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Media Criminology and the Potentially Distorted Social Constructions of Crime

By

Kristine Anne Nightingale

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2017

Media Criminology and the Potentially Distorted Social Constructions of Crime

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to shed light on the existing gap is scholarly literature, thus exploring the possibility of crime media creating inaccurate and potentially detrimental social constructions of crime, victims, offenders and enforcers. The 2015-2016 seasons of popular CBS dramas, *CSI* and *CM*, were analysed using a thematic content analysis. This analysis was compared to Canadian and US statistics to determine if television crime media inaccurately portrays crime and if so, to what extent. To provide further insight on the possibility of crime media influencing public perceptions of crime, in person interviews were conducted with attention given to educational background of participants as a possible influence. Findings revealed that *CSI* and *CM* do present inaccurate portrayals of crime and when compared to interview responses, likely social constructions and cultural understandings of crime emerged. Inaccurate representations in crime media consisted of: an overrepresentation of female victims, highly intelligent offenders, superhero enforcers, and overrepresentation of violent crime. Interview responses found that: DNA evidence was highly favoured as a form of conviction, participants do not fear crime but assumed violent crime when discussing victimization, and offenders are only successful if intelligent. The answers given between those academically educated in criminology and those who were not were quite similar, thus favouring a media criminology theoretical framework. This study is necessary because if crime media influences public perceptions of crime the impact on the criminal justice system is likely to be immense.

DEDICATION

This Master's Thesis is dedicated to my biggest cheerleader throughout my academic education my Grandma, Marlene Yates. At the acceptance to my Bachelors to the University of Toronto my Grandma cried tears of joy. It is still uncertain if those tears were because she was so proud of my accomplishment at being accepted into the University of Toronto or if it was because that meant I was moving in with her. From day one she supported me in my education with the purchase of a desk and forfeiting her living room.

Grandma supported me in other ways as well, I can remember when a big batch of chilli was made and she spent the greater part of an evening measuring it into a thermos before transferring it into a container to be frozen, ensuring a full meal was provided. There were days I left for school I could swear my lunch was the heaviest thing in my bag.

When I was accepted into the university exchange program, Grandma made it possible. She also went the extra mile and bought a computer, learned how to use the internet, and Skyped me every chance she got. The stories and conversation continued while on the other side of the world, staying up late and waking up early for those short connections.

Aside from giving me a room in her house, filling my lunch for an army, and giving me the gift of conversation as a break from school, Grandma is also my biggest cheerleader. Any school function that could be attended, she was there. I cannot thank my Grandmother enough for the endless guidance, support, and Starbucks runs that made my education possible. Without moving to Toronto, the relationship I have with my Grandmother would not be what it is today. I thank the University of Toronto and the University of Windsor as they have shown me that Marlene is more than just my Grandma, she is my best friend.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/SYMBOLS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the link between findings from previous scholarly research detailing the inaccurate portrayals of popular crime media and claims of potential implications these may have on public perceptions of crime. Through the exploration of previous research it has been found that there are very few scholars who have made a connection between the inaccurate portrayals of crime and potential implications it has had on society and the criminal justice system using empirical research. A number of publications highlight that crime is inaccurately portrayed but the connections made to its effects are concluded through academic deduction and analysis rather than interaction with public ideologies.

This thesis attempts to shed light on that missing link by first analysing media portrayals of crime, offenders, victims, and enforcers in two popular CBS crime dramas – *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-2015) and *Criminal Minds* (2000-current) – to determine whether media portrayals reflect what is statistically known in both the United States (USA) and Canadian contexts. Then, to assess whether crime media may influence perceptions of crime, students at the University of Windsor and Facebook members from the 'Free and Cheap Kitchener' group, were recruited and participated in one-on-one qualitative interviews.

Three questions essentially guided the thesis research. First: How does entertainment media such as crime drama series represent crime, offenders, victims, and law enforcers? This question was studied qualitatively through content and thematic analysis of the 2015-2016 seasons of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (*CSI*) and *Criminal*

Minds (CM). These portrayals were then compared to Canadian and US statistics to assess the accuracy of representation.

The second question that guided the research related to the relationship between crime dramas, specifically *CSI* and *CM*, and public perceptions and understandings of crime, its participants, and the criminal justice system. This question was addressed through qualitative interviews with recruited participants to provide insight into the general public's understanding and cultural assumptions of crime, shedding light on the missing link in existing scholarly literature. The findings and themes discovered from the content analysis of *CSI* and *CM* provided a structure for the interview questions. Portrayals revealed through the crime dramas were compared to the responses given by participants to explore whether public understandings of crime mirrored media portrayals. It was hypothesized that public perceptions of crime would likely be cultivated from media exposure. Therefore, social construction theory would posit that perpetual exposure to crime media potentially leads to society cultivating norms and understandings of crime through viewing. If a social construction was cultivated by viewers, then cultural criminology is also reflected. This is because audiences are likely to establish and carry their understandings of crime within and across their interactions in society from what is seen on television. Meaning, individuals will likely behave a certain way depending on how they understand the culture of crime.

The third and final research question was: Do the effects of crime media differ depending on viewers' educational background? The focus on viewers' educational background intended to address the critical difference between two theoretical frameworks: media criminology and popular criminology. Addressed in further detail shortly, Haney

(2009) argues that media criminology posits the media as potentially the sole educational resource surrounding crime for the general public. Whereas Rafter (2000) argues that popular criminology posits that media works in concert with academic resources to educate viewers to create a broader understanding of crime. It was anticipated that a comparison between two different backgrounds, those who are academically educated in criminology and those who are not, would provide insight into these competing but complementary theoretical frameworks. It was hypothesized that individuals educated in criminology could potentially have different understandings of crime from the general public based on their academic background. General public audience members were imagined to have potential social constructions of crime, victims, enforcers, and offenders that were heavily reflective of crime media; whereas audience members educated in academic criminology were imagined to have possible constructions reflective of Canadian or US statistics.

This thesis first examines the theoretical frameworks of popular criminology, media criminology, cultural criminology, and social construction and how they function in possibly shaping audience members understandings of crime. Next, previous literature regarding the inaccurate portrayals of crime and its possible effects on society are explored. Supporting research is provided in the themes of crime media section, captured from the recent 2015-2016 seasons of *CSI* and *CM* that detail the inaccurate portrayals cultivated through a thematic content analysis. These inaccurate portrayals were then used in the formation of interview questions regarding public understandings of crime. Interviews were conducted examining criminology student and general public understandings, analysing the possibility of a social construction. This thesis concludes with a discussion

of the predominant themes in both the examinations of *CSI* and *CM* and participant

interviews.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

There were four main theoretical frameworks that guided this research: media criminology, popular criminology, social construction theory, and cultural criminology. Although these were considered to be four distinct and separate frameworks, they are also capable of blending together and supporting one another, as will be demonstrated by their use in this thesis.

Media Criminology

The first theoretical framework, media criminology, is explored by Haney (2009, 689) who posits that the average American citizen has earned the equivalent of a Ph.D. in media criminology by the time they have turned 18 years old. Rafter (2007, 415) defines criminology as understanding both crime and criminals, thus media criminology is possibly learning about crime solely through the media. The mediums of popular culture are only continuing to grow in today's society, presently consisting of but not limited to: television, music, film, and podcasts. Modern television media is inundated with multiple crime dramas available at all hours. The development of spinoffs and similar shows results in an abundance of readily available crime media. Success is based on ratings rather than a source of accurate knowledge, thus becoming a hyper commercialized product (Haney 2009, 692).

Crime dramas attempt to appear largely realistic in an effort to draw in viewers by basing episodes on true stories, referring to specific laws and regulations, or situating themselves in an identifiable framework such as a geographic location. Therefore, media focused on crime is arguably received by audience members as both informative and

entertaining. Viewers may subconsciously believe what they see on television is a reflection of reality depending on the engagement of audience members. This reflection results in the lines between fact and fiction being blurred for audience members (Dowler et al., 2006, 838). In addition, Haney (2009) notes very few spectators are educated in law or criminology, which could contribute to or hinder their ability to identify the difference between what is constructed by entertainment writers and what is found in Canadian or USA statistics. Haney (2009) argues that the more an individual tunes into television with a focus on crime, then the greater the possibility that their understandings of crime control and the criminal justice system will be distorted and reflect media portrayals. In this instance the media is a form of education for unquestioning audience members and inaccurate portrayals are likely to lead to misguided beliefs surrounding enforcers, offenders, and victims.

Popular Criminology

Haney's theoretical framework of media criminology is very similar to Rafter's popular criminology with a small but important difference. Haney argues that media criminology undermines academic criminology within the wider public. Those who potentially learn about victims, offenders, and enforcers from television, radio, broadcasts, etc., are likely to be uneducated in its merits academically (Haney 2009). Therefore, according to Haney, crime media is possibly responsible for the greater majority of audience members' education surrounding crime. There is a likely division between those who are educated academically and those who are educated through the media.

Rafter (2007, 415) argues that popular criminology – crime education through popular culture - works in concert with academic criminology, interweaving together as

two equally significant sources of knowledge. Both authors nevertheless argue that popular and media criminology have a much wider reach than academic criminology, and thus exposure to popular crime media may have important impacts on public perception.

The number of individuals who possess a criminological background is, without doubt, eclipsed by the popularity of television crime media. Statistics detailing those educated in criminology in both Canada and the USA were categorized as social sciences, and therefore are quite broad as other subjects fall into this category as well. In 2014 Canadian data, 76, 407 post-secondary students graduated a social science program, 14 percent of all degrees obtained that year (Statistics Canada 2016). The latest statistics in the USA were from 2012 and similar to Canada, finding that 177, 326 individuals graduated social science programs, which was a total of 10 percent of all programs (Science and Engineering 2012). For comparison, season 15 of *CSI* had an average of 8.26 million viewers tune in each week, an average 16.78 percent lower than previous seasons. Similarly, *CM* reported an average of 9.011 million viewers each week, also reflecting a decrease of 12.6 percent from previous seasons (TV Finale, 2016).

Important to note is that these figures do not include viewers who illegally stream, and furthermore is not specified whether these statistics represent worldwide viewership or viewership solely within the USA. Moreover, these findings are also only for *CSI* and *CM*. Therefore, with the growing number of crime dramas broadcast each year it can be speculated that more individuals watch entertainment crime media than are academically educated in criminology.

Although the number of people who watch television crime media outnumbers those who are academically educated, there are also other sources of popular criminology that educate viewers. Crime media can also be a source of education when hyper-commercialism is not the primary purpose; documentaries featuring criminals, prisons, crimes, victims, and enforcers also serve as educational resources. Other forms of popular criminology that serve as a realistic source of education for the general public include news media and biographies. Since the purpose of this thesis is to shed light on how crime media likely leads to social constructions and cultural understandings of crime, it will not discredit all forms of crime media as inaccurate and misleading viewers.

Social Construction Theory

The third theoretical framework that guided this thesis research is social construction theory. Social construction theory posits that individuals possibly shape and create their own realities and understandings of society and the world around them through what they are exposed to and absorb (Matthews and Herbert 2014). According to Berger and Luckmann (1966, 17) "man's [sic] consciousness is determined by his [sic] social being," meaning that what an individual learns and accepts to be true is likely reflective of what they are exposed to each day. Thus, when an individual perpetually exposes themselves to television crime media they are likely to formulate their understandings about crime from what is seen on television. Rafter (2007, 416) outlines the foundation for the connection between social construction theory and how audience members possibly create a social construction of crime through the act of viewing (2007, 406). This occurs by first organizing cultural bits received from films or television that can include but are

not limited to: overrepresentations, inaccurate portrayals, and extreme forms of sensationalizing.

After substantial and continual exposure, these cultural bits could then be formed into frames or templates that occupy a larger area within the human memory, and when even more exposure occurs, these frames likely transform into ideologies. It is possible that audience members use these inaccurately created ideologies to cultivate norms and assumptions, therefore each occurrence of crime does not need to be interpreted using a blank slate. The concept of a possible social construction is also catalyzed by the fact that very few individuals in society experience crime first hand, a similar conclusion posited by Haney (2009).

According to Matthews and Herbert (2014), the main principles of a social construction are time and space, meaning the duration of exposure and external surroundings shape possible social constructions. Therefore, since audience members may view crime dramas with different ideologies and surroundings, many may conclude that altered constructions of crime are likely to be achieved as such variables cannot be controlled. However, it could also be argued that the possible social constructions created by individuals through continual exposure to crime media are likely to be quite similar. This is because television drama series are typically prefaced with a 'previously on' recap which provides details that creators want those watching to remember. Thus, perpetuating and refreshing the same memories and nail biting moments for each and every viewer. Audience members' memories and exposure are potentially shaped by this recap, different and specific offences may be remembered by some. However, the overarching themes and

connections are recapped for viewers each time they engage with the show, potentially allowing similar social constructions across audience members to be cultivated.

Lastly, a social construction is most likely to be created by an unquestioning or uncritical individual. Berger and Luckmann (1966, 14) note that the man in the street, referring to any individual who is not a philosopher, takes reality and knowledge for granted. He assumes what is known to be true, and what is true to exist without question; he will likely not trouble himself with questioning what is perceived to be reality and knowledge. Thus, knowledge can be socially constructed easier when an individual does not question what they are presented with and thus, passive viewers could be influenced easier.

Cultural Criminology

One of the main concepts of cultural criminology is the notion that the meaning of crime is carried within society's cultural dynamics (Ferrell 2008, 2). Media is a strong cultural force that has the potential to create cultural expectations and patterns beyond the initial intention of entertainment. Thus, when a possible social construction is created by continual exposure to crime media, audience members potentially come to view not just media but the rest of the world with these cultural expectations. Although the primary intention of crime media is entertainment, it may be interpreted as knowledge and can lead to a cultural misunderstanding of crime. This misunderstanding may also transfer between viewers when discussing episodes within the created culture.

Ferrell (2008, 3) notes that cultural criminology understands culture to "be the stuff of collective meaning and collective identity." Therefore, if audience members develop

collective meanings and identities surrounding crime media they potentially create a cultural criminology of media representations of crime. Criminal culture, or any culture for that matter, does not remain stagnant; outside forces are continually influencing the direction to shape and shift the identity and meaning.

Within his 2008 paper *Cultural Criminology: An Invitation,* Ferrell examines the example of a punch, noting that decades ago it was considered acceptable for a man to hit a woman. These actions reinforced his superior and her subordinate positions in society. This illustration of domestic violence demonstrates how society and culture are always changing, a man's bloody knuckles fifty years ago has far different meaning than today, having shifted from an understanding of discipline to one of abuse (Ferrell 2008, 8). The culture around crime media can change, but the audience determines its success by continually following the series. Without an audience tuning in each week creators and writers are forced to change their content until money is made or face the threat of a cancellation. As a result, audiences dictate acceptable portrayals of crime by tuning in week after week and actively seeking out crime media.

It should be noted that within the examined theoretical frameworks it is not assumed all audience members are passive viewers, specifically being shaped by what is shown on television. Active viewership is believed to minimize the possibility of inaccurate assumptions generated from crime media. Thus, creating a social construction or culture is not an absolute, only a possibility. It is assumed that audience members are active engagers and these are possibilities for potential passive consumption. The above theoretical frameworks are used in concert with one another within this thesis as media criminology, popular criminology, and cultural criminology all influence possible social

constructions. Therefore narrow focus on one theory is not necessary. The below overview

of previous research provides examples of how these theories possibly influence audience

members criminal understandings.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The inaccurate portrayals of crime, offenders, victims, and enforcers in crime media have been highlighted in scholarly publications over the past few decades as television broadcasts have surged in both popularity and volume (Haney 2009). Bainbridge (2015) concludes that television crime media unfolds in expected and similar patterns, therefore it provides audiences with potential frameworks on how to think about crime. The growth in popularity and little variance in episode development has led to stereotypes being created surrounding the portrayal of offenders, enforcers, and victims (Rafter 2000). This literature review will detail the resulting stereotypes and their possible detriments in terms of offenders, victims, enforcers, and crime, also noting theories, such as the *CSI Effect.* Overview will begin with the predominant stereotypes of offenders.

Offenders are commonly categorized within a set framework that audience members are inclined to favour when understanding criminals. Viewers come to accept and anticipate on screen offenders to fall into the following categories discussed by Rafter (2000, 47):

1) Environmental causes, where the culture or situation an individual is facing has forced or propelled them into such crimes;
2) Psychopathy, which consist of mental abnormalities causing criminal behaviour;
3) Aspirations for a better life, choosing crime over being 'normal' or as a short cut to wealth (Rafter 2000, 49);
4) An uncommon but final basic explanation of crime is bad biology, whereby the criminal is inherently evil and unable to control themselves (Rafter 2000, 50).

Rafter identifies these stereotypical criminal categories as being far too overly simplistic and overused in film media. As a result of their perpetual use, the general public may be unable to identify the complex nature behind pushes or pulls to crime within the real world.

By continually providing audience members with limited and overused stereotypes, viewers are potentially unable to see the differences and nuances between offenders. Therefore, audience members are likely to regard all offenders as being the same with little concern to individuality or extenuating circumstances.

Perpetuating stereotypes surrounding offenders also includes appearance, which is addressed by Eschholz et al. (2004, 165). It is noted that even when media representations of offender's race are quite similar to Uniform Crime Report (UCR) figures, 69 percent of participants still believe blacks were more often represented. These beliefs were cultivated from the portrayal of enforcers because the majority of enforcement personnel in crime media are white. Therefore, when a non-white individual appears on screen, it is most often in the role of an offender (Eschholz et al. 2004, 165). The appearance of a predominantly white main cast coupled with audience members perceiving non-whites to offend more supports the claims of a societal dependence to see 'others' as actively engaging with criminal cultures according to Dowler et al. (2006, 840). Eschholz et al. (2004, 173) also note that this separation perpetuates an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy. A similar conclusion was made by Rafter (2000, 51) who posits that appearance stereotypes echo Lombroso's theory of inherent criminality whereby criminals appear to wear their stigma.

While the images of offenders are largely saturated with non-white tones they are also inundated with violent crime. A study by Dominick (1973, 245) found that 60 percent of onscreen crimes depicted were violent, consisting of homicide, attempted homicide, and assault; leading audience members to assume that offenders are both non-white and extremely violent. Soulliere (2003) echoes this point by noting that television depicts the

least occurring crimes in society while simultaneously ignoring the most prominent rate of offence, which is property crime. Rafter (2000, 47) ultimately concludes that when presentations in crime media are provided with narrow and simplistic criminal stereotypes it only perpetuates the belief that crime can be explained, and in some instances explained easily.

When the appearance and behaviour of an offender follows a routine that can be easily identified by viewers it is likely to create a social construction reflecting or based on this portrayal. If this construction is created, then audience members are apt to assume non-white individuals are inclined to offend and are likely violent. If crime media is the sole source of education then this potential social construction could perpetuate notions that a person is capable of recognizing a passing criminal in their daily lives. Without other sources teaching viewers differently, audience members are restricted to the most readily available source of crime media, television. The possibly emergent 'us' versus 'them' dynamic possibly creates a culture of crime where viewers believe offenders are inherently different from the rest of society.

Stereotypes also exist for the enforcers within crime media. Pigeonholes for enforcers include, but are not limited to, good guy and outlaw heroes. Good guy heroes are seen as standing tall and enforcing the law to promote both law abiding and good behaviour. On the other hand, outlaw heroes stand for archaic forms of deterrence whereby law enforcers believe they are justified in bending or breaking the law to enforce it for the rest of society (Rafter 2000, 148). As previously noted, enforcers are overwhelmingly portrayed as white individuals; specifically 95 percent male and 86 percent white (Dominick 1973, 247). Rafter (2000, 150) notes that enforcers within crime media are

typically portrayed as elite individuals, using the term hero, capable of succeeding at impossible tasks each and every week. Enforcers are described as persistent, imaginative, and adept, resulting in their on screen solving rate being roughly 88 percent, nearly four times the UCR statistics (Dominick 1973, 245). More recent findings were provided by Eschholz et al. (2004, 172) who found that *NYPD Blue* clearance rates were 78 percent, noting this finding was over representative of normal US statistics.

Huey and Broll (2015) also focused on the misrepresentation of enforcers in regards to policing. They found that crime shows fail to portray the dirty work that officers deal with each and every day, noting that officers on duty must sometimes search people who have defecated or vomited on themselves or who are heavily intoxicated. They continue to expand their argument to include how enforcers are faced with both social dirt and moral stigma that is not mirrored on screen. Social dirt consists of dealing with individuals whom society has deemed to be social junk, such as addicts, prostitutes, and homeless people. There is also a reality of moral stigma in which officers interact with morally taboo individuals such as pawnbrokers and known violent individuals (Huey and Broll 2015, 238).

The inaccurate portrayal of enforcers is addressed by Huey and Broll (2015, 243) as a leading reason many enter the police force. The career of an enforcement officer is shown on television as highly glamorized, even *sexy* according to the authors, as female enforcers chase offenders in heels and the smell of rotting flesh is mocked for entertainment. It is shown that audiences harbour expectations of policing careers that reflect what is seen on television. Without using the social construction term specifically in their paper, Huey and Broll showcase how audience members shape their understandings

of crime and enforcers around what is seen on television. Numerous examples have provided detail on how inaccurately crime media portrays enforcement and how it has guided individuals into the career with unobtainable expectations.

One of the stereotypes perpetuated through crime films and television drama Rafter did not address in great detail was the victim trope. Soulliere (2003, 50) notes that when the media constantly portrays the victim as a helpless female it potentially perpetuates rape myths, female inferiority, and subsequent male superiority. This point is echoed by Eschholz et al. (2004, 165) who state that female victimization accounts for over 50 percent of media depictions, nowhere near UCR statistics. Dowler et al. (2006, 838) also address the fact that when a female is victimized it is typically considered to be her own fault, and within the attack she is devalued, depersonalized, objectified, and dehumanized. Dominick (1973, 242) states that when women are perpetually victimized by men it only reinforces the subordinate position feminists have been attempting to escape for decades. In contrast, the highest rate of victimization according to collected statistics is for men aged 18-25 (Soulliere 2003, 51).

A study by Cavender and Deutsch (2007) found that *CSI* focuses heavily on violent crime. They note that 72 percent of the crimes depicted were violent, and 46 percent of these crimes were murder, adding that similar findings were produced for the spinoff series of *CSI: NY* and *CSI: Miami* (72). These instances of violent crime and homicide are quite significantly different than actual statistics as they are highly overrepresented. When horrific crimes are overly depicted a social construction of victimization is likely to develop possibly leading to a greater and unrealistic fear of crime.

Learning about victims and victimization from crime media may lead to inaccurate social constructions of victimization whereby females fear crime and males do not. Perpetual presentation of males victimizing females has the potential to create a variety of social constructions regarding both offenders and victims. Audience members could perceive that women are too weak to defend themselves and incapable of offending as women are more often portrayed as victim than offender. Social constructions in terms of male gender are also possible resulting in men believing women should be controlled and dominated.

A popular theory pertaining to the impact crime media has had on the public is the *CSI* effect. The *CSI* effect, named after the popular forensic crime drama, refers to the phenomenon in which "jurors hold unrealistic expectations of forensic evidence and investigation techniques, and have an increased interest in the discipline of forensic science" (Robbers 2008, 86). This effect increases the burden of proof for those prosecuting cases, as citizens expect DNA evidence to be present in the majority of trials. Bainbridge (2015) notes that there are two forms of the *CSI* effect: the first places a greater emphasis on the requirement of DNA evidence by jury members, as noted by Robbers (2008). The second form of the *CSI* effect is when criminals attempt to cover their own DNA traces when offending. Examples given by Bainbridge include the use of latex gloves, bleaching crime scenes clean, and even one instance of offenders collecting cigarette butts to fill their ashtray as a form of DNA distraction (359). This finding by Bainbridge (2015) demonstrates that social constructions of crime have the possibility to affect not only law abiding members of society but perhaps those intending to commit

crime as well. Some criminals appear to be learning from the portrayals of criminality broadcast weekly, albeit, not entirely successfully.

Another study of the *CSI Effect* was performed by Robbers (2008) who interviewed prosecutors, judges, and defence attorneys that had practiced or ruled before and after the breakthrough of crime media, longer than seven years at the time of the study. The most significant finding was that in the post-crime media boom, eyewitnesses were considered to be invalid, and preference of forensic evidence over eyewitness testimony was found within 53 percent of those interviewed. One prosecutor's story goes as follows:

> I prosecuted an attempted murder case where the defendant stabbed a state employee six times, locked her inside the business and left with her keys. The defendant was arrested three blocks away, within 10 minutes of the commission of the crime, with the victim's keys in his pocket. The victim identified the defendant as the man who stabbed her. The first jury trial resulted in a hung jury because five jurors believed there should have been DNA evidence presented at trial because they saw blood in the crime scene photos. I explained the victim had identified this blood as her own because she was stabbed (Robbers 2008, 91).

Robbers (2008) details how audience members rely on social constructions cultivated through viewing crime media and how it affects the criminal justice system. However, her study is done through the opinions and findings of lawyers and judges and their experiences with the general public after the crime media boom. Interviews were not conducted with audience members specifically to analyse if the presence of a possible social construction was present.

The validity of the *CSI* effect has been debated by many. Bainbridge notes that there is no empirical evidence showing that such an effect occurs at a basic level. Crime media does not necessarily tell audience members what to think, instead it provides them with the foundation for what they should think about (Bainbridge 2015, 360). As a study

performed by Podlas (2006) found, there is very little difference in the decision making process of potential jury members of two test groups, those who watch *CSI* and those who do not. It was found that even those who belonged to the do-not-watch category would have likely seen portions of or full episodes without explicitly following the series, which would make them aware of basic concepts and routines (Robbers 2008, 87). Thus, when 'non-watchers' are able to make conclusions similar to those who regularly watch, it demonstrates the strength of potential social constructions to crime media exposure. The educational background of the students is not stated and therefore it cannot be concluded if Podlas's study supports a media criminology or popular criminology framework. Although conclusions leaned in favour of a powerful social construction, it could also be argued that since the two groups made similar conclusions the effect of crime media are not as influential as anticipated.

Finally, Rosenberger and Callanan (2001, 439) note that a different impact is achieved by different mediums of crime media. For example, television is likely to create a higher fear of crime because of the visual aspect of delivery, and this is also coupled with the realistic portrayal, discussed by many scholars earlier. Rosenberger and Callanan (2001) also found that newspapers had very little effect on punitive ideologies, while television viewership had the greatest effect on public attitudes towards rehabilitation or punishment (447). This is one of few articles that detail research on the public perceptions of crime rather than relying on analytical academic deduction. However, the research focused on testing the attitudes towards rehabilitation or punishment and how they could possibly differ based on the medium of crime media; whereas this research is looking to

see if media depictions of crimes are mirrored in public ideologies because of created social constructions.

The literature indicates that crime media misrepresents the portrayal of crime, offenders, victims, and enforcers. These inaccurate portrayals have been on screen for decades as shown by Dominick's publication in 1973. When time, the main principle of social construction theory, is applied a social construction is likely to occur after significant amounts of crime media exposure. The social construction is also likely to be strengthened when audience members participate in the culture of crime created around these shows by discussing criminals, laws, and the portrayals of both victims and offenders. When crime education occurs solely through the media it demonstrates the theoretical framework of media criminology. However, when other sources of education are received, particularly academic, the theoretical framework of popular criminology is demonstrated.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

Crime Media Content Analysis

This study consisted of two separate stages. First, a thematic content analysis was performed on season 11 of *CM* and season 15 of *CSI,* the original Las Vegas edition. *CM* is a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) drama created by Jeff Davis. Within this series the Behavioural Analysis Unit (BAU) is called upon by local police to profile the most heinous offenders and aid in their capture. One of the shows taglines consists of "Their job is to catch criminals, their speciality is to think like one" (*Criminal Minds,* 2016). The team works together to solve the most difficult crimes across the USA. *CSI*, created by Anthony E. Zuiker, consists of an elite team of police forensic experts who solve difficult cases in Las Vegas with the use of physical DNA evidence. These officers know the area better than anyone else as their team consists of a homegrown ex-stripper turned blood splatter expert, forensic entomologist, chemist, and coroner. Collectively the team pieces together evidence and solves crimes during the gruelling night shift. The evidence found within the crime scene is referenced as 'speaking' to the team, consisting of the tagline "the evidence does not lie" (*CSI: Crime Scene Investigation,* 2015).

The seasons were analysed using DVD versions of the series that allowed precise detail to be taken as episodes could be manipulated to ensure accurate notes. These notes were comprised of categories such as: gender of victims and offenders, race of victims and offenders, methods used to perform the criminal activity, and relationship between victim and offender. Notes also included transcriptions of salient parts and thorough episode details and were then analysed for existing themes which emerged within the seasons.

Both *CSI* and *CM* were used for this research for multitude of reasons. First, the longevity of their time on air is critical to the principles of social construction theory of duration and continual exposure. *CM* began in 2005 and continues to this day, resulting in it being a substantially prevalent crime drama as it has accumulated more than a decade of seasons. Similarly, *CSI* began in 2000 providing 15 years of entertainment and potential constructions. Therefore, the longer the shows have been a part of the public's lives, entertainment, and interests, the higher probability of a social construction (Matthews and Herbert 2014). The series longevity reaches a widespread audience which also supports the theoretical framework of cultural criminology, as a collective identity is created when audience members provide dedicated viewership and support. Secondly, both of these programs have resulted in spinoff series, specifically *Criminal Minds: Suspect Behaviours* (2011)*, Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders* (2016- Present), *CSI: NY* (2004-2013), *CSI: Miami* (2002-2012), *CSI: Cyber* (2015-2016), and a television movie *CSI: Immortality* (2015). The popularity and success of these spinoffs are not of concern to this study. These shows have such an enormous fandom, following, and popularity, that corporations were able to create shows with similar plot lines but different characters to both increase the presence and potency of crime media exposure. As a result of such popularity, even if a series has been discontinued, there are still multiple reruns broadcast each week.

The analysis of crime media provided insight into the question, how does entertainment media such as crime drama series represent crime, offenders, victims, and law enforcers? Findings in the portrayals of *CSI* and *CM* were compared to Canadian and US statistics which detailed the inaccuracy of the 2015-2016 seasons. The inaccuracy of crime media sheds light on possible social constructions and the surrounding culture of

criminology viewers potentially create. The data was analysed with both formal and thematic coding. Formal coding consisted of the categories noted in the literature review cultivated by other academics such as: overrepresentation of female victimization; gender and race of offenders; stereotypes of enforcers; and overrepresentation of violent crime. Thematic coding was also performed to ensure that all content was analysed for possible themes not previously cultivated.

Operationalization of Categories and Themes

Definitions are necessary in order to outline the precise characteristics and categories analysed. First is the offender. This is any individual who is responsible for injuring, maiming, murdering, or attempting to murder another character. Typically in these shows this is the individual(s) the episode will in large part focus on, other than the victim. For the purpose of this research, individuals referenced as a previous offender or those 'toying' with the justice system were not included in the definition of an offender. This eliminated multiple individuals who were brought in for questioning but were not responsible for the act in question, as well as misdirection formulated by writers to induce or incite further entertainment.

Another necessary definition is the victim, which includes anyone who is attacked, injured, or murdered by the offender. In order to sustain mutual exclusivity, offenders that ultimately die at the hands of another, such as police or loved one, were not categorized as victims. The definition of victim is seen from the eyes of the law and not the offender. Thus, individuals attacked by a mentally unstable offender, who understood they were helping, were still categorized as a victim. There were two final categories of victims, those who were victims of homicide and those who were victims of attempted homicide.

24

The second category was negligible compared to the first and, as such, only victims of homicide were used within the statistics presented.

Enforcers are those who are employed by the government with the sole purpose of apprehending offenders and ensuring that others follow the law; thus, the analyses did not include civilians who took the law into their own hands. An enforcer was not categorized as a victim as there is an inherent danger assumed within the career, and they were also omitted from being categorized as offenders because their actions were not considered malicious.

The gender of each victim, offender, and enforcer was documented as well. As television attempts to mirror and push the boundaries of society's accepted values, gender was portrayed as being quite fluid. Two episodes in *CSI* are prime examples of the fluid portrayal of gender. *The Twin Paradox* (*CSI*, 15. 06) featured a trans-gender victim and *Rubbery Homicide* (*CSI*, 15. 08) which examined the lives of living dolls (rubber suits worn by men allowing them to live their lives like women). Therefore, the gender of each victim, offender, and enforcer was recorded as they were portrayed throughout the episode or at the time of an offense.

The last definition explored is sensationalized crime. To sensationalize is defined as: "to describe or show something in a way that makes it seem more shocking than it really is" (Merriam-Webster, 2017). A crime was considered sensationalized if it could not be categorized within Canada's most common methods of homicide, which consists of shooting, beating, strangulation, fire, and stabbing (Statistics Canada 2016). Collected USA homicide method statistics contain far more categories than Canada. A total of 12

categories are present on the government website that include: shooting (broken down into different gun types), knives, blunt objects, personal, poison, explosives, fire, narcotics, drowning, strangulation, asphyxiation, and 'other' or unknown.   Therefore, USA categories were reorganised into the six Canadian categories to allow for comparable data. The categories of personal and blunt objects were combined into beating; strangulation and asphyxiation into strangulation; and explosives, drowning, narcotics, and other or unknown were categorized within the 'other'.

Another form of sensationalism would be when the presentation of crime, victims, offenders, or enforcers are statistically overrepresented or underrepresented on screen. When referring to 'actual crime' it should be noted that reference is being made to the latest Canadian and USA statistical data. These figures are collected regularly and provided to the general public on their websites. It is important to note that these figures do not account for the dark figure of crime, acts not reported to police.

Interview Recruitment

Interviews shed light on the question, what is the relationship between crime dramas, specifically *CSI* and *CM*, and public perceptions and understandings of crime, its participants, and the criminal justice system? This question attempts to shed light on the missing link in previous research providing empirical study of crime media effects on audience members. It was hypothesized that if participant's responses were a reflection of crime media than media criminology and or popular criminology could be supported as educational resources for audience members. Reflections of crime media were believed to be a cultivated social construction of crime as well as a cultural understanding of crime.

The second stage of research consisted of recruiting participants from two different backgrounds for one-on-one in person qualitative interviews. The first group of participants consisted of individuals from the Facebook group 'Free and Cheap Kitchener', while the second group consisted of criminology students from the University of Windsor. It was hypothesized that students majoring in criminology, thus being exposed to academic criminology, would be more aware of statistical facts and figures surrounding crime. Hence their social construction of crime would be influenced less by what is portrayed on television and based more on what is learned in the classroom. Essentially, these student participants could shed light on the argument between Haney's media criminology and Rafter's popular criminology, providing direction to the question, do the effects of crime media differ depending on viewers' educational background? Therefore, a comparison could be made between the potential social constructions which arose from interviewing the general population, those recruited with the use of Facebook, to those with an educational background in criminology.

Criminology students from the University of Windsor and individuals from the Facebook Group 'Free and Cheap Kitchener' were recruited simultaneously. Students were emailed a recruitment poster by Dana Wiley, the undergraduate secretary, with a reminder email sent out by Laura Chesterfield, the graduate secretary. The poster was also displayed within the department to create further exposure. A total of three female students' were willing to take the study beyond first contact and complete a one-on-one qualitative interview at the University of Windsor campus.

Individuals were also recruited from a general public setting using the Facebook group 'Free and Cheap Kitchener', this group was chosen as the researcher is a member

and a wide audience was achieved as it consisted of 40,303 members during recruitment. 'Free and Cheap Kitchener' allowed the furthest outreach possible, without recruiting through known individuals, while also ensuring a broad sample as it was not directed at any specific demographic such as age, gender, or socioeconomic status. An administrator to the group facilitated in uploading the poster, knowing her assistance would eliminate her from the study. The poster was shared two times daily over the course of a week to facilitate maximum exposure in the fast paced group. A total of three individuals, two females and one male responded and were willing to complete the recruitment process and partake in one-on-one qualitative interviews. Interviews for Facebook participants took place at the Kitchener Public Library, Fisher-Hallman location.

To be eligible for interview participation participants were required to watch either or both series examined, *CSI* or *CM*. A total of six participants were interviewed, consisting of five females and one male. The study age range was 19 to 25 and all participants were Caucasian. In order to maintain confidentiality for participants they will be referred to by their recruitment group, i.e., Facebook or Student, and a number. Although it was not the intention of the interview to bring forth personal information regarding participant's experiences with victimization such information was offered and steps must be taken to protect the confidentiality of those who volunteered.

Interview Process

The interview consisted of four distinct stages (Appendix A). The first stage began by discussing participants viewing habits: How often they watched crime media, what shows were watched and what style of watching did participants take part in such as binging, weekly episodes, or late night broadcasts. The second stage of the interview

consisted of discussing crime media in general. Some questions included: who do you believe is victimized the most in crime media? Could you name some of the methods used during victimization? Do you remember specific reasons given for offenders in crime media? This set of questions shed light on how participants engaged with the examined series and if the assumptions of crime, offenders, enforcers, and victims were based on how they remembered crime media presentation. At the end of the second stage a break occurred to allow a buffer for the focus to shift from the understandings of what is portrayed on television to real life understandings.

Questions surrounding real life understandings included: what would you say are the characteristics of a good law enforcer? Do you fear crime? What is the difference between a successful and unsuccessful criminal? The answers given in this section shed light on how the general public perceives crime and if their understandings are shaped by crime media. Lastly, possible follow up questions concluded the interview. After interviews were transcribed, a thematic analysis was performed that identified recurring and common answers throughout the interviews. This analysis was performed two separate times to ensure all emergent data were captured. The first stage of coding consisted of interviews being analysed for similar themes to those present in crime media, the second stage consisted of new or emergent themes outside of existing categories.

CHAPTER 5

CRIME MEDIA THEMES

Once all the data from *CSI* and *CM* was collected it was analysed using a thematic content analysis. The themes that emerged from the 2015-2016 seasons of *CSI* and *CM* are as follows: the superhero enforcer, intelligent and organized offender, officers and their families being perpetually targeted by offenders, the gendered nature of offending and victimization, and forms of sensationalism.

The Superhero Enforcer

The theme of law enforcers as superheroes is demonstrated in a variety of ways throughout each series. For example, when mentoring in *'til Death Do Us Part* (*CM*, 11.03)*,* FBI Agent Derek Morgan lectures young children about the importance of being physically active for a minimum of 60 minutes daily. He notes that physical activity will increase their chances of making it in the NFL or FBI. Morgan's statement suggests to the children as well as viewers that FBI personnel share the same status as sports heroes in North American society.

Enforcement characters are further presented as superhero-like figures when they are able to solve what would otherwise be considered unsolvable cases. According to Statistics Canada data, the 2016 homicide solving rate was approximately 78 percent. These findings correspond to the fact that in the majority of solved homicide instances the victim and offender have a previous relationship, meaning they were something along the lines of friends, acquaintances, family, or significant others 87 percent of the time. The previous relation is one of the main reasons leading to Canadian homicide clearance rates of 78 percent. Therefore, in 13 percent of solved Canadian homicide crimes victims and

offenders were believed to be strangers (Statistics Canada 2016). Rates in the USA suggest that victims know their offenders in 44 percent of solved homicides and are strangers in 56 percent of solved homicides. This relation between victims and offenders in USA can be compared to the 2013 clearance rate of 64 percent (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017). Interesting to note is that the rates between Canadian and US associations are vastly different. Perhaps one of the reasons is that the number of murders in USA is nearly 12 times that of Canada (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017). Residents in the US also have easier access to fire arms which could affect the rate of association between victim and offender as provocation could escalate to the use of deadly weapons. Aside from their difference neither country is portrayed in crime media homicide relation statistics.

CSI and *CM* portray the relation between offender and victim quite opposite to Canadian and USA UCR findings. In season 15 of *CSI* it was found that victims and offenders have a previous association in 28 percent of homicide incidents but are strangers to one another in the remaining 72 percent of cases. Similarly, *CM* portrays a previous association between victims and offenders in 13 percent of homicide incidents, with victims and offenders as strangers in 87 percent of the time. When these two statistics are combined, crime media portrays a 19 percent rate of association and an 81 percent rate of victims and offenders being strangers in homicidal events. Crime media enforcers are thus presented as making connections and being able to solve cases that are not likely to be solved in real life homicide circumstances, given the lack of association between victim and offender that renders such cases substantially more difficult to solve.

It could be argued that *CSI* has such a high solving rate, 100 percent for the examined season, simply on the basis that it is a forensic evidence drama. Therefore, it is

natural that the majority of cases would be solved because the focus is on DNA evidence which essentially points the finger at a specific individual. However, in the majority of *CSI* episodes studied, the DNA did not point the finger at a specific offender. Instead, it provided a piece of the crime that the team had to collect, analyse, decipher, and solve. For instance, in *Merchants of Menace* (*CSI*, 15.14), DNA evidence collected by the forensic team points to a recently executed serial killer. It is through the efforts and exemplary memory of one of the team that the real killer is actually discovered, not through the collection of forensic evidence.

Another way the enforcement teams are portrayed as superheroes is in their actions, at times showing super-human capabilities. In an episode appropriately titled *Derek* (*CM*, 11.16), Special Agent Derek Morgan is kidnapped and viciously tortured by four contract killers. He is able to endure the torture by putting himself into a state of deep meditation and then, later, is incredibly able to fight off the four attackers despite being severely injured. In contrast, victims in *CSI* and *CM* do not appear to show such super-human abilities; they are unsuccessful in defending themselves or need to be saved by the enforcement team. Similar vulnerability is portrayed by enforcement outside the main cast, resulting in other forms of policing requiring rescue. The portrayal of others unable to defend themselves against attack, specifically other law enforcers, only increases the reputation of the main cast as elite and untouchable.

The portrayal of enforcers, specifically the main cast, as both superhuman and better than others is also reinforced by portraying local police or lower levels of enforcement as inadequate or purposefully inferior. Episodes *The Job* (*CM,* 11.01) and *Outlaw* (*CM,* 11.04) are examples this of inferiority. Season 11 opens with a local detective

declaring that a victim has overdosed on his own supply of methamphetamine also citing possible Mommy issues. Special Agent Rossi steps in and disregards the previous claim and indicates all of the mistakes made by the detective. He then cites the correct method of homicide and possible reasons. In *Outlaw* the local police chief feels pressured to make a conviction in the small town murder incident and as a result takes the edge off by hiding hard liquor in his coffee cup. Special Agent Rossi tells the officer "Why don't you go home, drink some real coffee, and dry out. You can come back fresh, you can help us catch these guys" (*Criminal Minds,* 2015). He alerts the officer in a private manner and avoids public discipline and therefore is able to correct and improve the inappropriate behaviour.

By portraying law enforcers as super-human, *CM* conveys to its viewers that members of the BAU team are essentially unstoppable, unbreakable, and even better than others. Thus, viewers may develop expectations beyond law enforcements actual abilities. It is possible that some victims of crime would prefer their case be addressed by higher ranking enforcement due to an assumption of local law enforcement being inadequate. As well, because the majority of on screen law enforcement is male, this could lead viewers (and members of the public more generally) to favour and trust males over females within law enforcement.

Intelligent and Organized Offender

A recurring and dominant theme throughout *CSI* and *CM* was that of the brilliant and exceptionally organized offender. The typical language used when describing suspects included terms such as: sophisticated, high intelligence, well educated, and smart. A total of 68 percent of episodes referred to offenders this way. In many instances the offender attempts to set up the team to become potential victims or to prove their intelligence and

outsmart enforcement personnel. In some instances these traps are effective, however, this is only portrayed as possible when dealing with 'outside' enforcers who are not recurring characters or part of the main team. Offenders were also depicted as largely organized and described as both methodical and intelligent, capable of executing well planned criminal acts. The organized and brilliant offender is portrayed throughout *CSI* and *CM* in the majority of episodes, however each series had a team of offenders who spanned the length of the season.

The CSI Effect (*CSI*, 15. 01) begins with Jared Briscoe and his estranged twin brother Paul Winthrop playing a wild game of cat and mouse. The criminal trademark Briscoe and Winthrop use to taunt the team is a thoroughly processed crime scene consisting of trajectory strings composed of human flesh, purposefully strung with hidden messages to be deciphered. Winthrop and Briscoe's crimes climax when they kidnap Detective Shaw's daughter as a form of emotional black mail, thus forcing him to trade team lead D.B Russel's daughter for his. After the exchange, Detective Shaw fires a hidden pistol at the brothers before taking a bullet himself, resulting in Winthrop outsmarting Shaw when he reveals a ballistic vest.

Another instance of an overarching team of offenders being chased for the majority of a season was in *CM* season 11 opener *The Job* (*CM,* 11.01). Technical Analyst Penelope Garcia narrowed her search parameters to 12 categories when searching for a possible offender. The precise search parameters alerted his associates, referred to as *The Dirty Dozen,* who named Garcia as their next victim. It is revealed in *Entropy* (*CM,* 11.11) that the final four members were detained after two were arrested at a safe house and the other

two were lured into a trap under the facade of Special Agent Spencer Reid wanting to kill his fictional wife.

It is important to note is that these descriptions were not the only themes presented in *CM* or *CSI* of offender portrayals[1]. The explored examples were only of offenders whose crimes were featured throughout the majority of a season, other offenders who were only featured in an episode were also described and portrayed in a similar highly intelligent style. When offenders are commonly and consistently portrayed in a methodical, smart, and organized manner it could lead to potential sentencing implications as Canadian and US laws allow those being prosecuted to be judged by a jury of their peers. These jury members are everyday individuals who are very likely to have been exposed to the inaccurate and overabundant television depictions of criminals.

Officers and Family Perpetually Targeted by Offenders

CSI and *CM* did not limit the portrayal of those harmed to civilians and general public. In both series many episodes featured the main cast or their families being targeted by offenders. Sometimes the offender would target enforcement personnel on more than one occasion; such portrayals could potentially demonstrate and teach the audience that no one is safe from the intentions of a determined offender.

In the season opener *The CSI Effect* (*CSI*, 15.01) D.B Russell is affected by the possible loss of one of his best agents by the same serial killer stalking his daughter. The episode opens with Julie Finlay being trapped in her vehicle as a bomb chirps a countdown under her. The offender calls Russell taunting him as he fears for the life of his college,

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[1] Other depictions of offenders included mentally ill, mentally handicapped, revenge oriented, and blacked mailed into committing crimes

only wanting one thing; to be identified and named. Finlay is saved when the offender is acknowledged and the bomb countdown is cancelled by the offender. Within this episode it is also discussed how the same offender serially stalked Russell's daughter, Maya. As mentioned, Maya ultimately is used as bait to catch the twins. Winthrop and Briscoe were also successful at capturing and torturing Keri Torres, Detective Shaw's partner. While Torres was undercover meeting Winthrop about the disappearance of other victims she is attacked and tortured until she escapes in *The Twin Paradox* (*CSI*, 15.06).

Another example is in episode *Girls Gone Wilder* (*CSI*, 15.05) where a criminalist conference is terrorised by two different mass shooters. The first offender, Jeff Lasky, sought revenge for the fact that his wife and daughter were raped and murdered because of a typo on an offenders forms that resulted in his release. Broken and distraught, Lansky went to the criminalist conference and killed three individuals who were on the Texas crime lab team at the time of the mistake. The second shooter, Cliff Ballard, who had recently been released from prison where he served nine years for fraud, previously worked as a crime scene investigator and tampered with evidence to get the results necessary for conviction. While being prosecuted, other CSI individuals evaluated his cases, which ultimately led to his finding of guilt. Ballard shot and killed one of the men who analysed his work and was then after another, Sara Sidle, who learned of his motives just as she was being lured into his trap via text message. Ballard intended to kill Sidle, however, his efforts were thwarted when he was shot by SWAT.

Members of *CM* BAU and family were also targeted by offenders. As noted, Morgan was attacked by a team of four contract killers in *Derek* (*CM,* 11.16). They were unsuccessful as he overpowered them and escaped, returning to a life of normalcy until his

wife, Savannah, was shot in *A Beautiful Disaster* (*CM,* 11.18). Against Hotchner's orders to stay out of the case as it is a conflict of interest, Morgan seeks and finds the responsible offender, and struggles with his desire to kill him. In a later episode, *The Storm* (*CM,* 11.22),* Hotchner is framed for an act of terror against his country, being used as a pawn and diversion technique. The real reason Hotchner was detained was to lure and focus the BAU to one location to allow13 serial killers to escape from prisons all over the USA.

The portrayal of enforcement personnel consistently being targeted by premediated criminal acts creates an image for viewers that further enforces the superhero superiority of main characters as well as highly intelligent offenders. Time and again enforcers are seen as escaping and avoiding the traps laid out for them. They are capable of overpowering, out smarting, and getting themselves out of situations they have been led into. As well, when audience members witness the consistent planned and methodical attacks against enforcers it can lead to inaccurate social constructions of the dangers they face and how a crime is motivated and enacted. These escalated dangers could make audience members disregard the natural everyday risks enforcement personnel face.

The Gendered Nature of Offending and Victimization

Within the examined seasons of *CSI* and *CM* there was a total of seven female offenders across 40 episodes between the two series. Female offending accounted for 20 percent of crimes in *CSI* and nine percent of crimes in *CM*. As a result, women were slightly underrepresented in terms of Canadian and USA statistics, which is 13 percent (Statistics Canada 2016) and 10 percent respectively (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017). Although the percentage of women offending was somewhat accurate, the portrayal of female offenders being arrested was not. For example, five out of the seven female

offenders (71 percent) were seen as being arrested while in a dress, exuding their femininity and thus creating a visual divide between male and female offenders. Doing so allows audience members to see a *softer* side of the female criminal. They are reminded of the gender of the offender and the association's femininity carries, possibly evoking visions of children or husbands being left behind.

For example, in *'til Death Do Us Part* (*CM,* 11.03) the young mentally ill female offender is portrayed as suffering from psychosis. When she was arrested in not only a dress but a wedding dress, it reminded the audience just how much was taken from this woman because of her illness. It is assumed, because it is not shown, that after she was arrested she was incarcerated in either a prison or a mental facility for her crimes and she would likely not experience the milestone she dreamed of the entire episode, a wedding. Weddings are referred to as something 'every little girl dreams about', so by eliminating her chances audience members are reminded of her femininity surrounding the event she was attempting to orchestrate.

This reminder of the softer side of a criminal is one not granted to male offenders. Typical attire for a man is pants and a shirt and little regard is given to their clothing throughout the season. Aside from attire, male gender stereotypes foster a more aggressive and dominant demeanour, which does not allow for forgiving or worried connotations surrounding their crimes. When male offenders were being questioned, interrogated, or confronted by police, children were hardly mentioned as a technique to calm them down or to solicit a confession and cooperation. In one episode, *Outlaw* (*CM,* 11.04), the male offender attempts to reform for the child he discovers when released from prison, but his actions only led him into more crime and endangering the child's life during a police

shootout. In contrast, three of the seven female offenders had children. These children were mentioned during interrogations as a way to coax them to cooperate and confess. As a result, society may see female offenders as more malleable and capable of reforming for the sake of their children.

The demographics of victims were largely misrepresented in the examined crime media. *CSI* and *CM* portrayed females as the victim 46 and 51 percent of the time, respectively. Female victimization was portrayed at a 49 percent rate in the 2015-2016 seasons collectively. Of the portrayals of female victimization, demographics in terms of race consisted of 78 percent of female victims being white and 22 percent non-white. Throughout the two analysed seasons a total of nine victims were referred to simply by their gender, these figures could not be included in the racial demographics. In terms of the race of victims and offenders these findings are unable to be compared to Canadian statistics because such information is not collected. This is because it is seen by many as very difficult to measure race and collecting such data would perpetuate and justify race theories surrounding crime (Linden 2016, 130). Collection of data in USA details the race and victims of offenders, however, comparable data is not available as a category of the race of female victims is not provided (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017).

The portrayal of female victimization was also accompanied by crimes other than homicide; multiple victims were additionally cited as suffering sexual assault. In some instances the intended crime was sexual assault and homicide was the final result. For example, in *CSI* episode *Dead Woods* (*CSI*, 15.12) two hunting club leaders were shop workers at a small-town taxidermist. When lost tourists asked for directions within the conveniently located shop, the two offenders would determine if they wanted to take

advantage of any accompanying females. If they found the female(s) suitable they would drug the male accompaniment, as they now knew the campsite, and proceeded to sexually assault her. This plan of attack was set into motion on multiple occasions as referenced during the confession. However, in the instance detailed, the female, a mother of two girls who were also in the tent, fought back viciously enough that the offender shot and killed her and one of the children.

Another example of sexual assault accompanying a homicide in female victimization is in *Outlaw* (*CM,* 11.04). Two offenders recently released from prison team up to continue the crimes one offender initiated and was convicted of while the previous partner remained detained. Within their crimes they attacked stores or businesses later in the evening when it was close to closing. They made the men present watch the rape of their female coworkers before killing them and making the recently assaulted female watch before killing her as well. The crime in this instance goes beyond the sexual assault and power over the female; pleasure is received from forcing others to watch their crimes. The offenders achieve a notion of supremacy in their actions.

Sensationalism

The hyper commercialization and glorification of crime was presented in many different ways throughout the two different seasons examined. Sensationalism consisted of overrepresentation of 'other' forms of homicide: exaggerated methods of regular forms of homicide, long awaited revenge, and unrealistic or convenient crime which allowed the episode to be neatly packaged within the one hour time frame.

In season 15 of *CSI* and 11 of *CM* the methods offenders used during homicidal crimes were documented and these findings were compared to Statistics Canada 2015 and 2013 USA findings. The definition used to analyse homicide throughout crime media shows was the one given within the notes of the 'Homicides by method' Statistics Canada page which stipulates that any murder, manslaughter, or infanticide as an offense against the *Criminal Code* would be considered homicide. It is important to also note that within the statistical findings presented, when multiple methods were used against a victim only the one specifically leading to and causing death would be calculated (Statistics Canada 2016). Therefore, only one method of homicide was counted per victim when analysing their fatality. The same definition of homicide and the use of one method counted per victim were modeled throughout the study to provide meaningful comparison with Canada and USA data. The finding of this analysis is as follows:

Table 1: Homicide by Method

	Statistics Canada (2015)	USA Statistics (2013)	CM	CSI	CSI and CM
Shooting	29.5%	69%	30.7%	37%	33.1%
Stabbing	35.4%	12.2%	10.7%	8.7%	9.9%
Beating	21.9%	9.1%	2.7%	30.4%	13.2%
Strangulation	6.3%	1.4%	10.7%	8.7%	9.9%
Fire	1.3%	0.8%	0.0%	0%	0%
Other	2.3%	7.5%	44%	15.2%	33.1%
Unknown	3.3%	--	1.3%	0%	0.8%

The category of 'other' is the best indication of sensationalism as it is highly overrepresented in crime media when compared to Canadian and USA statistics. When the findings are combined for both *CSI* and *CM,* the category of 'other' is 14 times more likely to occur in crime media than Canadian Statistics (Statistics Canada 2016). Similarly, when comparing USA statistics to *CSI* and *CM* findings, categorized 'other' forms of homicide are four times as likely to occur on television. It should be noted that the rates referencing 'other' forms of homicide in USA statistics are slightly vague as this category also includes unknown causes of death. Separation of this data was unable to be located (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017).

An example of the 'other' method of homicide occurred in *Angle of Attack* (*CSI*, 15. 11), where there were multiple glorified methods of homicide within one episode. First, a business man is killed within his own office as another victim is propelled through the window by way of a military flight suit colliding with and killing the second victim before dropping the body 30 feet later. The offender attempts to cover up his tracks and poisons the first victim's friend to ensure his silence and secret. The *CM* episode *The Job* (*CM,* 11.01) is another example that consisted of a hired killer injecting his previous clients with a meal supplement causing a slow and painful cardiac death. The last example that displays the sensationalism of 'other' forms of homicide is within *Future Perfect* (*CM,* 11.10) where a male offender was attempting to cure individuals diagnosed with degenerative terminal illnesses. His methods consisted of finding a healthy individual and injecting them with the DNA of animals whose lifespans were longer than humans, such as tropical parrots, jellyfish, sea urchins, and turtles. The blood from the 'host' was then transferred to the

other victim suffering the degenerative disease. Within his trials the unwilling participants died from seizure, heart attack, and exsanguination.

Even when the method is not categorized as 'other' and falls within the 'normal' methods of homicide, sensationalism is still largely present. For example, in *Merchants of Menace* (*CSI,* 15.14) the murder weapon consisted of a knife that was made from the bone of a previous serial killer. Another example is *The Sandman* (*CM,* 11.17), where the offender would sneak into the house of a family, cut the throat of the father then place eye drops and sand into the sleeping mother's eyes. This process glued his victims eyes shut as he loudly kidnapped the child to panic the mother, testing the devotion she had for her child.

The portrayal of long awaited revenge was most prominent in *Bad Blood* (*CSI*, 15. 03), *Let's Make a Deal* (*CSI*, 15. 09), and *The Bond* (*CM*, 11.13). The first episode, *Bad Blood*, involved a male attorney whose village was decimated by a virus when he was young. His entire family fell victim to the disease leaving him as the sole survivor. The company attempted to make reparations for these actions and paid for his law degree then employed him as the company lawyer. Karmic revenge ensued when he poisoned the researcher with the same virus that took his family.

Another act of revenge occurred in *Let's Make a Deal* where a prisoner was murdered by another inmate. The murdered male inmate had previously raped the offender when he was just a boy, affecting his life so drastically he was troubled and propelled into a life of crime. Lastly, *The Bond*, depicts a mother and son each murdering for related but different reasons. The mother was previously raped by a truck driver before cutting off

and taking her left ear as a souvenir. She proceeded to kill other truck drivers and collected the same souvenirs before finding her offender and killing him. Her criminal actions led to her arrest forcing her son into foster care. Having grown and exited the system he reconnected with his mother and murdered those responsible for their separation, also removing their left ear.

Lastly, convenient crime is a term used to acknowledge the events that led to the episode wrapping up in a timely fashion with little regard for the realistic world and the gruelling nature that successfully solving homicide entails. Convenient crime is considered to be sensationalized as it was responsible for captivating the attention of viewers and allowing shocking revelations and results within the single episode, examples include ridiculous notions being introduced to serve the plot even if not plausible.

The first example of convenient crime is in *Buzz Kill* (*CSI*, 15. 02). While searching a vehicle for evidence, the excrement of birds is analysed from the roof finding remnants of berries. What is convenient about these berries is that they only grow in the rainforest, the furthest naturally occurring thing within the desert. However, there is one rainforest within Las Vegas located at one of the main casinos. The casino is found and a radius is drawn according to the birds nesting patterns. Little regard is given to the fact that the indoor rainforest casino is likely barricaded to birds by a series of doors and thus prevents perpetual passage and access to the berries. Nonetheless, the discovered radius leads to locating the offender.

Another instance of convenient crime was in *The End Game* (*CSI*, 15. 18) where Winthrop was tracked down by the ink used in a recent tattoo acquired when he mailed his

finger to the team. It is stated that tattoo artists are particular about what ink is used during their craft and thus, the ink can be analysed to determine the specific artist responsible for the tattoo. The tattoo is examined and leads to one specific artist, allowing Winthrop to be tracked down and subsequently the exact location of his next crime scene is discovered.

The methods used by enforcement were also considered to be quite convenient and unrealistic in terms of their portrayal on screen. *The CSI Effect* (*CSI*, 15. 01) consisted of Nick Stokes running a DNA analysis of recovered remains within the trunk of his cruiser receiving results within minutes. The speed at which results are achieved within television has remained a source of contention for the criminal justice system, noting that members of the public may come to expect instant and accurate results (Robbers 2008, 85). However, the portrayal of evidence being processed in the trunk of a car allows quick progression of the storyline leading to it being neatly wrapped up within the hour.

Lastly, the results of search parameters and guidelines were also unrealistically portrayed. For example, in *Outlaw* (*CM,* 11.04) initial search results for possible offenders contained 1,139 different individuals that were narrowed by including only surrounding states and those over 45, resulting in only two possible people. Similarly, *The Last Ride* (*CSI*, 15.16) consisted of a victim being hit by a classic car leaving an identifying bruising imprint on her body; the car is one of two registered in Las Vegas but the other is eliminated as it burned in a fire. After the car and owner are identified, investigators find and arrest the offender without discussing how the distinct and precisely lined identifiable bruise was unrealistically created from her being shoved into the grill.

CHAPTER 6

INTERVIEW THEMES

Themes which emerged from the qualitative interviews included: clearance methods and rates, an absence of fear pertaining to crime, real life enforcers mirroring expectations from favourite characters, and perceptions of offenders in the media and real life.

Clearance Methods and Rates

One of the most prominent themes found within interviews was the necessity for forensic evidence to be present or applied to a crime scene in order to point to a specific offender. When asked "what is the main reason a crime is solved?" every single participant noted that forensic evidence was a mainstay to any case being closed or a conviction being made. Although DNA evidence was not the only response given in methods used by enforcers to solve crimes, it was the only one to occur within every interview. Other methods given included but were not limited to: interviews, murder weapons, and video evidence. These methods were considered to be secondary to physical or DNA evidence within a crime scene. One respondent, Facebook3, immediately discredited eyewitness accounts of crime, deeming them 'awful' without elaboration before referencing the significance of physical evidence.

Although the responses between the analysed groups were very similar, the replies from students were particularly intriguing. Specifically, Student3 openly noted her belief was wrong while stating:

> Student3: I know I feel like this is wrong, because what I learned in class it definitely doesn't… but I want to say DNA evidence of some kind.

Throughout a criminology student's career they are taught about the leading factors that cause crime and many note how gruelling the impact of the *CSI Effect* has been on the criminal justice system (Robbers, 2008). However, there seems to remain a societal dependence on forensic evidence that reaches even those who are educated otherwise.

Throughout the interview 50 percent of respondents also noted that in order for a crime to be solved there must be a societal force to create a sense of urgency and necessity that pushes enforcers to seek justice. It is likely that a petty crime, like theft, would not generate societal outcry pushing for action from enforcement personnel. For example, such a statement was made by a participant:

> Student1: I mean if it is a very public crime then the public pushes for that crime to be solved.

A similar statement was made by another participant:

> Facebook2: Also for things to be solved it needs to be of worth, in real life they are not going to try really hard to find who stole your TV.

Lastly, Facebook3 noted in regards to petty theft:

> Facebook3: Chances are you aren't getting your stuff back. My parents have had two of their properties broken into, the only justice they got was the second time the guy was so drunk that he stayed in the garage and passed out.

Small crimes are not likely to lead to an offender being caught according to half of respondents. There are bigger tasks at hand where the focus of enforcers is of greater necessity. From experience, individuals believed that when victimized by a small crime the chance of arrest or conviction diminished considerably.

47

However, there was also similar weak faith in more serious crimes. Regardless of recruitment strategy 67 percent of respondents noted that violent crime clearance rates were quite low. The lowest percentage referenced was by Student3 who estimated that 40 percent of violent crimes are solved. The answers by others were not drastically different, Facebook1 stated 60 percent. The response given by Student2 was the most reflective of actual societal rates, both in Canada and the USA, who gave a range between 70-80 percent which was followed by noting that such a range was probably way too high and that realistically it was probably a bit less.

The ranges participants offered regarding clearance rates were particularly surprising because the majority of on screen portrayals of victimization result in arrest. In each episode of *CSI* and *CM* the offender was identified and located, except for each series presentation of an overarching season offender who was apprehended within the season. Therefore, discussions regarding participant's belief that real life crimes remain unsolved is necessary and will be addressed within the discussion section.

Gendered and Racial Nature of Victimization

The responses given by both Student and Facebook participants were quite similar to one another, 67 percent providing similar answers, when discussing media portrayals of victimization. The portrayal of victimization in crime media in regards to student understanding was quite interesting. Student3 responded that African American or lower social class individuals were depicted as the victim most often, while Student1 and Student2 expressed that the portrayal of victimization within the media is heavily weighted towards white women. Findings for Facebook participant understandings of victimization consisted of Facebook2 and Facebook3 believing that white women were more often

48

portrayed as victims than any other gender or race. Facebook1 stated races and genders were represented roughly equally. In summary, 67 percent of respondents found that white women were most often the victims in crime media.

Therefore, there was a common conception between both Facebook and Student participants that mostly white women are portrayed as the victim on screen. When probed as to why they believe white women are portrayed more than others many cited the Western beauty standard.

> Facebook3: I think that there is the traditional Hollywood cache of a woman in distress and that is the easiest storyline to digest. There is, depending on what situation you put the watcher in there is more or less resistance to watching something. And constant conditioning of it being okay to watch a white woman in trouble makes it easier to go back to that story line and constant viewership of that storyline. And romanticisation of that story line as bad as it is makes it easy as well. But, I know that there is maybe types of crimes that are don't lend themselves to the type of thing people want to watch and would rather lie to themselves about.
>
> Researcher: Can you expand on that?
>
> Facebook3: My head immediately goes to abuse of power for people in the black community in the United States. I have seen a couple shows touch on that topic but it is always so tender it is never just outright slasher murder like what you see with white women. Or, you know, what's another good example? I don't see a lot of, not another never situation, but I don't see a lot of acts of terrorism portrayed. I feel like the worry is that it is a touchy subject and how do you do that gracefully and then once again they lean back on [societal approval to] kill a white 20 something year old woman… Great!

In the second half of the interview participants were asked who they believed was commonly victimized in real life. The common answer, 83 percent, believed minority individuals, with emphasis on men, were more likely to be victimized. Each participant

also added that low income was an important factor in determining an individual's likelihood of real life victimization. Therefore, it is evident that participants recognized the overrepresentation of female victimization but it did not result in a social construction of victimization as white females were not found to be commonly victimized in real life. Again, race victimization data is not collected in Canada, and US reports do not detail both gender and victim in the same category. Therefore, only gender can be analysed. Canadian statistical data found that men were victimized in 71 percent of incidents in 2015 (Statistics Canada 2016) and USA statistics posit men account for 70 percent of victimization in terms of gender (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017). Therefore, the understanding that men are more likely to be victimized in real life than women is a reflection of actual statistical findings.

Absence of Fear Pertaining to Crime

When participants were asked if they feared crime, all but one responded with an outright no. One participant noted her fear of crime stemmed from past victimization.

> Student1: I've been a victim of sexual assault before, so, obviously
> I feel it could be possible again, because once it happened it's easier
> for you to think it's possible again.

Many felt they could protect themselves from crime with a variety of methods. Student1 noted that she carries a knife with her as a precaution. As well, size was often referenced in terms of protection; the women interviewed noted that despite their size they would not be victimized without a fight. Facebook2, a slim and slender female stated:

> Researcher: Can you protect yourself from crime?

> Facebook2: Yes, I also have an unrealistic expectation of that. I feel
> that I could be mighty mouse.

Researcher: How?

Facebook2: think I would, if someone was attacking me for example I would go for their eyes and blind them with my fingers. I would probably elbow them in vulnerable places like their kidneys or their groin. I would bite someone... I wouldn't go down without a fight.

Student1 also cited herself as "able to throw a decent punch". Physical defense was not the only way respondents felt they could protect themselves from crime. Some also noted avoiding dangerous situations was both a way to avoid being victimized and a reason they felt a negligible fear of crime.

Student3: I don't put myself in situations where crime would take place, like I said, walking home in the middle of the night. And I don't associate with groups of people or any type that show themselves as troubled. If I don't like something I steer clear of it and don't involve myself in it.

Interesting to note, when females were asked if they could protect themselves from crime they automatically assumed violent crime without asking or being prompted with what kind. The only male participant, Facebook3, when asked if he could protect himself from crime referenced violent forms of crime but also broadened his analysis to include other forms of victimization.

Facebook3: From random assault or attack no, from standpoint of like being knowledgeable about a scam let's say or something like that then yah. My parents have definitely done their job in informing me when I was younger and my grandmother and grandfather when he was alive.

Although the majority of respondents did not fear crime themselves, they noted some family members were more likely to be victimized over others. Three participants, Student1, Student2, and Facebook3 expressed that they felt their grandparents were more likely to be victimized referencing how their age likely affected their security habits, trusting nature, and vulnerability. Similarly, Facebook1 did not cite her grandparents but

referenced her sisters as a result of them being "ditzy and don't quite have common sense".

Facebook2 and Student3 both cited their brothers were more likely to be victimized because of their previous trouble with the law. When questioned, Student3 stood by her answer stating:

> Student3: He has already been in and out of the law a little bit so he would be more apt to follow into that path, either as victim or offender based on the positions he has put himself in.

Similarly, Facebook2 noted that drugs were a factor for her brother, and the bad influence of a girlfriend. Both Facebook2 and Student3 were adamant that their brother's previous experience with law enforcement was an indicator of likely victimization.

Real Life Enforcers Mirroring Expectations of Favourite Character

Half of the participants interviewed provided answers where there was overlap between who they discussed as their favourite character and why, and what they believed were necessary traits for a real life successful enforcer. When Student2 was asked who her favourite character was and why she stated:

> Student2: In *Criminal Minds* probably ummm, what's his name, Derek.
>
> Researcher: Why are they your favourite character?
>
> Student2: Just his personality, he is the media stereotype of a police officer. He is very throw himself in the centre of things. He is very direct, and very, not leader, but very enfor… military, he is asked to do something and he just goes with it kind of thing. He follows orders.

Then when asked what Student2 believed were characteristics that made an enforcer successful she responded:

> Student2: [...] being able to follow orders and fully being able to understand the law not just what they think it is. Having an actual

definition and not just what they think it is. So being that authority figure and problem finding skills is of really great importance…

Student1 responded with similar overlap when providing a description of her favourite character, Derek from *CM*, and attributes expected from real life law enforcers:

> Researcher: What characteristics would you say about this character make them a good enforcer? Aside from his physical attractiveness.
>
> Student1: I would say in the episodes where it does involve a child or like a sexual assault victim he does kind of have that to his advantage where he does have that personal experience, umm, that allows him to work with the person better.

Again, during the second half of the interview participants were asked about their real life understandings and expectations of enforcers in society. An overlap was noted between what Student1 applauded from her favourite character, Derek, and how she expected a real life enforcer to conduct themselves with victims.

> Researcher: What would you say are characteristics of a successful and good enforcer?
>
> Student1: Someone who is unbiased and intelligent, understands the complexities of social institutions and social life, is fair, and is really good at thinking about peoples thought processes and individual needs I would say.

Within the two above examples the interview concluded with follow up questions. Student1 and Student2 were asked if they were aware of the possible overlap between what they saw on television and what they expected in society and both cited their past as the reason for these expectations.

> Student2: I was in army cadets for six years so I find that being able to [follow orders], no matter what job whether it be policing or not, I find that's a quality for legal policing detective being able to give orders and follow orders is a pretty big thing. Because if you don't, that is just going to cause more problems and potentially ruin the case.

Student1: I think so, I mean like, I feel like they should be, I was able to empathize with the way that he worked with victims, and that kind of subconsciously, I came to expect that is how all should interact with victims, but even with just personal experience if someone was just able to empathize with myself or sympathize with myself it would be easier to talk to me about a crime.

If the larger part of society exhibited similar expectations about media portrayals of favourite characters being mirrored in real life enforcers, the impact on the criminal justice system would be immense. When individuals expect local enforcement to behave, act, or police a certain way they may feel let down and this could lead to a mentality of distrust and opposition between general society and enforcement.

Perceptions of Offenders in the Media and Real Life

When respondents were asked who they believe offends the most in crime media and, if necessary, were probed for race and gender a total of half felt that minority males were portrayed most often as the offender. One participant, Facebook2, felt that the portrayal of offender in terms of race and gender was more or less accurate depending on what show was being watched.

Researcher: Who do you believe is portrayed as the offender most often in crime media?

Facebook2: In *Criminal Minds*, white males a lot. But in *CSI* I feel like Mexicans were because of location I guess. Hispanic, but not white people.

The other half of those being interviewed felt that white males were responsible for more onscreen offenses. Aside from race, participants all agreed that males offend more than females on screen. Regardless of the race and gender of offenders respondents vocalized a difference between successful and unsuccessful offenders. When discussing the characteristics of a successful offender every participant cited behaviours such as having a

well thought out plan for criminal activities and the necessity of intelligence. Intelligent and planned approaches to crime included: wearing gloves, surveying the location of a possible crime to make themselves aware of video cameras, being knowledgeable of the tools police utilize when attempting to apprehend an offender, and the ability to make themselves disappear after the crime.

Opposing characteristics were used when discussing unsuccessful offenders, such as little forethought being given to the crime and likely not being premediated. These characteristics are important within the criminal justice system and the understanding of how general society perceives offenders, especially when they are chosen to make legal decisions.

When respondents were asked to describe a real life offender in terms of appearance, race, and gender, five out of the six respondents profiled a white male in their descriptions. The only participant to respond differently was Facebook3 who stated that "anyone can be a criminal, literally anyone for any reason", an answer that reflects society rather than crime media as in real life anyone is capable of becoming a criminal.

Participants were also asked if they thought something had to happen to a person for them to become a criminal. It is evident that the presented stereotypes of an offender discussed by Rafter were not relied upon by Facebook3 and Student2 as they were the only individuals to give answers outside of Rafter's four onscreen stereotypes of an offender (environmental, psychopathy, aspirations, and bad biology Rafter 2000, 47). Facebook3 responded:

> Facebook3: No, I think that, on both sides of that question people
> can be abused oppressed and subjugated over and over and over

again rise above it consistently and, on the other hand people can become criminals for no good reason. In some cases people can also be abused oppressed and ultimately it can't amount to too much, it's kind of hard to guess. Not one set of ingredients is going to come out with the recipe for being a criminal

Student2 responded similarly noting that although something does not have to happen to a person to make them a criminal that is how it is most often portrayed on television. Lastly, Student1, Student3, Facebook1, and Facebook2 all gave reasons for criminal activity that were a reflection of Rafter's noted stereotypes. Answers given by these participants were similar to Facebook1 who responded:

Facebook1: Sometimes, maybe, like maybe if someone commits an act because of maybe certain circumstances like they become a thief because they don't have a lot of money or a heat of the moment crime like murder when someone is caught cheating. But then there are also people where their childhood and upbringing might influence them to become a criminal.

Other sources of criminal activity from those who believed something had to happen to a person included: upbringing and nurture as abuse was likely to lead a person into a life of criminality, systemic issues, or offending for no apparent reason. A total of 67 percent of those interviewed reflected Rafter's stereotypes providing support to social construction theory as the greater majority of respondents understood offenders as a reflection of how it was portrayed in crime media.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

Initial analysis of interviews did not support the earlier hypothesis that individuals who are educated or have a background in criminology are less likely to be affected by crime media. It was believed that student's social constructions would be shaped through education rather than media, a reflection of Rafter's theory of popular criminology. Within the interviews it was found that inaccurate perceptions of crime, offenders, victims and enforcers were held by both Student and Facebook participants. A likely conclusion regarding the debate between popular criminology and media criminology is then in favour of media criminology. The findings demonstrated that the majority of beliefs students possessed were not based on academic education and quite similar to general public participant responses.

The concept of the *CSI Effect* is quite evidently a cultural understanding of crime and a possible social construction held by participants. All of the participants interviewed thought that DNA or physical evidence was one of the main methods enforcement personnel used to solve a crime. One student, Student3, even noted that her confidence in DNA evidence was the complete opposite of what was learned in school. The reliance on DNA evidence even though taught otherwise generates similar conclusions as the study Bainbridge (2015) noted by Podlas, which found that even when *CSI* is not watched regularly the show tends to establish a visible theme and routine that audience members are aware of even with minimal exposure. Thus, audience members are more likely to adopt and internalize the basic routines of the show and methods enforcers utilize when

solving crime. The conclusion Student3 made is an example of how influential crime media is in shaping viewers' social constructions.

The patterned portrayal of crime media begins with victim versus the offender, followed by a team of enforcers piecing together the puzzle with likely inclusions of DNA evidence, and ending with capture and arrest. The procedural trope of crime dramas creates an expectation for viewers as to how the show will unfold and progress that may consequently translate into real life expectations for solving crimes. When each and every participant notes that DNA evidence is a leading factor to clearance rates the portrayal of its necessity in crime media cannot be ignored. DNA is also likely favoured as crime media portrayals of its use are extremely expedited. As discussed, *CSI* depicts a DNA scan being run in the back of a cruiser. Thus, audience members likely have a cultural understanding that DNA evidence is readily available and produces quick results as it follows the routine of evidence drama, similar to conclusions made by Robbers (2008).

As demonstrated within the themes of crime media chapter, a great number of cases are not solved with DNA evidence directly. In many instances the DNA is used to tell the story of the crime, showing the audience what, where, when, and how within the crime scene, leaving the enforcers to decipher who and why. Deduction, analysis, and teamwork are typically the final finger pointers leading to the conviction of an offender. As well, without getting into the details of how DNA evidence works, it is not as foolproof as generally assumed. In order for DNA evidence to be as precise as possible it must possess the following three credentials:

> (1) Officials must already have a large sample of the suspect's genes, and they must be well preserved;

(2) The reason the DNA evidence is present at the crime scene must be purely criminal;

(3) No mistakes were made by the lab when processing the sample (Ossola, 2015).

There are countless instances, even within crime media, where all of these conditions are not met. DNA evidence and its analysis are seen as scientific, leading to assumptions that few mistakes are made. However, much like eyewitness testimonies, human error occurs. Participant's likely favoured DNA evidence as science is often viewed as more trustworthy than the human memory. As demonstrated by Robbers (2008) study, the previous confidence in eye witness testimony has shifted to a faith in DNA evidence. She noted that the crime media surge has led to the majority of jury members discrediting eyewitness testimonies entirely, an act that did not occur before the popularity of crime media. A reflection of this shift was displayed when Facebook3 favoured DNA evidence because eyewitness reports are 'awful'.

Another aspect that all participants agreed upon was necessary characteristics of intelligence and premeditation for a criminal to be successful. Every participant noted that there was a difference between successful and unsuccessful criminals, claiming that unsuccessful criminals are likely to get caught because they are sloppy, unintelligent, and do not plan their crimes. As noted within the themes of crime media, offenders were often portrayed as brilliant and organized and even when their crimes did not go exactly as planned, backup measures were typically in place. Thus, a social construction regarding the mentality and operations of offenders was likely created from crime media portrayals as on screen offenders were commonly portrayed as smart, determined, and organized. It appears that the participants understanding of a successful offender is likely based on what they see on *CSI* and *CM*.

The understanding of successful offenders being intelligent and methodical is a reflection of Haney's (2009, 739) discussion of the crime master narrative. The crime master narrative posits that when crime media continually portrays offenders as freethinking, intelligent, and deliberate individuals it sets the image for audience members that all criminals operate in such a manner. Although the crime master narrative is a conclusion made to how crime media portrays offenders, it can also be regarded as a cultural understanding audience members develop regarding these portrayals. Similarly, Rafter's (2000, 47) discussion of the four portrayals of offenders: environmental, psychopathy, aspirations, and bad biology provide a stereotype framework audience members possibly use to understand criminals on and off screen. It was shown that 67 percent of respondents reflected their understandings of offenders and criminality within these stereotypes. Participants noted reflections of these when discussing the events possibly responsible for pushing a person into a criminal lifestyle. Important to note is that assumptions regarding offenders may well be influenced by whom participants are surrounded by and interact with in their daily lives. Therefore, it cannot be concluded definitively that understandings of crime and offenders is based on media portrayals.

Haney's (2009, 739) crime master narrative also references crimes of offenders. It likely helps to both create and dominate public perceptions of crime via continual portrayal of brutal offenders. As explored in the findings, *CSI* and *CM* largely sensationalizes the portrayal of criminal activity by continuously depicting out of the box heinous forms of homicide. Haney argues that when media criminology perpetuates the most extreme and bizarre forms of crime that are increasingly rare, there is the possibility that the most punitive punishments are reinforced within the legal system by the wider public. Going on

to note that by coupling the crime master narrative with extreme forms of sensationalism society potentially begins to associate heinous crimes with immoral and unmanageable criminals. Therefore, there may be potential sentencing implications by continually portraying offenders as brilliant and heinous individuals.

It has been demonstrated that audience members' understanding of offenders in real life is possibly constructed by television depictions, thus the impacts on the criminal justice system may be sizeable. Those sitting on juries are likely to look at more than the crime itself and seek answers from information not pertaining to the case. For instance, members may look for prior information surrounding convictions even if it has no importance to the specific case under review. Prior criminal offenses could be an indication that the offender is unreformed, unstoppable, and unremorseful. These portrayals of offenses can likely lead to cultural criminological understandings of career offenders. As well, the length of time an offender remains undetected for their crimes could have an effect. If society understands and creates expectations regarding successful offenders as both planned and intelligent, a lengthy time between the crime and arrest could have an effect on what kind of offender they are assumed to be. In the portrayals of offenses in *CSI* and *CM,* offenders were often portrayed as committing multiple transgressions before they are caught. In some instances the number of victims reaches the double digits for on screen offenders.

Evidently the mentality of offenders was likely a reflection of media portrayals, however the answers given by participants regarding race and gender of victims, offenders, and enforcers were similar to the emergent themes in the content analysis. To reiterate, the portrayal of race and gender on screen is as follows:

Table 2: Race and Gender of Victims, Offenders, and Enforcers

	Race		Gender	
	White	Non-white	Male	Female
Victims	78%	22%	51%	49%
Offenders	95%	5%	86%	14%
Enforcers	88%	12%	65%	35%

Two different possible social constructions arose in terms of the demographics surrounding on screen offenders and real life offenders. First, half of those interviewed noted that on screen offenders were most often male and a member of a visible minority group. The assumption that male minorities offend most on screen is a potential social construction that arose not from the portrayal of male minorities offending but likely from an overrepresentation of white male enforcers. Eschholz et al. (2004, 165) note that even when media representations of race and offending are similar to UCR their study found that 69 percent of individuals thought blacks, or members of races other than white, were depicted more often as the offenders. This is due to a possible emerging social construction rooted in that fact that the main cast of most crime dramas is predominantly white and therefore whenever a character appears on screen as a non-white race they are most likely doing so as the offender.

The second possible social construction of offenders is in regards to how participants understand offenders in real life. Although half of respondents stated they felt minorities were portrayed on screen as the offender, 83 percent noted that they believed white individuals are more likely to be an offender in real life. Therefore, understandings

of offender demographics on screen are different from the understandings of real life offenders. Two possible reasons for this inconsistency are participant's real life surroundings influencing their understanding and how criminals are portrayed on screen. First, depending on the social surroundings of an individual, the understanding of an offender is likely influenced. For example, if the dominant surroundings of participants consists of a heavily Caucasian community then it is likely they would understand offenders in regards to their surroundings. Second, in the examined crime media white males were portrayed as the offender in 95 percent of incidents. Although half of participants discussed how minority men were responsible for the majority of on screen offenses it is possible that they still understood white men offend more in real life. Both community and media are likely to have influenced participant understanding, one cannot be ruled out entirely. The lack of diversity present within both the main cast and those featured as offenders potentially creates an inaccurate social construction of crime and possibly leads to society believing one race offends more or less than another. Therefore, a probable conclusion one can make is a social construction is not always created around what is shown, but how it is shown.

The possible cultural assumptions are also capable of influencing those who do not watch crime media. If a non-watcher engages with active watchers who discuss, relay, or note fear from episodes they are likely to be impacted. The culture of crime media is not restricted to audience members. It is capable of expanding and reaching beyond those who engage, possibly shaping the understandings of offenders for those who do not watch. The culture may also affect non-watchers if real crime events are discussed, it is likely the understandings or constructions of an offender could then be relayed to the non-watcher.

When participants discussed who was most likely in their family to be victimized many noted family members with obvious vulnerabilities. However, two participants, Student3 and Facebook 2, noted their brothers because of their previous involvement with crime. Understanding that previous offenders are more likely to be victimized is a generalization of the culture of offenders and crime. It potentially creates a separation and divide between good and bad, situating and leaving those on the 'bad' side to remain there indefinitely. This categorization of offender and non-offender is an action speaking to the conclusion of Dowler et al. (2006, 840) who noted that society prefers to see offenders as 'other'. Thus, it could lead to an 'us' versus 'them' ideology creating ideas that such a life has been chosen and assistance is not needed for protection when victimization occurs. Aside from binary categories of good and bad it could also create the idea that regardless of how an individual approaches crime the end result is likely to be victimization. Even if an individual approaches crime as an offender it increases their likelihood of victimization as 'the world of crime' has been stepped into.

Similarly, female victimization was largely overrepresented in *CSI* and *CM*. Female victimization accounted for nearly half of all on screen homicides. According to 2015 Canadian and 2013 USA statistical data, females were victims of homicide in 29 percent (Statistics Canada, 2016) and 30 percent (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017) of incidents respectively. Thus, crime media highly over-represents females as victims when compared to statistical data. These findings do not account for the fact that in both *CSI* and *CM* the female was the intended victim in many instances; when a male individual was murdered it was typically in conjunction with a female victim. Thus, the rate of male victimization climbed when he was attacked as a removal strategy for the offender to

approach the intended female victim. The portrayal of men being victimized as a removal strategy is likely to perpetuate cultural norms regarding the inability of women to protect themselves. Similar possible social constructions and cultural assumptions are noted in Soulliere's (2003) study, finding that female victimization perpetuates female subordination.

The high rate of female victimization proposed a hypothesis that females would then likely have a higher fear of crime because of its continual portrayal. However, the majority of females interviewed, 80 percent, did not fear crime and the one that did framed it within her previous victimization. Although a fear of crime was not cited, when asked if participants could protect themselves against crime every female participant assumed and focused on violent crime.

Reasons for this focus could possibly be that the majority of female victimization in crime media is portrayed as quite violent, consisting of sexual assault and homicide. When the one male participant was asked if he could protect himself from crime he too assumed violent crime by stating "from random attack or assault, no". He then referenced how to protect himself from property crime. Therefore, it is likely that a social construction has been created by participants watching *CSI* and *CM* that the most common crime individuals need to protect themselves against is violent. Assumptions of victimization consisting of random violent crime was also assumed to be from strangers as demonstrated by Student3 who noted that she avoided unaccompanied after dark situations.

In Canada violent crimes account for 19 percent of all *Criminal Code* violations, as compared to 58 percent non-violent property crime (Statistics Canada, 2016). In 2013

USA statistics violent crime accounted for 12 percent of criminal acts compared to 88 percent of non-violent property crime (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017). It is clearly demonstrated that the likelihood of being a victim of violent crime is significantly less than being a victim of property crime. Within the analysis of *CSI* and *CM* the portrayal of non-violent crimes was negligible. Even when an episode did not feature murder other violent acts such as rape and sexual assault were primary. It can be argued that the assumption of violent victimization is likely a social construction from crime media as the majority of onscreen offenses are violent in nature. However, it could also be argued that such assumptions are made because the impact of violent crimes tend to be far more severe than the effects of property crime.

It is also possible that the assumptions of violent victimization generated from audience members could also spread beyond the culture and influence those who do not watch crime media. If the actions of viewers are shaped around possible constructions of violence then it is probable that they could influence the actions of those around them. The potential precautions taken by viewers could extend and influence defences of others. These potential effects are also likely magnified if a series is cited as a reason for their actions because the episode outcome is likely unknown as well as the events potentially glorified.

Participants were also asked if they learned any lessons from crime media victimization and two gave answers regarding how to avoid further victimization by humanizing themselves when faced by an offender. It has been cited within many different forms of crime media that when a victim humanizes themselves to an offender they are less

likely to be victimized further. These lessons learned are likely to be one of the reasons participants noted they did not fear crime.

Interestingly, the theme presented in *CSI* and *CM* of elite enforcement mirroring superhero qualities was not reflected in the answers given by participants when discussing real life enforcement. Instead, answers reflecting on screen portrayals of defense were mirrored in participants' responses to their own abilities of fighting off victimization. The majority of female participants stated that if attacked they believed their methods of self-defence would be effective.

Briefly, Facebook1 noted that an individual of smaller stature than her would be easy to fend off. Similarly, Facebook2 gave vivid examples of vulnerable points of contact she anticipated to attack. Perhaps these expressions of capable defense techniques stem from Cavender's (2007, 70) supposition that when using 'police family' values - portraying the team as a family in a relatable manner - "attracts an audience but also reinforces the cultural meanings that are conveyed through the characters." Therefore, it could be argued that audience members view the heroism of the main characters and identify with their abilities, allowing them to believe they too are capable of such acts.

Although audience members believe self-defence akin to media portrayals is possible, audience members are reminded of the inaccuracy of crime media portrayals when engaging in cultural criminology. The culture of crime media facilitates discussion when audience members review latest episodes, possibly highlighting the inaccuracy of its portrayal. Therefore, it is possible that such discussions shift the understanding of crime media into a lens of inaccuracy causing viewers to underestimate how likely on screen

events truly are. Perhaps this is why some social constructions created with inaccurate information mirror crime media and some did not. For instance, it is has been explored that the race and gender of victims, offenders, and enforcers possibly creates social constructions. However, many of those interviewed noted clearance rates well below Canadian and USA statistics and below what is depicted in *CSI* and *CM*. One respondent, Student3, stated that she believed roughly 40 percent of violent crimes were solved. This figure is nearly half of what Statistics Canada reports being 78 percent (Statistics Canada, 2016), and significantly lower than USA findings of 64 percent (Uniform Crime Reporting 2017). These national statistics are far below the collection of crime media findings of clearance rates of 100 percent. Perhaps another reason why those being interviewed reported a belief of low clearance rates is associated with the speed of the Canadian and USA judicial systems. When a violent crime is initially picked up by news media and broadcast to the public many are shocked at its occurrence, with time their interest diminishes as news media has picked up another story without following the first to completion. Therefore, many are potentially unaware of the result of a crime.

Most participants' responses, 67 percent, reflected clearance rates closer to USA findings even though the two nations are different in terms of criminal activity. Something to also make note of is that a great majority, if not all, on screen crimes are solved; within the examined seasons there was not a single crime that was unsolved in CSI or CM. Some episodes examined previously closed cases, such as Dead Woods (CSI, 15.10) where a 10 year-old case is closed and the offender is convicted. The high solving rate could be argued as wanting to keep audience members engaged yet satisfied with the outcome to increase the chance of their return. The findings from Dominick's study published in 1973 found

that on screen clearance rates of 88 percent do not reflect current depictions, as the analysis of *CSI* and *CM* produced a clearance rate of 100 percent over the two seasons. Crimes did not reach a dead end or remain unsolved on screen. Comparisons between Dominick's study and this research show that the inaccuracy in crime media portrayals has only increased over the years according to the analysis of the 2015-2016 seasons of *CSI* and *CM*.

The analysis of how audience members view crime media and potentially shape their understandings around its portrayal is of necessity. As it has been shown, it is likely that social constructions leading to cultural understandings are possibly shaped by exposure to crime media. If audience members are impacted by the superhero type portrayal of enforcers it is likely to affect their interactions with real life enforcement personnel. It is possible that if these exchanges do not meet possible expectations, dissatisfaction and distrust of local law enforcement could arise. As noted by Huey and Broll (2015, 243) the impact of the portrayal of enforcers has had an effect on the criminal justice system as many entering the academic world possibly assume their education could result in careers reflecting that of media enforcement.

The impacts inaccurate social constructions and crime media cultures may have on society reach further than the individual viewer. If the political discourse of crime control feeds into possible inaccurate social constructions of audience members it is likely to increase the sense of validity. It could also magnify assumptions as individuals may come to believe the crime problem is far worse than anticipated.

CHAPTER 8

STUDY LIMITATIONS

There were limitations within this study that require discussion. The first limitation consists of the political timing of this research. Interviews were conducted during the winter semester of 2017 at a time when anti-police movements and mentalities were quite prominent. The summer before this study began *Black Lives Matter*, a movement against the police brutality of African Americans in the US, demanded all police floats be disallowed within the Toronto Gay Pride Parade (Simmons 2017, BLM-TO). Therefore, results of participants are likely to be affected when discussing views on the performance and expectation of law enforcement. The *Black Lives Matter* movement has been, and continues to be, very prominent in both Canada and the USA. The anti-police rallies and viral videos of police brutality are likely to have had an effect on what participants believe to be good characteristics of enforcers and what makes an enforcer successful in their position. It is possible that anti-police opinions could have an effect on how participants view or shape their constructions of enforcement by pushing for a higher standard of service. If this study was done previous to, or at a substantially later date, the answers to these questions could be affected to a varying degree.

The second limitation of this research was a combination of a novice researcher and limited resources available. Being a novice interviewer had an effect on the interview guide and flow. Had the study been performed by an experienced researcher the flow of conversation would have improved. Although the interview was practiced on friends and family there was still an effect on interviewing strangers caused by a heightened nervousness. As well, it is recognized that the interview questions could have been

improved and expanded upon to elicit more thought provoking answers. Research findings are not discredited, however further research could provide additional support to this study's findings.

Another limitation consists of limited funding for the research; outside funding was not depended upon or provided for this thesis research project. The possibility of winning a gift card is likely to have diminished participant willingness when compared to a guarantee of benefit. When a participant completed the interview they were entered into a draw to win one of two 25 dollar *Starbucks* gift cards. Those reading the posters were unaware of how many interested parties would complete interviews and the odds of winning remained unknown. Had participants been guaranteed to receive a small token upon interview completion the interest in the study would likely have been greater, however this of course is speculation.

The final and most influential limitation within the research is the limited number of participants. Upon completion of recruitment only six participants responded, consisting of five females and one male. Thus, the findings are not generalizable to the wider population as opinions found concerning crime, victims, offenders, and enforcers are mainly those of the female population. As well, the age range of participants was 19 to 25 and does not account for the thoughts of those falling beyond this age bracket, older or younger. The study also only consisted of Caucasian participants and this likely effected findings.

CHAPTER 9

NEXT STEPS

Due to the limited nature of this thesis research further analysis is necessary to provide broader insight. A similar research project with a larger number of participants would yield results more generalizable to the public. The results found within this study are narrowly focused as the responding participants were mostly female, except for one male, and all within the age range of 19 to 25. An extended study could potentially shed more light with more generalizable findings.

Another possible extension of this study would be to conduct interviews with participants who are residents of USA. It is possible that the social constructions of USA residents would differ from Canadian as the examined crime media is created within the US. Thus, there is a possibility that participants residing in the nation of creation would assume portrayals are a more accurate reflection of their criminal system. Therefore, performing this studying again with USA residents could influence possible social constructions.

Performing the study with Canadian crime media is likely to be of greater difficulty as the popularity and fandom currently does not exist. Canadian crime media dramas are quite limited, consisting of *Flashpoint, Murdoch Mysteries* and the recently announced *Cardinal* to name a few. The argument of possible social constructions is likely to be effected when using Canadian crime drama series as many are only broadcast for a few seasons. For example, *Flashpoint* aired from 2008-2012 and *Cardinal* is anticipated to be a one season series with six episodes. The longest running series *Murdoch Mysteries* has been a CBC original since 2008, just shy of a decade.

Another possible next step could be a stronger interview guide. As a novice researcher the questions participants were asked could be strengthened to incite more detailed responses. The flow of conversation would also improve with an updated interview guide and practiced researcher. Questions asked could be modified with the findings of this study to provide future studies direction and intention.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

The theoretical frameworks of social construction, media criminology, popular criminology, and cultural criminology are all intertwined when it comes to the possible effects on society generated through crime media. The longer an individual watches a show the more they will talk about it with others and potentially create a permeating cultural criminology around it. It had originally been anticipated that the social construction of ideologies surrounding crime, enforcers, offenders, and victims were going to be incredibly saturated and blanketed by influence from crime media. Therefore, if an individual had one inaccurate construction all constructions would continue to be mistaken. Reflecting, this was an incorrect assumption which gave little autonomy to viewers. It was found that social constructions were largely dependent on how and what was represented; for instance, the potential social construction that non-whites offend more on screen was formulated from the overrepresentation of Caucasian cast members. There were also possible social constructions created from extreme overrepresentation such as the on screen solving rates. Each and every crime within the examined seasons was solved, and participants likely regarded this as outrageous causing them to pull their assumptions about clearance rates well below known statistical data.

Instances where the potential social construction of crime was likely drawn from media criminology included DNA evidence, intelligent offenders, and victim portrayals. Half of the participants discussed similarity between their favourite character and expectations of real life enforcers, however this was not a permeating construction. The portrayal of female victimization did not lead to a social construction of a heightened fear

of crime for female participants, it instead taught those watching how to possibly protect themselves from crime. Females also mirrored the superhero portrayal of self-defence seen in crime media when discussing their own potential capabilities to ward off attack. The portrayal of both female and male victimization potentially led to the social construction of an assumption of violent crime. Although participants did not outright fear crime, when asked if they could protect themselves from crime each individual assumed violent crime over all other forms of victimization.

One of the elements within the Canadian and USA judicial systems is that criminal offenders may be judged by a jury of their peers. Therefore, the understanding of crime, enforcers, offenders, and victims has an enormous effect when making life altering decisions of guilt or innocence. Although these decisions are not made lightly and the court system attempts to present evidence in an unbiased and professional manner, those sitting on the case could find it of great difficulty to rid themselves of presupposed assumptions and ideas about crime.

The effects of potential understandings of crime and its participants has the possibility to also reach as far as politics and its discourse. Discussions of crime control and rates could be used to inflate likely social constructions cultivated from crime media. If high ranking officials, such a parliament members, discuss the necessity of a crime control culture it is possible that viewers could develop a sense of validity in their beliefs potentially strengthening an inaccurate social construction.

As shown, audience member's cultural understandings of offenders as intelligent and violent individuals is a reflection of Haney's (2009) crime master narrative. Every

participant noted that successful offenders were intelligent, premediated, and organized. They also reflected Rafter's (2000) four stereotypes of offender's pushes or pulls to crime: environmental, psychopathy, aspirations, and bad biology. Thus, simplistic and narrow understandings of offenders is likely to impact the criminal justice system as audience members have possibly created social constructions of offenders that lead to cultural understandings of crime. Therefore, it is likely that crime media cultivates notions of harsh and punitive punishments as their understandings are possibly formulated from crime media portrayals.

Findings from this study indicate that public perceptions of crime support the theoretical framework of media criminology over popular criminology. Research was performed utilizing criminology students at the University of Windsor, it was anticipated that social constructions would be different as academic education is believed to mitigate the influence of crime media. It was found that the perceptions of crime, victims, offenders and enforcers, expressed by Student participants was quite similar to on screen crime media depictions and Facebook participant responses. Thus, a possible conclusion is that crime media affects societal perceptions of crime by shifting and creating ideologies reflecting that which is portrayed on television. The understandings of crime and possible social constructions favours Haney's media criminology theoretical framework. However, further research is necessary with a larger number of participants to support these findings.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Basic Information

Name: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Email: _____

Crime Media Exposure

1) Do you watch crime shows? (Example: Law and Order, Criminal Minds, CSI)
   a. Probe: What crime shows?
2) How often do you watch these shows?
   a. Probe: follow weekly broadcastings? Binge watch? Late night channel surfing?
3) How many crime shows would you say you watch?

Criminal Media Characters

Note* Focusing on *Criminal Minds* and *CSI* now

4) Do you have a favourite character(s) in *Criminal Minds* or *CSI*?
   a. Follow up: who is your favourite character(s)?
5) Why are they your favourite character(s)?
   a. Probe: characteristics, age, gender, method/style of enforcement
6) What characteristics would you say about this character make them a good enforcer?
7) Is there anything that gives them an advantage as an enforcer over other characters?
8) To what extent should an officer or person of the law go to find guilty individuals? (How far should they go?)
   a. Follow up: Do you believe an officer or detective should or can break the law to find a guilty individual?
   b. Probe: Have you seen this happen before?
9) Should enforcers have limitations?
   i. Such as be held to a higher account of the law. Should they be allowed to break the law in order to enforce it?
   b. Probe: Why?
   c. How would these limitations be enforced?

10) Are races and genders represented equally for enforcers?
   a. How are they or are they not?

Victimization and Crime in Media

11) Who do you believe is victimized the most in the media?
   a. Probe for gender and race
12) Do you believe races are portrayed equally as victim? Why? Why not?
13) Does the victim know the offender in the majority of instances?
   a. How are victims chosen by offenders?
14) Name some of the methods used during offenses?
15) Can you give me examples of stories with specific methods?
   a. Probe: How were they hurt, captured, saved, etc.?
16) Why do you remember these?
17) Overall, what would you say is the biggest lesson in victimization within the media? How and why?
18) What kind of crime dominates the media? / What is the highest rate of crime? Give me an example.

Offenders in the Media

19) Are there/do you remember reasons given for offending in the media?
   a. What were some of the reasons for offending shown?
20) Can you remember a specific offender?
   a. What was their crime, method, and reason? Give me their story.
21) Who do you believe offends the most in the media?
   a. Why do you believe this type of person offenders more?
      i. Probe for race, gender, age, etc.
22) Do you believe races are portrayed equally as the offender? Why/Why not?

Allocated break will occur, before continuing participants will be asked if they wish to continue

Real Life Criminal Justice System Members

23) What would you say are the characteristics of a good detective or law enforcer?
   a. Look for mentions of superior intelligence, methods of deduction (typical traits among media depictions of criminal justice system)
   b. Look for themes between favourite character and real life enforcers
24) How often do you think crimes are solved by real life enforcers?
   a. How are crimes solved? What kinds of methods do police use?
25) What is the main reason a crime is solved?
   a. Look for mentions of enforcement superiority or other
26) What do you believe are the differences between real life enforcers and media, if any? Can you give me examples?

27) If you closed your eyes and pictured an enforcer what do they look like?
- a. Probe for clothing, features, race, gender etc.?
- b. Reflecting back on your description do you believe it is based on anyone or anything?

28) What makes a successful enforcer?
- a. How does this differ for other forms of enforcement?

Victimization

29) Can you describe for me a victim?
- a. What they look like, attributes, characteristics, race, gender, etc.

30) Who would you say is affected by crime the most?
- a. Probe: demographics such as age, race, gender, economic status

31) Do you fear crime?
- a. Probe: Who is most vulnerable to crime in your family?
- b. Why?
- c.

32) What kinds of crime do you fear?
- a. Violent/non-violent. Why?

33) How can you protect yourself or your family from crime?

34) Can you protect yourself from crime?
- a. How?

35) Can you describe any story surrounding a victim for me that you remember?
- a. Was this real or from the media?
- b. How do you remember this?
- c. Who was the victim, what was the crime?
- d. Was it solved?

36) Why do you think you remember this story of victimization?

Offenders

37) What would you say are the characteristics of a good criminal?
- a. Again: Look for mentions of superior intelligence, vengeful, spiteful, planned out etc. (typical traits among media depictions of criminals)

38) What is the difference between a successful and unsuccessful criminal?
- a. How can a criminal be successful?
- b. What makes a successful criminal?

39) Do you believe you would be able to recognize a criminal if you saw one on the street or in a crowd?
- a. How would you do so?
- b. What would you look for?

40) If you close your eyes and picture a criminal could you describe them for me?
- a. Is this image based on any specific person/thing/or show?
- b. Probe: Age, race, gender, attire, etc.

41) Can you attempt to describe the mentality of a criminal for me?

a. How do you believe they think, behave, etc.?
    b. Why are they a criminal?
42) Do you think something has to happen to a person to become a criminal?
    a. Background factors?
    b. How is a criminal made?
43) Do you think traits of a good criminal differ for male or female offenders?
    a. Probe: Why?
    b. Probe: How are they different?

Possible Follow-up Questions

44) I notice overlap between what you believe to be a good detective or criminal justice official and the characteristics of your favourite character from a criminal show
    a. What do you think about this? / could you reflect on this for me?
    b. Do you think this has an impact on the CJS?
    c. Probe: How? In what ways? What if everyone thought this way?
45) You previously said officers and detectives can break the law in order to find a guilty party, but then stated they should have limitations. Could you explain your thinking or reasoning here?
46) Do you believe your viewing of crime shows (Criminal Minds and CSI) have any impact on your perspectives surrounding crime?
    a. How so?
    b. If they say no look for overlap between how they describe the media and real life?

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through a University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.

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