Introduction

Media coverage of homicides reflects and shapes how society perceives members of different demographic groups. Ideal victim theory proposes that victims perceived as weak, vulnerable, etc. will be treated better. It is important to analyze differential coverage of homicides in media, not only based on race, gender, and sex identities, but also through the lens of intersectionality. A news article is humanizing when it mentions additional information about the victim, presenting them as a person not just a statistic. Content analysis can be automated using Natural Language Processing, specifically assisted by the GPT-3 Large Language Model.

Results

To determine the factors which significantly affect humanization for each victim, a Probit regression model is used, with the dependent variable being a binary humanization score \( h = 1 \) when at least one article uses humanizing language to describe the victim and \( h = 0 \) when no articles are present, or all are impersonal.

![Humanizing Coverage](image)

Probability of humanizing coverage for male victims is significantly higher for whites among all age groups, with the highest difference (30 percentage points) in the <18 age group.

Black female victims, only in the age range of 18-29, are significantly less likely to have humanizing coverage than whites (20 percentage point difference).

Demographics perceived as innocent are more likely to receive humanizing coverage (children and the elderly more than all other ages & females more than males).

![Victim Age](image)

Conclusion

Newspaper depictions of homicides disproportionately humanize victims of certain demographic groups. Ideal victimhood provides the most consistent explanation of the humanization patterns documented. Differences across demographic groups are brought into sharp contrast when measured intersectionally.

Conclusions

Young adult Black females and Black males of all ages, but especially young Black males, are less likely to be humanized because they are perceived as stronger, less vulnerable, and less innocent.

Content analysis can be done through automated natural language processing using a large language model such as GPT-3.