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Real Attitudes, Fictional Crime: How Crime Dramas Impact Policy Attitudes

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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Previous research shows that citizens' primary source of information about crime is through the media. These empirical investigations have generally focused on the link between news – particularly the content of local television news – and perceptions of and attitudes about crime. Local television news programming, however, comprises a small and diminishing proportion of all televised media consumed by Americans. And while scholars have long suspected violence on television affects viewers' perceptions of the world, only recently have political scientists turned their attention to the role non-news media might play in political attitudes. The present study expands on this nascent literature to discover how alternative sources of media, and specifically fictional crime dramas, impact

viewers' attitudes on crime. First, using Nielsen ratings data from 1965 to 2010, I argue that crime dramas have sustained majority support for punitive (retributive) crime policies, even as crime rates have steadily dropped. I next examine this relationship at the individual level, using two surveys from different time periods. Overall, this analysis reveals that the effects of crime dramas are content specific, and impact not only policy attitudes but also the relative importance of other considerations relevant to crime (i.e., racial attitudes). Finally, I link the distorted but systematic portrayal of offenders and the criminal justice system in these shows with the cognitive assessments viewers make about crime in order to motivate an emotional theory of punitiveness. An experiment suggests that the content of crime dramas produces perceptions of high offender controllability and certainty about the offender's responsibility for the crime, leading viewers to be more supportive of punitive policies. Moreover, this relationship is largely mediated by feelings of anger, as appraisal theories of emotions would predict. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of theoretical implications and empirical extensions.

For Lisa, Ellen, Andrew, and especially Lara

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to Punitiveness and the Media

> *Durkeim argues that the criminal sanction expresses society's condemnation of criminals and reaffirms the moral boundaries that crime threatens. However, since punishments are no longer public spectacles, in contemporary society it is often the media, including entertainment media that socially condemn fictional criminals. The crime genre is like a morality play that reinforces cultural meanings about crime.*
>
> (Deutsch and Cavender 2008, p. 46)

The safety and security of its citizens is arguably government's primary goal. As such, crime and justice is an "easy" issue for political elites (Carmines and Stimson 1980), in the sense that little to no political sophistication is required to grasp the contours of the debate. Consequently, crime is a perennial issue that politicians on both sides of the aisle have been more than eager to emphasize and exploit for political gain. Indeed, it is one of

the few issues that crosscuts ideology (Stimson 1991), and is associated almost as strongly with Republicans as it is with Democrats (Page 2012).

What citizens want is less crime, not surprisingly, and also harsh punishments for those who victimize others (Cullen, Fisher and Applegate 2000). As elaborated on below, Americans tend to endorse traditionally conservative crime policies that emphasize retribution and deterrence. It is likely that majority support for punitive crime policies stems in part from the fact that Americans are misinformed about the extent to which crime is a problem in the U.S. As an illustration, Gallup has repeatedly asked national samples whether they think crime nationally has increased, decreased or remained the same since 1989. Every year a plurality, and usually a clear majority, of citizens report that the crime rate has increased when, in fact, every year since 1993 crime has decreased, both nationally and within nearly all major cities (Zimring 2008). As recently as 2011, 68% of Americans believed crime to be higher than in the previous year (Saad 2011), even as violent crime fell 4% and property crime .8% (of Justice 2012). Polls also indicate that the public is misinformed about conviction, parole, and recidivism rates - all on the side of perceiving the criminal justice system to be more lenient than it actually is (Roberts 1992).

In the U.S., this dynamic has resulted in a series of policy shifts over the last several decades toward an increasingly punitive criminal justice system, particularly relative to other western, industrialized nations. For example, the U.S. currently has the highest incarceration rate in the world (*Entire World – Prison Population Totals* 2013). The only two other nations who consistently carry out more executions than the U.S. is China and Iran; more recently, the U.S. ranked fifth worldwide in executions (*Death Sentences and Executions* 2012). Similarly, the U.S. falls on the punitive end of the spectrum relative to other economically and politically similar countries with respect to illegal drug enforcement policies (Levitt, Nason and Hallsworth 2006). A good example is also provided by analyses of

residency restriction laws in the U.S., which show that there are few places where convicted pedophiles can legally live. Municipalities continue to enact these laws, despite little to no evidence that they are effective in preventing child molestation (Levenson 2008; Merriam and Salkin 2009).[1] In one instance, a group of Floridian pedophiles set up camp beneath a Miami causeway in order to comply with local residency laws (Yung 2007).

Some of the more notorious campaigns for the implementation of punitive crime policies have been spearheaded directly by the public, and the families of victims, in particular. Perhaps the most obvious example comes from the story of Polly Klaas and the institution of the three-strikes law in California. The victim's father, Marc Klaas, became a child victim advocate in the wake of his daughter's murder, and was a vocal proponent and lobbyist for passage of the law, which requires that offenders convicted of any third felony[2] with two or more violent felony convictions already on their record be sentenced to at least twenty-five years in prison. The law also mandates that offenders with prior felonies on their record serve sentences consecutively (sequentially), rather than concurrently (Brown and Jolivette 2005).

Another well-known example comes from the parents of seven-year-old Megan Kanka who, with the help of Marc Klaas, lobbied effectively for the passage of Megan's Law in New Jersey. Megan's Law, which is actually the informal name for a group of bills, requires sex offenders to register with the state, provides for notifications to communities when registered sex offenders move in nearby, and mandates life in prison without parole for those convicted of a second sexual assault. The Kankas remain active today, and are currently lobbying to increase the number of parole officers dedicated to working with sexual offenders, and

[1] These kinds of laws are ineffective largely because sex offenders tend to be someone the child already knows, such as a family member or friend of the family, rather than a stranger lurking near a playground or a school (Lieb, Quinsey and Berliner 1998).

[2] This was amended by California voters in 2012 to apply exclusively to third-time violent felons.

upgrade sexual assault to a second-degree crime for offenders with permanent mental or intellectual disabilities (Davis 2013).

Importantly, these anecdotal examples of public-driven policy are backed up by empirical analyses: the public "mood" on crime drives policy action and elite attention, rather than the other way around (Enns 2010; Nicholson-Crotty, Peterson and Ramirez 2009; Percival 2010). For example, using an estimate for the annual level of aggregate punitiveness, Enns (2010) shows that the federal incarceration rate is driven by increasing public support for punitive crime policies, above and beyond crime rates, income inequality and the party in power. Similarly, Nicholson-Crotty and colleagues (2009) demonstrate that policy outputs (i.e., federal spending levels, the federal incarceration rate, and the number of charges filed annually in U.S. District Courts) are driven by public opinion. Specifically, the authors use Stimson's (1999) second dimension of policy mood[3], which is the estimated level of conservatism (or liberalism) with respect to criminal justice public policy preferences, to demonstrate that government responds to public preferences above and beyond crime rates and political factors.

To the extent that crime legislation is spurred by the public rather than elites, understanding what informs public perceptions and thus policy attitudes about crime is equivalently important. The question this dissertation poses is: when crime has dropped to a fifty-year low, why do Americans continue to perceive crime as a problem in general, and remain supportive of punitive criminal justice policies in particular? In other words, where do people learn about crime, and what do they learn about it?

A long literature suggests that the predominant answer to this question is the media; after all, unlike most domestic issue domains (e.g., the economy, education, health care, etc.), most people have little direct experience with crime. Indeed, most "[p]rior research

[3]This measure is described in more detail below.

suggests that public knowledge about crime and justice is largely derived from the media" (Dowler 2003, p. 112). Thus, for the majority of citizens, perceptions of crime "in reality" are based on what they see on television (Scheingold 1984; Beckett 1999). However, scholars have focused almost exclusively on the news as this source of information. Much attention has been paid to local TV news, in particular, since it consistently features local and national crime stories, following the adage "if it bleeds, it leads". As a result, we know quite a bit about the ways in which local TV news programs cover crime and how this coverage affects viewers' attitudes.

Yet, people are exposed to political issues from a variety of media sources, not just news programs. This has become increasingly obvious as the media market has fragmented, allowing viewers to pick and choose among a wide variety of programming (Prior 2007). Research in political science, for example, has recently investigated how "soft news" programming, such as *Entertainment Tonight* and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, affects both public opinion and voting behavior (e.g., Baum 2003; Baum and Jamison 2006). These studies reveal that the content and tone of foreign policy coverage, for example, is very different relative to traditional news coverage. Not only does the content of this coverage differentially affect attitudes, but those who are most likely to be influenced by such media coverage (i.e., the least politically interested and informed) are also those who are most likely to be watching soft news (Baum 2003).

Crime is also covered by soft news, but its level of exposure in these programs pales in comparison to the centrality of crime in entertainment media (i.e., crime dramas).[4] For example, the *CSI* franchise, of which the original was one of the top ten most watched shows in the U.S. its first ten seasons running, has been named the most watched show in the world

[4]There are also a number of crime reality shows, such as *COPS* and *The First 48*, that follow actual detectives in their efforts to solve crimes. However, these shows have small audiences and are few in number, particularly compared to crime dramas.

five of the last seven years (Bibel 2012). Or consider the fact that *Castle*, which follows a successful crime novelist who has teamed up with a police detective to solve crimes while curing his writer's block, has produced several *New York Times* best-selling novels ostensibly written by the fictional novelist Richard Castle himself. And, week after week, Nielsen rates crime dramas among their top ten most watched shows.[5] Moreover, these shows are but a sample of what's out there: American television is filled with stories of crime and the men and women in uniform who keep our streets safe.

I argue that the public's love for crime dramas is an important and overlooked factor in misperceptions about the nature of crime and offending, and that regular viewership of these shows has helped sustain American punitiveness, particularly during an era of falling crime rates. In other words, as a result of the distorted nature in which crime is portrayed in crime dramas, Americans have continued to believe crime is more rampant than it is. In turn, the distorted content of these shows has bolstered support for punitive crime policies as a way to deal with the perceived problem. In this dissertation I seek to demonstrate that the criminological theories presented by crime dramas, such as the prevalence of crime, the "causes" of criminality, the appropriate responses and cures for offending, and the goals and efficacy of the current criminal justice system, affect the viewing public's perceptions of crime and crime policy attitudes in a meaningful way. As I outline in Chapter 2, the fictional presentation of crime invites viewers to make specific evaluations, or appraisals, along three key dimensions: perceptions of controllability over the crime, attributions of responsibility for the crime, and feelings of certainty about these perceptions and attributions. The formulaic presentation of these criminological theories, and the subsequent appraisals they invite viewers to make, results in anger about crime and ultimately support for punitive policies

[5]The most recent week as of this writing lists five crime dramas in its top ten list: *Person of Interest*, *NCIS*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *Elementary*, and *Blue Bloods* (Accessed May 10, 2013 from `http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/top10s.html`).

among viewers.

In order to provide context for the empirical analyses that test this proposition, the remainder of this chapter highlights what previous research has revealed about American punitiveness, as well as how the media, and in particular crime dramas, contributes to crime policy attitudes. Chapter 2 describes the themes and consistencies in content across crime dramas based on previous analyses. Understanding the way in which crime dramas systematically portray crime and offenders provides the necessary backdrop for identifying potential theoretical mechanisms at work (i.e., how crime dramas affect viewers). This is followed by an outline of specific hypotheses that are an outgrowth of my theory, as well as a brief description of the empirical approach taken in the following chapters. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 describe the data and results of time series analyses, multivariate analyses of two surveys, and a series of experiments, respectively. Combined, these chapters not only demonstrate the role crime dramas play in fostering punitiveness, but also mutually overcome the limitations of each individual analysis by triangulating around the research problem. In addition, Chapter 5 outlines the results of an original, updated content analysis of three popular shows today (*Criminal Minds*, *The Mentalist* and *NCIS*) in order to compare with previous analyses and motivate an experiment that manipulated the dimensions of interest (attributions of responsibility, perceptions of controllability and feelings of certainty). Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion on the substantive impact of crime dramas, as well as the role of entertainment media and public opinion in the formulation of criminal justice policies more generally.

Punitiveness Defined

Before discussing the literature on attitudes toward crime, it is important to understand what is meant by punitiveness. After all, most criminologists appear to have a similar notion in mind when discussing punitive attitudes, yet few explicitly define it (Matthews 2005). Instead, the operationalization of punitiveness tends to proxy for a definition of the concept, creating nearly as many different definitions of punitiveness as there are studies (e.g., Costelloe, Chiricos and Gertz 2009; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Payne et al. 2004; Unnever and Cullen 2010). In particular, the extant literature has been inclined to measure attitudes toward individual policies (e.g., the death penalty, three strikes laws and other mandatory minimum laws, drug rehabilitation), general beliefs about the criminal justice system (perceptions of the courts; preferences about spending on social programs versus punishment), and any mix of the two when operationalizing, and thus defining, punitiveness.

This study does not diverge from the literature's implicit definition, but it is nonetheless important to explicitly state what is meant by the term. Thus, references to punitiveness encompass what is traditionally viewed as supporting harsh and retaliatory penalties for offenders. That is, the more supportive an individual is of policies that emphasize retribution and punishment goals, the more highly he or she would score on a scale of punitiveness, regardless of the actual policies used in defining it. For instance, an individual who supports three-strikes laws and the death penalty while opposing treating juvenile offenders more leniently or providing amenities for prisoners would be considered more punitive than an individual who held opposing views.

This definition, however, raises a broader question of whether punitiveness so defined even exists: after all, a long-held truism in the study of ideology is that the public fails to hold meaningful beliefs across policy domains (Converse 1964). And what is punitiveness,

but a kind of narrow, policy-specific ideology? Modern scholars of public opinion have demonstrated convincingly that citizens do hold real policy opinions (Feldman and Zaller 1992; Zaller 1992), although the levels of stability and crystallization in attitudes differ widely across issue domains. In other words, some issues and policies are "easier" for citizens to understand than others, and thus easier for them to form opinions on the matter. Crime is considered a classic example of an "easy" issue, in that it fits all of the criteria (Carmines and Stimson 1980, p. 1): 1) it is more symbolic than technical (Scheingold 1984; Marion 1997); 2) the political dialogue often centers on policy ends rather than the means (e.g., the "get tough on crime" rhetoric); and 3) crime is a perennial issue for politicians (Cummins 2009). As a result, very little political sophistication is required to "understand" easy issues and their symbolic implications, and consequently the public feels more informed on such issues relative to other, "harder" issues.

The ease of crime as a political issue notwithstanding, prominent scholars of public opinion on crime have long lamented the narrow focus of questions designed to measure punitiveness (Roberts 1992; Cullen, Fisher and Applegate 2000). In particular, punitiveness tends to be assessed by a core group of questions that are asked repeatedly, even though the criminal justice system is comprised of a vast array of policies. To be sure, some of these policies are complicated (e.g., prison segregation, the appeals process), and the public is much less likely to be aware of or understand them, compared to general government spending preferences, for example. The result of this work has been a greater understanding of the depth of punitiveness with respect to specific policies, such as the death penalty, and less understanding about its breadth - and thus the extent to which individuals hold consistently punitive attitudes.[6] Moreover, when we examine the data on specific policies, the literature suggests that attitudes are "mushy" (Cullen, Fisher and Applegate 2000), and

[6]I return to this point in Chapter 4.

that even highly salient and long-standing issues are susceptible to framing (Peffley and Hurwitz 2007). For example, support for the death penalty drops when respondents are given alternative sentencing options to choose from, such as a life sentence without the option of parole (Cullen, Fisher and Applegate 2000). Similarly, support for punitive policies drops when given a specific set of circumstances (i.e., given a specific individual, his/her background, and mitigating/aggravating factors surrounding the crime) rather than asking about attitudes in general (Applegate et al. 1996; Sprott 1999). Naturally, policy attitudes tend to be assessed at a general level.

Even with these caveats, the fact remains that the public overwhelmingly supports punitive policies. In examining poll trends up to 1995, for example, Warr notes that it is with specific reference to "attitudes about the criminal justice system that we can see the punitive and perhaps angry side of public opinion" (1995, p. 300). Cullen and colleagues succinctly put it this way: "[T]he public is punitive toward crime. Get-tough attitudes are real and not simply a methodological artifact" (2000, p. 8). As recently as 2012, 65% of the public expressed support for capital punishment; 63% believed the courts are not harsh enough when dealing with criminals, and an additional 22% believed the courts to be about right.[7]

This assessment can perhaps best be made in considering the relationship between crime rates and policy preferences over the last half century. In particular, from the 1960s until the early 1990s, crime in the United States was on the rise. At the peak of the "crime creep", 49% of Americans identified crime as the "most important" problem (Carroll 2005). Given the easiness of crime as an issue, the interpretation of American punitiveness as a function of rising crime rates made intuitive sense (Page and Shapiro 2010): as the streets became less safe, Americans supported more punitive policies to combat the problem. Since then,

[7]This data is publicly available from the General Social Survey at `http://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm`.

crime rates have been steadily declining, recently returning to levels not seen in fifty years. In contrast, Americans remain disproportionately punitive.

To make this point visually, Figures 1 and 2 show the longest trends in public opinion on crime plotted against the relevant trends in actual crime statistics. Figure 1, for example, shows support for the death penalty from 1965 on, compared to the actual murder rate during this time period.[8] In 1980, when the murder rate peaked, support for the death penalty was at 72%. The murder rate declined for the next several years yet, when it peaked again in the early 1990s, support for the death penalty was at nearly 80%. The murder rate has since dropped to levels not seen since the 1960s, while support for the death penalty, despite a parallel decline, is still 30 points higher than it was at the beginning of this time series.

[Figures 1 and 2 About Here]

Similarly, Figure 2 plots the percent of Americans who believe the courts are "not harsh enough" (as opposed to "too harsh" or "just right") over this same time period. This graph tells a different but analogous story: a clear majority of Americans continue to believe the courts deliver insufficient punishment despite an exponential increase in the incarceration rate. While the percent of Americans believing the courts to be "too harsh" dropped seven points to a two-thirds majority, the incarceration rate increased 400% during the same time period. Thus, even if punitiveness as traditionally measured overestimates its prevalence (by asking for general policy attitudes rather than preferences given a specific crime), the resistance to moderation exhibited in recent times portrays a public that still overwhelmingly

[8]It is possible that citizens do not respond to trends in specific crimes. However, neither the violent crime rate nor the total crime rate exhibit any substantial deviances from the murder rate during the period shown (both violent crime and murder correlate with property crime at r = .82; violent crime and the murder rate correlate at r = .52).

endorses a "get tough" mentality. This point is worth repeating: I am not suggesting that Americans have become more punitive as crime has decreased - indeed, there is clear evidence that punitiveness has waned since its peak in the early 1990s. Rather, my focus is on the *greater* support for punitive policies over the last two decades relative to other eras in which crime was *equally* prevalent - in other words, I seek to understand this gap in reality and perception that has appeared over the last two decades.

One obvious explanation for this sustained punitiveness over time is that the public attributes the drop in crime to the implementation of punitive, "get tough" policies. In other words, perhaps the public continues to support punitive policies not because they are misinformed or "irrational", but because they believe these policies have been effective at reducing crime and thus support their continued use. Studies of public opinion, however, find little evidence linking support for punitive policies and an acknowledgment of their effectiveness in decreasing crime rates. For instance, belief in the efficacy of the police in combatting crime is uncorrelated with punitive attitudes when controlling for other factors, such as sociodemographics and media exposure (Dowler 2003). Similarly, a 2002 study reported that 58% of Americans believe efforts to rehabilitate prisoners have been unsuccessful (Peter D. Hart Associates 2002). In other words, most Americans believe that "today's prisons are no more than 'warehouses' providing little or no rehabilitation or reentry programs, that instead simply store criminals for a period of time and then dump them back on the street, no different than when they were first incarcerated" (2002, p. 9). In any case, large proportions of the public aren't even aware that crime has been declining and, in fact, believe things are getting worse (Saad 2011). So, if actual crime rates explain little of the variance in opinions, what does drive policy attitudes?

Explanations for American Punitiveness

One likely determinant of perceptions and attitudes are socio-demographic factors. Given a long line of research showing large gender and racial gaps in fear of crime (e.g., Rahn and Transue 1998), it would not be surprising to find similar differences in support for punitive policies. Contrary to what one might expect, however, those groups who tend to be the least fearful of crime (especially white males) also tend to be the most supportive of punitive policies. Indeed, females tend to be less punitive (Applegate et al. 1996; Pratto, Stallworth and Sidanius 1997; Payne et al. 2004; Sims and Johnston 2004) and more prevention-oriented than males (Hurwitz and Smithey 1998). With respect to race, research consistently reveals that blacks (Browning and Cao 1992; Hutchings and Valentino 2004) as well as minorities generally (Sims and Johnston 2004), tend to be less punitive than their white counterparts. For example, Sims and Johnston (2004) found that minorities were not only more likely to oppose the death penalty, but were also more likely to cite rehabilitation as the most important goal of prison. Similarly, Hurwitz and Peffley have found consistent racial gaps in policy attitudes (2005) as well as perceptions of fairness with respect to the criminal justice system (2010).

Despite the importance of race and gender at the individual level, however, neither satisfactorily explains the trends in punitiveness exhibited over time. The sex ratio in the United States has remained essentially constant over time. At the same time, the proportion of the population that is non-white has increased since the 1960s. The fact that minorities have comprised a steadily increasing proportion of the population during a time in which punitiveness increased more than it decreased suggests that shifting racial demographics[9]

[9]By racial demographics I refer strictly the respondent's race as an explanatory factor. Below I elaborate on the implications of these trends given the strong associations between race, racial attitudes, and crime policy preferences.

cannot explain the changes in punitiveness displayed in Figures 1 and 2.

Thus, while objective indicators of attitudes are revealing in their own right, important individual differences also emerge across and within categories of people. Furthermore, objective indicators might be able to predict punitiveness, but they do little to explain it. As a result, scholars of public opinion on crime have identified a number of correlates that not only predict but also shed light on why certain individuals hold punitive attitudes in the domain of crime. In particular, a number of studies have examined the role of ideological conservatism, authoritarianism and racial prejudice in explaining punitiveness. As the following discussion makes clear, each of these is important for understanding individual differences in policy attitudes. Nonetheless, it is also clear that they explain only part of the puzzle. This is particularly evident when it comes to their relative explanatory power at both the individual– and aggregate-levels.

Conservatism

The most obvious and well-studied individual-based explanation for punitiveness is general political conservatism, which includes specifically conservative positions on crime and justice within its broader purview (Jost et al. 2003). Traditionally, conservatism has been conceptualized as support for free market principles and smaller government (McClosky and Zaller 1984). This is the model of conservatism upheld in public and elite discourse: it reflects strong support for security and order (Swedlow 2008), traditional moral values (Ellis and Stimson 2009), and less support for social welfare (McClosky and Zaller 1984). Alternatively, Jost and colleagues argue that conservatism serves epistemic and motivational needs and is linked more generally with need for order, structure and closure, as well as death anxiety and system threat (Jost, Nosek and Gosling 2008). These conservative needs are satisfied in

part, for example, by punitive attitudes toward violators of the system (i.e., criminals).

Regardless of the theoretical approach taken as to why conservatives hold certain political beliefs, research consistently shows that ideology is an important component of attitudes toward specific crime policies at the individual level. Indeed, early survey research demonstrated that political ideology was the strongest determinant of policy attitudes, suggesting "a consistency between people's general approach to politics and their specific views on crime" (Browning and Cao 1992, p. 967). These differences can also be found at the level of the party, such that Democrats and Independents tend to be less punitive than Republicans on issues like the death penalty and spending preferences (Sims and Johnston 2004). It is worth noting, however, that the gap is not nearly as large as for many other policy issues. For instance, the Pew American Values Survey (2012) found that issues of national security was one of the least polarizing issues when it came to Democrats and Republicans; in contrast, partisans are strongly divided when it comes to attitudes toward the social safety net, the environment, equal opportunity and the preferred scope of government. Of course, national security issues are likely thought of (and certainly discussed) as separate from domestic crime; perhaps it is most telling that issues of domestic crime were not even asked by Pew, suggesting there is a large consensus about the need and methods to address crime (see also Page 2012).

Whether changes in conservatism over time can also explain increases and decreases in punitiveness remains directly untested, although it is ostensibly unlikely. Figure 3 shows Stimson's (1999) measure of "policy mood", which taps the public's estimated ideological positioning on the liberal-conservative spectrum over time. Specifically, annual mood scores are computed by conducting a factor analysis across hundreds of survey questions tapping Americans' policy attitudes. The theory is that the aggregate distributions of these policy attitudes reveal different parts of the same underlying construct of policy mood, which cap-

tures the general ideological leanings of the American public. Interestingly, this estimation technique reveals that public mood loads on two dimensions. The first dimension captures the usual left-right dimension in American politics: that is, a general preference for more or less government. The second dimension of mood, in contrast, captures "social compassion". As Erikson, MacKuen and Stimson explain, this second dimension encompasses "issues that seem to share the attribute of sympathy (or lack thereof) for some social group. Most distinctive are attitudes toward criminals. Items on the death penalty (for murderers) and on treatment of (generic) criminals load strongly" (2002, p. 208). These indicators, which range from 0 to 100 with higher numbers representing more liberal attitudes, are displayed in Figure 3.

[Figure 3 About Here]

It is clear that the trends revealed in Figures 1 and 2 both share common variance with the second dimension over time, not surprisingly since these specific policy attitudes and perceptions are the primary sources for estimating "social compassion". This relationship is revealed most strongly by examining the trends in support for the death penalty: for example, Figure 3 shows that the second dimension of mood trended sharply conservative from the early 1970s until the early 1990s, precisely the period of time during which support for the death penalty steadily increased (see Figure 1). On the other hand, perceptions of the courts remained more or less stable over this time period (see Figure 2). In any case, the point is that the trends in crime-specific opinion are asynchronous with the dominant (first dimension) ideological positioning of the American public. For example, liberalism decreased from the mid-1960s until the early 1980s, then increased proportionately until 1990. This stands in contrast to the continually increasing support for the death penalty during this

time, and the continued perception that the courts are not harsh enough on criminals.

The positive correlation between general liberalism and punitiveness also appears when examining ideological self-identification, rather than constructed ideology as policy mood does. Indeed, aggregate measures of self-identification reveal dramatic increases in the proportion of the population claiming the conservative label from 1964 to 1965 when support for the death penalty was declining, 1975 to 1980 when support for the death penalty was also increasing, and 1990 to 1995 when support for the death penalty remained stable (see Ellis and Stimson 2009). With respect to perceptions of the courts, opinion also increased about five points during the late 1970s and remained stable in the early 1990s. Moreover, some of the largest increases in support for punitive policies come during periods in which liberal self-identification actually increased. Like crime rates, then, conservatism explains only a portion of the variance in American punitiveness (see also Holbert, Shah and Kwak 2005; Peffley and Hurwitz 2002; Unnever and Cullen 2010).

Authoritarianism

Much of the research beyond the role of conservatism in punitiveness tends to keep conservative values at its core. In particular, a number of studies have investigated the authoritarian personality, with which conservatism shares a strong correlation (Adorno et al. 1982; Altemeyer 1988): authoritarians tend to exhibit conservatism because of their affinity for societal norms, rules and expectations. Authoritarians are also supportive of aggression toward others who violate cherished norms and rules. Research suggests that highly authoritarian individuals will exhibit these traits (conservatism and aggression) specifically when threatened (Lavine, Lodge and Freitas 2005; McCann 2008). For example, McCann (2008) has recently shown that more conservative states hand out a greater number of death sentences

and perform more executions than liberal states, but only when threatened, as measured by the murder rate, violent crime rate, and relative size of the nonwhite population.

How does this conform to the trends outlined in Figures 1 and 2? Although there are no consistent, long-term indicators of authoritarianism, the American National Election Studies (ANES) have asked about child-rearing values, a common measure of authoritarianism (Feldman and Stenner 1997; Feldman 2003), in 1992, 2000, 2004 and 2008. The weighted distribution of this scale shows little movement over time: in 1992, 25% of the sample scored below the midpoint of authoritarianism, and 49% of the sample fell into the top quartile. In contrast, 20% of the sample scored below the midpoint and 49% fell into the top quartile in 2008. The other two years show virtually identical distributions. Thus, the aggregate level of authoritarianism does not appear to have increased over time (see also Altemeyer 1988).

The aggregate effect of authoritarianism, however can still increase or decrease as a function of threat: that is, the impact of authoritarianism can still change over time if threat increases, even if the underlying distribution of authoritarianism remains unchanged (Stenner 2005). On one hand, we might expect that authoritarians have felt more threatened over time, given the growth in the minority population over the last several decades. Similarly, party polarization has increased during this era, more so among elites but also among (some of) the mass public (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Layman and Carsey 2002). This increasing polarization might also be seen as symbolically threatening to authoritarians, specifically as a sign of cultural conflict (Hetherington and Weiler 2009).

On the other hand, crime has declined for the last two decades while punitiveness has remained high; the economy was also improving during the same period in which punitiveness increased the most (the 1980s and early 1990s), suggesting less threat over time. Moreover, whereas Doty, Peterson and Winter (1991) find that the aggregate effect of authoritarianism decreased as a function of declining threat from the late 1970s and early 1980s to the late

1980s, there was no corresponding drop in punitiveness toward crime during this time period. Finally, a period in which we would expect the greatest impact of authoritarianism via threat on punitiveness would be after the terrorist attacks in September 2001[10], and yet we again see no corresponding increase in punitiveness. In fact, punitiveness declined slightly during this time period (see Figures 1 and 2).

Racial Prejudice

One of the most frequently researched and consistently important predictors of punitiveness at the individual level is racial animus. As Hutchings and Valentino comment, "crime may become so highly racialized that support for punitive crime policy is tightly linked to attitudes about blacks" (2004, p. 398). The work of Mark Peffley and Jon Hurwitz in particular has focused on the intersection of race and crime from a political science perspective. Through a series of survey experiments, the two have convincingly demonstrated that racial attitudes play a significant role in determining whites' crime policy opinions. One experiment, for example, shows that when a prison furlough program is framed as targeting black prisoners, subjects become more punitive in their responses relative to when the program is described as targeting whites (Peffley and Hurwitz 2002). Even more disturbing, they have presented evidence that making the issue of racial bias salient to white Americans with respect to the application of the death penalty actually boosts support for capital punishment (Peffley and Hurwitz 2007). Similarly, Valentino (1999) demonstrates that racially stereotypic crime coverage not only increases the effect of racial attitudes on presidential candidate evaluations, but also affects other racially encoded issues. Thus, subjects who were exposed to a story about crime not only exhibited stronger relationships between their attitudes toward crime and candidate evaluations, but also exhibited stronger relationships

[10] Although see Hetherington and Suhay (2011).

between their attitudes toward welfare - a story not even mentioned in the experimental stimulus - and candidate evaluations, presumably because of the link race makes between them.

The effect of race on crime policy attitudes can also be seen at the implicit level (Mendelberg 2001). For instance, in a separate survey experiment, Hurwitz and Peffley (2005) found that racial attitudes had no predictive power for respondents who were asked about their preference for building new prisons versus supporting antipoverty programs to combat crime. In stark contrast, racial attitudes strongly predicted attitudes when the policy referenced "inner-city" criminals. They argue that this phrase has become code for "black", and provide evidence for this hypothesis by showing that racial stereotypes strongly and significantly predict attitudes among those who were given the "inner-city" frame, but not for those in the control group.

Similarly, Mendelberg (2001) builds a strong case for her argument that the infamous "Willie Horton" spot, which employed the use of racial imagery but shied away from any verbal acknowledgement of race, primed white voters on racial attitudes when evaluating presidential candidates. She shows that, before the ad's racial content was explicitly acknowledged, racial resentment was a strong predictor of presidential candidate preference. In fact, at the peak of the implicit (i.e., visual) coverage of Horton, racial resentment had a larger impact on candidate preference than did party identification; however, this effect eroded and was eliminated completely by the time the role race played in the ad was explicitly acknowledged (Mendelberg 2001).

While race may be a strong predictor of attitudes at the individual level, it is difficult to explain the dynamics of American punitiveness with racial prejudice over time. Given the growing acceptance of egalitarianism in American society (Mendelberg 2001), Americans now tend to reject explicit statements of negative racial beliefs, attitudes, and endorsement

of stereotypes (Unnever and Cullen 2010). This is not to say that negative racial attitudes have declined over time: instead, they might be better repressed, requiring more implicit measures of attitudes. Unfortunately, this also means that a reliable and thus comparable measure of whites' "true" racial attitudes over time is likely unachievable. Yet unless we are willing to believe that Americans hold greater racial animus toward blacks today relative to the 1960s, then racial attitudes cannot explain the continued persistence of punitiveness in American attitudes toward crime.

One objection to this argument might be that even if racial prejudice has not increased, stereotypes have evolved so that crime has become more racialized over time (see Hutchings and Valentino 2004). A particularly attractive approach that supports this point of view is the Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al. 2002), which holds that social groups are stereotyped along two dimensions: perceived warmth, or the degree to which a group is competitive for scarce resources, and perceived competence. However, stereotypes of blacks have evolved from the 1920s and 1930s when, as a group, they were viewed as incompetent but warm (thus eliciting pity and protective, "paternalistic" attitudes rather than punitiveness). Today, there are at least two subgroups of blacks: "poor blacks" who are also perceived as incompetent but warm, and "professional blacks" who are viewed as competent but not warm (Fiske et al. 2002). Fiske and colleagues also suggest other subgroups of blacks, including one that is criminal and violent, and who "would be perhaps respected on a different dimension, but clearly disliked" (Fiske et al. 1999, p. 486). To the extent that questions about crime policies raise racial concerns, then, criminals may be stereotyped as high in competence and certainly perceived as low in warmth. In turn, the SCM predicts that low warmth should elicit contempt and active harm, such as support for more punitive crime policies.

As with racial prejudice, it is difficult to know how much evolving stereotypes informs changes in punitiveness. Nonetheless, looking at Figures 1 and 2, the trends in public

opinion over time do not align with expectations based on changes in stereotypes (or racial prejudice). For instance, although we would expect increases in the 1960s and 1980s, when law and order (i.e., crime) were salient topics, there is little reason to expect punitiveness would also increase in the 1970s, when crime was of relatively little concern.

A closely related argument is that trends in punitiveness are a function of immigration and the prejudicial reaction of citizens to Hispanics (Passel and Cohn 2008). Indeed, there is recent evidence that whites who stereotype Hispanics as criminal are more likely to support punitive crime control policies (Welch et al. 2011). However, the correlation between prejudice and punitiveness is predominantly driven by whites, a rapidly shrinking proportion of the population. That is, non-Hispanic whites made up 63% of the U.S. population in 2010 - compared to over 80% in 1970 - and are projected to lose majority status by 2043 (Yen 2012). Thus, even if white Americans now link crime with both blacks and Hispanics, and have become more punitive over time in response to the changing racial and ethnic landscape, this increase would have to have been so great as to overcome their declining numbers in the aggregate. In other words, the consistently lower levels of punitiveness found among Blacks and Hispanics make it difficult to argue that racial attitudes fully explain aggregate trends in punitiveness, particularly when punitiveness is greater overall now than in the 1960s, an era in which whites were a much larger majority than today.

Altogether, it is clear that these individual-level differences explain a great deal of the cross-sectional variance, but fail to also explain changes in aggregate punitiveness over time. Changing demographics, a general trend toward liberalism (Davis 1992; Smith 1990) and racial egalitarianism (Kellstedt 2000) during a time in which punitiveness was increasing suggests that other factors are at play. In the next section, I elaborate on the contextual, or environmental, factors at work in fostering punitiveness, which brings us closer to a complete understanding of why Americans continue to support punitive crime policies.

Environmental Factors

Clearly, the literature has been successful at identifying individual predictors of punitiveness. What was entirely absent from this discussion, however, were structural and environmental factors that likely influence opinion. Apart from moments of national or historical significance (e.g., 9/11, the Furman decision), most studies of crime policy attitudes have focused on individual-level differences (e.g., ideology, racial attitudes, and authoritarianism), neglecting how the environmental context influences attitudes in the process. This may explain, in part, why theories of individual-level punitiveness fail to hold at the aggregate level: attitudes are a function of the interaction between individuals and their environment (Zaller 1992). Nonetheless, there are some exceptions to this criticism, which can be broken into two strands of inquiry: theories of neighborhood context and theories of media influence.

Neighborhood Context

Going back to the 1950s and earlier, scholars recognized the importance of the social setting in opinion formation, particularly when it came to racial attitudes. Early proponents of the contact hypothesis, for example, argued that simply being in a more racially heterogeneous environment was correlated with holding less racially antagonistic beliefs (Allport 1954). More recently, this has led to the formation of interactive hypotheses: specifically, hypotheses about the moderating effect of the neighborhood context, with respect to either its racial, educational, or income composition.

For instance, as a neighborhood's educational level increases, the effect of racial composition becomes increasingly positive with respect to policy attitudes focused on blacks (Branton and Jones 2005). As neighborhoods become more racially heterogeneous, whites become more supportive of education quotas, preferential hiring and aid to blacks, but only

among those neighborhoods that are highly educated. In contrast, racial composition has no effect on policy attitudes among residents of low-education neighborhoods. Similarly, Oliver and Mendelberg (2000) show that racial attitudes are related to the educational level of those living in a respondent's surrounding area, rather than the racial composition of the neighborhood. The only instance in which racial composition mattered for attitudes was among low-education zip codes with respect to attitudes on integrated housing. Thus, "an environment's racial and status composition can shape its residents' opinions on race-targeted policies, but only where the contextual parameter coincides with real racial composition" (p. 583).

The importance of the environment has also been demonstrated with respect to crime specifically. For example, when exposed to racial stereotypes in the news, white respondents in homogenous neighborhoods became more punitive, expressed more negative stereotypic evaluations of blacks, and reported feeling more distant from blacks as a group (Gilliam, Valentino and Beckmann 2002). Whites from heterogeneous neighborhoods, on the other hand, were unaffected or moved in the opposite direction on these measures as a result of exposure to stereotypic news coverage. Despite significant strides made since the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, residential segregation is still a very real facet of American life (Peffley and Hurwitz 2010; Feldman, Huddy and Perkins 2009), particularly for whites. Today, the majority of whites still live in overwhelmingly white neighborhoods. As a result, the environmental context can have a large impact in the aggregate, given the gap between blacks and whites in both perceptions of the criminal justice system (Peffley and Hurwitz 2010) and policy attitudes (Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005).

Nonetheless, once again the trends in residential segregation (and education, for that matter) do not align with the trends in punitiveness over time. Analyses of census tract data, for example, show that residential segregation has steadily declined since the 1960s: whereas

all-white neighborhoods comprised one-fifth of American neighborhoods a half century ago, they are virtually non-existent today (Glaeser and Vigdor 2012, see also Massey and Denton 1989; Iceland and Weinberg 2002). During most of this period, in contrast, punitiveness was steadily on the rise. Much like the individual-level predictors, the racial composition of an individual's neighborhood provides a piece of the puzzle for an individual's policy attitudes, but cannot contribute much to aggregate trends in public opinion over time.

The Media

Up until now, the focus has been on reviewing the factors that are important for explaining citizens' attitudes toward crime, and punitive attitudes in particular. Clearly, conservatism, authoritarianism, racial prejudice and other individual-level differences are major forces shaping public opinion. Reality, too, matters: both crime rates and the racial composition of the neighborhood predict policy attitudes. Nonetheless, these factors fail to tell the whole story. That is, each provides a partial explanation for individual differences or aggregate-level dynamics in punitiveness, but none provides a satisfactory explanation for both. I argue that what remains missing from this story is the media - specifically entertainment media - and how fictional programs have shaped perceptions and attitudes across individuals and over time.

Of course, I am far from the first to argue the importance of the media in explaining attitudes, and particularly crime attitudes. Because people tend to be removed from the implementation of crime policies and their consequences, scholars argue that large proportions of the citizenry are heavily reliant on the media for formulating their opinions (Dowler 2003; Scheingold 1984). Indeed, a long literature demonstrates that the media play an important role in the formation of perceptions of, and attitudes toward, political issues (e.g., Iyen-

gar and Kinder 1987; Nelson, Clawson and Oxley 1997; Page, Shapiro and Dempsey 1987). When asked directly where they get most of their information about crime, moreover, 95% of citizens identify the media as their primary source, rather than direct experience or conversations with friends and family (Graber 1980). Thus, the media plays a non-ignorable role in citizens' perceptions about crime and, consequently, their policy attitudes.

Crime in the News

Most of the research examining the relationship between the media and public opinion on crime have emphasized local television news, given its penchant for crime stories as well as its ability to pair racial and emotional imagery with the "crime narrative" (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). While content analyses show that crime is heavily emphasized by local TV news in particular, most studies of televised news programs focus on national broadcasts or newspapers, largely for reasons related to data management and availability (for exceptions see Graber 1980; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). Nonetheless, these studies are revealing, in the sense that the media are consistently found to shape how people think about political issues (see also Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydstun 2008).

For one, there is strong evidence that the news media can set the agenda. That is, there is a direct correlation between the amount of time the media dedicates to a specific issue and the public's perceived importance of that issue. The most glaring example of this comes from Gallup polls between 1993 and 1994 that revealed a large jump in the proportion of Americans citing crime as the "most important problem" (Lowry, Nio and Leitner 2003). In predicting this jump over time, the authors found that their media indicators of crime salience, culled from the Vanderbilt archives of broadcast news programs, explained significantly more of the variance in public opinion than actual crime rates. Similarly, Beckett (1999) shows that

media coverage by three major newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The L.A. Times*, and *The Washington Post*) predated spikes in public concern over crime.

These findings have also been duplicated with self-reports of media consumption. For example, a survey of residents in Washington D.C. found that reportedly watching local TV news increased the probability of saying crime was the most important problem. In contrast, neither watching national TV news nor reading a newspaper had the same agenda setting effect as local television (Gross and Aday 2003). More convincingly, experiments have also demonstrated the power of the media to set the agenda with respect to crime (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Holbrook and Hill 2005).

An equally voluminous literature has examined whether the media affect individuals' emotional reactions to crime, and specifically one's fear or anxiety about victimization. The general argument is that by increasing the salience of crime through the media's agenda setting power, viewers increasingly see the world as dangerous and crime-filled (Gerbner et al. 2002) and thus experience greater levels of fear. The strong visual component of television news adds further theoretical justification for the expectation of increased anxiety. That is, the ability of local TV news to show the scene of the crime, interview scared neighbors or witnesses, and show clips of tense police officials discussing the offender make the event seem more immediate, dramatic, and perhaps even encourages identification and empathy with the victims or bystanders.

However, scholars have found rather mixed results in regard to media consumption and fear of crime. For example, a survey of Florida residents found that watching television news during a "media-driven panic" about crime significantly predicted elevated levels of fear, even when controlling for perceptions of local crime rates (Chiricos, Padgett and Gertz 2000). In contrast, Gross and Aday (2003) found that self-reports of watching local television news failed to significantly predict fear of crime among residents of Washington, D.C. Eschholz

(1997) makes a compelling argument that the mixed results in this regard highlight the need for better measures. More specifically, she argues that the failure of the literature to come to a consensus about the effects of media on fear of crime is a function of scholars using different measures of fear of crime, as well as discrepant definitions of media consumption.[11]

Within this agenda setting power, it is also clear that certain frames tend to be emphasized more than others when the media discusses crime. In particular, Iyengar's (1991) comprehensive analysis of the frames used by network television news (ABC, CBS and NBC) categorizes stories as either episodic or thematic in nature. An episodic frame "parachutes the journalist and the audience into the middle of an already developed situation and puts the focus on the people who are in trouble or in conflict" (Bennett 2012, p. 44). In contrast, thematic frames place a specific event in the larger context in which it has taken place by exploring the economic, political and/or social circumstances of the news at hand. Not surprising to viewers of local TV news, the overwhelming majority of crime stories analyzed were framed in an episodic rather than a thematic way (Iyengar 1991). Thus, the media tend to portray criminal acts as more or less random events, and provide little discussion of how the particular crime being reported fits into a larger political and societal framework (e.g., in the context of crime rates). These frames also have clear implications for attributions of responsibility (i.e., what theory of offending best fits the crime), which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. The question of whether the media can be directly tied to individuals' policy attitudes, rather than simply increasing the salience of an issue, is an altogether different question. This would suggest a more substantive and meaningful media effect, given the important role public opinion plays in crime legislation.

In fact, some of the best work to date suggests that the media do matter for policy

[11]The issues in measuring fear of crime have been discussed at length in Ferraro and Grange (1987) and Farrall et al. (1997).

attitudes, particularly in its ability to prime racial considerations (Gilliam, Valentino and Beckmann 2002; Valentino 1999). For example, Gilliam and colleagues (2002) argue persuasively that crime coverage on local television news tends to follow a similar script: blacks, particularly black males, commit violent crime (see also Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Graber 1980; Reiner 2006). They then conducted an experiment that shows whites from racially homogenous neighborhoods became more punitive in their orientations toward crime after exposure to racially stereotypic news relative to whites from more heterogeneous neighborhoods (Gilliam, Valentino and Beckmann 2002).

Overall, this research highlights the important role news media plays in public opinion on crime. Some of the most convincing evidence has come from experiments, which overcomes the problem of causality in regard to viewing behavior and attitudes. Nonetheless, cross-sectional survey data also suggest a clear correlation between the two. The portrayal of crime, and particularly the visual connection of crime with race in local TV news, affects viewers' perceptions and attitudes.

Whether trends in local TV news viewership can explain punitiveness over time, however, is a more difficult question to answer. Unfortunately there are no good measures of local TV news viewership over any great length of time. More recent data reveals that viewership of local TV news has been dropping steadily since the mid-2000s (Potter, Matsa and Mitchell 2013). This is due almost certainly in part to media fragmentation: in the 1960s and 1970s, most homes had a television, but only received a few channels (Prior 2007). As a result, citizens watched more or less the same programs. Since then the number of channels has increased over time, nearly exponentially with the introduction of cable and satellite TV. Moreover, content analyses of local TV news suggest that these programs spend less time on crime stories now compared to the past (Jurkowitz et al. 2013). It is likely, then, that local TV news viewership was relatively stable until recently, when alternative forms of news

became more readily available (e.g., cable news and the Internet).

At the same time, crime is portrayed in a number of ways on television, of which local TV news represents only a slice. Media scholars have long argued that fictionalized crime on television affects perceptions of the real world (Gerbner et al. 2002). In addition, the proportion of television dedicated to fiction relative to news has increased over time as the number of channels has exploded. As citizens have more choice in media content, they have increasingly tuned into entertainment programs rather than news programming (Prior 2007). Only recently, however, has the field broadened its scope to analyze empirically the potential effects of entertainment media (e.g., Baum 2003; Mutz and Nir 2010). In the next section, I review the small but growing literature that looks at whether non-news media sources affect policy attitudes, with a specific look at the handful of studies focusing on crime.

Crime in Entertainment Media

Scholars of political behavior generally agree that, as individuals, the American public is generally uninterested in news and politics. In a world of seemingly endless media choice, then, it is not surprising that citizens tend to tune out news programs. Matt Baum and colleagues, however, have argued that the least politically sophisticated and interested are still inadvertently exposed to political issues and information through non-news programming. In recent presidential campaigns, for instance, it has become common for candidates to appear on "soft news sources" such as *Ellen*, *The Daily Show*, and *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. More importantly, this research suggests that non-traditional news sources can act as a sufficient substitute for voting; in other words, the least sophisticated are still "informed" by watching soft news and are able to cast a vote consistent with their predispositions (Baum and Jamison 2006).

In addition to voting, there is also evidence that non-traditional media sources can affect opinions on specific political issues. In political science, this research has focused primarily on foreign policy attitudes. Despite some obvious differences in foreign policy and crime attitudes (e.g., levels of perceived importance and public interest), this work is nonetheless revealing. Baum (2003) argues, for example, that the dramatic and stark nature of military interventions makes compelling television, which is why soft news programming (e.g., *Oprah*, *Entertainment Tonight*) began covering military crises. Not only does this provide information about political issues to typically low-information citizens, but it also frames issues in ways that are distinct from traditional news sources. In particular, soft news is much more likely to frame military interventions from an episodic rather than a thematic viewpoint, to make analogies to the Vietnam War, and to cite celebrities critical of the decision (Baum 2003). His data show a "clear association between consuming soft news and opposition to, or distrust of, a proactive, multilateral, or interventionist U.S. foreign policy" (p. 256), but only among the least attentive and least politically sophisticated viewers.

Perhaps more so than foreign policy issues, crime is a regular topic outside of traditional news sources. Certainly national events such as the crimes surrounding O.J. Simpson, Elizabeth Smart, and Bernie Madoff capture attention and are discussed at length on soft news sources. Indeed, one study suggests that the portrayal of crime in soft versus hard news differs in both content and structure, and thus affects crime policy attitudes in very different ways. For example, infotainment shows such as *Hard Copy*, which emphasize the drama of crime rather than it's meaning, are correlated with more simplistic thinking about crime and thus more simplistic solutions (Sotirovic 2001). In contrast, more elaborate portrayals of crime are related to more complex attitudes, and thus support for more complex solutions.

The viewing public's most common encounter with crime, however, is in a completely fictionalized context. The Senate Judiciary Committee, for example, held hearings in which

experts estimated that the average child will see 200,000 violent acts and 16,000 murders on television by the time they are 18, mostly in dramas (Boyse 2010). As with the presentation of foreign policy issues in soft news, these shows portray crime in a consistent and predictable way. In turn, by systematically framing crime and offending, crime dramas expose viewers to strong messages about the nature of crime and the appropriate policy responses for addressing it. I propose that crime dramas constitute a domain-specific source of information about crime, and thus are influential in the formation and persuasion of policy attitudes.

It is also worth noting that these shows are enormously popular, suggesting that to the extent crime dramas shape public opinion about crime, their effects are far-reaching. Early shows such as *Dragnet* and *The Avengers* gave way to *Magnum P.I.*, *Hawaii Five-0* and *Columbo*. *Law & Order* and *NYPD Blue* were both highly rated shows in the 1980s and 1990s; more recently, NCIS has reigned the airwaves, along with a host of other popular programs, such as *The Closer*, *The Mentalist* and *Criminal Minds*. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that crime dramas have become relatively more popular over time, and particularly over the last decade or so. To illustrate this, Figure 4 displays the Nielsen ratings[12] of the most watched crime drama within each season compared to the highest rated program altogether. This figure reveals not only the aforementioned market fragmentation (i.e., the consistent trend in ratings of the most watched show has been toward increasingly smaller audiences), but also the sustained - or, relative to the most popular show that season, increased - popularity of crime dramas. Two of the three years in which no crime drama appeared in the top thirty in terms of ratings occurred in the 1960s; the years in which a crime drama was the most watched program on television all occurred since 2000.

[Figure 4 About Here]

[12]Nielsen ratings are explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

Crime in Crime Dramas

Given the prevalence and popularity of crime as a topic in fictional media, it is surprising that so little research has been done on the subject. In fact, very few studies look explicitly at the relationship between consumption of crime dramas and policy attitudes at all, let alone theorize about the underlying mechanisms. What research has been conducted, however, indicates that consumption of crime dramas is related to holding punitive crime policy attitudes. To date, I have identified six peer-reviewed studies that explore specifically whether watching crime dramas affects policy attitudes, three of which employ survey data and three which present experimental evidence.

The most well specified model of the analyses employing survey data can be found in Kort-Butler and Hartshorn's (2011) survey of Nebraska residents. Their data revealed that watching crime dramas, as measured by responses to the question of how many days in an average week one watched "TV crime dramas like '*Law & Order*' or '*CSI*' " was significantly related to support for the death penalty. This effect held even when controlling for the effects of socio-demographics, ideology, fear of crime, being a victim of crime, and local crime rates. A separate study of survey data comes from Holbert, Shah and Kwak (2005), who found that watching crime dramas was significantly related to support for capital punishment, whereas watching local television news was not. In addition, their data revealed that watching crime dramas was negatively related to support for the police, such that consumers of crime dramas were actually less supportive of police authority. This study also controlled for ideology and religiosity, as well as specified more clearly what kind of media consumption the authors were interested in. That is, the authors asked respondents specifically whether they watched *NYPD Blue* and/or *Law & Order*, rather than simply inquiring about general viewership of "crime shows".

In contrast, Dowler (2003) found that self-reports of being "frequent viewers of a television crime show" were unrelated to punitiveness. Unfortunately, this measure did not specify what kinds of television crime shows are included in this definition (i.e., it is unclear whether this question is also referring to reality crime shows), nor does it define what being a "frequent viewer" entails. And although this study controlled for basic socio-demographics (i.e., race, gender, age, education and income), other important and previously established correlates of punitiveness, such as conservatism and racial attitudes, were omitted. Moreover, this and other analyses of cross-sectional data cannot address the question of causality. That is, although these data can reveal significant partial correlations, they cannot speak to the larger question of whether watching crime dramas leads to increased punitiveness, or punitive individuals are drawn to watching crime dramas.

One study that did not rely on survey data and thus can speak more directly to the issue of causality comes from Slater, Rouner and Long (2006). Unfortunately, the goal of their study was slightly different than assessing the relationship between watching crime dramas and policy attitudes. In particular, the authors used an experimental design to test how individuals' ideological beliefs affected policy attitudes after watching an episode of *Law & Order*. They argue that watching television dramas should weaken the effect of ideology on support for policies due to suppressed counter-arguing. Consistent with their hypotheses, subjects who watched a crime drama exhibited no relationship between their ideology and support for the death penalty; in contrast, the control condition (who saw a show focusing on gay marriage) exhibited the "usual" effects, with self-reported liberalism predicting greater opposition to capital punishment. Although there was no discussion of overall differences in support for the death penalty across conditions, at a minimum their results show that the considerations used in formulating policy opinions are affected by watching crime dramas.[13]

[13]A point I return to in Chapter 5.

Holbrook and Hill (2005) investigated whether crime dramas had similar effects on viewers as those found in the well-established literature on media effects generally: that is, agenda setting and priming. In a series of experiments using different shows, they found that watching crime dramas significantly increased the probability of identifying crime and violence as the most important problem facing the country (see Hill, Holbrook and Vaccaro 2010 for analogous results with respect to terrorism). Similarly, Mutz and Nir (2010) found that subjects exposed to a crime drama that portrays the criminal justice system in a positive light *and* who are told to empathize with the main characters expressed significantly greater support for the death penalty. In contrast, subjects who watched an episode showing the criminal justice system in a negative light or subjects who were not instructed to empathize with the characters were equally and less supportive of the death penalty as a punishment for murder.

In noting that the duration of these effects is unknown, Mutz and Nir also suggest that "[l]ong-term exposure to such programs, as cultivation researchers maintain, should result in profound long-term political effects among viewers" (2010, p. 212). In other words, repeated exposure to fictional programs likely has a large impact on citizens' attitudes, "perhaps even one as important as the extensively studied content of political news" (p. 212). Given the overwhelmingly popularity of crime dramas, then, it is important to examine all the ways by which citizens are exposed to crime, and not focus myopically on exposure to normatively desirable programs (i.e., the news).

Conclusion

Previous research has demonstrated that the media plays an important role for citizens in terms of providing information, shaping impressions and forming opinions. When it comes

to crime specifically, the media are an especially crucial source of information. With great consistency, the media turn up as a stronger predictor of attitudes than actual crime rates or personal experience with crime, and has the ability to alter the importance of predispositions such as ideology and racial attitudes in opinion formation. As this review has highlighted, other explanations of attitudes toward crime can explain individual differences or trends over time, but not both. Exposure to crime dramas, in contrast, has the potential to explain differences in attitudes across individuals as well as the sustained punitiveness exhibited in recent decades.

Despite recognition that the media impact political attitudes, scholars have paid scant attention to the variety of media citizens are exposed to, including entertainment media. Although it is clear that these issues are discussed at length in news programs, they also appear in emotionally compelling and engaging ways outside of the news. And frankly, a lot of individuals aren't all that interested in the news: after a long day of work, many citizens simply want to relax and be entertained. As will be seen shortly, crime dramas in particular are enormously popular, perhaps in part because they are so far removed from most people's day-to-day experience. Thus, it is important to study the ways in which crime dramas may be affecting viewers' attitudes.

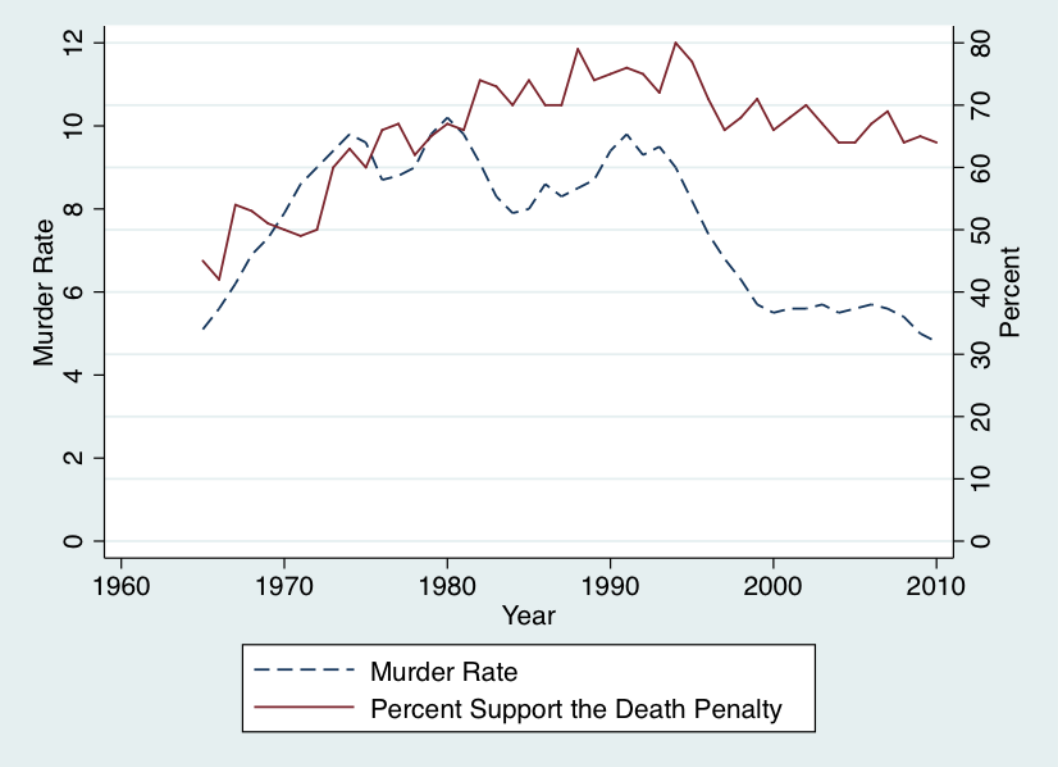
More importantly, what little we do know about entertainment media suggests that political issues are often portrayed in a systematically different light relative to their portrayal in news programming. When it comes to foreign policy, for example, soft news programs tend to frame war episodically - that is, in a simplistic and self-contained format. This has important implications for viewers of soft news, in that it affects their perceptions of the war and their subsequent support or opposition. Given findings such as these, there is every reason to believe that similar patterns would emerge from regular exposure to crime dramas.

Absent from the discussion so far, however, has been any mention of the content, or

way in which crime is portrayed in crime dramas. In particular, crime, like most issues, is complicated in its nature. The reasons people commit crime and the best approaches to address the problem of crime are numerous, complex, and incomplete. At the same time, most crime is rather ordinary and routine: for example, property crime comprises the vast majority of all crimes committed in the U.S. Thus, there is an incentive on behalf of TV writers to both simplify crime and make it more dramatic in order to attract audiences who are looking to be entertained. As Chapter 2 will demonstrate, crime dramas tend to simplify crime by emphasizing individualistic explanations for offending, and dramatize crime by disproportionately focusing on violent crime, particularly murder.

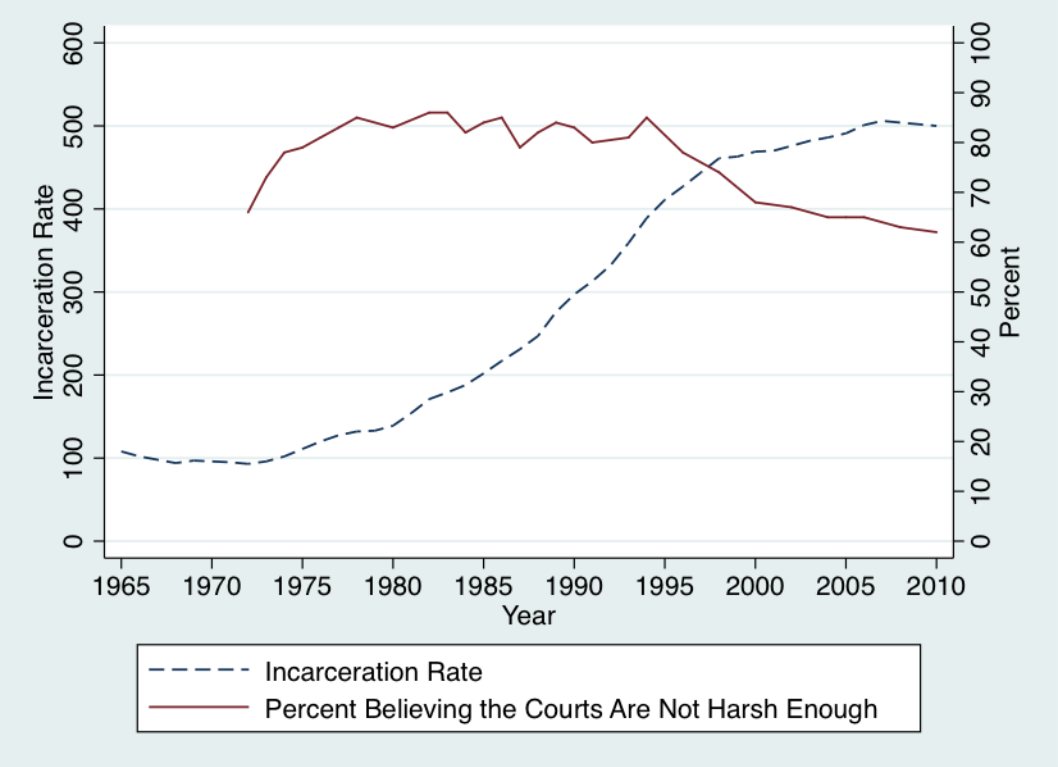
In the next chapter, then, I address the content of crime dramas, as well as develop a theoretical model to explain how entertainment media impact policy attitudes. In particular, I outline the results of previous content analyses, as well as present the results of an original content analysis of several current crime dramas. This is followed by specific hypotheses for the empirical analyses presented in the three empirical chapters. At a time when crime is at an all-time low and support for punitive policies remains high, application of an empirical lens is vital to better understanding the disconnect between reality and perception. It is my hope this work prompts this discussion and provides an additional piece of the puzzle in explaining American punitiveness.

Figure 1.1: The Murder Rate and Support for the Death Penalty, 1965-2010



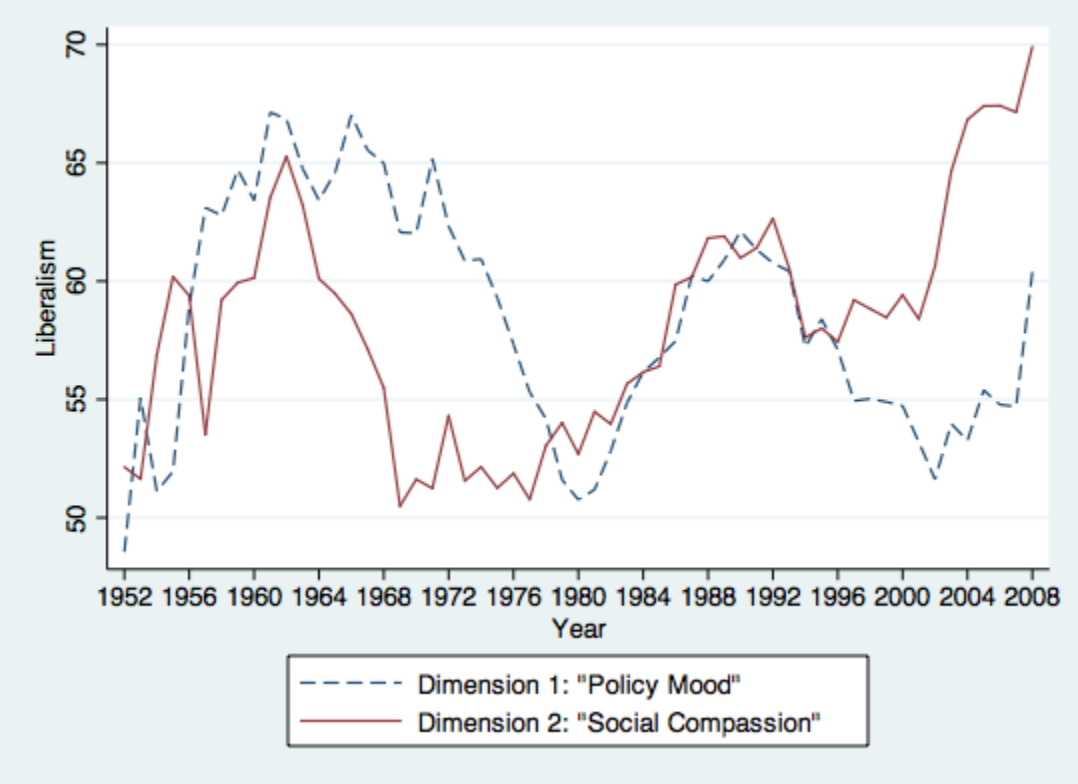
Sources: General Social Survey, Gallup, iPoll, FBI Uniform Crime Reports.

Figure 1.2: The Incarceration Rate and Perceptions of the Courts, 1965-2010



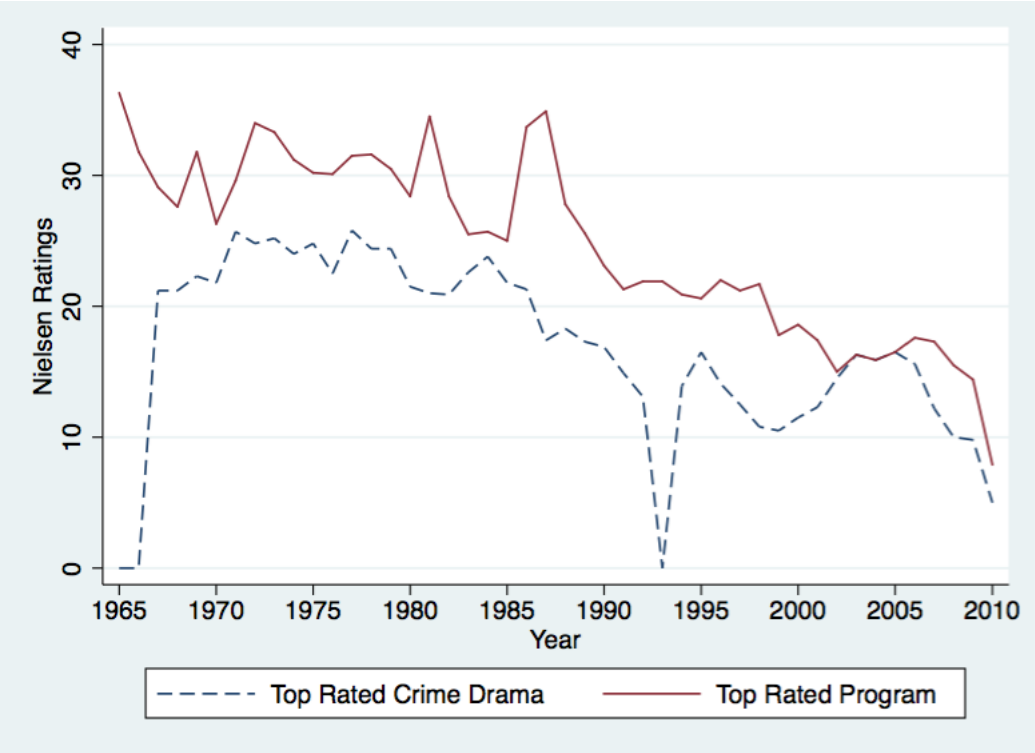
Sources: General Social Survey, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Figure 1.3: Dimensions of Policy Mood, 1952-2008



Publicly available at `http://www.unc.edu/~jstimson/Data.html`.

Figure 1.4: Nielsen Ratings of the Most Watched Crime Drama and Most Watched TV Program, 1965-2010



Sources: (Lackmann 2003; Brooks and Marsh 2007); The Nielsen Company.

Chapter 2

How Crime Dramas Impact Policy Attitudes

Introduction

As the previous chapter made clear, a number of factors are important for understanding American punitiveness. For example, a great deal of research has demonstrated the pervasive role race plays in crime attitudes, whether that is the level of an individual's racial prejudice, racial identification, or the racial composition of the surrounding neighborhood. Similarly, it is clear that more conservative, authoritarian and more racially prejudicial individuals tend to hold more punitive policy attitudes, as do certain socio-demographic groups, such as white males. However, none of these predictors explain the whole story. Perceptions of increasing crime, lax courts, and support for harsh policies all remain high, particularly relative to previous time periods that experienced equivalent (or higher) crime rates.

Because most citizens do not have direct experience with the criminal justice system, the media acts as a primary source of information about crime. It is clear that the portrayal

of crime in the news can activate predispositions and alter attitudes, but the portrayal of crime is more pervasive and engaging in entertainment media. Given low levels of political interest and declining TV news consumption, the portrayal of crime in crime dramas has the potential to impact policy attitudes in a substantively meaningful way.

In this chapter I outline what is known about the content of crime dramas in order to develop a theoretical model of how these shows shape policy attitudes. In particular, this model argues that the portrayal of offenders as highly self-controlled and individually responsible for their crimes, in conjunction with a highly efficacious criminal justice system, generate anger and ultimately support for more punitive policies.

The Portrayal of Crime in Fictional Media

In order to hypothesize how entertainment media, and specifically crime dramas affect attitudes, it is important to first understand the similarities in content across crime dramas, particularly with respect to its portrayal in that other media bastion of crime, local TV news. It is important to note, however, that most of these studies have focused exclusively on a small set of shows that have been popular within the last fifteen years. For example, Eschholz, Mallard and Flynn (2004) analyzed *Law & Order* and *NYPD Blue* during the 2001-2002 season, while Deutsch and Cavender (2008) analyzed a season of CSI during the 2000-2001 season. Soulliere (2003) coded a season each of *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order* and *The Practice*, and Brown (2001) coded a season each of *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order*, and *Homicide: Life on the Streets*, both during the 1999-2000 season. Once exception to this is Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams (2008), who coded all episodes (58) throughout the first fifteen seasons of *Law & Order* that featured a juvenile offender. Although this is but a small slice of all the crime dramas on television, they collectively represent the most

watched crime shows at the turn of the century. Thus, at a minimum, their content reflects what a majority of the crime-drama-viewing public was exposed to during this time period.[1]

In addition, these content analyses by and large employ similar methodologies. For example, all episodes from an entire season of a crime drama would be coded across the dimensions of interests. In some studies, crimes committed were the unit of analysis (e.g., (Deutsch and Cavender 2008); others used offenders (e.g., (Brown 2001; Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008) or episodes (e.g., (Eschholz, Mallard and Flynn 2004) as the unit of analysis. All of the studies employed multiple coders to check for inter-rater reliability. Although the coders usually began with a complete coding sheet, some modifications were made to the coding instrument after the first few episodes when necessary.

Overall, the analyses reveal important differences between criminals in crime dramas and the "crime script" used in local TV news (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). This should not be terribly surprising, given that crime dramas are designed to entertain and news programs are ideally designed to inform. In particular, crime dramas can provide greater detail and insight into the relationship between the victim and the offender, conveniently condensed timelines, and emotionally compelling visuals that are simply impossible for local TV news to produce, even if such dramatic storylines occurred on a regular basis in real life. Whereas crime dramas have the ability to paint three-dimensional pictures of offenders and provide insights into their motivations, local TV news programs are usually able to gather only cursory details about the offender and the crime, and perhaps a mugshot or video footage of the offender.

Despite these differences, both programs seek to maximize audiences, and it is clear that local TV news programs "work with what they have", specifically by disproportionately em-

[1]Chapter 5 outlines the findings from an original content analysis of three different shows from 2011-2012 for comparison. Overall, the results show that conclusions drawn from these analyses are still highly relevant today.

phasizing violent crimes. Thus, local TV news and crime dramas also share some interesting similarities in terms of content. To organize the following discussion, the systematic portrayal of crime in crime dramas is compared and contrasted relative to local TV news and actual statistics across four distinct dimensions, all of which have important implications for punitiveness: 1) the type of crime committed, 2) the perpetrators of these crimes, 3) the perpetrators' motivations for committing crime, and 4) the efficaciousness of the criminal justice system.

The Crime

The first dimension on which crime dramas, local TV news shows and reality can be compared and contrasted is the type of crimes portrayed. Crime dramas, for example, vastly over-represent the prevalence of violent crime, particularly murder, and under-represent the prevalence of more common (and less "exciting") property crimes. In fact, violent crime is portrayed in nearly inverse relationship to actual crime statistics (Brown 2001; Cavender and Deutsch 2007; Deutsch and Cavender 2008; Eschholz, Mallard and Flynn 2004; Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008; Soulliere 2003). Murder was consistently the most committed crime in the crime dramas analyzed, comprising anywhere from 63 to 92% of all crimes shown. In stark contrast, murder comprised 1.2% of violent crimes and .1% of all crimes reported in 2011 (of Justice 2012). The disproportionate emphasis on murder appears to be greater in crime dramas today relative to previous years: although murder was still the modal crime in dramas in 1972, it comprised only 26% of crimes shown on TV at the time (Dominick 1973). In TV dramas analyzed during the early 1950s, murder comprised a mere 14% of all crimes shown (Head 1954).

Content analyses also indicate that violent crime is overrepresented by local TV news

programs, although not nearly to the same extent as crime dramas. During a five-week content analysis of two local news stations in the fall of 1997, for instance, 65% of the crime stories covered by the local channel WGN of Chicago focused on violent crime, compared to only 30%[2] of crime stories in the "small town" newscast (WGEM of Quincy, Illinois; (Maguire, Sandage and Weatherby 1999). In Graber's (1980) content analysis of Chicago area media in 1976, nearly 50% of crime stories reported on two local TV news stations focused on "street crimes", as opposed to corruption, terrorism, or white-collar crime; 24% focused on murder specifically.

Given these numbers, the proportion of crime stories dedicated to violent crime may have increased over time. However, the proportion of stories in local TV news dedicated to crime altogether appears to have declined recently. Pew's annual State of the News Media reported that crime comprised 29% of the local TV "newshole" (i.e., the amount of time in a broadcast) in 2005, compared to 17% in 2010 (Jurkowitz et al. 2013). This compares, however, to 20% of the local TV newshole in an analysis of Chicago TV news programs in 1976 (Graber 1980). It should also be noted that a comparison of content across media platforms found that WGN of Chicago featured the greatest number of crime stories on average (2.44 per half hour), compared to the local TV news programs for a small town (.97) or the NBC nightly network newscasts (1.67) during the same time period (Maguire, Sandage and Weatherby 1999).

The Offender

Although local TV news and especially crime dramas overemphasize violent crime, differences between local TV news and crime dramas emerge in regard to the perpetrators of these

[2]This gap may largely be a result of the degree to which crime is a problem in each of these cities; however, crime data for the small town of Quincy, IL is unavailable.

crimes, and specifically with respect to the offender's race. In crime dramas, both blacks and Hispanics tend to be underrepresented in proportion to their actual prevalence as offenders, victims and criminal justice officials (Eschholz, Mallard and Flynn 2004; Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008). In contrast, content analyses of local TV news tend to find that minorities are either equally or even over-represented as offenders. Chiricos and Eschholz (2002) summarize the literature nicely, when they note that content analyses typically find that blacks are shown as offenders more often than whites when looking specifically at violent crime stories covered by local TV news stations. Few of these studies, however, compare TV rates to the racial makeup of the surrounding area, and those that did found mixed results (Gilliam et al. 1996; Dixon and Linz 2002; see also Dixon and Azocar 2006). Chiricos and Eschholz's (2002) own data did not replicate previous research from other major cities: blacks in the Orlando area were not more likely to be shown as suspects relative to actual arrest rates. However, their data did indicate that blacks were more likely to be portrayed in a menacing fashion (e.g., in a mugshot or handcuffed) than whites when shown.

In addition to offenders in crime dramas typically being portrayed as white, they also tend to be middle-upper class (Brown 2001; Soulliere 2003; Eschholz, Mallard and Flynn 2004; Reiner 2006; Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008). This is true not only today but also in dramas from the 1970s (Dominick 1973). In other words, these shows tend to portray offenders as having more resources and coming from a more privileged background than the average offender. That is, crime drama offenders tend to be whiter, wealthier, and even older (Brown 2001) than those whom they portray in real life, and who subsequently appear on local television news programs.

The Motive

When it comes to motivations for offending, content analyses of crime dramas reveal an interesting consistency in their explanations for criminality. In particular, crime dramas often portray murders as carefully planned, often stemming from greed or revenge. As Soulliere points out:

> [T]elevision crime dramas tend to give the impression that most murders are meticulously planned. Indeed, the overemphasis on planned murders on television masks the spontaneity of real-life murder, which is often the result of an argument or dispute or fuelled by alcohol and/or drugs (2003, p. 24).

This focus on planned, "rational" murder was also noted by Dominick thirty years prior:

> The motives for TV crime are plain and easily understandable. Greed seems a primary impetus. Once a crime has been committed, the need for avoiding detection or capture necessitates more crime. Seldom do motives have complex political, psychological, or sociological undertones. Most TV crime is committed by middle class people who simply are not satisfied with what they have and desire more (1973, p. 250).

A separate content analysis found that crimes committed by juveniles specifically were portrayed as commiting murder for "rational choice" reasons more than any other reason (Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008). Offending was considered "rational choice" in nature if it was committed for the thrill of the experience (i.e., killing for the experience or the enjoyment) or in order to prevent exposure of another crime. Similarly, offenders featured on *CSI* and its spin-offs are typically portrayed as "selfish, venal, remorseless people, so no causal explanation of criminality is needed. The idea that there is a social context in which

crime occurs is not an issue or is depicted as a farcical one" (Cavender and Deutsch 2007, p. 78).

This emphasis on individualistic explanations for offending appears to be relatively stable from earlier time periods. Dominick's (1973) content analysis of dramas found that crimes were almost always given an explicit motive. In particular, 32% of crimes shown were motivated by greed, and 31% to avoid detection of another crime. Even during the early days of television, antagonists were overwhelmingly portrayed as professional criminals (in fact, 70% of all "bad guys" in TV dramas from the early 1950s were criminals; Head 1954); given that morality was often clearly defined in these dramas (Lane 2001) and the antagonists were described as professional (i.e., repeat offenders), it appears that individualistic explanations – that is, explanations that focus on the individual rather than society or sociological factors – have always been popular in television shows.

Unfortunately, I was unable to identify any content analyses of local TV news that examined motivations for offending. One rare exception comes from Graber (1980), who found that crime stories printed in *The Chicago Tribune* attributed offending to personal reasons (i.e., "quarrels, greed, and the like") 65% of the time. Another quarter of crime stories were given political differences as the motive for offending, but this was entirely due to heavy coverage of the Patty Hearst case (Graber 1980). Most telling of all is the fact that less than 15% of crime stories provided information on the motivation for the crime at all. In any case, this analysis examined the local newspaper, not local TV news, and is approaching forty years old; as a result, drawing conclusions from these data is questionable at best.

Nonetheless, we might expect that because the framing of crime stories in the news is disproportionately episodic in nature (Iyengar 1991; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000), it is reasonable to expect that individuals are implicitly blamed for the crime in local TV news stories. If crimes were predominantly framed thematically, for example, crime stories would emphasize

sociological explanations such as the role of neighborhoods, school systems, government and police policies, economic conditions, and perhaps even trends in crime rates. Instead, the typical crime story on local TV news gives brief details about the who, what, where and when, but largely neglects the why. As a result, it is unlikely that local TV news emphasizes (at least with any great frequency) sociological explanations for offending.

Moreover, to the extent local TV news disproportionately shows minorities as offenders, (white) viewers should make individualistic attributions of responsibility for crime. Research suggests that black offenders on TV naturally invite dispositional attributions among whites, while white offenders tend to invite more societal attributions of responsibility (Iyengar 1991). In other words, when asked their opinions about the causes of offending, citizens tend to blame "black crime" on individual and personal failings rather than on larger societal problems, such as poverty or bad neighborhoods (see also Peffley and Hurwitz 2007).

The individualistic theories and attributions of criminality portrayed in crime dramas and ostensibly local TV news stand in contrast to the criminological literature on "real world" offenders. For example, sociological explanations of offending are central or critical to social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay 1942), strain theory (Merton 1949; Agnew 1992), labeling theory (Cloward and Ohlin 1960), and more recent biosocial theories of offending (Moffitt 1993). It is generally accepted that the reasons an individual commits crime are numerous and complex: most offenders receive a poor education, become involved in criminality at a young age with a peer group, acquire substance use and abuse issues, and have uneven job histories with few viable employment options (e.g., Loeber and Farrington 2000). In turn, criminal records perpetuate this trajectory, reinforcing relationships with other offenders and making legal employment increasingly difficult. Of course, individual-level differences are important, too: many offenders have low IQs, poor impulse-control and even genetic predispositions to delinquency (Rhee and Waldman 2002). In the end, however,

the modal "real-world" offender is caught up in a tangled web of criminality, particularly compared to the typical offender in a crime drama. Perhaps this is no more evident than in the fact that offenders are overwhelmingly previous (and sometimes repeated) victims of crime themselves (Lauritsen, Sampson and Laub 1991; Jennings, Piquero and Reingle 2012).

The Criminal Justice System

The fourth and final dimension upon which the portrayal of crime in crime dramas is distinctive is the implied efficacy of the criminal justice system. For example, Dominick (1973) found that nearly 90% of all crimes featured in dramas were solved. In contrast, the author reports that the overall clearance rate (i.e., the percent of crimes for which someone was arrested and charged) in 1972 was 23%. More recently, Eschholz et al.'s (2004) content analysis focused on depictions of the police in *Law & Order* and *NYPD Blue*. They found that the clearance rate in these shows was also much higher than reality: the same year the shows aired (1999), the actual clearance rate for violent crimes was 29%; in contrast, the arrest rate in *NYPD Blue* was 78% and the conviction rate was 61% in *Law & Order*.

Interestingly, these shows also depicted the police as committing a number of civil liberties violations, usually in a positive light. That is, civil liberties violations were often portrayed as necessary for officers to bring an offender to justice. The most frequent violation shown was a failure to Mirandize arrestees, but physical abuse of suspects was not uncommon, either (Eschholz, Mallard and Flynn 2004). This aggrandizement of officers' role in society may suggest to viewers that the ends justify the means and, ultimately, the criminal justice system is fair and balanced.[3]

As with motivations for offending, it is unknown to what extent the criminal justice

[3]A closely related and on-going project outside the scope of this dissertation examines just that, by combining a content analysis of police use of force and civil liberties violations in crime dramas with perceptions of innocence, fairness and self-reported media exposure.

system is portrayed as efficacious in local TV news programs. Graber's (1980) analysis of a Chicago-area newspaper revealed that only 46% of crime stories gave any information about the apprehension of suspects at all; of these, 59% indicated that an arrest had been made. Thus, a majority of newspaper stories either implicitly or explicitly indicates the suspect has not been apprehended. Because local newspapers and TV news programs use the same sources for crime stories (i.e., the police department), it is likely that local TV news is quite similar in this respect. In any case, the "good" part of the story from the media's perspective is the crime itself. Since suspects are rarely apprehended immediately, the media typically reports on a crime before the case has been closed. With the exception of extraordinary or sensational crimes, apprehension of a suspect is less dramatic and visually compelling (particularly compared to the drama of filming live from the scene of the crime, with police tape and flashing lights in the background) and, more importantly, old news. Thus, at a minimum, it seems reasonable to suggest that the implied clearance rate in local TV news is lower than that of crime dramas, and perhaps even closer to actual statistics than the impressive numbers put out by fictional police departments.

As should now be clear given the preceding discussion, the portrayal of crime in entertainment media shares some important similarities with, and differences from, crime in the news media and in reality. Table 1 presents a summary of these content differences across local TV news, crime dramas, and actual statistics. It is apparent that while both programs disproportionately emphasize violent crime relative to official statistics, crime dramas are especially skewed in their heavy emphasis on murder. In addition, although both programs emphasize individualistic attributions of responsibility for crime, local TV news does so implicitly (i.e., through the portrayal of offenders as black), whereas characters in crime dramas often give (or are assigned by other) explicit, dispositional explanations for the crime. In addition, it seems likely that crime dramas portray the criminal justice system as more ef-

fective than local TV news does, and certainly portrays the system as more effective than real world statistics show.

[Table 1 About Here]

More importantly, the portrayal of crime and the criminological theories for offending implicitly given by crime dramas have clear implications for viewers' policy attitudes. For viewers, crime is a choice made by bad people who knowingly and willfully commit violent acts. As a result, punishment and incapacitation, rather than prevention or rehabilitation, is the key to successfully addressing crime. In the next section, I discuss in greater detail how the systematic portrayal of crime in crime dramas leads viewers to make specific cognitive appraisals and elicits discrete emotions, thus ultimately impacting policy attitudes.

Attributions

The goal of this chapter is to lay the foundation for a theoretical explanation of how the viewing of crime dramas affects policy attitudes. This goal requires understanding the systematic portrayal of crime and offending in crime dramas in order to hypothesize about the cognitive appraisals viewers should make with respect to crime. In particular, the content analyses reviewed above show that crime tends to be attributed to specific individuals rather than sociological or situational factors (e.g., Soulliere 2003; Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008). Crimes, and notably murders, are motivated by greed, revenge, or to cover up another crime. In other words, crime dramas present crime as a function of dispositional and individualistic (rather than situational) factors, inviting specific, focused attributions of responsibility for crime as a consideration in formulating policy attitudes.

Moreover, it has been demonstrated empirically that attributions of responsibility lead to

increased support for punishment of the responsible party. For example, subjects' increasing perceptions that a party acted on their free will (rather than under duress) correlated with increased punitiveness for wrongdoing, although only among those who were held accountable for their actions (Lerner, Goldberg and Tetlock 1998). With respect to crime, individuals tend to naturally attribute causal responsibility to both individuals and society (Iyengar 1991).

As noted prior, however, important differences in causal attributions emerge when individuals are exposed to a crime story in which the race of the offender is experimentally manipulated (Iyengar 1991). Differences in race and attributions of responsibility for crime also appear in work by Peffley and Hurwitz (2007), who examined racial differences in support for the death penalty. Their survey experiment revealed that whites were more supportive of the death penalty when given a racial rather than a non-racial frame. Furthermore, dispositional (as opposed to structural) attributions of crime strongly predicted whites' support for the death penalty in the racial frame, but not in the non-racial frame or the control condition. This suggests that racial priming led whites to be more supportive of the death penalty, in part because they believed blacks to be personally responsible for the crime.

Clearly, perceptions and attributions of responsibility are far from fixed. The fact that research indicates citizens are naturally ambivalent about the causes of crime, in the sense that they spontaneously attribute responsibility to both society and the individual (Iyengar 1991), suggests that they are susceptible to framing effects. Because crime dramas feature offenders who are disproportionately white, viewers are less likely to *implicitly* attribute individualistic explanations for offending as a function of race (Iyengar 1991; Peffley and Hurwitz 2007). Instead, crime dramas give explicit individualistic explanations for offending, portraying the individual as knowingly and willfully committing the crime. This means that racial attitudes may be less important for crime policy attitudes among regular viewers

of crime dramas, even as they hold more punitive attitudes than non-viewers. More importantly, while both local TV news and crime dramas emphasize individualistic explanations of crime, they do so in very different ways.

Emotional Attributions

It is clear that attributions of responsibility for crime are important for policy attitudes; nonetheless, this relationship can be fleshed out further by incorporating emotional reactions to crime. To illustrate this point, first consider an example: two neighbors have their mailboxes vandalized while they are away at work. Although the neighbors are similar in many respects (e.g., age, gender, income), they have very different reactions to the crime. Neighbor One becomes convinced that a teenager who lives down the street did it, possibly on a dare; in light of this fact Neighbor One becomes quite angry about the crime, particularly given the boy's youth and ostensible cowardice. In contrast, Neighbor Two is not so convinced, particularly after reading about possible gang activity at some of the local schools. Feeling vulnerable by the thought of gangs, and uncertain about who specifically was responsible and why she was targeted, Neighbor Two feels rather fearful after the incident.

What distinguishes the neighbors in this hypothetical story is the way in which the crimes were appraised. Neighbor One felt he knew who had committed the crime, attributed responsibility for it to a specific individual and, feeling certain in this belief, felt in control of the situation. In contrast, Neighbor Two felt uncertain about who had committed the crime and why; having tentatively attributed responsibility for the crime to a group of unknown individuals from one of the local schools, she felt rather vulnerable and out of control in the situation. The end result was that Neighbor One felt quite angry about the crime while Neighbor Two felt anxious and fearful.

Recent research suggests that appraisals, or cognitive assessments, such as those highlighted in the above hypothetical examples do, in fact, lead to distinct emotional outcomes. This stands apart from other theories of emotions, which generally arrange feelings according to their valence (positive or negative; Marcus and MacKuen e.g., 1993). As Lerner and Keltner note, however: "[v]alence-based approaches face one obvious shortcoming... They fail to specify whether different emotions of the same valence differentially influence judgments and choices" (2000, p. 475). And there is a good deal of evidence that shows similarly valenced emotions have different outcomes (Huddy, Feldman and Cassese 2007) and, in some cases, oppositionally valenced emotions have similar outcomes (Lerner and Tiedens 2006)

Smith and Ellsworth (1985) were among the first to propose that emotions are discrete and, rather than being categorized according to valence, are arrayed along six cognitive dimensions of appraisal. Drawing from this, the Appraisal Tendency Framework (ATF) holds that emotions arise as a function of these cognitive appraisals (Lemer and Keltner 2001) and, in turn, have substantive and differential effects on attitudes downstream. What makes the ATF different from other theories of emotions is that it conceptualizes emotions as discrete, rather than arrayed along dimensions of valence. As a result, emotions with similar valence (e.g., fear and anger) can have different effects on judgments, attitudes and behavior. This approach to emotions also explains how emotions of different valences (e.g., anger and happiness) can result in similar behaviors and outcomes (Lerner and Tiedens 2006).

Although Smith and Ellsworth (1985) suggested six different dimensions along which cognitive appraisals are made, feelings of certainty, controllability, and attributions of responsibility are particularly important for understanding punitive policy attitudes (Lerner, Han and Keltner 2007). Specifically, the ATF predicts that an individual will feel anger to the extent she attributes responsibility to a specific individual, believes them to be in control of the situation, and is certain about this attribution (Lerner, Han and Keltner 2007). In

contrast, if an individual attributes responsibility to the situation (e.g., societal problems or bad circumstances), believes no one to be in control of events and/or is uncertain about these appraisals, the ATF predicts feelings of anxiety and fear. In turn, feelings of anger should lead to support for outward, retaliatory actions, whereas anxiety should lead to support for inward, protective actions (Huddy et al. 2005). This approach has substantial support in recent work, as will be outlined in the next section, particularly when it comes to tying emotions to attitudinal outcomes.

It should be noted that although there are stable, individual differences in dispositional emotions, I focus here on emotions that arise from cognitive appraisals of a specific situation. That is, some individuals are simply more prone to anger or anxiety, and these proclivities tend to exhibit similar relationships with policy attitudes as spontaneous emotions (i.e., more dispositionally angry individuals hold more punitive policy attitudes). There is also evidence that "incidental emotions" (i.e., emotions unrelated to a specific judgment or decision) affect risk perceptions, information processing and behavioral tendencies in ways predicted by the ATF (Lerner, Han and Keltner 2007; Lemer and Keltner 2001). Nonetheless, the focus in this study is strictly on "integral emotions" (Lerner, Han and Keltner 2007), or emotions that arise from cognitive appraisals of a given situation.

Anger, Fear and Crime

A great deal of ink has been spilled over the relationship between emotions, particularly fear of crime, and their relationship to public opinion and punitiveness. Despite such intense interest by the field, the results have been rather mixed (Eschholz 1997). For example, survey data indicates that fear of crime fails to predict attitudes toward the goals of prison, support for capital punishment, and support for tax dollars being used for programs versus

prisons (Sims and Johnston 2004). However, fear of crime does appear to predict willingness to give up basic civil liberties. For example, experiments that induced fear showed that anxious individuals tend to perceive risks as greater than their less anxious counterparts (Lerner et al. 2003). In fact, individuals who were induced to be anxious were not only more likely to have exaggerated risk assessments, but were also more supportive of taking specific measures to increase safety, indicating that anxiety may affect policy attitudes on crime, but not through increased punitiveness *per se*.

Other evidence for the protective role of anxiety in policy attitudes comes from research on attitudes toward terrorism and foreign policy. Specifically, residents near New York City who reported higher levels of anxiety after 9/11 were found to be less supportive of military action and involvement overseas, and were also more disapproving of Bush's handling of the situation (Huddy et al. 2005). A few years later, individuals who continued to feel anxiety about the attacks were less supportive of the War in Iraq (Huddy, Feldman and Cassese 2007). Thus, one reason why the literature on fear may be so muddled is that the crime policies it is supposed to predict are not cleanly distinguished as to whether they are punitive or preventative. The issue becomes more complicated when we consider the fact that different people often view the same policy as having different goals. For example, is incarceration meant to punish, deter or rehabilitate? When one indicates support for increased spending on crime, would they prefer their tax dollars go to hiring more police officers, building more prisons, or increasing community policing programs?

Despite being generally neglected by criminologists, the emotions literature suggests that anger should have more explanatory power in predicting punitive policy attitudes than fear. For instance, whereas anxiety has been found to increase risk perceptions and decrease support for war, anger is associated with the opposite effects: it decreases risk perceptions and increases support for war (Huddy, Feldman and Cassese 2007). Petersen (2010) found

that both anxiety and anger were associated with support for more punitive crime policies, although the effect of anger was much larger. Similarly, Johnson (2009) also found significant relationships between fear, anger and punitive policy attitudes, but the effect of anger was nearly twice as large as that of fear. This is perhaps not surprising, given that anger and fear are often correlated. Nevertheless, it is clear that these emotions have "distinct effects" (Huddy, Feldman and Cassese 2007): whereas fear tends to increase support for protective policies, anger tends to do the opposite, by increasing support for punitive actions.

One shortcoming as noted by Lambert and colleagues (2010) is that most studies examining the relationship between anger, anxiety and attitudes rely on survey data. Although revealing, such designs cannot disentangle the true relationship between emotions and attitudes given that previous research suggests that, for instance, angry individuals tend to also be authoritarian and support more punitive policies (Lambert et al. 2010). Fortunately, experimental designs confirm the general pattern of findings previously discussed. For instance, randomly assigning subjects to either a condition in which they were reminded of 9/11 or a control group revealed that 9/11 memories significantly increased both anger and anxiety. Moreover, anger alone mediated the effect of increased support for the president and other attitudes. Perhaps the most provocative finding in this series of experiments was that there was no change in conservatism. Emotions, rather than shifts in pre-existing political orientations, were responsible for the changes in attitudes exhibited (Lambert et al. 2010).

Given the relationship between cognitive appraisals, emotions and attitudes, it is now possible to link this to the content of crime dramas. In conjunction with the content analysis in Chapter 5, prior analyses reveal a modal or typical crime drama storyline, which follows the police as they whittle down a short list of murder suspects until one is left standing. In the end, criminal justice officials overwhelmingly "get their man" - either by arresting and/or prosecuting him. Rarely do these crime dramas leave viewers with any doubt that

justice was served, and served well.

Moreover, the motivations for offending depicted in these shows are overly simplistic: criminals are bad people who choose to do bad things. In the language of the ATF, entertainment media attribute responsibility for crime unambiguously to a specific individual, leaving viewers feeling certain about who is responsible and increasing perceptions that the offender is highly in control of the situation. This kind of frame clearly invites feelings of certainty, particularly in contrast to what more sociological explanations for criminality might suggest to viewers. That is, the idea that criminality is a function of multiple causes such as parenting styles, impoverished and understaffed schools, bad neighborhoods, economic circumstances, drug addiction, and so on makes it difficult to identify who or *what* is responsible for crime. At a minimum, it is difficult to point to any single, underlying cause for crime. In contrast to the criminological theories offered by crime dramas, sociological explanations are complicated, and implicate that any number of people, places, and circumstances (including the viewers themselves) are to blame.

In regard to crime dramas, storylines that provide clear and simple reasons for offending, portray the offender as highly self-controlled, and implicate unambiguous attributions of responsibility, should lead to feelings of anger. The strong emphasis on a universally condemned crime (i.e., murder) generally leaves little room for ambiguity with respect to blame (in contrast to, for example, drug use or other "victimless" crimes). Similarly, the tendency to conclude crime dramas with the arrest and incarceration of the guilty person leaves viewers feeling certain about these appraisals - once again, justice is served.

In sum, appraisals of events along a series of cognitive dimensions lead to differential emotions. Of particular interest from the perspective of crime policy is anger and anxiety. Although often correlated, fear tends to increase perceptions of risk and support for protective policies and anger decreases risk perceptions and increases support for punitive

actions. Given the inherent emotional nature of drama as well as the appraisals that are invited by the systematic ways in which crime is fictionalized, we should expect emotions to play an important role in explaining policy attitudes toward crime. In particular, the content of crime dramas is such that we should expect viewers to make appraisals spurred by anger. That is, the motivations for offending and portrayal of a disproportionately efficacious criminal justice system invite appraisals of certainty, controllability, and attributions of dispositional responsibility. In turn, these appraisals should increase anger among viewers, and thus increase support for more punitive policies.

Theoretical Implications

To this point, the discussion has focused generally on the ways in which media affect policy attitudes and how crime dramas both fit in with and diverge from this literature. Of greatest interest is how crime is portrayed in crime dramas, and thus how these fictionalized accounts might affect attitudes both at the individual and aggregate level in substantive ways. This section more explicitly lays out the theoretical implications for policy attitudes as a direct, consumptive function of how crime is portrayed in crime dramas. In particular, I argue that crime dramas support punitiveness through their emphasis on highly controlled offenders, dispositional explanations for criminality and the portrayal of an effective criminal justice system. By displaying crime in this manner, crime dramas invite perceptions of offender controllability, attributions of responsibility and feelings of certainty, emotional appraisals (i.e., anger), and ultimately support for punitive, status quo policies. To make this argument graphically, Figure 1 outlines the relationship between these theoretical concepts.

[Figure 1 About Here]

To put it in more descriptive terms, one of the ways in which crime is presented by crime dramas is that there are clearly good guys (cops) and bad guys (criminals); the good guys usually win, the bad guys go to prison. Even at this basic, fundamental level, we should see different opinions among viewers of crime dramas relative to their non-viewing counterparts. That is, the criminal world to which viewers are exposed reveals that criminals are everywhere, but also that the cops are highly successful at solving crimes. In this world, crimes are committed by known offenders, but their actions are controllable through incarceration. Thus, the status quo is functional and successful in combating crime.

In addition, offenders are portrayed as committing crimes for revenge, greed, thrills, or other cold and calculated reasons. As a result, crime dramas invite very clear attributions of responsibilities: "bad people" commit crime. The logical extension of this attribution (i.e., that bad individuals are responsible for crime) is a punitive approach to dealing with criminality. That is, the perception that dispositional attributes are to blame for criminality suggests that social programs would have little effect. After all, why would education, job training, or life skills help someone who has turned his or her back on society? Individualism emphasizes the myth that anyone who wants to get ahead in life can, and all it takes is some elbow grease: society has not failed the individual - the individual has failed society.

As noted, the way in which crime is portrayed in crime dramas should also impact emotional appraisals. Although the criminological literature has largely focused on fear of crime, there is not much reason to suspect that the portrayal of crime in crime dramas would produce such emotions. On a superficial level, given the disproportionately high clearance rate of police in these shows and the emphasis on justice (Sparks 1992), we should not expect viewers to experience much anxiety. Theoretically, we should not expect fictionalized accounts of crime to induce fear in its viewers due to the nature of its portrayal. As previously stated, crime dramas portray crime as being committed by known offenders and for known,

dispositional-based reasons. Moreover, the current criminal justice system is presented as an efficacious response to the problem. In other words, crime dramas elicit feelings of responsibility, certainty and perceptions of control, appraisals that should lead to anger about crime, not fear.

In turn, appraisals of crime and the causes of criminality that produce anger should bolster punitive policy attitudes. Although policies that are directly linked to crime dramas are the most likely candidate for seeing differences in viewers versus non-viewers, it would not be surprising to see punitiveness spread to other crime policies not traditionally featured. In particular, given the heavy emphasis on murder and incarceration, we might expect crime dramas to affect attitudes toward capital punishment and incarceration as a response to crime especially. However, we might also expect crime dramas to boost support for other traditionally punitive policies, such as mandatory minimums and trying juvenile offenders as adults. This leads to the following hypotheses:

> **H1**: Regular exposure to crime dramas invites specific cognitive appraisals and, in particular, individualistic attributions of responsibility. That is, viewers of crime dramas should be more likely than non-viewers to attribute criminality to dispositional and individual factors (e.g., personality defects and greed) and to perceive offenders as in control of their actions (**H1a**). In addition, viewers of crime dramas should feel more certain about the causes of crime and who is responsible for the crime (**H1b**).

> **H2**: The cognitive appraisals elicited by crime dramas should be associated with particular emotions. Because crimes in crime dramas are committed by known offenders ("bad" people) for known reasons, and crime is controllable through arrest and incarceration, viewers should feel more anger about crime

than non-viewers (**H2a**). In contrast, because the police are portrayed as highly efficacious and criminals are frequently caught in crime dramas, there should be no significant differences in fear of crime between viewers and non-viewers (**H2b**).

H3: The cognitive appraisals invited by crime dramas should affect viewers' policy attitudes, in that viewers of crime dramas should exhibit greater support for punitive policies than non-viewers (**H3a**). This greater punitiveness should arise as a function of cognitive appraisals (**H3b**), with this relationship (partially) mediated through anger (**H3c**).

H4: Because crime dramas disproportionately show offenders as white, racial attitudes should be less important for punitiveness among regular viewers of crime dramas relative to non-viewers. Specifically, the relationship between racial attitudes and punitiveness should be weaker among viewers relative to non-viewers.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the commonalities of crime dramas, comparing and contrasting their content with local TV news and actual statistics, in particular with respect to their emphasis on violent crime, individual attributions of responsibility, and an efficacious criminal justice system. In turn, the systematic portrayal of crime and offending in crime dramas was aligned with theories of emotions that emphasize cognitive appraisals in order to generate theoretical expectations: individual attributions of responsibility in conjunction with feelings of certainty about offenders should lead to anger among viewers and ultimately support for punitive, retributive crime policies. What remains to be seen, however, is the extent to which these shows are viewed by the public, and thus the extent to which they

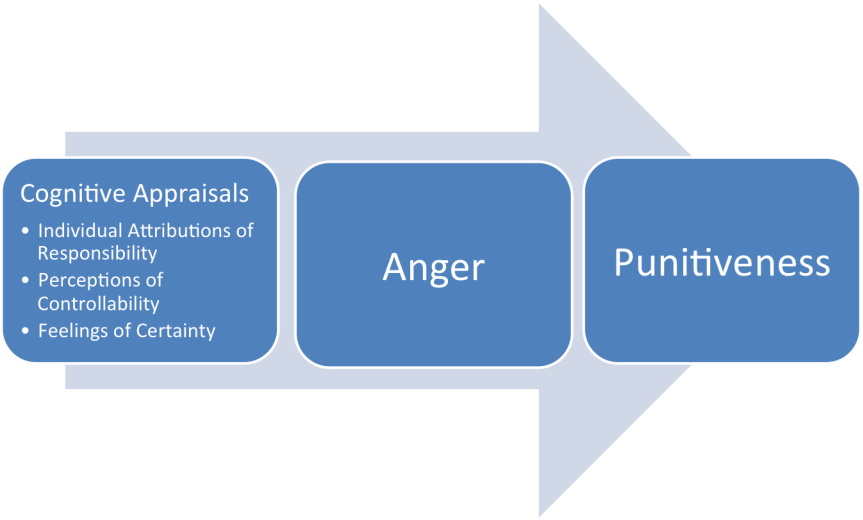
potentially impact public opinion, both at the individual level and in the aggregate. The latter question will be tackled first in Chapter 3, which examines the relationship between the popularity of crime dramas and support for punitive policies from 1965 to 2010.

Table 2.1: Crime in the News and in Crime Dramas

	Crime Dramas	Local TV News	Crime Statistics[4]
Crime Type			
Violent Crime	72% (LV, 2001)[5]		15% (LV, 2001)
		65% (Chicago, 1997)[6]	24% (Chicago, 1997)
Murder	64% (LV, 2001)	?	.26% (LV, 2001)
	79, 92% (NY, 2001)[7]	?	.22% (NY, 2001)
Offender Race (% Black)			
Murder	6% (LV, 2001)	.54 (B:W ratio, LA, 1995-1997)[8]	49% (National, 2001)
Violent Crimes	14, 43% (NY, 2001)	.33 - 2.5 (B:W ratio, various)[9]	22% (National, 2006)
All Crimes	16, 38% (NY, 2001)	.28 to 1.7 (B:W ratio, various)	51% (NY, 2001)
Offender Age	75% 25 and older[10]		45% 25 and older (national)
	(NY, Baltimore)		
Motivations	Individual	Individual	Individual & Sociological
	(greed; thrill; cover up crime)	(racial "crime script")	
	24, 28% argument (NY, 2001)	?	42% argument (NY, 2001)[11]
Clearance Rate			
1972	90% (various)[12]	?	23%
1999	78% (NY)	?	29% (national)
		59% (NY, murder only)	

[4]All official data except where noted otherwise comes from the FBI and is available online at `http://www.ucrdatatool.gov/`.
[5]All data from (fictional) Las Vegas in 2001 comes from Deutsch and Cavender (2008).
[6]All data from (fictional) Chicago in 1997 comes from Maguire, Sandage and Weatherby (1999).
[7]All data from (fictional) New York in 2001 comes from Eschholz, Mallard and Flynn (2004).
[8]Data from (Dixon and Linz 2000).
[9]Data drawn from (Chiricos and Eschholz 2002).
[10]Age data comes from Brown (2001).
[11]Data comes from the NYPD, as reported in Pring (2013).
[12]Data come from Dominick (1973).

Figure 2.1: A Media-Based Theory of Emotional Punitiveness



Chapter 3

An Analysis of Viewership Over Time

Introduction

This dissertation was motivated by a simple question: why do Americans continue to hold punitive policies even as crime rates have declined? A satisfactory answer to this question requires an analysis of public attitudes *over time*. If crime dramas do, in fact, drive punitive attitudes towards crime and punishment, not only should crime drama viewership be linked to punitive attitudes at any point in time among individuals, but the popularity of crime drama among the public as a whole should be connected to punitive public opinion in the aggregate longitudinally. This chapter addresses that question directly, using Nielsen ratings data and public opinion data on crime from 1965 to 2010.

Predictors of Aggregate Punitiveness

Previous empirical research on the aggregate long-term predictors of opinion with respect to crime is rare, to say the least. Likely one reason for this scarcity of studies is the difficulty

in finding adequate data: only a few questions concerning attitudes toward crime have been asked consistently over a sufficient period of time. Moreover, to the extent that scholars have empirically analyzed public opinion on crime over time[1], they have employed it as an independent variable, focusing primarily on how public opinion affects policy and political outcomes, such as incarceration rates (Enns 2010), implementation of the death penalty (Jacobs and Carmichael 2002), death sentences (McCann 2008), and federal criminal justice policy more generally (Nicholson-Crotty, Peterson and Ramirez 2009). Nonetheless, a few exceptions emerge, having focused on the role of objective factors such as crime rates, race, and the media in public perceptions and policy attitudes.

Objective Factors

Perhaps the most obvious starting point for exploring aggregate trends in punitive public opinion is to assess how closely they track increases and decreases in actual crime. As Page and Shapiro (2010) noted twenty years ago, there is at least a *prima facie* relationship between punitiveness and crime rates: as crime increased from the 1960s until the early 1990s, punitiveness was also on the rise. Nonetheless, the empirical results are rather mixed in this regard.

On one hand, studies show that crime rates predict the public's perception of crime as an issue. For example, there was a dramatic increase in naming crime as the "Most Important Problem" in the early 1990s. Analysis of this trend revealed that crime rates only accounted for a small proportion (9%) of the variance in this increase (Lowry, Nio and Leitner 2003). There are some problems with the analysis, however, that raises questions about the accuracy of this non-finding. Specifically, the analysis employed OLS regression, which is not only inefficient but also, and more seriously, associated with an increased likelihood of falsely

[1]For a discussion of trends, see Warr (1995) and Cullen, Fisher and Applegate (2000).

rejecting the null hypothesis of no relationship between trends over time. More appropriately, Gonzenbach (1992) used an Auto-Regressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) model to analyze agenda setting in the domain of crime and public opinion, specifically toward the issue of illicit drugs. Using the same "Most Important Problem" series as Lowry, Nio and Leitner (2003), he found that neither the media nor presidential attention to drugs predicted public opinion on crime. Instead, only actual events, as measured by the number of cocaine-related emergency room admissions, significantly predicted the salience of drug issues for the public. There appears to be a direct connection between crime rates and the perception of crime as a major problem. However, it is important to note that these studies examine the agenda setting effect of the media, and its role in heightening attention to crime, rather than punitiveness directly. That is, these researchers seek to answer whether increasing media emphasis on crime leads to increased public concern about it, rather than increased support for certain policies.

To understand the link between crime rates and policy attitudes, the only available evidence comes from studies of individuals, and these are relatively inconclusive (for an exception, see Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydstun (2008), discussed below). For example, Hipp (2007) found that perceptions of local crime rates are correlated with actual crime rates, but Tyler and Weber (1982) found that perceptions (of local crime rates) were uncorrelated with policy attitudes. More recently, perceptions of increasing crime have been found to be correlated with taking a punitive approach to dealing with crime generally, but not support for the death penalty specifically (Unnever and Cullen 2010). Looking at actual crime rates tells an equally inconsistent story: For instance, Soss and colleagues (2003) found a positive correlation between actual violent crime and punitiveness among white Americans. A different story is revealed when respondents are split by race, however: Percival (2010) found that perceptions of the courts were unrelated to violent crime rates among whites, but

exhibited a positive and significant relationship with attitudes among minorities. Thus, it appears that whites in particular rely on considerations other than actual crime statistics.

Certainly there is little to no evidence that actual victimization is correlated with punitiveness. Early surveys consistently showed that those who had been personally victimized or experienced greater levels of fear were no more or less likely to support punitive crime policies (Taylor, Scheppele and Stinchcombe 1979; Tyler and Weber 1982). More recent analyses tell a similar story: Costelloe, Chiricos and Gertz (2009) found that recent victimization was uncorrelated with punitiveness. In a recent review of the literature, Unnever and colleagues (2007) concluded that there was no convincing evidence that victimization leads to punitiveness.[2]

Taken together, this suggests that crime rates might increase the salience of crime for the public, but are unlikely to affect the direction of attitudes (i.e., punitiveness). Lowry, Nio and Leitner (2003) provide a tentative explanation for this disjuncture when they note that "crime affects millions of people directly, but network TV crime news affects many more millions of people indirectly... [the media] has indeed become the American public's virtual crime reality as it influences the public fear agenda" (p. 72). I, too, argue that the media is the missing link between reality and attitudes, although my focus is on entertainment media. As Chapter 1 noted, most citizens get their information about crime from the media rather than from personal experience. Thus, crime rates should affect policy attitudes only to the extent that the media accurately reflects these realities. Moreover, as Chapter 2 outlined, this is not the case: the news and crime dramas exaggerate the prevalance of violent crime, fail to place crimes in context, and both distort the racial demographic of offenders, albeit in opposite directions.

[2]This conforms with the research on self-interest more generally, which reveals weak relationships between personal impact or experience and policy attitudes (Sears and Funk 1991).

Nonetheless, there are still other objective factors that may be important for punitiveness. In particular, a relatively small branch of research suggests that factors such as the economy affect punitiveness, although not through the direct link of crime. Instead, frustration from real world events indirectly related to crime increases support for punitive policies. More specifically, this argument holds that economic insecurities such as job loss cause feelings of frustration and anger. Those who are affected by such insecurities then need a place to take out their frustrations, for which criminals provide a convenient and universally unpopular target. There is some evidence that economic insecurity correlates with punitive attitudes at the individual level (Costelloe, Chiricos and Gertz 2009). In a similar vein, Hogan and colleagues (2005) found that economic insecurities exacerbate punitiveness, but only among certain subgroups - in particular, white males (Hogan, Chiricos and Gertz 2005; Johnson 2001). Despite this body of work, it remains unclear to what extent this relationship persists in the aggregate, as I was unable to identify any studies that address this question over time. Thus it will be important to control for economic factors that could potentially explain changes in punitiveness over time.

Race

Unlike crime rates, race (in terms of both the citizens' race and their racial attitudes) is a consistently important predictor of punitiveness. Not only are whites as a group typically more punitive than non-whites, but also there is variation within this group, such that more racially antagonistic whites are more punitive than racially liberal whites (e.g., Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Peffley and Hurwitz 2007; Soss, Langbein and Metelko 2003; Unnever and Cullen 2010). Much of this literature was outlined in Chapter 1, which noted that the perception of crime as being predominantly committed by violent blacks - in conjunction

with the reality that blacks are disproportionately arrested and serving time in prison - means that racial attitudes are closely intertwined with crime policy attitudes.

Individual-level analyses show that the racial context matters, as well. For example, Soss et al.'s (2003) analysis revealed that anti-black prejudice was correlated with support for the death penalty, and that this effect was even stronger among respondents in counties with a greater number of blacks. Similarly, Percival (2010) found that white respondents in states with a higher percent of black prisoners were more likely to perceive the courts as not harsh enough on criminals. Thus, it is possible that as the proportion of blacks in a county increases, the aggregate distribution of opinion shifts toward the punitive end of the spectrum.

Unfortunately, there is no annual measure of either the proportion of blacks in the United States or racial attitudes during the time period of interest. In regard to the former, there are annual estimates courtesy of the Census Bureau beginning in 1990; prior to this time period, only the dicennial census provides estimates of the racial makeup of the country. Because the following analysis is conducted using annual data, this is an insufficient number of data points to conduct statistical tests with any semblance of power. Nonetheless, a brief examination of this data makes it clear that the proportion of blacks has remained relatively stable over time, fluctuating between 11 and 14% from 1960 to 2010. Considering that Hispanics have made up a large proportion of the population growth over time (Passel and Cohn 2008), this means that the ratio of whites to blacks has actually decreased. That is, although the proportion of blacks in the U.S. has remained stable overall, their numbers have actually increased relative to whites as a group.

With respect to racial attitudes, it is unlikely that a suitable indicator can be identified over time. Not only have stereotypes of blacks evolved over time (Fiske et al. 2002), but also whites have come to accept the norm of egalitarianism (Mendelberg 2001), which means

that older measures of racial attitudes have become increasingly unreliable over time. It is also important to keep in mind that racial considerations are largely relevant for whites, a steadily shrinking proportion of the population. Thus, even if we assume that whites are as racially antagonistic today as they were in the 1960s, their shrinking numbers with respect to the population means that racial attitudes are unlikely to account for the increase in punitiveness over time.

The Media

Much like crime rates and race, little work has examined the relationship over time between the media on one hand, and public opinion as a dependent variable, on the other. What exists serves to bolster the individual-level findings: the media is a crucial component of public opinion. As noted above, for instance, Lowry and colleagues (2003) compared the relative explanatory power of crime rates, relative to "TV variables", operationalized as the length, placement and number of stories about crime on network news programs, in predicting policy attitudes over several weeks in 1993 and 1994. Whereas crime rates significantly accounted for 9% of the variance in the jump crime exhibited as the "Most Important Problem" during this time period, the TV variables accounted for 34% of the variance by comparison.[3]

More recently, Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydstun (2008) directly examined predictors of punitiveness by analyzing the role of media framing in aggregate changes of support for the death penalty. These authors argued that over the last decade, the media has predominantly framed the death penalty debate in terms of innocence by highlighting the now hundreds of

[3]However, it is worth reiterating that Gonzenbach's (1992) study of the media and the salience of drugs failed to turn up any significant media effects. One possibility for these discrepant findings might be the dependent variable used; the open-ended question format of Gallup's Most Important Problem series allows for rich data, but does not provide insight on the respondents' frame of reference. In other words, many individuals may cite crime as the most important problem, although drugs are a component of this concern.

men exonerated from death row.[4] Using quarterly data on homicides and content analyses of news media tone (positive or negative) from 1976 to 2006, their analyses revealed that while neither predicted changes in attitudes toward the death penalty, both predicted a long-run equilibrium with public opinion. In other words, if media tone became more negative or the number of homicides increased, public opinion eventually responded by becoming more supportive of punitive policies. Moreover, the maximal effect of media tone was virtually identical to the effect of changes in homicides over time.

All in all, there is very little work with respect to public opinion on crime over time. Crime rates certainly appear to affect the salience of crime, and possibly punitiveness, as well. Other factors that are important at the individual-level, such as racial animus and economic insecurities, may play a role in the aggregate, but this remains an unanswered empirical question. And finally, previous work suggests that media coverage affects attitudes toward the death penalty, bolstering the results from analyses of survey data. In the present analysis, I also argue for the role of the media in explaining aggregate punitiveness, but focus instead on the popularity of entertainment media. In particular, I hypothesize that as the proportion of the population watching crime dramas increases, support for punitive crime policies should increase overall **H3**. To test this, I employ time series methods to examine the relative explanatory power of crime dramas relative to other predictors of punitiveness over time.

Measuring Punitiveness

In the models presented below, punitiveness is operationalized in two ways, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. The first comes from Stimson's policy-specific moods,

[4]See `http://www.innocenceproject.org/`.

available on the Policy Agendas website.[5] Policy-specific moods are estimated by first coding all available public opinion series into one or more[6] of several policy areas (e.g., the environment, health, crime), then using Stimson's (1991) dyad ratios algorithm to estimate a single series that takes advantage of both variation within series and covariation across series over time. The resulting measure ranges from 0 to 100, with higher numbers indicating greater aggregate liberalism within a policy area.

I model series 1210, which focuses specifically on attitudes toward sentencing and the rights of offenders. This was chosen as opposed to the "major topic" measure of crime mood (series 1200), which captures attitudes toward "law, crime and family issues". In addition to questions about perceptions of the court, attitudes toward the death penalty and preferences toward the rights of the accused, this major topic measure also includes several questions regarding gun control, spending preferences (including one that asks about spending toward illegal immigration), and a single question each on urban unrest and gay marriage.[7] In addition to some of these latter questions being outside the domain of domestic crime policy, the inclusion of attitudes about gun control introduces an undesirable complexity to the measure. Analyses show that attitudes toward gun control have been essentially constant over time (Smith 1984; Page and Shapiro 2010) and are distinct from general policy attitudes on crime (Wolpert and Gimpel 1998)[8], and thus a measure that excludes these questions comes

[5]This data is publicly available online at `http://www.policyagendas.org/`.

[6]About one-quarter of the series coded fell into two or more categories (Atkinson et al. 2011).

[7]This series was included because the question wording speaks directly to legal issues: "Do you think gay or lesbian couples, in other words, homosexual couples, should be legally permitted to adopt children?" Similarly, the question about urban unrest asks, "There is much discussion about the best way to deal with the problem of urban un-rest and rioting. Some say it is more important to use all available force to maintain law and order no matter what results. Others say it is more important to correct the problems of poverty and unemployment that give rise to the disturbances. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought very much about this?"

[8]It is also telling that six of the twelve questions gauging gun control attitudes have factor loadings of .35 or less on the crime mood (1200) indicator, suggesting attitudes toward gun control do not load especially well on a more general measure of law and crime preferences.

closer to measuring punitiveness as it has been conceptualized here. The exact questions and question wording used in compiling the measure of crime mood (1210) can be found in Appendix A. This measure was recoded so that higher numbers indicate increased conservatism within the policy domain of crime, and is displayed in Figure 1. This trend shows that punitiveness steadily climbed until the 1980s and 1990s, during which it was relatively stable, and has since begun to decline. Nonetheless, punitiveness remains about ten points higher than when the series began, despite crime rates that are equivalent to those in the 1960s.

[Figure 1 About Here]

This measure has the advantage of incorporating several aspects of public opinion about crime. The disadvantage, however, is that none of these questions span the entire time period. In particular, the crime mood measure captures attitudes toward the death penalty in some periods, the rights of the accused or perceptions of the courts in other periods, and varying combinations of these attitudes in still others. The argument is that altogether, these attitudes tap the same underlying construct of policy preferences. However, scholars of public opinion have suggested that attitudes toward crime are more nuanced than generally believed (Cullen, Fisher and Applegate 2000; Warr 1995). To put it more succinctly, just as attitudes toward gun control are largely distinct from other crime policy attitudes, it may also be the case that attitudes toward sentencing policies, juveniles, drugs and other aspects of the criminal justice system are formulated using separate and distinct considerations.[9] Because this indicator of punitiveness is comprised of different series at different time periods, crime mood could change over time purely because of changes in the components of the measure, rather than any real change in policy preferences. Thus, it would be more convincing if

[9]Again, a point I revisit in Chapter 4.

attitudes toward a single policy could also be predicted over this same time period.

The only option in this regard is to examine attitudes toward the death penalty, as other policy attitudes have neither been measured for as many years nor as consistently as attitudes on capital punishment. The very reason such a lengthy series exists for this policy is also one of its limitations: the death penalty is a highly salient, well-known policy. Unlike other aspects of the system (e.g., drug courts, intermediate sanctions, etc.), some of which can be downright mundane (e.g., plea bargaining) the death penalty elicits strong attitudes from the public informed by not only racial but also moral and religious considerations. These limitations with respect to generalizing attitudes about the death penalty to other crime policies should be kept in mind when considering the results.

At the same time, there is also a theoretical advantage to this measure, in that crime dramas disproportionately emphasize murder, the only crime for which offenders have been sentenced to death in the modern era (i.e., since the reinstatement of capital punishment in *Gregg v. Georgia* 1976). Not only is violent crime portrayed in a nearly inverse relationship to actual crime statistics, but also murder is consistently the most committed crime on crime dramas, comprising anywhere from 63 to 92% of crimes in prior content analyses (Brown 2001; Deutsch and Cavender 2008; Eschholz, Mallard and Flynn 2004; Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008; Soulliere 2003). In this respect, then, the death penalty is a good policy with which to test whether the popularity of crime dramas explains, in part, the high levels of punitiveness found in the American public.

Most of the data for this series comes from Gallup, which has measured public support for the death penalty nearly every year from 1965 to 2010.[10] These surveys were asked at different time periods each year (as early as January and as late as October). Given that the TV season typically begins in the fall (late September or October), public opinion for a given

[10]See Appendix A for details on data availability and sources.

year is always measured prior to or at the very beginning of the next season.[11] Specifically, the question asks respondents: "Are you in favor of the death penalty for a person convicted of murder?" Thus, the proportion of citizens saying they favor the death penalty for murder is the dependent variable for this analysis. There were several years (1972, 1985, 1988, 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2006), in which Gallup fielded the question twice. In two of these years, the question was asked once with a full sample and once with a half sample (2001 and 2006); in these instances, the full sample numbers were used. Because Gallup does not make the individual data publicly available, an average of the two aggregate sample responses were used for the remaining years. In all but two years (1972 and 2003), the difference in support and opposition between the two within-year samples is within the standard Gallup margin of error (+/- 4%).[12]

The dramatic change in 1972 is almost certainly due to the decision in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972). In this landmark case, the five-justice per curium decision held that the death penalty as currently applied violated the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the 8th Amendment. The public, in response to what was perceived as legal activism by a liberal court, became more supportive of capital punishment (Bohm 2003). Not surprisingly, then, the data indicates a structural break during this time period (see below). As a result, the pre-Furman distribution of opinion was used for the year 1972, and an intervention dummy variable was created to capture the change in opinion from 1972 to 1973 as a result of this court decision.

For the years in which Gallup did not ask their respondents about attitudes toward the death penalty, data was taken from Ipoll, an archive of survey questions and responses from every major US polling firm, which is available online via subscription through the Roper

[11] In other words, public opinion is measured either during the second half or after that year's ratings.
[12] See `http://www.gallup.com/poll/101872/How-does-Gallup-polling-work.aspx`.

Center. Most of the remaining data comes from the General Social Survey (GSS), which asks, "Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?" in all but four of the years missed by Gallup: 1968, 1970, 1992 and 1997. Fortunately, *ABC News* and *The Washington Post* used this exact question wording to gauge support for the death penalty in 1992, as did the Princeton Survey Research Associates and *Newsweek* in 1997.[13] However, for 1968 and 1970, no sufficiently analogous question was asked, and thus mean imputation using the distribution of opinions from the years before and after the missing data points was used.[14] [15] Figure 2 displays the trends in both support and opposition to capital punishment over time. Much like the measure of crime mood, support (opposition) for the death penalty increased (decreased) until its peak in the mid-1990s, at which point the trend reversed; nonetheless, support remains about 20 points higher than the beginning of the series altogether.[16]

[Figure 2 About Here]

Gallup's question wording, not surprising for scholars of public opinion, tends to find slightly greater support for the death penalty than the GSS due to the one-sided nature of the question wording. In particular, respondents tend to exhibit acquiescence bias (Bishop,

[13]The one difference is that both organizations recorded the voluntarily answer of "it depends", rather than requesting respondents choose a response option or recording "don't know".

[14]In 1968, it appears that no major survey organization asked for attitudes toward the death penalty. In 1970, Virginia Slims commissioned a survey a several thousand men and women, asking, among other things: "Do you favor capital punishment (the death penalty), or do you oppose it?" Only the aggregate data is available and it is split by men and women; nonetheless, assuming a 50/50 split in terms of gender and taking the average of opinion doesn't change the results.

[15]It is worth emphasizing that despite potential weaknesses in this measurement strategy, measurement error in the dependent variable is absorbed by the error term and decreases the power of statistical tests (see, for example, Kennedy 1998). As a result, any hypothesis tests employing this measure as a dependent variable are more conservative, making it more difficult to reject the null.

[16]In fact, the two differenced trends exhibit a decently moderate correlation (r = .45), simply because questions about the death penalty make up approximately half of the items used in estimating the crime specific policy mood.

Oldendick and Tuchfarber 1982), and thus indicate greater support for whichever side is presented (in this case, favoring the death penalty). For example, in 1994, Gallup found 80% in favor of the death penalty and 16% opposed, while the GSS found 74% in favor and 20% opposed. Similarly, in 1991, Gallup found 75% in favor and 18% opposed; the GSS found 72% in favor and 22% opposed. However, this is not always the case: in 1986 the GSS found 71% favoring the death penalty and 24% opposing it, compared to Gallup's 70% in favor and 22% opposed. This would be cause for concern if the trend predominantly drew from Gallup in the first half of the series and from the GSS in the second half (or vice versa); fortunately, the data is taken from both sources over the entire length of the series, and thus does not systematically inflate or deflate support.

Measuring Viewership of Crime Dramas

With dependent variables in hand, I turn to the measurement of the primary independent variable of interest: viewership of crime dramas over time. The data for this variable comes from the Nielsen Company, which collects information on who is watching what and when. The data is collected primarily by connecting a device to televisions in a random sample of U.S. households, which records what is being watched, and sends this information back to Nielsen nightly. A separate device has buttons which individual members of the household are asked to press whenever they start and stop watching television. The measure most commonly reported by Nielsen and others is program ratings, which indicate what percent of all television-equipped households are tuned into a given show. Data on the thirty most popular shows from 1965 to 2007 based on program ratings was taken from Lackmann (2003) and Brooks and Marsh (2007). Data for the remaining three years was taken from Nielsen

Media releases that were published online.[17]

Although ratings are often thought of in the context of cancellations and renewal decisions as well as advertising price points, this data also provides unique insight into the popularity of crime dramas over time. An ideal indicator of crime drama viewership would capture the ratings for all crime dramas on television within a year. This, unfortunately, is impossible. Even if collecting the data for all crime dramas outside of the top thirty shows within each year was not prohibitively expensive, Nielsen does not release individual-level data. The lack of access to individual data prevents a determination of the extent to which audiences for crime dramas overlap. In other words, simply adding up the market share or program ratings for all crime dramas on television within each year is insufficient, as there is no way to know what proportion of these audiences are repeated across shows (i.e., what proportion of citizens watch multiple crime dramas).[18]

As a result, the top rated crime drama within each year is used as an indicator of the popularity of crime dramas within that year. I define a crime drama as any drama in which the plot typically involves the commission of a crime, and follows criminal justice officials in their attempt to solve the crime and bring the offender to justice.[19] Annual ratings actually span two calendar years; as a result, the ratings data for each year is the season that ended that year (e.g., ratings data for 1965 captures the October 1964 to April 1965 TV season).

[17]Data for 2008 is from `http://www.tv.com/news/american-idol-tops-most-watched-of-2008-12017/`; data for 2009 is from `http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/blogs/live-feed/nielsens-top-10-tv-shows-52739`; data for 2010 is from `http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2010/u-s-top-10s-and-trends-for-2010.html`.

[18]Although there would be error in the measurement of aggregate crime drama exposure within years, one might argue this error would be relatively constant over time. Unfortunately there is no way to test this assumption, especially given the degree to which the market has fragmented. Moreover, the amount of error would be affected by the average amount of total television viewing during this time period, for which there are no sufficient estimates (although it is quite certainly non-constant: it is likely, for instance, that average television viewing has increased overall from the 1960s).

[19]Thus, legal dramas (e.g., *Harry's Law*, *Columbo*, *Murder, She Wrote*) and programs that are not told from the perspective of criminal justice officials (*Weeds*, *Person of Interest*, *Knight Rider*) are excluded based on this definition.

Of course, this is an imperfect measure, particularly given that the number of crime dramas on television changes from year to year. Nonetheless, because it measures only a single crime drama rather than all crime dramas on television, this proxy is a conservative estimate of viewership, albeit a measure that is more conservative in some years than others.

Just as the number of crime dramas fluctuates from year to year, so has the number of programs altogether. In particular, the number of available channels and thus programs on television has increased, seemingly exponentially, from the late 1960s to the present day (Prior 2007). For example, the average rating for the top rated show between 1965 and 1974 was 31.1; in contrast, the average rating for the top rated show between 2001 and 2010 was 19.3. This remains true looking at specific subgroups of programs: the news program *60 Minutes*, for instance, was a consistently top ten program from 1978 to 2000. The show's average Nielsen rating was 24.8 the first half of this time period, and 18.0 the second half, despite the fact that the show was the most watched program twice in the former period and three times in the latter period. Similarly, the most popular comedy from 1985 to 1991, *The Cosby Show*, had an average Nielsen rating of 26.6, compared to an average of 14.7 for *Friends* between 1998 and 2004. Thus it is necessary to control for this fragmentation in the market. As a result, the primary independent variable for this analysis is the ratio of the top rated crime drama to the top rated show altogether within each year (i.e., the top rated crime drama divided by the top rated show).[20]

Other Explanations of Aggregate Punitiveness

In addition to the proportional measure of crime drama viewership, several other variables are included in order to estimate a fully specified model. First and foremost, given

[20]The results are unaltered using the average rating of the top ten most watched shows annually as the denominator.

that previous analyses at both the individual and aggregate level have shown a correlation between media attention in terms of news programming and punitiveness, it is important to distinguish the independent effect of crime dramas from this well-established relationship. Ideally, a measure of aggregate exposure to local TV news would be used, given that this has been the focus of most individual-level analyses (e.g., Gilliam, Valentino and Beckmann 2002; Iyengar 1991). Unfortunately such data is not available given the sheer variety and number of local TV programs. Instead, two proxies for local media attention are used, one that measures the amount of attention paid to crime by newspapers, and one that measures the amount of attention given to crime by national TV news networks.

The former comes from the Policy Agendas website, from which I use the proportion of all *The New York Times* stories focused on law, crime and family issues (excluding New York City and state news) from 1965 to 2008.[21] Of course, *The New York Times* is read by only a small proportion of citizens, and is considered an elite (and liberal) paper. Nonetheless, several analyses have shown that the amount of attention *The New York Times* pays to issue areas is broadly reflective of other newspaper outlets' attention (e.g., Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydstun 2008; Cameron, Cover and Segal 1990; Zaller 1992). The second measure is a count of crime stories covered by the major networks from the Vanderbilt TV archives.[22] The archive collects data on every news story broadcast on the national news programs (ABC, CBS and NBC[23]) beginning August 5, 1968 up to the present. I collected data on all stories (excluding specials) in which "crime" or "criminal" appeared in either the headline or the abstract of the news segment. Because this search included a substantial

[21]Given that my interest is ultimately in local news attention to crime, I also examined *only* New York metro news as a proxy for local TV news attention. Although the proportion of metro area news dedicated to crime was not highly correlated with the index used (r = .30), the results are identical.

[22]This data is publicly available at `http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/`.

[23]The archive also collects this information for CNN beginning in 1989 and Fox beginning in 2003. These data were excluded so that the data was comparable over the entire time series.

amount of foreign crime (e.g., war crimes in Sudan; the trials of Nazi war criminals Mengele and Barbie; Bosnia), headlines indicating a foreign byline were excluded from the analysis.[24] In addition, data on the length of each news stories was collected, and both measures were summed within years.[25] These measures were highly correlated (r = .88), and thus only the count of stories is included.[26]

As noted previously, a variable that directly measures the amount of attention dedicated to crime by local TV news would be preferable. For example, one immediate concern might be that these media modes present crime differently, which may be the case. Although older content analyses suggested that crime was portrayed as disproportionately committed by minorities (Humphries 1981), more recent studies have found that newspapers rarely mention or show the race of the offender (Barlow, Barlow and Chiricos 1995). When stories do mention the offenders' race, it is an insignificant predictor of being covered (although the victim's race was a significant predictor, with stories about minority victims less likely to be covered by newspapers than stories featuring whites victims; Johnstone, Hawkins and Michener 1994). This finding stands in direct contrast to findings from local TV news content analyses (Chiricos and Eschholz 2002; Iyengar 1991; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000).

At the same, these media outlets do share some similarities in terms of content. For example, newspapers and network TV news disproportionately emphasize violent crime and murder, perhaps as much as local TV news (Chermak 1994; Marsh 1991; Sheley and Ashkins

[24]Headlines were searched for the following: Afghanistan, Africa, Argentina, Asia, Australia, Austria, Barbie, Bosnia, Brazil, Britain, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, El Salvador, England, Europe, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Libya, Mengele, Nazi, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Russia, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, Sudan, Thailand, USSR, Venezuela, Vietnam, West Bank, Yugoslavia, Zimbabwe. All headlines marked for exclusion were examined one by one in order to remove "false positives" (e.g., stories taking place in Chinatown or New Mexico).

[25]For 1968, the count of and length of stories was multiplied by 12/5 in order to estimate the counts for the full year.

[26]The results are substantively identical using the total minutes dedicated to crime stories in lieu of the story count measure.

1981). More importantly, it is not important whether the content of newspaper or network TV news differs from local TV news coverage. As proxy indicators, it is only important that changes in the *amount* of coverage focused on crime in network TV news and newspapers is generally reflective of changes in the amount of crime coverage in local TV news. Chapter 2 provided some suggestive evidence for how the content of crime dramas compares and contrasts to that of local TV news, and the ways in which we might expect both to impact punitiveness. To better interpret the impact of these differences, however, it is first necessary to demonstrate an empirical relationship between media and public opinion before turning attention to the psychological mechanisms at work. In this respect, then, using changes in the proportion of network TV and newspaper content dedicated to crime as a proxy for changes in the proportion of the newshole dedicated to crime by local TV news coverage is a much less tenuous assumption than if these indicators were used as proxies for the content of local TV news.

In addition to media variables, the violent crime rate as reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics is included in the model to capture the relationship between public opinion and actual crime rates (e.g., Page and Shapiro 2010; Gonzenbach 1992).[27] In addition, as noted, some research suggests that economic insecurity correlates with punitive attitudes (Costelloe, Chiricos and Gertz 2009; Hogan, Chiricos and Gertz 2005; King and Maruna 2009; although see Johnson 2001). These studies tend to operationalize economic insecurity in a variety of ways; as a result, data on both subjective and objective economic conditions was collected. Specifically, to measure perceptions of the economy, quarterly measures for the Index of Consumer Sentiment (ICS) were averaged to create an annual measure of economic perceptions. The ICS is calculated using survey responses to questions regarding both current

[27]See Gross and Aday (2003) and Hipp (2007) for a justification of using the violent crime rate rather than the property crime rate. In any case, including the property crime rate in addition to or in lieu of the violent crime rate has no effect on the significance or substantive effects of the model.

and prospective economic assessments, and is normalized to equal 100 in December of 1964.[28] In addition, the yearly unemployment rate was taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics as an objective measure of economic insecurity.

Moreover, attitudes on crime, like many policy areas, are informed by partisanship and particularly ideology, at least at the individual level (e.g., Browning and Cao 1992; Unnever and Cullen 2010; see also Chapter 4). Given conservatives' focus on social conformity and order, it is not surprising that they also tend to be more supportive of punitive policies. It is less clear, however, whether this relationship would hold up in the aggregate. On one hand, Republican (and Democratic) identification has steadily declined over time. On the other hand, self-identified conservatism has been on the rise (Ellis and Stimson 2009). However, it also appears that many conservatives may have adopted the label for reasons entirely unrelated to actual political conservatism (e.g., Ellis and Stimson 2009; Feldman and Johnston 2013). As a result, two indicators of the political leanings of the American public were gathered.

First, data on the aggregate proportion of Democrat and Republican identifiers was taken from Pew People and the Press, which in turn largely employs Gallup data to estimate these yearly averages.[29] This information was combined into a single measure by taking the ratio of Republican identifiers relative to all partisan identifiers (i.e., the proportion of Republican identifiers was divided by the sum of Republican and Democratic identifiers) within each year.[30] The second measure is general policy mood, which captures aggregate conservatism by combining public opinion data across a variety of public policies within and across years

[28]See `http://www.sca.isr.umich.edu/documents.php?c=i` for more information about the calculation of the ICS.

[29]This data is available online at `http://www.people-press.org/files/2012/06/1939-2012-PartyID-updatex.swf`.

[30]All models were re-run including first the percent of Democratic identifiers and then the percent of Republican identifiers. The results are substantively and significantly identical.

(see Stimson 1991 and Chapter 1 for a detailed explanation of the creation of the policy mood measure). This measure ranges from 0 to 100 and was recoded so that higher numbers indicate greater conservatism.

One might argue that predicting issue specific mood from general mood is conceptually redundant - and, to some extent, that is true. The questions used to estimate mood on crime were also used, along with hundreds of other questions, to estimate general mood. As a result, it is not surprising that issue-specific moods exhibit the same general, cyclical trend that generic mood displays (Atkinson et al. 2011). In this particular instance, crime mood correlates fairly strongly with generic mood ($r = .59$). Nonetheless, the heavy influence of generic mood on issue specific moods only makes it more difficult to explain the remaining variance.

Lastly, as noted prior, there was a dramatic increase in support for the death penalty in the wake of the Supreme Court decision in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972). Gallup polls conducted shortly before and after the decision was announced revealed that support for capital punishment increased by 7% and opposition dropped by 10% (the asymmetry in these numbers comes from changes among the proportion of people who stated they had no opinion); support for the death penalty has remained well above pre-Furman levels ever since (see Figure 1; Bohm 2003). This suggests what econometricians refer to as a structural break: that is, when the data generating process is non-constant across the range of the data. Indeed, a Chow test of whether public opinion changes before and after Furman strongly rejects the null of structural stability ($F(1, 44) = 132.15$; $p \leq .001$).[31] As a result, an intervention for Furman is included in the model, coded -1 in the year 1973 and 0 for all

[31] A reduced model using only the independent variable of crime drama consumption was used to preserve degrees of freedom, as the proposed structural break occurs early in the time series resulting in a small sample size for the pre-Furman data ($n = 8$).

other years.[32]

Stationarity

Because the data are time series, the use of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression for estimating the relationship between media consumption and policy attitudes is inappropriate. In particular, the data are heavily autocorrelated as a result of time-dependency. If left unaddressed, OLS will generate an autocorrelated error term, violating the Gauss-Markov assumptions in the process. In this situation, OLS produces biased standard errors and inefficient (but unbiased) coefficient estimates.

The standard remedy for autocorrelation as a function of working with time-series data is the Box-Jenkins method, which first requires variables to be stationary (i.e., the mean and variance are constant over time; Enders 2004). As can be seen in Figure 1, crime mood does not appear stationary, and more formal statistical tests support this visual assessment.[33] Fortunately, simply differencing a time series variable often purges the trend of its own past history, creating a stationary, random walk process. That is, while the raw value of a trend is often highly correlated with its value from the previous time period, the change - or difference - in the value of a trend from one time point to the next is usually uncorrelated with the change in the previous time period. In this case, taking the first difference of mood on crime achieves just that, producing a differenced trend that is free of autocorrelation.[34] The partial autocorrelation function and autocorrelation function also support this assessment, indicating that the changes in mood over time are stationary. Similarly, attitudes toward

[32]The intervention dummy was coded as -1 rather than +1 so that the differenced version of the variable is positive, making interpretation of the coefficient more intuitive.

[33]Dickey Fuller Z(t) = -1.041, p = .74; Portmanteau Q = 147.260, p = .000; Breusch-Godfrey LM χ^2 = 37.556, p = .000.

[34]Dickey Fuller Z(t) = -9.032, p = .000; Portmanteau Q = 11.894, p = .912; Breusch-Godfrey LM χ^2 = 1.334, p = .248.

the death penalty are also non-stationary (see Figure 2).[35] But again, as with crime mood, first differencing produces a white-noise process that can be estimated using the Box-Jenkins methodology.[36]

To deal with this non-stationarity, all variables used in the following models have been first differenced. In addition, with the exception of the ICS, all variables were coded so that positive relationships were expected. That is, I expect that popularity of crime dramas should exhibit a positive relationship with punitiveness over time, as operationalized by aggregate crime mood as well as support for the death penalty. In addition, the more attention the media pays to crime, the higher the violent crime rate, the higher the unemployment rate, the greater the number of Republican identifiers, and the more conservative the general policy mood, the more we should see Americans endorse punitive policies. Only the ICS should exhibit a negative relationship with both crime mood and attitudes toward the death penalty, as people should become less punitive as their perceptions of the economy become more optimistic. Finally, the intervention dummy for the Furman decision is included in the model of the death penalty only, and it is expected to be positive and significant. Basic descriptive statistics for these variables can be found in Table 1.

[Table 1 About Here]

Results

Table 2 tests whether viewership of crime dramas is positively correlated with more conservative crime mood, controlling for news media attention, crime rates, and economic

[35]Dickey Fuller Z(t) = -2.541, p = .11; Portmanteau Q = 186.37, p = .000; Breusch-Godfrey LM χ^2 = 31.616, p = .000.

[36]Dickey Fuller Z(t) = -8.089, p = .000; Portmanteau Q = 32.947, p = .03; Breusch-Godfrey LM χ^2 = 2.01, p = .16.

and political conditions. More specifically, Column 1 shows the model including *The New York Times* measure of newspaper attention; Column 2 shows the same model but replacing this variable with the measure of network TV news attention to crime. Although the two measures were not highly correlated, the newspaper variable runs from 1965 to 2008, whereas the network TV news variable runs from 1968 to 2010; given the small sample size, the models were run separately to preserve power.

Looking at Table 2, it is clear that differencing eliminated most of the autocorrelation, as the Durbin-Watson statistic is close to 2 for both models. More importantly, Columns 1 and 2 also show that the coefficient estimates for the popularity of crime dramas is in the expected direction, although it is only significant in the first column (controlling for newspaper attention to crime).[37] In contrast, neither of the variables measuring news media attention to crime come close to statistical significance.

[Table 2 About Here]

Because the coding of the main independent variable is as a proportion, the direct interpretation of these coefficients is not intuitive. For example, Column 1 indicates that for each point increase on this proportional measure, crime mood becomes more conservative by .026 points. A more sensible interpretation, then, is to think about the maximal effect of crime drama viewership: that is, going from a year in which not a single crime drama appears among the top thirty shows on television to a year in which one is the most highly rated show increases crime mood by nearly 3% in the conservative direction.

It is also notable that this effect remains above and beyond the effect of general pol-

[37]Careful readers will have also noticed that the coefficients in Column 2, which covers the period 1968 to the present, are smaller than those found in Column 1. Examining the data visually suggests that the estimated relationship may be weaker due to the loss of data from the first three years, given that no crime drama appeared in the top thirty shows in two of these years. This attenuation is also found in Table 3, although the drop is not as severe and the relationship remains statistically significant.

icy mood and actual crime rates, which both positively and significantly predict increased punitiveness, as expected.[38] Indeed, although the size of the coefficient for policy mood is several times the size of that for crime drama popularity, the maximal *observed* effect of policy mood within this sample is virtually identical to that of the crime drama indicator - approximately 3%.[39]

The models also do not provide any evidence for the economic insecurity hypothesis. Although statistically insignificant, increased unemployment is negatively correlated with punitiveness in both models, suggesting that greater economic insecurity is associated with less punitive attitudes. Similarly, increased optimism about the economy is positively correlated with crime mood. This is surprising, given that past work suggests economic insecurity is correlated with increased punitiveness.

Table 3 shows the same models, now predicting attitudes toward the death penalty specifically. Again, the Durbin-Watson statistic is nearly 2 in both models, indicating that there is little to no autocorrelation in the differenced data. What stands out from these models is that the relative popularity of crime dramas is the *only* significant predictor of aggregate support for the death penalty in the model. Indeed, the predicted change in support for the death penalty going from a year in which no crime dramas appear in Nielsen's top thirty to a year in which a crime drama is the most watched show on television is 8 to 11%, depending on the news media attention variable used.

[Table 3 About Here]

The only other variable that comes close to being significant in Table 3 is general policy mood, which positively but only marginally significantly predicts support for the death

[38]The results are substantively and significantly identical using the murder rate in lieu of the violent crime rate.

[39](sample max sample min)*coefficient estimate = (49.92-34.10)*.192 = 3.04%.

penalty in Column 1 ($p < .10$). This is likely due to the closer alignment between policy mood in general and crime mood, relative to attitudes toward the death penalty. In the former case, both variables are estimated using the same (sub)set of questions and using the same algorithm.

In addition, unlike the model of crime mood (controlling for newspaper attention to crime), the violent crime rate fails to significantly predict attitudes toward the death penalty specifically. This suggests that crime rates are predictive of crime policy attitudes and perceptions more generally, but do not predict attitudes toward the death penalty specifically. Although both news media attention variables are positive as anticipated, they do not significantly predict changes in punitiveness over time. Moreover, as in Table 2, three of the four economic insecurity coefficients are in the opposite direction than expected, but are again statistically insignificant. Finally, policy mood and the dummy intervention for Furman are both positive as expected, although neither are significant predictors of punitiveness.

The difference in effect size for crime dramas going from an indicator of general punitiveness (crime mood) to support for a single policy (the death penalty) over time is perhaps not surprising in hindsight: the former includes a mixture of policy attitudes, some of which would likely be affected more strongly by watching such shows rather than others. In fact, the death penalty may be one of the most strongly affected policies, given the disproportionate emphasis on murder in these shows. Overall, then, the preceding analysis suggests that entertainment media can have a powerful impact on policy attitudes.

Discussion

The goal of this analysis was to explore the relationship between viewership of crime dramas and punitive attitudes over time. Employing data that spans five decades and a

majority of the years in which television has been a staple in most Americans homes, I find that punitive attitudes toward crime increases as viewership of crime dramas increases. This effect is not only statistically significant, but also substantively large: the effect of watching crime dramas is on par with the effect of the changing tide in ideological preferences (i.e., policy mood) among Americans more generally, and exhibits an even larger relationship with attitudes toward the death penalty specifically.

Other interesting patterns develop when examining the trend in the popularity of crime dramas. That is, the relative popularity of crime dramas was trending downwards from the early 1970s until 1993, at which point in time not a single crime drama rated among the top thirty most watched programs. This is precisely the point at which violent crime and the salience of crime as a political issue peaked. Since then, violent crime has decreased dramatically, and punitiveness much less so. In contrast, the popularity of crime dramas has more or less steadily increased since then, with a crime drama (*CSI*) being the most (or second most) popular show on television altogether for most of the 2000s.[40]. This suggests that as interest in watching local TV news has waned over the years, punitiveness has remained high due to the increasing popularity of crime dramas.

As with any analysis, however, there are some caveats in drawing conclusions from this study. First and foremost, the data for the main independent variable (the crime drama indicator) are censored. Ideally, this variable would have data on the most watched crime drama even when one did not make the list of top thirty shows annually. Moreover, censored regressors generally lead to "expansion bias" - that is, coefficient estimates that are larger than they should be. Given the amount of censored data (15% of the sample), it is possible that the coefficients are biased upwards by as much as 10% (Rigobon and Stoker 2009). Even taking this into account, however, the substantive conclusions remain intact.

[40]See Figure 4 of Chapter 1

Secondly, this analysis does not - and perhaps cannot - account for racial attitudes. This is obviously an important component of public opinion toward crime, and should be considered to ensure the results presented here aren't spurious. Although this is omitted from the present analysis, the next chapter sheds additional light on the interplay between race, racial attitudes, and punitive policy attitudes.

In addition, this kind of methodological approach cannot overcome questions of causality. On one hand, the data for the popularity of crime dramas is taken from the season ending in the year public opinion is measured. Thus, we may take some comfort in the fact that the indicator of crime drama popularity is measured over several months in the previous year and the first half of the actual year in which punitiveness is measured. In other words, the way in which crime drama popularity is measured somewhat implies causality, at least from a time standpoint. On the other hand, this analysis cannot completely dispel the criticism of self-selection bias: that is, that certain individuals are drawn to crime dramas because they reinforce their punitive notions. If this were true, crime dramas might become more popular during times of increasing conservatism, for instance, because they portray the kind of justice citizens also want in reality. The question of spuriousness is tackled in the next two chapters, where I test (and find little evidence for) self-selection bias using survey data (Chapter 4), as well as manipulate the content of crime dramas in order to demonstrate causal ordering more cleanly (Chapter 5).

It is clear that punitiveness increases in years when crime dramas are more popular, and decreases when crime dramas are less popular. This effect holds above and beyond attention to crime by news media organization, crime rates, and political and economic factors. This suggests that in order to better understand the effect of media on public opinion, we should pay more attention to what viewers are exposed to, rather than what we would like citizens to be exposed to. Entertainment media is interesting, engaging, and

emotionally more compelling than news programs. And, in the case of crime dramas, at least, it systematically portrays crime and justice in a way that fosters punitive policy attitudes. Nonetheless, whether this relationship holds up at the individual level remains an empirical question, and one that will be addressed in the next chapter.

Table 3.1: Descriptives of Variables, Prior to Differencing

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Crime Mood	63.61	82.91	76.74	4.87
Percent Favoring the Death Penalty	42	80	65.50	8.97
Crime Drama Ratings (relative to the most watched show)	0	100	69.60	22.27
Media Attention to Crime (% of crime stories in *The New York Times*)	3.84	12.62	6.44	1.40
Media Attention to Crime (Count of crime stories on ABC, CBS & NBC)	75	507	163.88	77.90
Violent Crime Rate	200.2	758.2	513.65	135.81
Unemployment Rate	3.49	9.71	6.02	1.62
Index of Consumer Sentiment	63.75	107.58	85.88	11.87
Party Identification Gap	31.34	50.82	41.88	5.86
Policy Mood	34.10	49.92	42.08	3.99
Furman Intervention	-1	0	–	–

Table 3.2: ARIMA Models of Crime Mood

	Coefficient (Standard Error)	Coefficient (Standard Error)
Crime Drama Ratings	.026*	.014
	(.013)	(.015)
Newspaper Attention	-.132	–
	(.226)	
Network TV News Attention	–	.004
	–	(.003)
Violent Crime Rate	.017*	.007
	(.008)	(.009)
Unemployment Rate	-.316	-.178
	(.445)	(.325)
Index of Consumer Sentiment	.053	.030
	(.034)	(.028)
Party Identification Gap	-.086	-.067
	(.087)	(.077)
Policy Mood	.193*	.171*
	(.113)	(.089)
Constant	.119	.087
	(.267)	(.220)
N	43	42
Log Likelihood	-73.42	-67.29
Chi-square	18.43*	14.84*
Durbin-Watson	2.24	2.02

Table 3.3: ARIMA Models of Attitudes Toward the Death Penalty

	Coefficient (Standard Error)	Coefficient (Standard Error)
Crime Drama Ratings	.110*	.089*
	(.041)	(.044)
Newspaper Attention	.203	–
	(.348)	
Network TV News Attention	–	.020
	–	(.014)
Violent Crime Rate	.009	.003
	(.026)	(.026)
Unemployment Rate	-.183	-.080
	(.588)	(.806)
Index of Consumer Sentiment	.000	-.027
	(.090)	(.086)
Party Identification Gap	-.186	-.141
	(.276)	(.273)
Policy Mood	.592	.470
	(.375)	(.315)
Furman	2.192	2.251
	(2.612)	(2.224)
Constant	.228	.251
	(.552)	(.599)
N	43	42
Log Likelihood	-114.05	-107.86
Chi-square	17.62*	21.53*
Durbin-Watson	2.07	2.08

Figure 3.1: Policy Mood Toward Crime, 1965-2010

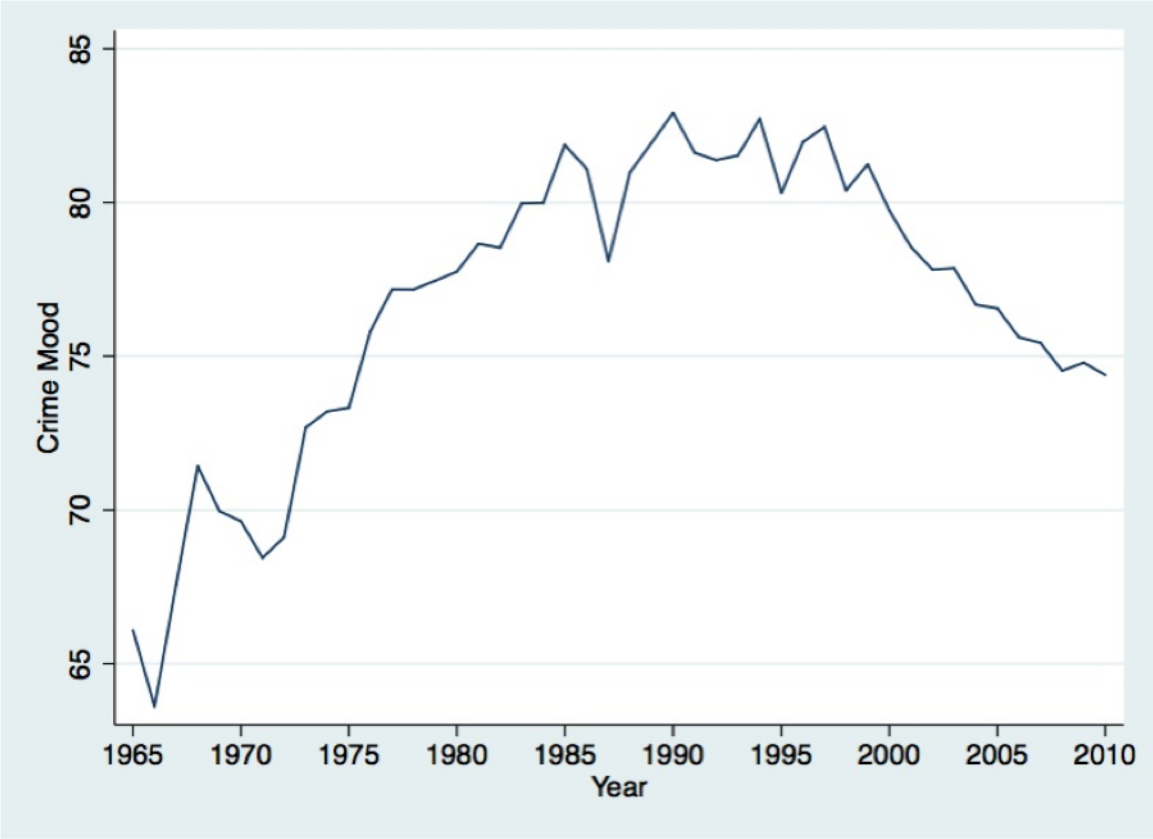
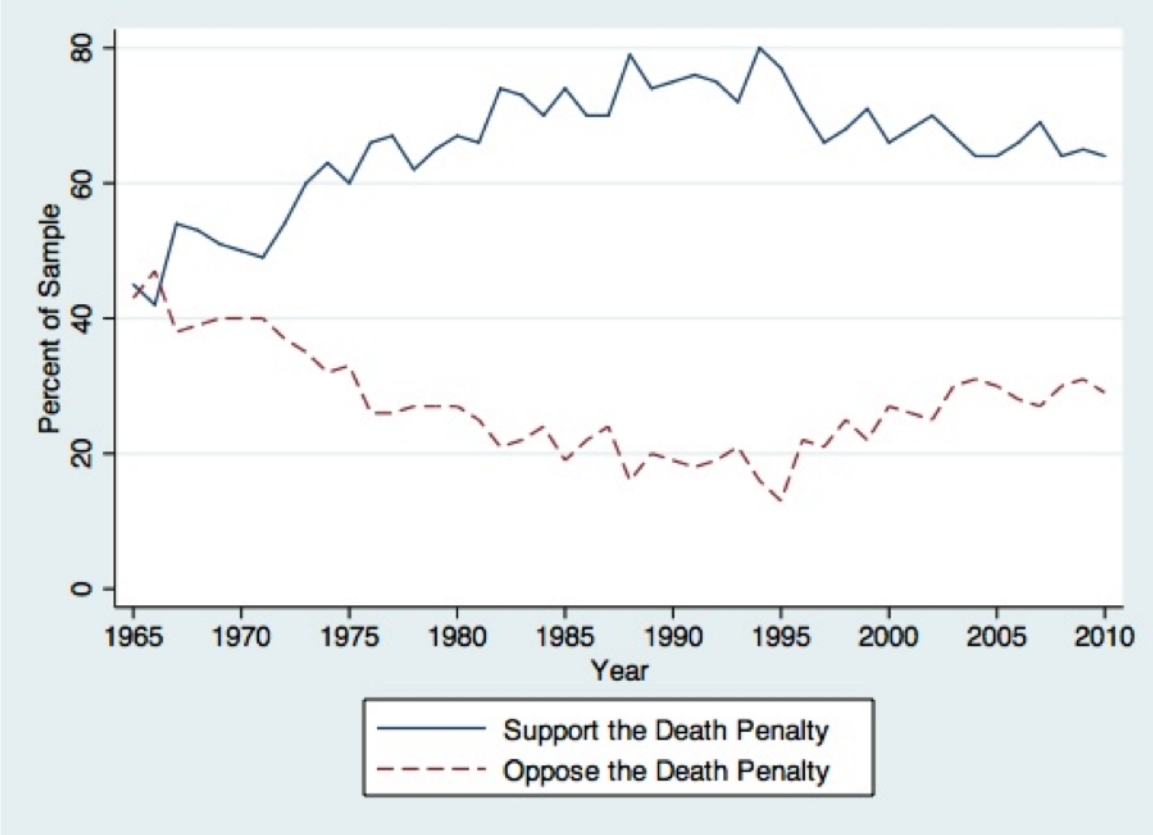


Figure 3.2: Public Opinion Toward the Death Penalty, 1965-2010



Chapter 4

Results from a Representative Survey

Introduction

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, viewership of crime dramas and support for punitive attitudes is positively correlated over time, controlling for political and economic variables, crime rates, and news media attention to crime. Although these results are a promising start, there were some limitations to the analysis: for one, the news media measures were less than ideal, since most previous research suggests it is local TV news, rather than national news or newspapers, that affects viewers' attitudes on crime.[1] Moreover, there is no sufficient indicator of racial attitudes over time. Although given shifting demographics it seems unlikely that racial attitudes can explain the trends exhibited in Figures 1 and 2 of Chapter 3, this remains an empirical question and thus a weakness of the previous analysis.

Moreover, the time series analysis cannot demonstrate conclusively that an individual who watches crime dramas is more likely to hold punitive attitudes than someone who does not. That is, although we know that watching crime dramas and supporting punitive

[1] Although, as noted previously, use of these indicators is less dubious given that they are proxies for changes in the amount of coverage, rather than the *content* of local TV news.

crime policies are correlated in the aggregate, we cannot know from these data whether those individuals who watch crime dramas are also the ones who hold more punitive attitudes. For instance, perhaps watching crime dramas and punitiveness are correlated in the aggregate because political attitudes, such as conservatism, drive both of these trends over time. Crime dramas would then become increasingly popular as macro-conservatism increased, if the proportion of individuals who support punitive crime policies also enjoyed watching criminal offenders brought to justice.

Because the previous analysis cannot dispel the criticism that watching crime dramas and support for punitive policies exhibit a spurious relationship with one another, and because better measures of key explanatory factors of punitiveness are crucial to convincingly demonstrating the importance of entertainment media for understanding attitudes about crime, I employ individual-level survey data to demonstrate that citizens who watch crime dramas are also more likely to support punitive policies. Of course, the question of causality cannot be directly addressed with cross-sectional survey data. Nonetheless, it is still informative to analyze who is watching crime dramas, how often, and the nature of the relationship between watching these shows and policy attitudes.

The organization of the chapter is as follows: first, I briefly review the theoretical expectations to be tested. Then, I outline in detail the sample and methods that were used to gather the data, as well as the operationalization of the primary variables of interest: media exposure - particularly exposure to crime dramas - and punitiveness. This exercise reveals that punitiveness varies widely across policies, providing evidence for Cullen et al.'s (2000) suspicion that questions typically used to gauge punitiveness (e.g., the death penalty) do not tell the whole story about Americans' attitudes about crime. Next, I present results from two different samples from two distinct time periods that demonstrate watching crime dramas does, in some cases, correlate with punitive attitudes, above and beyond the effect

of established predictors of such attitudes. A short discussion of the study's implications follows.

Theoretical Expectations: A Quick Review

As Chapter 2 made explicit, I expect punitiveness to be greater among those who regularly watch crime dramas relative to those who do not (**H3**). This hypothesis stems from the fact that crime dramas disproportionately display crime as committed by calm, cognizant individuals who are in full control of their actions. These fictional criminals are "bad apples" who, for reasons such as revenge, greed or just plain psychopathy, knowingly and willfully commit crimes, often murder. In conjunction with the portrayal of an overwhelmingly successful and accurate criminal justice system (often accompanied by a confession or an evil glare from the offender himself) and concomitant feelings of certainty that the suspect committed the crime, viewers are exposed to very powerful messages about the nature of crime and justice in America.

In addition, because crime dramas disproportionately portray offenders as middle class whites, racial attitudes should exhibit a weaker relationship with crime policy attitudes among regular viewers of crime dramas (**H4**). In contrast, the evidence shows that minority and particularly black offenders on local TV news are shown in either greater number or equal to their proportion in terms of actual arrest data, which is also disproportionate to their numbers in the population as a whole. As a result, the notion that crime dramas promote public support for punitive crime policies is partially a result of sending messages similar to those in local TV news, but also a result of the unique emotional appraisals they invite, independent of racial priming. The exact causal mechanism through which crime dramas sustain punitiveness are explored more fully in Chapter 5; for now attention

turns to the individual-level survey data, which focuses on the relationship between media consumption and punitiveness.

Sample and Methods (Long Island)

Empirical studies of the effects of entertainment media on public opinion is a relatively nascent field, and it is not surprising that available survey data on the subject is quite limited. For example, I was only able to locate a single publicly available survey that assessed both viewership of crime dramas and political attitudes with respect to crime simultaneously: the 1995 Pilot American National Election Studies (ANES).[2] I return to these data at the conclusion of the chapter; for now, I describe the results from a regional survey collected in the fall of 2011.

To test my theory, a Random Digit Dial telephone survey of 422 Long Island (LI, which includes Nassau and Suffolk Counties), New York residents was conducted by the Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research (`www.stonybrook.edu/~surveys`). An adult respondent was selected at random within the household using the "most recent birthday" method (Lavrakas 1993). Interviews were conducted between October 3 and November 7, 2011, and numbers were attempted up to six times. The AAPOR Response Rate 3 was 18%;[3] the household-level Cooperation Rate 3 was 33%.[4] As a result of the problems endemic to any phone survey, such as non-response bias, the LI sample was compared to the 2010 Census data and weighted. The distribution of key socio-demographic variables, shown in Column 1 of Table 1, indicates that the weighted sample is remarkably similar to Census benchmarks

[2] A 2005 Pew study, for instance, asked about watching two popular crime dramas (*NPYD Blue* and *Law & Order*), but did not ask for any policy attitudes toward crime specifically.

[3] This is the number of completed interviews divided by completed interviews, refusals, no contacts and an estimated number of how many unknown households that are eligible (in this case, 25%)

[4] This is the number of completed interviewers divided by completed interviews and refusals.

for Long Island, which are displayed in Column 2 for comparison. Column 3 of Table 1 also displays the national 2010 Census data, in order to highlight the differences between Long Island (and the representative LI sample) and national benchmarks. With respect to gender and ethnicity, Long Island is quite similar to the nation as a whole. In contrast, Long Island has a higher proportion of whites, an older population overall, and a higher proportion of college-educated citizens at the expense of those with only some college education.

[Table 1 About Here]

It is not immediately clear what the aggregate effect of these sample differences relative to a national survey would be. For starters, an examination of the literature reveals that age is inconsistently correlated with attitudes about crime (although it rather consistently predicts holding less punitive attitudes in the results below). Whites, however, do tend to hold more punitive attitudes than non-whites, suggesting that Long Island would hold more punitive attitudes on average. At the same time, greater education is consistently negatively correlated with support for punitive policies (Chiricos, Welch and Gertz 2004), thus possibly negating or even overpowering the effect of the sample's racial composition. The fact that support for the death penalty in the LI sample was virtually identical to recent, national survey data provides some preliminary evidence that these sample differences (age, education, and race) largely cancel one another out. In any case, the analyses focus predominantly on multiple regression, which centers on the marginal relationships between variables, not their absolute values. Thus, while the overall level of punitiveness or media consumption may not replicate a national sample precisely, we can be fairly confident that the relationship between the two is generalizable.

The questions for this analysis were part of a larger, omnibus poll,[5] and came after an

[5]The full omnibus poll had a sample size of 810. The questions for this study were not IRB approved

initial series of questions regarding housing and urban planning on Long Island, followed by questions regarding beliefs about child rearing and physical exercise. Respondents were first asked about their attitudes toward three distinct crime policies, selected to assess the extent to which crime dramas differentially affect punitiveness. Respondents were then asked a series of three questions gauging total television viewing, local TV news viewing, and crime drama viewing. At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were asked a series of standard demographic questions, including their race/ethnicity, gender, age, education, and household income. In addition, respondents were also asked about their political ideology and interest in local politics[6] on a four-point Likert scale. In addition to better understanding who watches crime dramas, many of these socio-demographics have been shown to correlate with punitiveness, and thus must be controlled for in multivariate analyses. In particular, whites, males, respondents with less education, and more conservative respondents should all be more punitive than their respective counterparts. Income, age and interest in politics were also included as potential covariates of both media consumption and punitiveness.

Finally, respondents were also asked for their zip code. Post-data collection, this information was used to merge individual survey responses with aggregate-level data from the 2010 Census. In particular, previous research has demonstrated that the environment influences and even moderates the relationship between individual-level predispositions and attitudes, such that whites in racially homogenous neighborhoods react more strongly to

until partway through interviewing, and thus only 422 (52%) completed the questions used in this analysis. The response rate and cooperation rate are calculated for the full sample. Response rates and cooperation rates for the half-sample used in the present analysis are not possible, as some of the completed interviews were attempted prior to but ultimately completed after IRB approval. However, the sample was released in replicates, which are miniature random samples within the full random sample used. Moreover, the close fit of this half-sample relative to Long Island benchmarks alleviates concerns that the half sample is unrepresentative. Restricting the analyses to only those completes who were part of replicates released after IRB approval (n = 276) does not substantively or significantly change the results.

[6]Respondents were also asked a four-point Likert scale of interest in national politics; including this in addition or in lieu of interest in local politics did not change the results.

racially stereotypic news (Gilliam, Valentino and Beckmann 2002), although this effect may be driven largely by whites in low socio-economic areas (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). As a result, the percentage of blacks in the respondent's zip code was collected and is included as a control in the models.[7]

Measuring Punitiveness

To measure punitiveness, respondents were asked for their policy attitudes toward three distinct criminal justice policies. Specifically, respondents were asked: "How strongly do you support or oppose the death penalty for murder? Would you say you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the death penalty? The second question asked respondents, "Do you think that teenagers under the age of 18 convicted of their first crime should be given the same punishment as adults convicted of their first crime, or should they be treated less harshly?" Finally, respondents were given a forced choice question regarding drug policy: "If two programs that cost the same were found to be *equally effective* at reducing drug-related crime, which would you support implementing: one, setting up free drug abuse support groups, or two, increasing targeted enforcement of major drug distributors?" Responses toward each policy were rescaled to range from 0 to 1, with 1 representing the more/most punitive response. In other words, attitudes toward juveniles and violators of drug laws are dummy variables with 1 indicating a preference for treating juvenile offenders the same as adults and focusing on drug distributors rather than drug rehabilitation, respectively, 0 otherwise; support for the death penalty is a four-point

[7] In the following models, race, ethnicity, and gender are all coded as dummy variables, with 1 indicating black, Hispanic, and male, respectively, 0 otherwise. Education, income, ideology and interest in local politics are all ordinal measures recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the greatest level of education, income, conservatism, and interest in local politics. Similarly, age and the percent black living in the zip code were recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the sample maximum (90 years old and 68.9%), and 0 the sample minimum (18 years old and 0.0%).

ordinal variable, recoded so that 1 indicates strong support for the death penalty and 0, strong opposition.

Of course there are any number of other questions that could have been asked, such as support for three-strikes laws, truth in sentencing, attitudes toward sex offenders, and so on; however, these particular questions were chosen based on two compelling attributes: first, they are differentially salient in the political domain (and thus, presumably, TV news programming), and secondly, they are differentially emphasized in crime dramas. For instance, attitudes toward the death penalty have a strong and clear connection to crime dramas - other than treason, murder is the only crime eligible[8] for the death penalty in the U.S., and the only crime for which people have been put to death in the modern era (i.e., since the reinstatement of the death penalty in *Gregg v. Georgia* 1976). At the same time, the death penalty is a well-known and salient policy with clear partisan connections, and one that becomes headline news any time an execution takes place or when major cases concerning the 8th Amendment reach the Supreme Court. Thus, although political considerations should be paramount to capital punishment attitudes, crime dramas should also play a role in sustaining punitiveness, independent of political preferences.

In contrast, juvenile justice is not a salient component of criminal justice policy as far as public opinion is concerned. One reason for this may be the greater confidentiality and anonymity legally afforded to juvenile offenders in general, thus restricting news media attention at least with respect to juvenile offenders. Regardless, it is unlikely that such attitudes are (as strongly) influenced by predispositions (e.g., ideology) as a politically salient policy,

[8]Technically, the 1994 Federal Death Penalty Act established the death penalty for the distribution of large quantities of narcotics (i.e., drug "kingpins"), but no one has been prosecuted under this law without having also committed at least one murder. If someone were to be convicted and sentenced to death, it is likely to be found unconstitutional, considering the Supreme Court has declared the death penalty unconstitutional for child rape in *Kennedy v. Lousiana* (2008), which is generally perceived to be a more heinous crime than drug trafficking.

such as the death penalty, would be. Moreover, when shown in crime dramas, juvenile offenders are portrayed in a menacing light, with the findings from content analyses for adult offenders even more skewed with respect to juveniles. In particular, a content analysis of *Law & Order* found that 89% of crimes committed by juveniles was murder, with sexual assault comprising the remaining 11% of cases. One hundred percent of these offenders were in school, and only a small fraction had experienced some kind of abuse (physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect) in their past, in stark contrast to the reality of juvenile offenders (Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008). In addition, 72% of juvenile offenders were treated and processed as an adult, rather than being sent to the juvenile justice system (Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader and Williams 2008), sending strong messages about the proper approach for dealing with younger offenders.

Finally, it is expected that respondents' attitudes regarding drug policies are unaffected by crime dramas: after all, drugs and alcohol are disproportionately absent from these shows (Soulliere 2003), particularly relative to actual statistics which show that drugs are heavily involved in actual criminal activity (Karberg and Mumola 2006; Mumola 2009). Moreover, other studies of media effects show that attitudes toward drug policy are not easily altered through framing, largely due to the "already dominant status of individual responsibility" with respect to drug use (Iyengar 1991, p. 44). As a result, this question was included as a check on content specificity - that is, viewers' attitudes should be affected by the specific policies relevant to and made salient by the crimes committed and offenders featured in crime dramas.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 show graphically how the LI sample responded to the three questions concerning crime policy, contrasting them to comparable national polls. Two things stand out in these figures as a whole: first, opinion in the LI sample closely reflects that found in other national surveys. For example, 63% of the sample supported the death penalty (see

Figure 1), compared to 62% in a Pew People and the Press study conducted in November of 2011. Similarly, one-fourth (25%) of LI respondents supported the punitive response for juveniles (i.e., treating those convicted of felonies the same as adults), with 61% preferring to treat them with some leniency (see Figure 2). This is similar to a 2007 survey sponsored by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency that found 67% of citizens believe juvenile offenders should not be incarcerated in adult correctional facilities. Interestingly, older polls that use similar question wording show a much more punitive public. For instance, a 2003 Gallup survey found that 59% of Americans would prefer to treat juvenile offenders the same as adults, compared to 32% who would prefer more lenient treatment. Similarly, 55% of respondents supported treating juveniles convicted of a violent crime the same as adults, compared to 34% who supported a lesser punishment (ABC News Poll, May 2001). This suggests that public opinion regarding juvenile offenders may have moderated over time. Certainly when crime was at its peak in the early 1990s, some influential commentators placed blame on so-called "superpredators" - repeat, violent, and socially disenfranchised juvenile offenders alleged to be partially responsible for the increase in crime rates (DiIulio 1995). Today, however, the issue of juvenile justice fails to register much in the political conversation about crime (further evident by the lack of questions on the topic in national surveys).

[Figures 1, 2 and 3 About Here]

Finally, when forced to choose between focusing on rehabilitation for drug users and increasing enforcement of drug distributors, 54% of the LI sample chose the latter (see Figure 3). There are no completely analogous questions in other publicly available national surveys regarding attitudes toward drug offenders in recent times. Instead, the closest available

data comes from a telephone survey sponsored by the Family Research Council in 1999, in which a sample of registered voters was asked about their preferences for tackling "the drug problem". In this survey, an equal number of respondents stated they would rather focus on supply-side tactics (i.e., drug interdiction or increased law enforcement) as those who said they would rather focus on prevention or treatment of drug use (44%). This even split seems a reasonable reflection of national opinion, especially in light of the number of recent state propositions and laws narrowly passing or defeating marijuana legalization and regulation.

In addition to increasing confidence about the generalizability of results from this regional sample, the second point these graphs highlight is that the public is differentially punitive across a variety of crime policies. In fact, we can roughly gauge how the public views the punitiveness of various policies based on their relative responses. The sample exhibited the strongest support for the death penalty, compared to a slightly smaller majority who indicated support for increased enforcement of drug distribution laws, and only a quarter of respondents who support treating juvenile offenders as adults.[9] Also, we can see that larger proportions of the public have opinions on the more politically salient policy issues of the death penalty and drug laws: approximately 5% of the sample had no opinion or refused to answer these two questions, whereas 14% of the sample did not have (or give) a policy preference in regard to the treatment of juvenile offenders.

Ideally, punitiveness is operationalized as a general preference for punishment and retribution that is broadly applicable across policies, and the most focused test of theoretical expectations would be to examine the effect of consuming crime dramas across the set of policies as a whole. However, the pattern of responses across these three policies correlated

[9]Because of this distribution of opinions, I examined whether a Guttman-like scaling could be created when combining responses toward the three policy issues. The joint distribution of the data gave no indication of patterned responses. That is, respondents who supported treating juveniles the same as adults were no more or less likely to support enforcement of existing drug laws over rehabilitation, who in turn were no more or less likely to support the death penalty.

only moderately with one another and did not produce a sufficiently reliable scale (α= .50). Attitudes regarding drug policy were moderately correlated with both attitudes toward the death penalty (r = .43) and juveniles (r = .42), whereas attitudes toward the latter two were less strongly correlated with one another (r = .28). Beyond this, the distribution of responses suggests that citizens' attitudes toward criminal justice policies are not consistently punitive.[10] This conforms with Cullen et al.'s observation that "surveys that include questions that assess diverse ideological views on correctional policies find that public opinion is complex, progressive under certain conditions, and not unyieldingly punitive" (2000, p. 8). I return to this point in the concluding discussion; for now, I examine the relationship between watching crime dramas and each distinct punitive policy attitude, rather than as a summary scale.

Measuring Media Consumption

After the policy questions, respondents were queried about their level of television media consumption. Specifically, respondents were asked, "In a typical week, how many hours a day do you spend watching television? This includes television programs that you watch online, such as through a streaming service or on a network's website, as well as DVDs that you have rented or purchased." Following an assessment of total television program viewing, respondents were asked about local television news viewing habits: "In a typical week, how many hours a day do you spend watching local television news such as *News 12* or *Fox 5?*" Respondents were asked about total and local TV news viewing for two main reasons: first, as a check against national samples to see how the Long Island sample differs from the nation, and second, to assess the extent to which watching local TV news and crime dramas

[10]This does not necessarily mean, however, that correlations between these attitudes are not high over time.

correlate in predicting punitiveness.

Finally, respondents were asked about their viewing habits with respect to fictional crime dramas. Specifically, respondents were asked, "In a typical week, how many hours do you spend watching *fictional crime dramas*, such as *CSI*? This can also include shows that are no longer airing new episodes, such as *NYPD Blue* or the original *Law & Order*." If a respondent indicated watching crime dramas for any length of time in an average week, a follow-up question was asked: "What fictional crime dramas do you watch regularly?" This was done in order to audit responses and ensure respondents were actually watching crime dramas, and not reality crime shows (e.g., *America's Most Wanted*), shows focused on terrorism (e.g., *Homeland or 24*), or shows that fall outside my definition of crime dramas (e.g., *Fringe*, *Dexter*).

It should be noted that more attention has been paid recently to the measurement of media consumption, and particularly the validity and reliability of such measures. Noting that estimates of the nightly network news audience based on the Annenberg National Election Study are more than three times the size of estimates based on Nielsen ratings, for example, Prior (2009) argues that respondents tend to use flawed estimation strategies when responding to questions about time spent watching media. Moreover, he finds that the most politically interested and educated respondents are the most likely to report higher estimates for news consumption when not given guidance on estimation (Prior 2009). This may provide a partial explanation for the distribution of news viewing displayed in Table 2, given that Long Island has a much higher proportion of college educated citizens than the nation as a whole. Similarly, Dilliplane and colleagues (2013) have noted that respondents likely think about TV viewing in terms of programs watched rather than time units, making questions about average TV viewing cognitively demanding. Although I do not provide a list of programs as Dilliplane, Goldman and Mutz (2013) suggest, asking respondents to list

the crime dramas they watch should have a similar effect in terms of increasing the measures validity. Thus, we can have a great deal of confidence in the key independent variable - regular viewership of crime dramas.

After the data had been collected, it became apparent that some respondents misinterpreted the questions regarding time spent watching television, along with a few others in the omnibus poll that focused on estimates of time spent on activities (e.g., commute time). Of particular concern, many respondents focused on the word "week" in the question wording and subsequently gave weekly, rather than daily, estimates of hours spent watching television. For example, some respondents indicated that they watched 40 hours of television - quite the impressive feat given there are only 24 hours in a day. As a result, a sub-sample of the respondents were called back and re-asked these questions, emphasizing that we were interested in hours per *day*. In the end, 102 of the 422 respondents were re-contacted[11], of which 50 (49%) and 32 (31%) gave substantively different responses[12] for total time spent watching TV and time spent watching local TV news, respectively. In all cases, respondents' most recent estimates were used. For the remaining respondents who were not re-contacted, a conservative cut-off was used in assuming they were giving their watching habits on a weekly - not daily - basis. Based on the 2011 Bureau of Labor Statistics Time Use Survey, only 5% of citizens reported watching ten hours or more of television a day.[13] As a result, any respondents who were not re-contacted and indicated watching ten or more hours of television a day were assumed to have given weekly estimates. Respondents who indicated watching five or more hours of local television news per day were also assumed to have given weekly estimates. Fortunately, this problem did not affect estimates of time spent watching

[11]For the full, omnibus sample, 307 were re-contacted and 217 completed. The callback sample had a Response Rate 3 of 89%, and a Cooperation 1 Rate of 91%.

[12]Defined as estimates that differed by more than an hour for total TV viewing, and by more than 30 minutes for time spent watching local TV news.

[13]This data is available at `http://www.bls.gov/tus/datafiles_2011.htm`.

crime dramas, as the question asked for weekly estimates to begin with. This is further confirmed by the distributions of local TV news and total TV viewing, which were out of line with national estimates, while the crime drama measure conformed with what is known about the popularity of such shows (see below). In addition, because respondents were asked to name specific crime dramas, it was straightforward to verify that individuals who spent more time watching crime dramas tended to identify watching more than one program.

Table 2 displays frequencies of the estimated total amount of time spent watching television and the amount of time spent watching local TV news and crime dramas for the full sample before (Column 1) and after (Column 2) the data was adjusted from the callback interviews. Column 3 of Table 2 also shows weighted frequencies of total TV and local TV news viewing habits for comparison, based on data from the 2011 Bureau of Labor Statistics American Time Use Survey (ATUS), and a Pew People and the Press (2010) survey on media consumption. It is likely that much of the differences between Columns 2 and 3 is due to question wording and sampling design. In particular, the ATUS split its sample into two groups, calling half during weekdays and the other half during weekends. In addition, any respondent over the age of 15 was eligible for the survey, in contrast to the LI sample's cut-off of age 18. Perhaps most importantly, the ATUS questionnaire emphasized activities performed the previous day, as opposed to the usual or "average" day, as the questionnaire for the LI sample did. Finally, the LI sample was asked for TV program watching across all modes (i.e., including streaming and DVDs), whereas the ATUS question simply asked about television watching independent of other media on its own.

[Table 2 About Here]

Table 2 also shows that Long Islanders watch much more local news than the general

populace. These differences are also likely attributable to question wording: the Pew study first asked whether respondents watched the news or a news program on television the previous day (or Friday if interviewed on a Sunday or Monday); those who replied yes (58%) were then asked, "About how much time did you spend watching the news or any news programs on TV (television) yesterday/Friday?" and given Likert scale response options. In contrast, the LI sample was asked about average TV news viewing; given Prior's (2009) results with respect to estimation strategies, the use of this question wording in conjunction with the large proportion of college educated citizens on Long Island is likely also a contributing factor. Finally, given the positive correlation between age and watching local news on television, the age skew on Long Island may also provide a partial explanation for the heavier consumption of local TV news found in this sample.[14]

Finally, although there is no (publicly) available data with respect to the amount of time people spend watching crime dramas, we do know that the split in terms of whether one watches crime dramas at all in the LI sample is roughly similar to existing surveys. That is, after auditing responses to which crime dramas viewers watched, it was discovered that 48% of the LI sample reported regularly watching at least one crime drama; this compares to 59% of respondents who reported watching either *CSI*and/or *Law & Order* in the 2005 Pew survey, and 54% who reported watching either *NYPD Blue* or *Murder, She Wrote* in the 1995 ANES.[15] For the models reported below, estimates of local television news viewing were recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating one or more hours of viewing

[14]For example, a recent study found that 31% of adults between 18 and 29 years of age reported regularly watching local TV news, compared to 61% of 50 to 64 year olds and 64% of those 65 and over (the Press 2010; see also Graber 2007).

[15]Two older studies also confirm that a large proportion of Americans watch crime dramas. Specifically, a study sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation in four waves between 1997 and 1998 found that approximately one-third of their sample each reported watching *NYPD Blue* and *Law & Order*. Similarly, 57% of citizens reported regularly or sometimes watching "fictional crime drama shows about detectives and police" in a 1993 *Times Mirror* survey. The data are available via subscription through Ipoll's website.

in an average day. Although the distributions of total and local television viewing were relatively normal, the distribution of time spent watching crime dramas was highly skewed (i.e., 50% of the sample do not watch any crime dramas). Ordinary Least Squares regression does not make any assumptions about the distribution of predictor variables, but heavily skewed distributions can still lead to misleading hypothesis tests (Fox 2008). Moreover, it is likely that each additional crime drama watched on a regular basis has strongly diminishing marginal returns in terms of increasing punitiveness. As a result, the measure of time spent watching crime dramas was dichotomized, with 1 indicating that the respondent regularly watched at least one crime drama a week and 0 indicating no regular exposure to crime dramas.

Results

While the primary interest here is in predicting policy attitudes, I first examined whether there is any evidence of self-selection. Certainly when it comes to news programming, there is strong evidence that citizens seek out information that conforms to their own political predispositions (Stroud 2008). It is less clear whether this holds true for other types of programming. Certainly the Republican Party has purchased ad space during popular crime dramas under the assumption that likely, conservative, voters are watching these shows (Parker 2010). This strikes an intuitive chord, as the Republican Party is traditionally associated with issues of law and order. Nonetheless, the enormous popularity of these shows suggests that their appeal may reach beyond conservatives.

Predicting Media Consumption

Table 3 displays straightforward OLS (Columns 1 and 2) and probit (Column 3) models predicting total television consumption, local news media consumption, and crime drama consumption, respectively. What stands out the most from these models is television's broad appeal. Indeed, only age positively predicts total time spent watching television. Those who are more interested in local politics are, not surprisingly, more likely to watch local TV news, as are Hispanics relative to non-Hispanics. Age, although positive, is insignificant for predicting consumption of local TV news. For crime dramas specifically, however, none of the model's predictors are significant. Even though both age and the dummy variable for Hispanics remain positive, suggesting that those groups watch more local TV news and more crime dramas than younger and non-Hispanic viewers, they both miss conventional levels of significance (two tailed p's = .11 and .20, respectively).

[Table 3 About Here]

The universal appeal of television and crime dramas specifically is an especially important insight for understanding the extent to which these shows impact policy attitudes. Although previous research has found that viewers with less formal education or who are less politically sophisticated tend to watch daytime talk shows more than their more educated counterparts (Baum 2003), these patterns do not replicate for crime dramas. Moreover, the fact that conservative ideology and race - factors regularly used to predict punitiveness - are unrelated to watching crime dramas provides some preliminary evidence that self-selection is not a concern. Again, causality cannot be addressed with observational data, but these preliminary analyses suggest that crime dramas do not just attract individuals who likely support punitive policies already; instead, crime dramas are enjoyed by whites and non-whites, rich and poor,

liberals and conservatives alike.

Predicting Punitiveness

Given the lack of political or socio-demographic bias among those who watch television and crime dramas in particular, any relationship between watching crime dramas and holding punitive policy preferences is unlikely to be spurious. Regardless, it is still necessary to examine this relationship with a fully specified model, controlling for potential covariates. In particular, I expect a direct, positive relationship between watching crime dramas and punitiveness. The models included here also control for the same factors used to predict media consumption, with the expectation that whites, non-Hispanics, males, less educated, and more conservative individuals will hold more punitive policy attitudes; age, income, and interest in local politics are also included as potential covariates of both media consumption and punitive attitudes.[16]

The first column of Table 4 shows the effects of watching crime dramas on support for treating juvenile offenders as adults. Notably, the coefficient for crime drama consumption reveals a positive and significant relationship with attitudes toward the treatment of juvenile offenders. However, because probit coefficients are not directly interpretable, it is necessary to calculate the change in probability of holding the more punitive response given a change in viewership of crime dramas, with all other variables constant at some level. Assuming a white, non-Hispanic male with a mean position on all other variables in Table 4, this calculation suggests that being a regular viewer of crime dramas increases the probability of holding punitive attitudes toward juveniles by 14%.[17]

[16]Controlling for total television viewing negatively and significantly predicts attitudes toward drug policy, but does not change the results across any of the three models substantively or significantly.

[17]Given the larger proportion of missing data for this question, I also ran a multinomial logit with the less punitive response as the baseline. This model revealed that watching crime dramas still significantly

[Table 4 About Here]

In addition to the effect of fictional media, this analysis also reveals that the question of juvenile offending is strongly affected by racial considerations, in that blacks are much less likely to support the more punitive option, whereas respondents who live in more racially heterogeneous neighborhoods are substantially more likely to support treating juvenile offenders as adults. What is more, these effects are sizable: going from a respondent's zip code in which no blacks reside to one that has the largest observed proportion of blacks (69%) increases the probability of supporting the more punitive option for juveniles by a whopping 56%. Less dramatically, black respondents were 25% less likely to support treating juvenile offenders as adults, all else held constant at their means and modes.

It is also noteworthy that attitudes toward juvenile offenders are not influenced by political considerations, such as ideology. Indeed, glancing across the table more generally, one can see that while a respondent's race and the racial makeup of the surrounding area are important for attitudes toward juveniles, they have no impact on attitudes toward the death penalty and drug enforcement. Similarly, what predicts the latter two have no impact on policy preferences with respect to juveniles. Thus, as suggested previously, the extent to which a policy is salient and elicits clear elite cues determines how citizens think about an issue (Zaller 1992). Given the low salience of juvenile justice today, it is not surprising that political considerations are unimportant in shaping such attitudes.

Next, Column 2 reports the ordered probit coefficients for the model predicting attitudes toward the death penalty.[18] As just noted, racial considerations exhibit no relationship to death penalty attitudes. Despite this anomaly, many of the other covariates are significant

predicted holding the more punitive response, although it also predicted a significantly greater probability of saying "don't know" over the less punitive response, as well.

[18]This models meet the proportional odds assumption (LR χ^2 with 22 df = 27.69, p = .19).

predictors as expected: in particular, males and conservatives are more likely to support capital punishment, whereas older and better educated respondents are significantly less likely to support it. Respondents professing greater interest in local news are also significantly less likely to support the death penalty.[19]

As far as crime dramas are concerned, however, there is little evidence that attitudes toward the death penalty are affected by regular exposure. Although the coefficient is in the expected direction, it is small and far from significant. Instead, exposure to local TV news strongly and positively predicts increased support for the death penalty. Substantively, heavy viewers of local TV news (defined as those who estimated watching an hour or more a day on average) are 12% less likely to strongly oppose and 18% more likely to strongly support the death penalty, relative to those who are not regular viewers of local TV news.

Finally, Column 3 of Table 4 shows the results for the models predicting attitudes toward violators of drug laws. While it was suspected that crime dramas would have no impact on drug policy attitudes, given their conspicuous absence from crime dramas, this was not the case. Certainly being a regular viewer of crime dramas did not increase the probability of holding more punitive attitudes on drug policy, as hypothesized; however, exposure to crime dramas actually *negatively* predicts holding more punitive attitudes toward crime.[20] One possible explanation for this is that while the prevalence and portrayal of drugs in crime dramas is biased toward downplaying their role relative to reality, these shows might also be sending demand-side oriented messages about the appropriate response to drug abuse. Unfortunately, previous content analyses have not explored the portrayal of drugs. To address this deficiency, I briefly explore how crime dramas portray drug use by offenders in Chapter 5, which highlights the results of a content analysis of three highly rated crime dramas from

[19]Perhaps because more interested respondents know that New York no longer employs the death sentence.
[20]This is not marked as significant in Table 4, given that the statistical tests are directional in nature.

the 2011-2012 TV season.

In the meantime, it should also be noted that attitudes toward drug policy closely mimicked those for the death penalty in terms of the covariates in the model. In particular, males and conservatives are more likely to support increased enforcement of drug traffickers over rehabilitation for users, while more educated and more political interested respondents are less likely to support such supply-side tactics. Although the coefficient for Hispanics was negative in all three models, it only attains statistical significance here, suggesting that Hispanics are less likely to support punitive drug policies than non-Hispanics. Finally, the indicator for local TV news consumption is positive as in the other two models, but is once again insignificant.

All in all, the message of Table 4 is that watching crime dramas is a factor in predicting crime policy attitudes, although the relationship is not as straightforward as expected. In particular, this analysis suggests that crime dramas have their greatest potential effect when policy attitudes are less politically salient, such as the treatment of juvenile offenders. In contrast, attitudes toward the death penalty are uncorrelated with regular viewership of crime dramas. This is surprising, given the heavy emphasis on murder in crime dramas, at least according to others' content analyses. One possible explanation is that crime dramas no longer emphasize murder to the same extent as they did a decade ago, when many of these content analyses were conducted.[21] Another alternative is that because New York has had an effective moratorium on capital punishment since 1995, the LI sample does not connect the murder in crime dramas with the death penalty. Given that the distribution of opinion closely matched that of national samples, however, this also seems tenuous.

Finally, it was expected that general orientations toward drug policies would be uncorre-

[21] Although this theory is answered strongly in the negative by the updated content analysis presented in Chapter 5.

lated with regular exposure to crime dramas when, in fact, the data revealed a negative and significant relationship between the two. This suggests that crime dramas may be sending liberal messages with respect to drug policy, a question to which I return in Chapter 5.

A National Replication

Although the LI sample provides some evidence that watching crime dramas and punitiveness are linked, it is still possible that the relationship between media consumption and policy attitudes differ nationally. After all, Long Island is not only whiter, older and more educated than the nation as a whole, but also reported watching more TV and more local TV news specifically than national samples. In addition, it is surprising that not only was watching crime dramas unrelated to attitudes toward the death penalty in this sample, but so were the race of the respondent and the racial composition of the respondent's neighborhood. These results conflict with a large body of work that shows attitudes toward the death penalty are heavily influenced by racial considerations. Thus, we could have greater confidence in the link between crime dramas and policy attitudes if the theory is tested with a sample whose joint distribution of media consumption and policy attitudes more closely resembled that of the U.S. population.

As noted at the outset, the 1995 ANES Pilot study was the only identified and publicly available survey that asked questions about both media consumption and crime policy attitudes. In particular, the survey asked respondents whether they favored or opposed the death penalty for murder (*V941042*), whether they supported increasing, decreasing or keeping federal spending on crime the same (*V940825*), and whether they supported or opposed Clinton's 1994 Crime Bill (*V941040*), a major piece of crime legislation that expanded the federal death penalty, placed a ban on the manufacturing of assault weapons, and autho-

rized funding for building prisons, hiring more police officers, and establishing "boot camps" for juvenile delinquents, among other provisions. Attitudes toward the death penalty were recoded into a five-point ordinal measure ranging from 0 to 1, with 1 representing strongly favoring the death penalty for murder. Spending preferences and attitudes toward Clinton's crime bill were both recoded as dummy variables with 1 indicating a preference for increasing spending and favoring the bill, and 0 indicating a preference for decreasing spending or keeping spending the same and opposing Clinton's crime bill.[22]

Respondents were subsequently asked how often they regularly watched *NYPD Blue* (*V952317*), among other popular TV shows of the time.[23] Responses to this question were recoded into a dummy variable indicating 1 if the respondent reported watching the show at all (30% of the sample), and 0 otherwise. Respondents were also asked whether they regularly watched news programs and, if so, whether they watched "local news programs like 'Eyewitness News' or 'Action News'?" If responding yes to both questions, respondents were asked how frequently they watched local news: "every day", "most days", "once or twice a week", or "only occasionally." Responses to these three variables (*V952300*, *V952305*, and *V952306*) were combined into a five category ordinal variable and recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 representing respondents who reported watching local TV news every day, and 0 representing respondents who reported watching no news at all.

Lastly, information about the socio-demographics of the respondents was also collected, as well as some additional variables that more fully specify the model. In particular, re-

[22]Here too, we see that attitudes toward various crime policies do not correlate highly with one another: attitudes toward spending on crime and Clinton's crime bill exhibit the strongest correlation (r = .38), whereas attitudes toward the death penalty correlate modestly with spending (r = .22) and slightly negatively with attitudes toward the crime bill (r = -.10).

[23]Respondents were also asked whether they watch *Murder, She Wrote* (*V952319*). However, this is a legal drama that does not focus on criminal justice officials (i.e., it follows a mystery writer who investigates murders, often solving the crime before the police). Despite their differences, the key results are substantively and significantly identical whether or not respondents who watch this show are also coded as watching a crime drama.

spondents' gender, race, ethnicity, age and ideology were all recoded to match the variables used in the previously reported models. Education, income and general interest in public affairs was also collected and recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the highest level of education, income, and interest, respectively.[24] Finally, the ANES study collected the respondents' seven-point partisan affiliation and racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996; α= .72), both recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating strong Republicans and the most racially resentful, respectively. This latter variable is especially helpful, as it allows for a test of **H4**, which contends that racial attitudes should be less weakly tied to crime policy attitudes among regular viewers of crime dramas, given the disproportionate portrayal of offenders in crime dramas by white actors. To test this, the crime drama indicator and racial resentment were interacted, with the expectation that racial attitudes would less strongly predict policy attitudes among those who regularly watch crime dramas (i.e., the interaction should be negative and significant).

Table 5 shows the results of two models per policy attitude, with sample weights applied.[25] The first model for each policy attitude (Columns 1, 3, and 5) shows the direct effect of regularly watching crime dramas on policy attitudes; the second model (Columns 2, 4 and 6) includes the interaction between watching crime dramas and racial resentment as a test of **H4**.

[Table 5 About Here]

[24]It should be noted that these questions are not, however, identical to the education, income, and interest questions from the CSR sample, as the two surveys contained different response options and, in the case of political interest, markedly different question wording.

[25]I also ran models predicting local TV news and crime drama consumption similar to those found in Table 2 as a check on self-selection (with the addition of partisanship and racial resentment as predictors). In further support of the notion that crime dramas have broad and diverse appeal, the only significant predictor was the dummy variable indicating black respondents, which was positive and significant in both models. These analyses can be found in Appendix B.

Looking first at attitudes toward the death penalty (Columns 1 and 2)[26], we see that, unlike the LI sample, crime drama consumption is both positive and significant in predicting greater support for the death penalty. Similar to the LI sample, racial considerations are not significant. As it turns out, this is because racial resentment interacts powerfully with crime drama consumption. Ignoring this interaction, for example, suggests that regular viewers of crime dramas are 22% more likely to strongly support the death penalty than non-regular viewers. However, taking racial resentment into consideration reveals that, among respondents who do not regularly watch crime dramas, going from low to high racial resentment increases the probability of strongly supporting the death penalty by 37%. In contrast, increasing racial resentment among regular viewers of crime dramas is associated with a decline in the probability of strongly supporting the death penalty by 16%. Thus, as expected, racial attitudes are highly predictive of punitive policy attitudes among non-viewers, whereas regular viewers do not become more punitive as racial resentment increases.

Furthermore, males, wealthier individuals, conservatives and more politically interested individuals are more likely to support the death penalty. Although the results for gender, income and ideology replicate from the LI sample, the political interest variable is in the opposite direction. In other words, politically interested individuals were less likely to support the death penalty in the LI sample, but significantly more likely to support the death penalty in the ANES sample. Whether this is a function of geography, time, or both is unclear, but the overall picture elicited by these two models is that regular viewers of crime dramas are

[26]These models fail to meet the proportional odds assumption (Column 1: LR χ^2 with 36 df = 54.91, p = .02; Column 2: LR χ^2 with 39 df = 61.33, p = .01). Running the data as a multinomial logit instead shows that watching crime dramas significantly predicts holding more punitive attitudes relative to strong opposition. It appears that the violation of the proportional odds assumption is a result of crime dramas increasing the probability of supporting the death penalty - both weakly and strongly - relatively equally. That is, watching crime dramas is correlated with supporting the death penalty, but is not a stronger predictor for those who strongly support the death penalty relative to those who weakly support the death penalty. Nevertheless, the ordered probit estimates are displayed for ease of presentation, and because the results are substantively identical.

more likely to support for the death penalty. Further, because crime dramas do not activate and perhaps even suppress racial considerations, racial resentment is a much more powerful predictor of punitiveness among non-viewers.

Next, Columns 3 and 4 of Table 5 show identical models predicting support for increasing federal spending levels on crime, relative to supporting reductions in spending or keeping current spending levels as it. What is most striking from this set of models is that nothing other than watching crime dramas predicts attitudes toward spending. Although many of the covariates are in the expected direction (e.g., partisanship and ideology), it is only regular viewership of crime dramas that attains statistical significance. In particular, watching crime dramas increases the probability of supporting increased spending on crime by a little over 10%.

Moreover, racial resentment exhibits a small, negative and insignificant relationship with attitudes on crime spending. Given that racial attitudes are irrelevant for these policy attitudes, it should perhaps not be surprising that the interaction of racial resentment and crime drama viewership, while negative, is also insignificant. Inclusion of the interaction in this case also reduces the significance of the crime drama indicator, although this is due to multicollinearity as evidenced by the inflated standard errors (i.e., when racial resentment is mean centered before creating the interaction, the crime drama indicator remains significant at the .05 level, one-tailed). One possible explanation for this is that questions on spending preferences, even when referencing crime, do not activate racial considerations but, instead, elicit general government preferences. This explanation is supported by a reanalysis of these data, controlling for general attitudes toward the role of government. In particular, respondents were asked, "Some people feel the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on their own" (*V940930*). Respondents were then

instructed to place themselves on a seven-point scale that ranged from 1 ("government should see to a job and good standard of living") to 7 ("government should let each person get ahead on their own"). This question is a strongly significant predictor of attitudes toward spending, although its exclusion or inclusion does not alter the key results.

Finally, Columns 5 and 6 display the probit estimates for attitudes toward Clinton's crime bill. Although the indicator for crime dramas is positive, it is insignificant in this model. Instead, attitudes toward the crime bill are predicted by other considerations. For example, black, older, and more educated individuals are all significantly less likely to report favoring the bill. In addition, interest in public affairs predicts greater opposition to the bill, a finding that replicates from the policies asked of the LI sample (i.e., individuals reporting great interest in local politics were significantly less likely to support the death penalty or targeted enforcement of drug distributors). Partisanship strongly and positively predicts support for Clinton's crime bill - although it is Republicans, not Democrats, who are substantially more likely to support the bill.[27] Moreover, it is the least racially resentful who are most likely to support the crime bill, also a somewhat counterintuitive finding. This suggests that the crime bill, perhaps given its specific nature (i.e., the bill outlined specific, detailed policy proposals, rather than making broad generalizations about crime), does not conform with expectations about determinants of support when gauged more generally.

All in all, then, these models provide further evidence that the effect of crime dramas is content specific. Attitudes toward relevant crime policies, such as the death penalty and general spending, are affected by the consumption of crime dramas. In contrast, policies that focus on crime but are not made salient by the portrayal of crime in entertainment media (e.g., Clinton's crime bill) are unaffected by regular exposure. In addition, the analyses show

[27]Including attitudes toward Clinton as measured by a feeling thermometer (0 to 100) does not change the results, although the relationship between the feeling thermometer is positive, significant and substantively quite large.

that watching crime dramas and punitiveness go hand in hand, not only for the nation as a whole, but also in a more fully specified model and across a different set of policy attitudes than what was presented to the LI sample.

Summary

In closing, the primary focus of this chapter was to examine the relationship between watching crime dramas and attitudes toward crime at the individual level. Using two samples from different time periods, I find that exposure to crime dramas is correlated with holding punitive attitudes, but only for policies that are relevant to crime dramas. In particular, attitudes toward the treatment of juveniles and crime spending are both positively predicted by consumption of crime dramas, such that regular viewers are more likely to support treating juvenile offenders as adults and to prefer increased spending on crime.

In contrast, crime policies that are not made salient by crime dramas (Clinton's crime bill) are unaffected by exposure to these types of programs. The question regarding drug policy also suggests that crime attitudes are not universally made more punitive by crime dramas; instead, the direction of the effect depends on the specific way in which crime is portrayed. Thus, while attitudes toward drug policy are significantly correlated with watching crime dramas, viewers are more likely to support liberal, "demand-side" tactics (e.g., rehabilitation) as opposed to increased enforcement of drug distributors.

Finally, the results regarding attitudes toward the death penalty were mixed: whereas support for the death penalty is positively correlated with watching *NYPD Blue* in a national sample in 1995, it is uncorrelated with watching crime dramas in the LI sample in 2011. One possible explanation for the null results in the LI sample are due to omitted variables: other than crime drama consumption, partisanship and racial attitudes are the only significant

predictors of death penalty attitudes in the 1995 ANES, neither of which were asked of the LI sample.[28] Another possibility lies in sample differences between LI and the nation as a whole. As noted at the outset, Long Islanders are whiter, more educated and report watching a great deal more local TV news relative to national samples. At the same time, the distribution of opinion on the death penalty looked much like that of the nation as a whole, and the focus here was on partial correlations.

It also bears repeating that these results indicate the public is not uniformly punitive. Indeed, although majority support exists for questions that are typically asked by survey houses (e.g., support for the death penalty and spending preferences), the public overwhelmingly supports treating juvenile offenders more leniently, and is evenly split with respect to drug policy. Related, although it was hypothesized at the outset that citizens' attitudes on crime would correlate highly with one another, this is not the case. Thus, these results support Cullen and colleagues' (2000) contention that punitiveness varies, depending on the specific policy under consideration.

Taken as a whole, these results - in conjunction with the results of the time series analysis - provide promising evidence in support of the theory. Those policies that are most directly connected to the content of crime dramas (and, incidentally, are also the most directly punitive, in contrast to attitudes toward a specific piece of legislation) are affected by regular exposure. Likewise, regular viewers of crime dramas rely less on racial attitudes when formulating crime policy attitudes, providing further evidence of the specificity of entertainment media effects.

Nonetheless, as with any analysis, a few caveats are in order. For one, surveys cannot demonstrate causality, and thus any significant relationships revealed suggest only that watching crime dramas and punitiveness go hand in hand. At this level of analysis, it is just

[28]Though neither partisanship nor racial attitudes predicted crime drama consumption; see Appendix B.

as plausible that watching crime dramas results in more punitive attitudes as it is for more punitive individuals to be drawn to crime dramas because they reinforce their worldview. Yet up to now there is little evidence of self-selection, as important predictors of punitiveness (such as gender, race and political conservatism) are uncorrelated with watching crime dramas. This provides suggestive evidence that the relationship between watching crime dramas and punitiveness is unlikely to be a function of self-selection.

Above all else, these data cannot address the underlying theory - that is, that the portrayal of crime and offenders in crime dramas elicits attributions of individual responsibility and feelings of control, generating anger and ultimately support for punitive policies to address crime. As the analysis stands, the relationship between watching crime dramas and support for punitive crime policies is a black box. Thus the question of causal mechanisms will be directly addressed in Chapter 5, which outlines the findings from a series of experiments that employed direct manipulation of exposure to the prevalent themes in crime dramas.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Key Socio-Demographic Variables, LI Sample

	LI Sample (Weighted)	2010 Census/ACS, Long Island	2010 Census/ACS, National
Gender			
Male	48	48	49
Female	52	52	51
Race	80	79	72
White	9	10	13
Black	11	11	15
Other			
Ethnicity			
Hispanic	14	16	16
Not Hispanic	86	84	84
Age			
18-34	24	26	31
35-44	18	18	18
45-54	22	21	19
55-64	17	16	17
65+	19	19	17
Education (25+)			
HS grad or less	37	38	36
Some college	26	26	44
BA/BS or more	37	36	20

Entries are percentages. Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Media Consumption, LI Sample

	LI Sample (Weighted) Pre-Callback	LI Sample (Weighted) Post-Callback	ATUS Bureau of Labor Statistics
Total TV (per day)			
Doesn't watch	3	4	22
30 minutes or less	6	7	22
31 to 60 minutes	13	15	9
61 to 120 minutes	27	28	16
121 to 180 minutes	22	21	14
181 to 240 minutes	11	12	11
241 to 300 minutes	6	4	7
300 minutes or more	12	10	17
DK/Refused	1	–	–
Local TV News (per day)			Pew People and the Press
Doesn't watch	15	17	42
Less than 15 minutes	4	4	3
15 to 29 minutes	7	9	5
30 to 59 minutes 19	22	17	
60 minutes or more	53	47	33
DK/Refused	3	2	1
Crime Dramas (per week)			
Doesn't watch	52		
60 minutes or less	14		
61 to 120 minutes	9		
121 to 180 minutes	6		
181 to 240 minutes	5		
241 minutes or more	15		
DK/Refused	1		

Notes: Entries are percentages. Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

Table 4.3: Predicting Media Consumption, LI Sample

	Total TV	Local TV News	Crime Dramas
Race (Black)	.063	.166	.141
	(.086)	(.115)	(.455)
Ethnicity (Hispanic)	-.018	.169**	.551
	(.059)	(.067)	(.359)
Gender (Male)	-.002	.050	-.152
	(.027)	(.048)	(.177)
Age	.002*	.002	.006
	(.001)	(.002)	(.008)
Education	-.017	.153	-.987
	(.091)	(.169)	(.667)
Income	-.081	-.137	-.343
	(.051)	(.093)	(.366)
Ideology (Conservative)	-.020	.061	-.010
	(.039)	(.071)	(.246)
Interest in Local Politics	-.002	.187**	.214
	(.047)	(.080)	(.300)
Percent Black	.157	.027	.397
	(.110)	(.183)	(.654)
Intercept	.395**	.350	.266
	(.105)	(.183)	(.744)
F =	1.70*	3.18**	1.44
N =	364	359	365

Notes: Entries are OLS (Columns 1 and 2) and probit (Column 3) coefficients (standard errors in parentheses), with sampling weights applied. Income estimated using multiple imputation. All variables are scaled to range from 0 to 1. ** $p \leq .05$ * $p \leq .10$, two-tailed tests.

Table 4.4: Media Consumption and Policy Attitudes, LI Sample

	Treat Juveniles as Adults	Support the Death Penalty	Prefer Drug Enforcement
Crime Drama Viewer	.422*	.027	-.333
	(.209)	(.151)	(.175)
Local TV Consumption	.096	.499*	.341
	(.264)	(.210)	(.254)
Race (Black)	-1.460*	-.485	-.506
	(.577)	(.414)	(.462)
Ethnicity (Hispanic)	-.398		-.578*
	(.389)	-.110	(.312)
Gender (Male)	-.128	.523*	.444*
	(.198)	(.154)	(.179)
Age	-.010	-.014*	.002
	(.007)	(.005)	(.006)
Education	-1.131	-1.882*	-1.139*
	(.786)	(.524)	(.661)
Income	.551	.283	.538
	(.374)	(.289)	(.334)
Ideology (Conservative)	.290	.975*	.496*
	(.305)	(.214)	(.242)
Interest in Local Politics	.089	-.749*	-.531*
	(.375)	(.252)	(.285)
Percent Black	2.059*	-.056	-.134
	(.743)	(.643)	(.742)
Intercept	-.125	–	.553
	(.769)		(.661)
Cutpoint 1	–	-2.586*	–
		(.564)	
Cutpoint 2	–	-1.848*	–
		(.562)	
Cutpoint 3	–	-.721	–
		(.512)	
F =	1.85*	6.48*	2.94*
N =	316	340	344

Notes: Entries are probit coefficients for juveniles, ordered probit coefficients for the death penalty and drug enforcement (standard errors in parentheses), with sampling weights applied. Income estimated using multiple imputation. All variables are scaled to range from 0 to 1. * $p \leq .05$, one-tailed tests.

Table 4.5: Media Consumption and Policy Attitudes, 1995 ANES

	Support the Death Penalty		Support Increased Spending on Crime		Support Clinton's Crime Bill	
Crime Drama Viewer	.627*	1.507*	.328*	.515	.210	.413
	(.207)	(.472)	(.181)	(.523)	(.206)	(.657)
Crime Drama Viewer X	–	-1.456*	–	-.302	–	-.314
Racial Resentment		(.736)		(.813)	(.967)	
Racial Resentment	.461	.810*	-.186	-.111	-1.367*	-1.285*
	(.363)	(.429)	(.382)	(.439)	(.457)	(.526)
Local TV Consumption	-.114	-.129 *	.128	.127	.409	.403
	(.235)	(.238)	(.247)	(.248)	(.275)	(.275)
Race (Black)	-.199	-.233	.252	.240	-.732*	-.725
	(.295)	(.280)	(.336)	(.334)	(.445)	(.443)
Ethnicity (Hispanic)	.274	.288	-.433	-.426	.551	.558
	(.555)	(.541)	(.563)	(.564)	(.681)	(.690)
Gender (Male)	.348*	.343*	-.119	-.113	-.175	-.176
	(.154)	(.153)	(.166)	(.166)	(.185)	(.185)
Age	-.325	-.327	-.208	-.209	-.382	-.382
	(.326)	(.328)	(.338)	(.338)	(.366)	(.365)
Education	-.246	-.239	-.216	-.216	-.617*	-.616*
	(.371)	(.374)	(.339)	(.340)	(.373)	(.374)
Income	.698*	.656*	.081	.069	.184	.174
	(.397)	(.391)	(.363)	(.362)	(.444)	(.443)
Ideology (Conservative)	.342*	.322	.092	.090	.165	.166
	(.208)	(.209)	(.223)	(.223)	(.284)	(.284)
Partisanship (Republican)	-.277	-.300	.044	.039	1.697*	1.694*
	(.265)	(.268)	(.295)	(.296)	(.352)	(.351)
Interest in Public Affairs	.527*	.521*	.012	.012	-.455	-.461
	(.264)	(.266)	(.266)	(.266)	(.338)	(.339)

(Continued on next page)

Table 4.5: Media Consumption and Policy Attitudes, 1995 ANES

	Support the Death Penalty		Support Increased Spending on Crime		Support Clinton's Crime Bill	
Intercept	–	–	.678	.012	1.103*	1.066
			(.504)	(.517)	(.637)	(.641)
Cutpoint 1	-.444	-.314	–	–	–	–
	(.502)	(.506)				
Cutpoint 2	-.032	.101	–	–	–	–
	(.506)	(.511)				
Cutpoint 3	.047	.181	–	–	–	–
	(.507)	(.512)				
Cutpoint 4	.712	.851	–	–	–	–
	(.509)	(.516)				
F =	2.76*	2.67*	.57	.52	4.17*	3.93*
N =	320	320	322	322	293	293

Notes: Entries are ordered probit (death penalty) or probit (spending and Clinton's crime bill) coefficients (standard errors in parentheses), with sampling weights applied. All variables are scaled to range from 0 to 1. * $p \leq .05$, one-tailed tests.

Figure 4.1: Attitudes Toward the Death Penalty

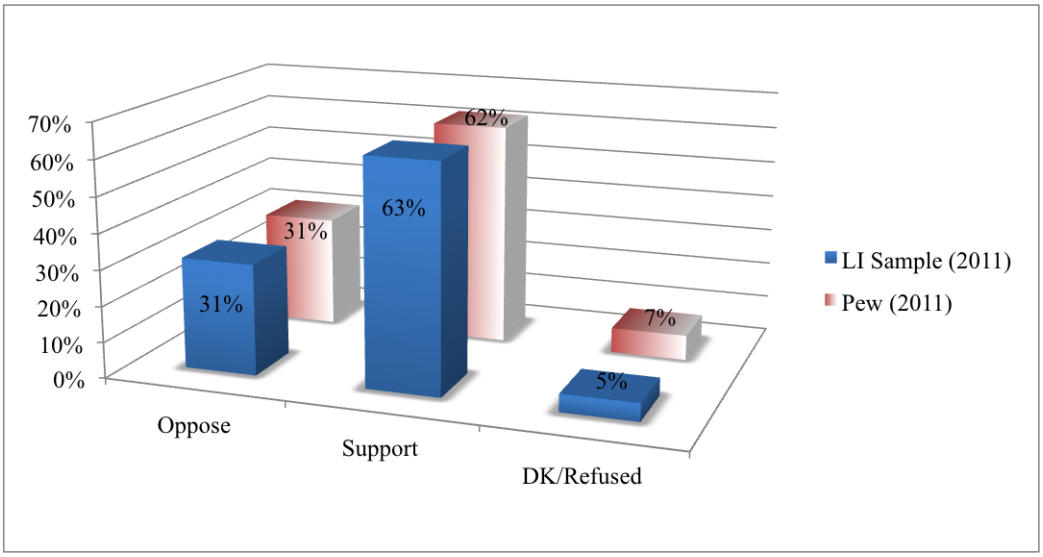


Figure 4.2: Attitudes Toward the Treatment of Juvenile Offenders

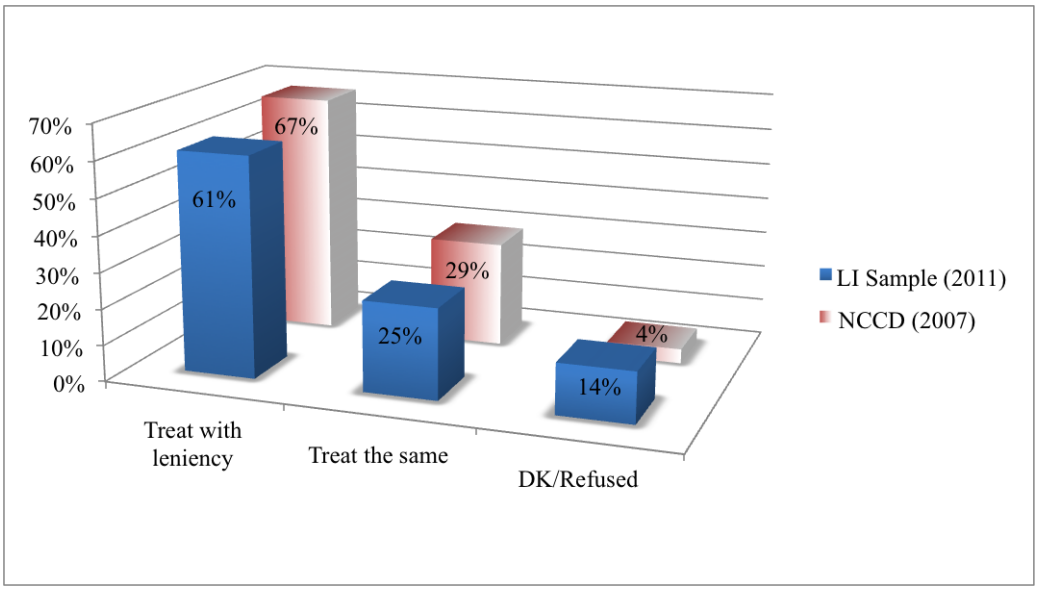
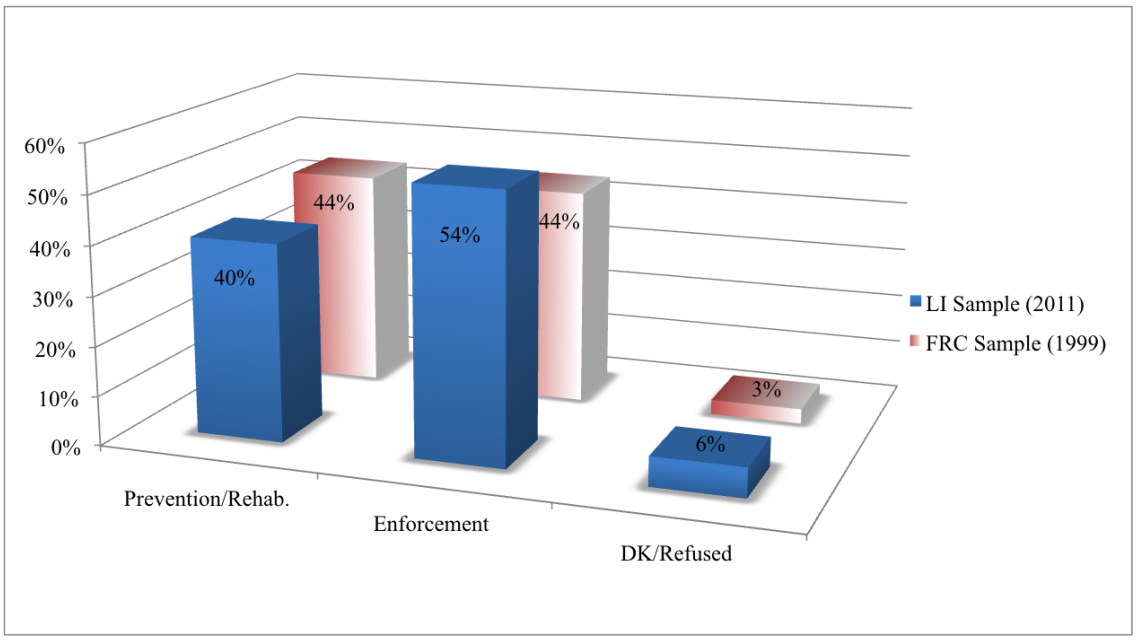


Figure 4.3: Attitudes Toward General Drug Policies



Chapter 5

An Experimental Investigation of Crime Dramas

Introduction

The previous two empirical chapters demonstrated that watching crime dramas and holding more punitive attitudes go together. Not only is aggregate public punitiveness greater in years that crime dramas are more popular, but so is individual support for content-specific policies among those who watch such shows on a regular basis. Moreover, there was little evidence of self-selection, in that other important predictors of crime policy attitudes (i.e., gender, ideology and local TV news consumption were insignificant in predicting media consumption). The survey data also suggest that racial attitudes, as expected, were less important for policy attitudes among regular viewers. Given that more racially resentful individuals were just as likely to watch crime dramas as their less resentful counterparts, it appears that the portrayal of offenders as white attenuates the effect of racial considerations.

Nonetheless, it is important to stress that these findings rest on observed correlations:

neither aggregate time series nor survey data can fully address the question of causality. These analyses, while compelling, are not enough to assuage concerns that the causal arrow might run in the opposing direction. For instance, it is plausible that as citizens become more punitive, for reasons unrelated to entertainment media exposure, they are increasingly drawn to programs that reinforce their beliefs about crime and offending. Moreover, data limitations have prevented a thorough investigation of the proposed causal mechanisms. Thus, while I have demonstrated a relationship between media exposure and policy attitudes, the exact causal pathway remains an untested series of assumptions to this point.

As stated at the outset, I deliberately chose to use several methodologies to address the same research question. In this way, the strengths of each design partially compensate for the weaknesses of the others. In order to tackle the question of causality as well as the theoretical mechanisms in a way not possible in either of the previous two analyses, a series of experiments was conducted. These experiments, in addition to addressing the internal validity of the theory, explore the manner by which crime dramas shape policy attitudes. In other words, why do crime dramas make viewers more punitive?

The Role of Emotions in Punitiveness

As laid out in Chapter 2, Ithe large gap between the reasons for offending given in crime dramas and the "real" reasons for criminality should lead to markedly different assessments regarding why people commit crime among regular viewers of crime dramas. More importantly, given different criminological theories about offending, regular viewers of crime dramas should also support different solutions to the problem of crime. Exposure to unambiguous attributions of responsibility for crime and highly controlled offenders should cause viewers to exhibit greater support for punitive crime policies.

At one level, this is a logical relationship: if viewers believe criminals to be beyond rehabilitation and inherently bad, then the best policy response is incapacitation and punishment. Beyond this, there are also compelling psychological and emotional reasons for viewers of crime dramas to support more punitive policies. Specifically, I utilize the Appraisal Tendency Framework (ATF) to theoretically link the content of crime dramas with policy attitudes. Unlike dimensional theories which array emotions according to valence (positive to negative; e.g., Marcus and MacKuen 1993), the ATF imagines emotions as discrete, but still capable of being placed along various dimensions (Lemer and Keltner 2001; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). There are several dimensions along which emotions can be arrayed (e.g., level of attention, pleasantness), but the ones of most interest for the present are perceptions of controllability, attributions of responsibility, and feelings of certainty. In other words, emotions are correlated (or *tend* to arise) with perceptions of controllability over the situation (as both an individual and the perceived controllability of others involved), whether a specific individual is responsible for an event, and feelings of certainty and predictability over the situation.

Previous content analyses of classic crime dramas such as *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order* and *CSI* have shown that crime is portrayed systematically and predictably within the genre. In particular, crime dramas emphasize individualistic explanations for criminality, which is to say that explanations for offending indicate the crime is pre-meditated and conducted in sound mind by the offender. In other words, crime drama offenders tend to have a high degree of control over the crime and can be directly attributed with responsibility for the crime. It is also clear that crime dramas should create feelings of certainty, given that they show the police as having an exceptionally high clearance rate (i.e., the proportion of crimes for which the police arrest and charge a suspect). The ATF suggests that these appraisals (individual attributions of responsibility, perceptions of controllability, and feelings of certainty) should be correlated with feelings of anger, and thus support for more punitive policies. In contrast,

feelings of uncertainty and failure to attribute responsibility to an individual would result in anxiety, and support for protective policies.

It should be noted that most research on the ATF has not examined the extent to which these six theoretical dimensions are present or absent in conjunction with discrete emotions. For example, research has demonstrated relationships consistent with the ATF between emotions and risk perceptions (Lerner and Keltner 2000; Lerner et al. 2003), policy attitudes (Huddy et al. 2005; Small and Lerner 2008), and moral judgments (Horberg et al. 2009; Strohminger, Lewis and Meyer 2011). None of these studies, however, examine the actual dimensions by which the emotions differ. Furthermore, although the ATF suggests that cognitive appraisals can be both a cause and effect of emotions, much of this work has manipulated emotions and then measured appraisals (e.g., Lemer and Keltner 2001; Lerner and Tiedens 2006; Small, Lerner and Fischhoff 2006). There is less evidence that this pattern also flows in the other direction, and that manipulation of cognitive appraisals will correlate with the emotions predicted by the ATF.

As a refresher of the specific expectations to be tested here, my hypotheses are as follows:

> **H1**: Regular exposure to crime dramas invites specific cognitive appraisals and, in particular, individualistic attributions of responsibility. That is, viewers of crime dramas should be more likely than non-viewers to attribute criminality to dispositional and individual factors (e.g., personality defects and greed) and to perceive offenders as in control of their actions (**H1a**). In addition, viewers of crime dramas should feel more certain about the causes of crime and who is responsible for the crime (**H1b**).
>
> **H2**: The cognitive appraisals elicited by crime dramas should be associated with particular emotions. Because crimes in crime dramas are committed by

known offenders ("bad" people) for known reasons, and crime is controllable through arrest and incarceration, viewers should feel more anger about crime than non-viewers (**H2a**). In contrast, because the police are portrayed as highly efficacious and criminals are frequently caught in crime dramas, there should be no significant differences in fear of crime between viewers and non-viewers (**H2b**).

H3: The cognitive appraisals invited by crime dramas should affect viewers' policy attitudes, in that viewers of crime dramas should exhibit greater support for punitive policies than non-viewers (**H3a**). This greater punitiveness should arise as a function of cognitive appraisals (**H3b**), with this relationship (partially) mediated through anger (**H3c**).

H4: Because crime dramas disproportionately show offenders as white, racial attitudes should be less important for punitiveness among regular viewers of crime dramas relative to non-viewers. Specifically, the relationship between racial attitudes and punitiveness should be weaker among viewers relative to non-viewers.

In the remainder of this chapter, I describe three studies of undergraduate students that test these hypotheses: the first was conducted in the spring of 2012, the second in the fall of 2012, and the third in the spring of 2013. The core design consisted of asking subjects to read about a criminal who fit, to varying degrees, the profile of a typical offender in a crime drama. Over the course of the three studies, however, the exact nature of the experiment was altered to address difficulties in successfully manipulating the dimensions of interest. Specifically, Study 1 failed to manipulate feelings of controllability altogether, and unevenly manipulated feelings of certainty and attributions of individual responsibility. Study 2, although more effective overall in terms of the treatments, did not manipulate the retained dimensions of certainty and controllability orthogonally. In addition, the design

of both studies was lengthy and intricate, with the end result that the manipulations got "lost" in the details. Subsequently, Study 3 focused more narrowly on the offender, creating the profile of what I call a stereotypical crime drama offender, based on content analyses. This dramatically reduced the length of the experiment and more cleanly manipulated the variables of interest. Thus, in the following discussion, I outline the sample, procedure, measures and manipulation checks in detail for Studies 1-3, but pay only scant attention to the null results of Studies 1 and 2. First, however, I describe an updated content analysis that, in conjunction with previous content analyses, motivated the construction of the plot and specifically the offender presented to subjects.

Crime Dramas Today: An Updated Content Analysis

This content analysis was conducted by two undergraduate research assistants, who together coded an entire season (23-24 episodes) of *The Mentalist* (season 4), *Criminal Minds* (season 7), and *NCIS* (season 9). These shows were chosen based purely on Nielsen ratings, which ranked them as the most popular crime dramas during the 2011-2012 television season.[1] It is also worth noting that two of these three shows were also in the top ten most watched shows that season (only *Criminal Minds* missed the top ten mark). I met with both assistants and discussed the coding sheet beforehand. They then coded the first four episodes of *The Mentalist* and an episode of *NCIS* in order to calculate inter-rater reliability ($\varkappa = .71$); the unit of analysis was the criminal act.[2] The coding sheet was refined based on this preliminary data and post-reliability conversations with the coders, and can be found in Appendix C.

[1]Technically, *NCIS: LA* beat out *The Mentalist* for the top three but, given the strong similarities in content to *NCIS*, I opted for a wider variety of crime dramas.

[2]Because some offenders committed multiple crimes (or involved multiple victims), and some crimes were committed by multiple offenders simultaneously, the number of crimes coded does not equal the number of offenders.

In addition to collecting standard socio-demographic information (gender, race, and age of the offender) and aspects of the crime committed (type of crime, weapon used), information was also collected on the degree to which an offender was in control of his actions, portrayed as responsible for the crime, and the certainty provided about the offender's guilt. These ratings were carried out to confirm whether offenders in crime dramas are depicted as in control of their actions and still identified with as much certainty as crime dramas from the 1990s and 2000s.

To assess these dimensions of interest, information was collected on whether the correct offender was identified (meaning the show explicitly or implicitly indicates that the offender was known to the criminal justice officials), and whether the officials cleared the case (meaning the show either explicitly shows the offender being arrested and charged, or indicates the offender will be successfully arrested and charged). In addition, the shows were coded with respect to the level of controllability over the crime exhibited by the offender. This was assessed by asking the coders to rate whether or not the offender was in control of his actions at the time (yes or no), followed by an open-ended question asking for examples to explain their assessment. In addition, information was collected on whether the crime was planned or not (yes or no). Finally, attributions of responsibility were assessed by whether the coders judged the offender to have committed the crime(s) because he was a bad person, because of bad circumstances (e.g., duress, accident), or both.

Table 1 displays a breakdown of violent crimes shown on these three shows. Much like previous content analyses, this analysis reveals that a large proportion of all violent crime shown was murder or attempted murder. Across all three shows, 56% of crimes were murder, ranging from a high of nearly three-fourths of all crimes shown on *Criminal Minds* to a low of 41% for *NCIS*. An additional 9% of all crimes were attempted murder, which the FBI does

not report individually due to its infrequency.[3] For comparison, Column 5 of Table 1 also displays the relative proportions of crimes reported nationally based on the 2011 Uniform Crime Report (UCR; of Justice 2012). In stark contrast to crime dramas, murder comprised .1% of all crimes reported in 2011. It is also clear that rape and kidnapping make up a healthy portion of fictional crimes, on *Criminal Minds* especially, although they make up less than 1% of all crimes together.

[Table 1 About Here]

Below crime type are the distributions for gender, race and age of all offenders shown in the three shows. Column 5 shows these same distributions for the perceived gender, race and age of offenders based on the 2006 National Crime Victimization Survey for all violent crimes, and Column 6 for homicides only based on the 2011 UCR. Although the representation of offenders' gender in crime dramas is fairly representative of actual offenders, with males comprising the vast majority of offenders, the racial breakdown also confirms previous content analyses: whites are over-represented and blacks under-represented as offenders. *Criminal Minds* displayed the greatest skew toward white offenders, with 96% of all offenders played by white actors. The lowest proportion of whites (67%) was in *NCIS*, but this was not because blacks made up the remainder of offenders. Rather, a large proportion of offenders were coded as "Other" because of the military focus of the show. Specifically, a handful of episodes focused on crimes committed during war or having international ties and involved Middle Eastern offenders.

Looking at the distribution of age for offenders, it is ambiguous as to whether crime drama offenders are older on average than real-life offenders, as previous content analyses have found (Brown 2001). Certainly there are more young adults and fewer teenagers than offenders as

[3]Attempted murders that are reported are considered assaults.

perceived by their victims, but the proportion of adults (30+) was relatively equal in crime dramas and according to actual victims. Comparing crime drama offenders to individuals who commit homicide only, the gap in perceived age becomes even less noticeable. It should be noted, too, that a much larger proportion of actual victims were unable to identify the age of their victim. In fact, this was also true of gender and race, with about 30% of offenders unidentified according to these basic sociodemographics. Not surprisingly, this figure is much lower for crime drama offenders.

Moving down the table, the content analysis also suggests that the modal offender in crime dramas is perceived to be middle class. Interestingly, the largest proportion of middle class offenders occurred in *Criminal Minds*, which is unique from other crime dramas in that it focuses more on the individual criminal, rather than a crime or series of crimes.[4] Naturally this is a rather subjective measure so, as a check, information was also collected on the offender's occupation. The results conform to what would be expected based on the assessment of social class. For instance, of the 39 "low class" offenders, 28% were engaged in criminal activities professionally (e.g., drug dealer, prostitute, hitman, etc.), and an additional 18% were unemployed. Other occupations included custodial service, prison shuttle driver, garage mechanic, ranch hand and "surfer/boat salvager". By contrast, upper-class offenders included a vineyard owner, an economist, a divorce attorney, and a CEO.

Finally, the bottom of Table 1 shows the assessments of certainty, controllability and attributions of responsibility. With respect to certainty, the first row shows the fictional clearance rate for all violent crimes compared to the actual figures for violent crimes in 2011 (Column 5); the second row shows these same figures for homicides only, compared to the clearance rate for homicides in 2011 (Column 6). Although the actual police are much better

[4]This can also be seen by the lower number of offenders overall in *Criminal Minds* compared to the other two shows, which averaged 2.6 offenders an episode.

at solving murders relative to violent crimes altogether - clearing about 65% of all reported murders - these figures are not as impressive as the departments portrayed in crime dramas. Approximately 85% of both violent crimes and homicides specifically were solved in *The Mentalist* and *NCIS*, while the FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit featured in *Criminal Minds* successfully identified and apprehended every offender they profiled. Thus, as indicated by previous content analyses, crime dramas overwhelmingly identify the party responsible for crimes portrayed in these shows, particularly relative to actual statistics. As argued at length already, this should cause viewers to feel a great deal of certainty about offender responsibility.

The portrayal of offenders as highly in control of their actions and directly responsible for the crimes committed is also confirmed by this content analysis. Consider, for example, the following descriptions of murders committed in these shows:

> There was a bombing incident at a high school and the man who survived the bombing wanted to be recognized as the one who stood up to the bomber, so kills the people who were with him at the time of the bombing. (*Criminal Minds*, episode 4)

> Kati Bauer, a young mother, is found stabbed to death. A mentally-unsound veteran - and Kati's secret extramarital lover - is suspected, but Kati's in-laws actually killed the victim to avoid the divorce that would be caused by her adultery, and framed the lover. (*The Mentalist*, episode 17)

> Two real-life "superheros" are killed by a slumlord and his butler for lowering the crime rate and thus raising the cost of real estate in the neighborhood. (*NCIS*, episode 13).

To demonstrate this empirically, the bottom of Table 3 shows the percent of offenders perceived to be in control of their actions at the time they committed the crime and the percent of crimes planned by offenders. It is clear that crime dramas are portrayed as overwhelmingly in control and individually responsible. About 85% of offenders were perceived to be cognizant and in control of their actions at the time of the crime. The majority of crimes in all three shows were also perceived to be planned by the offender, although this exhibited greater variation across shows, with only 62% of crimes planned in *The Mentalist*, compared to approximately 90% of crimes in the other two shows planned.

Coders were also asked to rate whether the offender committed the crime because he was a "bad person" or due to "bad circumstances" in order to assess the level of responsibility individual offenders are attributed in crime dramas. Over 60% of offenders were perceived as having committed the crime because they were a bad person rather than because of their circumstances, a figure which was fairly consistent across shows.

Obviously there are no comparison statistics for the controllability and responsibility of actual offenders. Nonetheless, the portrayal of offenders as deliberately and consciously committing crimes stands in stark contrast to many accepted theories of offending in criminology, which incorporate sociological aspects (e.g., social disorganization theory [Shaw and McKay 1942], strain theory [Merton 1949; Agnew 1992], labeling theory [Cloward and Ohlin 1960], and biosocial theories of offending [Moffitt 1993]). That is, it is generally believed that the reasons people commit crime are numerous and complex: many offenders do poorly in school[5] and/or attend an underachieving school, become involved in criminality with a peer group, begin to acquire and abuse legal and illegal substances, and have uneven job histories with few viable employment options. In turn, criminal records perpetuate this trajectory, reinforcing relationships with other offenders and making legal employment increasingly dif-

[5]For example, a 2003 study of prison inmates found that 68% had no high school diploma (Harlow 2003).

ficult. Of course, individual-level differences are important, too - many offenders have low IQs, poor impulse-control, and even genetic predispositions to delinquency (Rhee and Waldman 2002). But in the end, the average "real-world" offender is caught up in a tangled web of criminality which is difficult to escape from, quite at odds with the portrayal of offenders as middle-aged, employed, middle class white males who make a clear decision to turn to crime.

Related to the issue of controllability, I also collected information on the presence of drugs and alcohol during commission of these crimes. Across all three shows, drugs were present in only 15% of crimes. However, of these drug-related crimes, 76% insinuated that drugs were at least partially responsible for the crime (e.g., the offender was under the influence of drugs at the time, or a crime was committed in order to obtain drugs). Not surprisingly, perceptions of control were correlated with the presence of drugs: 40% of offenders identified as not in control of their actions during commission of the crime were also involved in drugs or alcohol, compared to 11% of "high control" offenders.

Importantly, attributions of responsibility also correlated with the portrayal of drugs across the three shows. Specifically, offenders who committed a crime that involved drugs were significantly less likely to be perceived as a bad person ($\chi^2 = 3.40$, $p < .05$). This effect appears to be driven by instances in which drugs were to blame, although the sample size is too small to detect anything but very large differences.[6] Finally, and of particular relevance given the findings from Chapter 4, offenders for whom drugs were present during the time were significantly less likely to be assigned a harsh sentence ($\chi^2 = 19.39$, $p < .05$). Of the 39 offenders for whom sentence information was given, 46% of those that involved drugs served

[6]Offenders for whom drugs were partially held responsible (n = 18) split 50/50 with respect to attributions, whereas 60% of offenders for whom drugs were not responsible (n = 5) were perceived to have committed the crime because they were a bad person.

no jail time[7], 8% were sentenced to less than 5 years, and 46% were sentenced to 20 or more years. Among offenders who committed a crime that did not involve drugs, however, 23% served no jail time, 8% were sentenced to life with the possibility of parole, 27% were sentenced to life without parole, and 27% were either sentenced to death or the prosecution intended to pursue capital charges (with the remainder serving sentences in between.)

These results align with the unexpected finding from Chapter 4, namely, that viewers of crime dramas hold less punitive attitudes than non-viewers when it comes to drug policy. Overall, this content analysis suggests that crime dramas typically do not portray crimes as drug-related. When they do, the offender is significantly less likely to be perceived as a bad person and in control of their actions. Moreover, these shows explicitly judge offenders of crimes that involve drugs less severely, handing out significantly less harsh sentences than offenders who do not commit drug-related crimes. Although the issue of how drugs are portrayed in entertainment media should be investigated more thoroughly, these findings provide additional evidence that the effects of crime dramas on perceptions and attitudes are more nuanced and content-specific than previously thought.

Study 1

One hundred and sixty-four students taking a political science class at Stony Brook University in the spring of 2012 participated in this experiment in exchange for marginal extra credit.[8] Column 1 of Table 2 displays the frequencies for several socio-demographic variables

[7]Although in some instances were sentenced to rehab or community service.

[8]Initially, 205 subjects participated. Subjects (n = 27) were excluded from the analysis if none of the following three conditions were met: 1) the subject is a US citizen, 2) English is his/her first language, or 3) the subject has lived in the U.S. for 4 years or more. These subjects were dropped because interest lies exclusively in American punitiveness, and Stony Brook University has a high proportion of international students. Of the remainder, 14 subjects took the study more than three times faster or three times as long as the average response time (mean response time = 37.4 minutes), and thus were also dropped from the

of interest (Columns 2 and 3 show these same variables for Studies 2 and 3, respectively). Overall, the table shows that the student sample is split evenly in terms of gender, reflects considerable racial and ethnic diversity, and is heavily skewed toward Democratic identification and liberalism. It should be reiterated, however, that the goal of experiments is internal validity, rather than generalizability. Given that the relationship between viewing crime dramas and policy attitudes has already been demonstrated in two representative adult samples, and that the theory does not predict interactions between the treatment and any unrepresentative covariates (e.g., education, race, or age; Druckman and Kam 2009), sample deviations are not of particular concern for the present analyses.

[Table 2 About Here]

For this study, subjects were told that the study was investigating "what makes some television dramas so popular on television today." This mild deception was used in order to preclude the possibility of demand effects (i.e., that subjects would react to the experimental treatment differently because they knew the purpose of the study). In particular, subjects were told they were going to read a "short story outlining the plot of a drama typical to those seen on television today." Prior to the experimental manipulation, subjects were asked several questions about potential moderators. This included questions ascertaining media exposure to news, crime dramas, and television more generally; political sophistication; general political attitudes (i.e., partisanship and ideology); and a series of questions assessing trait anger and trait anxiety.

The experimental manipulations themselves took place in a short story that outlined the plot of a typical crime drama. The story follows a team of Detectives who are investigating the murder of a woman, Margaret Jenson. The Detectives quickly determine two primary

analysis due to concerns about the extent to which subjects were able to read and comprehend the material.

suspects: the husband, who was ostensibly away on business when the wife was murdered, and the next-door neighbor, Justin Taylor, a man in his early 30s who lives with his parents. The first half of the story was the same for all subjects, and the experimental manipulations appeared in the second half of the story.

The first manipulation focused on ***attributions of responsibility***, and specifically the implied reason(s) why Justin might have killed his neighbor. This was done by describing Justin as creepily obsessed with the victim and somewhat psychopathic (individualistic attributions), or as a more pathetic individual who is a victim of abuse by his father and in love with the victim (situational attributions). To capture this, the individualistic attributions condition featured a number of individuals (e.g., the detectives, other neighbors) describing him as "a total creep" and a "sick individual", and the Detectives discover Justin has a prior conviction for assaulting a woman. In contrast, the situational attributions condition featured descriptions of Justin as a "rat in a cage" and a "sad human being", having been physically abused by his father for years. The neighbors suggest that he only sought some love and friendship from the victim as an escape from the abuse, which was physically evident to neighbors.

The second experimental treatment was ***controllability***, which manipulated whether Justin exhibited low or high control over his own actions. This was executed by having Justin be addicted to drugs in the low control condition, and the Detectives suggest that his disposal of the murder weapon indicates panic in the aftermath of the crime. In the high control condition, by contrast, it is revealed that Justin is obsessed with Margaret, and the detectives propose that his disposal of the murder weapon was planned and conniving. Finally, feelings of ***certainty*** about who is responsible for the crime were manipulated by unambiguously identifying Justin as the offender (i.e., the Detectives find incontrovertible physical evidence and Justin confesses to the crime) or ending the story with the Detectives

still working on the case, and unable to conclude whether Justin or the husband is responsible.

After the manipulation checks, subjects were asked "How angry did Justin make you feel? Very angry, somewhat angry, a little angry, or not at all angry?" This question was repeated but with "outraged", "anxious", and "fearful" in place of "angry". An exploratory factor analysis retained two factors, and rotating the factors obliquely revealed that the two anger questions loaded highly on the first factor (anger factor loadings $> .80$; fear factor loadings $< .10$), and the two fear questions loaded highly on a second factor (fear factor loadings $> .70$; anger factor loadings $< .10$). As a result, the former two questions were averaged to create a scale of ***anger*** ($\alpha = .64$); the latter two were averaged to create a scale of ***fear*** ($\alpha = .80$).

In addition, subjects were queried on both specific and general policy attitudes. In particular, subjects were asked for the attitudes toward the ***death penalty*** with respect to Justin specifically: "In the fictional crime story you just read, Margaret Jenson was murdered, a crime that is eligible for the death penalty. How strongly do you support or oppose the death penalty as punishment for the murder of Margaret Jenson? Strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose?" Finally, subjects were asked for their attitudes toward the death penalty in general, the treatment of juveniles, drug policy and crime spending, using the same question wording as in the LI and ANES samples from Chapter 4.[9] The survey concluded with a scale assessing racial attitudes and questions about basic socio-demographics.

[9]Death Penalty: "How strongly do you support or oppose the death penalty for murder? Strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose?" Juveniles: "Do you think that teenagers under the age of 18 convicted of their first crime should be given the same punishment as adults convicted of their first crime, or should they be treated less harshly?" Drug Policy: "If two programs that cost the same were found to be equally effective at reducing drug-related crime, which would you support implementing: one, setting up free drug abuse support groups, or two, increasing targeted enforcement of major drug distributors?" Spending: "If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, for which of the following programs would you like to see spending increased and for which would you like to see spending decreased: Dealing with crime?"

To this point, I have argued that exposure to crime dramas increases support for punitive policy attitudes. Given that policy attitudes are typically measured at the general level, I have assessed punitiveness using general question wording identical to that typically used by large survey houses. Here, I assess both specific and general policy attitudes for two primary reasons. First, specific policy attitudes are typically less punitive than general policy attitudes. It would also be of interest if specific and general policy attitudes were differentially affected by crime dramas. That is, do crime dramas affect both general and specific attitudes equally, or one more than the other? A second and closely related reason is that it is possible exposure to a single, text-based[10] version of a crime drama would affect only immediate attitudes. Whereas repeated exposure to crime dramas would impact general policy attitudes over the long run, it may only be possible to demonstrate the effects of a single crime drama on policy attitudes relevant to the specific offender described in the story.

Manipulation Checks

The efficacy of the certainty manipulation was measured by asking subjects about their level of certainty and confidence that the person identified as the offender by the subject was guilty of murder ("How certain do you feel that Justin killed Margie Jenson? Very certain, somewhat certain, a little certain, or not at all certain?" "How confident do you feel that Justin killed Margie Jenson? Very confident, somewhat confident, a little confident, or not

[10]Indeed, the decision to present subjects with a plot outline, rather than an episode of an actual crime drama, was a deliberate one. This design has the obvious advantage of full control over the content and the manipulations, but it lacks the same *je ne sais quoi* of watching a crime drama on television. At its core, this tradeoff is simply an extension of the usual advantages and disadvantages of experiments (i.e., greater internal at the expense of external validity). Nonetheless, this tradeoff is worth emphasizing: whereas the typical lab experiment on media effects likely finds larger effects than what would be discovered in the public at large (Jerit, Barabas and Clifford 2013), I argue that the manipulations in the experiment described here are actually weaker as implemented in the lab than they are in reality. In any case, given that a relationship between watching crime dramas and punitiveness has already been established in representative samples, we can have more confidence in the generalizability of findings.

at all confident?"). These two questions formed a single factor, and thus were averaged to create a scale of certainty (α= .89).

Attributions of responsibility were assessed with several questions, the first of which asked why Justin Taylor killed the victim and provided several response options, from which the subject could choose as many as they liked ("He was a bad person"; "He was treated badly by others"; "He was addicted to drugs"; "He was mentally ill"; "He was jealous"; "He was angry"; "He was confused"; "Other"). Next, subjects were asked a forced choice question: "If you had to choose, would you say that Justin Taylor killed Margaret Jenson because he was a bad person or because of bad circumstances?" The responses to whether Justin was perceived as a bad person (in the check all that apply and forced choice question format) and treated badly did not load highly on a single factor (α= .25), and thus were analyzed separately.

Finally, controllability was assessed with three questions: subjects were asked how much Justin Taylor was in control of his actions ("In the fictional crime story you just read, how much was Justin Taylor in control of his actions? Very much in control, somewhat in control, a little in control, or not at all in control?"), understood what he was doing when he killed the victim ("In the fictional crime story you just read, how much did Justin Taylor understand what he was doing when he killed Margie Jenson? Understood a lot, understood somewhat, understood a little, or didn't understand at all?"), and whether he planned to commit murder ("In the fictional crime story you just read, did Justin Taylor plan to commit murder? Definitely planned the murder, possibly planned the murder, or definitely did not plan the murder?"). These three questions weakly formed a single factor, and were averaged to create a scale of controllability (α= .40).

To examine whether or not the experimental conditions were successful in altering the profile of the criminal, manipulation checks were conducted using either OLS regression,

probit or ordered probit, depending on the nature of the dependent variable. All dependent variables were recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating greater feelings of certainty, controllability, and attributions of responsibility. In addition, all significant findings are at the 95% confidence level, one-tailed.[11]

Certainty: Respondents in the high certainty condition were not significantly more likely to be certain in their judgment of who the offender was than those in the low certainty condition ($b = .05$, $p > .10$). For example, 56% of respondents in the high certainty conditions were somewhat or very certain and confident Justin was the offender, compared to 46% in the low certainty condition who felt equally certain and confident.

Attributions: Subjects in the individual attributions condition were significantly less likely to believe Justin was treated badly by others ($Z = -1.16$, $p < .05$). They were not, however, more likely to believe he was a bad person in either the check all that applies ($Z = .41$, $p > .10$) or forced choice ($Z = .18$, $p > .10$) question format. In fact, only 15% of the sample in total believed Justin was a bad person (based on the forced choice question), and this was relatively equally distributed across the two attributions conditions, with 17% of respondents in the individual attributions condition believing he committed the crime because he was a bad person, and 10% believing so in the situational condition.

Controllability: Subjects in the high controllability condition were significantly more likely to perceive Justin as having greater control over his actions ($b = .08$, $p < .05$), although this effect was driven entirely by perceptions that he planned the crime. That is, when examining each question separately, only perceptions that Justin planned the crime were significantly different between subjects in the low and high controllability conditions ($Z = .84$, $p < .05$). In contrast, there were no significant differences between the two groups in either perceptions of Justin as in control of his actions ($Z = .14$, $p > .10$) or as understanding

[11]Marginally significant findings are reported in the text but not marked in the Tables.

what he was doing when he committed the crime (Z = .02, p > .10). Moreover, subjects in the high and low controllability conditions did not differ with respect to their beliefs that Justin was confused when committing the crime (Z = .04, p > .10).

Results

For the substantive analyses, primary interest lies in the interactive effect of attributions, controllability and certainty: that is, the level of anger and punitiveness expressed among respondents in the individualistic attributions of responsibility, high controllability and high certainty condition, or what I refer to as the ***stereotypical (crime drama) offender*** condition, relative to the other conditions. Thus, the expectation is that the triple interaction of these manipulations will be positive and significant in predicting anger and thus punitiveness, although varying lower-order combinations (e.g., the interaction of controllability and attributions of responsibility) may also significantly boost emotional reactions and support for punitive policies. As with the manipulation checks, all dependent variables were recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating greater emotions or support for the more punitive policy option.

Since the experimental manipulations were weak and uneven in their effects, it is not surprising that the treatments also failed to explain emotional reactions to the offender of policy attitudes. With respect to anger, only certainty was negative and significant (b = -.28, p < .05), such that subjects in the situational attributions, low controllability, and high certainty condition expressed significantly less anger relative to subjects in the situational attributions, low controllability and low certainty condition. With respect to fear, none of the manipulations or their interactions were significant (all p's > .10). In addition, neither the manipulations nor their interactions were significant with respect to attitudes toward

the death penalty in Justin's case specifically, or policy attitudes in general.

The results of Study 1 are summarized in Table 3, which shows the reliability for the scales measuring the manipulation checks, as well as the difference in means between subjects who received the stereotypical crime drama offender (high certainty, controllability and individual attributions) relative to the other conditions.[12] This table clearly shows not only the problems encountered with the manipulation checks (i.e., responses did not scale as expected, and the treatments were not effective in manipulating appraisals of certainty, controllability and attributions of responsibility), but also their lack of effectiveness with respect to the dependent variables of interest. The failure of these manipulations motivated Study 2, which sought above all to strengthen the theoretical appraisals as they appeared in the plot outline.

[Table 3 About Here]

Conclusions

The lesson of Study 1 was that the manipulations were weak and therefore ineffective. In particular, the results for the certainty and attributions of responsibility manipulation checks were mixed, and the controllability manipulation appeared to be particularly ineffective. In hindsight, the primary problem stemmed from the fact that it was difficult to manipulate one dimension without the other. That is, how does one effectively describe an offender who is individually responsible but not in control of his actions? Or, conversely, an offender who is highly controlled in his behavior but the crime is described as stemming from situational factors? Indeed, Smith and Ellsworth described the control dimension as varying based on "whether the events were controlled by the person, another person, or

[12]The same results are reported for Studies 2 and 3 in Columns 2 and 3.

impersonal circumstances" (1985, p. 818). In contrast, attributions of responsibility focus not only on the causes of the event, but also the legitimacy of the outcome. For example, a "person may be responsible for initiating a situation, but then cease to control it" (p. 818). Clearly, these dimensions are closely related. In fact, the authors confess only that "control *may* be different from responsibility", and that they are examining the "two related but potentially separable dimensions in the hope of further clarifying the conceptually elusive, but intuitively compelling set of distinctions" (p. 819; italics added). Indeed, recent work has focused solely on attributions (e.g., Small, Lerner and Fischhoff 2006) and/or the certainty dimensions (Lemer and Keltner 2001; Lerner et al. 2003; Small and Lerner 2008), ignoring the controllability dimension altogether.

Furthermore, the plot outline in the high certainty condition resulted in the arrest of Justin, whereas in the low certainty condition no arrest was made. The story was initially written as such because it was difficult to suggest that Justin was guilty (and thus inducing high certainty appraisals) without suggesting or implicating that he would also be arrested for the crime. However, since this appraisal dimension focuses on feelings of certainty about who is to blame, the differential outcomes of the high and low certainty conditions may have done more than alter these appraisals. In particular, this kind of certainty manipulation shares some conceptual overlap with attributions of responsibility, in that arresting the offender may imply a greater degree of responsibility for the crime than not arresting the offender. As a result, the experiment was refined in order to address these problems, and specifically to strengthen and streamline the manipulations in hopes of more effectively manipulating the dimensions of interest.

Study 2

One hundred and forty-one students taking a political science class at Stony Brook University in the fall of 2013 participated in this experiment in exchange for marginal extra credit.[13] Column 2 of Table 1 shows the distribution of socio-demographic variables for the subjects in this study. In general, the sample looks much like that of Study 1, although it is the most skewed in terms of political attitudes and gender (i.e., the sample is highly liberal, Democratic and female) relative to the other two studies.

The questionnaire was nearly identical to that used in Study 1. One exception is that the check all that apply question format for assessing the attributions of responsibility manipulation was dropped, due to low reliability (as well as the merging of the attributions dimension with controllability, described below). The experimental manipulation, on the other hand, was altered substantially in order to address the problems that arose in manipulating the dimensions of interest in Study 1. First, the story was amended so that the low and high certainty conditions both led to the apprehension and arrest of Justin Taylor for burglary, and the certainty manipulation focused solely on whether Justin was guilty of homicide or not. In the high certainty conditions, Justin confesses to murdering the victim (when subjects were also assigned to the situational attributions condition) or his burglar accomplice "flips" on him and testifies against him in exchange for a more lenient sentence (when subjects were also assigned to the individual attributions condition). In the low certainty conditions, no murder weapon is ever found, no one confesses, and the Detectives are only able to identify Justin as responsible for a string of burglaries in the neighborhood.

[13]Initially, 173 subjects participated. Subjects (n = 20) were excluded from the analysis if none of the following three conditions were met: 1) the subject is a US citizen, 2) English is his/her first language, or 3) the subject has lived in the U.S. for 4 years or more. Of the remainder, 10 subjects took the study more than times faster or three times as long the average response time (mean response time = 35.9 minutes), and thus were dropped from the analysis. Finally, 2 respondents had missing data on every question after the experimental manipulation and thus were dropped from the analyses.

Second, the controllability and attributions of responsibility manipulations were merged into a single dimension of controllability.[14] The merged manipulation was also strengthened by making Justin a drug addict in the low controllability condition, as well as describing him as "more comfortable around pets" than people and a "dumb schmuck with poor decision making skills". This condition further indicated that Justin was in debt to his drug dealer, and implied that the crime was committed under duress. Thus, the goal was to emphasize the sociological explanations for offending and maximize the extent to which subjects perceived the events as a function of the situation and out of the individual's control. The high controllability condition, by contrast, described Justin as "creepy" and implied that he murdered the victim because she knew he was burglarizing houses in the neighborhood. Moreover, the Detectives discover that the victim was choked after she was already dead from a gunshot wound, indicating (they suggest) excessive rage and cold-bloodedness on behalf of the offender.

As a result of these changes, Study 2 was a 2 x 2 between-subjects design, in which subjects were randomly assigned to a high or low certainty condition, and a high or low controllability condition. However, in order to effectively perform these manipulations, the story had four slightly different endings. That is, most of the manipulations were performed by altering single sentences within the story until the end, at which point the story branched into four different conclusions, one for each possible combination of the manipulations.

Third, the extent to which the text emphasized these manipulations was expanded in order to make them stand out more in a fairly lengthy story. That is, the number of sentences that assisted in manipulating certainty and controllability increased, and the manipulations began earlier in the narrative. Moreover, the story was shortened to include 14 screens of

[14]I prefer the term controllability over attributions of responsibility because I was able to more overtly manipulate the level of controllability displayed by the offender. Nonetheless, as described in Study 3, it is clear that more controlled offenders are also perceived as more responsible.

text (each approximately a paragraph in length), down from 18 screens in Study 1.

Manipulation Checks

Certainty: The certainty scale was notably more reliable in Study 2 (α= .58). Unlike Study 1, respondents in the high certainty condition were significantly more likely to be certain and confident in their beliefs about the offender's identify (b = .10, p < .05).

Controllability: The controllability scale was also much more reliable (α= .91), and the controllability manipulation predicted greater beliefs on this controllability scale (b = .18, p < .05). Looking at the three variables separately, the controllability manipulation predicted both perceptions that Justin planned the crime (Z = 1.32, p < .05) and that he understood what he was doing (Z = .37, p < .05). In contrast, the coefficient for the controllability manipulation when predicting perceptions of control was correctly signed but insignificant (Z = .23, p > .10). Subjects in the high controllability conditions were also significantly more likely to perceive Justin was a bad person in a forced choice question (Z = .67, p < .05).

Additional analyses, however, revealed that the manipulations were not orthogonal to one another. In particular, the certainty manipulation was effective when subjects were assigned to the low controllability condition, but not when assigned to the high controllability condition. As a result, subjects in the high certainty and low controllability condition were significantly more likely to feel certain and confident in their beliefs about who was responsible for the crime relative to subjects in the certainty and low controllability condition (interaction b = -.15, p < .05). In addition, the interaction of controllability and certainty was positive and significant in predicting greater perceptions that Justin planned the crime (Z = .75, p < .05) as well as marginally significant in predicting greater perceptions that

Justin was in control of his actions (Z = .59, p < .10). The interaction of controllability and certainty was also positive but insignificant in predicting perceptions of how much Justin understood what he was doing (Z = .49, p > .10). Thus, the controllability manipulation was significantly more effective when subjects were in the high certainty condition relative to the low certainty condition.[15]

Results

Once again, I checked that anger and fear formed two distinct factors, which they did (anger: α= .89; fear: α= .73). With respect to anger, neither the indicators for controllability and certainty nor the interaction of the two were significant. Unexpectedly, the expectations for fear were also not borne out. The certainty and controllability indicators were both significant, but only controllability was in the expected direction (certainty: b = -.10, p < .05; controllability: b = .13, p < .05). Thus, subjects in the high controllability but low certainty condition expressed the greatest level of fear, while subjects in the low controllability but high certainty condition expressed the least amount of fear; subjects in the other two conditions experienced levels of fear that were between these two extremes.

Finally, analyses were run predicting support for the death penalty with respect to the offender described in the story and sentencing more generally. As with emotions, there was no support for the hypotheses regarding how the treatments would affect policy attitudes. In regard to the death penalty for Justin specifically, only certainty was negative and significant (Z = -.48, p < .05), suggesting that subjects in the low certainty and high controllability

[15]I also checked for evidence of moderation in Study 1. The only dimension affected by a treatment that was not theoretically relevant was feelings of certainty. Specifically, this analysis showed that controllability was positive and significant (b = .10, p < .05), and the interaction of attributions and controllability was positive and significant (b = .16, p < .05) in predicting greater feelings of certainty. In other words, subjects who read about a highly controlled offender, and particularly a highly controlled and individually responsible offender, were more likely to feel certain and confident in their beliefs in the low certainty condition. There was no other evidence of moderation in Study 1.

condition (who had also expressed the greatest levels of fear) were less supportive of the death penalty relative to the other three conditions. The conditions did not differ significantly with respect to general crime policy attitudes, however. These null results are summarized in Column 2 of Table 3, which shows the reliability of the manipulation checks and emotional reactions, as well as the difference in means between these variables, and general and specific policy attitudes.

Conclusions

In sum, the manipulations in Study 2 work when viewed in isolation - however, their effects were not independent of one another. In particular, the combination of high certainty and high controllability reduced certainty (compared to the low controllability and high certainty conditions). Conversely, the certainty manipulation magnified the effect of the controllability manipulation in regard to perceptions that Justin was in control of his actions. Thus, subjects in the high certainty and high controllability condition had the greatest perceptions that Justin was in control of his actions, with subjects in the high controllability and low certainty condition holding the next greatest perceptions. Moreover, there was also evidence of moderation for the controllability manipulation, in that it was effective only for subjects in the high certainty condition, but not subjects in the low certainty condition.

A re-examination of the stories suggested some possible reasons for the conflation of these dimensions. In particular, the high certainty condition had two different endings, depending on the controllability manipulation. In the low controllability condition, Justin confesses to the crime, telling them that his drug dealer gave him the gun in the first place and that he didn't know it was loaded. In the high controllability condition, by contrast, a homeless man finds the murder weapon digging through garbage looking for recyclables, and Justin's

accomplice agrees to testify against him in exchange for a less sentence for the burglaries. In some respects, then, the combination of low controllability and high certainty was the clearest in terms of guilt, specifically relative to the high controllability and high certainty condition. That is, because the offender doesn't personally confess to the crime in the high controllability condition, it appears that subjects felt less certain about who was responsible for the murder.

The controllability manipulation also differed by certainty. As just noted, the high controllability and high certainty condition featured Justin's accomplice, who says that it was Justin's idea to burglarize the neighbors. The Detectives also find evidence that suggests Justin strangled his victim after she was dead, noting his rage in killing her. The high controllability but low certainty condition also features the accomplice flipping on Justin to get a reduced sentence but, in this scenario, the Detectives note they have no other evidence other than his testimony, which doesn't look good to juries coming from "a guy with a rap sheet a mile long". Thus, as with the certainty manipulation, it appears that the high controllability conditions were not perceived equivalently across the high and low certainty conditions. In particular, subjects perceived Justin as having greater control over his actions in the high certainty condition, seemingly due to the greater evidence levied against him.

Thus, it is likely that the conflation of these dimensions was a primary factor in finding null results.[16] Arguably this conflation would not have been as problematic (although still undesirable) if it was the "desired" direction - that is, if the certainty manipulation was most effective in the high controllability condition, and the controllability manipulation was most effective in the high certainty condition. Nonetheless, informal discussions with subjects

[16]Indeed, this experiment highlighted the difficult in independently manipulating the dimensions, or appraisals, that are associated with discrete emotions. Clearly, it is easier from an experimenter standpoint to manipulate emotions and measure appraisals of certainty and controllability than to manipulate the appraisals and measure emotions.

after the experiment revealed a separate problem, which is that the story was too long and complex, resulting in the manipulations getting lost in the details. For example, in both Studies 1 and 2, subjects took nearly 40 minutes on average to complete the survey. The story itself took up 14 screens, each with approximately a paragraph worth of text. From a quantitative perspective, less than a third (30%) of the text emphasized either of the manipulations. As a result, it was decided that the next iteration would focus exclusively on the offender (analogous to the format of *Criminal Minds*), and simplify the remainder of the plot to a few sentences. In this way, the manipulations would comprise the bulk of the experiment (rather than the surrounding text which was largely filler) and could simultaneously be strengthened in terms of maximizing the differences in appraisals across conditions.

Study 3

One hundred and eighty-seven subjects taking a political science class at Stony Brook University in the spring of 2013 participated in this experiment in exchange for marginal extra credit.[17] Column 3 of Table 1 displays the frequencies for several socio-demographic variables of interest, which reveal that the sample is again quite similar to that in Studies 1 and 2, although most closely approximates the Long Island sample from Chapter 4. Overall, the survey was also similar to that used in Studies 1 and 2, which began by first asking about media exposure. Political sophistication and general political attitudes were moved to the end of the survey before questions concerning racial attitudes and demographics, in order

[17]Initially, 220 subjects participated. Subjects (n = 25) were excluded from the analysis if none of the following three conditions were met: 1) the subject is a US citizen, 2) English is his/her first language, or 3) the subject has lived in the U.S. for 4 years or more. Moreover, this sub-group was significantly worse at correctly answering an attention manipulation check ($\chi^2 = 3.66$, $p < .05$). Of the remainder, 8 subjects took the study more than times three faster or three times longer than the average respondent (mean response time = 21.6 minutes), and thus were dropped from the analysis.

to minimize respondent fatigue before encountering the experimental manipulation. The treatments were followed by the usual series of manipulation checks (assessing feelings of certainty and perceptions of control), and the remainder of the survey, with two exceptions, was identical.

First, an additional question was added to more directly assess perceived controllability. This question asked subjects, "How much is Justin Taylor responsible for his place in life? Very responsible, somewhat responsible, a little responsible, or not at all responsible?" In addition, the question wording for assessing emotional reactions was expanded and altered, so that subjects were asked, "Thinking back to what you learned about Justin, how much does he and his actions make you feel" a specific emotion. The emotions displayed in random order were "outraged", "irritated", "furious", "angry", "frightened", "fearful", "nervous", and "anxious". Respondents were given the option of choosing "Felt a lot, felt somewhat, felt a little, or didn't feel at all."

As already noted and in contrast, the experimental manipulation underwent extensive reconstruction from Studies 1 and 2 to Study 3. Specifically, after the media exposure questions, subjects were instructed to read about Justin Taylor, a man "whose girlfriend, Lacey Johnson, was recently discovered stabbed to death in her apartment" and is considered a suspect in her death. This was followed by a single screen highlighting bullet point observations of Justin by neighbors, co-workers, and family members of the victim. In the high controllability condition, Justin is described as "highly disciplined" and keeping a "grueling schedule". It is noted that he is never seen drinking at a bar he frequents, and a search warrant turns up tapes of his girlfriend in her bedroom, although it is unclear whether she is aware of the tapes or not. In contrast, the low controllability condition features Justin's mother describing him "as an impulsive child" and having a "bad habit of getting into bar fights". In addition, Justin has held a string of low-paying jobs, drinks away much of his pay-

check, and has a history of domestic violence with his girlfriend (who has also been charged with assault previously). The exact profiles of Justin used in the controllability manipulation can be found in Table 4.

[Table 4 About Here]

At the same time as the controllability manipulation, subjects were randomly assigned to receive a photo or not ostensibly showing the "grieving family" of Lacey Johnson. The photo shows a white family[18], dressed in black, and hugging in a small circle. One young woman's face is turned outwards and crying. This photo manipulation was added for two reasons: first, the previous two studies revealed that the experiment was cognitively demanding. Several screens of text seemed to overwhelm respondents, and the manipulations were buried within a mass of information. The hope was that the photo would make the story less demanding and more engaging. Secondly, part of what makes television emotionally compelling is the visual aspect. As a result, it was hypothesized that adding the visual component of crime dramas to the experimental design would exaggerate the impact of the other treatments, specifically the effect of controllability and certainty, on emotions and/or policy attitudes.[19] The photo can be found in Figure 1 below.

[Figure 1 About Here]

Finally, certainty was randomly manipulated by informing half of the respondents: "Imagine that upon further investigation, the detectives found DNA evidence and a murder weapon

[18]Seventy-eight percent of victims in the updated content analyses were white (81% for *Criminal Minds*, 68% for *NCIS* and 86% for The Mentalist). These figures are generally higher looking at murder victims only (83% in *Criminal Minds*, 80% in *NCIS* and 79% in *The Mentalist*). In contrast, this is an inflated number compared to homicide victims, of which 46% were white in 2011 (of Justice 2012).

[19]I discuss the implications of using this specific photo more fully in the summary.

linking Justin Taylor to the crime scene; they use this to obtain an arrest warrant and charge him with the first-degree murder of Lacey Johnson." Thus, the experiment overall became a 2 x 2 x 2 between subjects design, with certainty, controllability and the presence of the photo randomly manipulated.

As noted above, these changes were made in order to focus the experiment more narrowly on the dimensions of interest. Specifically, Study 3 improves on the previous two studies by: 1) strengthening the manipulations so that they comprised the majority of the text subjects were exposed to and focused more narrowly on the offender; 2) shortening the overall length of the manipulations[20]; and 3) collapsing attributions and controllability into a single dimension in order to more cleanly and orthogonally manipulate the dimensions of interest.

Manipulation Checks

Before conducting the main analyses, I again conducted a series of manipulation checks to ensure the experimental treatments were effective, a summary of which can be found in Column 3 of Table 3.

Controllability: The controllability manipulation was positive and significant in predicting perceptions of Justin as a bad person ($Z = .68$, $p < .05$). In stark contrast to Study 1, 54% of subjects in the high controllability condition said Justin committed the crime because he was a "bad person", as opposed to 28% in the low controllability condition. Perceptions of Justin's controllability (whether he planned the crime, how much he understood what he was doing when he committed the crime, and how much he was in control of his actions at the time of the murder) formed a reliable factor ($\alpha = .72$), and were higher among subjects in the high relative to the low controllability condition ($b = .18$, $p < .05$). Finally, subjects

[20]The average response time from Studies 1 and 2 to 3 dropped from 40 to 20 minutes as a result.

in the high controllability condition were significantly more likely to believe Justin is "responsible for his place in life" ($Z = 1.24$, $p < .05$). For example, 80% of subjects in the high controllability said Justin was "very responsible" for his place in life, compared to only 39% in the low controllability condition.

Certainty: Feelings of certainty and confidence also formed a highly reliable scale ($\alpha = .86$), and scores on this scale were significantly higher among subjects in the high certainty relative to the low certainty condition ($b = .12$, $p < .05$). For comparison with Study 1, 24% of subjects in the low certainty condition were somewhat or very certain and confident that Justin was the offender, compared to 53% who felt somewhat or very certain and 44% who felt somewhat or very confident in the high certainty condition.

Photo: Finally, the manipulation checks were examined with respect to the photo. It was hypothesized that the photo would moderate the impact of the certainty and attributions manipulation, specifically by exaggerating the effect of the high certainty and individual attributions condition. Analyses revealed, however, that the photo had no impact on the efficacy of the manipulations themselves (i.e., the interaction between the photo and the other treatments was never significant in predicting the manipulation checks). Moreover, the photo failed to reveal a significant main effect with respect to feelings of certainty and perceptions of controllability (all p's $> .10$). As will be seen shortly, though, the photo had a critical impact on how subjects reacted to the text-based manipulations.

Results

As a test of (**H3**), Table 5 displays models predicting whether the experimental manipulations affected attitudes toward the death penalty. Column 1 shows the results for attitudes toward using the death penalty in Justin's case specifically, followed by general death penalty

attitudes in Column 2, as a function of certainty, controllability and their interaction.[21] The photo is ignored for the moment, given the lack of evidence that it affected the certainty and controllability manipulations.

[Table 5 About Here]

First, it is obvious that neither manipulation worked in isolation.[22] The indicator variables for both certainty and controllability are slightly negative and substantively rather small in Column 1, indicating that support for the death penalty in Justin's case was relatively equal among subjects who were exposed to a low control offender and/or felt uncertain about these attributions. This also holds true for attitudes toward the death penalty in general. Although the coefficients are larger than those found for specific attitudes, the effect of one dimension absent the other is non-significant (see Column 2).

Importantly, the interaction of certainty and controllability is large and positive in both models. This interaction reaches significance with respect to death penalty attitudes toward Justin specifically, but only achieves marginal significance for attitudes toward the death penalty in general ($p < .10$). In other words, subjects who read about an offender who was in control of his actions and was clearly responsible for the crime expressed significantly greater support for the death penalty relative to the other conditions. More concretely, 52% of respondents in the stereotypical condition strongly or somewhat supported the death penalty for Justin, compared to 37% in the other three conditions combined. Similarly, 50% of respondents supported the death penalty in general after being exposed to a stereotypical

[21]The distribution of support for the death penalty in general is only slightly higher than support for the death penalty given details about the specific offender described in the story. In this experiment, 42% of subjects supported the death penalty in general across all conditions, compared to 38% when asked about Justin specifically.

[22]Since dummy coding was used, these models do not specifically test the main effects of the manipulations. However, using effect coding does not change these conclusions.

crime drama offender, compared to 39% of respondents in the other conditions. Thus, whereas the pattern displayed in Table 5 is as expected, the data indicate that exposure to a single crime drama is not sufficient to significantly alter general policy attitudes. As a result, the following discussion focuses solely on attitudes regarding the death penalty toward the offender described in the story.

Although the photo did not impact the effectiveness of the manipulations themselves, there is clear evidence that it exacerbated the effects of the manipulations with respect to policy attitudes. The pattern of these means is perhaps best displayed graphically. Figure 2 displays the group means of support for the death penalty for these eight conditions, with certainty on the x-axis, controllability represented by the solid (red) and dashed (blue) lines, and the two plots representing the absence (left) or presence (right) of the photo. Clearly, subjects in the stereotypical condition (high controllability and high certainty) expressed the greatest support for the death penalty, but only when also receiving an accompanying visual. In fact, the visual is the difference between expressing opposition or support for the death penalty: on average, subjects in the other conditions said they somewhat *oppose* the death penalty for Justin specifically, whereas subjects in the stereotypical, visual condition said on average that they somewhat *support* the death penalty.

[Figure 2 About Here]

Because the manipulations did not impact policy attitudes in isolation (and also to preserve degrees of freedom, especially since the sample is split), many of the following analyses examine the effect of the ***stereotypical crime drama offender*** (coded 1 if the respondent was exposed to a stereotypical crime drama offender, and 0 otherwise) on emotions and policy attitudes. Doing just this reveals that the differences apparent in Figure 2 are also

statistically significant. Specifically, separating respondents by whether they received the photo manipulation or not reveals that exposure to a highly controlled and unambiguously responsible offender significantly increases support for the death penalty among the former, but not among the latter.[23] Fully 64% of subjects in the stereotypical condition somewhat or strongly supported the death penalty for Justin, compared to 34% in the other conditions combined. By comparison, when subjects did not see a photo, only 41% of subjects supported the death penalty for Justin in the stereotypical condition, compared to 33% in the other conditions.

In addition to policy attitudes, it was hypothesized that exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender would increase feelings of anger (**H2a**) but not fear (**H2b**). Both scales were highly reliable (anger: α= .90; fear: α= .91) and moderately correlated with one another (r = .38). Columns 3 and 4 of Table 5 show the models predicting feelings of anger and fear, respectively, as a result of the manipulations. As with attitudes toward the death penalty, the manipulations do not affect anger in isolation.[24] Column 3 shows that increasing certainty or controllability in isolation negatively and non-significantly impacts the degree to which anger is felt. Further, the interaction of high controllability and certainty produces the greatest amount of anger, although this difference is not significant from the other conditions. As it turns out, this is because the photo - as for policy attitudes - has an important moderating influence on the degree to which the manipulations affect emotional responses.

To demonstrate this visually, Figure 3 shows mean anger as a function of certainty, controllability and the photo. This displays shows clearly that overall, subjects who read about a stereotypical crime drama offender and saw the photo expressed the highest levels of anger.

[23]See Columns 3 and 8 of Table 6, which replicate these models for the meditational analysis. The difference in coefficients across the photo manipulation is not significant.

[24]Effect coding also fails to produce any significant main effects.

[Figure 3 About Here]

Moreover, these visual differences are confirmed empirically: separating respondents by whether they received the photo manipulation or not reveals that the combination of controllability and certainty (i.e., exposure to the stereotypical crime drama offender) significantly increases anger among the former subjects, but not among the latter. Columns 1 and 6 of Table 6 display the coefficients for these models.[25] Subjects who saw a photo expressed a mean anger of .69 when also reading about a stereotypical crime drama offender, compared to .52 among subjects in the other conditions. Among subjects who did not see a photo, mean anger was .48 in the stereotypical condition and .53 in the remaining conditions.

[Table 6 About Here]

Turning to expressed levels of fear, the data - contrary to expectations reveal patterns highly similar to those found for anger. Specifically, Column 4 of Table 5 shows that, as with anger, the manipulations have no independent effect on the degree to which a subject expresses fear about the crime. Similarly, the interaction of controllability and certainty produces the greatest level of fear, but this difference is not significant. However, these non-significant findings are driven by subjects who did not see the photo. Columns 2 and 7 of Table 6 show the results of these models, which indicate that the combined manipulations significantly boosted feelings of fear in the presence of a visual, but had no effect otherwise.[26]

In sum, there is evidence of increased anger and support for punitive policies when exposed to a stereotypical crime drama offender, but these effects are only significant when the description was accompanied by a visual. In other words, the experiment was effective

[25]The difference in coefficients across models is significant ($b = .05$, $p < .05$).
[26]The difference in coefficients across models is significant ($b = .04$, $p < .05$).

when the manipulation most closely approximated the experience of watching an actual crime drama. There was also, unexpectedly, evidence of increased fear as a result of the manipulations. As with anger, fear was greatest when exposed to a stereotypical crime drama offender and the photo. Notably, however, overall levels of fear are much lower than anger in all conditions. That is, subjects who read about the stereotypical offender and viewed the photo had significantly greater levels of anger than fear ($t = 3.56$, $p < .05$), as did subjects in the other conditions combined ($t = 10.02$, $p < .05$). As a result, although it was hypothesized that anger would mediate the effects of the manipulations (**H3c**), in the following analyses I also investigate the extent to which feelings of fear matter for punitiveness.

Mediation

Although exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender affected both emotions about (Columns 1 and 2 of Table 6) and attitudes toward (Column 3 of Table 6) crime, it remains an empirical question as to whether the effect of such exposure on policy attitudes is partially mediated by feelings of anger. As a first cut at answering this question, I apply the traditional Baron and Kenny (1986) test of mediation, which holds that the mediator should remain a significant predictor of the dependent variable, controlling for the primary independent variables. Columns 4 and 9 of Table 6 show the relationship between the mediator (anger) and support for the death penalty among subjects who did and did not see the photo, respectively. Unlike the cognitive aspects of crime dramas (i.e., feelings of certainty and perceptions of controllability), feelings of anger boost support for punitive policies regardless of the photo. Once again, however, the effect is much larger for subjects who saw the photo than for those who didn't.[27] As a result, the maximal effect of anger among subjects who saw the photo is to increase the probability of strongly supporting the death penalty by 32%

[27]The difference in coefficients across models is not significant.

and somewhat supporting it by 24%. In contrast, going from least to most angry among subjects who did not see the photo increases the probability of strongly supporting the death penalty for Justin by 19%, and somewhat supporting it by 17%.

If anger (but not fear) is mediating the effect of exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender on punitiveness, then only anger should remain significant. As can be seen in Column 5 of Table 6, the coefficient for anger is substantively large and remains a significant predictor of attitudes toward the death penalty, even when controlling for the effect of fear. However, the combination of high certainty and controllability also remains a positive and significant predictor of attitudes toward the death penalty, suggesting only partial mediation. Nonetheless, a Sobel-Goodman test ($Z = 2.17$, $p < .05$) indicates that anger mediates approximately 62% of the total effect of the experimental manipulations.[28]

Recently, Andrew Hayes and Kristopher Preacher (2008) have argued for estimating bootstrapped confidence intervals to determine the extent to which an independent variable is mediated by another variable. In particular, they note that the Sobel-Goodman test assumes a normal sampling distribution, an assumption that is frequently violated in these tests, particularly with smaller samples. Moreover, the Sobel-Goodman test cannot estimate the indirect effect of an independent variable through multiple mediators. Although the preceding analysis suggests that exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender is mediated through anger, it is still possible that the increased fear exhibited by these subjects mediates some of the additional variance with respect to the effect of appraisals.

Using the SPSS package Mediate (Hayes and Preacher 2012), I find that the estimated relationships are still significant and that, while the proportion of the effect mediated by anger is smaller than that estimated using the Baron and Kenney method, it is still a

[28]The full models for subjects who did not see the photo is also shown in Column 10 for completeness, although the first steps of the analysis have already failed to demonstrate any significant direct effects for the manipulations.

substantial proportion of the variance. Specifically, among subjects who saw the photo, 46.6% of the total effect was significantly mediated through anger, and an additional 11.9% of the variance was explained by fear. The estimated relationships are shown graphically in Figure 4, which displays the direct effect of the stereotypical crime drama offender and anger on support for the death penalty - as well as the indirect effect of exposure to the stereotypical crime drama offender on attitudes through anger - for subjects who saw the photo and those who did not.

[Figure 4 About Here]

Overall, there is clear support for the hypotheses, although only for subjects who received an accompanying visual. Among subjects who saw the photo, exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender significantly increased support for the death penalty. Moreover, these subjects also expressed significantly greater levels of anger, which, in turn, mediated the effect of perceptions of controllability and feelings of certainty on support for the death penalty. The implications of these results will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion; first, however, I turn attention to one remaining question: does exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender attenuate the effect of racial attitudes with respect to punitiveness, as hypothesized in Chapter 2 and demonstrated in Chapter 4?

Racial Attitudes and Crime Dramas

If the content of crime dramas affects viewers as I have hypothesized, then racial attitudes should be less important for crime policy attitudes than it is for regular viewers (**H4**). In particular, the disproportionate portrayal of whites as both victims and offenders should suppress activation of racial considerations, which seem to arise naturally for whites in

forming crime policy opinions (Peffley and Hurwitz 2002).

In this study, racial attitudes were measured by the following questions: "On average, African-Americans have lower income and worse housing than white people. How much of the economic difference between blacks and whites occur because..." This was followed by a series of explanations, of which four are of particular interest: "most blacks just don't have the motivation or will power to perform well"; "most blacks do not teach their children the values and skills that are required to be successful in school"; "of fundamental genetic differences between the races"; and "of racial differences in intelligence". The degree to which each explanation was accepted by the respondent was measured on a four-point Likert scale ("A great deal, some, a little, or none?"), and responses were recoded to range from 0 to 1 with 1 indicating greater beliefs that blacks are worse off due to lower motivation and ability or inherent biological differences.[29] An exploratory factor analysis revealed two distinct factors: the first capturing a major component of racial resentment, namely "the belief that blacks lack motivation and the values needed to get ahead" (Feldman and Huddy 2010, p. 7); the former two questions loaded highly on this factor and formed a reliable scale of what I call ***intrinsic racial attitudes*** (α= .70). The latter two questions regarding genetic differences between blacks and whites loaded highly on the second factor and formed a reliable scale of ***explicit racial attitudes*** (α= .62). This permits an exploration of whether negative racial attitudes - expressed either explicitly (i.e., blacks are biologically inferior) or intrinsically (i.e., blacks lack motivation) - are less powerful for subjects who are exposed to a stereotypical (white) crime drama offender.

As Table 7 reveals, exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender does not moderate the relationship between explicit racial attitudes and support for the death penalty. Column 1 shows that whereas explicit racial attitudes positively and significantly predict punitiveness,

[29]For a full discussion of these measures, see Feldman and Huddy (2010).

this relationship is not affected by exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender. In other words, explicit racial attitudes are an equally strong predictor of punitiveness in both the stereotypical crime drama offender condition and the other three conditions combined.

Similarly, intrinsic racial attitudes are also a strong predictor of punitiveness, on par with the effect of explicit racial attitudes. Unlike explicit attitudes, however, intrinsic racial attitudes are much less strongly related to punitiveness for subjects in the stereotypical condition. Splitting the respondents into those in the stereotypical condition versus those in the other conditions, intrinsic racial attitudes strongly and significantly predicts support for the death penalty in the latter ($b = .802$, $p < .05$), and has no impact on punitiveness among the former ($b = -.019$, $p > .10$). However, the difference in these slopes across conditions is only marginally significant ($p < .10$), as can be seen by the lack of a significant interaction in Table 7.[30]

[Table 7 About Here]

Moreover, these results are not a function of the experimental manipulation affecting racial attitudes: comparing racial attitudes among subjects in the stereotypical crime drama offender versus subjects in the other conditions revealed no significant differences (intrinsic: $t = .86$, $p > .10$; explicit: $t = .94$, $p > .10$), indicating that the manipulations did not affect racial attitudes themselves.[31]

[30] Unlike the results for anger and punitiveness, these results are identical taking the photo into account.

[31] Recently, Banks and Valentino (2012) have demonstrated that anger toward blacks interacts powerfully with racial resentment (but not old fashioned racism) in predicting policy attitudes. Specifically, they find that by experimentally manipulating anger, racial considerations became activated and boosted opposition among white conservatives. Given the tight connection between race and crime in America, I also examined whether intrinsic but not explicit racial attitudes interacted with feelings of anger in predicting policy attitudes. These analyses revealed a positive, significant and substantively large interaction between implicit racial attitudes and anger in predicting support for the death penalty for Justin specifically ($Z = 1.95$, $p < .05$). In contrast, the interaction between anger and explicit racial attitudes was non-significant ($Z = 1.35$, $p > .10$). The indicator for exposure to the stereotypical crime drama offender remains a positive and significant of punitiveness in both models.

Conclusions

As hypothesized, by successfully manipulating perceptions of controllability and related attributions of responsibility, as well as feelings of certainty about who was responsible for crime, subjects expressed a greater degree of anger and support for the death penalty with respect to the fictional offender. Although subjects in this stereotypical crime drama offender condition also expressed the greatest degree of support for the death penalty in general relative to the other conditions, this difference only attained marginal significance. Nonetheless, the pattern was clear - feelings of anger were associated with appraisals of controllability and certainty and, in turn, this anger was associated with increased support for punitive policies.

Unexpectedly, subjects in the stereotypical condition also expressed the greatest degree of fear over the crime. Although the greater presence of fear was surprising in the stereotypical offender condition, this may be because of the experimental focus on the offender's, rather than the perceiver's, controllability. In any case, meditational analyses indicted that it was anger – not fear – that was primarily responsible for the increased support for the death penalty.

Moreover, there was also evidence that exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender depressed activation of racial attitudes. In particular, individuals who endorsed explicit negative racial attitudes were unaffected by the manipulations, such that they were significantly more likely to support punitive crime policies regardless of condition assignment. What I call intrinsic negative racial attitudes were also a significant predictor of punitiveness *except* in the stereotypical crime drama offender condition. Thus, in line with a long body of research, negative attitudes toward blacks, both explicitly and intrinsically, are powerful predictors of punitiveness. However, this experiment indicates that the media can attenuate

these considerations, ostensibly by portraying offenders as disproportionately white.

Finally, these effects were driven largely (and in some cases entirely) by subjects exposed to a photo of the victim's purported family. Although the grief on the family's face is vivid and engaging, the presence of a single visual is far removed from the experience of watching twenty to forty minutes of a TV episode. These effects should only become more exaggerated as the experiment comes to more closely resemble the experience of watching a crime drama. Thus, whereas typical media experiments likely find larger effects in the lab than they would in the field (Jerit, Barabas and Clifford 2013), I argue that this experiment reflects what is true of the real world fairly accurately (see also Chapter 4).

Summary

This chapter began by outlining the content analysis of three current crime dramas. By and large these results confirmed that modern crime dramas continue to portray crimes and offenders in much the same as previous content analyses indicated. Stereotypical crime drama offenders are disproportionately white, middle class males who commit murder but who tend to be caught by the police for their crimes. Offenders are also portrayed as highly cognizant and in control of their actions, and tend to plan the crime. Fictional crime is portrayed as a deliberate, even "logical" choice by individuals who otherwise do (and have) not engaged in criminal activity. Indeed, only 27% of offenders across the three crime dramas, and only 20% of offenders who committed murder, had a prior criminal record. In contrast, of actual homicides in 2011 for which the circumstances were known to the police, 42% were a result of arguments, including brawls under the influence of drugs and alcohol, love triangles and arguments over money or property, and an additional 10% were gang-related (of Justice 2012).

The consistencies found in content across crime dramas were used to motivate a series of experiments, with specific interest in the degree to which subjects felt anger and supported punitive policies as the treatments increasingly resembled a typical crime drama (offender). In the extreme, subjects read about a crime that was committed by an individual whose circumstances were out of his control and therefore not explicitly responsible for the crime, and were never told that the main suspect was definitively responsible. On the other end of the spectrum, subjects read about a stereotypical crime drama offender, who conveyed a high degree of control over his actions, and was clearly responsible for the crime given that he is identified and apprehended by the police. Drawing from the Appraisal Tendency Framework, I predicted that exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender would increases perceptions of controllability and feelings of certainty about who is responsible, and that these cognitive appraisals would be associated with feelings of anger and ultimately support for punitive policies.

The first two experiments attempted to recreate the experience of watching a crime drama as much as possible by outlining a detailed plot typical of those found on television today. Given that the experiments were text-based, however, this proved to be difficult. In particular, Study 1 failed to successfully implement the manipulations, so that subjects perceived the offender as equally responsible, in control, and felt relatively equally certain about these perceptions across all conditions. The failures of Study 1 were used to motivate Study 2, specifically by shortening the text of the plot and streamlining the manipulations (i.e., attributions of responsibility and controllability were merged into a single dimension of controllability). However, this study also incurred problems, in that the manipulations were not orthogonal and thus unevenly effective, depending on condition assignment to the other manipulation. Thus, Study 3 focused more narrowly on the offender and incorporated a visual component to make the text-based descriptions more engaging and reflective of the

experience of watching a crime drama.

Specifically, Study 3 improved over the first two studies in a number of ways. First, it maximized the extent to which the manipulations were emphasized. Whereas the first two studies attempted to manipulate certainty, controllability and attributions of responsibility by altering sentences throughout the plot description, Study 3 made the manipulations the primary focus of the text. Second, and related, the length of the experiment – and specifically the length of the text – was reduced by nearly half. This was done concurrently in order to not only draw attention to the manipulations (rather than them being lost in the details of plot description), but also reduce respondent fatigue. Third, the controllability and attributions manipulation was strengthened. By describing the fictional offender as either an underemployed drunk who was raised primarily by his delinquent brother, or as a highly disciplined and relentless worker who exhibits some psychopathic tendencies, Study 3 more cleanly distinguished between a stereotypical crime drama and real-world offender. Fourth and finally, a photo manipulation was added in order to maintain a degree of ecological validity and capture, to some small degree, the unavoidably visual nature of TV crime dramas.

Study 3 revealed that stereotypical crime drama offenders, which are typically portrayed as clearly responsible and in control, induce feelings of anger about crime. In turn, this anger leads to increased support for punitive policies, as theories of emotions would predict. Moreover, the portrayal of offenders as white appears to dampen racial considerations with respect to crime policy attitudes. Whereas exposure to a stereotypical crime drama offender did not reduce mean levels of racial attitudes, these attitudes mattered less for punitiveness. Thus, despite the fact that racial attitudes and perceptions of crime are tightly intertwined in America, this connection can be loosened by (disproportionately) emphasizing whites as involved in crime.

Of course, there are limitations to this design. First and foremost, some may take issue with the specific photo used in the experiment. This visual, which shows a grieving family at a funeral, could have arguably impacted the effectiveness of the manipulations in a way that another photo (such as of the crime scene or the Detectives at work) would not have. Perhaps the most obvious criticism is that it focuses on the victim and the victim's family, whereas crime dramas typically follow the police. As a result, the photo did not make the experiment more ecologically valid but, instead, heightened emotionality by encouraging identification with the victim's family.

I argue, however, that crime dramas do encourage identification with the victim, but that the victims tend to be the main characters. Crime dramas typically insinuate - and in some cases explicitly state - that characters joined law enforcement because they experienced terrible crimes in their past. Patrick Jane of *The Mentalist*, for example, switched careers after a serial killer murdered his family. On the *Criminal Minds* Behavioral Analysis Unit team, a young Agent Derek Morgan was molested by his mentor, and Analyst Penelope Garcia's parents were killed by a drunk driver while searching for her out past curfew as a teenager. Agent Gibbs was a sniper in the Marines until his wife and daughter were killed by a drug dealer, at which point he left the military and tracked down and killed the offender before joining the *NCIS* team. Not surprisingly, these past pains frequently arise during the course of their work, such as Jane's repeated encounters with his family's murderer. In other words, crime dramas encourage identification with the criminal justice officials who seek to take bad guys off the street, perhaps for mostly personal reasons. Thus, whereas the photo highlighted the pain of the victim's family, crime dramas tend to portray the pain of the main characters and their relentless efforts to heal, whether by helping others or solving the crimes of their past.[32]

[32]It should also be noted that the photo exhibited no main effects for feelings of anger and fear; instead,

In addition, successive refinement of the experiment meant sacrificing ecological validity, such that the main study was primarily a description of the offender. Crime dramas, by contrast, frequently feature more than one suspect, and there are often twists and turns as the police begin to unravel the mystery. One might argue, then, that these effects were only found because of the intense focus on the portrayal of the offender.

As I have suggested above, however, the lack of ecological fallacy only made it more difficult to uncover effects. Television has the power to make people jump in fear, laugh out loud and even cry, something that even the best-written books have difficulty accomplishing, and certainly could not be achieved by a few pages outlining the plot of a crime drama. There is something emotionally visceral and powerful about images that heighten engagement with a story. Crime dramas can also capture subtleties in body language, facial expression and tone of voice that are all important contributing factors to impression formation. Moreover, viewers become attached to the main characters, who are regular, weekly guests for sometimes years of a person's life. I argue that the results of Study 3, in spite of this lack of engagement and continued visual stimulus - and combined with evidence that exposure to crime dramas is associated with punitiveness in both representative samples of individuals (Chapter 4) and over time (Chapter 3) provide compelling evidence of how fictional media can shape policy attitudes on crime.

the visual mattered for emotions only when the text of the experiment described a stereotypical crime drama.

Table 5.1: A Comparison of Real-World and Fictional Offenders

	Criminal Minds	*The Mentalist*	*NCIS*	All Crime Dramas	All Offenders	Homicide Only
Crime Type						
Murder	74.4	41.1	48.8	56.2	0.1	–
Attempted Murder	3.5	9.4	15.9	9.2	–	–
Assault	3.5	13.0	7.3	6.2	7.3	–
Robbery	0.0	2.4	0.0		3.5	–
Rape	4.7	1.2	–	1.9	0.8	–
Kidnapping	12.8	5.9	11.0	9.6	–	–
Gender						
Male	88.9	71.4	81.3	78.6	78.3	65.2
Female	11.1	28.6	12.5	18.8	19.7	7.8
Unknown	0.0	0.0	6.3	2.6	1.9	27.0
Race						
White	96.3	77.8	67.2	76.6	59.0	32.5
Black	3.7	6.4	3.1	4.6	22.4	37.7
Other	0.0	14.3	23.4	15.2	10.8	1.8
Unknown	0.0	1.6	6.3	5.7	7.9	28.0
Age						
Child (12 and under)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.1
Teenager (12-20)	0.0	4.8	3.1	3.3	27.3	12.5
Young Adult (21-29)	51.9	36.5	42.2	41.8	24.7	27.9
Adult (30+)	48.2	57.1	47.6	51.6	38.5	49.1
Unknown	–	1.6	6.4	3.3	8.7	32.0
Socioeconomic Status						
Low	25.9	31.8	18.8	25.3	–	–
Middle	70.4	31.8	59.4	50.0	–	–
Upper	3.7	31.8	9.4	17.5	–	–
Unknown	0.00	4.8	12.5	7.1	–	–

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Table 5.1: A Comparison of Real-World and Fictional Offenders

	Criminal Minds	*The Mentalist*	*NCIS*	All Crime Dramas	All Offenders	Homicide Only
Certainty (Clearance Rate)						
Violent Crime	100.0	86.8	85.4	91.3	47.7	–
Homicide Only	100.0	83.3	87.1	91.6	–	64.8
Controllability						
Offenders in control	88.9	84.2	85.5	84.5	–	–
Crimes planned	92.0	62.4	86.4	81.3	–	–
Attributions						
Offenders are"bad"	66.7	61.8	58.1	59.1	–	–
Crime N =	86	84	90	260	–	–
Offender N =	27	63	64	154	–	–

Notes: Entries are percentages. Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

Table 5.2: Distribution of Key Socio-Demographics of Student Samples, Studies 1-3

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Gender			
Male	51	43	48
Female	49	57	52
Ethnicity			
Hispanic	9	13	14
Non-Hispanic	91	87	86
Race			
White	46	50	40
Black/African-American	4	6	10
Hispanic/Latino	6	7	10
Asian	37	26	34
Other	5	9	6
Party ID			
Strong Democrat	19	25	21
Weak Democrat	37	34	31
Independent, Leaning Democrat	16	22	29
Independent, Leaning Republican	10	6	7
Weak Republican	13	13	7
Strong Republican	6	0	5
Ideology			
Strong (very) liberal	5	4	5
Somewhat liberal	34	38	25
Slightly liberal	–	17	25
Moderate	45	28	31
Slightly conservative	–	9	6
Somewhat conservative	12	6	6
Strong (very) conservative	3	0	1
Regular Viewer of Crime Dramas			
Yes	60	67	55
No	40	33	45
Age			
Min	18	18	18
Max	28	29	60
Mean	20.2	20.8	21.6
N	164	141	187

Table 5.3: Summary Statistics, Studies 1-3

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Manipulation Checks (reliability)			
Attributions of responsibility	.25	–	–
Controllability	.40	.58	.72
Certainty	.89	.91	.86
Emotions (reliability)			
Anger	.64	.89	.90
Fear	.80	.73	.91
Emotions (difference in means)			
Anger	-.11	.03	.05
(Photo)	–	–	.17*
(No photo)	–	–	-.06
Fear	.04	-.03	.11*
(Photo)	–	–	.20*
(No photo)	–	–	.03
Policy Attitudes (difference in means)			
Death Penalty (specific)	.11	-.03	.13*
(Photo)	–	–	.20*
(No photo)	–	–	.06
Death Penalty (general)	.06	-.01	.09
(Photo)	–	–	.12
(No photo)	–	–	.06
N	164	141	194

Note: Cells show either the reliability of a scaled variable, or the difference in means between respondents in the stereotypical crime drama offender (individual attributions and high certainty) and the other three (or seven, in the case of Study 1) conditions combined. Significance of emotions was determined by t-tests, and policy attitudes by Mann-Whitney tests, * $p \leq .05$, one-tailed.

Table 5.4: Experimental Manipulation, Study 3

Individual	Situational
•Justin graduated with a B.A. in economics in 2003 and has since received his master's degree in business through the brokerage firm where he is employed.	•Justin's father left when he was very young; his mother worked two jobs to pay the bills so he was left alone a lot as a child. His older brother, who is currently in jail for violating probation, took primary responsibility for Justin growing up.
•Co-workers report that Justin had climbed his way up the corporate ladder over the last decade, in no small part due to his grueling schedule. One co-worker described him as relentless coming in early, leaving late, and always one step ahead of everybody else. For the most part, people said he was friendly and outgoing, but the detectives quickly discovered that they knew hardly anything about Justin's personal life.	•His mother recalls him as an impulsive child, saying that he "never thought things out and would say or do whatever he felt in the moment. I guess no one was there to teach him how to handle disappointment."
•A close friend of Lacey's said that although they had dated for two years, Lacey had recently broken up with Justin, accusing him of cheating on her with multiple women. He was supposed to return the next afternoon to collect his belongings, but when Lacey awoke he had already come and gone. That same morning she found a vulgar note left under her car's windshield wiper. As a result, she had issued a restraining order against him and changed her locks.	•A friend of Justin said that he had applied for a business loan to open an auto shop about two years ago but was denied because his credit was too low. There were other kinds of loans that the bank suggested Justin apply for, but he never pursued them.

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Table 5.4: Experimental Manipulation, Study 3

Individual	Situational
•According to Justin, Lacey had agreed for him to come early and must have forgotten, and the note was an unfortunate coincidence left by someone else; in any case, he and Lacey hadn't spoke since they broke up. A search warrant of Justin's apartment revealed several tapes of Lacey's bedroom: the footage showed was entirely of Lacey's bedroom and showed both Justin with Lacey as well as some footage of Lacey alone. The tapes looked as though they were filmed from a hidden camera (neither Justin nor Lacey ever acknowledge the camera on tape), but Justin said Lacey knew about it and it was something they did "for fun".	•Since then he has worked several jobs, including construction part-time, a few months as a grocery stocker, and most recently driving trucks. One of the other truckers at Justin's company described him as hot-headed, opinionated, and "loud". The co-worker also said Justin was an "okay guy", but had a bad habit of getting into bar fights, and "got his ass handed to him" as often as he beat up the other guy. The co-worker recalled that six months ago he had to be hospitalized briefly for kidney pain after a particularly brutal bar fight.
•Lacey's sister described Justin as highly disciplined - he never missed a day of work, he was never late, and always thought before he spoke. She said that he was friendly, but "hard to read". "He was very secretive," she added. "I felt like I really didn't know that much about him yet he could get almost anyone to open up to him and tell him everything."	•When they ran Justin Taylor's information through the system, the detectives discovered that he has five prior misdemeanors two for possession of drugs, one for public intoxication, one for disorderly conduct, and one for a simple assault. He frequently drinks too much, although Justin himself confessed he was trying to cut back and had managed to make it a few weekends recently without spending his paycheck Friday night.
•Justin's next-door neighbor said that few people visited Justin, with the exception of Saturday nights when he often brought home a woman. The neighbor said that one time he ran into Justin and a "lady friend" in the hallway, and she had been nearly blackout drunk, whereas Justin appeared sober. The neighbor had never, however, heard of Lacey Johnson and did not recognize a photograph of her.	•Lacey and Justin had dated on and off again for almost two years. She was there when Justin was charged with simple assault a month ago, and was charged with assault herself at the same time. When asked, Justin explained that Lacey's neighbors had called the cops to report loud noises and voices screaming. The officer who arrived on scene had been called to Lacey's house before, and had threatened to charge both with assault if he had to come back, which he did.

(Continued on next page)

Table 5.4: Experimental Manipulation, Study 3

Individual	Situational
•A regular at the bar Justin frequented confirmed that Justin hung out there at least once or twice a week, but was never seen drinking only water. The regular said Justin spent most of the night not talking to anyone, just people watching, but an hour or two before close he would find a girl (usually a rather intoxicated one), hit on her aggressively and often leave with her at close.	•Shortly thereafter, Lacey had a restraining order issued against Justin because of his temper, citing safety concerns. She had told the judge that Justin was spontaneous and impulsive, and even more unpredictable when he was drinking, which he usually did to a greater extent after they broke up. However, Justin insists that after that they stopped speaking, and hadn't seen her since.

Table 5.5: Predicting Emotions and Policy Attitudes, Ignoring the Photo, Study 3

	Support DP			
	Specific	General	Anger	Fear
Certainty	-.003	-.244	-.002	-.023
	(.232)	(.231)	(.063)	(.065)
Controllability	-.007	-.167	-.056	.069
	(.251)	(.250)	(.067)	(.065)
Certainty X Controllability	.411*	.524	.094	.072
	(.324)	(.323)	(.087)	(.084)
Intercept	–	–	.541*	.248*
			(.049)	(.072)
Cutpoint 1	-.515	-.628	–	–
	(.192)	(.192)		
Cutpoint 2	.433	.116	–	–
	(.192)	(.190)		
Cutpoint 3	1.293	1.044	–	–
	(.205)	(.199)		
	$\chi^2 = 5.43$*	$\chi^2 = 3.52$	F = .76	F = 2.69*
N =	186	187	186	186

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq .05$, one-tailed test.

Table 5.6: Anger Partially Mediates the Effect of Crime Dramas, Study 3

	Photo					No Photo				
	Anger	Fear	Support DP			Anger	Fear	Support DP		
Stereotypical Offender	.172*	.201*	.666*	–	.456*	-.050	.024	.207	–	.237
	(.068)	(.067)	(.257)		(.272)	(.063)	(.061)	(.239)		(.242)
Anger	–	–	–	1.624*	1.430*	–	–	–	.993*	.890*
				(.406)	(.444)				(.402)	(.431)
Fear	–	–	–	–	.120	–	–	–	–	.414
					(.439)					(.435)
Intercept	.518*	.243*	–	–	–	.526*	.274	–	–	–
	(.036)	(.035)				(.035)	(.034)			
Cutpoint 1	–	–	-.543	.147	-.179	–	–	-.479	-.052	.076
			(.157)	(.256)	(.259)			(.153)	(.241)	(.260)
Cutpoint 2	–	–	.473	1.231	1.287	–	–	.429	.886	1.030
			(.155)	(.277)	(.281)			(.152)	(.250)	(.272)
Cutpoint 3	–	–	1.353	2.157	2.242	–	–	1.265	1.747	1.898
			(.195)	(.318)	(.325)			(.186)	(.282)	(.304)
F =	6.42*	8.96*	6.76*	16.36*	19.63*	.61	.16	.75	6.16*	8.24*
N =			90					96		

Note: Entries are OLS regression (Columns 1, 2, 6 and 7) and ordered probit (Columns 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10) coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq .05$, one-tailed test.

Table 5.7: Crime Dramas Attenuate the Effect of Racial Attitudes, Study 3

	Support DP	
Stereotypical Offender	.366*	.700*
	(.212)	(.278)
Implicit Racial Attitudes	–	.752*
		(.296)
Explicit Racial Attitudes	.758*	–
	(.339)	
Stereotypical Offender X	–	-.735
Implicit Racial Attitudes		(.593)
Stereotypical Offender X	.460	–
Explicit Racial Attitudes	(.723)	
Cutpoint 1	-.381	-.230
	(.126)	(.156)
Cutpoint 2	.590	.736
	(.128)	(.161)
Cutpoint 3	1.476	1.619
	(.155)	(.186)
F =	14.03*	11.91*
N =	186	186

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq .05$, one-tailed test.

Figure 5.1: Photo Displayed to Subjects, Study 3

Figure 5.2: Mean Support for the Death Penalty (Specific)

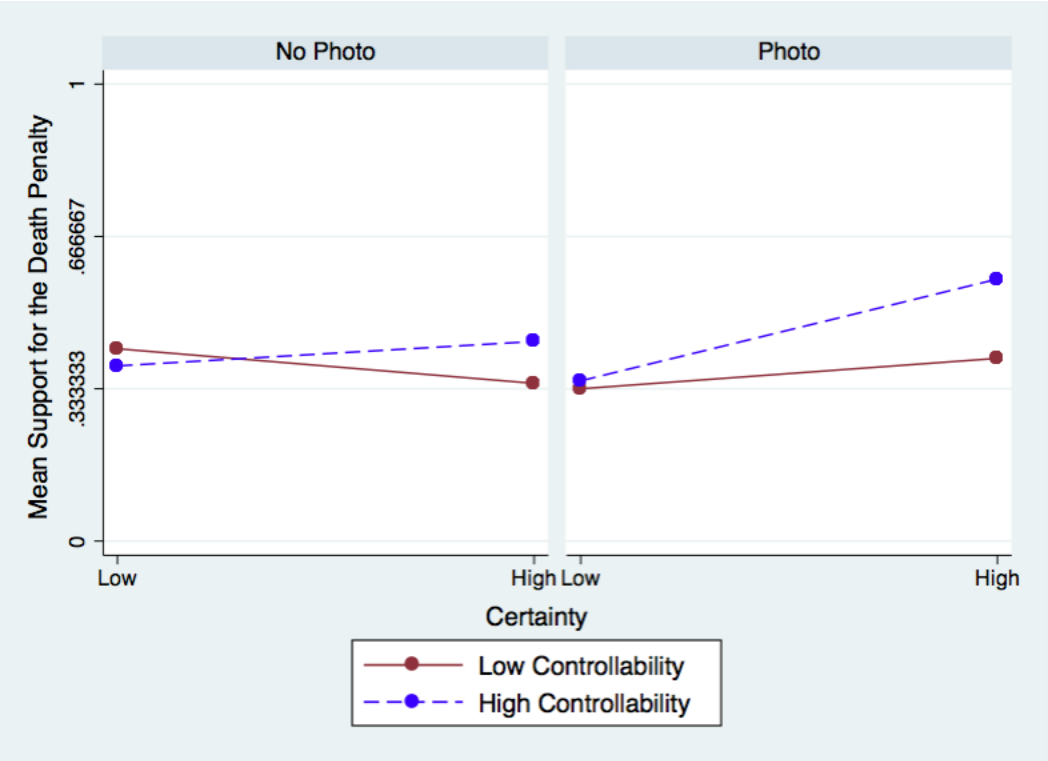


Figure 5.3: Mean Anger About the Crime

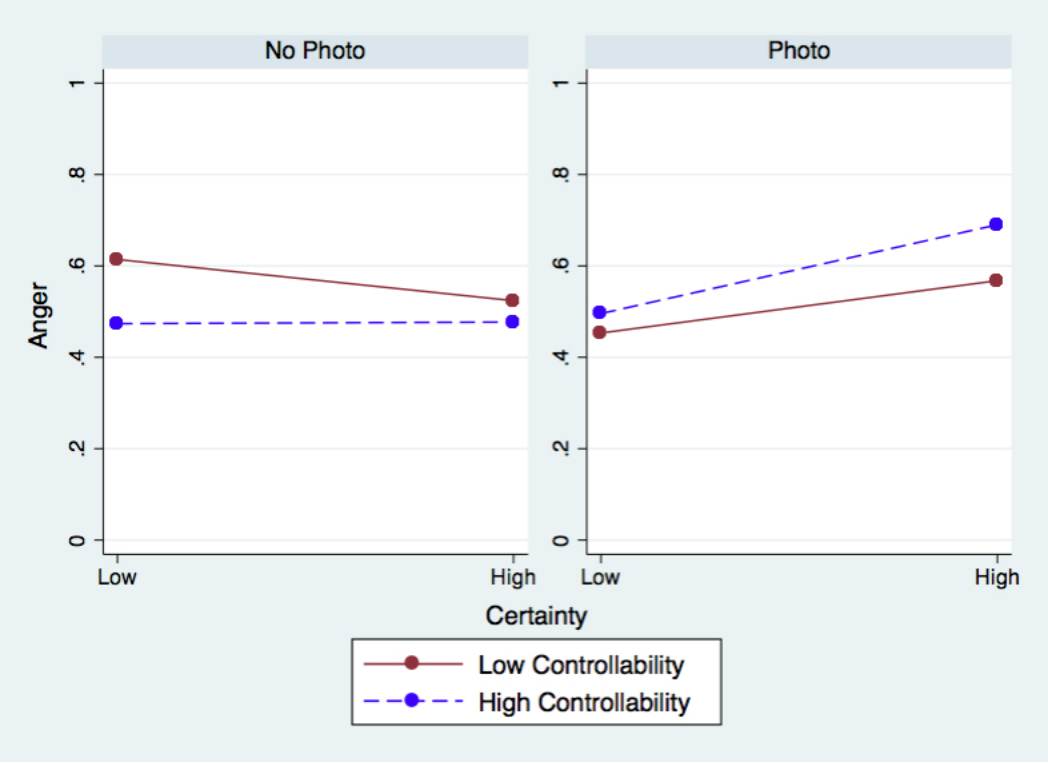
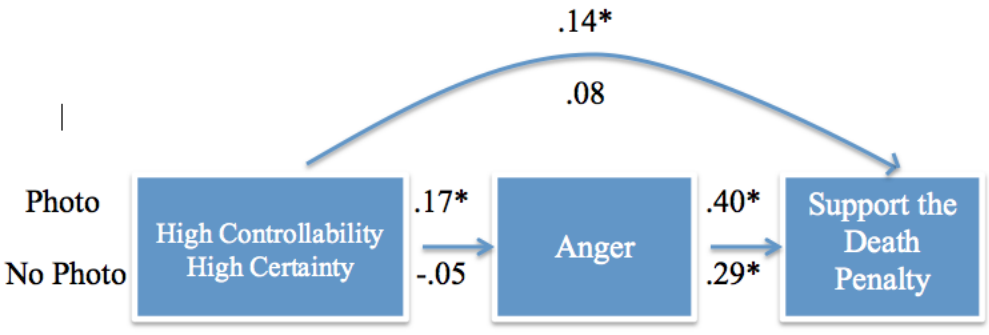


Figure 5.4: Meditational Path Analysis



Chapter 6

Some Concluding Remarks and Implications

As noted at the outset, political scientists have tended to overlook crime as a policy issue, particularly with respect to the dynamics of this public opinion. This is apparent from the review in Chapter 1 of research on crime-related public opinion, most of which has been conducted by sociologists, criminologists and communication scholars. Indeed, despite thriving literatures in other fields, "there have been few studies of public opinion toward crime in the political science literature, despite the salience of the issue and the large portion of state budgets devoted to anti-crime measures" (Peffley and Hurwitz 2002, p. 61).

This dissertation seeks to not only bring the attention of political scientists (back) to crime as an important and influential issue, but also to expand on our understanding of what informs the public's policy attitudes in this regard. In particular, the previous three empirical chapters demonstrated that, across different samples and different methodologies, greater media exposure to crime dramas predicts greater support for punitive crime policies. Chapter 3 documented this relationship over time, controlling for crime rates,

macro-economic conditions, and political variables, and news media attention to crime. The findings make clear that punitive attitudes have increased over time in tandem with crime drama viewership, but not crime rates or economic conditions. The relationship between crime drama viewership and punitive attitudes is also apparent at the individual level, as shown in Chapter 4. Drawing on two different samples interviewed in two different time periods, which differed in the salience of crime as an issue, individuals who watched crime dramas with greater frequency held more punitive attitudes on crime policy.

Moreover, the data from Chapter 4 suggests that the effects of crime dramas are domain specific. That is, aspects of the criminal justice system that are well represented in crime dramas (and which present a distorted picture of crime) affect relevant policy attitudes. The high prevalence of murder in crime dramas has an especially pronounced effect on attitudes toward the death penalty among regular viewers, but this relationship is also found for attitudes about juvenile offenders and crime spending preferences.

Simultaneously, the data indicated that watching crime dramas can increase support for criminal rehabilitation policies through their representation of drug users: viewers of crime dramas expressed greater support for drug rehabilitation over increased enforcement of drug distributors. Moreover, a content analysis of three current, popular crime dramas indicated that this is possibly because drug-related crimes are typically portrayed in a more sympathetic light. That is, offenders who committed drug-related crimes were perceived as less inherently bad and less in control of their actions. What's more, these offenders received significantly lesser sentences than their drug-free counterparts, painting a more lenient and liberal picture of drug-related crime. Thus, crime dramas do not generate uniformly punitive views, and more investigation is needed of their portrayal of drugs and drug users to better understand these findings. Nonetheless, on the important and (directly relevant) question of death penalty sentencing, crime dramas clearly elicit greater punitiveness among viewers.

Expanding on previous work on the subject, the content analysis also showed that offenders are routinely portrayed as having planned their crimes, in control of their actions and individually responsible for the crime. Moreover, the criminal justice system is portrayed as highly efficacious, especially when it comes to "getting their man." Using these results, Chapter 5 outlined a series of experiments that sought to understand how crime dramas affect attitudes by systematically manipulating the degree to which a criminal was in control of his actions and the certainty that he committed a murder. Both of these are known to generate anger toward the perpetrator of an event, a prediction that was confirmed by the experiment. In sum, the portrayal of crime in crime dramas invites appraisals that are associated with anger, which mediates a large proportion of the increased support for punitive crime policies exhibited by regular viewers of crime dramas.

Although these findings may be of intrinsic interest to some, other readers may wonder about their substantive impact. What is the relevance of entertainment media to politics? How does this contribute to our understanding of public opinion, particularly when it comes to crime? And *where* are the policy implications? As I will explain in detail below, this research has the potential to contribute to four distinct fields within political psychology: public opinion, emotions research, media and political communications, and criminal justice policy.

Public Opinion

The theory of a "rational public" (Page and Shapiro 2010) has had a tremendous impact on public opinion research. Indeed, in many respects public opinion moves in predictable and sensible ways in reaction to actual events. However, the public can only react rationally to real world events to the extent that they have an accurate understanding of these events.

And it is clear that, when it comes to crime, citizens are ill-informed: a large proportion of the population continues to believe crime is on the rise, even as crime rates have fallen to levels not seen in a half century. Of course, it remains to be seen whether these trends will continue. In the meantime, exploring an issue in which citizens fail to meet the ideal of a rational public is an important exercise.

More generally, crime is an interesting domain to study simply because it is asynchronous with trends in political attitudes more generally. As Stimson's (1991) mood measure reveals, issues related to crime, guns, and abortion (considered a crime by many Americans) load on a separate dimension from other major political issues. Moreover, this dimension of mood is only moderately correlated with the first dimension, which broadly measures attitudes toward more or less government. This in and of itself is interesting, since there is no obvious reason why crime would not also be viewed in terms of government size and reach. After all, Packer's (1968) classic conceptualization of the criminal justice system describes it as pulled between two opposing models: a crime control model and a due process model. He describes these models as "two separate value systems that compete for priority in the operation of the criminal process", the former emphasizing lower crime and resembling an assembly line of justice, and the latter emphasizing civil liberties and resembling an "obstacle course". In other words, these systems represent the competing values of security and liberty. Should the system value more government intrusion in order to combat crime, or more civil liberties and protection from government?

The question is, why do citizens think about crime differently from other major issues? Providing the safety and security of its citizens is arguably government's primary function. Perhaps, then, citizens generally believe that addressing crime requires a minimum level of government intervention, and thus do not view the issue in terms of more or less government. In contrast, citizens are more polarized on taxing and spending policies, the government's role

in health care and education, and the tension between fostering positive economic conditions and environmental policies. In other words, even during periods in which crime is relatively less salient, issues of safety and security are distinct from the primary ideological dimension that describes most of American politics.

Emotions

In addition to understanding public opinion, these studies also provide insights into recent emotions research. Emotions have recently enjoyed something of a renaissance within the human sciences in recent years, and most scholars would agree that political attitudes and behavior is shaped in part by emotional responses to political stimuli (Lodge and Taber 2005; Marcus 2000). Specifically, it is clear that emotions are important for understanding policy attitudes (e.g., abortion, immigration), and crime is no exception.

Criminologists have produced a voluminous literature on fear of crime and its relationship to behavior, attitudes, and specifically punitiveness. Despite this attention, however, the literature overall has failed to reveal many consistent and reliable findings. In part this can be attributed to shifting conceptualizations of fear, problems with its measurement, and other methodological issues (Ferraro and Grange 1987; Farrall et al. 1997). Another cause, however, may be the discrepancy between what emotions should be associated with and what criminologists measure. This study suggests that, by focuing on fear, criminologists have been looking at the wrong emotional response. My findings provide further evidence that anger is more strongly associated with holding more punitive attitudes, not fear or anxiety. Based on recent emotions research, I would expect fear and anxiety to be associated with more protective attitudes and behaviors, such as supporting better street lighting and being more likely to install an alarm system, but not holding punitive attitudes. Certainly

fear and anger are correlated, but they have distinct and separate effects. As others have recently noted (Johnson 2009; Templeton and Hartnagel 2012), criminologists should pay more attention to citizens' feelings of anger about crime and not remain myopically focused on fear.

This study also contributes more narrowly to the literature on the Appraisal Tendency Framework (Lerner and Keltner 2000). This theory and others (Smith and Ellsworth 1985) holds that emotions can arise as a function of certain appraisals, but appraisals can also be a function of emotions. Nearly all of the work in this regard, however, has focused on the latter: a typical experiment, for example, begins with an emotion induction, and then appraisals are measured (e.g., Lerner and Tiedens 2006; Small, Lerner and Fischhoff 2006; Lemer and Keltner 2001). In contrast, the experiments presented in Chapter 5 manipulated appraisals and measured emotions, thus providing evidence that this process is endogenous. In other words, individuals feel emotions based of their cognitive appraisals, as well as making appraisals based on feeling specific emotions.

These studies also make clear that separating some appraisal dimensions, such as controllability and attributions of responsibility, and manipulating them orthogonally is difficult in practice. Although theories of discrete emotions argue that emotions can be placed on six distinct dimensions, in reality, some may be so highly correlated that they are relatively indistinguishable from one another. In Study 1, for instance, it was difficult to portray the crime perpetrator as responsible for his actions yet not in control of the events surrounding the crime. Nonetheless, studying how these dimensional appraisals play out in politics, as well as how we expect these appraisals to affect policy attitudes, is important for understanding why Americans support punitive policies.

Media and Political Communications

Third, this study contributes to a growing body of literature that suggests the media has a broader impact than traditionally conceptualized. As the media market has fragmented (Prior 2007) and interest in watching local TV news has declined (Potter, Matsa and Mitchell 2013), citizens have increasingly turned to other forms of media, especially entertainment media. Previous work has demonstrated that soft news sources, for example, portray foreign policy issues in a systematically different way than traditional news programs (Baum 2003). Moreover, these shows affect the perceptions, attitudes, and even voting behavior of those who regularly watch them (Baum 2003; Baum and Jamison 2006). Less is known about the potential effects of entertainment media, as only a handful of studies have tackled this question empirically (e.g., Dowler 2003; Holbert, Shah and Kwak 2005; Mutz and Nir 2010). The series of studies presented here suggests that entertainment media can have a powerful and widespread impact on its viewers.

Although this research focused specifically on crime and crime dramas, there is no reason to expect that findings would not generalize to other issue domains. For example, the popularity of doctor dramas, such as *ER* and *Gray's Anatomy*, might send both implicit and explicit messages about the efficacy of health care policies and practitioners, attributions of responsibility regarding illnesses and injuries, and so on (see also Hill and Holbrook 2004). More recently, several shows focused on terrorism have appeared, such as *Homeland* and *24*. The literature in this regard is sparse, although what exists suggests that media does affect certain attitudes. For example, Hill, Holbrook and Vaccaro (2010) find evidence that entertainment media influences agenda setting with viewers being more inclined to see terrorism as a major problem, but it did not prime attitudes in an experimental setting. In particular, subjects who watched an episode of *24* were significantly more likely to mention

terrorism as an important problem in an open-ended format, but were not more likely to rate it as important nor to use their evaluations of the President's handling of terrorism in their overall evaluations of him.

In addition, this research suggests that it is important to examine the content of media programs and not assume that related attitudes will be affected. The results suggested that policy attitudes are differentially affected by watching crime dramas; thus, aspects of the criminal justice system that are heavily distorted have a larger impact on attitudes (e.g., the death penalty). There was also clear evidence that regular viewers of crime dramas preferred increased spending on crime and were more likely to oppose lenient treatment of juveniles. However, regular viewers also held less punitive attitudes on drug policy, seemingly because drug offenders are portrayed as less individually responsible for their crimes. Thus, rather than viewers becoming uniformly punitive with respect to crime policies, their attitudes are affected in very specific and focused ways.

It is important to note, too, the extent to which the American public is exposed to crime dramas. Consider that four of the ten most watched shows on broadcast TV as of this writing are crime dramas (*NCIS*; *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *Castle* and *Criminal Minds*).[1] Altogether, the evidence suggests that approximately half of the population watches crime dramas on a regular basis. Nearly 50% of the Long Island sample confessed to watching crime dramas, compared to 54% in the 1995 ANES who reported regularly watching *NYPD Blue* and/or *Murder, She Wrote*. Similarly, a Pew study from 2005 that probed respondents on their television watching habits found that 60% respondents regularly watched *Law & Order* and/or *CSI*. And, the evidence suggests that watching is equally prevalent among sub-groups: watching crime dramas was uncorrelated with standard socio-demographics and

[1]Retrieved May 31, 2013, from `http://nielsen.com/us/en/insights/top10s/television.html`. It is also of note that the other shows rounding out the top ten were reality TV competitions (*Dancing with the Stars* [2], *American Idol* and *The Voice*), and *The Big Bang Theory* [2].

political attitudes (see Chapter 4).[2] Thus, the sheer popularity of these dramas - and its appeal across major socio-demographic and political variables - means that perceptions and attitudes are affected on a large scale.

Policy

Last but not least, the evidence strongly suggests that criminal justice policy is highly responsive to public opinion (Enns 2010; Percival 2010; Nicholson-Crotty, Peterson and Ramirez 2009). Crime, after all, is an "easy" issue (Carmines and Stimson 1980) and seemingly a perennial concern in many local races. It is also a valence issue, in the sense that everyone wants less crime. The problem, however, is that neither elites nor the media have offered a compelling alternative to the standard, "lock 'em up" mentality for dealing with criminality. Not surprisingly, then, when citizens report high levels of support for punitive policies, electorally minded candidates respond in kind, even competing with one another to win the title of who is tougher on crime. The clear exception is drug policy, which is portrayed in a more liberal light in crime dramas. Viewers pick up on these tailored messages; thus policies that are implicitly promoted by crime dramas garner more support (i.e., the death penalty and the treatment of juveniles), and policies that are implicitly rejected garner greater opposition (i.e., drugs).

Scholars have long remarked on the disproportionately punitive nature of our criminal justice system. From three-strikes laws and mandatory minimums to the system's approach for dealing with drug and sex offenders, it is clear that the overriding emphasis of the criminal justice system is on punishment and incapacitation. Moreover, these policies have led to what some refer to as the "prison-industrial complex" (Schlosser 1998), a multi-billion

[2]Although not representative, 50% to 60% of all three student samples presented in Chapter 5 indicated they regularly watched crime dramas, as well.

dollar operation that has led to the creation of privately prisons, "tent cities" to house inmate overflow, and other innovations to deal with the mass of young men serving time in our jails and prisons. In the extreme, the Supreme Court ordered that thousands of California prisoners be released in order to reduce prison overcrowding, deemed so severe that it violated the Eight Amendment ban on cruel and unusual punishment (*Brown v. Plata* 2011).

Thus, while these studies do not speak directly to policy issues, it is clear that crime policy is heavily influenced by the public's expressed level of punitiveness. When large proportions of the public believe criminals are different from the rest of us, and are exposed to a criminal justice system that is highly effective working within this model of criminology, it is no wonder that public officials fear being seen as "soft" on crime. Because candidates of both parties espouse support for tough criminal sanctions, understanding the crime policies implemented - as well as where and how reforms can be implemented - ultimately requires understanding the public's attitudes toward crime.

Future Directions

In addition to its current contributions, this dissertation also suggests several avenues for future research. One project for which data has already been collected explores a separate aspect of crime dramas, in particular the portrayal of police misconduct and civil liberties violations. As Eschholz et al. (2004) noted in their content analysis, crime dramas tend to show several civil liberties violations, and they are usually portrayed in a positive light. In other words, these violations and instances of misconduct are if not necessary, then at least expeditious in terms of identifying the offender and perhaps even preventing additional crimes. In my own content analysis, there are several instances of this, including warrantless

searches, "roughing up" of suspects, and even an episode in which an entire team loses their badges for misconduct and are suspended, yet continue to investigate the crime regardless. In reality, these are serious breaches of protocol and contribute to mistrust in the police; in crime dramas, these are merely the actions of men and women driven to fight crime in the face of a cumbersome and legally-tied system. Public opinion of viewers, then, should reflect these portrayals, with these citizens expressing less concern about civil liberties violations, greater trust in the police, and a greater willingness to forgive police misconduct.

Another interesting aspect of crime dramas that was only touched upon in the present study is race. The survey and experimental data provided compelling evidence that crime dramas dampen the effect of racial attitudes. However, a full exploration of this was outside the scope of this project. Content analyses tend to find that minorities are under-represented in terms of offenders and victims, but over-represented with respect to positive roles, such as lawyers, detectives and judges. In contrast, minorities are at least shown in proportion to their actual prevalence as offenders on local TV news, and perhaps are over-represented. It seems likely this is a result of Hollywood seeking to avoid accusations of racial bias than any sort of noble attempt to change perceptions about race and crime (and aided by the fact that minorities are underrepresented as actors generally in Hollywood; Eschholz et al. 2002). Nonetheless, it may be that repeated exposure to white offenders begins to affect viewers conceptions of crime, and particular of violent criminals. Additional content analyses could focus on, for example, whether implied attributions of responsibility and certainty are different across racial groups of offenders. Parallel experiments could manipulate these factors, as well as explore the cognitive associations of race and crime for viewers relative to non-viewers.

Finally, future research should more closely examine the role of perceptions, as well as measure actual information about the criminal justice system. Data from an on-going

project, for instance, shows that there is a great deal of variation in terms of citizens' perceptions regarding basic facts about the criminal justice system. In addition to emotional responses, it is probable that crime dramas are also affecting attitudes through levels of knowledge and perceptions of the criminal justice system. It is interesting to note that perceptions of crime rates were unaffected by watching crime dramas, which was the primary point of departure for this project. If it is not crime rates, then what other perceptions are important for understanding policy attitudes on crime?

In sum, it is my hope that this dissertation contributes to a number of interdisciplinary fields, but especially to our understanding of public opinion about crime. Fictional media is pervasive, popular, and preferred - especially relative to the news - by many citizens. As such, it is important to know what individuals may be learning about political issues from these alternate media sources. The preceding analyses have demonstrated that, when it comes to crime, citizens are exposed to systematic distortions about the relative rates of different crimes, the kinds of offenders and the reasons why they turn to criminal activity. The portrayal of crime in this way invites appraisal of certainty and perceptions of high offender controllability, thus leading to anger and ultimately support for punitive policies. And, given trends in local TV news viewership, the impact of fictional media on perceptions of attitudes about crime is only likely to increase in the future.

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Appendix A

Table 6.1: Questions Used in the Estimation of Crime Mood (Series 1210)

	Question Wording for Crime Mood
COURTSY	In general, do you think the courts in this area deal too harshly, or not harshly enough with criminals, or don't you have enough information about the courts to say?
HARSH	In general, do you think the courts in this area deal too harshly, or not harshly enough with criminals, or don't you have enough information about the courts to say?
MRIGHTS	Some people are primarily concerned with doing everything possible to protect the rights of those accused of committing crimes. Others feel that it is more important to stop criminal activity even at the risk of reducing the rights of the accused. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought very much about this?
CAPPUN	Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?
CAPPUNH	Do you believe in capital punishment, that is, the death penalty, or are you opposed to it?
DEATHFAIR	Generally speaking, do you believe the death penalty is applied fairly or unfairly in this country today?
DEATHOFT	In your opinion, is the death penalty imposed...too often, about the right amount, or not often enough?
NYTDEATH	Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

Source: Atkinson et al. (2011).

Table 6.2: Questions Used in the Estimation of Death Penalty Support

	Question Wording for Death Penalty
Gallup: 1965-67, 1969, 1971-72, 1976, 1978-79, 1981, 1985-86, 1988, 1991, 1994-95, 1999-2010	Are you in favor of the death penalty for a person convicted of murder?
GSS: 1973-75, 1977, 1982-84, 1987, 1989-90, 1993, 1996, 1998	Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?
ABC News / Washington Post: 1992	Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?
PSRA / Newsweek: 1997	Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?

Note: Gallup's data is available at `http://www.gallup.com/poll/1606/death-penalty.aspx`. The data for the General Social Survey (GSS), ABC News/Washington Post and PSRA/Newsweek is available at `www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html`.

Appendix B

Table 6.3: Predicting Media Consumption (ANES Sample)

	Local TV News	Crime Dramas
Race (Black)	.737**	.655**
	(.267)	(.306)
Ethnicity (Hispanic)	.438	-.028
	(.656)	(.574)
Gender (Male)	.125	.209
	(.136)	(.161)
Age	.143	-.276
	(.269)	(.317)
Education	-.359	-.178
	(.268)	(.324)
Income	.102	-.370
	(.288)	(.342)
Ideology (Conservative)	.235	-.118
	(.176)	(.206)
Partisanship (Republican)	-.163	.182
	(.241)	(.282)
Interest in Local Politics	.346	.025
	(.219)	(.240)
Racial Resentment	-.258	.386
	(.311)	(.367)
Intercept	–	-.469
		(.487)
Cutpoint 1	1.024	–
	(.392)	
Cutpoint 2	-.330	–
	(.396)	
Cutpoint 3	.186	–
	(.398)	
Cutpoint 4	.856*	–
	(.404)	
N =	329	341
F =	1.66*	1.15

Notes: Entries are ordered probit (Column 1) and probit (Column 2) coefficients (standard errors in parentheses), with sampling weights applied. All variables are scaled to range from 0 to 1. ** $p \leq .05$ * $p \leq .10$, two-tailed tests.

Appendix C

Coding Scheme for Content Anaylsis

- Coder
- Show
- Episode No.
- Order Coded
- Brief Summary of Plot
- Victim Gender
    1. male
    2. female
    3. multiple
- Victim Race
    1. White
    2. Black
    3. Hispanic
    4. Asian
    5. Other
    6. multiple
- Victim Age
    1. child
    2. teenager
    3. young adult (20-35)
    4. middle age (35-55)
    5. senior
    6. multiple
- Victim SES
    1. low

2. middle
3. upper-middle
4. upper class
5. multiple
6. unknown

- Victim Occupation
- Relationship to Offender

1. family (blood)
2. family (non-blood)
3. friends itemlovers
4. co-workers/business partners
5. neighbors
6. other
7. none/strangers
8. unknown

- Crime 1 (specify who if more than 1 victim)

1. murder
2. rape
3. robbery
4. kidnapping
5. assault
6. attempted murder
7. other
8. drug-related

- Crime 2 (specify who if more than 1 victim)

1. murder
2. rape
3. robbery
4. kidnapping

5. assault
6. attempted murder
7. other

- Weapon Used
  1. gun
  2. knife or sharp object
  3. blunt object
  4. strangulation/aspyhixiation
  5. other
  6. bomb/arson
  7. fists
  8. chemicals/drugs
  9. N/A
- Drugs/Alcohol Involved?
  1. yes
  2. no
  3. unknown
- Drugs partially blamed for crime?
  1. yes
  2. no
  3. unknown
  4. N/A
- If yes, explain:
- Offender Gender
  1. male
  2. female
  3. multiple
- Offender Race

    1. White
    2. Black
    3. Hispanic
    4. Asian
    5. Other
    6. multiple

- Offender Age
    1. child
    2. teenager
    3. young adult (20-35)
    4. middle age (35-55)
    5. senior
    6. multiple

- Offender SES
    1. low
    2. middle
    3. upper-middle
    4. upper class
    5. unknown

- Offender Occupation

- Prior Record?
    1. yes
    2. no
    3. unknown

- If multiple offenders, relationship?
    1. friends
    2. family
    3. lovers

4. other(explain)
5. none
6. business/co-workers
7. N/A

- Correct offender identified?
  1. yes
  2. no
- If no, explain:
- Offender confesses?
  1. yes
  2. no
  3. implicitly (caught in the act)
  4. N/A
- Sentence suggested/given
  1. community service/no jail time itemless than 5 years
  2. 5 to 10 years
  3. 10 to 20 years
  4. 20+ years
  5. life (with parole)
  6. life (without parole)
  7. death penalty
  8. other (explain)
  9. N/A
  10. killed/died before sentencing
  11. unknown
  12. rehab/counseling/commitment
- Offender's motive
  1. emotions (rage/jealousy)

2. cover up another crime
3. psychopathy/serial killer
4. money
5. love
6. accident
7. other
8. revenge
9. mental illness
10. unknown

- Others' explanation for motive
  1. emotions (rage/jealousy)
  2. cover up another crime
  3. psychopathy/serial killer
  4. money
  5. love
  6. accident
  7. other
- Other providing explanation
  1. police
  2. victim
  3. family/friends of offender
  4. other (explain)
- Crime planned?
  1. yes
  2. no
  3. unknown
- Offender has control over actions?
  1. yes
  2. no

3. both/don't know

- Offender attributions?
  1. bad person
  2. bad circumstances
  3. both/don't know
- Provide Examples