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The Role of Entertainment Media in Perceptions of Police Use of Force

Abstract

Scholars have long noted the importance of the media in shaping citizens' attitudes about crime and justice. Most studies have focused on the impact of news and particularly local TV news, yet Americans spend far more time watching entertainment media. We examine the portrayal of police misconduct in crime dramas, and how exposure to these portrayals affects perceptions of the police. We find that viewers of crime dramas are more likely to believe the police are successful at lowering crime, use force only when necessary, and that misconduct does not typically lead to false confessions. In contrast, perceptions regarding the frequency of force are unaffected. Our results add to a growing literature demonstrating the importance of entertainment media for attitudes toward crime and the criminal justice system.

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Entertainment Media and the Police

How do people form their attitudes about police use of force and misconduct? Although both police departments and academics recognize the importance of trust in and cooperation with the police (Tyler & Huo, 2002), little is known about where and how citizens form these impressions. Previous research suggests that much of society learns about crime and criminal justice processes not by personal experience, but rather via media exposure that shape perceptions of crime and justice issues (Surette, 2007). For instance, media exposure has been cited as a more influential factor in shaping Americans' fear of crime than direct experience (Chiricos, Padgett, & Gertz, 2000). This should not be surprising given that Americans age 15 and up watch an average of 2.8 hours of television (TV) per day (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Thus, it is likely that the media also play an important role in forming attitudes about the police specifically.

Studies examining the role of media in perceptions of the police in the United States have typically focused on exposure to the news. For example, citizens who report having heard or read about incidents of police misconduct on TV or in newspapers also believe that police misconduct is more prevalent than those who report less news media exposure (Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). Other studies focusing specifically on local TV news have found that citizens, especially minorities, hold more negative attitudes toward the police in the wake of highly publicized incidents of police misconduct (e.g., Weitzer, 2002; although see Chermak, McGarrell, & Gruenewald, 2006).

However, local TV news audiences have been steadily shrinking, particularly among younger viewers (Potter, Matsa, & Mitchell, 2013). There is also some evidence that local TV news programs spend less time on crime stories than they did in the past (Jurkowitz et al., 2013).

In any case, it is clear that the average citizen spends much more time watching entertainment programs: in 2012, Pew People & the Press reported that Americans spend an estimated 52 minutes, on average, watching TV news. In other words, Americans spend more than twice as much time – over two hours a day – watching entertainment media than news (see also Prior, 2003; Prior, 2005). So what programs are Americans spending so much time watching?

It turns out that the answer to that question is crime dramas. Indeed, crime dramas and police procedurals are consistently ranked among the most watched entertainment programs on TV. Just as in 2012-2013, Nielsen Media listed five crime dramas (*NCIS*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *Blacklist*, *Person of Interest*, and *Blue Bloods*) among their top ten most watched shows for the 2013-2014 TV season. Given their overwhelming popularity, the myopic focus on TV news is a bit puzzling. One possible reason that scholars have largely ignored entertainment media is the ostensibly safe assumption that viewers make a distinction between fact and fiction. Yet Reiner (2008) cites a British survey that found 29% spontaneously mentioned media fiction as their main source of information about the police. In the U.S., over 40% of citizens said they believe crime shows to be somewhat or very accurate (Dowler & Zawilski, 2007). These perceptions are purposely perpetuated by the writers and producers of crime dramas themselves, who in interviews reveal that they see educating the public on policing issues as part of their job (Colbran, 2014).

Some recent work has begun to explore whether and how crime dramas impact perceptions and attitudes about crime. This research suggests that entertainment media exhibit the same kinds of effects traditionally found in the context of news programming. For instance, exposure to crime dramas can increase the salience of crime as a political problem (Holbrook & Hill, 2005), replicating the agenda setting effect often found in media studies. Similarly, both

surveys (Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2005; Kort-Butler & Hartshorn, 2011) and experiments (Mutz & Nir, 2010) have demonstrated that exposure to crime dramas can affect policy attitudes, specifically by making them more punitive (although see Dowler, 2003).

While revealing, these studies have neglected the police in general and police use of force and misconduct in particular. In fact, the only study of which we are aware comes from Dowler and Zawilski (2007), who found that while viewers of crime dramas did not hold significantly different beliefs from non-viewers regarding the frequency of police misconduct, they were more likely to believe that the wealthy are treated better by the police. They suggest that viewers of crime dramas had greater exposure to wealthy or high status offenders – a hypothesis supported by prior content analyses – and that these offenders received better treatment by the police – a hypothesis that remains an empirical question.

In order to better understand how exposure to crime dramas might affect viewers' attitudes, it is first necessary to explore how the police are portrayed and whether this portrayal is consistent across crime dramas. In the next section, we briefly review the results of previous content analyses of crime dramas, highlighting the fact that prior studies give only hints about the portrayal of police use of force and misconduct. As a result, we conducted a content analysis of three popular crime dramas in 2011-2012, which aided us in generating specific hypotheses about the ways in which crime dramas might impact perceptions of the police.

Good Guys Wear Blue

Previous content analyses of crime dramas have typically focused largely on the socio-demographics of offenders and victims, as well as the types of crimes committed and the offenders' motivations.¹ A review of these analyses provides three important insights. The first is

that the portrayal of crime and offending is similar across programs. In particular, content analyses of TV crime dramas consistently find that:

- The crimes shown are violent, and typically murder (Brown, 2001; Cavender and Deutsch, 2007; Deutsch and Cavender, 2008; Eschholz et al., 2004; Rhineberger-Dunn et al., 2008; Soulliere, 2003)
- Offenders tend to be white (Britto et al., 2007; Eschholz et al., 2004; Rhineberger-Dunn et al., 2008) and middle- or upper-class (Brown, 2001; Soulliere, 2003; Eschholz et al., 2004; Reiner, 2006; Rhineberger-Dunn et al., 2008)
- The explanations for offending lean toward the personal (e.g., psychopathy, greed, revenge) rather than the sociological (e.g., poverty, gangs; Soulliere, 2003; Rhineberger-Dunn et al., 2008)
- The criminal justice system is portrayed as highly efficacious with respect to solving crimes (Britto et al., 2007; Dominick, 1973; Eschholz et al., 2004)

A second and related insight is that these consistencies are skewed, in some cases dramatically, from the reality of crime. For example, whereas murder is the modal and often the majority of crimes shown on dramas, homicide typically accounts for less than 1% of all crimes reported to the police (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). In contrast, less exciting property crimes, which comprise the bulk of reported crimes, are relatively rare. The good news is that fictional police departments disproportionately excel at solving these violent crimes: Britto et al. (2007) found that 100% of crimes featured in *Law & Order: SVU* were cleared by arrest. At the same time, the actual clearance rate (i.e., the percent of crimes for which someone was arrested and charged) in New York City was 49%. Eschholz et al. (2004) also reported that the success rate among criminal justice officials in crime dramas remained much higher than reality: the arrest rate during the 1999-2000 season was 78% in *NYPD Blue* and the conviction rate was 61% in *Law & Order*, while the actual NYPD clearance rate for violent crimes in 1999 was 29%.

The third insight is that existing content analyses have relatively little to say about the portrayal of police on TV. Beyond demographics and the efficacy of the criminal justice system,

only two quantitative analyses (Britto et al., 2007; Eschholz et al., 2004) have examined other factors related to the portrayal of the police. What they found, however, is intriguing: crime dramas depict the police as committing a number of civil liberties violations, though usually in a positive light (i.e., as necessary for officers to bring an offender to justice). One of the most frequent violations shown was a failure to Mirandize suspects at the time of arrestⁱⁱ, although physical abuse and excessive use of force against suspects was not uncommon, either. This magnification of officers' role in society may suggest to viewers that the ends justify the means and that police use of force and misconduct is often warranted. Indeed, "[t]he casual use of civil rights violations with no repercussions may prime viewers to believe that this is how policing is and 'should' be done" (Eschholz et al., 2004, p. 173). Importantly, this depiction is not unique to the U.S., as Leishman and Mason's (2002) qualitative assessment of the portrayal of police in British media reveals "rule-breaking is a central theme" (p. 68).

While suggestive, these analyses leave many questions unanswered. How frequently and what kinds of force are used against suspects? Do the police engage in other kinds of misconduct and, if so, what? Is the use of force and police misconduct portrayed as necessary as Eschholz et al. (2004) suggest? Or does it result in innocent civilians getting pulled into the criminal justice system? Although it is likely that the arrests and convictions in crime dramas are often portrayed as accurate (that is, that the criminal justice system is apprehending and punishing the factually guilty), previous analyses have not explicitly examined this. In order to answer these and other questions, we conducted a content analysis that assessed several aspects of interest relating to the police in general and use of force specifically.

An Updated Content Analysis: Data and Methods

Our 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 on Nielsen ratings data for 2011-2012, which identified them as the most popular crime dramas of the television season.ⁱⁱⁱ We met with both assistants and discussed the coding sheet beforehand; the unit of analysis is the crime.^{iv} The assistants then coded the first four episodes of *The Mentalist* and the last four episodes of *NCIS* in order to calculate inter-rater reliability ($\kappa = .71$). There was some variation in reliability, with objective codes (e.g., socio-demographics, police use of force; $\kappa = .73$) eliciting slightly higher reliability than subjective (e.g., suspect demeanor, necessity of force; $\kappa = .68$) codes. Disagreements were discussed with both coders to identify problem codes. Subsequently, one assistant coded *The Mentalist* and the first half of *NCIS* while the other coded the second half of *NCIS* and *Criminal Minds*.

In addition to collecting standard socio-demographic information (e.g., gender, race, age, and socio-economic status of the victim[s] and offender[s]) and aspects of the crime committed (e.g., type of crime, weapon used), the coding sheet also gathered data on the key variables of interest for this analysis. This included police use of force, perceptions regarding the justifiability of that force (including the offender's demeanor [civil, non-compliant and disrespectful, hostile and resistant] and the necessity of force [yes or no] given the situation), and the frequency and type of other kinds of police misconduct. The coding sheet was refined based on the initial data and post-reliability conversations with the coders, and is available upon request.

It should be noted that while the final coding sheet was relatively straightforward with respect to most of the variables collected (e.g., did the offender have a stated criminal record [yes or no]), criminal justice scholars disagree as to what exactly constitutes the use (and misuse) of

force and misconduct among police officers. For example, handcuffing can be performed respectfully in the context of arresting a suspect, or it can be done violently as a way of physically bullying a suspect. Likewise, certain verbal commands might be viewed as force depending on the context. Because of this lack of consensus, we took a broad view of force and measured any actions that could be construed as such (verbal command, verbal threat, restraint force [handcuffing, rough pat-downs], striking/hitting with body part, striking/hitting with weapon, joint manipulation, used non-lethal weapon [mace, TASER], displayed firearm, discharged firearm [non-lethal], discharged firearm [lethal], other [describe]). Coders were asked to rate the highest level of force used by an official. Similarly, we took a broad view of misconduct beyond the use of excessive force, asking coders to note anything that might be construed as police misconduct (accepting complementary items, unnecessary stopping/detention, using insulting language toward civilian, taking bribes, using excessive force, direct involvement in criminal activity, other [describe]).

Content Analysis Results

Our analysis revealed that one season of all three shows portrayed 252 crimes committed by 155 unique offenders. As with previous content analyses, the majority of crimes committed were murder or attempted murder (66%). Other violent and relatively unusual crimes comprised much of the remaining offenses coded, including kidnapping (8%), assault (6%), rape (2%), and torture (2%). By contrast, theft and “victimless” crimes (e.g., drug use, prostitution, and gambling) comprised a small portion of offenses coded (4% and 3%, respectively).

In general, offenders were white (76%), middle- to upper-class (67%) males (77%). Moreover, as Table 1 shows, nearly all offenders (92%) were correctly identified, and a majority (64%) were arrested for their crimes. The *Criminal Minds* team was by far the most successful,

correctly identifying every single offender in this season; the least accurate team was *NCIS*, who correctly identified 88% of offenders (though they also had twice as many offenders to deal with compared to *Criminal Minds*). Given these results and previous content analyses, we expect viewers of crime dramas to believe the police are more successful in getting criminals off the street than non-viewers (**H1**). Moreover, the similarities across these shows to previous content analyses in terms of crime type, offender demographics and motivations, and police efficacy increase our confidence that our findings regarding police use of force and misconduct would be broadly applicable to many other crime dramas shown in recent years, such as *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order*, and *CSI*.

[Table 1 About Here]

We also found that in the remaining cases where the offender was not correctly identified the police were unable to solve the crime because the episode ended. That is, instances in which the offender was unidentified occurred not because the police made a mistake, but because they were unable to identify anyone at all who might have committed the crime. Thus, these crime dramas collectively gave no indication that the police ever mistakenly target innocent citizens. Portraying the police in this manner likely sends a strong message about the accuracy as well as the efficacy of the criminal justice system. Because criminal justice officials are shown as rarely or never targeting an innocent person, we also expect viewers to be more likely to believe that misconduct by the police rarely leads to wrongful convictions relative to non-viewers (**H2**).

In addition to being highly successful and accurate, the police were also shown as engaging in the use of force quite frequently. Over half of all offenders had force employed against them (57%), though this figure was substantially higher on *Criminal Minds* (see Table 1). Moreover, when the police engaged in force, they employed a variety of techniques. Nearly 20%

of the encounters in which force was employed ($n = 92$) involved only verbal commands or verbal threats. Much more common was the use of physical force, including restraint force (e.g., handcuffing or rough pat-downs), hitting the suspect or engaging in a joint manipulation technique, or using a non-lethal weapon (e.g., mace or TASERs). Firearms also made several appearances in police/offender interactions, including displaying a firearm (16%), and discharging it in a lethal (10%) or non-lethal (13%) manner.

The portrayal of frequent police use of force in crime dramas stands in contrast to studies of actual police use of force. Of course, studying police use of force is methodologically challenging, and estimates of its frequency vary. For instance, less than 2% of citizens in a large-scale survey ages 16 and up reported having force used against them (Eith & Durose, 2011). Yet a comprehensive analysis of observational studies, survey data, and official records suggests that the police employ force anywhere from 0.19% to 27% of the time, depending on how force is operationalized and the unit of analysis (Adams, 1996). Regardless, even taking the highest estimate as the most accurate suggests that fictional police engage in force substantially more often than the actual police. As the portrayal of force in crime dramas is not reflective of the rates of force used by police in reality, we expect regular viewers of crime dramas to perceive the police as engaging in force more often than non-viewers (**H3a**).

A natural follow-up question is whether this frequent use of force was also portrayed as necessary and sufficient. As Table 1 shows, nearly four-fifths (79%) of encounters involving the use of force were perceived as justified. Moreover, we asked coders to record the suspects' demeanor toward police officers. Offenders were more or less equally split with respect to whether they were civil and compliant or non-compliant. Specifically, 37% of offenders were perceived as civil when interacting with the police, 12% were non-compliant and disrespectful

and 30% were seen as actively hostile and resistant.^v Of those who were anything other than civil ($n = 67$), one-third engaged in behavior that was not inherently violent (e.g., having a verbal disagreement with the police that did not involve threats or fleeing from the police). The remaining two-thirds, however, exhibited much more serious behavior. Specifically, 25% of non-civil offenders threatened harm, 22% assaulted, 4% attempted to kill, and 7% successfully killed one or more criminal justice officials.

In turn, non-compliant and hostile offenders were significantly more likely to have force used against them ($\chi^2(6) = 80.8, p < .001$), with a majority of these instances (54%) involving the use of either non-lethal (e.g., TASERs) or lethal (e.g., firearms) weapons.^{vi} Several offenders still had force used against them even if they were described as civil and compliant ($n = 29$, or 48% of all civil and compliant offenders). Given that force was typically perceived as necessary and used against offenders who were non-compliant, however, we expect viewers to also believe that the use of force by police is applied appropriately and is almost always necessary to make an arrest (**H3b**).

However, just because the force used is necessary does not mean it is perceived as sufficient. If viewers believe the police engage in more force than non-viewers, then we might also expect them to perceive this force to be normatively the right amount. It is also possible that viewers believe the police do not use force often enough or, at a minimum, do not believe them to be using force more than they should. Thus, we expect viewers to perceive this greater use of force by police to be at least sufficient if not under-utilized, given the highly disrespectful nature of most fictional suspects (**H3c**).

Finally, 9% of police-citizen interactions involved some sort of misconduct beyond the use of excessive force. The frequency of misconduct differed marginally significantly across

shows ($\chi^2(4) = 9.3, p = .06$): the straight-laced officials in *Criminal Minds* only engaged in a single instance of police misconduct, compared to 9% and 12% of the time in *The Mentalist* and *NCIS*, respectively. These instances of misconduct ranged from taking bribes and disobeying orders from a superior officer to direct involvement in criminal activity (e.g., blackmail, identity fraud). And while these instances of misconduct were significantly more likely to take place in episodes that also displayed the use of force ($\chi^2(4) = 67.4, p < .05$), they were not significantly related to the use of unnecessary force ($\chi^2(1) = 1.3, p > .10$).

In sum, the results of this content analysis generated a number of expectations concerning our survey data. While fictional officials in crime dramas are both highly successful and accurate, they are also shown as engaging in force frequently. Moreover, these instances of police use of force tend to be portrayed as necessary and justified, a finding that is not surprising given the demeanor of many suspects. In general, then, we expect viewers to have more positive and trusting views of the police with respect to the use of force and misconduct than non-viewers.

Survey Data and Methods

To test our expectations based on the content analysis, we utilized data from an online, omnibus survey funded by RTI International, and fielded by GfK (Knowledge Networks at the time) March 6-18, 2013. GfK recruits a nationally representative sample for their KnowledgePanel using random digit dialing and address-based sampling methods; respondents without web access are given a free laptop with Internet service for as long as they remain an active part of the panel. Our respondents ($n = 2,119$) were a probability proportional to size (PPS) weighted sample of all KnowledgePanel members ($n = 55,000$); the completion rate for this survey was 58%.^{vii} Because it was an omnibus survey, these data come from questions asked

after two unrelated modules.^{viii} In order, respondents were asked [with response options in brackets]:

- In general, how successful do you think the police in your city are at reducing crime? [Very successful, somewhat successful, somewhat unsuccessful, very unsuccessful]
- In general, how often do police officers in your city use physical force against a suspect when making an arrest? By physical force we mean actions such as wrestling with or striking the suspect, or using a weapon such as a Taser or firearm. [Almost always; often; sometimes; rarely; never]
- In general, does the police department in your city use force too often, not enough, or about the right amount when dealing with citizens? [Too often; about the right amount; not enough]
- If you had to choose, would you say that the police in your city generally use force against a suspect because it was necessary to make the arrest, or because the suspect was disrespectful and deserved to be “roughed up?” [Necessary to make the arrest; the suspect deserved it]
- Overall, how often does misconduct by the police in your city, such as the use of force to get a false confession, contribute to someone being found guilty of a crime he or she did not commit? [Most of the time; sometimes; rarely; never]^{ix}

Table 2 displays the weighted^x distribution of these attitudinal variables, and reveals that citizens overall have very positive perceptions of and attitudes toward the police. Nearly four-fifths of respondents (77%) believe that the police are very or somewhat successful at reducing crime; nearly two-thirds (63%) believe that misconduct rarely or never leads to false confessions. When it comes to the use of force specifically, 39% of respondents believe that the police rarely or never use physical force when making an arrest. In contrast, only 1 in 10 respondents believe that the police engage in force almost always or often. However, when the police use force, most citizens agree that it is necessary for arrest (79%), rather than a form of “street justice,” and that the police use force about the right amount (72%).

[Table 2 About Here]

For the analyses reported below, these attitudinal variables were recoded to range from 0 to 1, with higher numbers corresponding to beliefs that we expect to be more prevalent among

viewers of crime dramas. Thus, 1 indicates a belief that the police are very successful at reducing crime, misconduct never leads to false confessions, the police almost always or often use physical force when making an arrest, they use force because it is necessary for the arrest, and they do not use force enough when dealing with citizens. As a result, increasing viewership of crime dramas should exhibit positive relationships with these attitudinal variables. Moreover, recoding from 0 to 1 facilitates interpretation by revealing the maximal effect of variables, and allows for (rough) relative comparisons of the substantive impact of variables in the model.

Respondents were subsequently asked how much time they spend watching local TV news (“In a typical week, how much time per weekday do you spend watching local television news?”) as well as fictional crime dramas (“In a typical week, how much time do you spend watching fictional crime dramas, such as *CSI*? This can include shows that are no longer airing new episodes, such as *NYPD Blue* or the original *Law & Order*.”) in minutes, as indicated by the open-ended box. Unfortunately, the question wording for the local TV news variable appears to have been misinterpreted by a number of respondents: in the extreme, respondents indicated impossible watching times of 4000 minutes (67 hours) for local TV news in a typical day, suggesting that they focused on the introductory phrase, “in a typical week.”

As a result, data from a 2011 survey of Long Island, NY residents that used identical question wording were used as a benchmark for comparison. Comparisons of the distribution of these two recoded variables can be found in the Appendix, although it should be noted that Long Islanders are whiter, older, and more educated than national samples. A conservative cut-off of 180 minutes per day was used^{xi} for viewers of local TV news; any higher reports were divided by 5 on the assumption that they gave a weekly rather than daily total (7.6% of the sample). For local

TV news, responses were recoded such that 0 = doesn't watch, .333 = watches 1-29 minutes, .667 = watches 30-59 minutes, 1 = watches 60 minutes or more.

Fortuitously, because the key independent variable requested *weekly* viewing estimates of crime dramas, it is unlikely that this variable suffers from the same measurement problems as local TV news viewing. Nonetheless, as reports of crime drama viewing were heavily skewed ($s^2 = 12.49$), responses were recoded such that 0 = doesn't watch (44%), .5 = watches 1-60 minutes (25%), 1 = watches 61 minutes or more (31%).

The survey concluded by asking respondents for basic socio-demographic information, including gender, race/ethnicity, age, education, income, U.S. citizenship, ideology ("Would you say your views in most political matters are liberal, moderate, or conservative?"), previous experience with the police ("Have you ever been involved in an encounter with the police *other than* a traffic stop? In other words, a situation where the police approached or stopped you as a suspect?"), and residency information which allowed us to determine whether the respondent lives in an urban or rural area and in the South according to Census classifications. These variables were all recoded to range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating males, blacks, Hispanics, the oldest respondent (91), the highest level of education and income, having been born in the U.S., identifying as conservative, having had a previous encounter with the police, living in an urban area, and in the South.

Survey Results

Before examining the relationship between viewership of crime dramas and attitudes directly, we first run simple models predicting exposure to crime dramas. Although this cannot completely dispel criticisms of selection bias (i.e., that viewers of crime dramas tend to watch such shows because they reinforce pre-existing beliefs), such an analysis can, at a minimum,

describe audiences of crime dramas demographically. Thus, Table 3 displays the results from an ordered probit model predicting viewership of crime dramas.^{xii}

[Table 3 About Here]

Whereas females and older respondents are more likely to report watching crime dramas than males and younger respondents, the remaining variables are statistically insignificant predictors.^{xiii} On average, females reported watching 65 minutes of crime dramas relative to 57 minutes for males; the oldest individuals reported watching nearly 80 minutes of crime dramas in a typical week, compared to 42 minutes for the youngest respondents in the sample. Unlike most analyses, the poor model fit here is good news, as the results suggest that crime drama audiences are generally representative of Americans as a whole. Although females and older respondents tend to be more fearful of crime and hold less punitive attitudes when it comes to crime policies, it is unclear whether these gender and age differences would also translate to attitudes regarding police force and misconduct. However, concerns about self-selection are relatively assuaged with the knowledge that, at least in this sample, liberals, Black respondents, and urban dwellers report watching crime dramas just as much as conservatives, non-Blacks, and rural residents. In other words, it is unlikely that differences between viewers and non-viewers are a function of ideological differences, race, or proximity to crime.

Given that the relationship between reported exposure to crime dramas and perceptions of the police is unlikely due to self-selection, we now turn attention to the results of interest. Table 4 displays the coefficients for two ordered probit models, the first assessing police success (i.e., efficiency) and the second the degree to which police misconduct leads to false confessions (i.e., accuracy). Looking first at Column 1, and in accordance with **H1**, greater reported exposure to crime dramas is associated with an increase in the probability of believing the police are

successful at reducing crime net controls.^{xiv} Thus, holding all other variables at their means and modes,^{xv} those who watch more than an hour of crime dramas a week are roughly four percentage points more likely to believe the police are “very successful” at reducing crime compared to those who watch no crime dramas.^{xvi} To more readily compare the substantive effect of watching crime dramas vis-à-vis conservatism, we plot the impact of these two variables on holding more pro-police attitudes for this model and the ones below in Figure 1.

[Figure 1 About Here]

Similarly, Column 2 reveals that our survey data align with **H2**, which held that exposure to crime dramas is associated with a belief that misconduct does not lead to false confessions.^{xvii} In particular, increased viewership is associated with a seven percentage point increase in the probability of believing that misconduct rarely or never leads to false confessions. Although the impact of crime dramas is not overwhelming, it is on par with the impact of self-identifying as a conservative rather than a liberal, as seen in Figure 1.

[Table 4 About Here]

Next, Table 5 examines several aspects of attitudes toward police use of force, and specifically perceptions of the frequency with which force is deployed, the necessity of this force, and the sufficiency of this force. Column 1 displays the ordered probit estimates for the frequency with which the police use force against suspects; due to the small number of respondents at the margins, responses of “almost always” and “often” were combined, as were “rarely” and “never” for analysis. Column 2 displays the probit coefficients for predicting perceptions of the justifications for force, and the final two columns display the multinomial estimates for normative attitudes toward the frequency with which force is used: do they use

force too often (Column 3) or not enough (Column 4) compared to respondents who said they use force about the right amount.

Column 1 of Table 5 reveals that, contrary to **H3a**, watching crime dramas has no effect on perceptions regarding the degree to which the police actually use force when making arrests.^{xviii} This is surprising, given the overwhelming extent to which viewers of crime dramas are exposed to police use of force. Nonetheless, these findings are in line with those of Dowler and Zawilski (2007), who also found no relationships between crime drama viewership and perceptions regarding the degree to which police engage in various forms of misconduct. Although viewership of crime dramas does not appear to affect perceptions regarding the frequency with which police engage in force, it does correlate with perceptions regarding the necessity of that force. As shown in Column 2 and in line with **H3b**, self-reports of watching crime dramas significantly predicts that a respondent believes force used by the police is usually necessary for arrest, rather than because the suspect deserved it. Consequently, all else constant, watching crime dramas increases the probability of believing the use of force was necessary by six percentage points (see Figure 1). Finally, Columns 3 and 4 reveal that **H3c** receives qualified support.^{xix} On one hand, regular exposure to crime dramas is negatively linked with the probability of believing the police engage in force too often. That is, watching crime dramas is associated with a nearly five percentage point decrease in the probability of believing that the police engage in force too often, relative to the right amount. However, exposure to crime dramas does not affect one's propensity to believe that the police do not engage in force enough. Thus, a weaker version of our hypothesis holds, in that viewers are less likely to believe police use of force occurs too often; however, viewers are no more likely to believe the police do not engage in force often enough relative to non-viewers.

[Table 5 About Here]

Although not our primary focus, we also find several results among the control variables worthy of mention. For one, local TV news viewing was associated with perceptions regarding the relationship between misconduct and false confessions and the belief that police use force too often relative to the right amount. Thus our results provide support for the claim that local TV news influences perceptions about crime (Chiricos et al., 2000), although content analyses of the portrayal of police in local TV news would be helpful to understand when attitudes toward the police should be affected by local TV news and when they should not. Regardless, it is not terribly surprising to see this effect given that some police-citizen encounters generate interest from news media outlets across the country because of their significance. Take, for example, the unfortunate killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, which resulted in vast media coverage and protests across the country. This suggests that even when examples of police misconduct (perceived or otherwise) are not germane to one's locale, citizens may still be exposed to images from elsewhere around the country.

By comparison, ideology and prior police experience played a much greater and more consistent role in explaining perceptions of police use of force. The effects of conservatism mirrored that of viewing crime dramas on a regular basis with one important exception: conservatives were less, not more, likely to believe that the police are successful at lowering the crime rate. At first glance this finding might seem counterintuitive; however, conservatism focuses more on protection of society, while liberals emphasize provision of services (Janoff-Bulman, 2009). Thus, while conservatives espouse "limited government" (Kinder, 1998) it is only in the domains of social welfare spending, and not protection-oriented services such as the military and police. Given this added focus on protection by conservatives, it seems plausible

that conservatives have higher expectations for the police than liberals. Relatedly Hipp (2010) reported that wealthier individuals, a consistent predictor of conservatism (Gelman, 2009; McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006), were more likely to think crime was a more pervasive problem than their less wealthy counterparts. Piecing all of this together provides a plausible, though untested, explanation for why conservatives might view the police as less successful at combatting crime than liberals.

Similarly, previous police experience was only a non-significant predictor for perceptions of the necessity of force. Not surprisingly, respondents who reported having prior contact with police were more likely to think force is used during arrest and that the police use force too often, and less likely to view the police as successful at lowering crime, and that police misconduct rarely leads to false confessions. Oddly, however, these respondents were also significantly more likely to indicate police do not use force enough, compared to the right amount. One potential explanation for this counterintuitive finding is that the results are a function of the type of previous encounter the respondent had with police. That is, our question asked respondents whether they had previous encounters with the police, and not whether they had summoned the police as a complainant or victim, or whether they were the suspect or offender of a crime. If this question captured both types of encounters (as victims and offenders), then we would see a pattern of responses similar to what is shown in Table 5, with victims expressing dissatisfaction over the (perceived) lack of force and offenders expressing dissatisfaction over the (perceived) excessive use of force.

Last but not least, our models indicate that, as with many aspects of the criminal justice system, black respondents hold significantly different views relative to whites. In particular, blacks were more likely to believe police use force when making arrests and use it too often, and

less likely to think false confessions are not linked to some form of police misconduct. However, while the effect of watching crime dramas on attitudes toward the police was in every case stronger for white respondents ($n = 1,766$), this difference was not significant compared to Blacks ($n = 202$) as tested by an interaction between the dummy variable for Blacks and crime drama viewership.

Discussion

Survey research consistently reveals the esteemed position the police hold relative to other aspects of the criminal justice system (Cullen, Fisher, & Applegate, 2000). As Warr (1995) notes, “[i]f there is any element of the criminal justice system that Americans admire, it is the police” (p. 301). An obvious question is, why? It seems unlikely that the police often receive positive news coverage and, even if they do, this is counteracted by the frenetic coverage of incidents of police brutality and misconduct. Moreover, the most common type of police-citizen encounter is a traffic stop (Langton & Durose, 2013), and it seems equally unlikely that those who are stopped for speeding or other minor violations are enthusiastic about their interactions. Where is this positive image of the police coming from, then?

We believe that the overwhelming popularity of crime dramas, which many citizens tune in to on a weekly basis, provides a partial answer. The typical formula of these shows is to follow the lives of passionate and well-intentioned police officers in their quest to solve what are often heinous crimes. And while some break from this tradition (e.g., *The Wire*), the vast majority paint relatively simplistic portraits of good guys and bad guys. In the absence of information about the true nature of crime and offending, it is easy to see why this facile, not to mention emotionally and visually compelling, storyline is projected onto the real world.

Specifically, our content analysis indicated that the police in crime dramas are exceptional at solving crimes and rarely make mistakes. Moreover, while the police were shown frequently engaging in force, that force was often portrayed as necessary and justified given that it was commonly employed against hostile and resistant suspects, many of whom attempted to or successfully endangered one or more officers' lives. While our content analysis also revealed instances of coercive tactics being used to elicit false confessions and other kinds of misconduct, they were few and far between.

In turn, viewers of crime dramas held significantly different attitudes toward the police than their non-viewing counterparts. In particular, viewers were more likely than non-viewers to believe that: 1) the police are successful at combatting crime, 2) misconduct generally does not lead to false confessions, and 3) force, when used, is typically necessary for an arrest rather than as a form of street justice. In contrast, viewers and non-viewers had similar views with respect to the frequency with which police use force. With respect to the sufficiency of this perceived frequency, viewers were less likely than non-viewers to believe that the police use force too often, but they were not more likely to believe the police do not use force enough.

Perhaps the largest question this study raises is why some attitudes are affected by watching crime dramas while others are not. In particular, perceptions regarding the frequency of police use of force as well as the sufficiency of this frequency (i.e., do the police use force enough) were the same for both regular viewers and non-viewers. One possible explanation for these discrepant findings is the degree to which respondents receive information about the police from other media sources. That is, citizens may be exposed to a lot of information about police use of force from other media platforms, particularly given the tremendous amount of coverage some of these events receive. Incidents such as the shooting of Jonathan Farrell shooting in

Charlotte, North Carolina or Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri are covered not only by local and national news, but also social media such as Twitter and Facebook. With respect to Michael Brown specifically, it is clear that the amount of coverage dedicated to the shooting and subsequent riots in Ferguson differed dramatically across the two platforms (Sullivan, 2014). In turn, one's relative exposure to Twitter and Facebook likely impacted not only how important users perceived this event to be, but also the way in which they perceived it.

In contrast, the modal news media story involving the police focuses on the crime and offender, rather than the successful apprehension of suspects. Indeed, the news media are notoriously bad at placing crime stories in a larger context (Iyengar, 1991), which might include information such as trends in crime and clearance rates and thus inform perceptions of police success (Surrette, 2007). We suspect that the same is true of network and cable TV as well as social media. As a result, in the absence of such information, respondents draw on what they know when answering questions about the degree to which the police are successful at reducing crime or their ability to correctly identify suspects.

A second and related question is the degree to which regular viewers of crime dramas hold attitudes and perceptions that are distorted from the reality of crime. Certainly these shows tend to elicit more pro-police attitudes in general; however, this does not mean that these attitudes are factually inaccurate. In our view, the answer to that question is mixed. On one hand, viewers are less likely to think police use force too often, a belief that is consistent with the data showing police rarely use force (Alpert & Dunham, 2004; Pate & Fridell, 1993). On the other hand, viewers' perceptions diverge from reality when assessing the efficacy of police and their role in obtaining false confessions. According to the FBI, the nationwide clearance rate for crimes hovers around 30%. Moreover, available evidence suggests that police misconduct often

leads to false confessions (Innocence Project, 2014) and, in some cases, is directly related to wrongful convictions (Covey, 2013). Thus, when it comes to the efficacy and accuracy of the police, viewers are overly optimistic about police practices and results.

With respect to the necessity of force, our content analysis revealed that many suspects are depicted as resisting police authority, either verbally or physically. In contrast, observational studies reveal a quite different reality. One large-scale observational study of police-citizen interactions found that 13% of these encounters involved resistance, half of which was the result of “passive resistance” – that is, not listening or disobeying directives (Terrill, 2003). Thus, although we did not ask directly about perceptions of suspect resistance, the fact that viewers were more likely to perceive the use of force as necessary may be a function of their (mis)perceptions regarding the level of resistance offered by the typical suspect.

It is clear that dramas distort crime and offending in a number of ways. In the present study we focused specifically on the use of force and misconduct, as well as issues of innocence. We suspect, however, that there are several other dimensions on which crime dramas could be analyzed and found to predict attitudes among viewers. For example, crime dramas appear to typically portray the police as engaging in traditional policing practices. Community and problem-oriented policing are not shown, and may be perceived as unnecessary given how effective the fictional police are at traditional, reactive policing and detective work. Moreover, given that offenders are typically portrayed as personally responsible and committing crimes for psychological and pathological – rather than sociological or situational – reasons, viewers of crime dramas may believe that proactive policing is unnecessary and ineffective. After all, how would better street lighting prevent a sociopath from kidnapping women?

Moreover, given that force and misconduct are portrayed as necessary and justified, we suspect that viewers of crime dramas would also tend to have greater trust in the police than non-viewers. In general, the positive attitudes of viewers may translate into other interesting facets, such as greater compliance with police commands and reports of higher satisfaction and better experiences after police-citizen interactions. Indeed, there is some evidence that people interpret their own experiences with the police in light of their general views (Brandl, Frank, Worden, & Bynum, 1994), suggesting that exposure to crime dramas might impact not just attitudes, but also behavior.

Limitations

Of course, as with all studies, ours suffers from a few important limitations. Most obviously, the question of self-selection cannot be completely ruled out in these data. Given the potential for endogeneity, experiments such as those designed by Mutz and Nir (2010) should be conducted in order to address this concern directly. Although a valid concern, we have shown that crime dramas appeal to a wide variety of Americans, which should assuage concerns of self-selection. That is, while it is relatively plausible that viewers who hold punitive attitudes toward criminals seek out crime dramas because they show a morality play that is conducive to their beliefs, it is more difficult to believe that citizens' perceptions of police use of force and misconduct leads them to seek out such shows. Relatedly, we must acknowledge the cross-sectional nature of our data, which further contributes to the difficulty of ruling out self-selection as a rival explanation for our results.

In addition, while our results align with insights from previous research (Britto et al., 2007; Eschholz et al., 2004), it should be reiterated that our analysis focused on only three popular dramas in recent years. Analyses of other dramas from other periods in time may reveal

different results, as well as provide additional insights as to why perceptions of force frequency were uncorrelated with crime drama viewership; this is particularly true given that our survey asks about crime dramas in general, and not these the three dramas content analyzed specifically. As a result, it is possible that some of our survey viewers of crime dramas did not watch the programs analyzed, attenuating the connection between the results of our content analysis and the survey results.

Nonetheless, the present study contributes to a growing literature on how media affects perceptions of criminal justice issues. Unlike most quantitative analyses that have focused on the influence of news media, ours explored the role of crime dramas on respondents' perceptions of police efficacy, use of force, and misconduct. Our results support the notion that fictional media play a role in shaping perceptions of crime and criminal justice issues, but also generates questions about how viewers reconcile real life events with fictional ones. It appears that exposure to fictional crime dramas complicates the processing of criminal justice related information by blurring the line between what is real and what is not. The challenge for researchers going forward is to better understand how viewers process information from fictional accounts of the criminal justice system and when that information is reconciled with real-life events (e.g., frequency of force) and when it is not.

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ⁱ These studies analyzed a narrow set of shows airing at the turn of the century: Britto, Hughes, Saltzman, and Stroh (2007) – 2003-2004 season of *Law & Order: SVU*; Eschholz, Mallard, and Flynn (2004) – 2001-2002 seasons of *Law & Order* and *NYPD Blue*; Deutsch and Cavender (2008) – 2000-2001 season of *CSI*; Soulliere (2003) – a season each of *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order*, and *The Practice*; and Brown (2001) – 1999-2000 seasons of *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order*, and *Homicide: Life on the Street*. There is one exception: Rhineberger-Dunn, Rader, and Williams (2008) coded seasons 1-15 of *Law & Order*.

ⁱⁱ Legally, Miranda warnings need not be read at the time of arrest, a fact that does not appear to have been taken into account in their coding scheme.

ⁱⁱⁱ *NCIS: Los Angeles* was rated higher than *Criminal Minds*, but we coded the latter in order to obtain a wider variety of dramas. All four ranked among Nielsen's top ten most highly rated shows for 2011-2012.

^{iv} We chose this as the unit of analysis because the crime, rather than the offender, tends to drive the storyline and was typically identified at the beginning of the episode. As a result, our research assistants could code as the story unfolded, even if the offender was not identified until much later or at all.

Additionally, because some offenders committed multiple crimes, and some crimes were committed by multiple offenders simultaneously, the number of crimes coded does not equal the number of offenders.

^v The following descriptive statistics are based on an n of 162; some offenders made repeat appearances across episodes and thus had more than one opportunity to engage with the police.

^{vi} In line with Dowler and Zawilski's (2007) hypothesis, force was used less often against middle- and upper-class suspects ($\chi^2(8) = 16.8, p < .05$), but not perceived as less necessary ($\chi^2(8) = 10.9, p > .10$).

^{vii} The median completion time for the total survey was 35 minutes. The cumulative response rate for initial panel recruitment was 5.9%. For more detailed information on GfK's methodology, please see their documentation online at <http://www.gfk.com/Documents/GfK-KnowledgePanel-Design-Summary.pdf>

^{viii} The first module contained questions about food consumption, and the second module questions about the respondents' political views and attitudes toward the new health care law.

^{ix} This question contained a survey experiment in which half of the respondents were randomly assigned to receive information about the Innocence Project. Because the results from this survey experiment fall outside the scope of this paper they are ignored at present. However, the model predicting attitudes regarding misconduct and false confessions contains a dummy variable to control for this manipulation.

^x Post-stratification weights were generated by GfK using the 2012 Current Population Study as a benchmark. See <http://www.gfk.com/Documents/GfK-KnowledgePanel-Design-Summary.pdf>

^{xi} Pew (2012) reported that while Americans watch an average of 52 minutes of news per day, less than a third watch an hour of TV news or more per day. Given that the Pew question asked generically about TV news and not just local TV news, we believe this to be a justifiably conservative cut-off point.

^{xii} Many of the ordered probit models failed to meet the assumption of parallel lines. However, in only one instance did running it as a multinomial logit change the key results. For ease of presentation, then, ordered probit models are displayed for all but one model, and differences between the two footnoted.

^{xiii} This model fails to meet the assumption of parallel lines ($\chi^2(11) = 38.27, p < .001$). A multinomial logit reveals that gender and age are only significant predictors at the highest level of watching. In addition, conservatives were less and Blacks more likely to report watching up to an hour of crime dramas compared to not at all, effects that run counter to concerns about self-selection. Finally, more educated individuals were less likely to watch up to an hour of crime dramas compared to not at all.

^{xiv} This model meets the assumption of parallel lines ($\chi^2(26) = 28.61, p = .33$).

^{xv} Thus, assuming a non-black, non-Hispanic, non-southern female who lives in an urban area, was born in the U.S., and does not report having a previous encounter with the police.

^{xvi} The results were driven by those at the higher end of watching crime dramas. All models were re-estimated with two dummy variables in place of the ordinal measure. Results show watching more than an hour a week produced significantly different attitudes compared to none at all or up to 60 minutes.

^{xvii} This model fails to meet the assumption of parallel lines ($\chi^2(14) = 37.48, p < .001$), but a multinomial logit is substantively identical with one exception: conservatives are significantly more likely to say misconduct rarely or never leads to false confessions, but not sometimes compared to most of the time.

^{xviii} This model fails to meet the assumption of parallel lines ($\chi^2(12) = 22.46, p < .05$). Conservatives, non-Blacks, and wealthier individuals are significantly less likely to believe the police engage in force almost always or often, but not sometimes, compared to rarely or never.

^{xix} This model fails to meet the assumption of parallel lines ($\chi^2(13) = 99.51, p < .001$) and the results for a number of variables including the key independent variable differed markedly across the three levels of the dependent variable. As a result, we present the multinomial logistic estimates in Table 5.

Table 1: The Frequency of Police Use of Force and Misconduct in Crime Dramas

| | <i>Criminal Minds</i> | <i>NCIS</i> | <i>The Mentalist</i> | All Shows |
|---|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Correct Offender Identified? (n = 155)</i> | | | | |
| Yes | 100 | 88 | 93 | 92 |
| No | 0 | 11 | 7 | 7 |
| <i>Force Used</i> | | | | |
| Yes | 90 | 48 | 49 | 57 |
| No | 3 | 47 | 45 | 38 |
| <i>Type of Force (n = 92)</i> | | | | |
| Verbal Command/Threat | 7 | 25 | 25 | 20 |
| Restraint Force | 18 | 13 | 28 | 20 |
| Striking/Hitting | 18 | 9 | 19 | 15 |
| Displayed Firearm | 21 | 25 | 3 | 16 |
| Discharged Firearm | 29 | 25 | 16 | 23 |
| <i>Force Necessary (n = 92)</i> | | | | |
| Yes | 96 | 69 | 75 | 79 |
| No | 4 | 28 | 16 | 16 |
| <i>Suspect Demeanor</i> | | | | |
| Civil | 16 | 33 | 51 | 37 |
| Non-compliant/disrespectful | 13 | 9 | 14 | 12 |
| Hostile/resistant | 65 | 29 | 14 | 30 |
| <i>Other Misconduct</i> | | | | |
| Yes | 3 | 12 | 9 | 9 |
| No | 90 | 80 | 69 | 78 |
| <i>N =</i> | 31 | 66 | 65 | 162 |

Note: Entries are percentages. Columns may not sum to 100% due to omission of unknowns and N/A codes. Shows are from the 2011-2012 TV season; each season consisted of 23 to 24 hour-long episodes.

Table 2: Distribution of Attitudes toward Police

| | <u>Percentage</u> |
|--|-------------------|
| <i>Police Successful at Reducing Crime?</i> | |
| Very successful | 17 |
| Somewhat successful | 59 |
| Somewhat unsuccessful | 15 |
| Very unsuccessful | 6 |
| <i>Misconduct Linked to False Confessions?</i> | |
| Never | 16 |
| Rarely | 47 |
| Sometimes | 28 |
| Most of the time | 3 |
| <i>Frequency of Force?</i> | |
| Almost always | 3 |
| Often | 11 |
| Sometimes | 44 |
| Rarely | 34 |
| Never | 4 |
| <i>Necessity of Force?</i> | |
| Necessary for arrest | 17 |
| Suspect deserved it | 79 |
| <i>Sufficiency of Force?</i> | |
| Too often | 12 |
| About the right amount | 72 |
| Not enough | 12 |

Note: Entries are weighted percentages. Columns may not sum to 100% due to omission of “don’t know” and refusals, and rounding error.

Table 3: Viewership of Crime Dramas

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Conservative | -.024 (.096) |
| Male | -.155* (.066) |
| Black | .025 (.098) |
| Hispanic | -.179 (.127) |
| Age | .701* (.148) |
| Education | -.138 (.214) |
| Income | -.212 (.145) |
| Previous Police Exp. | .029 (.082) |
| Urban | .029 (.085) |
| South | .068 (.067) |
| Born U.S. | .201 (.125) |
| Cutpoint 1 | .021 (.214) |
| Cutpoint 2 | .695* (.213) |
| <i>N</i> = | 2005 |
| <i>F</i> (11, 1994) = | 3.47* |

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Sampling weights applied. * two-tailed $p < .05$.

Table 4: Predicting Perceptions toward Police Efficacy and Accuracy

| | Police Very Successful At Lowering Crime | Misconduct Not Linked to False Confessions |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Crime Drama Viewing | .141* (.072) | .239* (.078) |
| Local TV News Viewing | -.019 (.093) | -.246* (.096) |
| Conservative | -.175* (.085) | .241* (.094) |
| Male | .087 (.063) | .200* (.067) |
| Black | .002 (.106) | -.645* (.134) |
| Hispanic | -.138 (.104) | -.122 (.141) |
| Age | .386* (.146) | .547* (.165) |
| Education | .147 (.224) | -.168 (.244) |
| Income | .298 (.153) | .356* (.152) |
| Previous Police Exp. | -.287* (.087) | -.487* (.097) |
| Urban | .232* (.090) | -.060 (.086) |
| South | -.045 (.066) | -.060 (.086) |
| Born U.S. | -.181 (.115) | .147 (.141) |
| Cutpoint 1 | -1.175* (.251) | .300 (.300) |
| Cutpoint 2 | -.416 (.245) | 1.809* (.305) |
| Cutpoint 3 | 1.344* (.249) | – |
| <i>N</i> = | 1987 | 1938 |
| <i>F</i> (<i>df</i>) = | 3.77* (13, 1974) | 7.08* (14, 1925) |

Note: Entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. A dummy variable capturing a survey experiment embedded in the misconduct question was included in the model but is omitted from the table. Sampling weights applied. * two-tailed $p < .05$

Table 5: Predicting Perceptions Regarding Police Use of Force

| | Police Often Use Force | Force Necessary | Police Use Force | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | When Making Arrests | To Make Arrest | Too Often | Not Enough |
| Crime Drama Viewing | -.171 (.091) | .271* (.104) | -.632* (.237) | -.342 (.230) |
| Local TV News Viewing | .158 (.096) | -.054 (.128) | .645* (.314) | .023 (.286) |
| Conservative | -.269* (.091) | .245* (.113) | -1.072* (.257) | .429 (.262) |
| Male | .072 (.066) | -.119 (.089) | .052 (.197) | .210 (.200) |
| Black | .290* (.116) | -.147 (.136) | .549* (.266) | .329 (.312) |
| Hispanic | -.007 (.150) | .020 (.155) | -.044 (.353) | .457 (.311) |
| Age | -.229 (.150) | .441* (.201) | -.688 (.470) | -1.117* (.416) |
| Education | .123 (.242) | .587 (.319) | .159 (.746) | -2.207* (.589) |
| Income | -.523* (.154) | .484* (.199) | -1.034* (.402) | .105 (.422) |
| Previous Police Exp. | .507* (.087) | -.188 (.114) | 1.275* (.218) | .671* (.256) |
| Urban | .395* (.096) | -.175 (.119) | .105 (.267) | -.479 (.250) |
| South | .109 (.067) | .010 (.089) | .022 (.189) | .166 (.199) |
| Born U.S. | -.026 (.121) | .239 (.162) | -.357 (.345) | -.013 (.355) |
| Intercept | – | -.090 (.321) | -.879 (.775) | -.068 (.654) |
| Cutpoint 1 | -.200 (.248) | – | – | – |
| Cutpoint 2 | 1.237* (.253) | – | – | – |
| <i>N</i> = | 1961 | 1952 | 1961 | |
| <i>F</i> (<i>df</i>) = | 8.07* (13, 1948) | 3.36* (13, 1940) | 5.30* (26, 1936) | |

Note: Entries are ordered probit (Column 1), probit (Column 2) and multinomial logit (Columns 3 and 4) coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Sampling weights applied. Reference category in Columns 3 and 4 is “about the right amount.” * two-tailed $p < .05$.

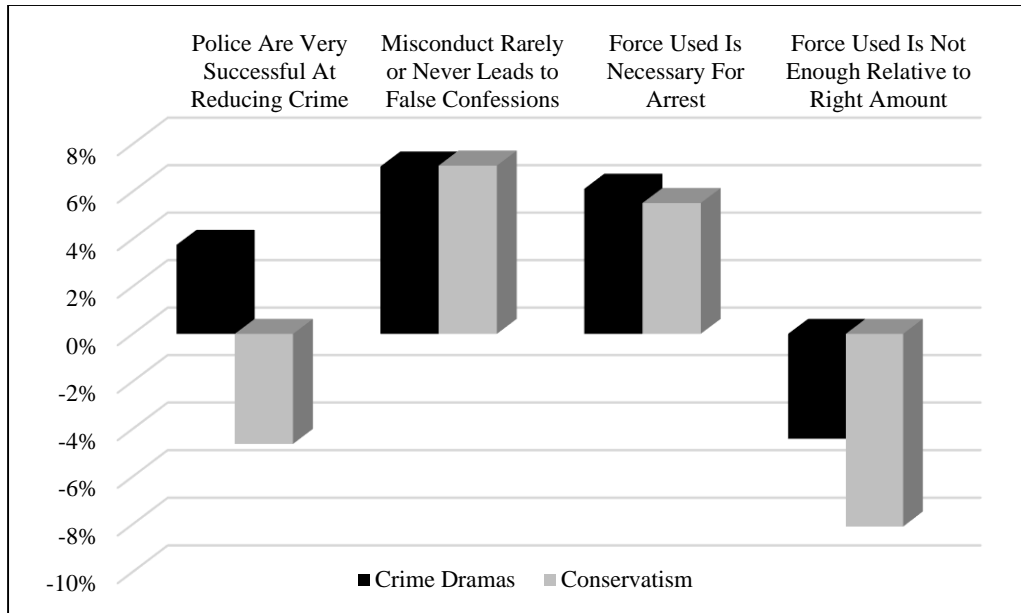


Figure 1: The Impact of Crime Dramas is on Par with Conservatism

Note: Bars show the change in probability of holding the attitudes specified at the top of the chart as a function of watching at least an hour of crime dramas a week or more relative to none at all, and identifying as a conservative relative to a liberal, respectively. All other variables are held at their means and modes.

Appendix

| Distribution of Media Consumption | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| | LI Sample (2011) | RTI Sample (2013) |
| <i>Local TV News (per day)</i> | | |
| Doesn't watch | 17 | 13 |
| Less than 15 minutes | 4 | 9 |
| 15 to 29 minutes | 9 | 20 |
| 30 to 59 minutes | 22 | 4 |
| 60 minutes or more | 47 | 36 |
| DK/Refused | 2 | 3 |
| <i>Crime Dramas (per week)</i> | | |
| Doesn't watch | 52 | 42 |
| 60 minutes or less | 14 | 27 |
| 61 to 120 minutes | 9 | 16 |
| 121 to 180 minutes | 6 | 6 |
| 181 to 240 minutes | 5 | 1 |
| 241 minutes or more | 15 | 4 |
| DK/Refused | 1 | 4 |
| <i>N =</i> | 422 | 2119 |

Notes: Entries are percentages, with sampling weights applied. Columns may not add to 100% due to rounding error.