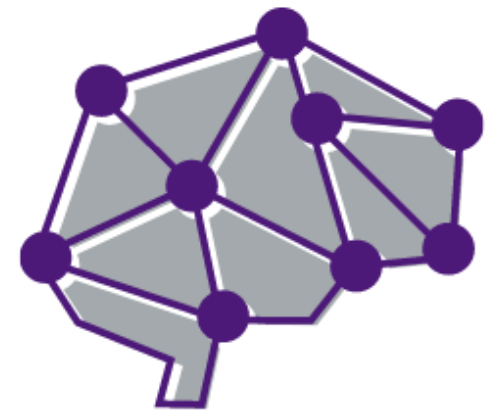




LOUISE DILWORTH DAVIS
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IBR SOAR LAB
STUDENT OVERVIEW OF
APPLIED RESEARCH

The Medium is the Message: Examining How News Format Shapes Audience Perceptions of Local Crime and Public Safety



SciCom
Let's Talk Science

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Background

- Media consumption is rapidly evolving, raising questions about how format influences perception.
- Research consistently demonstrates that audiovisual media produces stronger emotional responses and memory retention compared to text-based media (Grabe & Zhou, 2000)
- These effects have yet to be replicated in a crime news-focused context. Understanding these effects has implications for journalism, public opinion, and criminal justice outcomes.

Aims

- This study examines how media format specifically affects perceptions of crime severity and community safety.
- Based on previous literature, we hypothesize that audiovisual formatting will lead to more negative feelings about community safety than text alone.

Methods

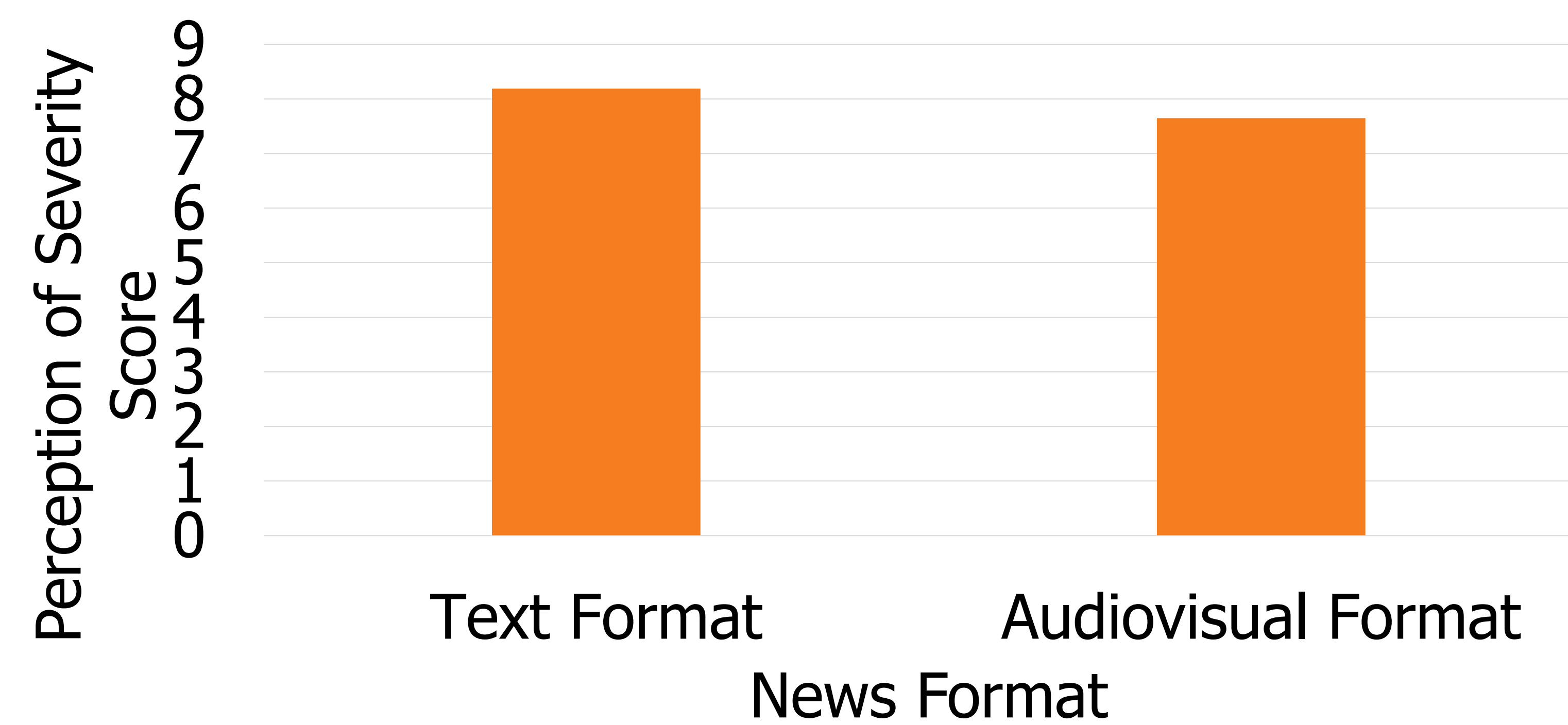
- Design: Randomized between-subjects experiment with DFW residents (N = 33)
- Procedure: Participants were assigned to view either an audiovisual news clip (n = 19) or a text transcript (n = 14) of the same crime story and then rate the severity of the crimes in the story and their perceptions of community safety
 - Perceptions of safety were measured using a 4-item Likert-type measure (e.g., *In my area people really do not need to lock their doors when they leave their homes for a short period of time*; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*)
 - Severity of the crime was measured via 3-item Likert scale (e.g., *In your opinion, how morally wrong are these behaviors?*; 1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very much*)
- Stimulus: News story describing multiple violent crimes (e.g., shootings, stabbings) occurring over a single weekend

Results

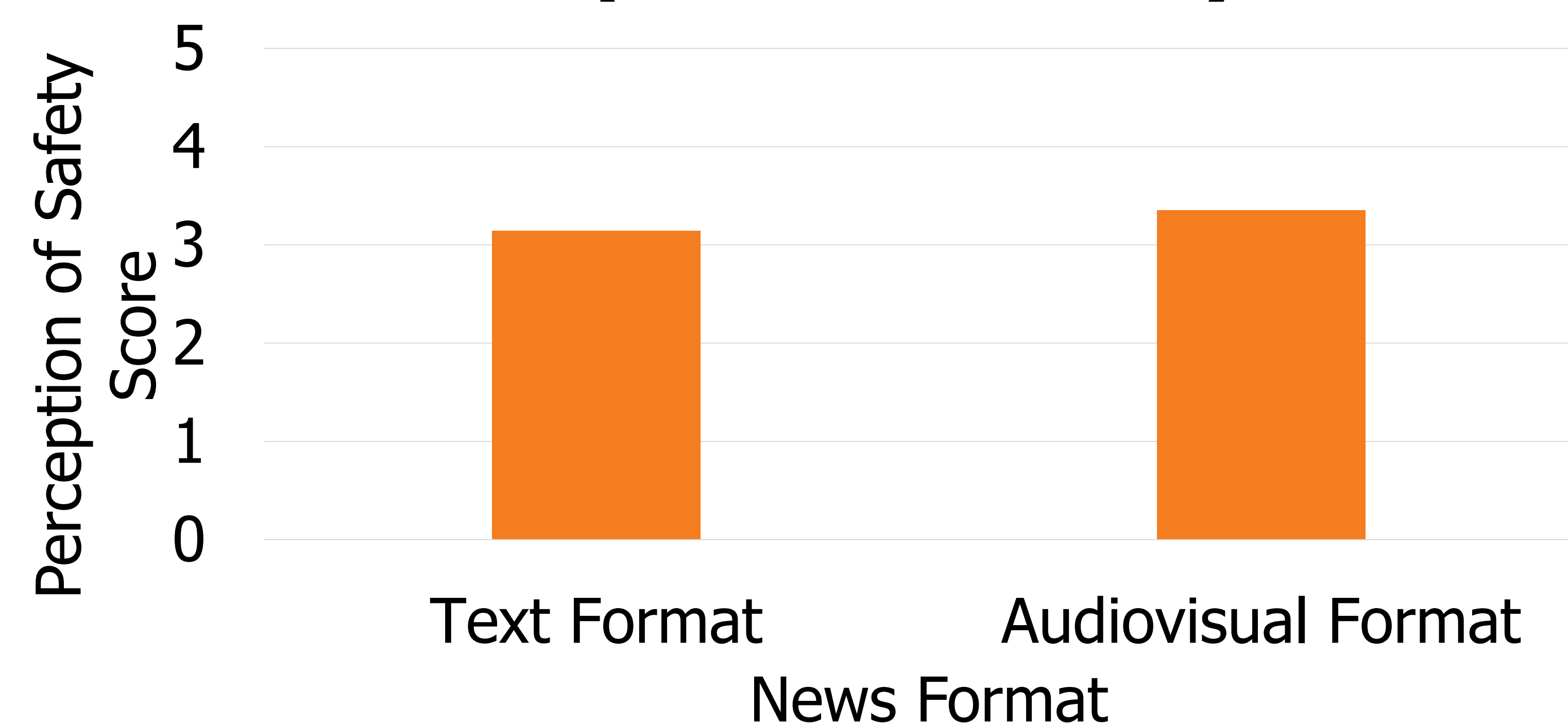
- An independent-samples *t*-test was run for each of our outcomes.
- No significant differences in perceived crime severity (t = 1.067, p = 0.295) were found.
- There were no significant differences in community safety perceptions between media formats (t = -0.416, p = 0.680).
- Overall, media format (text vs. audiovisual) did not significantly influence perceptions.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceptions of Crime Severity		
Audiovisual	7.65	1.43
Text	8.19	0.67
Perceptions of Community Safety		
Audiovisual	3.35	0.89
Text	3.14	0.69

Perceptions of Crime Severity



Perceptions of Safety



Demographics

Demographic Characteristic	<i>N</i>	%
Race		
White	19	57.6
Black or African American	7	21.2
Bi-racial or Multicultural	2	6.1
Other	4	12.1
No response	1	3.0
Gender		
Male	15	45.5
Female	16	48.5
Non-binary	1	3.0
No response	1	3.0
Age		
<i>M</i> = 32.47 (<i>SD</i> = 12.28), min = 18, max = 61		

Discussion

- Results of this study are highly limited by the small sample size. However, results indicate media format alone does not strongly shape perceptions of crime or safety.
- Public interpretations of crime may depend more on other factors (e.g., prior beliefs, context). This awareness is important for ensuring more accurate evaluations of potential danger.
- Findings highlight the need for critical media consumption and awareness of potential biases.
- Future research should examine platform-specific effects and larger, more diverse samples.

References

Intravia, Jonathan & Wolff, Kevin & Paez, Rocio & Gibbs, Benjamin. (2017). Investigating the relationship between social media consumption and fear of crime: A partial analysis of mostly young adults. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 77. 10.1016/j.chb.2017.08.047.

Grabe, Maria & Zhou, Shuhua. (2000). Packaging Television News: The Effects of Tabloid on Information Processing and Evaluative Responses. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media - J BROADCAST ELECTRON MEDIA*. 44. 581-598. 10.1207/s15506878jobem4404_4.