responding to community's demands took 5 percent of primary themes in the SLP, although it did not appear as a secondary theme. On the other hand, the ELP did not have responding to community's demand as a primary theme, and as a secondary theme, it totalled a modest 1.3 percent of the total themes.

Similarly, responding to mayor's demand received 7.7 percent both as primary and secondary themes in the ELP, whereas the SLP did not carry this category either as primary or secondary.

### **Responsibility of Citizenship and A Failing Democracy**

The frequency of these two themes pointed out the widest differences between the two presses. The SLP concentrated 20 percent of its primary and 5 percent of its secondary coverage on the theme of a failing democracy. Meanwhile, the ELP provided a mere 3.8 percent as primary and 2.6 percent as secondary for this theme.



It is not surprising that the SLP did not have the theme of responsibility of citizenship either as primary or secondary. However, the ELP had responsibility of citizenship scoring 1.3 percent as primary, and 3.8 percent as secondary.

#### **An Inexperienced and Unsympathetic Mayor and An Inexperienced and Sympathetic Mayor**

Both presses portrayed the mayor as inexperienced. However, to a certain extent, they viewed her handling of the Mount Pleasant crisis from opposite point of views. The ELP reported the mayor to be inexperienced and sympathetic in 5.1 percent of its coverage as a primary focus, and 1.3 percent as a secondary theme; whereas the SLP did not carry this theme.

In contrast, the SLP reported the mayor as inexperienced and unsympathetic in 5 percent and 10 percent of their total primary and secondary themes, respectively. Although, the category of inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor captured 9 percent of the total primary themes in the ELP, it did not appear as a secondary theme.

Themes which accounted for less than 5 percent as primary and secondary in both presses were things will get better, things will stay the same, and a recessionary trend.



## **Summary**

During the week in which the disturbances took place in Mount Pleasant, the ELP and the SLP evidenced significant discrepancies in the types of frameworks and frequencies they used in reporting the event. The ELP offered a wider variety in the presentation of themes than did the SLP. This may be attributed to the greater frequency and larger size of the English-language papers. The nearest the two presses came to agreeing on a theme, and on the frequency of that theme was for an inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor, which as a primary theme scored 9 percent in the ELP and 5 percent in the SLP. As a secondary theme there were significant differences in the frequencies of usage of this theme. The greatest differences involved the perception of the local political system as either responsibility of citizenship or a failing democracy.

Furthermore, the ELP tended to be more balanced than the SLP in that when they presented a theme, often they presented its bipolar opposite. An example a story would contain the theme of acculturation failure and the theme of acculturation success.

# **FREQUENCY OF THEMES IN THE WASHINGTON POST AND WASHINGTON TIMES DURING THE DISTURBANCES WEEK**

After reviewing the results for individual newspapers in the study, it was found that each paper had a differing perception of the event. One of the major dichotomies apparent in the Post was between Hispanic as perpetrators and as victims. As a primary theme, Hispanics as perpetrators made up 25 percent of the Post coverage, while Hispanics as victims made up 15.9 percent. However, in terms of secondary themes, the Post portrayed Hispanics as perpetrators at an 11.4 percent rate. As a primary theme Hispanics as victims did not appear in the Times; however as a secondary theme, it accounted for 5.9 percent of the total themes in the Times. In contrast, the Times portrayed Hispanics as perpetrators in 26.5 percent and 2.9 percent of its primary and secondary themes respectively.

Depending on each newspaper, the role of the police in the riots and their relation to the Latino community varied. The Post reported that the police were responding to mayor's demand in 2.3 percent of its primary themes, compared to 14.7 percent in the Times. Furthermore, responding to mayor's demand accounted for 8.8 percent of the secondary themes in the Times, compared to 6.8 percent in the Post. Responding to community demands did not appear in either newspaper as

a primary theme. As a secondary theme, it appeared only in the Times, accounting for 2.9 percent of the total. As a primary theme, the police as perpetrators captured 8.8 percent of the themes in the Times, compared to 4.5 percent in the Post. As a secondary theme this category accounted for 4.5 percent in the Post, compared to 2.9 percent in the Times. Police as victims appeared in the Post at a 4.5 rate as a primary as well as secondary theme, compared to 2.9 percent as a primary in the Times (which did not carry this theme as secondary).

In a remarkable similarity, an inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor was used in the Post for 9.1 percent of its primary focus, compared to 8.8 in the Times. In contrast, as a primary theme, the Times also portrayed the mayor as inexperienced and sympathetic for 8.8 percent of its primary themes compared to 2.3 percent in the Post. None of these categories appeared as secondary in the Post. An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor appeared in the Times as a secondary theme in 2.9 percent of its total secondary themes.

Two categories which showed balance on the part of the Post, were acculturation success and acculturation failure which both captured 6.8 percent of the total primary and secondary themes. However, only acculturation success appeared in the Post as a



secondary theme, scoring 6.8 percent. The Times, on the other hand, had acculturation failure scoring 5.9 percent as a primary theme, and acculturation success scoring 2.9 percent. Unlike, the Post, only acculturation failure was mentioned as a secondary theme accounting for 5.9 percent of the total secondary themes in the Times.

The themes of a successful and a failing democracy are categories which reflect the differences in the way the Washington Post and the Washington Times reported the Mount Pleasant disturbances.

Responsibility of citizenship was used in the Post as a primary for 2.3 percent of its themes, and for 6.8 percent of its secondary themes. Responsibility of citizenship did not appear in the Times either as primary or secondary. However, the Times had the theme of a failing democracy, which scored 2.9 percent as a primary, but was not present as a secondary. A failing democracy appeared in the Post, as 4.5 percent of both its primary and secondary themes.

The differential in the frequency of usage of the Hispanics versus Blacks theme between these two newspapers, show that even two news organizations belonging to the same cultural consensus may report an event from different perspectives.



In the Times, Hispanics versus Blacks scored 2.9 percent and 8.7 percent as a primary and a secondary respectively. The Post only had this category as a secondary theme 2.3 percent of the total. Hispanics and Blacks united was reported in the Post only as a primary category accounting for 2.3 percent. The Times did not have this theme either as primary or secondary.

The Post cited heterogeneity amongst rioters as a primary focus 2.3 percent of the time, and 9.1 percent as a secondary. Meanwhile, the Times only reported this category as primary, which received 5.9 percent.

The themes which accounted for less than 5 percent of the coverage in both newspapers, whether as a primary or secondary, included things will stay the same, things will get better, willingness but inability to integrate, and a recessionary trend.

As the results show, there were slightly more differences than similarities in the ways that the Washington Post and the Washington Times portrayed the Mount Pleasant disturbances. Even though both newspapers shared the same themes, the prominence and frequency of those themes varied.

**FREQUENCY OF THEMES IN EL DIARIO DE LA NACION AND EL TIEMPO LATINO DURING THE DISTURBANCES WEEK**

A total of 10 themes, primary and secondary, appeared in El Tiempo Latino, compared to 6 in El Diario de La Nacion, (see Tables 19 and 20). Once again, the predominant themes were Hispanics as perpetrators and victims. Hispanics as victims was used in El Tiempo Latino for a total of 30 percent and 10 percent of primary and secondary themes respectively. Hispanics as perpetrators captured 20 percent of the primary themes in El Tiempo and it did not appear as a secondary theme.

El Diario did not portray Hispanics as perpetrators at all, and Hispanics as victims accounted for 30 percent and 20 percent of the primary and secondary themes respectively.

El Diario perceived a failing democracy as an important issue. This category had a frequency of 30 percent as primary and 20 percent as secondary, while El Tiempo only had this theme scoring 10 percent both as primary and secondary.

Although the police were reported to be perpetrators in 20 percent of the primary and 10 percent of the secondary themes in El Diario, El Tiempo did not carry this category. On the contrary, El Tiempo perceived the police to be victims using this

category for 10 percent of its total secondary themes.

A theme with similar usage in both newspapers was heterogeneity among rioters, which had a frequency of 10 percent as primary and secondary in El Tiempo, and 10 percent of the total primary themes in El Diario.

Surprisingly, the theme of willingness but inability to integrate only appeared in both papers as a secondary with a frequency of 20 percent in El Diario, and 10 percent in El Tiempo.

The differences in themes usage between these two newspapers are more visible in the much broader way in which El Tiempo Latino reported the event. The themes of responding to community's demands and Hispanics versus Blacks both appeared as a primary in El Tiempo with a frequency of 10 percent each. Neither of them was present in El Diario. On the other hand, an inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor captured, as a primary and a secondary theme, 10 percent and 20 percent of the total themes in El Diario; whereas an inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor was not present in El Diario. Furthermore, El Diario did not perceive acculturation failure and acculturation success to be an issue, while El Tiempo carried both of these themes as secondary and both had a 10 percent frequency.

As the data collected show, the amount and type of coverage not only differ between the Spanish- and



English-language presses, but they also differ among individual newspapers. El Tiempo had a wider variety of themes than El Diario. In addition, both papers had a few significant differences in the way they perceived the roles that the police and Latinos played during the disturbances. The remarkable similarity is that all four newspapers seemed to follow a similar pattern in their usage of themes.

#### IV. WEEK AFTER THE DISTURBANCES

During the post-riot week both presses differed in their portrayal of the Mount Pleasant disturbances. The types of stories also changed. There was more of a concentration on background-oriented stories instead of on event-oriented. In addition, as the amount of coverage decreased, so did the number and frequencies of themes. Following is the description of these findings.

In this week the Washington Post did not publish either columns or editorials. It had four hard news stories which accounted for 15.72 percent of the total number of stories about Mount Pleasant (see Table 11). There was one feature story carrying 12.80 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage. The Post had six background-oriented stories compared to one event-oriented story representing 69.30 percent and 7.53



percent respectively of the total Mount Pleasant coverage.

The Washington Times did not publish any editorials and it only had one column which accounted for 10.27 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage (see Table 12). Five hard news stories accounted for 20.46 percent of the total news coverage, and there were no feature stories. Like the Post, the Times published only one event-oriented story and six background-oriented stories, accounting for 11.83 percent and 57.44 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage.

As indicated in Table 13, El Diario de la Nacion did not publish any columns, editorials, or features. It had two hard news stories with 62.46 percent of the total words concerning the Mount Pleasant coverage. It did not publish any event-oriented stories but one background-oriented story which accounted for 37.54 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage.

On the other hand, however, El Tiempo Latino published one hard news story and one feature story which accounted for 3.67 percent and 20.60 percent of the total coverage for Mount Pleasant (see Table 14). El Tiempo had no event-oriented stories but it published four background-oriented stories containing 68.06 percent of the total words related to the Mount

Pleasant. There was one editorial accounting for 7.67 percent of the total Mount Pleasant coverage, and there were no columns.

Thus, once the Mount Pleasant disturbances ended, the number of event-oriented stories decreased. Surprisingly, during this second week, there were fewer columns and editorials in both papers.

#### **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY THEMES IN THE ELP AND SLP AFTER THE DISTURBANCES WEEK**

##### **Hispanics as Victims and Hispanics as Perpetrators**

As in the prior week, this dichotomy captured the highest percentage of themes. As Tables 21 and 22 indicate, as a primary theme Hispanics were portrayed as victims in the ELP in 9.1 percent of coverage compared to 40 percent in the SLP. As a secondary theme this category was reported in the ELP in 9.1 percent of coverage compared to 20 percent in the SLP. Hispanics were portrayed as perpetrators, as a primary focus with 13.6 percent frequency in the ELP. Similarly, Hispanics as Perpetrators appeared in the SLP only as a primary and with a frequency of 10 percent.

### **Police as Perpetrators and Police as Victims**

Police as perpetrators scored high as a primary theme in the ELP, 18.2 percent; and as a secondary theme it appeared in 4.5 percent of the coverage. As a primary theme, the SLP did not have the theme of police as perpetrators, and as a secondary theme it accounted for 10 percent of the total secondary themes. On the other hand, neither the ELP nor the SLP portrayed the police as victims.

### **A Recessionary Trend**

As in the prior week, the SLP did not perceive the economy to be a problem. However, this category, despite being reported only as a primary focus, accounted for 13.6 percent of the total primary themes in the ELP.

### **Hispanics Versus Blacks and Hispanics and Blacks United**

During this week only the ELP carried these themes. Hispanics versus Blacks and Hispanics and Blacks united as primary themes achieved an equal 4.5 percent each. On the other hand, as secondary themes, Hispanics versus Blacks achieved 4.5 percent whereas Hispanics and Blacks united reached 13.6 percent.



### **A Failing Democracy**

During this post-riot week, both presses shifted their views as far as this category was concerned. Unlike the previous week, the SLP did not report this category either as a primary or a secondary. On the hand, a failing democracy seized 9.1 percent of the total primary themes in the ELP, twice the rate for the previous week. The opposing theme, responsibility of citizenship, was omitted by both presses during this post-riot week.

### **An Inexperienced and Sympathetic Mayor and An Unexperienced and Unsympathetic Mayor**

Once more, this dichotomy showed the different ways in which the English- and the Spanish-language presses reported this event. Like the previous week, the SLP did not report the mayor to be inexperienced and sympathetic, whereas the ELP provided 4.5 percent of its secondary themes to this category. Despite appearing only as a primary category, an inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor reached 10 percent of the total primary themes in the SLP. While, the ELP provided 9.1 percent of its total primary themes to an unexperienced and unsympathetic mayor, the ELP did not have this theme as secondary.



### **Heterogeneity Among Rioters**

Neither the SLP or the ELP had this category as primary. However, as a secondary theme it captured 4.5 percent and 10 percent of the total secondary themes in the ELP and SLP respectively.

### **Things Will Stay the Same and Things Will Get Better**

Neither of these categories appeared as secondary themes in either press. However, things will stay the same appeared in 4.5 percent of the primary coverage in the ELP but it did not appear in the SLP. Things will get better did not appear in the ELP, but appeared in the SLP, scoring 10 percent.

Themes which reached less than 5 percent in both presses were acculturation failure and willingness but inability to integrate.

### **Summary**

As the findings reveal, once again the role of Latinos as well as the role of the police during the Mount Pleasant disturbances were perceived differently by both presses.

### **FREQUENCIES OF THEMES IN THE WASHINGTON POST AND WASHINGTON TIMES AFTER THE DISTURBANCES**

The most striking and common element in both the Washington Post and the Washington Times during this

post-riot week was the frequency of the themes mentioned. As Tables 23 and 24 indicate, all of the eight themes which appeared in the Post had frequency of 22.2 percent or 11.1 percent as primary, and all secondary themes achieved a frequency of 11.1 percent. The thirteen themes in the Washington Times, whether primary or secondary, had a frequency of 7.7 percent, except Hispanic versus Blacks, which only appeared as secondary, capturing 15.4 percent.

The predominant themes in the Post were Hispanics as victims and as perpetrators, and a recessionary trend, all accounted for 22.2 percent of the primary themes. However, only Hispanics as victims was reported as a secondary theme accounting for 11.1 percent. Only Hispanics as perpetrators and a recessionary trend were reported as primary themes in the Times, and only Hispanics as victims appeared as a secondary theme.

The only other four themes reported in both papers were: a failing democracy, an inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor, Hispanics versus Blacks, and Hispanics and Blacks united, which all had different frequency percentages.

Thus, the results during this week again show a slight difference, not so much in the types of themes but in the frequency of themes of the Mount Pleasant

coverage between the Washington Post and the Washington Times.

**FREQUENCIES OF THEMES IN EL TIEMPO LATINO AND EL DIARIO DE LA NACION AFTER THE DISTURBANCES**

When separated analysis was conducted for these two newspapers the resulting differences were similar to those found in the Washington Post and Washington Times. For instance, all primary and secondary themes in El Diario scored either 66.7 percent or 33.3 percent, while all primary and secondary themes in El Tiempo captured either 28.6 or 14.3 percent.

The differences in the results between El Diario and El Tiempo lay in the variety of themes used by each newspaper and in the frequencies of usage. As Tables 25 and 26 show, El Diario had only two primary themes and one secondary theme, of which only Hispanic as victims, and a recessionary trend were also presented in El Tiempo. However, despite sharing these two themes, the frequency of the themes in each newspaper were very distinct. Whereas El Diario had Hispanic as victims for 66.7 percent of its total primary themes, El Tiempo, reported Hispanics as victims in 28.6 percent of its coverage. Furthermore, a recessionary trend captured 33.3 percent of the total primary themes in El Diario, and only 14.3 percent in El Tiempo.

Other themes not carried by El Diario, but presented in El Tiempo were: Hispanics as perpetrators, heterogeneity among rioters, police as perpetrators and things will get better.

Thus, as with the Post and the Times, there were similar differences between the Spanish-language papers.

The following chapter will discuss the conclusions that can be drawn from analyzing the English- and Spanish-language presses coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances.



TABLE 5

Total number of stories examined

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Newspaper	Number of stories percentage		Number of words percentage	
Washington Post	60	42.55%	50,194	49.91
Washington Times	51	36.17	32,609	31.78
El Diario de la Nacion	13	9.22	7,396	7.21
El Tiempo Latino	17	12.06	12,420	12.10
Total	141	100.00	102,619	100.00

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TABLE 6

Total number of stories and words published in each newspaper compared to the total number of stories and words that dealt with the Mount Pleasant disturbances.

Newspaper			Date	
<u>The Washington Post</u>			May 6 to 12	
	Stories	Percentage	Words	Percentage
Total	1,102		748,185	
Disturbances	43	3.90	38,381	5.12
			May 13 to 19	
Total	1,126		726,370	
Disturbances	11	0.97	8,261	1.13
<u>The Washington Times</u>			May 6 to 10	
Total	791		342,048	
Disturbances	34	4.29	24,804	7.25
			May 13 to 17	
Total	808		345,837	
Disturbances	13	1.60	24,804	1.95
<u>El Diario de la Nacion</u>			May 8	
Total	33		19,163	
Disturbances	10	30.30	5,542	28.92
			May 15	
Total	30		18,169	
Disturbances	3	10.00	1,854	10.20
<u>El Tiempo Latino</u>			May 10	
Total	36		27,213	
Disturbances	10	27.77	6,555	24.08
			May 17	
Total	41		26,020	
Disturbances	7	17.07	5,865	22.54

TABLE 7

Stories in the Washington Post during the two weeks prior to the disturbances.

Type	Number of stories percentage		Number of words percentage	
Date: April 22 to 28				
Hard news	2	50.00	735	28.85
Features	2	50.00	1,813	71.15
Columns	0	.00	0	.00
Editorials	0	.00	0	.00
Total	4	100.00	2,548	100.00
Date: April 29 to May 5				
Hard news	2	100.00	1,004	100.00
Features	0	.00	0	.00
Columns	0	.00	0	.00
Editorials	0	.00	0	.00
Total	2	100.00	1,004	100.00

TABLE 8

Primary and secondary themes in the Washington Post during the two weeks prior to the disturbances.

Theme	Primary percentage	Secondary
Date: April 22 to 28		
Hispanics as perpetrators	25.00	0.00
Acculturation success	75.00	0.00
Acculturation failure	0.00	0.00
A failing democracy	0.00	25.00
Stories missing themes	0.00	50.00
Total	100.00	100.00
Date: April 29 to May 5		
Hispanics as victims	50.00	0.00
A failing democracy	50.00	0.00
Acculturation success	.00	50.00
Willingness but inability to integrate	.00	50.00
Stories missing themes	.00	0.00
Total	100.00	100.00



TABLE 9

Stories in the Washington Times during the two weeks prior to the disturbances.

Type	Number of stories	percentage	Number of words	percentage
Date: April 22 to 26				
Hard news	2	100.00	159	100.00
Feature	0	.00	0	.00
Columns	0	.00	0	.00
Editorials	0	.00	0	.00
Total	2	100.00	159	100.00
Date: April 29 to May 3				
Hard news	2	100.00	900	100.00
Feature	0	.00	0	.00
Columns	0	.00	0	.00
Editorials	0	.00	0	.00
Total	2	100.00	900	100.00

TABLE 10

Primary and secondary themes in the Washington Times  
during the two weeks prior to the disturbances.

Theme	Primary percentage	Secondary
Date: April 22 to 26		
Hispanics as perpetrators	50.00	0.0
Acculturation success	50.00	0.0
Stories missing themes	0.00	0.0
Total	100.00	0.0
Date: April 29 to May 3		
Hispanics as victims	100.00	00.0
Acculturation failure	.00	50.0
Stories missing themes	.00	50.0
Total	100.00	100.0

TABLE 11

Types of stories concerning the Mount Pleasant disturbances in the Washington Post from May 6 to 19.

Type	Number of stories		Number of words	
		percentage		percentage
<b>May 6 to 12</b>				
Hard news	08	18.60	5,040	13.13
Feature	01	2.33	945	2.46
Event oriented	15	34.88	15,770	41.09
Backg. oriented	10	26.26	10,392	27.08
Columns	07	16.28	4,876	12.70
Editorials	03	6.98	1,484	3.87
Total	43	100.00	38,381	100.00
<b>May 13 to 19</b>				
Hard news	04	36.36	1,299	15.72
Feature	01	9.09	1,057	12.80
Event oriented	01	9.09	622	7.53
Backg. oriented	06	54.55	5,725	69.30
Column	0	.00	0	.00
Editorial	0	.00	0	.00
Total	11	100.00	8,261	100.00

TABLE 12

Types of stories concerning the Mount Pleasant disturbances in the Washington Times, from May 6 to 17.

Type	Number of stories	percentage	Number of words	percentage
<b>May 6 to 10</b>				
	04	11.76	2,354	9.31
Hard news	01	2.94	603	2.38
Feature	06	17.65	12,286	48.58
Event oriented	07	20.59	4,779	18.90
Backg. oriented	04	11.76	2,985	11.80
Columns	03	8.82	2,284	9.03
Editorials				
	34	100.00	24,804	100.00
Total				
<b>May 13 to 17</b>				
	05	38.46	1,380	20.46
Hard news	0	.00	0	.00
Feature	1	7.69	798	11.83
Event oriented	6	46.15	3,875	57.44
Backg. oriented	1	7.69	693	10.27
Column	0	.00	0	.00
Editorial				
	13	100.00	6,746	100.00
Total				



TABLE 13

Type of stories concerning the Mount Pleasant disturbances in El Diario de la Nacion published on May 8 and 15.

Type	Number of stories	percentage	Number of words	percentage
<b>May 8</b>				
Hard news	1	10	140	2.53
Feature	0	0	0	.00
Event oriented	1	10	1,048	18.91
Backg. oriented	3	30	1,257	22.68
Columns	3	30	2,449	44.19
Editorials	2	20	648	11.69
Total	10	100	5,542	100.00
<b>May 15</b>				
Hard news	2	66.67	1,158	62.46
Feature	0	.00	0	.00
Event oriented	0	.00	0	.00
Backg. oriented	1	33.33	696	37.54
Column	0	.00	0	.00
Editorial	0	.00	0	.00
Total	3	100.00	1,854	100.00

TABLE 14

Types of stories concerning the Mount Pleasant disturbances in El Tiempo Latino published on May 8 and 15.

Type	Number of stories	percentage	Number of words	percentage
<b>May 10</b>				
Hard news	2	20.0	1,858	28.34
Feature	0	.0	0	.00
Event oriented	2	20.0	867	13.23
Backg. oriented	4	40.0	2,726	41.59
Column	0	0.0	0	.00
Editorial	2	20.0	1,140	16.84
Total	10	100.00	6,555	100.00
<b>May 15</b>				
Hard news	1	14.29	215	3.67
Feature	1	14.29	1,208	20.60
Event oriented	0	.00	0	.00
Backg. oriented	4	57.15	3,992	68.06
Column	0	.00	0	.00
Editorial	1	14.29	450	7.67
Total	7	100.00	5,865	100.00

TABLE 15

Frequencies of primary themes in the English- and Spanish-language presses during the week of the disturbances.

Theme	English-language	Spanish-language Percentage
Hispanics as victims	9.0	30.0
Hispanics as perpetrators	25.6	10.0
Acculturation failure	6.4	0.0
Acculturation success	5.1	0.0
Police as perpetrators	6.4	10.0
Police as victims	3.8	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	7.7	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	5.0
Responsibility of citizenship	1.3	0.0
A failing democracy	3.8	20.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	5.1	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	9.0	5.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	3.8	10.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	1.3	5.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	1.3	0.0
A recessionary trend	2.6	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	2.6	0.0
Things will get better	1.3	0.0
Things will stay the same	2.6	0.0
Other	1.3	5.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	0.0

TABLE 16

Frequencies of secondary themes in the English- and Spanish-language presses during the week of the disturbances.

Theme	English-language	Spanish-language Percentage
Hispanics as victims	3.8	15.0
Hispanics as perpetrators	7.7	0.0
Acculturation failure	6.4	5.0
Acculturation success	0.0	5.0
Police as perpetrators	3.8	5.0
Police as victims	2.6	5.0
Responding to mayor's demand	7.7	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	1.3	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	3.8	0.0
A failing democracy	2.6	5.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	1.3	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	0.0	10.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	5.1	5.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	5.1	0.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	0.0	0.0
A recessionary trend	2.6	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	2.6	15.0
Things will get better	0.0	0.0
Things will stay the same	2.6	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0
Stories missing themes	41.0	30.0



TABLE 17

Frequencies of themes in the Washington Post during the week of the disturbances.

Theme	Primary Percentage	Secondary
Hispanics as victims	15.9	2.3
Hispanics as perpetrators	25.0	11.4
Acculturation failure	6.8	6.8
Acculturation success	6.8	0.0
Police as perpetrators	4.5	4.5
Police as victims	4.5	4.5
Responding to mayor's demand	2.3	6.8
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	2.3	6.8
A failing democracy	4.5	4.5
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	2.3	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	9.1	0.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	2.3	9.1
Hispanics vs. Blacks	0.0	2.3
Hispanics and Blacks united	2.3	0.0
A recessionary trend	4.1	2.3
Willingness but inability to integrate	2.3	2.3
Things will get better	2.3	2.3
Things will stay the same	2.3	2.3
Other	0.0	0.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	34.0

TABLE 18

Frequencies of themes in the Washington Times during the week of the disturbances

Theme	Primary Percentage	Secondary
Hispanics as victims	0.0	5.9
Hispanics as perpetrators	26.5	2.9
Acculturation failure	5.9	5.9
Acculturation success	2.9	0.0
Police as perpetrators	8.8	2.9
Police as victims	2.9	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	14.7	8.8
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	2.9
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	8.8	2.9
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	8.8	0.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	5.9	0.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	2.9	8.8
Hispanics and Blacks united	0.0	0.0
A recessionary trend	0.0	2.9
Willingness but inability to integrate	2.9	2.9
Things will get better	0.0	0.0
Things will stay the same	2.9	2.9
Other	2.9	0.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	50.0

TABLE 19

Frequencies of themes in El Diario de la Nacion during the week of the disturbances.

Theme	Primary Percentage	Secondary
Hispanics as victims	30.0	20.0
Hispanics as perpetrators	0.0	0.0
Acculturation failure	0.0	0.0
Acculturation success	0.0	0.0
Police as perpetrators	20.0	10.0
Police as victims	0.0	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	0.0	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	30.0	20.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	10.0	20.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	10.0	0.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	0.0	0.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	0.0	0.0
A recessionary trend	0.0	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	0.0	10.0
Things will get better	0.0	0.0
Things will stay the same	0.0	0.0
Other		
Stories missing themes	0.0	40.0

TABLE 20

Frequencies of themes in El Tiempo Latino during the week of the disturbances.

Theme	Primary Percentage	Secondary
Hispanics as victims	30.0	10.0
Hispanics as perpetrators	20.0	0.0
Acculturation failure	0.0	10.0
Acculturation success	0.0	10.0
Police as perpetrators	0.0	0.0
Police as victims	0.0	10.0
Responding to mayor's demand	0.0	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	10.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	10.0	10.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	0.0	0.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	10.0	10.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	10.0	0.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	0.0	0.0
A recessionary trend	0.0	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	0.0	20.0
Things will get better	0.0	0.0
Things will stay the same	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	20.0



TABLE 21

Frequencies of primary themes in the English- and Spanish-language presses in the week after the disturbances.

Theme	English-language	Spanish-language Percentage
Hispanics as victims	9.1	40.0
Hispanics as perpetrators	13.6	10.0
Acculturation failure	0.0	0.0
Acculturation success	0.0	0.0
Police as perpetrators	18.2	0.0
Police as victims	0.0	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	0.0	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	9.1	0.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	4.5	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	9.1	0.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	0.0	0.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	4.5	0.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	4.5	0.0
A recessionary trend	13.6	20.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	4.5	0.0
Things will get better	0.0	10.0
Things will stay the same	4.5	0.0
Other	4.5	20.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	0.0

TABLE 22

Frequencies of secondary themes in the English- and Spanish-language presses in the week after the disturbances.

Theme	English-language	Spanish-language Percentage
Hispanics as victims	9.1	20.0
Hispanics as perpetrators	0.0	0.0
Acculturation failure	4.5	0.0
Acculturation success	0.0	0.0
Police as perpetrators	4.5	10.0
Police as victims	0.0	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	0.0	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	0.0	10.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	4.5	10.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	4.5	0.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	13.6	0.0
A recessionary trend	0.0	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	0.0	0.0
Things will get better	0.0	0.0
Things will stay the same	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0
Stories missing themes	59.1	50.0

TABLE 23

Frequencies of themes in the Washington Post in the week after the disturbances.

Theme	Primary Percentage	Secondary
Hispanics as victims	22.2	11.1
Hispanics as perpetrators	22.2	0.0
Acculturation failure	0.0	11.1
Acculturation success	0.0	0.0
Police as perpetrators	0.0	11.1
Police as victims	0.0	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	0.0	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	11.1	0.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	11.1	0.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	0.0	0.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	0.0	11.1
Hispanics and Blacks united	11.1	11.1
A recessionary trend	22.2	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	0.0	0.0
Things will get better	0.0	0.0
Things will stay the same	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	44.4

TABLE 24

Frequencies of themes in the Washington Times during the week after the disturbances.

Theme	Primary Percentage	Secondary
Hispanics as victims	0.0	7.7
Hispanics as perpetrators	7.7	0.0
Acculturation failure	0.0	0.0
Acculturation success	0.0	0.0
Police as perpetrators	30.8	0.0
Police as victims	0.0	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	0.0	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	7.7	0.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	7.7	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	7.7	0.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	0.0	7.7
Hispanics vs. Blacks	7.7	0.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	0.0	15.4
A recessionary trend	7.7	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	7.7	0.0
Things will get better	0.0	0.0
Things will stay the same	7.7	0.0
Other	7.7	0.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	69.2



TABLE 25

Frequencies of themes in El Diario de la Nacion during the week after the disturbances.

Theme	Primary Percentage	Secondary
Hispanics as victims	66.7	0.0
Hispanics as perpetrators	0.0	0.0
Acculturation failure	0.0	0.0
Acculturation success	0.0	0.0
Police as perpetrators	0.0	0.0
Police as victims	0.0	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	0.0	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	0.0	33.3
Heterogeneity among rioters	0.0	0.0
Hispanics vs. Blacks	0.0	0.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	0.0	0.0
A recessionary trend	33.3	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	0.0	0.0
Things will get better	0.0	0.0
Things will stay the same	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	66.7

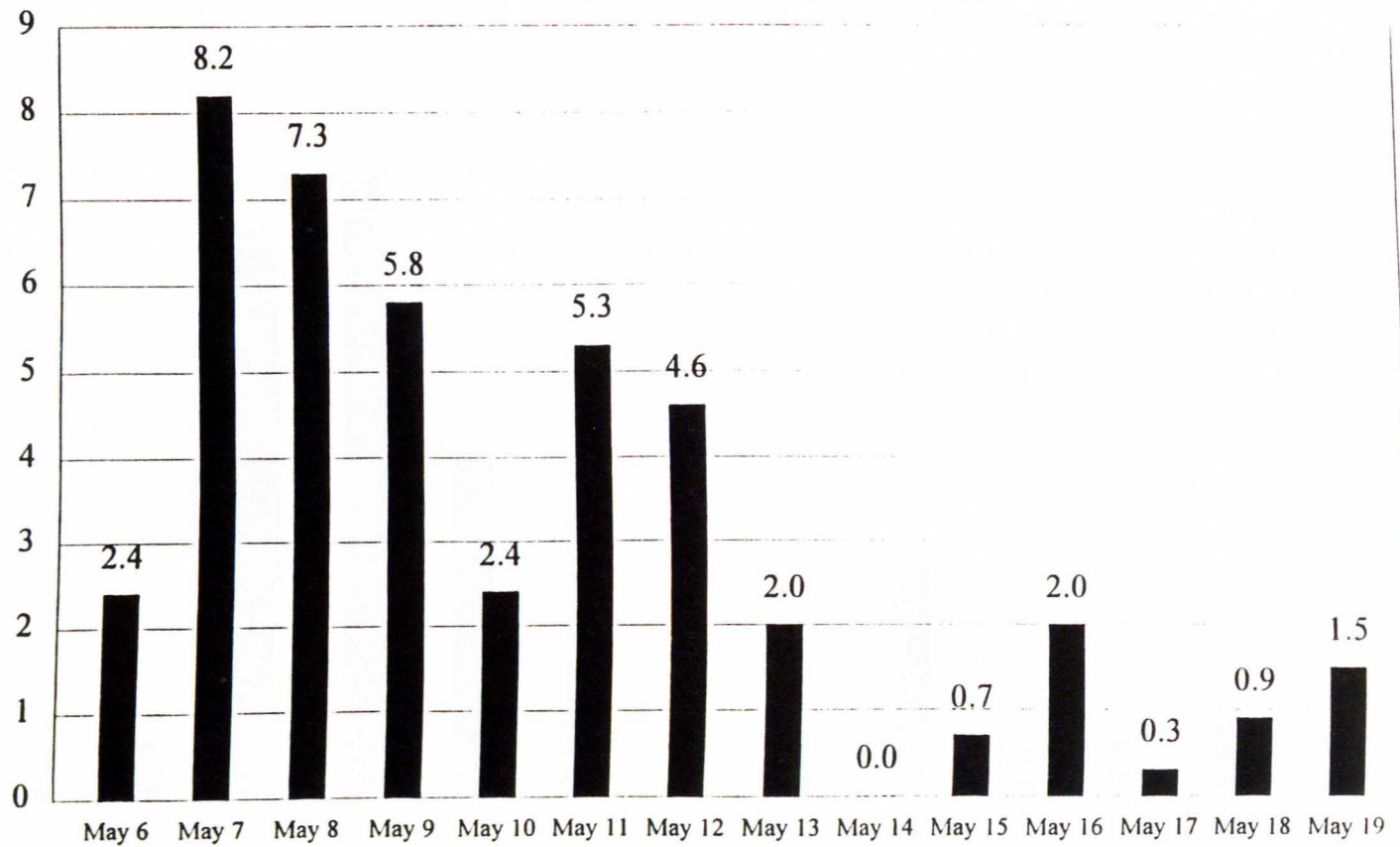
TABLE 26

Frequencies of themes in El Tiempo Latino during the week after the disturbances.

Theme	Primary Percentage	Secondary
Hispanics as victims	28.6	28.6
Hispanics as perpetrators	14.3	0.0
Acculturation failure	0.0	0.0
Acculturation success	0.0	0.0
Police as perpetrators	0.0	14.3
Police as victims	0.0	0.0
Responding to mayor's demand	0.0	0.0
Succumbing to community's dem.	0.0	0.0
Responsibility of citizenship	0.0	0.0
A failing democracy	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and sympathetic mayor	0.0	0.0
An inexperienced and unsympathetic mayor	0.0	0.0
Heterogeneity among rioters	0.0	14.3
Hispanics vs. Blacks	0.0	0.0
Hispanics and Blacks united	0.0	0.0
A recessionary trend	14.3	0.0
Willingness but inability to integrate	0.0	0.0
Things will get better	14.3	0.0
Things will stay the same	0.0	0.0
Other	28.6	0.0
Stories missing themes	0.0	42.9

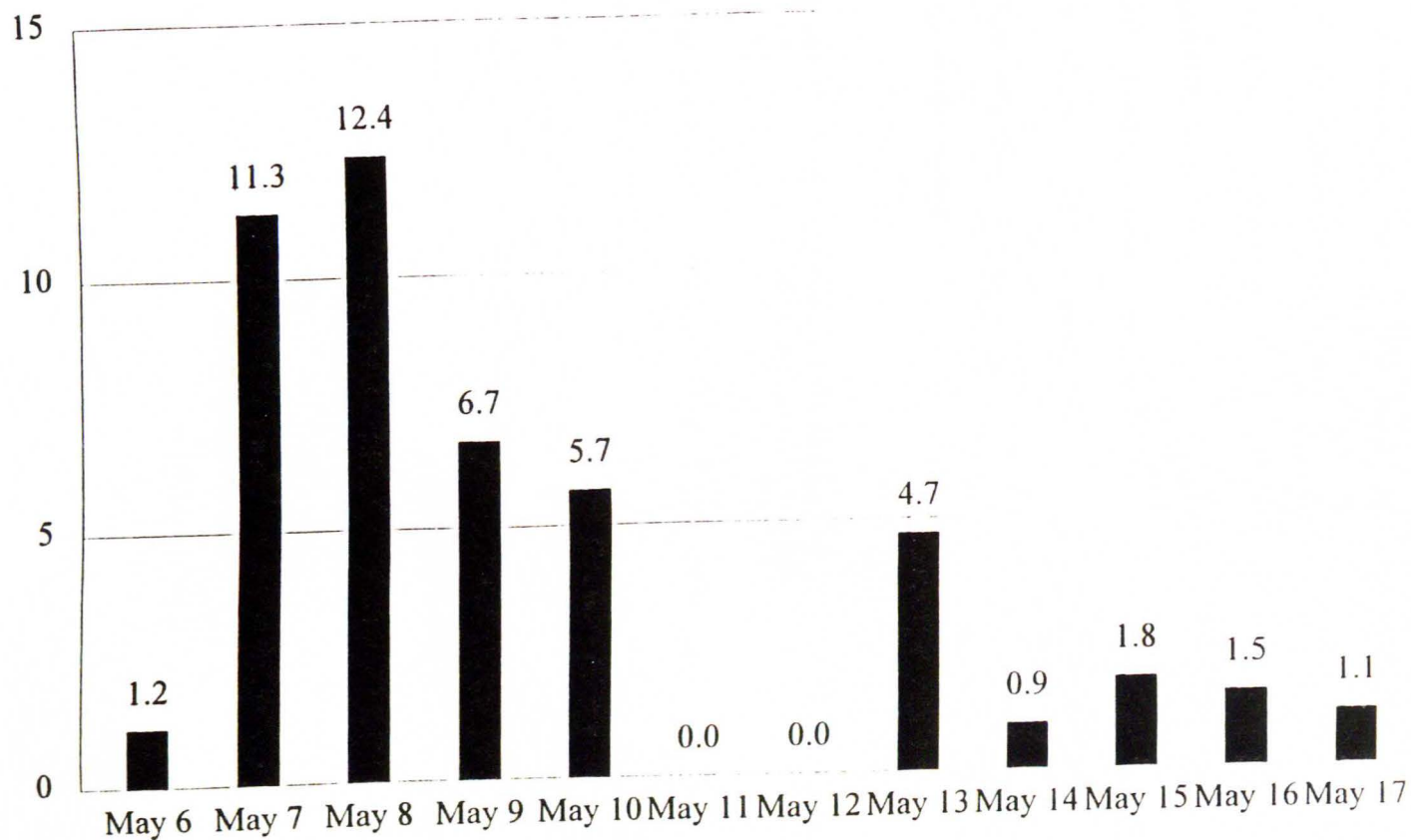
# Figure 1

Percentage of daily Mt. Pleasant coverage in the Post



# Figure 2

Percentage of daily Mt. Pleasant coverage in the Times





## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In general both content analysis results in the English-language press matched those found by previous researchers. Surprisingly, the results also show that the Spanish-language press coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances did not differ much in form and content from that in the English-language press. In order to address these issues, each research question will be discussed.

#### **I. MINORITY NEWS COVERAGE DURING CRISIS TIMES VERSUS NON-CRISIS TIMES**

One of the questions of this research concerned the amount of coverage about Latinos in the English-language press prior to the disturbances, during the disturbances and after the disturbances. As the findings show, the English-language press considerably increased its coverage of Hispanic-related issues during the week of the Mount Pleasant disturbance, when compared to the previous two weeks. This is not a surprise. The journalistic news values of the event were too extraordinary to be ignored. The Mount Pleasant disturbances occurred in the nation's capital and in a very prominent neighborhood just a few miles

from the White House; the event's conflict not only involved a minority group but also the city's police department. This conflict had the traditional elements of civil disturbances: an "oppressed" minority rebelling against a dominant system. The Mount Pleasant disturbances brought back memories of the 1960s civil disturbances which, coincidentally, occurred in the same area over 20 years ago. Thus, because of the news value of the event, it is not surprising that it received the amount of coverage that it did.

Nevertheless, this drastic increase of coverage about Latinos during the week of the disturbances and the drastic decrease of coverage in the week after the disturbances reinforce what researchers, such as Wilson and Gutierrez (1985), Lewels (1974) and Shaw (1990) have found. These studies claim that the mainstream news media coverage of minorities is characterized primarily by the portrayal of minorities only in the context of the problems or difficulties that they pose to society. So this leads to the conclusion that the dominant news media provided a lot of coverage to Latinos during the Mount Pleasant disturbances because of the worthiness of the event rather than the fact that Latinos were involved.

In addition, by covering minorities only in times of crisis, and by failing to portray minorities in non-crisis times, the mainstream news media may directly impair and blur the world view and understanding of minorities. In other words, seeing minorities only associated with crime and civil disturbances may lead audiences, who often have little contact with minorities, to internalize those images to the point that it may be difficult to think of a minority group and not associate it with some type of deviant behavior.

This thesis' findings also concur with those of an editorial published in the Columbia Journalism Review reporting on the news media coverage of the 1960s civil disturbances. The article, "One Nation Still Divisible" (1980), maintains that the reason African-Americans received so much coverage during the 1960s and 70s civil disturbances was due to the fact that the "protests commanded frequent press attention" (p. 24). Thus, as with the 1960s civil disturbances, the press provided coverage to Latinos during the Mount Pleasant disturbances because of the newsworthiness of the event.

Furthermore, in assessing the amount of coverage provided by both Spanish-language newspapers, it was found that El Diario de La Nacion followed the same



pattern as both English-language newspapers. El Diario's coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances largely decreased in the week after the disturbances. This may indicate that El Diario has been in some way influenced by the mainstream media in its news value norms and news story presentations.

For the Washington Post, the results of the thematic content analysis, during the two weeks prior to the disturbances, show that to a certain extent the Post was providing better coverage to local Latinos than the Washington Times. While few in number, the stories published in the Post about Latinos, were not all crime-related. They were also stories concerning Latinos who either had succeeded or were striving to succeed in the United States. This indicates that the Post provides what could be called a balance of "negative" news (crime-related), and "positive" news (success-related).

Another research question was: judging from the type of story published in both presses, which press was more event- or background-oriented, and which press used more editorials and columns? As expected, during the week of the disturbances the English-language press provided more coverage to the event per se, than to coverage of the problems underlying the event, although one might also consider that the disturbances



only lasted three nights. By the second week, the event had lost much of its immediate impact.

This decrease of event-oriented coverage during the week after the disturbances, may concur with the Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) theory that once the confrontation between minorities and society has been exposed the news media enter a stage that they call the "stereotypical selection stage." During this stage, the news media reassures the audience, through the usage of stereotype, of the end of the conflict and that minorities are back in the place they belong, and that "is the reservation, the ghetto, or whatever" (p. 139). Thus instead of concentrating coverage on the problems underlying the event the media focus on the settlement of the event.

In line with the quantitative content analysis, the thematic content analysis also seemed to be event-oriented. The results of the thematic content analysis clearly show a rapid decrease in the variety of themes used by both presses in the week after the disturbances. Themes which clearly dealt with event immediacy, such as Hispanics as perpetrators and police as perpetrators, continued to be predominant.

Overall though, it seems that the Spanish-language press provided better coverage to the event in terms of the types of stories they published. Both newspapers

provided more background-oriented stories than event-oriented ones during the week of the disturbances, although El Diario had more hard news stories after the week of the disturbances than during the week of the disturbances.

In assessing opinion narratives, editorials and columns, it seems that both presses followed the same type of journalistic trend or pattern; both presses had more opinion narratives during the week of the disturbances than during the week after the disturbances. It seems as though both presses wanted to create opinions during the week when the disturbances took place. This is particularly important because as the event is taking place people are more likely to read the paper and watch the news. Thus, both presses tried to convey opinions about the disturbances, particularly during the critical period when the disturbances were occurring.

## **II. CULTURAL FRAMEWORKS VERSUS JOURNALISTIC ROUTINES**

The goal of the thematic content analysis was to find out whether there was a significant difference in the themes used in the English- and Spanish-language presses when covering the Mount Pleasant disturbances and whether the Spanish-language press provided a more thorough and in-depth coverage than did the English-

language press. As a whole there were very few differences in the way both presses thematically covered the Mount Pleasant disturbances. In fact, the results show that neither the Spanish-language press nor the English-language press provided thorough coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances.

The results of the thematic content analysis reveal that both presses tried to sensationalize the event by concentrating on the event per se rather than investigating the underlying problems that led to the event. There seemed to be an overwhelming concern in both presses to portray Hispanics as either victims (SLP), or perpetrators (ELP); whether during the week of the disturbances or after, both presses concentrated much of their coverage on these two themes. For instance, out of 20 primary themes, only Hispanics as perpetrators reached a percentage beyond 10 percent in the English-language press during the week of the disturbances. This indicates that the coverage was superficial and indicates a lack of in-depth information about the event.

Although both presses used other themes besides Hispanics as perpetrators and victims, the frequency of those themes was very low. For instance, the themes of a failing democracy, responsibility of citizenship, and a recessionary trend had very a low frequency. Thus,



it seems that both presses were aware of other issues surrounding the Mount Pleasant disturbances, however, they failed to further explore these issues.

This lack of in-depth coverage and analysis of the event by both presses may be attributed to a dominant model of news presentation. Journalists may believe that in order to be objective, for instance, they have to concentrate on the "facts" of the event. And these facts can simply be the list of the happenings of a particular event, such as the burning of vehicles during the Mount Pleasant disturbances. McQuail (1988) states that "much news form is clearly devoted to pursuit of objectivity in the sense of facticity or factualness" (p. 211).

On the other hand, some of the language in the editorials and columns were acrimonious to the point of being "racist". An example was an editorial published in the Washington Times, which basically argued that Hispanics were not doing well because they were Hispanics (see page 87, theme # 12).

Overall, it seems that instead of covering the Mount Pleasant disturbances from different cultural point of views, as was predicted, both the English- and Spanish-language presses followed a journalistic news pattern by concentrating on the elements which most dramatized the event: Hispanics as the villains or



heroes; the society as either victim or hero and the conflict between the two groups.

The journalistic news values used by the press during the news coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances may be attributed to traits typical of the journalistic profession. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) maintain that news organizations, like any other professional institution, have their own "routines" which are considered to be professional news media values and norms. Concurring with this theory, Hirsch (1977) holds that mass media organizations share professional and organizational values and that those far outweigh their differences. In other words, there are certain values, patterns, and professional norms, such as news values and story telling style, used by news organizations in general.

Therefore, the similar manner in which the English- and Spanish-language presses covered the Mount Pleasant disturbances may indicate that journalists follow professional obligations more closely than they do cultural values. Shoemaker and Reese explain that these journalistic routines exist because news organizations are like any other organizations which "strive to find a market for their product" (p. 88). For instance, they hold that, as a news organization creating a product which must appeal to the public, be

sold and be profitable, news media organizations have created routines which they follow while in the process of creating their product. These routines facilitate the creation and delivery of the news product. "Over the years, those news values have become fairly predictable and are included with little variation at the beginning of most journalism textbooks" (p. 90). The concepts of news values and story telling style are representative examples of news media routines.

The news media's organizational routine, such as the news values used in the selection of what makes the news, can be easily detected in the Spanish- and English-language press coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances. In their coverage, for instance, the essential elements of the dramatic narrative were emphasized. These elements included the villains, the heroes and a motif; the event had a beginning, a middle and an end. In addition, all four individual newspapers, particularly in the week after the disturbances, concentrated on certain themes and these themes appeared with the same frequency. This is another example of a news pattern, indicating an effort by each newspaper to provide the same amount of space to a theme or issue.

Furthermore, both presses not only seem to have used the same news values, but they also seemed to have incorporated the journalistic news value model into their cultural bias. This is clearly supported by the fact that the English-language press concentrated on portraying Hispanics as perpetrators and the Spanish-language press concentrated on portraying Hispanics as victims. This discrepancy in the portrayal of Latinos during the Mount Pleasant disturbances may become a matter of concern and confusion for the audience about what role Latinos played during the Mount Pleasant disturbances.

What both presses failed to do was to evaluate the event and realize that beyond the rock-throwing and car burnings there were underlying problems, not only within the Latino community but also within the city government. Some of these underlying problems are described in a report prepared by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Racial and Ethnic Tensions in American Communities: Poverty, Inequality, and Discrimination: The Mount Pleasant Report.

The U.S Civil Rights report found that Latinos in Washington, D.C. have been denied basic civil rights. The Report cited police harassment, discrimination and economic inequality as problems for the Latino population. For instance, they reported that the U.S.



Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) has discriminated against Latinos, and particularly El Salvadorans, when they applied for war asylum in comparison with other ethnic groups such as Russians and Chinese. Latinos had been abused by employers and landlords who took advantage of their often undocumented visa situation, and threatened to call the INS whenever a Latino complained about the lack of employment benefits or substandard housing.

Furthermore, the Report noted that Washington, D.C.'s Third and Fourth districts (where most Latinos reside), from 1986 through 1990, have "ranked the highest in disorderly conduct arrests" (p. 23). So they conclude that, "With evidence that such arrests are often unwarranted, districts with an exceedingly high number of disorderly conduct arrests are a matter of concern" (p. 23).

The Commission added that many of the problems affecting Latinos are intrinsically related to the fact that Latinos are often not eligible to vote. This disenfranchisement means that the Latino population is not proportionally represented in the local city government.

At the same time, the Report also found that the entire staff of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) had not received any substantial training in



areas such as human relations, communication skills, and disorderly conduct arrests. In addition, due to a lack of funding government organizations such as the District of Columbia's Civilian Complaint Review Board have failed to "investigate and process complaints of police misconduct in a timely manner" (p. 145).

Thus, the findings by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission offer much more depth to the Mount Pleasant disturbances than the Washington Post, Washington Times, El Diario de la Nacion and El Tiempo Latino provided. Although both presses did mention problems such as a failing democracy, and a recessionary trend, the frequency of usage of these themes was low compared to the frequency of themes such as Hispanics as perpetrators or police as perpetrators. One would not expect the news media to provide the type of information that the U.S. Civil Rights Commission has provided -- because of time and money. However, one would expect something better than headlines such as the one published in the Washington Post on May 7, titled, "Leaderless group looks for trouble and finds it," which articles' main theme was that the people participating in the disturbances had no motives beyond causing trouble.

The purpose of journalism, at least in a theoretical sense, is to transmit information and

inform people about events in the most objective way possible. The findings in this study seem to indicate that this was not the case for this particular event. In general it can be assumed that human beings communicate with the goal of transmitting ideas and fostering a climate of understanding and cooperation in the society in which they live. However, the findings in this research, would seem to indicate that, regardless of cultural background, the press hews to its own traditional and professional values.

In the case of the coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances, the question arises as to the possibility that the Spanish-language press has been influenced by the dominant news media in their news value routines. Although this may be difficult to confirm, a study conducted by Fernando Reyes Matta (1990) found that the concept of news values can be transmitted and taught from one culture to another. Matta maintains, for instance, that the North American news value model has been successfully implemented and adapted by Latin American news institutions.

Matta argues that the Latin American concept of news value has "moved from the task of interpreting events and presenting opinion to the daily process of selecting events deemed 'newsworthy' and commercially interesting" (p. 151). He holds that this change was

brought on by the expansion of North American news organizations such as the United Press, and Associated Press, which spread the North American news value model through the import of news. In his words, "The current status of the Latin American press manifests the continuing dominance of North American news values, as institutionalized in the transnational news agencies" (p. 251).

It may be that the English-language newspapers, in particularly the Washington Post, have served as an example of a dominant news model which the Spanish-language papers may have come to emulate. This explains the similar manner in which both presses seemed to have used news patterns and news values. In fact, Virginia Rosario, an El Diario investor and its art director said in an interview for the Washington Post that El Tiempo "is more closely modeled after the Washington Post" than El Diario (Caspar, p. C1).

The few differences between the two English-language newspapers and the two Spanish-language newspapers, may be attributed to the internal policies of each news organizations, and to the background of each newspaper's editors. For instance, the Washington Post has been in the spotlight for their coverage of minorities by news media researchers; thus the fact that the Post provided a more "balanced" coverage of



the event than the Times. In addition, an article published in the Washington Times states that the editors of El Diario and El Tiempo have "different visions" about journalism, (Colp, 1991, p. B1). The publisher of El Diario, Jose Suerio, was said to believe that the role of the press to be that of an "advocate," whereas El Tiempo Latino's publisher, Armando C. Chapelli, Jr., perceives the role of the press to be an educational one (Colp, 1991). Thus, it is possible that both El Diario and El Tiempo have been influenced by the English-language press news value concept.

It may be true, that as scientists such as Carey (1989) and Murdock (1973) say, cultural values and norms will highly influence the news media presentation of events. However, from these thesis findings it appears that before anything else, journalists follow their own professional routines.

This thesis' findings call to mind Marshall McLuhan's theory of the "global village" in the sense that journalists worldwide may use similar news values in selecting events. However, in order to better allow the audience to understand the event, journalists will refract the event through local cultural symbols. Thus, they will input their own bias into the event. An example is the opposing views of the Spanish-



language press and the English-language press regarding Hispanics as the perpetrators or victims of the Mount Pleasant disturbances.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Regardless of cultural background the news media may have to come to reevaluate their media routines. The coverage of events does not occur in a vacuum and researchers have shown that cultural values, news media organizations' internal policies, and journalists' professional routines all intertwine to influence media output.

In addition, the dominant news media should be more receptive and sensitive to the concerns of the various minority groups. The news media organization should also reflect in their staff the ethnic and cultural diversity of the audience they serve, particularly as the U.S. population grows more diverse.

As illustrated in chapter one of this thesis, traditional minority groups such as Latinos, are now majority in cities such as Miami, Florida and El Paso, Texas (Renyolds, 1991). In addition, Hispanics are projected to become the nation's largest minority group by the year 2010 (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985).

Thus, being aware of demographic changes may not

only help newspapers to provide better coverage, but also to cultivate a new audience; several studies (Pomice & Mocreiff Arrarte, 1989; and Astroff, 1989) have found that when Latinos were unsatisfied with stories about them in the dominant news media, they tended to switch to Hispanic-oriented media.

In order to assess the amount of coverage the Washington Post and Washington Times provide to the various minority groups in the Washington metropolitan area, it would be helpful to conduct a study about the percentage of minority population in the area as compared to the amount of coverage they get on a daily basis. This coverage could also be compared to the amount of coverage accorded to non-minorities.

To further enhance the understanding of both presses' coverage of the Mount Pleasant disturbances, a semantic study of the Mount Pleasant coverage would help to decipher the type of language used in this coverage. Also, in order to assess journalists' usage of cultural values versus journalistic values, a comparative study of the news coverage of an event in two presses from two cultures or countries would go far toward answering the question of to what extent news values as opposed to cultural values, are used by journalists in the creation of news stories.

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