

A Game That Cannot Be Won: Media Framing of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Scandal

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Communication

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Keywords: *Sports, Framing, Duke, Lacrosse, Rape*

May 4, 2009
Blacksburg, Virginia

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ABSTRACT

On March 13, 2006 in Durham, North Carolina, some of the Duke Lacrosse players decided to throw a party. For this particular party, a group of Duke players decided to hire some strippers. Although the night started out harmless enough, the end result was two angry African American women leaving the house of 610 Buchanan Street to alleged sounds of insults and racial epithets. The police arrived a short time later to investigate the scene. Allegations of rape filled the air as one of the strippers indicated to Durham police that she had been raped. From there, implications of race, class, gender, and the university culture became prevalent and important topics for the media to cover as they covered the scandal extensively and made it a prevalent story from April 2006 to April 2007.

Utilizing a content analysis, this study coded for generic, macro and issue-specific frames used by six different newspapers that covered the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal finding some significant results. Additionally, this study employed frame and story valence, as well as frame substance, to further analyze the frames present in the newspapers provided. Furthermore, there appeared to be a significant similarity between the overall story valence and the news story type. Although the majority of frames used were found to be neutral, results found that there was still a great deal of negative media attention in the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal.

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Author's Acknowledgements

This thesis benefited from the insight of the members of my committee, and for that they deserve considerable thanks and gratitude. First, my appreciation to Dr. Tedesco; I would not be here today without your ideas, your explanations of methodology, your sense of humor, and your overall care and concern towards your graduate students. I appreciate all the help you have given me with developing a methodologically sound content analysis without making it considerably overwhelming. Most importantly, I thank you for supporting my thesis when it needed it the most. I am proud to have you as my adviser, chair, and friend. To Dr. Waggenpack for your overall support through this entire project and my graduate growth, I appreciate the opportunity you have given me, supporting my ideas and endeavors. Additionally, I appreciate all the writing help from my proposal and making this study balanced for all fields to read. To Dr. Magee, I appreciate the fact that you have fueled me further into being a quantitative researcher. Your help has led me to creating sound studies, and I will use those lessons throughout my career. I would also like to thank you for stepping in to be a thesis committee member this semester.

I would like to thank Dr. Williams for all his help in supporting this study in the early stages of my graduate development. I appreciate your enthusiasm, care, and concern towards my academic endeavors.

I would like to acknowledge all of my colleagues within the Communication Graduate Department, Thank you for listening to my incessant Duke Lacrosse rants. Having you as friends and colleagues made my life as a graduate student more fun than it

should have been. I am in your debt for all the support you have given me. I wish you all the best with the next phase of your lives and all your future endeavors.

Dedication

To My Mother and my Father: your support, your help, and your patience have been overwhelming. I am thankful for your concern, the time you have sacrificed, the money that you've spent, and your undying love to fuel my academic career. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for teaching me the value of hard work, dedication to my goals, and finding humor in everyday life. Without you, none of this is possible. Thank you.

I. Rationale

Prior framing literature indicates that framing and public perception are major components in mass media coverage. Entman (1993) explains “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). In addition, other studies have featured crisis, from Ryan’s (2004) framing study in news coverage about the war on terror, to deVreese and Boomgaarden’s (2003) study of how the media from multiple countries framed European and their expansion. Mass media have been known to address not only what the public thinks, but also what they should think about a major news story (Cohen, 1963).

In most instances of framing, scholars tend to focus on political figures and their crises. However, in this study, analysis will focus on Duke University as an administrative organization. Furthermore, this study will be viewing how the media framed a crisis situation from the viewpoint of athletes. More specifically, this study will be exploring the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. This was a crisis situation at a private research institution in the southeast that received a great deal of mass media attention. Prior studies indicate that sports stories receive a considerable amount of attention from the local media. A study completed by researchers at an academic institution in the Midwest revealed that 70 percent of all news stories dealt with sports within the university (Goff 2000). Hopwood (2007) wrote that oftentimes the media emphasize negative occurrences or controversy and, due to the allegations presented of first-degree rape, sexual assault, racial epithets, and under aged alcohol consumption, it received a great deal of coverage. Media frames provide a lens by which key elements of a news story can be isolated. Because news can develop a perspective on an issue, the examination of different frames can

expose salience. The Duke Lacrosse team was not only viewed negatively for the allegations of rape by some of its players, but also received a substantial amount of negative media coverage and scrutiny.

Tankard, Hedrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) defined a media frame as the “central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggest what the is issue is using selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (p. 3). This definition will be operationalized in the context of this study and will contribute to framing and crisis literature. Additionally, Semetko and Valkenburg’s (2000) five generic frames will be used in this study: attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, morality, and economic frames. This study will also look at issue-specific frames (de Vreese 1991, 2001) to view consequences and impacts of the Duke rape scandal. Lastly, this thesis will be applying Constantinescu and Tedesco’s (2007) generic macro-frames, including: cynicism, speculation, and metacommunication frames. Furthermore, it will be assessing frame valence (de Vreese & Boomgaarden 2003, Williams 2003, and Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams, and Trammell 2005) frame substance (Williams & Kaid 2006), and present dominant frames (Williams & Kaid et. al. 2006). This study will take a quantitative approach in assessing what frames are most salient and how the media portrays those generic, issue-specific, and macro-frames.

Prior framing literature has examined many social issues and crisis situations. Those situations include health organizations with regards to sanitation (Sellnow & Ulmer 1995, Ulmer & Snider 1998), crisis that deals with accidents (Duhe & Zoch 1994, Seeger & Ulmer 2002) and organizational scandals, (Greenberg & Knight 2004, Cowen & Sellnow 2002).

For the purposes of this study, the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal will be viewed from the media’s perspective in the initial stage of crisis as outlined by Graber’s (1980) study of stages of

crisis. The main objective of this study is to view framing messages in the initial stage of a scandal within an organization. This study will look in depth at the news coverage in six newspapers that covered this scandal and will expand framing and crisis literature on how an organization is framed initially in a time of crisis.

II. The Duke Lacrosse Rape Scandal

The narrative of events of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal presents the chronology as presented by Yeager and Pressler (2007). It is supplemented with accounts of police reports and various testimonies. On March 13, 2006, the Duke lacrosse players were anticipating a game against Cornell University. Because it was school spring break, they were not required to be at practice or any meetings for lacrosse. It was then that Dan Flannery, one of the players, decided to have a party at 610 North Buchanan Boulevard, which was also known as the “Lacrosse House” (Yaeger & Pressler, 2007). Jason Bissey, a neighbor, reported seeing at least five men standing in the back yard playing drinking games. According to the reports from the Duke players, it was a typical party for them (Yaeger & Pressler, 2007).

However, this party escalated into something much larger than anticipated. A few players at the “Lacrosse House” decided that they were going to hire entertainment for the night. According to the police reports, between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., Dan Flannery called the Allure Escort Service and requested two female strippers for the party. The strippers were supposed to arrive at 11 p.m. and dance for two hours for the price of \$800 (Yaeger & Pressler, 2007).

According to Yeager and Pressler (2007), at 11:05 p.m., one of the African-American strippers, Kim, arrived in her black Honda Accord. Bryan Taylor, who drove an unidentified dark sedan, dropped off the second African-American stripper, Crystal Mangum, at the house at 11:45 p.m. At 11:50 p.m. Jason Bissey reported that he saw the girls outside. Yeager and Pressler indicate that at 12:05 a.m. the strippers entered the bathroom to plan their entertainment for the evening. At 12:14 a.m. Reade Seligmann, Duke lacrosse player and one of the accused, telephoned On-Time Taxi and asked for a pick up at a nearby corner of Watts Street and Urban Avenue (Yaeger & Pressler, 2007). Moez Mostafa, owner of On Time Taxi, testified that he

picked up Seligmann and another unidentified person at the street corner and drove them to Wachovia Bank. The Bank's security camera shows Seligmann withdrawing money (payment for the strippers) from the ATM at 12:24 a.m. (Yaeger & Pressler 2007).

According to the players, Crystal had been drunk before she showed up and was unable to dance. Players testified that Kim was upset at Crystal because of her intoxicated state and inability to work with her. The players and the party guests were irate due to the fact there was no dancing by either of the girls (Yaeger & Pressler, 2007). Yeager and Pressler also report that the two strippers left the house, but Crystal needed to return to retrieve her missing shoe and her purse. The door had been locked, but the people at the party let her back in to recover her items. Upon exiting the house, she left with her purse and a shaving kit that belonged to lacrosse player David Evans. While walking away, Crystal fell on the ground in the front yard; Kim came to Crystal's aid and helped her up. Kim helped Crystal into her car, and requested payment from the lacrosse players (Yaeger & Pressler, 2007). When they refused, she made some obscene remarks and lacrosse players responded with some racist statements of their own. According to various news sources, Jason Bissey recalled the exchange between Kim and the Duke players. Kim then called 911 and reported that some people at 610 Buchanan had yelled racial epithets at her and her friend as they walked/drove past the house. The police rushed to the scene, but by the time they arrived, the party had broken up (Yaeger & Pressler 2007).

Yeager and Pressler (2007) indicate that at 1:22 a.m., in a nearby Kroger parking lot, a security guard called the Durham police. According to police reports, Kim asked the security guard to call the police because she was worried about Crystal. Also according to reports, Crystal was drunk and unconscious at this point. Sergeant John Shelton of the Durham police arrived first at the Kroger and made several attempts to remove Crystal from the car. Officer William

Barfield arrived to the scene second and transported the now semi-conscious Crystal to the Durham Center Access, an organization for people having a crisis (Yeager & Pressler, 2007).

According to Yeager and Pressler (2007), during the initial screening process, a nurse asked if Crystal had been raped; she said yes. From there, Officer Barfield reported transporting Crystal to the Duke University Medical Center (DUMC) where Sergeant Shelton, who had been following the two, met Officer Barfield. Crystal was checked into the DUMC and was examined by the sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) (Yeager & Pressler, 2007). While in DUMC, Sergeant Shelton reported questioning Crystal about the night. This time, however, she stated that she had not been raped. Sergeant Shelton called the police station and told them that Crystal recanted her story. Conversely, a second unidentified officer who had been present at the earlier examination told Shelton that Crystal told the SANE nurse that she had been raped. When Sergeant Shelton asked her a third time, Crystal began to cry and refused to talk to him. However, she submitted to a three to four hour rape kit by the SANE nurse (Yeager & Pressler 2007).

According to Yeager and Pressler (2007), the next day, the Duke lacrosse team had an annual bowling game with their coaches as part of their break. During this time, some of the players took head coach Mike Pressler aside and explained the situation that had occurred the night before. Pressler was irate with the players for the dangerous situation, but he supported their view that nothing bad had happened. He told the players to take it off their minds and not tell anyone else about the incident, and it would pass over (Yeager & Pressler 2007).

However, the story would only escalate. Because of Crystal's visit to the DUMC, she filed sexual harassment charges and identified three players, Reade Seligmann, David Evans, and Colin Finnerty as her attackers. In addition, police issued a search warrant for 610 North

Buchanan Boulevard. It was then *The News & Observer* (2007), the primary paper in the Raleigh area, published the first story about the alleged rape, though no names were mentioned.

A wave of mass-media attention from across the nation ensued. Various mentions of DNA testing became very prevalent in news media, and even though the DNA tests came up negative, the story pressed on. Mike Nifong, the district attorney in Durham, led the story and insisted the Duke Lacrosse players were guilty of rape. From there, news reporters, activists, Duke students, and Duke professors told the lacrosse players to confess to their crime. For over a year, the story remained in the headlines. It was not until April 11, 2007, that Reade Seligmann, Colin Finnerty, and David Evans were found innocent of all charges. It has been well over three years since the beginning of the Duke rape scandal, and it is still being covered briefly to this day.

The Duke lacrosse team did not receive much media coverage before the event occurred. However, the team was bombarded with many stories and quotes after the incident, indicating that this case was perceived as a major issue. Mike Nifong was quoted on ABC on March 27, 2006, stating, “My guess is that some of this stonewall of silence that we have seen may tend to crumble once charges start to come out.” He was also quoted in *The News & Observer* on March 28, 2006, calling the lacrosse players “hooligans” and urged potential witnesses to come forward (2007). *New York Times* writer Rick Lyman’s headline in the March 29, 2006 issue read “Duke Players Practice While Speculation Builds” (Lyman, March 29, 2006). Lyman quoted Duke president Mike Broadhead stating, “The facts of the March 13 episode remain unclear”. These statements indicate that a crisis was present, but the facts were, as of yet undetermined. The initial coverage serves as a framework to introduce the case. Also, the uncertainty within the case demonstrates that the scandal was in its initial phase. For the purposes of this study, the initial

crisis stage will begin March 18, 2006 and will end April 10, 2006. This time period follows immediately after the first report of the alleged rape from *The News & Observer*.

This thesis examines mediated framing messages within the initial crisis stage. Specific frames, frame valence, frame substance, and dominant frames will be evaluated in the initial crisis period in order to gain a better understanding of how media frames an organizational crisis.

II. a. Context of the Scandal

Yeager and Pressler (2007) call the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal the “perfect storm”. *The News & Observer* agreed, with multiple articles mentioning that the Duke Lacrosse scandal had implications of strains among race, class, and gender. Race, class and gender played an important role because these issues appeared to be most prevalent in media coverage of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. However, this story in particular was covered for almost a year. This study will briefly examine the aspects that made the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal so prevalent in the news coverage.

Race

One of the issues that made the Duke rape scandal so prevalent was the aspect of race. The strippers that came to the Duke party were African American, while all of the players that had to submit DNA tests were Caucasian. Yeager and Pressler (2007) state that according to the police records, the accuser, Crystal, asserted that she was raped by multiple white men. Additionally, as the strippers left the house, the players yelled out racial epithets at the two strippers, as neighbor Jason Bissey reported. This exchange of harassing words seemed to add tension and strain race relations. According to the Office of News and Communication at Duke University (2006), on May 1, 2006, The Black Panthers, a social activist group, made an appearance in Durham to protest. Additionally local television station WRAL reported on April

15, 2006, Reverend Jesse Jackson said that despite the outcome, he would pay Crystal Mangum's tuition at UNC Central in Durham, North Carolina. As these reports indicate, race was a primary concern within the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal.

Class

Another factor made prevalent by media was the idea of the class strain between the strippers and the players. Crystal Mangum was a student at UNC Central in Durham, North Carolina. She worked as a stripper at the Allure Escort service in Durham. *The New York Times* (2006) reported on April 2, 2006 that she was a single mother of two. The newspaper also implied that Crystal was poor and struggling financially during the scandal. On the other hand, the Duke players were mostly from the northeast. According to CNN transcripts from *The Nancy Grace Show* on April 18, 2006, the houses owned by parents of the players were valued at more than \$100,000 and that average annual incomes were significantly higher than the average income in the Durham area. The players were on full scholarship to Duke University, which is ranked among the top ten universities in the country by *U.S. News and World Report* rankings (2009). Therefore, Duke University is considered to be a very prestigious institution. The players were generally considered to be extremely privileged and well to do.

Additionally, there was strain between Durham and Duke University. *The Princeton Review* reported in 2008 that Duke ranked number 7 in "Town gown relations are strained." Duke University is a highly prestigious university, while *The News & Observer* reported that various sources considered Durham to be a mostly poor city in North Carolina (Hooley, 2006). There has definitely been some class struggle between the two communities as *The News & Observer* had reported on April 5, 2006 (Hooley, 2006). After the rape allegations, *The New York Times* reported that many Duke students were afraid to go out in downtown Durham at

night (Macur 2006 p. 2). This article gave implications that many were not sure what would happen to them if they did go downtown. It seemed these Duke students thought the town of Durham was upset with them and that students would have to proceed with caution when they left the University. Additionally, the Durham city council was furious of the way that the media depicted Durham and its relation to Duke. *The News & Observer* reported that Mayor Bill Bell was growing tired of the allegations about the city, due to the idea that Durham was viewed poorly and did not get any recognition for the strides that had been made to improve the city (Hooley, 2006). Nevertheless, the strain between Duke and the city of Durham became a primary concern within the scandal.

Prosecution

Another reason the Duke rape scandal was so prevalent was due to the prosecutions of rape and the persistence of District Attorney Mike Nifong. During the initial crisis coverage, Nifong asserted that the Duke players were guilty. *The News & Observer* quoted Nifong on March 30, 2006 stating, "How does DNA exonerate you? It's either a match or there's not a match," Nifong said. "... If the only thing that we ever have in this case is DNA, then we wouldn't have a case." (Nifong 2006 p. 1)

The initial crisis coverage was focused on the DNA presence or absence. Although there were no positive matches, Nifong argued that just because there was no DNA found, a rape still could have occurred. Despite the lack of DNA, Nifong continued to press forward. Thus, the media continued to cover the allegations as they were made due to Nifong's persistence with the case.

Prior Reputation

The News & Observer reported that many of the Duke players had prior arrests in their pasts. (Nesbitt, Niolet, & Perez 2006) A handful of the players had prior misdemeanors before the rape scandal had occurred. Additionally, a few of the players got into a fight in Washington D.C. shortly after the allegations. Lastly, Ryan McFayden, one of the lacrosse players that was not convicted, had written an e-mail to fellow lacrosse players about the scandal, where he mentioned skinning and murdering strippers. All of these prior charges made the situation that much worse. Due to the fact that many players had prior charges, they were considered to be “thugs” and “hooligans”. It gave the perception that because of prior misdemeanors, rape may have been possible or likely. Due to the fact that there were prior charges on record and inflammatory events afterwards, it fueled news sources in the initial crisis coverage to suggest that the players were guilty of sexual assault.

Overall, there were many aspects that made the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal so prevalent. Race, class, prosecution, and prior reputation were some of the main issues in the initial coverage, and they are perhaps why the scandal continued as long as it did.

III. Literature Review

This thesis first will offer a discussion of framing theory, highlighting the aspects that are most prevalent within the context of this study. This study will present the various definitions of framing and the definition that will be used in this study. In addition, this section will review the various generic, issue-specific, and macro-frames discussed by prior literature, to be followed by an examination of various frame dimensions that will be utilized in this analysis. Frame dimensions, valence, prognostic versus diagnostic frames, and dominant frames will be reviewed and discussed.

Following that review, this thesis will analyze crisis literature for an understanding of how the media frames crisis. It will be important to evaluate the crisis framework to determine the timeframe in which to analyze the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. Additionally, it will be important to view how prior studies have explored this scandal, specifically. Finally, as this case has to deal with a lacrosse team, this study will look at prior literature about scandal within sports. This section will review the framework of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal to assess if there are any prior findings that relate to the scandal or sports itself.

III. a. Framing Defined

Because semantics play such an important role in communication research, it is not surprising that many researchers disagree on what “framing” and “frames” mean. There are certainly conflicting definitions of framing. Many scholars have made arguments for how people should look at framing, and how framing should be categorized. For the purposes of this study, framing is operationalized by the definition offered by Tankard, Hedrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991). They defined a frame as the “central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggest what the is issue is using selection, emphasis, exclusion, and

elaboration” (p. 3). Lipmann (1922) was one of the earliest scholars to review and discuss the concept of framing. Similarly, Tuchman (1978) argued that media frames organize the world, both by the journalists who provide the coverage and the audience that views, organizes, and relies on the message that is provided. Snow and Benford (1992) defined framing as “an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’” (p. 137). This process involves selecting, emphasizing, and interpreting objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences within a person’s past or present environment. De Vreese and Semetko (2001) argued that framing is selecting, organizing, and emphasizing certain aspects within reality, with the exclusion of others. In essence, frames are more than an attribution of words or phrases that affects an audience’s interpretation. Rather, framing becomes the underlying unit of analysis within the media’s coverage of an event. Entman (1993) defined framing as “select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text.” Gamson and Modigliani (1987) defined framing as “the central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (p. 52). Tankard (1997) mentions that in media coverage, framing tends to emphasize and select certain aspects within a story.

Framing is a process involving selection and salience. A frame selects certain aspects of reality and makes them appear more salient than other details of a story and thus influences how an audience might interpret it (Entman, 1993). For example, the media can convey a time of war as a destructive waste rather than efforts to avoid tyranny. (Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams, & Trammell, 2005). Although there is an extensive body of literature on framing, there are still gaps within the research.

III. a. i. Framing Applications

Given the definition of framing, it is important to see how frames have been applied in research. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) created a set of five generic frames in political news coverage. These frames consisted of (1) attribution of responsibility, (2) human interest, (3) conflict, (4) morality, and (5) economic frames. Responsibility is defined as a frame that presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). Human interest is defined as a frame that brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). Conflict is defined as a frame emphasizing conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). Morality is defined as a frame that puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). Economic consequences is defined as a frame that reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). These generic frames were the frames that were initially used to analyze media coverage.

De Vreese (1991, 2001) expanded on these standards and focused on issue-specific frames that had to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Essentially, some frames could not be classified as generic frames, due to the fact that many news stories address different issues. As a result, some news stories could not fall under the category of generic frames. Frames such as Social impact and Political consequences were frames that were not mentioned in the generic frames but were found to be used frequently in mass media coverage. De Vreese argued that

some frames could not be broadly defined as easily as others, and had to deal with the specific case that was being evaluated. This becomes a primary frame category because generic frames alone, due to the differing issues, cannot analyze some frames within the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal.

Constantinescu and Tedesco (2007) argue that there are additional macro-frames that should be included in the literature. Macro-frames are defined as, “universal thematic organizing structures that serve as foundations to generic frames” (p. 450). Additionally, Constantinescu and Tedesco (2007) argue that any of the macro-frames can encompass other generic frames. The frames that are included in their study include: (1) cynicism frames, which are defined as, “frames associated with the powerlessness or sarcasm/irony” (p. 452) within the story at hand; (2) speculation frames, which are defined as, “those frames referred to either predicting a course of action or providing hypothetical explanations for what happened” and (3) meta-communication, which is defined as, “includ[ing] communication about others’ communication (i.e. other media sources or individuals)”. Macro-frames become an important aspect due to the fact these frames can help the understanding of generic frames.

All of the frames mentioned serve an important purpose in analyzing the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. The frames listed will serve as a unit of analysis to view the ways that media viewed the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. This study aims to add to the prior literature and will evaluate what frames are most prevalent in each frame category.

III. a. ii. Framing Dimensions

Williams and Kaid (2005) argue that all frames (e.g., generic, issue-specific, and macro) are not created the same way. They argue that these previously mentioned frames could also be classified in the context of substantive versus ambiguous frames. Substantive frames are detailed

and informative. The idea behind substantive frames is that they are clear to the reader and are easily recognizable. They provide a clear description of what frame is being used and do not require further information. Conversely, ambiguous frames are vague, open to different interpretations, have no context, or provide unclear information. Essentially, ambiguous frames do not provide a great detail of context about the issue at hand. Although the frame is present, the reader may seek out additional information, since the framed context unclear or incomplete.

Valenced frames “are indicative of ‘good and bad’ and (implicitly) carry positive and/or negative elements” (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003 p. 363). With valence, there is an underlying tone to the story. Williams (2003), in an analysis of the Gulf-War, argued that the media lost all of their objectivity and became supportive of government actions stating, “Journalists quickly abandoned all pretense of objectivity and became the uncritical mouthpiece of the US state” (p. 177). Furthermore, Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams, and Trammell (2005) examined the initial news coverage of the Gulf War II and noted that there were some regional differences in frames used in their coverage. There was also a difference between tone in coverage between countries that supported the war and the countries who opposed it

Snow and Benford (1988) explored specific frame dimensions and frame categories such as prognostic and diagnostic frames. They describe diagnostic framing as problem identification and attribution. Meanwhile, prognostic framing emphasizes what the outcome or solution will be (Snow & Benford, 1988, Landreville, K., & LeGrange, A. 2007). Essentially, diagnostic frames make mention of what has occurred and describe the problem at hand. Whereas prognostic framing looks at the future implications and what will happen within the case. Other prior research has found a presence of prognostic and diagnostic framing in coverage of war (Williams, 2004)

In analyzing coverage of European Parliament from ten countries, Williams, Kaid et al. (2006) discovered the frames that occurred most frequently in the media coverage. In their study, they found that countries within the European Parliament (UK, Spain, and Germany) utilized the consequence frame in nine out of every ten stories. The primary use of the consequence frame within media coverage classifies a dominant frame. A dominant frame is the organizing idea that appears most in the story. Although there may be other frames that occur within the context of a story, the dominant is the most prevalent and most used within the coverage.

Within the context of framing, it is important to evaluate the way frames are analyzed. This thesis will evaluate the dimensions of the 17 frames that will be explained in the method section. Valence, substance, and dominance will be assessed for each frame present. For example, a generic frame of economic consequences may be presented positively (valence), ambiguously (substance), and appear as the dominant frame in the story (dominance).

III. b. Crisis Communication Defined

This study aims to look at the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal as a crisis within the university. Due to the fact that prior literature usually uses crisis literature to describe a scandal, this thesis will view prior definitions of crisis. These definitions are important to analyze due to the crisis that occurred at Duke as an organization and the community around it.

Crises are predictable, nonroutine, yet untimely events that have possible and/or actual consequences for an organization, its organization's reputation, and its multiple publics, stakeholders, and their interests (Benoit, 1997; Brinson & Benoit, 1996; Coombs, 1999; Hearit, 1994; Heath, 1997; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998; Seeger & Ulmer, 2002). Coombs (1999) argues that crises are also threats, meaning they have the potential to create negative and/or undesirable outcomes. Lastly, Mitroff (2003) found that a positive public image could be

destroyed almost instantly in a crisis.

Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer (1998) define crisis “as a specific, unexpected, nonroutine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or perceived to threaten an organization’s high priority goals” (p. 233). Weick (1988) states that the crises are low/probability and high/risk scenarios that threaten goals of an organization. Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer (1998) debate that some crises are not at all predictable. They define some crises as a “surprise crisis” in which “Surprise is a consequence of being suddenly confronted with circumstances seen as unlikely and inconsistent with routine, familiar activities” (p. 235). Mitroff (1992) defines an organizational crisis as “normal events triggered by the complexity of the system itself and by faulty decisions as well as by the interrelationship between technological systems and the humans that manage them.”

III. b. i. Crisis Time framework

For purposes of this study, the initial crisis stage will be evaluated. Graber’s (1980) suggestion is that there are three stages of crisis coverage by media which seems to echo media functions (p. 229). During the first stage, “media is the prime source not only for the general public, but also for the public officials concerned with the crisis. Its key roles are to describe what has happened and to help coordinate the relief work. Its top priority is to get accurate information, which, even if it is bad news, relieves uncertainty and calms people” (p.233-234). In the second stage, the media cover the event and try to make sense of the event. Plans are formed to address the needs of the victim(s) and to repair the damage. Graber suggests that the third stage overlaps with the first two stages. In an effort to provide context, the role of the media is to turn a crisis into a larger and longer perspective.

Li (2005) incorporated Graber’s theory and created a time frame for the first, second, and

third stages of the crisis and used those to evaluate media coverage within the September 11 crisis. The study viewed the first stage from 8:48 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., found it to be the most important stage of the incident, and covered the most intensive part of the crisis. The time periods following reflected the rapid change of the incident.

The initial stage timeframe will be utilized in this study. It will be important to evaluate the initial stage of the crisis since prior literature found that the initial stage was the most important stage of the crisis (Graber, 1980). Additionally, it will be interesting to view the initial stage of crisis within the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal because of the overwhelming uncertainty that occurred in the initial stage before the DNA results were found.

III. b. ii. Prior Duke Lacrosse Findings

It is important to gain a better understanding of how other scholars viewed media framing within the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal to see if there are any similarities and if any assumptions can be ascertained from prior findings. This study viewed prior literature in regards to the framing of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. Within the articles found, there was little mention between the difference of crisis and scandal. Furthermore, there were no findings of any actual generic, macro, or issue-specific frames within the discourse of the articles present.

Barnett (2008) mentions that the Duke Lacrosse Story was a scandal (p. 14). However, she does not make any clear distinction between crisis and scandal. Additionally, within Barnett's research questions she asks about how the news media framed allegations of rape and sexual assault and the accuser and the accused. Although there are no specific frames used, Barnett concluded that the scandal was more about a drama at Duke, rather than a violence scandal.

Conversely, Fortunato (2008) analyzed the Duke lacrosse case from the response of Duke

University as a part of image restoration. Within the findings, Fortunato uses the term “crisis” and “crisis response” frequently, giving the implication that the Duke rape scandal was more of a crisis than a scandal.

Although prior research explores the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal, none of the prior studies apply the generic, issue-specific and macro-frames to the scandal. The prior literature does not evaluate the scandal during the initial crisis stage as defined in this study.

III. b. iii. Prior Scandals and Sports

Although there is fair amount of literature dedicated to sports, there is not as much literature dedicated to sports in relation to a scandal. Primarily, the sports scandal literature focuses on the steroid use in baseball. It is still important for this study to look at how the media has framed scandals with relation to sports and athletes. Within scandal, most of the literature indicates a negative valence within sports and scandal.

Denham (1996) examined how *Sports Illustrated* used negative frames in the coverage of steroid use in the 1980’s. In his findings, Denham demonstrated how *Sports Illustrated* was able to aid in building and agenda on anti-steroid abuse legislation.

Similarly, McCullough (2006) looked at media framing within the major baseball steroid scandal. The results indicated four frames that were found to be statistically significant. Conflict, Player Consequences, Conflict, Diagnostic, and MLB (Major League Baseball consequences were found to have a negative frame valence.

Hardin, Simpson, Whiteside, and Garris (2007) looked at framing within newspapers coverage in relation to the fairness of equal scholarships going to both men and women in collegiate athletics, which is known as Title IX. What they found was that although most stories avoided negative framing devices, stories about Title IX more often used negative framing that

could perpetuate misunderstanding about the law in the NCAA.

This study aims to look at specific aspects within sport scandal in order to view how the media frames scandals involving sports and athletes. It will be interesting to determine and analyze media framing of this sports scandal and its related characters and issues.

IV. Research Questions

Given the information about Duke Lacrosse and the prior framing and crisis literature review, several research questions consistent with the prior literature on framing were developed.

However, before presenting the research questions, it is necessary to specify how framing is operationalized in this study. As already discussed in the literature review, Tankard, Hedrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) defined a frame as the “central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggest what the is issue is using selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (p. 3)

In light of the literature review presented above, the following research questions have been formulated.

RQ1a: What frames were most prevalent in the initial newspaper coverage in the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal (DLRS)?

RQ1b: What is the dominant frame mentioned in the initial coverage of the DLRS?

RQ2: In the DLRS, is there a relationship between substantive/ambiguous frames and frame valence in the initial coverage of the crisis?

RQ3a: Within the initial crisis coverage what is the overall frame valence of the DLRS?

RQ3b: What was the valence of the story in relation to the dominant frame present?

RQ4: What sources are used most prevalently in media coverage of the DLRS?

RQ5a: What is the overall story valence in the DLRS?

RQ5b: What is the overall news story valence by the news type (hard news, soft news, or editorial) in the DLRS?

V. Research Method

This study uses quantitative content analysis as the method to measure the presence or absence of media frames, to evaluate the valence (positive, negative neutral), to review frame substance (ambiguous v. substantive), the dominant frame, and the overall valence of the story.

V a. Sample

The study used content from six newspapers collected from March 18, 2006 to April 10, 2006— when the first story appeared in from *The News & Observer* to when results revealed that there was no DNA present. For purposes of this study, the article was the unit of analysis, and all Duke Rape scandal-related stories, including hard news, soft news, and editorials, were collected during this time period.

The study selected the dates March 18, 2006 to April 10, 2006, based on Graber's theory of media framing in stages of a crisis. This time period was chosen because the media was still trying to gain a better understanding of the scandal at hand. The span of dates was much larger than most previous studies; the reasoning behind this was (1) the scandal did not have national impact therefore did not have immediate national coverage since the first article was published; (2) the scandal took longer to understand and comprehend than the prior example like September 11; and (3) due to the fact that the crisis was a scandal, it was harder to identify resolution.

The units of analysis included the six newspapers and the 108 newspaper articles that this study evaluated. The newspaper articles involved in this study include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The News & Observer*. The papers were selected for geographical distribution and circulation. According to the Audit Bureau Circulation in 2006, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* are all among the top 15 circulated newspapers in

the United States. Additionally, this study looked at *The News & Observer*, which is located in Raleigh, North Carolina, because it was considered the epicenter of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. *The News & Observer* also contains the highest reader circulation of the Raleigh, Durham area (Audit Bureau Circulation, 2006).

There were 108 news articles found in LexisNexis from the sample newspapers provided. “Duke Lacrosse” and “Duke Rape” were the keywords used to search the LexisNexis database. Due to the fact that *The News & Observer* does not appear on the LexisNexis search engine, newspaper articles were gathered from the actual newspaper’s web archive section. Of the 108 newspaper articles, 9 articles came from the *Washington Post*, 12 from the *USA Today*, 6 from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 from *The New York Times*, 9 from the *Boston Globe*, and 52 from *The News & Observer*. *The News & Observer* had a much larger sample due to the fact it was considered prominent news within the Raleigh/Durham area. All of the articles were collected, systematically downloaded from the LexisNexis database, and stored on a personal computer.

V b. Variables

The content analysis has identified the existing frames in the newspaper coverage, coding each story for a number of variables. The study examined the presence/absence list of 41 variables and the valence of 20 variables, including story author, stages of crisis, story focus, source of attribution, frames both generic and issue-specific, substantive versus ambiguous frames, frame valence, dominant frames, actors present and valence, and overall valence.

Two coders were asked to identify the newspaper story author as follows: Staff writer: someone that works for the paper that doesn’t give his/her opinion. Syndicated columnist: a columnist that works for the paper but is allowed to give his/her opinion, Independent columnist:

a columnist who can give his/her opinion and who is a contributor to the paper. News agency anything that is written from the associated press and not from the actual paper itself.

Coders will identify any of the following issues/ topics focused on in the story by selecting those present in the article:

- (1) Duke Players: The Duke players category emphasizes coverage that involves the mentions of Duke lacrosse players. This includes coverage concerning the players themselves, whether they had been indicted or were just a part of the team.
- (2) DNA Presence/Absence: The Duke players category emphasizes coverage that involves any mention of DNA. The coverage can emphasize DNA presence, DNA absence, or simply that DNA tests were to be done, or had to be determined in this case.
- (3) Political Figures: The political figures category emphasizes coverage that involves any elected officials. This category includes examples such as the Mayor or Durham or the Governor of Raleigh.
- (4) Economic Issues: The economic issues category emphasizes coverage that focuses any economic consequences or issues that the case was associated with. This focus may also cover tuition at Duke, annual income of families at Duke, and annual income of citizens in Durham.
- (5) Rallies: The rallies category emphasizes coverage that focuses on any rallies for or against the Duke players. For example, The “Take Back the Night” rally occurred on Duke’s campus during the initial coverage could be considered an example of this category.
- (6) Lacrosse Season: The lacrosse season category emphasizes coverage that focuses on Duke’s lacrosse season. This coverage can include stories about forfeiting games and possible impacts on other teams in the NCAA.

- (7) Court Hearings: The court hearings category emphasizes coverage that deals with specific court dates and events in court. Any information that comes from court reports within the Duke Rape Case is included.
- (8) Duke Concerns: The Duke concerns category emphasizes coverage that concerns and impacts Duke University. Any coverage that mentions concerns of: Duke students, the Duke president, or the reputation of Duke is included.
- (9) Durham Concerns: The Durham concerns category emphasizes coverage that concerns and impacts the town of Durham. Any coverage that mentions concerns of Durham citizens, the Mayor of Durham, or the reputation of Durham is included.
- (10) Players found Innocent: The players found innocent category emphasizes coverage that concerns the Duke players being innocent in the case. Any coverage that emphasizes the Duke players were innocent, innocent until proven guilty, or articles that emphasize that people should wait is included.
- (11) Other: Any coverage that does not involve the aforementioned story focuses will be included.

Source Attribution

Coders will identify the following list of possible sources as present or absent in the story:

- (1) Indicted Players
- (2) Other Players
- (3) Mike Nifong
- (4) Team Officials
- (5) Richard Broadhead

- (6) Anonymous
- (7) NCAA Officials
- (8) NCAA Delegates
- (9) Political Figures
- (10) Duke Professors
- (11) Police Chief
- (12) Police Officials
- (13) Other

Frames

Generic Frames

Each of the generic frames will be coded. Based on previous definitions provided by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) this study will be viewing the five generic frames.

(1) Conflict: This frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest (Neuman et al. 1992, Semetko & Valkenburg 2000) This includes coverage that emphasizes conflict between Duke Lacrosse Team and Mike Nifong, Duke Lacrosse Team and Duke University, Mike Pressler and Duke University, Duke University and Mike Nifong, Students and Duke Lacrosse Team, NCAA and Duke University, NCAA and Duke Lacrosse.

(2) Human Interest: This frame brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem (Neuman et al. 1992, Semetko & Valkenburg 2000). This includes coverage that deals with mental health and potential well being of Crystal Mangum.

(3) Economic Consequences: This frame reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country

(Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). This includes coverage that discusses how the scandal may impact the economy surrounding Duke, the team, coaches, or the individual players.

(4) Morality: This frame puts the event, problem, and issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). This includes coverage that examines the ethics behind those involved in the Duke rape scandal.

(5) Responsibility: This frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). This includes coverage that emphasizes or examines whose responsibility it is to help with prevention of sexual assault, or faulting other sources for informing NCAA athletes that they can do as they please.

Issue-Specific Frames

Each of the issue-specific frames will be coded for. Based on previous definitions provided by de Vreese (1991, 2001) this study will evaluate 7 additional frames that are specific to the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal

(6) Social Impact: This frame includes coverage that deals with the impact of the general public, not mentioning Duke specifically, but overall impact of Duke, Duke students, Duke administration, Durham citizens, Durham politicians, and Durham in general in this situation

(7) Impact on NCAA: This frame includes coverage that deals with the impact of binge drinking and sexual assault amongst other universities. Additionally, it includes coverage that deals with how the NCAA is influenced by this scandal.

(8) Impact on Duke: This frame includes coverage that deals with the impact of Duke, Duke Students, Duke faculty, and the lacrosse team. Any coverage that deals with the impact that Duke

has received based on the scandal.

(9) Political Consequences: This frame includes coverage that discusses the political consequences for the University, key figures, or the national agenda.

(10) Duke Consequences: This frame includes coverage that examines what the impact will be on the University itself and the penalties or scrutiny they have faced following the allegations concerning the rape scandal.

(11) Player Consequences: This frame includes coverage that examines what the impact will be on the Duke Lacrosse Team following the allegations concerning the rape scandal.

(12) Public Reaction/Backlash: This frame includes coverage that emphasizes the public's reaction to the issue of the Duke rape scandal, court hearings, or the investigations of those involved with the case.

Macro Frames

Each of the macro frames will be coded for. Based on previous definitions provided by Constantinescu and Tedesco (2007) this study will evaluate the three macro-frames:

(13) Cynicism: This frame includes coverage that reflects attitudes of distasteful or jaded negativity, especially as a general distrust of others' integrity or motives

(14) Metacommunication: This frame includes coverage that provides the authors own opinion, if the journalist cites other journalists, if the story mentions communication strategies by Duke University, or coverage that mentions how news media has handled the crisis

(15) Speculation: This frame includes coverage that provides a speculation of what has happened or will happen, if the story mentions any hypothetical assumptions about the event, or if the story asks any rhetorical questions or inference about Duke, or the Duke lacrosse team.

Additional Frame Classifications

(16) Diagnostic: This frame includes coverage that examines the processes in the investigations, the testing methods of DNA samples amongst the Lacrosse team.

(17) Prognostic: This frame includes coverage that attempts to predict the outcome of the investigations, the results of the DNA samples, the verdict of the case, and the future of the Lacrosse team.

(18) Other: This includes coverage that illustrates anything that falls outside of the previous frame categories.

Frames are operationalized by Tankard, Hedrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991), who defined a frame as the “central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggest what the is issue is using selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (p.

3). With this definition in mind, this study will be determining the presence and absence of generic and issue-specific frames.

Substantive/Ambiguous Frames:

Coders evaluated if generic, issue-specific, or macro frames have a substantive characteristic frame (i.e. very specifically defined, one meaning to the frame) or an ambiguous characteristic frame (i.e. open to interpretation, may be more than one meaning to the frame).

The coder typed a one or a two and write it in the space provided.

Frame Valence

Coders indicated if the frame is present or absent, and then determine whether or not the frame is perceived to be positive, negative, or neutral.

Dominant Frame

In the story, there will be a frame that is present and most prevalent. Coders determined the most prevalent frame and identify the frame from the list above.

Overall Valence:

Coders identified the valence of the piece as positive, negative, or neutral. Overall story tone will be determined by the following: story headline, valence of content, and the amount of content devoted to each aspect. The overall valence was determined by support for the individuals, the action taken, or the topic discussed and view whether the author or reporter criticizes the actions made by the team or if he/she supports the innocence of the team.

V c. Procedure

The two coders were provided with a code sheet (Appendix A) and a codebook (Appendix B). The coders coded the manifest content from the newspaper articles present and will assess the findings with the coding sheet. The coding book provides detailed explanation for each content category, if the other coder failed to comprehend some of the meanings presented in the coding sheet.

In order to analyze, coders read the transcript once to get the overall message of each article. Then, they read the article a second time and identified the frames, the frame valence, the frame substance, and the dominant frames within each article. Third, they identified any notable quotes or descriptions within the transcript to help determine the story focus, source attribution, and the dominant frame.

Coders read the manifest content of the newspaper presented in the initial crisis phase. They coded for all the aforementioned frames and entered the data into an excel file, which was transferred to an SPSS file. They each coded 16 articles (14.8%) of the 108 available articles then checked for inter-coder reliability and calculate it with Holsti's Formula (1969). In the formula ($C. R. = 2m / n_1 + n_2$), m equals the number of coding decisions upon which the two coders agree. Intercoder reliability was assessed using a sample of 16 articles and reached +.89

overall reliability with a range of .84 to 1.00 using Holsti's formula. After calculating inter-coder reliability, the remaining articles were coded and entered into an excel file which will later be transferred into an SPSS file. The data was collected and analyzed using the SPSS software.

VI. Results

In order to answer Research Question 1a, the frequency of frames was analyzed to determine which were most prevalent in newspaper articles. Three types of frame categories were used (generic, macro, and issue-specific), with each category type containing multiple sub-categories of frames. For example, there were five types of generic frames analyzed, three macro-frames, and multiple issue-specific frames. Table 1 shows the frequency of frames for each of the categories and sub-categories of frames.

As a first step to answer this question, the five generic frames established in previous literature were assessed and compared. Table 1 shows results for the frequency of each of the five generic frames (conflict, responsibility, human interest, morality, and economic consequences) as contained in the sample (N=108). *Conflict* was the most prevalent generic frame, being present 101 out of 108 times (93.5%). *Responsibility* was also prevalent in a majority (80 of 108, 74.1%) of the newspaper articles. *Human Interest* (37 of 108, 34.7%) and *Morality* (24 of 108, 22.2%) were all regularly used. *Economic Consequences* (8 of 108, 7.4%) was the least mentioned of the generic frames.

In addition to generic frames, issue-specific frames were content analyzed. Of the issue-specific frames, *Impact on Duke* was the most prevalent frame. *Impact on Duke* was mentioned in 54 of 108 articles (50%). *Social Impact* (51 of 108, 47.2%), *Player Consequences* (41 of 108, 38%), *Public Reaction/Backlash* (35 of 108, 32.4%), and *Duke Consequences* (27 of 108, 25%) were among the recurring frames within the issue-specific frames. *Impact on NCAA* (5 of 108, 4.6%) was mentioned in very few of the articles, and *Political Consequences* (0 of 108, 0%) was not mentioned at all in the 108 newspaper articles.

Furthermore, macroframes were content analyzed. The three macro-frames, as identified by Constantinescu and Tedesco (2007) as *Cynicism*, *Speculation*, and *Metacommunication*, were also assessed. *Speculation* (34 of 108, 31.5%) was found as a recurring frame within the initial coverage. *Cynicism* (10 of 108 9.3%) and *Metacommunication* (7 of 108, 6.5%) were the macro frames that were not found to be prevalent in the newspaper articles.

Of the additional frame types listed in the coding sheet, the *Diagnostic* frame was the most prevalent of the macro-frames. The *Diagnostic* frame was present 88 times in 108 articles (81.5%). The *Prognostics* frame was a prevalent frame being mentioned 20 times of 108 articles (18.5%).

Similarly to Research Question 1a, in order to answer Research Question 1b, the frequency of dominant frames was analyzed to determine which were most prevalent in the 108 newspaper articles. The dominant frame category is used to determine which frames are not only present in articles, but also which frames are used as a dominant reporting strategy. Additionally, the same three types of frame categories were used as mentioned in RQ1a.

As seen in Table 2, the *Conflict* frame was found to be most prevalent within the dominant frame in generic and overall frames (38 of 108, 35.2%). *Human Interest* (13 of 108, 12%) and *Responsibility* (10 of 108, 9.3%) were found to be dominant frames in 23 of the articles. *Morality* was not nearly as frequent as the other generic frames (3 of 108, 2.8%). Generic frames in their entirety were found to be dominant in 64 of the 108 articles found in the sample (59.2%).

Conversely, the issue-specific frames were dominant sporadically. *Social Impact* was not prevalent in the articles (2 of 108, 1.9%). *Player Consequences* was mentioned once of 108

articles (.9%). *Public Reaction* (7 of 108, 6.5%) and *Impact on Duke* (9 of 108, 8.3%) were more frequent in the findings than the other issue-specific frames.

Of the Macro-frames, *Metacommunication* (2 of 108, 1.9%) and *Speculation* (5 of 108, 4.6%) were mentioned irregularly within the 108 newspaper articles analyzed.

Furthermore, the additional frame category had dominant frames present in 18 of 108 of the newspaper articles (16.7%). *Diagnostics* had a frequency of 15 (13.9%) being a re-occurring frame amongst news briefs and re-cap articles. The *Prognostics* frame (3 of 108, 2.8%) was mentioned periodically in the initial coverage of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal.

In order to answer Research Question 2, the frame substance and the frame valence of the present dominant frames were compared and analyzed. All of the frame categories from RQ1a and RQ1b were assessed. The findings of the dominant frame results from RQ1b were used, and the study analyzed the 14 dominant frames found in the newspaper articles. A cross tabulation was performed between frame substance and frame valence between the dominant frames that were present in the findings. The Pearson Chi-Square results indicated four of the 18 (*Responsibility*, *Impact on Duke*, *Social Impact*, and *Cynicism*) frames present were found to be significant.

Of the generic frames, the *Responsibility* frame had a difference in the valence, $X^2 = 7.35$ (1), $p = .007$. While not significant at the $p < .05$ level, the *Conflict* frame approached significance and reveal that substantive frames were more likely to be reported with a negative slant, $X^2 = 2.83$ (1), $p = .09$.

Of the issue-specific frames, there were two dominant frames that disclosed a significant difference in the frame valence and frame substance. The results reveal a significant difference in the valence of the *Impact on Duke* frame, $X^2 = 8.92$ (1), $p < .01$, as well as the *Social Impact*

frame, $X^2= 3.93 (1)$, $p < .05$. Much like *Conflict* and *Responsibility*, both *Impact on Duke* and *Social Impact*, when reported as a substantive frame, had a highly significant negative slant.

Only one of the macro-frames was found to have a significant difference. The results showed a significant difference in the *Cynicism* frame, $X^2= 4.29 (1)$, $p = .038$, respectively.

In order to answer Research Question 3a, all 588 of the present frames found in the newspaper articles were analyzed. Of those frames found, each frame was coded as having positive, negative, or neutral valence. The frequency of the valence was analyzed to determine the overall frame valence in the coverage of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. All of the frames were used from the prior research questions. From there, the findings indicated which frames were the most positive, the most negative, or neutral.

From the tabulated results, the majority of the frames were found to be neutral in their context. However, among the presented frames, the generic frames were found to have the most negative valence. *Responsibility* was found to be the most negative generic frame. *Responsibility* was also found to be the most negative frame of all the 17 frames mentioned (26 of 108, 24.1%). Additionally, *Conflict* (15 of 108, 13.9%), and *Morality* (16 of 108, 14.8%) had a reoccurring negative frequency. *Human Interest* was found to be the most positive frame, with a frequency of 4 of 108 (3.7%). The negative slant of the *Human Interest* frame was only slightly higher at a frequency of 5 of 108 (4.6%).

Of the issue-specific frames, only one frame had a significant slant. *Impact on Duke* had a frequency of 14 of 108 (13%). *Player consequences* was found to have a re-occurring negative slant at 11 of 108 (10.2%). The only issue-specific frame that had a positive slant was *Duke Consequences*, which was only mentioned once of 108 (.9%).

Of the macro-frames, *Speculation* had a significant negative slant in the articles presented with a frequency of 14 of 108 (13%). *Cynicism* (7 of 10, 6.5%) included a few instances as well where the frame was considered negative. *Metacommunication* was the only occurrence (1 of 108, 1.9%) of a positive slant of the articles presented.

Of the additional frames, the *Diagnostic* frame was found to have a few instances of a negative slant (7 of 108, 6.5%).

There were several significant instances of a negative slant and very few instance of a positive slant. The findings concluded that most of the overall frame valence was neutral. The overall consensus is that, of the 588 frames that were present, 440 (74.8%) of the frames had no slant and were found to be neutral. Interestingly though, 142 of the 588 frames had a negative slant (24.1%). Conversely, there were only 6 instances of a positive frame (0.01%). The results found that there was little positive coverage of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal.

In order to answer Research Question 3b, the overall valence of the story and the present dominant frame were compared and analyzed. All of the frame categories from RQ1a and RQ1b were assessed. The findings of the dominant frame results from RQ1b were used, and the study analyzed the 14 dominant frames. A cross tabulation was performed between the overall story valence of the article and the dominant frame that was found within the article. The purpose was to see if there was any relation of the story valence to the dominant frame of the story presented. The Chi-square test was conducted and the data was reported.

A chi square test was performed to indicate the relation of the dominant frame in the newspaper article in relation of the overall story valence of the article. The cross tabulation found a significant difference, $X^2 = 53.54 (22), p \leq .001$. However, there were not enough results within the Chi-square to accurately answer Research Question 3b. Due to the fact that there were only

108 present dominant frames and there were 17 frames to sample from, the results indicated no significant conclusion with the dominant frame in relation to the overall story valence. *Conflict* frame had 38 dominant frames present (35.2%). *Diagnostic* had 15 dominant frames present (13.9%). *Responsibility* had 13 dominant frames present (12.0%). All of the other frames had a count of 10 or lower; therefore, the data cannot conclusively identify a correlation between the overall story valence and the dominant frame that was present in the article.

In order to answer Research Question 4, the frequency of source attribution was analyzed to determine which were most prevalent in newspaper articles. This study used a frequency test in order to find what sources were most used within the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. Twelve sources were used initially within the coding sheet. Additionally, five other sources (Joe Alleva, Joseph Cheshire, Mike Pressler, Duke Students and other duke lawyers) were found during the coding process and these were the other sources that were most prevalent.

Of the data collected, the findings indicated a myriad of sources that were used prevalently in the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. Richard Broadhead, the president of the University, was the source that was used most often. Richard Broadhead was mentioned in 39 of 108 articles (36.1%). Mike Nifong, the district attorney, was also very prevalent in the stories. Mike Nifong was mentioned in 28 of 108 articles (25.9%). The Duke Players overall, police officials, and political figures were all mentioned occasionally at a frequency of 11 of 108 (10.2%). Duke Professors were also re-occurring at frequency at 15 of 108 (13.9%). The NCAA officials (4 of 108, 3.7%) and NCAA delegates (2 of 108, 1.9%) were rarely mentioned.

Of the other sources mentioned, there were only a few re-occurring frames presented. Joe Alleva, the Duke athletic director, was the most present of the unlisted sources in the codesheet. Joe Alleva was mentioned in 9 of the 108 articles (8.3%). Interestingly, Mike Pressler, the Duke

head lacrosse coach, was only mentioned twice in all 108 articles (1.9%). This is surprising due to the fact he was an important figure in the scandal.

In order to answer Research Question 5a, the frequency of the overall story valence was analyzed to determine what valence (positive, negative, or neutral) was most prevalent within the story overall. This study used a frequency test in order to identify what valence was most prevalent within the newspaper article in the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal.

Of the articles analyzed, the general tone of the stories was mostly neutral at a frequency of 69 of 108 articles (63.9%). Interestingly though, there was a considerable amount of negative coverage at a frequency of 34 of 108 articles (31.5%). There were only five instances of a story being found to have a positive slant (5 of 108, 4.6%), respectively.

In order to answer Research Question 5b, the overall news story valence and the news type were analyzed. All of the news types (hard news, soft news, and opinion/editorial) were assessed. A cross tabulation was performed between the overall news story valence (positive, negative, or neutral) and the news story type. The purpose of this was to determine if there was any relation between the news story type and its overall news story valence. The Chi-square test was conducted and the data was reported.

The results tabulated found a significant difference within the data set presented, $X^2=17.92(4), p = .001$. The results indicated the *opinion/editorial* pieces were deemed to be considerably more negative (56.2%) than *hard news* (24.6%) and *soft news* (34.6%). Additionally, there was more negative coverage in opinion editorial articles than there were positive (6.2%) or neutral coverage (37.5%). Of the news types, *hard news* deemed to be the most neutral at 75.8%, while soft news was neutral 50% of the time. *Soft news* was found to be

the most positive at 15.4%, while there was not a positive slant for hard news, and only one instance of a positive slant for *opinion/editorial* pieces.

VII. Discussion

Research Question 1a asked which frames were most prevalent in the initial newspaper coverage in the DLRS. The results indicated a high prevalence of multiple frames within the context of the newspaper coverage of the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. Of the generic frames, *Conflict* was the most prevalent in the newspaper coverage (101 of 108, 93.5%). This finding is not surprising, because there was a multitude of conflict among various sources occurring within the scandal. One of the most prominent mentions of conflict was between Durham and Duke. For example, in an article in the *USA Today*, conflict was very apparent by stating, “Town-and-gown relations are often testy, but the glaring economic, racial and political discrepancies between Duke and the city and county of Durham are severe” (Ruibal 2006 p. 1). Additionally, within other newspaper articles, there were specific mentions of conflict between the University and the players, victim and the lacrosse players, and Duke students and Richard Broadhead (the president of Duke University), This is why the prevalence of conflict was not surprising. Although it seemed almost every article had some mention of conflict, there was a multitude of characters that were under duress at this point, and everyone seemed to be seeking answers from the DNA reports at this time.

Responsibility was also a highly significant reoccurring frame (80 of 108, 74.1%) Again, this result was not surprising. The news articles placed considerable detail on who was responsible for the occurrences at hand. Primarily, Duke players were found to be the most responsible in this instance. Essentially, the news media kept pressing the players to speak about the case perhaps to break a confession or any new information. The players were not the only ones being held responsible; the Duke administration was considered to be responsible for “doing the right thing”. One article from *The News & Observer* mentioned specifically that the

Duke administration should "Shut down the team" (Sheehan 2006 p. 2). Various staff writers and columnists seemed to write about what was necessary for the people in charge of the Duke lacrosse team should take action and do what was right.

Human Interest was another recurring frame (37 of 108, 34.7%). This result was anticipated because of the characters involved in the story. On one hand, only a few of the articles wrote stories about Mike Nifong, the district attorney and Richard Broadhead, president of Duke University. *The News & Observer* made mention that the spotlight was new for Mike Nifong, and much would hang on the case. "Nifong, who returns to work today after three days at a conference and a week of silence, has emerged as a divisive figure in the story of a black woman who said she was raped by three white men" (Niolet 2006 p.1). While the coverage for Nifong appeared to be mostly neutral, reports for Broadhead gave the implication that he was doing all he could despite the attention. *The News & Observer* wrote, "The dignified Yale English professor turned dean turned Duke president has had to sit uncomfortably under hot TV lights to be grilled about the sordid details of an investigation into whether a woman was raped at a Duke men's lacrosse team party" (Stancill 2006, p. 1). Additionally many of the Duke players were featured in human-interest pieces. According to *The News & Observer*, On April 6, 2006, Police investigators found an e-mail about Reade Seligmann (lacrosse player) and he was suspended because of this threatening e-mail (Niolet, Khanna, & Blythe, 2006). This message had implications of killing and skinning strippers. Five of the six newspapers reported about the e-mail and Reade Seligmann himself within the initial coverage. That same day, *The News & Observer* reported that some of the other players had a tussle with a person in the D.C. area (Khanna, 2006). On April 9, 2006, *The News & Observer* reported coverage reported on the boys

on this team had misdemeanors before these allegations (Nesbitt, Niolet, & Perez, 2006). These created an overall feel that there was more wrong with this team than just the current charges.

On April, 7 2006, *The News & Observer* conversely reported about Mike Pressler, the lacrosse head coach. Some of the articles presented a lack of trust in the coach. Other articles made mention of what a fine leader and person the Duke coach was (Perez & Stancill, 2006). The coverage made mention that he was in a game that he could not win. *The News & Observer's* opening line for its human interest piece stated, "Mike Pressler, who built Duke University's lacrosse program into a powerhouse, was good at winning. But in the thick of another victorious season, the coach got caught in a battle he could not win" (Blythe, Perez, Stancill 2006 p.1)

Morality was also a re-occurring frame in the initial coverage (24 of 108, 22.2%). The primary difference in the coverage between responsibility and morality in the coverage was that morality of the scandal was based on the premise of what is right and wrong. In the coverage presented, this goes beyond the idea that the Duke players are responsible; they are immoral and wrong. There were multiple mentions in the articles presented that the implication of "the party getting out of hand" was wrong, that those commit rape are wrong and they are bad people (Sheehan, 2006). The implications of Morality and what is right and what is wrong were present in 24 of the articles in the sample. *The News & Observer* reported, "The accused have the right to remain silent, but should we always remain silent, even when it's our right to do so" (Hatcher 2006 p. 3). Even lighter examples of criticism within the morality frame still have implications of negativity in their contexts.

Not surprisingly, *Economic Consequences* was rarely mentioned in the context of the articles. This was primarily due to the fact the economy or economic issues were not a real

concern within this case. Even the salaries people in of Durham versus the salaries of Duke students was only mentioned a few times. Additionally, there were implications that there was a town and gown strain between Durham and Duke, but the newspapers failed to directly link the strain to economic concerns.

Of the issue-specific frames, many of the frames were reoccurring in the initial coverage. *Social impact* was very prevalent as half the articles made some mention on how the events at hand would impact those settings and the people around them. Lacrosse players, the recruits, the city of Durham, and people at various institutions in North Carolina were all places and people that would be impacted or had been impacted by the rape allegations . The city of Durham had a major problem with the issues at hand and the media that covered it. *The News & Observer* reported that Mayor Bill Bell said he hadn't seen all of the national media reports on the Duke lacrosse team rape allegation -- "but I've seen enough of it" (Hooley 2006 p.1).. Impact on Duke was also heavily mentioned ($n = 54$ of 108, 50%), but this had direct links of how the events would impact Duke specifically. Either way, both are not surprising because many people were scared by the results and uncertainty that was occurring at this time. *The New York Times* reported, "The freshman Adam Weiss and his friends canceled plans to see a movie downtown here late Friday night, deciding it would be unsafe to venture beyond the Duke University campus" (Macur 2006 p. 2). Although the allegations affected the community surrounding Duke, few reports gave the implication that Duke itself was in their own crisis, even if they were not related to the allegations.

Duke Consequences and *Player Consequences* also were recurring frames. Over a quarter of the articles that mention the players consequences mainly mentioned the season despite the outcomes of the case. For example, *The News & Observer* reported, "The Duke University men's

lacrosse team will forfeit its next two games because of the team's conduct at a party earlier this month at which a woman claims she was raped, the university's athletics director announced today” (Staff Reports 2006 p. 1). Most of the coverage facing Duke’s consequences were more focused on the damaging of Dukes prior reputation. Political consequences, on the other hand, were not mentioned at all because it was rare that there would be an elected official present in the articles about this particular rape scandal.

Lastly, *Public Reaction/Backlash* was a recurring frame. This result was not surprising because the “Take Back the Night” Rally occurred right in the middle of the reporting. *The USA Today* reported, ‘Take Back the Night March’ that was scheduled well before the details of the alleged spring break rape emerged last weekend when it was learned 46 members of the team submitted to DNA sample requests from the Durham County law enforcement officials” (Ruibal 2006 p. 2). Additionally, that very same week was Sexual Assault Awareness Week, therefore it would only be expected that there would be a rally surrounding a scandal that had implications of sexual assault in it. Furthermore, a protest was held at the house on March 26, 2006. *The News & Observer* reported, “A cacophony of clanging pans pierced the crisp morning air Sunday as a group of Duke University students, neighbors and activists spoke out against sexual violence” (Cox 2006 p. 1). The frame *Public Reaction and Backlash* was very prevalent due to the events that were occurring during the initial phase of the crisis.

Of the Macro-frames, *Speculation* was the only frame that was re-occurring in the initial coverage. Many of the editorial pieces questioned what would happen to the Duke now that the events had happened. Many even assessed what had happened in the Duke rape scandal, speculating what happened during the event itself. *Cynicism* and *Metacommunication* were mentioned sporadically, presumably because there was such a high level of uncertainty in this

stage. For example, many columnists and staff writers may have wanted to keep away from a completely negative standpoint or refute other columnists. This may be due to the fact that the DNA had not come back and there was no way of telling whether or not this was an appropriate time to criticize or refute anyone at this stage of the crisis.

Of the additional frames, the *Diagnostic* frame was most prevalent at 81.5%. This result is not that surprising due to the likelihood that columnists and staff writers did not want to predict the outcome just yet. Stories and new briefs wanted to give the context for what had happened during the scandal, not what was going to happen. However, the *Prognostic* frame was a recurring frame (18.5%). This may have been due to the fact that some articles wanted to touch base on what would happen in the future. Opinion/editorial articles that wanted to touch base on what would happen to the coach or the players in this scandal.

Research Question 1b asked, “What is the dominant frame mentioned in the initial coverage of the DLRS?” Of all the frames mentioned, conflict was the most prevalent dominant frame in the news coverage. As discussed in RQ1a, there was a plethora of conflict between a myriad of characters within the Duke rape scandal, therefore it is certainly not surprising that *Conflict* would be prevalent in the news coverage. *Human Interest* was also prevalent as a dominant frame, primarily because many of the soft news pieces focused on Mike Pressler, Crystal Mangum, or Reade Seligmann. All of these characters had specific news articles about them and what was occurring in their situation, as the story was uncovered. Additionally, *Responsibility* was also a prevalent dominant frame. This was primarily because many of the writers begged the question of, “who was responsible in the allegations”. Mike Pressler, The Duke Players, and Mike Pressler were amongst the most frequent mentions.

Many of the issue-specific frames and macroframes were not as prevalent as a dominant frame. Many of them were present in the coverage, but the Conflict frame deemed to be most prevalent in many of the articles. Therefore, some of the other macroframes and issue-specific frames were sporadically dominant frames. *Metacommunication* was not a prevalent dominant frame. However, it deemed to be one of the most interesting mentions. The two articles where metacommunication was dominant made specific mentions that other column its and national media should not cover the scandal.

Lastly, *Diagnostics* was found to be a reoccurring dominant frame. This was mainly because many of the news briefs just re-capped the events. Additionally, some of the articles merely described the events by means of a timeline. For Example, *The New York Times* wrote an article to re-cap the events specifically:

“THURSDAY, MARCH 23 Forty-six members of the team reported to the Durham police crime lab to provide DNA samples and be photographed. Some were also interviewed.

FRIDAY, MARCH 24 The players attended practice after a two-day break that the coach attributed to the emotional loss to Cornell. "All our focus is on trying to beat the Hoyas now," Pressler said of the Georgetown game.” (Staff Reports 2006 p. 1)

Perhaps, because there was much uncertainty in scandal, the newspapers felt it necessary to keep their readers up-to-date with what was occurring before the DNA results came in.

Research Question 2 asked, “In the DLRS, is there a relationship between substantive/ambiguous frames and frame valence in the initial coverage of the crisis?” The results found that there were four frames present that approached significance (Impact on Duke, Social Impact, Responsibility, and Cynicism).

Within the generic frames, only *Responsibility* approached significance. The results showed that when *Responsibility* was mentioned as a substantive frame, it was found to be more

negative. Not surprisingly, substantive frames would be considered more negative due to the fact that columnists and staff writers would make direct mention of who was responsible; therefore the frames would be clear and the writer made a clear point to mention who was responsible in this scenario. *Conflict* was not considered significant, although it approached significance. Perhaps this was because conflict was present both in hard and soft news, and editorials. If the frame had substance or ambiguity would be constant due to the fact that conflict was extremely prevalent in the articles analyzed.

Social Impact and *Impact on Duke* both approached significance within the issue-specific frame. Again, these results are not surprising. Whether the coverage made direct mention of an impact on Durham the community or the coverage made mention on Duke, it came up negative. In most instances, if there were a direct mention on the impact of the community or the school, it would be considered to be negative because Duke's and Durham's reputation, was in jeopardy. A few of the articles allude to the fact that students are distraught because of the allegations and how it affected Duke. Additionally, Dan Hooley (2006) a staff writer for *The News & Observer* mentioned that Durham had a poor prior reputation before this event occurred, thus this scandal made it worse. Therefore it is not surprising that these issue-specific frames would be found to be significant.

Of the macro-frames, only the cynicism frame was found to be significant. This was not a surprising finding. As defined earlier, cynicism involves coverage that reflects attitudes of distasteful or jaded negativity, especially as a general distrust of others' integrity or motives. Considering most of the articles that were deemed as substantive frames had specific mentions of how bad the situation was, or how bad the players were, made cynicism a very prominent frame. Many of the articles that included blatant cynicism would more than likely be negative. If the

cynicism frame was substantive, it would only be expected that the connotation of the frame would be negative

Research Question 3a asks, “Within the initial crisis coverage what is the overall frame valence of the DLRS?” The results concluded that the majority of the frames present in the initial coverage were primarily neutral. Due to the fact that many of the news stories analyzed were found to be hard news, that result is not surprising. Hard news is supposed to tell the events that had happened, not interject with the staff writers’ own opinions. More than 50% of the staff writers reported the story with little to no mention of a negative or positive slant. Although many of the sources that they used had their own opinions, the writers were not biased in their reports. Interestingly, 24.1% of the coverage was found to be negative. Many of the editorial pieces that were within the sample were extremely critical of the lacrosse team, the coach, and the president. This led to many of frames to having a negative slant. Additionally, the negative slant may have come from the high amount of uncertainty and the perception that situation was bad any way it was viewed. The alleged rape, the coach resigning, the forfeiting of games, the player tussles in D.C., and the threatening e-mail were all instances that added to the perception that the situation was much worse, thus leading to a negative frame valence. This would also explain why there was very little positive coverage. The Human-interest frame was found to have a few positive instances because of instances in the newspapers concerning the defense of the alleged victim, or the praise of Mike Pressler. Nevertheless, the negativity outweighed the positive coverage significantly because rape is always seen as controversial and wrong. Therefore, it would only be expected that the negative coverage would outweigh positive coverage significantly.

Research Question 3b asked, “What was the Valence of the story in relation to the

dominant frame present?" Although the results were found to be significant, there was not enough sufficient information to answer the question effectively.

As stated before, conflict was dominant 38 times out of 108, the diagnostic frame was dominant 15 times out of 108, and the responsibility frame was present 13 times, and this led to no significant results within the findings. Perhaps if the sample set had been larger, there would have been a more distinguished significant correlation between the dominant frame present in the story and the overall valence. However, given that there were only 108 articles analyzed and many of the frames were re-occurring dominant frames, it would be hard to identify this correlation.

Research Question 4 asked, "What sources are used most prevalently in media coverage of the DLRS?" The findings indicated a plethora of sources found within the initial coverage of the Duke rape scandal. Not surprisingly, the biggest figures that were connected to the university and the case itself were most prevalent. However, there were a few characters that were not mentioned as often that made the findings very interesting.

The results indicated that Richard Broadhead, president of Duke, was the most prevalent source used. Considering that Broadhead was the primary voice of Duke, it was not at all surprising to see a majority of quotations from him. Broadhead had to answer each problem that the Duke team and university faced that occurred in this scandal. Broadhead's responses were mostly neutral. For the most part Broadhead did not make a distinction of guilty or not guilty. *The News & Observer* quoted Broadhead saying, "There is a body of behavior that's already established, and it's there for us to deal with, and every day we learn more about it," Brodhead said in an interview Wednesday. "It's just time to take action on what's there before our eyes." (Stancill, Blythe, Perez 2006 p. 3). Additionally, Broadhead stated in a *News & Observer* piece,

"If we take this seriously, if we use this as a chance to raise issues, to learn lessons, then it seems to me, actually, someday we'll be the better for this." (Broadhead 2006 p. 2). Most quotes gave a level of vagueness and seemed to try to make the situation as peaceful as possible. As the key speaker of Duke, Broadhead's quotes indicated that he wanted a peaceful resolution on all sides during the initial coverage.

Conversely, Mike Nifong, another prevalent source, appeared to be adamant about guilt in his stances. Even during the initial crisis phase, Nifong seemed to be very firm in his beliefs and pursued them with great fervor, with quotations alluding to the fact the Duke players were guilty. *The News & Observer* quoted him in the initial coverage saying, "I would like to think that somebody [not involved in the attack] has the human decency to call up and say, 'What am I doing covering up for a bunch of hooligans'" (Nifong 2006 p. 2). However, some quotations had Nifong stating that he did not want to comment on the events until further information was found. *The New York Times* had several reports saying, "Michael B. Nifong, the Durham County district attorney, has said he will not speak to reporters until there is new information in the rape case." (Macur 2005 p.3) This instance was not nearly as frequent. Of the overall coverage, Nifong was very aggressive and had little restraint towards the case and the players. However, the most interesting finding was that there were almost no direct quotations from Nifong from papers other than *The News & Observer*. All of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* articles and most of the *New York Time* articles indicated that he would not comment on the events. It is very interesting that the local paper was one of the only sources that had direct quotes from the prosecutor that seemingly attacked the Duke players. The rest of the papers in this study made brief mentions, but did not address it specifically.

Perhaps one of the most surprising results found was the lack of source attribution for head coach Mike Pressler. Of the 108 articles, Pressler was only mentioned twice in the sample. Due to the fact that Pressler was one of the main characters in the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal, it was surprising that he was not quoted more often. However, there could have been multiple reasons as to why he was not mentioned nearly as much as Nifong or Broadhead. Some papers may have wanted to protect his integrity as a good coach, as some of the articles alluded to that fact. Others may not have wanted to hear what he had to say, as some of the articles were clearly negative towards the Duke team and Pressler.

Besides the Duke lawyers, there were very few sources that were found to be in support of the Duke players. Many of the University officials and athletic directors apparently wanted to stay neutral and wanted to see how the situation played out. However, most sources gave no examples of defending the players, coaches, or the university itself.

Research Question 5a asks, "What is the overall story valence in the DLRS?" As shown by Research Question 3a, the articles' valence were primarily neutral in its context. The articles themselves had a neutral connotation throughout the initial stage of the crisis. However, the results found some implications of a negative connotation as well. Almost a third of the articles were found to have a negative overall story valence. There was almost no mention of a positive overall story valence in the context of the articles presented.

A scandal is a very interesting type of story to cover. Primarily, in the initial phase, it is more proper to report the results, rather than give commentary. Many people were waiting on the presence or absence of DNA at this point, so many newspaper articles just talked about the story itself without giving opinion. Additionally, this may be the reason why Crystal Mangum was not mentioned by name in the articles. The *News & Observer* made specific mention that they would

not identify the alleged victim. This aspect gave the story a neutral connotation. Before the DNA was revealed, they did not want to express any opinion about the alleged victim or the players. Nevertheless, this story was considered a scandal, a scandal about rape. It is not surprising by any means that the coverage would seem negative as well. Additionally, for the same reasons, it is not surprising that the coverage was not positive either. This scandal specifically was dealing with implications of sexual assault. With this in mind, it would be assumed that the coverage for this event would be more negative than positive in this initial stage.

Research Question 5b asks, “What is the overall news story valence by the news type in the DLRS?” The results indicate that there was a considerable amount of negative coverage in the opinion/editorial pieces. There were more negative implications in opinion editorial pieces than hard news or soft news. Additionally, there was more negative coverage in the op/ed pieces than there was positive or neutral coverage. Hard news contained the most positive coverage, while soft news had the more positive coverage than hard news and editorials.

Many of the staff writers and columnists who wrote op/ed pieces had a considerable amount of negative feedback towards the players, the coaches, and the organization. Despite the uncertainty, this scandal was deemed to be negative regardless of how much information was known. Considering there was an alleged sexual assault case, hiring of strippers, underage drinking, and prior arrests on the lacrosse players record, many of the writers expressed outrage by this case. The allegations seemed to be very substantial and many staff writers and columnists voiced out their distrust for the Duke players, but for the adolescent drinking environment that seems to be directly correlated with these events.

Hard news was found to be primarily neutral in the initial coverage. This result is not surprising due to the fact that hard news is supposed to be about covering the events that

occurred. However, there are still implications of hard news having a reoccurring negative slant. This result was not that surprising, possibly due to the idea that there was not much good news to report within the context of this scandal. Although hard news is supposed to cover the events, when all implications and coverage is negative, it's not uncommon to find a negative slant in the article.

Soft news was also primarily neutral as well, at 50%. It was found that most of the soft news coverage was not trying to attack anyone but rather explaining feelings behind the case. Some of the articles mentioned recruits, have implications of a negative and a positive slant in the same article. Some of the articles themselves was not criticizing either side, but rather letting the people surrounded by the events speak. Soft news did have a reoccurring negative slant as well, at 34.6%. This was primarily because some of the human interest stories were about prior misdemeanors that the Duke players had. Some of the coverage looked at the player tussle in D.C., while other coverage looked at Ryan McFayden's offensive e-mail. At the same time, soft news was the most positive of the three news types. This news coverage was positive due to the fact that many pieces did human-interest stories that were complementing the individual. There were few articles about Crystal Mangum and the campus of North Carolina Central University around her were considered to be positive (Blythe, 2006). While, Mike Pressler also had a few articles where the staff writer wrote a human-interest piece of how good a coach he was and how hard he worked with the team. Lastly, there were pieces that discussed Mike Nifong and Richard Broadhead in a positive light. These articles implied that Broadhead and Nifong are doing the best they can despite the scandal at hand.

VII. a. Limitations

The scandal happened in March of 2006. Due to the fact that this study analyzed the event three years after it had already occurred. There is a possibility that some of the articles could have been missed from various news sources. On the other hand, the advantage of covering the scandal after it had happened allowed the researcher to identify the initial phase of crisis. Due to the prior literature provided by Graber's (1980) study, this study could accurately define when the initial uncertainty had subsided. If this study were done during the events, the information may have not been as well known as it is now.

Additionally, the LexisNexis database search did not include many television transcripts. CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, and others covered the scandal widely during the initial crisis phase. However, those transcripts rarely appeared in the search engine results. There were many transcripts from the "Nancy Grace Show" on CNN, but there were not nearly enough hard news transcripts to call a valid sample towards the coverage during the initial crisis phase. However, while there were few transcripts off the LexisNexis database search, many of the news stations referred back to *The News & Observer* as a primary source within the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal. This study wanted to view newspaper coverage due to the idea that it was covered more prominently and there were more instances of hard news stories that some of the major broadcast networks did not provide as often.

Lastly, the sample was largely drawn from *The News & Observer* (52 articles) and not a great deal from other papers such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (6 articles) or the *Boston Globe* (9 articles). The coverage was obviously much more apparent and prevalent in the local paper than national media. However, there was good coverage from the *USA Today* (12 articles) and the *New York Times* (22 articles).

VII. b. Future Research

There are always a number of ways in which this research can be extended and improved upon. This thesis focused on one time frame of a crisis of Graber's three phases of crisis. Future research could reveal some differences in the same newspapers from the first stage of crisis to the second and third stages, due to the fact that the events took a strong turn during the end of the scandal. It would be very interesting to expand the study and see if there are any significant differences in the first stage and the final stage of crisis. Due to the fact that the crisis took a major swing near the end of the reports, it would be interesting to see if some frames were used differently, or if the valence differed from the first stage to the third stage.

Another implication of future studies within the Duke Lacrosse rape scandal is possibly using a different theory such as media priming. From a media effects perspective, it would be interesting to take the significant frames and see how readers react to specific frames. It would be very interesting to see if reactions would differ from person to person, especially if the study participants were not familiar with this case. Continued research of these stages and the coverage at hand would be beneficial for future research in this study.

VIII. Conclusion

The six newspapers that were used in this study reported that 63.9% of the 108 articles sampled were found to have a neutral valence. While there was a negative valence in 31.5% of the articles presented, and only a positive slant in 4.6% of the articles, *Conflict* was most prevalent and was most dominant of the frames presented in the initial news coverage. Many of the newspapers wanted to cover the events that happened so far, before they wanted to report a prognostic frame. However, there were many staff writers and columnists who predicted what the outcome would be and what should have been done. Sexual assault is always a scandalous subject to report, especially when it happens at an organization with such a high reputation such as Duke. Although the coverage would almost never be positive, this study showed that it is likely for the media to stay predominantly neutral while have re-occurring negative slants until uncertainty is eliminated.

Crisis communication practitioners and researchers are always looking at new ways at how news media handles crisis. This study aimed to advance framing literature as well as literature in crisis communication by examining how news media frames a scandal in its initial crisis phase. Despite the limitations mentioned, this study provided insight on how the media framed a specific scandal, what frames were used in the story, what characters were used, and what valence was attributed to the story. This study has found some significant differences, and other scholars can now analyze whether their results match or differ from the results presented in this scandal and this study.

These results are important for mass media practitioners, crisis communication scholars, framing scholars, and organizations that are faced with a similar situation. Due to the prior literature and the results that were found in this study, there could be a link drawn within similar

events of what frames are most used by the news media in an initial crisis phase, and what is the overall valence of the story in the initial coverage. These results could be used for future research and can be used by organizations that may want to be aware of how news media has covered scandal in prior situations.

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XI. Appendixes

XI. a. Codesheet

1. Coder:

2. Article #:

3. Story Date:

4. Story or Headline Title:

5. Word Count:

6. News Story Type 1. Hard News 2. Soft News 3. Opinion/Editorial

7. News Story Length 1. Full Article 2. News Brief

8. Newspaper:

1. *The New York Times*
2. *The Washington Post*
3. *USA Today*
4. *The Boston Globe*
5. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
6. *The News & Observer*

9. Story Author/Contributor: 1. Staff Writer 2. Syndicated Columnist
3. Independent Contributor 4. News Wire Service 5. Other

10. Story Focus

Story Focus 1. Yes 2. No
Duke Players
DNA Presence/Absence
Political Figures
Economic Issues
Rallies
Lacrosse Season
Court Hearings
Duke Concerns
Durham Concerns
Players found Innocent
Other? Please specify...

11. Source Attribution

Source Attribution 1. Present 2. Absent
Indicted Players
Other Players
Mike Nifong

Team Officials
 Mike Broadhead
 Anonymous
 NCAA Officials
 NCAA Delegates
 Political Figures
 Duke Professors
 Police Chief
 Police Officials
 Other

If other, please specify: _____

12. Frames

Frames	13.	14.	15. Valence
	1. Presence/	1. Ambiguous	1. Negative
	2. Absence	2. Substantive	2. Positive
			3. Neutral

Conflict

Human Interest

Economic Consequences

Responsibility

Morality

Social Impact

Impact on Duke

Impact on NCAA

Political Consequences

Duke Consequences

Player Consequences

Public Reaction/Backlash

Diagnostics

Prognostics

Cynicism

Metacommunication

Speculation

Other

16. Dominant Frame _____

17. Actors Present:

1. Mike Nifong 1. Present 0. Absent
Valence of Mike Nifong: 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Neutral

2. Mike Pressler 1. Present 0. Absent
Valence of Mike Pressler: 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Neutral

3. Crystal Mangum 1. Present 0. Absent
Valence of Crystal Mangum: 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Neutral

4. Players Indicted 1. Present 0. Absent
Valence of Indicted Players: 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Neutral

5. Team Overall 1. Present 0. Absent
Valence of Team Overall: 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Neutral

6. Duke University 1. Present 0. Absent
Valence of Duke University: 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Neutral

18. Overall Story Valence: 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Neutral

XI. b. Codebook

- 1. Coder ID:** Coder associated with the study will list their names from the survey tool option
- 2. Article ID:** Coders will identify the article from the survey tool option provided at the top of the document. For example 0123
- 3. Story Date:** Coders will identify an 8 digit date of the story in the space provided. For example May 16, 2006 would be: 05/16/2006
- 4. Story or Headline Title:** Coders will provide the full text of the story in the space provided
- 5. Word Count:** If the article is a newspaper or a magazine, the coders will provide the number of words in an article
- 6. News Story Type:** Coders will identify the story as soft news (human interest story), opinion piece (author's position on the story), or hard news (coverage of the basic facts involved in the story).
- 7. News Story Length:** Coders will review the article and determine if the article is entirely about Duke Lacrosse or are their other stories that are included in the article
- 8. Newspaper source:** Coders will select the story from the following list:
 1. *The New York Times*
 2. *The Washington Post*
 3. *USA Today*
 4. *The Boston Globe*
 5. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
 6. *The News & Observer*
- 9. Story Author:** Coders will identify the source of the newspaper from the following list:

Staff Writer: Any writer at the said paper except the syndicated columnist

Syndicated Columnist: Any writer that is listed at the head or tail of the article as a nationally recognized columnist in syndication).

Independent Columnist: Any knowledgeable on the subject offering a writing piece for the paper

News Agency: AP Redundant Stories

10. Story Focus: Coders will identify any of the following elements focused on in the story by selecting those present in the article:

- (1) Duke Players: Coverage that involves the mentions of Duke lacrosse players. Any coverage concerning the players themselves, whether they had been indicted or were just a part of the team
- (2) DNA Presence/Absence: Coverage that involves any mention of DNA. The coverage can emphasize DNA presence, DNA absence, or simply that DNA tests were to be done, or had to be determined
- (3) Political Figures: Coverage that involves any elected officials. This includes examples such as the Mayor of Durham or the Governor of Raleigh
- (4) Economic Issues: Coverage that focuses any economic consequences or issues that the case was associated with. Focus may also cover tuition at Duke, annual income of families at Duke, annual income of citizens in Durham
- (5) Rallies: Coverage that focuses on any rallies for or against the Duke players. For example: The “Take Back the Night” rally occurred on Duke’s campus during the initial coverage
- (6) Lacrosse Season: Coverage that focuses on Duke’s lacrosse season. This coverage can include: stories about forfeiting games and possible impacts on other teams in the NCAA
- (7) Court Hearings: Coverage that deals with specific court dates and events in court. Any information that comes from court reports within the Duke Rape Case is included.
- (8) Duke Concerns: Coverage that concerns and impacts Duke University. Any coverage that mentions concerns of: Duke students, the Duke president, or the reputation of Duke

- (9) **Durham Concerns:** Coverage that concerns and impacts the town of Durham. Any coverage that mentions concerns of: Durham citizens, the Mayor of Durham, or the reputation of Durham
- (10) **Players found Innocent:** Coverage that concerns the Duke players being innocent in the case. Any coverage that emphasizes the Duke players were innocent, innocent until proven guilty, or articles that emphasize that people should wait.
- (11) **Other:** Any Coverage that does not involve the aforementioned story focuses.

11. Source Attribution: Coders will identify the following list of possible sources as

- (1) Indicted Players
- (2) Other Players
- (3) Mike Nifong
- (4) Team Officials
- (5) Richard Broadhead
- (6) Anonymous
- (7) NCAA Officials
- (8) NCAA Delegates
- (9) Political Figures
- (10) Duke Professors
- (11) Police Chief
- (12) Police Officials
- (13) Other

Other Sources: Coders must write down any source that is not listed above. Please be specific

Noteworthy quotes: Coders will write down any meaningful quote(s) that help build the studies overall theme

12. Frames: Coders will indicate the present or absence of the following frames. A brief description will be given for clarity

(1) Conflict: This frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000) Coverage that emphasizes conflict between Duke Lacrosse Team and Mike Nifong, Duke Lacrosse Team and Duke University, Mike Pressler and Duke University, Duke University and Mike Nifong, Students and Duke Lacrosse Team, NCAA and Duke University, NCAA and Duke Lacrosse.

(2) Human Interest: This frame brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). Coverage that deals with mental health and potential well being of Crystal Mangum

(3) Economic Consequences: This frame reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). Coverage that discusses how the scandal may impact the economy surrounding Duke, the team, coaches, or the individual players.

(4) Morality: This frame puts the event, problem, issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). Coverage that examines the ethics behind those involved in the Duke rape scandal.

(5) Responsibility: This frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group (Neuman et al. 1992, Sementko & Valkenburg 2000). Coverage that emphasizes or examines whose responsibility it is to help with prevention of sexual assault, or faulting other sources for informing NCAA athletes that they can do as they please.

(6) Social Impact: coverage that deals with the impact of the general public, not mentioning Duke specifically, but overall impact of Duke, Duke Students, Duke administration, Durham citizens, Durham politicians, and Durham in general in this situation

(7) Impact on NCAA: Coverage that deals with the impact of binge drinking and sexual assault amongst other Universities. Additionally, coverage that deals with how the NCAA is effected by this scandal

(8) Impact on Duke: Coverage that deals with the impact of Duke, Duke Students, Duke faculty,

and the lacrosse team. Any coverage that deals with the impact that Duke has received based on the scandal.

(9) Political Consequences: Coverage that discusses the political consequences for the University, key figures, or the national agenda.

(10) Duke Consequences: coverage that examines what the impact will be on the University itself and the penalties or scrutiny they have faced following the allegations concerning the rape scandal.

(11) Player Consequences: coverage that examines what the impact will be on the Duke Lacrosse Team following the allegations concerning the rape scandal.

(12) Public Reaction/Backlash: Coverage that emphasizes the public's reaction to the issue of the Duke rape scandal, court hearings, or the investigations of those involved with the case.

(13) Diagnostic: Coverage that examines the processes in the investigations, the testing methods of DNA samples amongst the Lacrosse team.

(14) Prognostic: Coverage that attempts to predict the outcome of the investigations, the results of the DNA samples, the verdict of the case, and the future of the Lacrosse team.

(15) Cynicism: Coverage that reflects attitudes of distasteful or jaded negativity, especially as a general distrust of others' integrity or motives

(16) Metacommunication: Coverage that provides the authors own opinion, if the journalist cites other journalists, if the story mentions communication strategies by Duke University, or coverage that mentions how news media has handled the crisis

(17) Speculation: Coverage that provides a speculation of what has happened or will happen, if the story mentions any hypothetical assumptions about the event, or if the story asks any rhetorical questions or inference about Duke, or the Duke lacrosse team.

(18) Other: Coverage that illustrates anything that falls outside of the previous frame categories.

13. Present/Absent: Coders will determine whether or not the frame was present in the story or absent

14. Substantive/Ambiguous Frames: Coders will evaluate if the frames mentioned have a substantive characteristic frame (i.e. very specifically defined, one meaning to the frame) or an ambiguous characteristic frame (i.e. open to interpretation, may be more than one meaning to the frame). The coder will type a 1 or a 2 and write it in the space provided

15. Frame Valence: Coders will then for each of the above frames identify each of the frames present as positive, negative, or neutral.

16. Dominant Frame: Coders will identify what the dominant frame is in the story and mark yes or no in the spaces provided.

17. Actors Present: Coders will look for the following actors that were mentioned or shown in the news story. The coders will look for the following actors and decide whether or not they had a positive or negative valence within the context of the story:

Mike Nifong
Mike Pressler
Crystal Mangum
Indicted Players
Other Players
Duke University

18. Overall Valence: Coders will identify the valence of the piece as positive, negative, or neutral. Overall story tone will be determined by the following: Story headline, valence of content, and the amount of content devoted to each aspect. The overall valence will be determined by support for the individuals, the action taken, or the topic discussed: and view whether the author or reporter criticizes the actions made by the team or if he/she supports the innocence of the team.

Table 1: Frames Present

N = 108

Frames	Frequency	Percent
<i>Generic Frames</i>		
Conflict	101	93.5%
Human Interest	37	34.7%
Economic Consequences	8	7.4%
Responsibility	80	74.1%
Morality	24	22.2%
<i>Issue-Specific Frames</i>		
Social Impact	51	47.2%
Impact on Duke	54	50%
Impact on NCAA	5	4.6%
Political Consequences	0	0%
Duke Consequences	27	25%
Player Consequences	41	38%
Public Reaction/Backlash	35	32.4%
<i>Macro-Frames</i>		
Cynicism	10	9.3%
Metacommunication	7	6.5%
Speculation	34	31.5%
<i>Additional Frame Types</i>		
Diagnostic	88	81.5%
Prognostic	20	18.5%

Table 2: Dominant Frame Present

N = 108

Frames	Frequency	Percent
<i>Generic Frames</i>		
Conflict	38	35.2%
Human Interest	13	12%
Responsibility	10	9.3%
Morality	3	2.8%
<i>Issue-Specific Frames</i>		
Social Impact	2	1.9%
Impact on Duke	9	8.3%
Player Consequences	1	.9%
Public Reaction/Backlash	7	6.5%
<i>Macro-Frames</i>		
Metacommunication	2	1.9%
Speculation	5	4.6%
<i>Additional Frame Types</i>		
Diagnostic	15	13.9%
Prognostic	3	2.8%
Total	108	100%

Table 3 Frame Valence Present

N = 108

Frames	Positive	Negative	Neutral/ Not Mentioned
<i>Generic Frames</i>			
Conflict	0 (0%)	15 (13.9%)	93 (86.1%)
Human Interest	4 (3.7%)	5 (4.6%)	99 (91.7%)
Economic Consequences	0 (0%)	4 (3.7%)	104 (96.3%)
Responsibility	0 (0%)	26 (24.1%)	82 (75.9%)
Morality	0 (0%)	16 (14.8%)	92 (85.2%)
<i>Issue-Specific Frames</i>			
Social Impact	0 (0%)	8 (7.4%)	100 (92.6%)
Impact on Duke	0 (0%)	14 (13%)	94 (87%)
Impact on NCAA	0 (0%)	1 (.9%)	107 (99.1%)
Political Consequences	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	108 (100%)
Duke Consequences	1 (.9%)	4 (3.7%)	103 (95.4%)
Player Consequences	0 (0%)	11 (10.2%)	97 (89.8%)
Public Reaction/Backlash	0 (0%)	8 (7.4%)	100 (92.6%)
<i>Macro-Frames</i>			
Cynicism	0 (0%)	7 (6.5%)	101 (93.5%)
Speculation	0 (0%)	14 (13%)	94 (87%)
Metacommunication	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)	106 (96.3%)
<i>Additional Frame Types</i>			
Diagnostic	0 (0%)	7 (6.5%)	101 (93.5%)
Prognostic	0 (0%)	1 (.9%)	107 (99.1%)

Table 4 Source Attribution Present N = 108

<i>Source</i>	Frequency	Percent
Indicted Players	3	2.8%
Other Players	11	10.2%
Mike Nifong	28	25.9%
Team Officials	10	9.3%
Richard Broadhead	39	36.1%
Anonymous	6	5.6%
NCAA Officials	4	3.7%
NCAA Delegates	2	1.9%
Political Figures	11	10.2%
Duke Professors	15	13.9%
Police Chief	0	0%
Police Officials	11	10.2%
Other	48	44.4%
Total	108	100%
<i>Of Other Sources Prevalent</i>		
Joe Alleva	9	8.3%
Joseph Cheshire	5	4.6%
Mike Pressler	2	1.9%
Duke Students	7	6.5%
Duke Lawyers	5	4.6%

Table 5 Overall Story Valence

N = 108

Valence	Frequency	Percent
Positive	5	4.6%
Negative	34	31.5%
Neutral	69	63.9%