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Media: Effects on Attitudes Toward Police and Fear of Criminal Victimization

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Criminal Justice and Criminology

by

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May 2007

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Keywords: Media, Attitude toward Police, Fear

ABSTRACT

Media: Effects on Attitudes Toward Police and Fear of Criminal Victimization

by

Bradley Douglas Edwards

This research investigated the effects of the media on attitudes toward police and fear of crime, while controlling for selected audience trait variables. A self-report questionnaire was administered to 351 students at East Tennessee State University. The survey consisted of demographic and audience trait variables. The survey also contained items that measured the respondents' media consumption. Respondents were asked, for example, which format they typically get news from (e.g., newspaper, television), how often they watch television, and how real they perceive crime related television to be. Multivariate analysis showed that demographic and audience trait variables explained more variance than did media-related variables.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of researching and writing this project, there were times I never thought I would reach the point of writing acknowledgements. Many people have helped me get to this point, but first and foremost I must thank God for blessing me with the opportunity to receive the level of education that I have enjoyed. God blessed me with a wonderful family that fostered the curiosity and dedication needed to pursue and obtain my graduate degree.

I am especially grateful to my wife Nyela for her unwavering support during this time. There have been occasions where the amount of time that must be dedicated to graduate school has been tough on us. I could not have reached this goal without the sacrifices that you have made during this process, and I can never thank you enough.

Graduate school has been one of the best experiences of my life, largely because of the wonderful people whom I have met during this time. I will always miss the long hours in the graduate assistant office spent with Jennifer, Chris, Ashley, Maryann, and Katherine. I truly hope these are friendships that will continue for many years to come.

I would also like to thank the entire faculty that I have had the pleasure to work with during graduate school. Dr. Gillespie, thank you for all the time you have invested into my thesis. This thesis could never have been completed without your interest in my project. Thank you, Dr. Ellwanger and Dr. Braswell, for all your work on my committee and for all the advice you both have given me. I also want to thank Dr. Whitson for being my mentor over the past two years. Being your graduate assistant has been challenging at times, but I would not be the person I am today without your influence in my life. Finally, I would like to thank Sharon Elliot. Sharon, you have helped me in countless ways during this time. Your positive attitude and dedication to your job has been very influential in my life.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Television is a very important medium regarding how the public views the criminal justice system. Most citizens have very little contact with the criminal justice system, usually limited to contacts with police. Only an estimated 21 % of citizens have contact with police officers in a year, and 40 % of those contacts are merely traffic stops (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002). Most people get their information and perceptions about crime and the criminal justice system through various media outlets. Those who rely on the media, however, do not always receive an accurate view of reality. Media depictions, whether accurate or not, have very important public opinion and policy implications.

One prime example of how the media can have powerful influences on public opinion was the focus on school violence in the past decade. The school shootings in the 1990s caused a panic among many parents who had children in school at that time. As portrayed by the media, school violence and shootings were on the rise, and something had to be done. As a result of the public outcry, Congress held hearings on the problem, and school budgets were strained in order to get such enhancements as metal detectors and school cameras. The media attention given to school shootings seemed to result in a widespread panic, where actual statistics and logical assessments of the threat were replaced by emotionally charged reactions to these isolated incidents (Burns & Crawford, 1999). In actuality, school violence was on the decline during this time period and the rate of children carrying weapons to school decreased steadily from 1993 to 2003 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005).

Another type of media bias toward school violence was observed by Menifield, Rose, Homa, and Cunningham (2001). This research showed that media, especially newspapers, were

less likely to give attention to urban school violence, instead focusing their attention on rural school violence. This is despite the fact that urban school violence was far more common than rural violence. They suggest that urban school violence is so common that it ceases to become newsworthy. Clearly, those who rely on media portrayals of violence have a distorted picture of the prevalence and locale of school violence.

Media's impact is not isolated to school violence. Instead, media's impact can be seen throughout the criminal justice system. Another example of the strong impact of the media is seen in relation to the public's shift of support away from rehabilitative programs to a more punitive attitude favoring increased incarceration. Martinson (1974) published an influential article examining the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs. Martinson basically concluded that "nothing works" in regards to rehabilitation programs. This report garnered much media attention and is widely credited in shifting public opinion away from supporting such rehabilitation programs. As Cavender (2004) points out, many other researchers had reached similar conclusions, but these studies did not produce social policy change. Instead, the media's attention on Martinson's article was a primary ingredient in public opinion change and subsequent policy changes. Cavender also points out that when Martinson recanted his "nothing works" conclusion, the media paid very little attention. Rehabilitation policy is simply another instance where the media has been very influential in shaping public policy.

Current Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how the media affects fear of crime. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the causes of fear, many of which included the media as an independent variable. The current research is an important addition to the existing literature because of the comprehensiveness of this study. Very few studies have incorporated adequate

control variables that enable the authors to determine the actual independent effect of the media. Secondly, the current study examines the media's effects on attitudes toward police. The attitude toward police portion of this study is more exploratory in that few articles have focused on the effect media has on attitude toward police. The vast majority of research on both fear of crime and attitudes toward police has been conducted in large urban cities. The current research focuses on college students in a small urban area in East Tennessee. With this population, inferences and comparisons can be drawn about the effects of variables in areas with different demographic traits.

Fear of Crime

Most research has traditionally viewed fear of crime as being a result of direct experience as a victim of a crime. Obviously, being a victim of a crime can have a substantial impact on one's fear of crime. However, because fear exists among many people who have never been a victim, it would appear that vicarious experiences can also affect one's fear of crime. There are basically two types of vicarious experience: informal social contacts with family or friends and exposure to information given by the mass media (Tyler, 1984). This research is focused on the impact that the mass media can have, independent of other factors, on one's fear of crime.

The mass media has been shown to have some effect on perceptions and fear of crime. This effect was evident when Baker, Nienstedt, Everett, and McCleary (1983) conducted a study on team policing in the Phoenix area. Longitudinal wave studies were implemented in which the researchers conducted telephone surveys with 572 random respondents in September 1979, and then took another random sample of 635 respondents in July 1980. During the intervening time period, crime news in the area began showing a "crime wave theme," sharply increasing the attention to crime coverage. While crime increased in the area statistically, direct and vicarious

victimization remained the same across the two samples studied. Even so, perceptions and fear of crime changed drastically between the two samples. The authors hypothesized that because victimization rates remained constant, the respondents must have been influenced by an outside source: the media (Baker et al.). The current research seeks to examine the complex relationship between the media and fear of crime while including the various control variables deemed important by studying previous literature.

Attitudes Toward Police

Public support and cooperation is essential for police agencies. Most police intervention occurs following a citizen complaint, making it very important for citizens to trust in the police to resolve their issue satisfactory. With the lack of direct contact with the criminal justice system as noted earlier, most people rely on vicarious information for their attitudes toward the police. This vicarious information might come from stories conveyed by friends or relatives, but often citizens rely on the media to shape their views of police.

Much research has been conducted regarding attitudes toward police. Surprisingly, the effect of media has been largely overlooked in prior research. Even so, it would seem logical that exposure to certain types of media programs would affect one's attitudes toward the police. The current study fills in some gaps in the research on attitudes toward police by including media's effects. While doing so, the current research will have controls for the variables that have most often been associated with shaping attitudes toward police. By doing this, the current research should be able to determine what, if any, independent relationship exists between media consumption and attitudes toward the police.

Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity, several terms related to this study need to be clearly defined. Despite the large amount of research dealing with fear of crime, a clear definition of fear has been slow to emerge. Indeed, the term fear of crime has been tossed around in much of the research without explicit defining. Warr (1984) stated that “the phrase fear of crime has acquired so many divergent meanings in the literature that it is in danger of losing any specificity whatsoever” (p. 681). In the current research, fear of crime is defined, as adopted from Ferraro (1995), as “an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime” (p. 23). This focus on emotional responses creates a problem with much of the past research, and discussion on the best way to measure fear of crime will be given in a later chapter. For now, it is adequate to say that fear of crime is distinctly different than the perceived risk of victimization, which is a more rational, calculated state of mind.

“Crime” must also be defined. In the current research, crime refers to a wide range of offenses including violent crime, property crime, and white collar crime. Each of these types of crime activities is likely to generate different levels of fear. Most research on fear of crime has included general indicators of crime, failing to focus on the different levels of fear produced by different crimes. As will be discussed later, the current research uses an offense-specific scale to better measure fear of crime.

Finally, the meaning of “attitude toward the police” needs to be made clear. Research on attitudes toward the police has traditionally focused on two aspects, termed global and specific. Global attitudes toward police refer to general, stereotypical attitudes, while specific refers to rankings of individual experiences with officers. Research (Brandl, Frank, Worden, & Bynum, 1994) has indicated that global attitudes toward police condition the evaluation of individual

encounters, making global attitudes toward the police very important. In the current study, we are focusing on overall, general attitudes toward police instead of rankings of specific encounters with police.

Theoretical Perspectives

There are two primary theories that underlie the current research. First, the cultivation hypothesis outlined by Gerbner and Gross (1976) provides a good starting point when discussing the impact of the media. The cultivation hypothesis basically stated that television is full of violent images that gradually result in viewers having a more fearful, pessimistic view of society. There have been many dissenters to this theoretical framework, and the history and evolution of the cultivation hypothesis will be detailed in the next chapter. While many have questioned Gerbner and Gross's cultivation hypothesis, the basic premise seems reasonable and has guided much research dealing with the effects of media.

The second theoretical perspective guiding this research is opportunity theory. While most criminal justice theories focus on the offender, opportunity theory expands the focus to include examining the victim and the social setting of the crime. Specifically, opportunity theory suggests that crime is a result of the convergence in space and time of three elements: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardianship. Without the convergence of all three elements, a criminal act cannot occur (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The most important application to this research deals with fear of crime. Opportunity theory views fear as a logical response to a real threat, mainly resulting from being in situations where a person is likely to be a victim (Wilcox, Land, & Hunt, 2003). Because some populations (eg., the elderly) are less likely to be in dangerous situations, they should have a lower victimization rate. Indeed, elderly persons do have a lower victimization rate than others (i.e., see the Bureau of Justice Statistics,

2003), yet they are consistently found to be more fearful as will be shown in the next chapter.

This suggests that some outside factor must be in play that would make these populations more fearful. The author of the current research believes this outside force could be the media.

Limitations

Despite efforts to make this study as methodologically rigorous as possible, there are some limitations with this study. First, the sample for the study was taken from a mid size university in East Tennessee. This sample may not be generalizable to other populations such as non-students or students in other areas of the country. Also, cross-sectional data were used in this survey. These data do not allow measurement, for example, of attitudes toward police or fear prior to media exposure. This could have been useful because pre-existing stereotypes might influence how the media exposure is interpreted by each individual. Another potential limitation with this study is the use of self report questionnaires. Self-report questionnaires force the researcher to rely on the respondent to give accurate answers. Because some questions on this survey ask about past criminal or deviant behavior, we cannot be certain that all questions were answered accurately. Some researchers such as Ferraro (1995) have also argued that self-report questionnaires will always be insufficient in measuring fear of crime because of the inability to invoke the emotional responses inherent in fear of crime. Despite this limitation, the current research uses Ferraro's suggestions to best measure fear of crime in a self-report questionnaire.

Hypotheses

The current research seeks to determine how far reaching the media's influence is on attitudes toward police and fear of crime. While this research is more comprehensive in regards to control variables than most previous research, past research is very helpful in formulating

hypotheses regarding the media's overall impact. The first three hypotheses specifically deal with the media's effect on attitudes toward police, where less prior research is available. The research hypotheses are formally stated below.

Hypothesis 1: Individual exposure to television will result in positive attitudes toward police.

Hypothesis 2: Audience traits will have a significant effect on attitudes toward police.

Hypothesis 3: When audience traits are controlled, certain types of media will have significant effects on attitudes toward police.

Hypothesis 4: Watching crime-related television programs will increase fear of crime.

Hypothesis 5: Audience traits will have significant effects on the media/fear of crime relationship.

Hypothesis 6: When controlled for audience traits, differences in media content will significantly impact fear of crime.

Hypothesis 7: Those who have more confidence in police have less fear of crime.

Guided by prior research, the remaining four hypotheses deal with fear of crime.

Hypothesis 4 is that total media exposure increases fear of crime, controlling for other significant variables. Hypothesis 5 examines the effects that certain audience traits have on the media-fear of crime relationship. Hypothesis 6 examines differences in media content that can have differential effects on the media-fear of crime relationship. Finally, Hypothesis 7 tests whether there is any correlation between the two dependant variables in this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes toward police, fear of criminal victimization, and the effects of media have all been topics of past research. Most research on attitudes toward police has traditionally focused on variables such as race, age, gender, contacts with police, and neighborhood contexts. Little attention has been given to the role of media in shaping attitudes toward police. On the other hand, many sources have examined the media's role in shaping fear of crime. Although research examining the media's effect on fear of crime is vast, it is hardly conclusive. Initially thought to have far reaching effects, research has shown that the media has a limited, yet still present, effect on fear of crime. The areas of literature that are relevant to the current research on media's effect on fear of crime will be analyzed within this review in order to provide a clear picture of how the study of this relationship has progressed in the past 3 decades.

This literature review will have two distinct sections. First, literature relating to attitudes toward the police will be examined. This examination will begin with common demographic variables such as race and age that are significantly related to one's evaluation of police. Focus will then shift to more complex factors that contribute to one's attitude toward police and are thought to mediate the relationship between the demographic variables and satisfaction with the police. These variables will be the control variables used to test whether the media has any independent effect on attitudes toward police. The second section will include research dealing with fear of crime, specifically how the media has been thought to shape one's fear of criminal victimization. Similar to the attitude toward police literature, the fear of crime section will begin with demographic variables and continue to include more complex variables. Finally, the relationship between fear of crime and attitudes toward the police will be briefly explored.

Attitudes Toward Police

Race

One of the most common findings in literature dealing with attitudes toward police is the fact that, overall, African Americans have a much lower evaluation of the police than do other races (Baker et al., 1983; Correia, Reisig, & Lovrich, 1996; Decker, 1981; Tuch & Weitzer, 1997). Brown (2000) conducted research primarily exploring why African Americans have lower attitudes toward the police. Brown exclusively studied African American male adolescents in this research. Results showed that all participants had experienced contact with the police, and 80 % of these contacts were within the last year. In addition, 52 % of the respondents reported five or more contacts (Brown). These numbers clearly show that African American males experience contact with police much more often than the general public. Nearly half of the encounters with police were viewed as unfavorable, and these respondents were asked why they rated the contact as unfavorable. One third of these respondents rated the contact as unfavorable because of the officer's rude or racist attitude, while another third experienced physical treatment such as handcuffing and extensive searching. The next most common reason given for the unfavorable response was a perceived racial motivation for the contact. Negative attitudes toward the police were also found to be present vicariously through a friend or relative's negative contact with police (Brown).

Given the above findings, it appears that negative contacts with police officers are responsible for African Americans having more negative views of law enforcement. One interesting way to determine what might be responsible for causing African Americans to have more negative views of police is to examine articles that actually find no difference in attitudes of police between races. Frank, Brandl, Cullen, and Stichman (1996) found that blacks in

Detroit actually have a more positive view of police than do whites. This was attributed to the major shift in the racial makeup of the police force that has occurred since the 1970s. With the mayor, police chief, and nearly half of the police force all being African American, it is argued that Blacks are respected and treated better by the police force and, therefore, have a more positive outlook of law enforcement (Frank et al.). Thurman and Reisig (1996) also found no differences in attitudes of police among different races. This study included a total of 784 residents of two cities in Washington state who completed a mail survey. Thurman attributes the lack of racial significance in this study to the fact that the sample population had a very small proportion of minorities, and these minorities had the same socioeconomic status as whites. Most other studies finding Blacks to have a lower attitude toward police than Whites come from urban areas with larger, more stratified minority groups where blacks are more likely to have negative contacts with police (Thurman & Reisig). This research, consistent with Frank's findings above, seems to confirm that whether contacts with police were positive or negative did make a difference in corresponding attitudes toward the police.

Additional research completed by Weitzer and Tuch (2004) further examined why Blacks and Latinos have lower perceptions of police than whites. This research, with a sample of 1,792 metropolitan residents, used independent variables such as race, contacts with police, fear of neighborhood crime, and media exposure in order to account for attitudes toward police. Results showed that Blacks had much more negative personal and vicarious contact with police than Latinos and Whites. This also would seem to support the research (Brown, 2000, Frank et al., 1996, Thurman & Reisig., 1996) showing that contacts with police are a big part of why blacks have lower confidence in police than other races. The results further show, however, that neighborhood crime and media exposure are also significant variables. Actually, media exposure

was consistently one of the strongest predictors of perceptions of police among all races, though the effect among minorities was stronger than among whites. Importantly, the authors found an interaction effect for blacks between exposure to media and crime in their neighborhoods. This would suggest that those who live in neighborhoods with high amounts of crime relate to negative media reports. Thus, these individuals are influenced more than others who merely watch the media reports but are isolated from poor contacts with police (Weitzer & Tuch).

The impact of race in affecting the impact of media on attitudes toward police was further tested by Eschholz, Blackwell, Gertz, and Chiricos (2002). Using 1,492 telephone surveys, data regarding the respondent's confidence in the police, perception of crime in their neighborhood, and television viewing habits were gathered. Results showed that watching the news increased favorable opinions of police for both blacks and whites. This article focused also on the relationship between "reality" police shows such as *Cops* and attitudes toward police. Logically, watching more reality police shows should translate into positive attitudes toward police because reality shows most often portray officers in a positive light. This was indeed the case for white respondents. For whites, those who more often watched reality police shows had significantly more positive attitudes toward the police even when control variables were added. For blacks, however, watching reality television shows did not affect their attitudes toward police. This finding strongly suggests that race mediates the effect of media on attitudes toward police. Finally, this study did not support Weitzer and Tuch's findings that neighborhood context was a significant determinant of attitudes toward police, but the authors noted that this was likely because of a lack of variation in this variable (Eschholz et al., 2002). In sum, it appears that race has some effect on attitudes toward police, but this relationship is likely because of some

combination of mediating factors such as community context, contact with police and media exposure.

Age

Age is also consistently found to be a significant factor when considering attitudes toward the police. As respondents age, they typically have a more positive attitude toward the police (Decker, 1981; Murty, Roebuck, & Smith, 1990). Leiber, Nalla, and Farnworth (1998) sought to explain the underlying causes of the juvenile's negative attitudes toward police. The authors interviewed 337 delinquent youth in Iowa. Ordinary Least Squares regression models showed that, similar to minorities, contact with officers influenced the juvenile's attitude toward the police. Also found to be significant were neighborhood and social environmental factors. Specifically, respondents described good and bad features of their neighborhood. Social factors focused on delinquent subcultures in which children are often involved in (Lieber et al.). Delinquent subcultures are beyond the scope of the current research, but respondents' view of their neighborhood features will be examined. Ordinary Least Squares analysis showed that neighborhood had a direct significant effect on respect for the police. Specifically, those living in less desirable areas expressed less respect for police than those living in better neighborhoods (Lieber et al.). In sum, it appears from this research that the attitudes of one's peers, coupled with the neighborhood in which a juvenile lives, and individual contacts with police all influence the formation of attitudes toward the police for juveniles. After examining the relationship between race, age, and attitudes toward police, it is obvious that additional variables such as neighborhood structure and contact with police are influential in the formation of attitudes toward police.

Contact with Police

There is some debate in the literature as to how important direct contact is in influencing attitudes toward police. Research conducted by Scaglione and Condon (1980) supports the idea that contact with police is important. Their research consisted of attitude toward police surveys given to 273 citizens in Pittsburgh. Multiple regression analysis found that direct contact with a uniformed police officer is the most influential determinant of one's attitude toward the police; the more positive evaluation given of a particular contact with an officer, the more satisfied the respondent is with the police (Scaglione & Condon). Correia et al. (1996) also found significant relationships between direct contacts with officers and attitudes toward police. Using a random sample of 892 households in Washington, the mailed survey asked about perceptions of the Washington State Police. Logit regression models were used to show that the perceived treatment and receiving a clear explanation of the stop were among the most significant factors determining one's evaluation of the police. Even though respondents who had received the most citations generally had a more negative perception of the police, a clear explanation for the citation seemed to temper this effect (Correia et al.).

Brandl et al. (1994) found that while direct contacts with police were influential, they are mediated by pre-existing stereotypes. Using longitudinal methods, the researchers were able to determine that if respondents had a negative stereotype of a police agency, they were more likely to view any encounters with police less favorably. In this way, respondent's negative stereotypes serve to keep their less favorable attitude toward the police intact even if the officer they come in contact with was polite and professional. Likewise, if a person with a positive stereotype of police comes into contact with an officer who is somewhat rude, there is still a good chance of

the respondent viewing the contact as positive. Also, these stereotypes were found to be very constant, suggesting that specific contacts do little to change the overall stereotype that is formed within that respondent (Brandl et al.). This is significant to my research because the media might be one primary source of stereotypes.

Another aspect of contact with police is the different effects of voluntary vs. involuntary contacts. All contacts with police are either initiated by a citizen (e.g., calling 911) or by the police (e.g., traffic stops). Walker, Richardson, Williams, Denver and McGaughey (1972) point out that while examining the impact of police contact, one should realize that not everyone has contact with police in the same manner or under the same conditions. Also, some groups of citizens have a greater likelihood of having certain types of contacts. This research shows that those who have more contact initiated by the police have lower ratings of their experience. This seems logical because these are involuntary contacts and are usually as a result of something the respondent did that requires intervention. The research also shows, however, that voluntary contacts that result from a victimization are also likely to be rated negatively. This is likely attributed to the very high expectations people have when they call the police for help. Community policing is based in part by this principle that citizen ratings will improve when there is an increase in unofficial, more support-oriented contacts with police (Walker et al.).

Dean (1980) extended the literature regarding contact with police. This research found that the number of contacts with police was negatively correlated with attitudes toward police. That is, the more contacts with police that a respondent has, the more negative his or her view of police is. This effect still exists when controlling for race, suggesting that blacks might have more negative views of police primarily because they come into involuntary contact with them more often than other races. Similar to Walker et al., Dean finds that police-initiated contacts as

well as those involving victimization results in lower evaluations of police, but contacts that involved police assistance to a citizen can have a favorable impact on police evaluations. Interestingly, Dean also finds that while the number of satisfactory contacts with police improves overall opinions somewhat, negative contacts have a very strong impact on evaluations of police. This seems to suggest that while police improve their image a little by having positive contacts with police, they hurt their image much more by being rude, unclear, or otherwise unsatisfactory.

In a recent article incorporating most of the variables discussed so far, Rosenbalm, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, and Ring (2005) seem to clear up some of these issues. Using longitudinal models, Rosenbalm et al. found that direct contact with police in the past twelve months was not enough to change attitudes, but vicarious contact (i.e., learning about someone else's experiences with the police) does have a substantial impact on attitudes toward the police. These findings were valid whether the contact was initiated by the police or the respondent. Because time series analysis was used, this research was also able to determine that attitudes held by the respondents before the contact with police shaped how they defined their encounter, not vice versa (Rosenbalm et al.). The formation of these pre-existing stereotypes is at the core of my focus on media effects.

Neighborhood Context

Findings such as Lieber et al. that suggest that age has a different effect on attitudes toward police depending on neighborhood contexts has prompted many social scientists to consider more thoroughly the relationship between neighborhood and attitudes toward police. One of the first teams of researchers to include community context in examining attitude toward police was Cao, Frank, and Cullen (1996). This research included 934 residents of Cincinnati, Ohio. Confidence in the police was measured using a five-item scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.77).

Three multivariate models were created to test the significance of many different variables in relation to confidence in police. The first model included only demographic variables where race, age, income, and gender were all significant. The second model incorporated measures about fear of crime, victimization experience, and conservative political ideology. The second model was then combined with the first model. While the original variables remained significant, fear of crime and victimization experience became statistically significant while conservative political ideology did not.

The third model introduced two community contextual variables: community disorder and informal collective security. Community disorder was operationalized as a scale with items relating to garbage being on the street, neighbors being noisy, etc. Informal collective security referred to how closely neighbors watched out for each other. When the third model was added to the analysis, the community contextual variables were far more explanatory in explaining confidence in police than any of the other variables or models. In addition, the amount of variance explained in Model 3 greatly exceeded that of the other models, further showing the importance of community context variables (Cao et al.). One downside to this research is the absence of a variable testing for contacts with police. This variable has, as mentioned above, been found by many to be important when considering attitudes toward police. The inclusion of this variable would have likely been of value.

Despite the above results, there is no consensus as to the importance of neighborhood contexts on attitudes toward the police. Reisig and Giacomazzi (1998) conducted research in a small college town in the Northwest. While this research's primary goal was to determine the importance of positive attitudes toward police in order to effectively implement community policing, the researchers also included the community context variable "disorder" in their survey.

Disorder was measured using an eight-item scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85) that included items similar to Cao et al.'s community disorder scale. Results from an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed that "officer demeanor" was viewed more negatively in neighborhoods where there was a high level of disorder. When regression was used on the variables, however, disorder was not nearly as strong a predictor of officer demeanor as age, gender, and perception of crime in their neighborhood was (Reisig & Giacomazzi). While this research shows partial support for community context being an important factor for attitudes toward the police, physical disorder being less significant than demographic variables such as age and gender is clearly a deviation from Cao et al.'s research that showed community variables to be much better explanatory variables than simple demographic variables.

Reisig and Parks (2000) conducted research that again tested whether any relationship exists among neighborhood contexts and attitudes toward police. This research consisted of telephone interviews with 5,361 people living in 58 neighborhoods of Indianapolis, Indiana and St. Petersburg, Florida. Included in their survey were questions dealing with both contact satisfaction and neighborhood incivilities. Contact satisfaction was measured with four dichotomous variables asking whether the respondent was satisfied or not to both calls for service and police stops in the past 6 months. Neighborhood incivility was measured using a 6-item scale dealing with litter and trash, vandalism, gangs, etc. in their neighborhood. Results showed that both contact with police and neighborhood incivilities were significantly related to attitudes toward police, with neighborhood incivilities being relatively more strongly than the individual contacts with police.

More recently, Schafer, Huebner, and Bynum's (2003) research had somewhat mixed results for community context variables. Telephone interviews were conducted with 1,269

citizens of a Midwestern community. Similar to Cao et al., this project provided 4 regression models, each with different sets of variables regressed upon overall (i.e., the authors used the term “global”) citizen perceptions of police. Included in the first model were the common demographic variables such as race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. The second model included contact with police variables such as the ones examined previously in this literature review. Included were four variables: citizen initiated contacts that were satisfactory, citizen initiated contacts that were unsatisfactory, police initiated contacts that were satisfactory, and police initiated contacts that were unsatisfactory (Shafer et al.).

Model 3 included the neighborhood context variables. Neighborhood context consisted of numerous items. First, the researchers included the “quality of life” variables, virtually the same as the disorder variables used in Cao et al.’s (1996) research. Again borrowing from Cao et al., this research included items meant to measure how closely neighbors watched out for each other’s safety, etc. Schafer et al. also included in their neighborhood context measures of their perceptions that certain “major crimes” were a problem in their neighborhood as well as the official crime rate of the neighborhood. When the neighborhood context model was combined with only the model including demographic variables, every neighborhood context variable was significant. Interestingly, when the contact with police variables were included in the analysis, the quality of life variables (e.g., litter in neighborhood) became non-significant while the other neighborhood context variables remained significant (Schafer et al.). While showing overall support for neighborhood contextual variables, it is interesting that the quality of life variables became non-significant when contact with police variables were introduced. For this reason, I have decided to focus on this interaction in my research and have included only the quality of life variables in my survey.

Political Conservatism

When considering one's attitude toward police, it is necessary to control for political views. A large portion of the conservative platform rests on punitive punishments, increased support for police actions, etc. Conversely, liberals are more likely to question police authority, use of force, discriminatory police stops, etc. Despite the potential biasness created by political orientation, few researchers have controlled for this variable. Zamble and Annesley (1987) found that political conservatism has the potential to have great impact on one's attitude toward the police. Political conservatism was found to be significant predictors (i.e., $p < .001$) of attitudes toward performance of police and the support of increased powers being given to the police. It should be noted, however, that this was a convenience sample taken at a shopping mall in Canada. The sample might under represent those who do not go to shopping malls often. Even so, a measure of conservatism will be added to my survey to control for possible political bias.

Fear of Crime

As previously mentioned, there is evidence to show that both direct victimization, as well as victimization of a friend or family member, has a substantial impact on one's fear of crime. The current research focuses its attention on a second type of indirect experience with crime: the media. It seems reasonable to believe that media have at least some impact on popular culture and the way people view crime. Some researchers have argued that the effects of media are greatest among those who have direct experience as a victim of a crime or are surrounded by criminal behavior. Other researchers have argued that the effect of crime is greatest among those who have no direct contact with police and rather use the media to fill in the gaps of what is

reality. The history of both approaches will be examined, as well as research indicating that different types of media programs have more effect on fear of crime than others.

Cultivation Hypothesis

The systematic examination of the relationship between media and fear of crime perhaps began with Gerbner and Gross's (1976) introduction of what has become known as the cultivation hypothesis. Sponsored by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, Gerbner and Gross collected data on the rate of violence and harmful stereotypes portrayed in network television throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. In his 1976 article, Gerbner hypothesizes that television has an enculturation effect on people, and that regular television viewing leads to a more pessimistic, fearful view of society. To support this claim, Gerbner outlines his data showing that television violence was prevalent among all major broadcast networks, during all time frames (p. 188). His data also showed that those who most often watched television were less likely to be trustful of society and more likely to be fearful of crime. Their views can be summed up nicely by his closing passage:

As with violence, so with other aspects of social reality we are investigating, TV appears to cultivate assumptions that fit its socially functional myths. Our chief instrument of enculturation and social control, television may function as the established religion of the industrial order, relating to governance as the church did to the state in earlier times (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, 194).

Gerbner and colleagues continued to publish a yearly progress report on the rate of television violence. In 1977, 1 year after formally introducing their cultivation hypothesis, Gerbner, Gross, Eleey, Beeck, Fox, & Signorielli published research showed that television violence increased from the year before. Content analysis of the programs

showed that violence was disproportionately initiated by males and directed at older, vulnerable females. Gerbner et al.'s (1977) data again showed that those who watched the most television also had a tendency to overestimate the amount of violence in society and their risk of becoming a crime victim. It is important to note that Gerbner and colleagues believed all types of television programs lead to an increase in pessimistic and fearful views of society because all television programs contained a large amount of violence and stereotypical portrayals. Initially, they also believed this effect was basically universal among audiences. The 1977 article states:

The analysis also demonstrates that television effects cannot be accounted for in terms of major demographic variables of age, sex, education, or even...IQ.

Controlling for these variables, we still find a positive and significant relationship between our Index and amounts of television viewing.... The effects are consistent and robust across a range of undoubtedly powerful control comparisons (Gerbner et al., 1977, 178-179).

Like all social science theories, the cultivation hypothesis became subject to critique and testing by peer research. One early response to Gerbner's hypothesis was Hirsch's (1980) re-examination of the same data Gerbner used to make his hypothesis. First, Hirsch found that many unsupportive items were not reported by Gerbner, effectively questioning Gerbner's objectivity. In addition, Hirsch found that when almost any two or more controls were added to the analysis, the relationships between television viewing and the fearful, pessimistic view of the world as reported by Gerbner practically disappears (Hirsch). This has not been the only criticism of the cultivation hypothesis. As research on media and fear of crime has expanded, it has become clear that both

audience traits and the media content affect any relationship that media has on fear of crime. Both audience traits and media content will be examined in this literature review and the current research. This review will include literature encompassing at least two somewhat conflicting hypotheses that have emerged to explain what kinds of audience traits can affect the media-fear of crime relationship. These hypotheses have become known as resonance and substitution.

Resonance and Substitution

One of the first to challenge the premise of Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis was Doob and Macdonald (1979). The authors were skeptical of Gerbner's results, instead proposing that the increased fear of crime could be because of factors not controlled by Gerbner's data. Doob and Macdonald split the City of Toronto into four areas, two having a high crime rate and two having low crime rates. Door-to-door interviews were then conducted to measure the resident's media consumption and fear of crime. Multiple regression results showed that the effects of television viewing disappeared when age, sex, and the crime rate of the respondent's neighborhood were controlled. Because those in higher crime areas were shown to watch more TV than those in low crime areas, the authors proposed that this might be the reason for findings supporting the cultivation hypothesis. Importantly, Doob and Macdonald also suggested that residents of high crime areas might connect more to the violence shown on television, while those in low crime areas are affected less by violence on television because it is not accompanied by seeing violence in their neighborhoods (Doob & Macdonald).

Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) later acknowledged that "further examination of previously analyzed and new data reveals there are substantially different

patterns of association for different social groups between amount of viewing and certain conceptions of social reality” (p. 15). This led to a modification of the cultivation hypothesis to include a “resonance” component to account for the possibility that those who see violence in real life are even more influenced by what they see on television than those who do not see violence everyday, effectively creating a “double dose” of violence. Support for the resonance idea was also provided by an article written by Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz (2000), which will be discussed later in this literature review in detail. This possibility of audience traits influencing the way media shapes fear of crime has been the focus of much of the more current research.

While the above research would seem to indicate that the media’s impact on fear of crime is strongest among those who also actively view criminal activities or are victims of crimes, it has been argued that the opposite is true. Weaver and Wakshlag (1986) studied 108 undergraduate students in an attempt to further examine the relationship between media and fear of crime. Respondents were given a list of different types of television shows and asked to check which shows they watched during the past week. A fear of crime scale, as well as questions relating to direct and vicarious victimization, were also included in the survey. Respondents were grouped in terms of their victimization experience. For example, those reporting direct experience were grouped together, and the same was done for those who had friends or family members who were victims of crime. The remaining respondents, those of whom did not have any victimization experience either directly or vicariously, were placed in the final group.

Non-crime-related shows were found to be non-significant in terms of determining fear of crime. On the other hand, crime-related programs were shown to be

significant across some groups. Effects of these crime related television shows significantly increased concerns for personal safety among the group who had no direct or vicarious victimization experience. Crime related shows were not found to increase concerns for safety among those who had been a victim of a crime or knew someone who had. Crime shows, in fact, lowered concerns for future victimization among those who had direct experience as a victim of a crime (Weaver & Wakshlag). These results seem to discount the “resonance” perspective. Instead of the media increasing fear of crime among those who see crime or are victims of crime, these results show that effects of media are greater for those who are not otherwise exposed to crime. Media would then substitute as the primary factor determining one’s perception of social reality. With research providing support for two conflicting hypotheses, further investigation is clearly needed to determine how audience traits mediate the relationship between media and fear of crime.

Demographic Variables

An examination of the National Crime Victimization Survey shows that men and younger people are much more likely to be victims of crime. In 2003, 26.7 out of every 1,000 males were victims of a crime, while the rate of females was only 20.2. Similarly, the rate of victimization among teenagers is around 54 of every 1,000, while the rate of victimization for those over 65 is only 2.5 (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2003).

Logically, those who have a greater level of victimization risks should also have a greater fear of crime, but this is not the case. Clemente and Kleiman (1977) conducted a multivariate analysis on fear of crime, including independent variables such as sex, race, age, income, socio-economic status, and the size of their community. Their data were taken from an earlier survey

conducted by the National Opinion Research Center which included 2,700 respondents. Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was used to determine the predictive power of each independent variable on fear of crime. Sex and the size of the neighborhood were found to be the two most important variables in predicting fear of crime. Specifically, females and those living in larger communities were more likely to be fearful of crime (Clemente & Kleiman).

Age is also one of the most common demographic variables related to fear of crime. Generally, elderly people have a far greater fear of crime than younger people (Baumer, 1985). Interestingly, there also appears to be an interaction effect among age and sex, suggesting that age and sex are not necessarily independent of each other. Baumer found that, while age and sex are both significantly related to fear of crime, the effect of age is stronger for males than females. These results suggest that as men age, their fear of crime is more similar to the rate of fear experienced by females. If this is indeed true, age might be a more powerful predictor of increased fear of crime than sex, despite the above statistics that imply that elderly people are much less likely to become victims of crimes.

Warr (1984) examined sex and age differences in fear of crime for a variety of offenses. Levels of fear for a variety of offenses were measured via a mail survey (n=339) to determine possible differences of fear among personal and property crimes, a distinction of fear that the authors are critical of other researchers for not measuring. Generally, sex and age were found to be persistently related to fear across different types of offenses, with sex having relatively more persistence than age. That is, females and elderly are fearful of a wider range of offenses than males and young people.

Antunes, Cook, Cook, and Skogan (1977) sought to examine the victimizations of the different age groups to try to determine why the elderly are more fearful than younger people.

Using a sample of 375,000 self-report interviews conducted in 1973 and 1974, the authors were able to show that while the elderly overall are less likely to be victims of crimes, and the crimes that they are commonly subjected to differ in many aspects from those in other age groups. Specifically, elderly people were more likely to be victims of predatory crimes such as robbery and personal larceny, while younger people were more likely to be raped or assaulted. Also, older victims were more likely than young people to be attacked by strangers. Consistent with opportunity theory previously discussed in the introduction, older people were more likely to be victims of crimes at or near their homes, while younger people were more likely to become victims at a bar or other high risk business (Antunes et al.). Opportunity theory would suggest that this is a result of older citizens' routine activities that typically involve less time outside in unfamiliar places.

Jaycox (1978) pointed out that most research examining the elderly's fear of crime is taken at a national or the city level, possibly masking some of the effects within different parts of the nation or city. The author re-examines this issue using a dataset that included elderly residents of eight neighborhoods within four large U.S. cities. The results were very interesting. First, multiple regression shows that the neighborhood environments, as well as direct or vicarious experience as a victim, were significant variables independent of demographic variables.

Jaycox then isolated and compared the two neighborhoods in the data that had the lowest and highest levels of fear: Sherman Park, Milwaukee and Flatbrush, New York. While the elderly residents were demographically very similar, their neighborhoods were different in important ways. First, Sherman Park more closely resembled a suburb, with individuals owning their homes and staying in those homes for long periods of time. Flatbrush, on the other hand,

had experienced an influx of new residents coming previously from low income areas. The residents of Flatbrush reported less stability and feeling of belonging than residents of Sherman Park. Also, residents of Sherman Park had victimization rates similar to the national average, where Flatbrush residents were victims of crime four times as often as the national average (Jaycox). While neighborhood quality of life is generally studied in relation to attitudes toward police, these results also show the utility in examining its effect on fear of victimization also. Results such as this also show the importance of controlling for direct and indirect victimization rates.

Findings showing that older people have more fear of crime even though they are less likely overall to be victims create a theoretical issue that must be examined. Modern opportunity theory views fear of crime as resulting largely as a logical response to a real threat, specifically settings that allow for the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of guardianship fear of crime (Wilcox, Land, & Hunt, 2003). If a particular population is fearful of criminal victimization but are not actually in danger, opportunity theory would seem to be in error. One answer to this is Jaycox's above research indicating that more micro level research would show increased levels of victimization.

In another possible resolution to the above issue, Stafford and Galle (1984) suggest that we are measuring victimization risks in an inadequate way, pointing out that older people and females are naturally in the home more often and are not exposed to criminal activity as are other groups. These authors propose that we should instead adjust victimization rates to take into consideration how often they are actually exposed. As the authors point out:

The lower conventional victimization rates of women and the elderly thus may result from their lifestyles/routine activities that tend to insulate them from crime.

Even so, both groups might have relatively high rates of victimization per amount of time they are exposed to crime (Stafford & Galle, p. 175).

By changing the formula by which victimization rates are measured, for instance, the female rate of victimization would be higher than the male and would reflect the increased fear of crime indicated by women. When victimization rates were adjusted to take into account differential exposure to crime, their research indicated that fear of crime is more strongly correlated to the adjusted model as opposed to the conventional way of measuring victimization experience. It should be noted, however, that even with the apparently improved model taking into account differential exposure to crime, both age and sex were still statistically significant determinants of fear of crime. Because age and sex have shown to be resilient indicators of fear of crime, these variables should be included as control variables in any research examining fear of crime.

Local vs. National News

In addition to audience traits that can affect how the media-fear of crime relationship is realized, the content of specific kinds of media has also been found to be important. Basically, these approaches contend that what people watch is more important than how often they watch. The first type of content differences to be examined is local versus national news. Those scholars researching this aspect of content are trying to determine whether a person connects more with local news, making the impact of such news greater, than for national news. Heath (1984) examined whether any difference exists between local news and national news in regard to fear of crime. This article is a compilation of two studies. In the first, different newspapers were analyzed and rated in terms of how many crime stories involved local, sensational, and random crimes. Telephone interviews were then conducted that asked about which newspapers

respondents often read and also their fear of crime levels. The second study was a laboratory setting where college students taking a psychology class were divided into groups and given one of six crime scenarios, each describing a different type of crime. For instance, some scenarios included local situations, while some described situations in other locations. After reading the article, the students filled out a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of crime. ANOVA results from both studies showed that the articles pertaining to local crimes, whether sensationalistic or not, increase fear of victimization by respondents. However, those reading sensationalistic crime articles from other locations actually had lower fear. The authors credit this result to the fact that many reading about crime in other locations often feel safe by comparison, by not seeing that type of crime in their area (Heath).

Liska and Baccaglini (1990) extended Heath's research on local versus national crime news. The authors used data from the 1974-1975 National Crime Survey that included a sample size of about 10,000 people from 26 cities. Newspapers from those cities and years were then subjected to content analysis to record how many crime stories were included and whether these stories were local or non-local. Regression analysis showed that the effect of local stories on fear is strongly positive (standardized beta = .49), while the effect of non-local stories is somewhat negative (standardized beta = -.25). In other words, local stories strongly increased fear of crime, while non-local stories decreased fear of crime somewhat. These results would seem to support Heath's earlier research. It is worth pointing out, however, the age of the data used to reach these conclusions. Heath's data were collected in 1984, and Liska and Baccaglini's research is from a 1974-1975 sample. In addition, neither of these articles took into account local versus non-local televised news broadcasts. For this reason, I will examine the effects of both local and non-local televised news in my research.

Perceived Reality

One of the more interesting theoretical concepts relating to the media's effect on fear of crime involves how realistic the programs appear to be. In other words, does the respondent believe that the media exaggerates their crime coverage? Does the public believe that crime dramas are realistic? Does realistic crime coverage affect one's fear of crime more than a show that is obviously fictional? Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis implies that television viewership results in viewers accepting the shows as real, although Gerbner's research included no direct measures of perceived reality (Slater & Elliot, 1982). In fact, few researchers have focused on this issue, and results have been mixed.

Elliott and Slater (1980) researched what factors influenced respondents to rate TV programs as realistic. High school students were divided into groups dependant upon their experience with law enforcement. These students were then given survey questionnaires measuring which law enforcement related television programs were regularly watched and how real they perceived these shows to be. Results showed that those who watched these television programs often were more likely to rate them as realistic. Results further showed, however, that this relationship was mediated by direct contact with police, dependent on the type of contact. Respondents who had been arrested were more likely to perceive law enforcement shows as realistic than those who had average contact with police or had positive contacts with police (Elliott & Slater). This result is contrary to the researcher's original hypothesis that those who had direct experience with police, whether positive or negative, would perceive these television shows to be less realistic.

In a re-analysis of the previous data, Slater and Elliott (1982) reported additional findings regarding the importance of perceived realism. Using linear regression, the authors were able to

show that both law enforcement program viewing and perceived law enforcement program realism were significant predictors of their image of societal safety. The directions of these relationships are interesting. Higher levels of viewing law enforcement related shows significantly ($p < .05$) increased the respondent's level of perceived safety in society. This is the opposite effect than would be expected using a cultivation hypothesis framework. On the other hand, however, perceived realism of the law enforcement programs significantly ($p < .01$) decreased their perception of safety. This would seem to indicate that simply viewing television programs increases feelings of safety, but this feeling of safety diminishes as viewers increasingly feel that the shows are realistic (Slater & Elliott).

Potter (1986) conducted research to further examine the relationship between perceived reality of media and fear of crime. This study used two samples: one consisted of college students ($n=92$), and the other consisted of high school adolescents ($n=237$). In both cases, respondents completed a questionnaire that included demographic variables (e.g., age, sex, race), amount of television viewing, a perceived reality scale, and a fear of crime scale. Initially, television viewing seemed to increase fear of crime. This association disappeared, however, after demographic variables and the perceived reality scale were added into multivariate analysis. Perceived reality was found to be of about the same importance as the demographic variables such as age and sex (Potter).

Rubin, Perse, and Taylor (1988) were also able to find evidence that perceived reality is an important factor relating to fear of crime. A sample of 392 respondents completed self-administered questionnaires that included, among other things, questions addressing demographic, television exposure, and perceived reality of the show. Perceived reality was measured by a Likert scale of five questions such as "Television shows life as it really is" and

“Television lets me see what happens in other places in other places as if I’m really there.”

Results showed that perceiving television to be more realistic contributed to an increased concern for their personal safety. The authors suggest that unrealistic television might cause a disconnect among viewers who are not affected as much by such programs (Rubin et al.).

Not all research has found perceived realism of shows to be a significant factor in determining fear of crime. In a survey of 2,250 Florida residents, Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz (2000) included a question that measured how much respondents perceive that TV news programs exaggerate crime. Interestingly, they found that 58 % of respondents believed TV news programs exaggerate crime, while only 14 % said that TV news programs underestimated crime. The perceived reality of crime news variable was included into a regression analysis that also included the typical demographic variables, total time watching television, the actual crime rate of the area in which the respondents lived, whether they had been a victim of a crime in the last 12 months, and a measure of hours spent watching local vs. national news. With all these variables taken into consideration, the perceived reality of crime news was not found to be significantly related to fear of crime (Chiricos et al.). It might be the case that people are able to determine that TV programs exaggerate crime and are able to distance themselves from the messages being portrayed. This is a topic that seems worthy of future research, and it is included in my study.

The above research did, however, produce some interesting results regarding local versus national news. While Heath (1984) and Liska and Baccaglioni (1990) examined the effects local versus national newspaper stories, Chirico et al.’s study found both local and national televised news to be significantly ($p < .01$) related to one’s fear of crime, with local news much more significant than national news. This is a significant finding because with both local and national

level televised news proving to be significant factors in a study that controls for actual crime rate, the media would seem to have some independent effect on fear of crime that cannot be easily accounted for by control variables (Chiricos et al., 2000). In addition, the finding that local news had much more impact than national news bears support for the resonance hypothesis mentioned earlier. Resonance was also given support by Chiricos et al.'s (2000) finding that local news effects are most significant for those living in high crime areas and have recently been victims of a crime. In sum, these results suggest that those who watch local news “resonate” more with that news, particularly if they see crime in their area or have been victims of a crime recently.

Types of Media

Following Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis, one line of debate in the literature focused on whether television in particular leads to increased fear of crime, or whether all sources of media led to increased fear of crime. While some articles mentioned previously included measures of either newspaper or television effects, not as many researchers have included measures of various media formats in the same study. O'Keefe and Reid-Nash (1987) sought to address this issue when they studied the effects of television compared specifically to newspapers. This research was conducted as a wave study; wave one consisting of 1,049 respondents with the second wave re-interviewing 426 of the initial respondents 2 years later. The author's goal was to determine specifically if overall television viewing, crime drama, crime news, and crime-related newspaper articles affects fear of crime. Regression models showed that total exposure to television, watching crime dramas, and reading newspaper crime stories were not significantly related to fear of crime. A modest relationship did exist, however, between watching television crime news and fear of crime. Interestingly, the longitudinal nature of this

study allowed for testing of causal ordering. Results showed that television crime news did lead to increased fear of crime, not vice versa (O'Keefe & Reid-Nash).

Types of media can also be broken down into crime related and non-crime related. While Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis would suggest that viewing almost any television show leads to fear of crime regardless of the content, other researchers have questioned this reasoning. Does a television show such as *Home Improvement* really contain as much information that would influence one's fear of crime as much as a reality crime show such as *Cops*? Heath and Petraitis (1987) addressed this issue in their article examining the cultivation hypothesis. Two studies were performed, one focusing attention on total television viewing and the other specifically examining crime drama viewing. Both variables significantly increased fear of crime, but crime drama viewing was more significantly related than total television viewing. The authors suggest that total TV viewing is significant because of a "spillover effect" (p. 120) where high levels of crime dramas are contained in total TV viewing, thereby making both variables significant (Heath & Petraitis).

Chiricos, Eschholz, and Gertz (1997) extended this research by examining 2,092 Tallahassee, Florida citizens. In the years of and immediately before the data were taken, this area was engulfed in a time of increased attention on violent crime by the various media outlets. Several independent variables were tested to determine the media's impact on fear of crime. Authors included in the survey measures of television, newspaper, radio, and newsmagazine to determine the effects of each media type, and also demographic variable such as age, sex, race, and income. A measure to determine whether anyone in the respondent's household had been a victim of a crime in the 6 months prior to the survey was also included in the survey. When demographic variables were controlled, radio and TV news programs still had a significant effect

on fear of crime. Specifically, people who watch TV news and listen to radio news have increased fear of crime. On the other hand, newspapers and newsmagazines had no significant effect on fear of crime when demographic variables were controlled. In addition, people who watch only local television news were shown to have higher levels of fear, similar to previous work mentioned above.

Eschholz, Chiricos, and Gertz (2003) conducted a fairly comprehensive study on the media's effect on fear of crime, controlling for program types and the before-mentioned audience traits. This study measured respondent's viewing of various types of television programs including local versus national news, newsmagazines such as *Dateline* and *48 Hours*, tabloid shows, reality shows, and crime dramas. Findings showed that local news, crime dramas, and tabloid shows are significantly related to fear of crime, but mainly among those in racially mixed neighborhoods. Reality shows, however, were found to be most significantly related to increased fear of crime, and the relationship existed across every neighborhood (Eschholz et al., 2003). These results would suggest that the effects of reality crime shows are the most universal and consistent. This study did not, however, measure other forms of media (e.g., radio, newspaper) and did not include an offense-specific scale of fear of crime as advocated by others (Warr, 1984).

Relationship Between Attitudes Toward Police and Fear

The current research is designed primarily to test media effects on attitudes toward police and also fear of crime. In addition to the many variables being controlled for when testing this relationship, a possible interaction between attitudes toward police and fear of crime must be included. It is reasonable to believe that one who has greater confidence and a more positive attitude toward the police also would have less fear of crime. This relationship has been examined empirically by Baker, Nienstedt, Everett, and McCleary (1983). While their research

focused primarily on the effects of media crime news on fear of crime, confidence in the police was also measured. Confidence in the police had a substantial negative effect on fear of crime. That is, those who have more confidence in the police are less fearful. Interactions between attitudes toward police and fear will be examined in the current research.

Summary

The current research is guided largely by previous research. Each of the above studies is important when determining which variables to use in subsequent research. The fear of crime literature has shown that while the original form of the cultivation hypothesis (Gerbner et al., 1976) was too broad, the media do have some effect on fear. First, the research has shown that certain demographic variables such as sex (Clemente and Kleiman, 1977) and age (Baumer, 1985; Warr, 1984) have important effects on fear that must be controlled for. Research has also shown that local news might increase fear more than national news (Chiricos et al., 2000; Heath, 1984; Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990).

The content of television shows has also been shown to be important determinants of fear. Heath and Petraitis's (1987) study found that crime related shows such as *Cops* were more related to fear than other television programs. Realism of the show is also important as television shows that are realistic have been shown to increase fear of crime more than shows that are clearly fiction (Slater & Elliot, 1982; Rubin et al., 1988). Finally, different media formats increase fear more than others. Chiricos et al. (1997) found that radio and television news increased fear more than newspaper and newsmagazine articles. Even as research into these variables has taken place, few if any researchers have included all of these variables into a single study. The comprehensiveness of the current study seeks to fill this void in the research.

Research regarding the media's impact on attitudes toward police is limited. Therefore, the current study is largely exploratory to see whether any relationship does exist between media exposure and evaluations of police services. The first step in this process is to examine past research involving attitudes toward police to determine what outside factors influence attitudes toward police, and thus must be controlled for in the current study. First, certain demographic variables such as race (Baker et al., 1993; Brown, 2000; Tuch & Weitzer, 1997) and age (Decker, 1981; Murty et al., 1990) have been found to influence opinions of police. Other factors found to be important in determining evaluations of police include positive or negative contacts with police (Correia et al., 1996; Scaglione & Condon, 1980), the type of neighborhood the respondent lives in (Cao et al., 1996, Reisig & Parks, 2000), and political conservatism (Zamble & Annesley, 1987). These factors will be control variables in the current research to determine whether the media has any independent influence on attitudes toward police.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Data

Sample

The population for the current study was students enrolled at East Tennessee State University. East Tennessee State University is a public state university located in northeast Tennessee with a fall 2006 enrollment of 12,649. In order to obtain a probability sample of students, cluster sampling was employed to randomly select 71 classes offered in the fall semester of 2006. This sampling frame was obtained from the Department of Institutional Research at ETSU. From this list, a systematic sample of 34 classes was selected. Because of the random nature of the sample, classes covered many disciplines and levels of study. This procedure should produce a sample that is fairly representative of students at ETSU.

After selection of the 34 courses, instructors were contacted via email. The email informed instructors that their course had been randomly selected and that the researcher was asking permission to hand out a questionnaire to students during their class. The email stated the purpose of the study and that it should take approximately 15 minutes for students to complete. A 3-week timeframe was provided to instructors, and instructors were to respond via email in order to schedule a date for data collection.

The initial class list of 34 classes encompassed a total of 1,553 students. This list represents an intentional over-sampling because of an expected low response rate. Of the 34 instructors contacted, 12 allowed the questionnaires to be given in their class, for a response rate (12/34) of 35 % in the cluster of classes. A total of 519 students were enrolled in these courses. After accounting for student absences, a final sample of 351 students completed the survey, for a

response rate of (351/519) 68 % in the cluster of students. The overall response rate (351/1553) was 22.6 %.

Data Collection Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument in the current research. The questionnaire was seven pages long and contained 116 questions (see Appendix). Included in the questionnaire were the dependant variables, as well as key theoretical control independent variables. The two dependant variables in this study were attitudes toward police and fear of crime. Using the prior research as a guide, other important variables included demographic measures, contact with police, recent victimization, how realistic the respondents perceive the media, respondent's illegal behavior, political conservatism, and the level of disorganization in the respondent's neighborhood.

Attitudes Toward Police Scale

Attitude toward the police was one of the two dependant variables measured in the questionnaire. To measure attitudes toward police, an eight-item Likert-type scale was created that attempted to tap into different dimensions of attitudes toward police. The questions were general in nature in that they asked about respondents' overall attitudes toward the police instead of specific encounters they might have had. Some of the questions were borrowed from Jones-Brown (2000). Respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree) with statements such as "My local police department does a good job" and "police respond to minorities fairly." Scores were then summed, higher scores meaning more positive attitudes toward police. The scale as used in the current research obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of .840.

Fear of Crime Scale

Garofalo and Laub (1978) stated, “What has been measured in research as the ‘fear of crime’ is simply not fear of crime” (pg. 246). Fear of crime has traditionally been operationalized one of two ways. First, the National Crime Survey measures fear of crime with a set of two questions: “How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?”, and “How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood during the day?” The second commonly used method of measuring fear of crime comes from the General Social Survey that asks “Is there any area right around here- that is, within a mile- where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?” Because of the wide availability of these two datasets, this question is often used by researchers in their research on fear of crime. Researchers have, however, begun to criticize these methods of measuring fear of crime.

Ferraro (1995) specifically criticizes these common methods for not distinguishing fear of crime from perceived risk of victimization. Fear of crime, he argues, is a distinctly different psychological experience than perceived risk. While perceived risk is a cognitive response, fear is a highly emotional experience. The above questions do not adequately focus on the emotional response associated with fear. Instead, it is argued that questions should try to tap into the emotional fear of crime rather than the cognitive perceived risk of victimization. Fear of crime can be better analyzed by asking specifically about everyday life, instead of hypothetical scenarios, as well as listing multiple types of crime encompassing a range of seriousness (Ferraro, 1995). As a result, the current research uses the scale created and advocated by Ferraro. This scale (see Appendix) consists of 10 items and had a Cronbach’s alpha level of .935 in this study. Responses ranged from not being afraid at all (1) to being very afraid (10). Some

examples of the questions included are “being approached on the street by a beggar,” “having property damaged by vandals,” and “being murdered.”

Demographic Measures

The first type of independent variables included in the questionnaire was demographic constructs such as age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Age was measured at the ratio level by simply asking the respondent to indicate their age. Gender and race were both measured categorically by asking respondents to check the box that best described themselves. Socio-economic status was determined by a combination of three questions: the approximate income of the respondent in the past year, the highest education level of their father (substitute mother if they had no father), and a categorical measure of the approximate income of the respondent’s primary caregivers.

Media Exposure

Multiple facets of media exposure were assessed in the questionnaire. Questions asked respondents to write in approximately how many hours he or she spends watching television each day and also which type of media is the respondent’s primary news source (newspapers, television, etc.). In addition, a list of crime related television programs was provided for the respondents to check those programs that they regularly watch. This list contained three types of programs: crime drama, crime-related reality shows, and news programs. Because of evidence that local and national news have differential effects (Heath; 1984; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990), news programs are divided into local vs. national. Finally, the perceived reality of crime dramas and crime related reality shows were measured, as media are likely to have more impact on those who perceive the program to be realistic (Slater & Elliott, 1982). Respondents were asked to rate news programs in one of four categories (i.e., exaggerate crime a lot, exaggerate crime a little,

get it just about right, and underestimate crime). The subsequent question asked respondents to fit TV crime dramas into one of four categories (i.e., very realistic, somewhat realistic, somewhat unrealistic, and very unrealistic).

Exposure to Police and Crime

The questionnaire also contained items measuring exposure to crime and contact with police officers within the past year. Importantly, these questions measure both direct and vicarious exposure to crime. This is significant because vicarious exposure to crime has been shown to influence attitudes toward police (Brown, 2000; Rosenbalm, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, & Ring, 2005). Two separate ratio level questions were included to measure how many times the respondent and-or their relatives had been in contact with an on duty police officer in the past year. In addition, exposure to both violent and non-violent crime was measured, as the effects of exposure to crime is largely dependant on what type of crime to which one is exposed. Being a victim of a violent crime, for example, logically would affect someone differently than being a victim of a property crime. Respondents were given a list of crimes and were asked to check which of these crimes they or anyone in their family had been a victim of within the past year. This list included burglary, theft, robbery where someone threatened to harm them, assault, auto theft, and any other crime.

Deviant Behavior Scale

The next section of the data collection instrument measures the respondent's illegal and deviant behaviors within the previous 12 months. The current research deemed it important to control for criminal activity because those engaged in criminal behavior probably have different attitudes toward police and fear of crime than those not engaged in criminal behavior. Two factor based scales of criminal and deviant behavior were created by the researchers and included

various types of behavior. The first of these scales dealt with drug related deviance and included three items: taking illicit drugs, sold illicit drugs, and driving an automobile while intoxicated. This scale obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of .84. The second scale included six non-drug related behaviors such as vandalizing property and stealing someone else's property. This scale obtained a Cronbach's Alpha level of .70.

RWA Scale

Political conservatism has previously been found to have significant effects, particularly on one's attitude toward police (Zamble & Annesley, 1987). Political conservatism was measured using items from the Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale. The entire RWA Scale consists of 24 questions that measure the respondent's views on various issues (Altemeyer, 1981). Of the 24 questions, the current research chose 6 of the most relevant questions to include on the questionnaire. For example, respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree) with statements such as "In these troubled times laws have to be enforced without mercy, especially when dealing with the agitators who are stirring things up." Scores were then summed, lower scores meaning more conservative beliefs. The 6 questions combined achieved a Cronbach's Alpha level of .775 in the current study.

Neighborhood Disorder Scale

Research cited in the previous chapter by a variety of authors has stressed the importance of community context variables, specifically when discussing attitudes toward police. Neighborhood context variables have taken shape two distinct ways in the literature. First, researchers often use a "collective security" aspect focusing on how well neighbors watch out for one another. Secondly, a "quality of life" scale is often used to measure items such as living on a

noisy street, litter being a problem in the neighborhood, etc. (Reisig & Giacomazzi, 1998; Schafer, Huebner, & Bynum, 2003). Reisig & Parks (2000) found that the quality of life variables seem to have more influence on a respondent's attitude toward police than the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of actual contacts with officers. On the other hand, results from Schafer et al. (2003) found that these same variables were insignificant when contact with police is included as a control variable. Because the current research is able to control for contact with police, I included these quality of life variables into my research. The eight-item scale used in this study was borrowed from Flanagan and Longmire (1995) and had a Cronbach's Alpha of .843.

Variables

Dependent

The current study investigated the effects of media exposure on two dependent variables- attitudes toward police and fear of crime. Attitude toward police was measured using a series of eight questions related to the respondent's satisfaction with police. Fear of crime was measured using the 10-item scale advocated by Ferraro (1995). Both scales were measured at the interval-ratio level.

Independent

There were many independent variables in the current study. Some of these variables were demographic constructs such as age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Age was measured at the interval-ratio level, while race and gender were categorical variables. Race was collapsed into a dichotomous variable of White and Non-White. Socioeconomic status was a combination of three questions. Two of these questions were measured at the interval-ratio level,

while the remaining question was categorical. All three of these were entered into the analysis separately.

The primary independent variable of interest is media exposure. Many different aspects of the respondent's exposure to media were examined. First, the total time watching television per day was measured at the interval-ratio level. Also, the total number of certain crime-specific programs the respondent regularly watches was added together as an independent variable. This interval-ratio level variable measures the total number of crime-related shows regularly watched. In addition, the list of crime shows was broken down into "reality" shows and "crime drama" programs. The reality shows were added together to form a variable measuring total reality crime show exposure. Similarly, the crime dramas were added together and formed a separate variable. Finally, perceived reality of crime related shows was included as an independent variable.

Several other independent variables were included in the study as control variables. First, exposure to criminal victimization was measured as a categorical variable. Contact with police officers was also used as a control variable. This variable was assessed at the interval-ratio level by a question asking how many times in the past year the respondent has had direct contact with a police officer. Other control variables include the respondent's past criminal or deviant behavior, political conservatism, and neighborhood context. Each of these control variables was measured via scales at the interval-ratio level.

Analysis

Hypotheses

The current study tests numerous hypotheses regarding the effect of the media on attitudes toward police and fear of crime. The first set of hypotheses relate to the media's effects on attitudes toward police.

Hypothesis 1: Individual exposure to television will result in positive attitudes toward police.

Hypothesis 2: Audience traits will have a significant effect on attitudes toward police.

Hypothesis 3: When audience traits are controlled, certain types of media will have significant effects on attitudes toward police.

The second set of hypotheses tests relationships between the independent variable and fear of crime. Hypothesis 4 tests the cultivation theory proposed by Gerbner and Gross (1976), which stated that those who watch television regularly have more fear of crime than those who do not regularly watch television. Formally stated, Hypothesis 4 is: Watching crime-related television programs will increase fear of crime. Hypothesis 5 examines the effects that certain audience traits have on the media-fear of crime relationship. Specifically, Hypothesis 5 is: Audience traits will have significant effects on the media-fear of crime relationship. Hypothesis 6 examines differences in media content that can have differential effects on the media/fear of crime relationship. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 states that: When controlled for audience traits, differences in media content will significantly impact fear of crime. Finally, Hypothesis 7 tests whether there is any correlation between the two dependant variables in this study. Specifically, hypothesis 7 states that: Those who have more confidence in police have less fear of crime.

Univariate Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for most variables in the current research to determine the basic demographic composition of the sample. If the demographic makeup of the sample is similar to the composition of the University, results can be better generalized to the remainder of students at ETSU. Measures of central tendency were computed for various media exposure items as well as both dependent variables. This will help to illustrate the average ETSU student's media exposure, fear of crime, and satisfaction with police.

Bivariate Statistics

Several bivariate analyses were conducted to examine relationships between the variables. Independent samples t-tests, correlations, and chi squares were used to test relationships between the variables. For instance, a t-test was conducted to determine whether, consistent with the literature, women have more fear of crime than men. Correlations were also used to confirm that the independent variables were significantly related to the dependant variables. Also, correlations were computed on every independent variable to test the whether there is any multicollinearity among the variables that eventually were placed into the multivariate analyses. Chi-squares were computed to determine whether any of the variables measured at the nominal or ordinal levels were significantly related to the dependant variables.

Multivariate Statistics

A series of multiple regression models were conducted on the important variables of the study. Regression models test numerous independent variables simultaneously on a dependent variable to test which has the greatest influence on the dependant variable. The first set of regression models specifically test how attitude toward police was independently affected by the total amount of exposure to media and type of media exposure when race, age, contact with

police, neighborhood contexts, deviance, and political conservatism are controlled. Several regression equations were also created to test how fear of crime was affected by different types of crime related shows when age, sex, contact with police, victimization, and neighborhood context are controlled.

Summary

The current study was undertaken in an attempt to explain the effects of media exposure on attitudes toward police and fear of crime. In this research, the author attempts to control for certain additional variables which have previously been shown to affect attitudes toward police and fear of crime. In this way, it should be possible to uncover the independent effects that media might have on each of the dependant variables. A self report questionnaire was chosen as the best method to measure one's attitudes, fears, and behaviors. Scales were used to measure both dependent variables and most independent variables. Cronbach alpha levels were used to test the reliability of each scale. The obtained alpha levels in this study ranged from .775 to .935. Finally, systematic random sampling helps to ensure the reliability of the results.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Several analytical techniques were used to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. First, univariate statistics were computed in order to describe the basic composition of the sample. These statistics are descriptive in nature and cannot be used to determine relationships between variables. Bivariate analyses were then calculated to determine whether any relationships exist among the variables. Correlations were run for the interval-ratio level variables. Nominal level variables were measured using the Chi-Square test of independence. Relationships between a dichotomous independent variable and the dependent variables were analyzed using independent samples t-tests. While these bivariate tests can be used to determine if any relationships exist between the variables, it is important to note that these statistics do not show causality. Finally, multivariate statistics were computed to test the main hypotheses of the study. Multivariate statistics allow for the determination of which independent variables retain their significance when other variables are controlled simultaneously. In this study, numerous regression models were created in order to examine which variables shared the greatest relative influence with each dependent variable.

Univariate Statistics

Frequencies were conducted for the categorical variables included in this study. Frequencies were first run for race, gender, and whether the respondent was a criminal justice major or minor (see Table 1). There were 351 participants in this study (n=351). Of these, 40.1% were male and 59.9% were female. Race was distributed as follows: 92.8% (323) were White and 7.2% (25) were non-white. The above percentages are very similar to the composition of the university (Office of Institutional Research, 2006). In other words, this

sample did not depart drastically from the university composition with respect to any particular gender or race. The study also asked whether or not the respondent was a criminal justice major or minor. An overrepresentation of criminal justice majors might indicate a bias sample and thus influence the results. Frequencies show that 85.5% (296) of the sample was not a criminal justice major or minor. The relatively low percentage (14.5%) of respondents indicating that their major coursework focused on criminal justice suggests that the sample is fairly representative of the college campus from which the sample was taken.

In order to establish baseline levels for some important measures within the sample, frequencies also were computed for the respondent's primary news source and criminal victimization. Of the participants in this survey, 57% (199) responded that television was their primary source of news, while 8% of respondents chose radio. The newspaper and word of mouth accounted for 13.5 % and 19.8%, respectively. The frequency table also shows that 68% of respondents had not been victims of crimes within the last year. Specifically, 8.8% (31) reported being the victim of theft, 8.3% (29) reported being victims of more than one crime, and 7.4% (26) reported being a victim of a crime not included on the list of choices. Burglary, assault, and auto theft each occurred to only around 2% of the participants (see Table 1)

Table 1

Frequencies

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	137	40.1 %
Female	205	59.9
Total	342	100

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Race		
White	323	92.8 %
Black	25	7.2
Total	348	100
CJ Major		
Yes	50	14.5 %
No	296	85.5
News Source		
Television	199	57 %
Radio	28	8
Newspaper	47	13.5
Social Interactions/ Word of Mouth	69	19.8
Other	5	1.4
Total	349	100
Victim of Crime		
None	240	68.4%
Burglary	7	2.0 %
Theft	31	8.8
Assault	8	2.3
Auto Theft	10	2.8
Other	26	7.4
More Than One	29	8.3
Total	351	100

Descriptive statistics were generated for the interval-ratio variables of interest in the current study. The first set of descriptive statistics were run on the variables age, income, direct contact with police officer within the last 12 months, and how many relatives have had contact with a police officer within the last 12 months (vicarious contact). The minimum score,

maximum score, mean, standard deviation, median and mode were reported for each variable (see Table 2). The youngest participant in this study was 18 years old with the oldest being 48. The mean age was 22.13 years with a standard deviation of 4.62, and a median and mode of 21. The reported hours spent watching TV ranged from 0-15. The mean hours spent watching TV was 2.13 with a standard deviation of 1.63 and a median and mode of 2. Direct contact with police and relative's contact with police, as mentioned, is used to measure direct and vicarious contacts with police. Direct contact with police ranged from 0-100 with a mean of 2.60 and a standard deviation of 9.38. This represents a highly skewed distribution because of a few very large outliers. As a result, the mean and median are probably more indicative of the average respondent's direct contact with police. Most respondents (mode) reported no contact with police in the past year, while the median direct contact was one contact in the past year. Vicarious contact with police ranged from 0-50 with a mean of 1.99 and a standard deviation of 3.84. Similar to the direct contact variable, the mode and median are most likely the best measures of vicarious contact. The median score for vicarious contact with police was 1 while the mode was 0. These scores represent a relatively low amount of contact with police among the respondents.

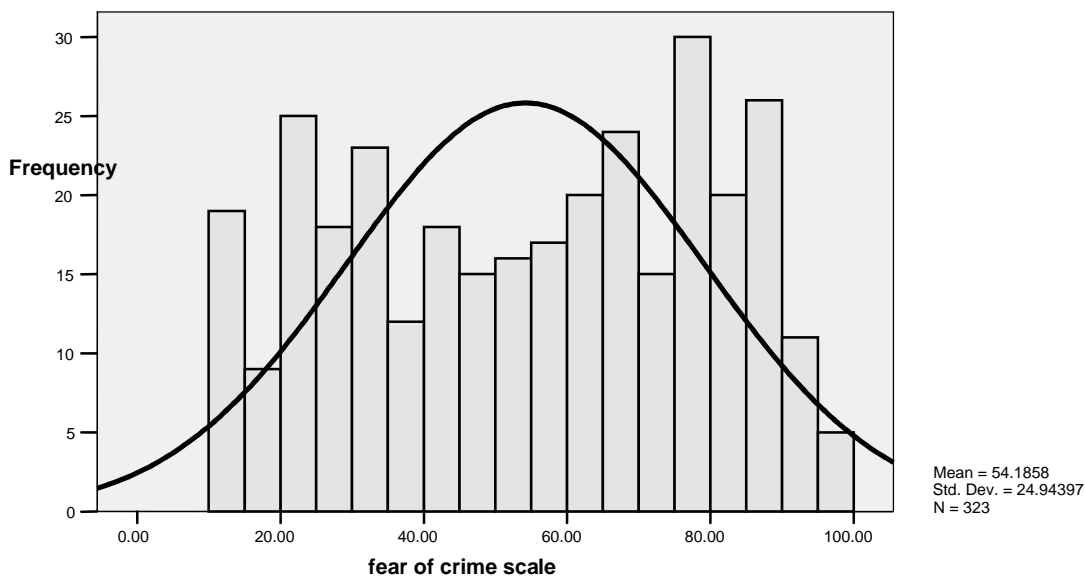
Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mode	Median
Age	18	48	22.13	4.62	21	21
Hours Watching TV	0	15	2.13	1.63	2.00	2.00
Income	0	70,000	10,144.88	11,381.90	0	7,000
Direct Contact with police	0	100	2.60	9.38	0	1
Vicarious contact with police	0	50	1.98	3.84	0	1

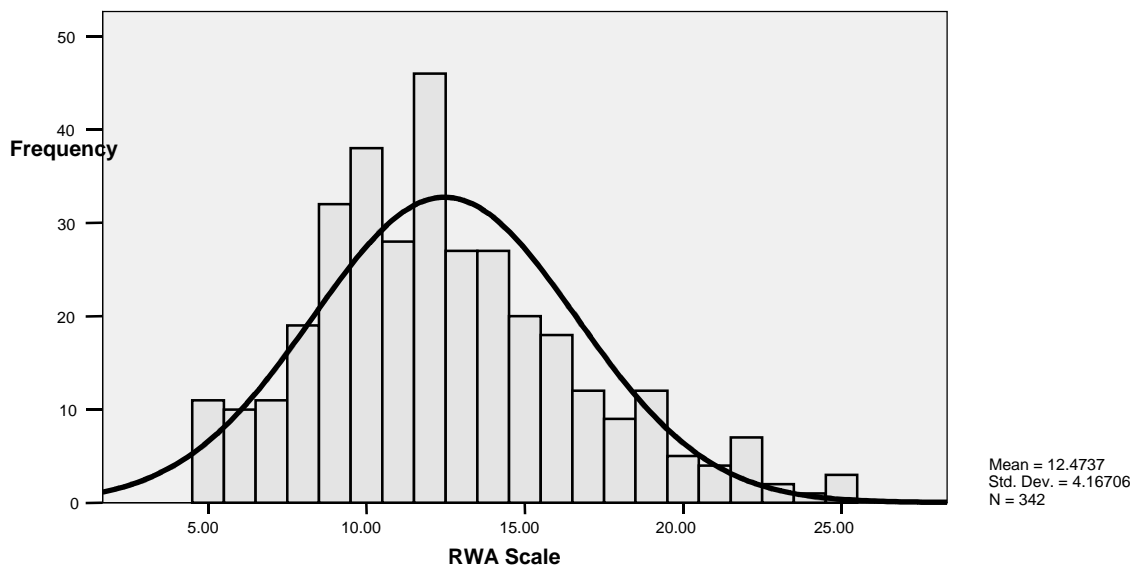
Descriptive statistics were also obtained for each of the relevant scales included in this study. The scales included are drug related deviance, non-drug related deviance, attitudes toward police, Right Wing Authoritarianism, neighborhood context, and fear of crime (see Table 3). First, the results for the two dependant variables were interesting. For the attitudes toward police scale, the minimum score was 8, indicating negative attitudes toward police, with the maximum being 40. The average score on the attitudes toward police scale was 26.52 with a median and mode of 26 and a standard deviation of 5.80. These scores show that the respondents were in the mid-range of attitudes toward police. Scores of the fear of crime scale ranged from 10 to 100, with lower scores meaning lower levels of fear. The mean was 54.19, with a median of 57 and a standard deviation of almost 25. This scale was also bimodal with modes of 10 and 75. The large range between modes, along with the large standard deviation score, indicated that the responses were very dispersed (see Figure 1). Respondents were generally either very fearful or not at all fearful.

Figure 1. Fear of Crime Histogram



For the Right Wing Authoritarian (RWA) scale, the minimum score was 5 with the highest score being 25. Again, the RWA scale runs from 5 to 25, with lower scores meaning less authoritarianism (conservatism). The mean RWA score was 12.47 with a standard deviation of 4.17, and a mode and median of 12. This indicates a fairly normal distribution with scores in the mid-range of the scale (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. RWA Scale Histogram



As mentioned before, the deviant behavior scale was divided into two factor-based scales. Remember that the drug-related deviance ranged from 3 to 15, while the non-drug related scale can range from 6 to 30, with low scores meaning low levels of deviance. Drug-related deviance ranged from 3 to 15, with a mean of 4.51. The mode and median was 3, with a standard deviation of 2.53. Non drug-related deviance ranged from 6 to 30, with a mean of 8.14. The median and mode for this scale was 6 with a standard deviation of 3.45. These scores represent a relatively low amount of deviance being reported on either scale. Finally, the neighborhood

context scale had a range of 8 to 40, with low scores meaning higher levels of social disorganization. The mean for this scale was 30.9 with a median and mode of 32 and a standard deviation of 6.34. This represents a fairly low level of social disorganization among the sample.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Scales

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mode	Median
RWA	5.00	25.00	12.47	4.17	12.00	12.00
Drug Related Deviance	3.00	15.00	4.51	2.53	3	3
Non Drug Related Deviance	6.00	30.00	8.14	3.45	6	6
ATP	8.00	40.00	26.52	5.80	26	26
Neighborhood	8.00	40.00	30.90	6.34	32	32
Fear of Crime	10.00	100.00	54.19	24.94	10, 75	57

Bivariate Statistics

Chi-Square

Cross-tabs tabulations and Chi-Square tests of independence were generated on the categorical variables in this study. These tests are appropriate for variables that are measured at the nominal level. The purpose of the Chi-Square test is to determine if two variables are independent of each other. This is accomplished by comparing observed cell frequencies with what would be expected if the null hypothesis is true (that the two variables are independent of each other). If a significant relationship is found using the Chi-Square test, cross tabulation tables are used to visualize these relationships. Interval-ratio level variables must be re-coded into nominal level or ordinal variables in order to be analyzed by a Chi-Square test.

Accordingly, the attitude toward police scale was re-coded into a categorical level variable.

Scores ranging from 8-18 were placed into a category called negative attitudes toward police. Scores ranging from 19-29 were considered neutral. Finally, scores ranging from 30-40 were classified as positive attitude toward police. Fear of crime was also re-coded into three categories. Scores of 1-33 were considered low fear of crime. Scores falling into the 34-67 range were considered medium fear of crime. A respondent who scored from 68-100 was considered highly fearful of crime. For simplicity, the independent variables were also re-coded. For instance, the respondent's primary news source was compressed into two categories: television and all other than television. Similarly, the perceived realism of crime shows and victim of crime were each collapsed into two categories (see Table 4).

Table 4

Crosstabs of Attitudes Toward Police and Relevant Independent Variables

	Attitude toward Police		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
News Source			
Television	10 (5.2%)	130 (67.4%)	53 (27.5%)
Other than TV	12 (8.2%)	93 (63.7%)	41 (28.1%)
Realistic			
Realistic	10 (6.8%)	95 (64.6%)	42 (28.6%)
Unrealistic	12 (6.3%)	126 (66.3%)	52 (27.4%)
Victim of Crime			
Victim	12 (5.1%)	156 (66.7%)	66 (28.2%)
Not Victim	10 (9.2%)	69 (63.9%)	29 (26.9%)

The Chi-Square test of independence was first conducted on the attitudes toward police variable (see Table 5). No significant differences were found for the variables news source, realism of crime show, and victim of crime at the $p \leq .05$ level. The cross-tabs table shows that most respondents had an attitude toward police in the mid-range of scores (see Table 4). The relatively low number of respondents having a negative attitude toward police should also be noted. The low number of negative attitudes toward police among this sample of college students might mask some subtle differences that might be uncovered among a more diverse sample. Also, note that those respondents who had been a victim of a crime within the past year had somewhat more positive views of police than those who had not been a victim.

Table 5

Attitude Toward Police Chi Square Tests

Variable	X ² value	df	Sig.
Attitude Toward Police*News Source	1.363	2	.506
Attitude Toward Police*Realistic	.109	2	.947
Attitude Toward Police*Victim of Crime	2.096	2	.351

Chi-square tests of independence were then calculated on the same set of variables in relation to the dependent variable fear of crime (see Table 7). Again, no significant relationships emerged for the variables news source, realism, and victim of crime. Being a victim of a crime had the most differences between groups when comparing fear of crime, but this only obtained a significance level of .134. The significance levels of news source and realism were .803 and .318 respectively.

Table 6

Fear of Crime Crosstabs

	Fear of Crime		
	Low	Medium	High
News Source			
Television	48 (26.1%)	66 (35.9%)	70 (38.0%)
All Others	40 (29.4%)	47 (34.6%)	49 (36.0%)
Realistic			
Realistic	40 (29.0%)	54 (39.1%)	44 (31.9%)
Unrealistic	48 (26.7%)	60 (33.3%)	72 (40.0%)
Victim of Crime			
Victim of Crime	62 (28.2%)	30 (38.2%)	74 (33.6%)
Not a Victim	27 (26.2%)	114 (29.1%)	46 (44.7%)

Table 7

Fear of Crime Chi-Square Tests

Variable	X ² value	df	Sig.
Fear of Crime*News Source	.438	2	.803
Fear of Crime*Realistic	2.295	2	.318
Fear of Crime*Victim of Crime	4.023	2	.134

Correlation

Pearson correlation coefficients were generated for many of the interval/ratio level variables in this study. The correlations were then organized into a correlation matrix to help visualize the results (see Table 8). Correlations are appropriate to determine if there is a significant linear relationship between two interval-ratio level variables. A correlation test produces a Pearson r value which ranges from -1 to +1. A Pearson r value of one would indicate a perfect positive linear relationship, while a score of -1 would indicate no a perfect negative linear relationship. A score of zero would indicate no relationship whatsoever between the variables. The sign of the value will show whether the relationship between the variables is positive or negative. A positive value indicates that as one variable increases, so does the other, or as one variable decreases so does the other. If the value is negative, this indicates that as one variable increases, the other decreases or vice versa.

The variables included in the correlation matrix are: age, income, hours spent watching television, number of crime related television shows watched regularly, contact with police, neighborhood context, conservatism, and the two dependant variables fear of crime and attitude toward police. As seen by the correlation matrix, age shares a significant positive relationship with income and viewing crime related television shows ($p \leq .01$). This shows that older respondents have a higher income and watch more crime related television shows. Age also shares a moderate negative relationship with fear of crime ($r = -.179$; $p \leq .01$). The negative relationship indicates that older respondents have a lower level of fear than younger respondents.

The correlation matrix also shows a significant positive relationship between hours spent watching television and the number of crime related television shows viewed on a regular basis ($r = .260$; $p \leq .01$). Political conservatism shares a significant negative relationship with both fear

of crime ($r = -.173$; $p \leq .01$) and attitude toward police ($r = -.517$; $p \leq .01$). Because lower scores on the conservatism scale are coded to correspond with more conservative viewpoints, this suggests that those who are politically liberal have a lower level of fear and a more negative view of the police. The only remaining significant correlation is a moderate negative relationship between hours spent watching television and attitudes toward police ($r = -.138$; $p \leq .05$). Interestingly, there is no significant relationship between the two dependent variables. Past research (Baker et al., 1983) had suggested that a positive attitude toward the police had a negative relationship with fear. That is, those who had a more positive view of police are less fearful of crime. Instead, these results show a small positive but non significant correlation ($r = .050$) between the two variables. Also, the lack of a significant correlation between hours spent watching TV and fear does not lend support to research hypothesis 4. That is, these findings do not support Gerbner and Gross's (1976) original cultivation hypothesis that simply increasing the amount of time spent watching TV will in itself lead to increased fear of crime.

Table 8

Pearson Correlation Matrix

	Age	Income	Hours Spent Watching TV	Crime related TV shows	Contact With Police	Fear of Crime	Neighborhood Context	Attitude Toward Police	Conservatism
Age	-----								
Income	.391**	-----							
Hours Watching TV	.006	-.066	-----						
Crime Related TV shows	.159**	.051	.260**	-----					
Contact With Police	-.044	-.051	-.016	.101	-----				
Fear of Crime	-.179**	-.072	.019	.045	-.076	-----			
Neighborhood Context	.061	.036	-.027	.025	-.024	-.109	-----		
Attitude Toward Police	-.021	.038	-.138*	-.008	.019	.050	.062	-----	
Conservatism	.067	-.043	-.005	-.065	-.027	-.173**	-.046	-.517**	-----

* = $p < .05$

** = $p < .01$

Independent Sample t-tests

Independent sample t-tests are appropriate with a dichotomous independent variable and an interval-ratio level dependant variable. This statistical tool groups the data in accordance to the dichotomous independent variable to determine whether any significant difference exists based on the respondent's membership with a particular group (i.e., race). Accordingly, independent sample t-tests were computed to determine whether any certain groups have significantly different means of the two dependant variables in this study. Similar to the other bivariate forms of analysis, independent sample t-tests cannot control for the influence of additional variables. Therefore, t-tests are a weaker statistical tool than the multivariate analysis described later in this chapter.

The first dependent variable of interest is attitude toward police (see Table 9). Independent variables examined in this series of t-tests included gender, race, and the respondent's major course of study. First, examining gender, the mean attitude toward police among males was 26.51 while the mean for females was 26.52. These means were very similar and not significantly different ($t = .013$; $p = .989$). Next, attitudes toward police were examined according to race. The mean score among Whites was 27.03 while the mean for Non-Whites was 20.09. These scores show that Whites have a significantly more positive attitude toward police than do Non-Whites ($t = 5.804$; $p \leq .01$). Finally, the respondent's program of study was included to determine if those who are taking coursework primarily involving criminal justice courses have different attitudes toward police. The mean score for criminal justice students was 28.30, while the mean score for non criminal justice students was 26.26. This shows that criminal justice students have a more favorable attitude toward police that is moderately significant ($t = 2.31$; $p = .021$).

Table 9

Attitudes Toward Police t-tests

Attitudes Toward Police				
Variable	Mean	T	Df	Sig.
Gender		.013	331	.989
Male	26.5113			
Female	26.5200			
Race		5.804**	337	.000
White	27.0316			
Non-White	20.0870			
Major		2.313*	335	.021
CJ Major/Minor	28.3000			
Not CJ Major/Minor	26.2648			

* = $p < .05$ ** = $p < .01$

The same independent variables are examined for possible differences in means on the fear of crime scale (see Table 10). First, significant differences appeared based on gender ($t = 9.072$; $p \leq .000$). The mean score for males was 40.50 while the mean score for females was 63.61. This shows that females were significantly more fearful of crime than males, which is consistent with prior literature. A significant difference also existed showing that criminal justice students had a somewhat higher level of fear than non criminal justice students ($t = 1.664$; $p \leq .10$). Finally, no significant differences in fear existed between races ($t = .419$; $p = .675$).

Specifically, the mean fear score for Whites was 54.09 while the mean score for Non-Whites was 56.35.

Table 10

Fear of Crime t-tests

Variable	Fear of Crime			
	Mean	T	Df	Sig.
Gender		9.072**	312	.000
Male	40.4960			
Female	63.6085			
Race		.419	318	.675
White	54.0875			
Non-White	56.3478			
Major		1.664*	316	.097
CJ Major/Minor	55.0801			
Not CJ Major/Minor	47.2581			

* = $p \leq .10$

** = $p \leq .01$

Multivariate Analysis

Ordinary Least Squares regression (OLS) was used to complete the analysis and test the major research hypotheses. Regression allows for several independent variables to be analyzed simultaneously in determining the relative importance of each variable in predicting the dependant variable. Ordinary Least Squares regression computes an Adjusted R-Squared statistic that demonstrates the combined amount of explained variance for all variables in the

equation. For each independent variable, a beta score is computed that allows for the comparison of each independent variable to all other independent variables in the equation. Ordinary Least Squared regression typically can only be used on interval-ratio level variables. Dichotomous variables can also be included as independent variables, however, if they are dummy coded into values of zero and one. The dependant variable in each regression equation must always be measured at the interval-ratio level. The current study employs a series of Ordinary Least Squared regression analyses for each dependant variable.

Fear of crime

Seven separate OLS regression models were created to test the ability of the independent variables to explain fear of crime. There are two types of independent variables of interest. Again, audience traits have been found to be important predictors of fear (Baumer, 1985; Jaycox, 1978, Stafford & Galle, 1984). That is, not all members of a television audience will have identical levels of fear because of life experiences, age, etc. Each of the first five models includes identical measures of audience traits. The audience trait variables included in the regression equations are: neighborhood context, gender, age, respondent's victimization experience, and contact with police. Next, different types of media programs are thought to affect the audience differently. Accordingly, each of the first five models will include a different media content variable in a stepwise manner. Next, a model is created which includes only the media variables. Finally, the seventh model combined all media content variables as well as the audience trait variables (see Table 11).

As can be seen, age and gender were the two strongest factors relating to one's fear of crime. Specifically, females and younger respondent's have the most fear of crime in this sample. Neighborhood context, being a victim of a crime, or having contact with police does not

significantly affect ones fear of crime when the other variables are considered. Nevertheless, the strong significance of age and gender does lend some support to hypothesis 2. That is, the media's effect on fear of crime is likely different among certain audiences.

Table 11

OLS Regression Results for Fear of Crime

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Variable	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Age	-.214**	-.211**	-.222**	-.212**	-.209**		-.215**
Gender	.452**	.456**	.483**	.452**	.473**		.489**
Neighborhood Context	-.086	-.074	-.073	-.076	-.079		-.074
Victim of Crime	-.015	-.006	-.015	-.017	-.018		-.006
Contact With Police	-.028	-.027	-.043	-.032	-.027		-.027
Total Hrs. Watching TV	.018					.013	.015
Watch Crime Dramas		-.005				.011	-.028
Watch Reality Shows			.089			-.077	.078
Local News				.129*		.196*	.082
National News					.106	-.016	.085
R ²	.248	.249	.256	.266	.260	.039	.274
Adjusted R ²	.229	.231	.238	.248	.242	.024	.244

**= p≤.01

*= p≤.05

The multivariate analysis shows marginal, if any, support for the hypothesis that media content variables would have a significant impact on fear of crime. When audience traits are controlled, total hours watching television, watching crime dramas, watching reality shows, and watching national news were all non-significant. The only significant ($p \leq .05$) media content variable was watching local news, but this significance disappeared in the final model. This would suggest that while watching local news results in a somewhat increased level of fear, this and the other media content variables are generally not significant predictors. When only media variables are included in the model, local news was again the only significant variable. This model overall was significant ($R^2 = .024$; $p \leq .05$), but the level of explained variance was far below that of the models which included audience traits. While this lends some support to the hypothesis that the media might explain a significant amount of one's fear of crime, the models that include demographic variables such as age and gender have a much higher level of explained variance than the model including only media variables.

Attitude Toward Police

Two regression equations were computed for the dependant variable attitude toward police. The first equation included only those independent variables that are audience traits (see Table 12). This equation explained a significant amount of the variance ($F = 14.185$; $p \leq .01$). The equation had an adjusted R^2 of .297, meaning that 29.7% of the variance was explained by this model. Several individual variables accounted for much of the explained variance. First, race was a strongly significant factor on attitudes of police ($Beta = -.199$; $p \leq .01$). Similarly, conservatism was found to be a strong influence on attitudes toward police ($Beta = -.469$; $p \leq .01$). Other factors found to be somewhat less strong predictors included drug related deviance ($B = -.119$) and non-drug related deviance ($B = -.097$).

Table 12

OLS Regression Results for Attitudes Toward Police (Audience Traits)

Variable	Beta	Sig.
Age	.038	.492
Race	-.199***	.000
Neighborhood Context	-.015	.780
Victim of Crime	.036	.529
Contact With Police	.026	.642
Conservatism	-.469***	.000
Drug Related Deviance	-.119**	.039
Non-Drug Related Deviance	-.097*	.092
Adjusted R ²	.297	

* = p<.10

** =p<.05

***=p<.01

The second equation kept the original audience traits variables but also included the items involving the media (see Table 13). If the research hypothesis is correct, this equation will explain more of the variance than the first equation, and some of the media related variables will become significant. In fact, very little support for the research hypothesis is provided by these results. The value of the adjusted R² did increase to .349, meaning that the media variables helped explain attitudes toward police. However, among the new media related variables, only total hours spent watching television (B = -.126; p≤.05) was significant.

Table 13

OLS Regression Results for Attitudes Toward Police (Full Model)

Variable	Beta	Sig.
Age	.047	.406
Race	-.217**	.000
Neighborhood Context	.010	.860
Victim of Crime	.066	.252
Contact With Police	.014	.806
Conservatism	-.480**	.000
Drug Related Deviance	-.136*	.019
Non Drug Related Deviance	-.075	.206
Total Hours Watching TV	-.126*	.029
Watching Crime Dramas	.009	.871
Watching Reality Crime Show	.045	.435
Watching News	-.066	.238
Adjusted R ²	.349	

* = p<.05

**= p<.01

Summary

While some of the hypotheses presented in Chapter 1 were supported by the statistical analyses in this chapter, many were not. Multiple regression analysis showed that audience traits were very influential in determining attitudes toward police and fear of crime. However, these results do not support the main hypotheses that the media might be significant predictors of the

dependent variables even when controlling for audience variables. Age and gender seem to be the most influential factors determining fear of crime, and these relationships remain when media variables are controlled for. Similarly, significant relationships were found suggesting that the respondent's race, political conservatism, and involvement in deviant behavior seem to be most predictive of one's attitude toward police. Again, media variables were generally not significant predictors of a respondent's attitude toward police. The results are examined more comprehensively in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which the media has an impact on a person's fear of criminal victimization and attitudes toward police. A review of existing literature suggests that the media has some effect on fear of crime, possibly more so on some audiences than others (Chiricos Padgett, & Gertz, 2000; Doob & Macdonald, 1979). Many demographic traits such as age and gender have been found to be significantly related with fear of crime (see: Antunes et al., 1977; Baumer, 1985; Jaycox, 1978; Stafford & Galle, 1984). The main thesis of the current study is that watching media has more impact on fear than do the demographic traits. Certain media contexts were found to be significant in previous literature, and these variables were included in the current study. These media contexts included perceived reality of the crime show, the type of media format, and local vs. national news.

The media's effect on attitude toward police has been largely ignored by previous research. This study found it valuable to include a measure of attitudes toward police into the questionnaire to see what effect the media had on this variable. A look at existing literature found that measures such as race, age, number of contacts with police, neighborhood disorder, and political conservatism have previously been found to have significant impacts on a respondent's attitude toward police (e.g. see: Cao, Frank & Cullen, 1996; Dean, 1980; Decker, 1981; Tuch & Weitzer, 1997; Zamble & Annesley, 1987). These were included in the analysis to see if the media had any additional influence on attitudes toward police.

Methodology

The current study used self-report questionnaires that were distributed to randomly selected classes at East Tennessee State University. The questionnaires included items that

measured demographics and media viewing. Scales were also used to measure variables such as attitudes toward police, fear of crime, deviant behavior, political conservatism, and neighborhood context. While the deviant behavior scale was created by this researcher, the other scales were borrowed from other sources. The attitude toward police scale (Jones-Brown, 2000), the fear of crime scale (Ferraro, 1995), and the neighborhood contexts scale (Flanagan & Longmire, 1995) have all been reliably used in other research. Also, the political conservatism scale was a portion of the Right Wing Authoritarianism scale, which has been widely used. Reliability analysis conducted on these scales showed that each scale was reliable. Factor analysis conducted on the deviant behavior scale resulted in the variable being broken down into two separate dimensions: drug-related deviance and non-drug-related deviance.

Findings

Attitudes Toward Police

The level of respondent's attitudes toward police was normally distributed, with the mean, median, and mode all being around 26 on a scale of 8 to 40. This means that the average view of police was moderate. Bivariate statistics were first used to help explore the first hypothesis that increased exposure to television will result in more positive attitudes toward police. Because research examining the media's relationship with attitudes toward police has been sparse, this hypothesis was based simply on the idea that television typically portrays the police in a positive light. A correlation matrix, however, showed a moderate negative correlation between the two variables ($r = -.138$; $p \leq .05$). Because television exposure was simply a question of how many hours the respondent spent watching television on an average day, an attempt was made to further understand what type of television exposure might cause more negative attitudes toward police. Interestingly, the correlation between attitudes toward police and crime specific

television shows was much smaller and non-significant ($r=.008$). For further analysis, crime related television was divided into crime dramas (e.g.; *CSI*) and reality crime shows (e.g.; *Cops*). Both crime dramas (.021) and reality crime shows ($r=-.054$) had weak and non significant correlations with attitude toward police. Because local and national news were measured as dichotomous variables, correlations could not be computed for these variables.

The correlation between increased television exposure and more negative attitudes toward police could have many explanations. First, the relationship could simply be because of sampling error. There is a five percent probability that this correlation is simply a chance finding. Secondly, news might contribute to more negative attitudes toward police. Either local or national news might shape respondent's attitudes toward police more than crime dramas or crime related reality programs. Finally, there might be some other type of program not examined that unexpectedly influences a viewer's attitude toward police.

Bivariate analysis was also used to explore the second hypothesis that audience traits would have an impact on attitudes toward police. Chi-square tests of independence were first used to test the degree to which being a victim of a crime had an effect on one's attitude toward police. Nearly one-third (31.6%) of the sample responded that they had been a victim of a crime within the past year, but results showed no significant differences of attitudes toward police between those who had been victimized and those who had not. Independent samples t-tests were then used to examine the differences between gender and race groups in attitude toward police. The attitude toward police score was found to be almost identical between males and females, meaning that males and females had approximately the same level of support for police. Race, however, was found to be a significant factor of one's attitude toward police. Whites had significantly more positive attitudes toward police than did Non-Whites. This result was

expected, as race has consistently been found to be one of the leading determinants of attitudes toward police (Baker et al., 1983; Decker, 1981; Tuch & Weitzer, 1997). Finally, a correlation analysis revealed a significant correlation between political conservatism and attitudes toward police. This supports Zamble and Annesley's (1987) findings, and political conservatism is included in the later regression models.

The third research hypothesis involved the impact that media variables might have on attitudes toward police. Bivariate analyses were computed for many of the media variables included in this study. First, Chi-square tests were used to determine whether any differences in attitudes toward police exist between those who watch television as their primary news source or some other media format (eg.: radio, newspaper, etc.). No significant differences were found, suggesting that these different media formats are not related to an individual's attitudes toward police. Chi-square was also used to measure the impact of a realistic television show as opposed to a show that is not so. Again, no significant differences exist between realistic shows and those that are not realistic. It was thought that those who perceive crime shows as realistic might be affected most by the content of those shows. These results do not support such a conclusion.

Multivariate analysis was used to simultaneously control for each item to determine which variables have comparatively more predictive power than other variables. Two regression models were created for examination. The first model included only the audience trait variables. Four out of the eight audience trait variables were found to be significant in the first model. Race and political conservatism were the strongest predictors of one's attitude toward police. Drug-related deviance and non-drug related deviance were also both significant at significance levels of .05 and .10, respectively.

The second model included the same audience traits while adding four media related variables. The media variables included total time spent watching television, watching crime dramas, watching reality crime shows, and watching news programs. In this model, race, political conservatism, and drug-related deviance remained significant, while non-drug related deviance became non-significant. Of the four media related variables, only total time spent watching television was moderately related. This model did, however, have a higher explained variance (.349) than the previous model (.297).

Interestingly, some of the audience trait variables that have been found in prior research to be significant predictors of a respondent's attitude toward police were not significant in the current research. First, neither the correlation matrix nor regression analysis found a significant relationship between age and attitudes toward police, a common finding among the existing literature (Decker, 1981; Murty et al., 1990). This is likely because of the age range in the current study not being similar to the population examined by much of the prior research.

Contact with police was also not found to be a significant predictor of attitudes toward police. Some research suggests that contact with police (i.e., arrest or assist) influences attitudes toward them, even when controlling for race (Dean, 1980; Scaglione & Condon, 1980). The current results seem to support the findings of Brandl et al. (1994); while contact with police can be influential; this is mediated by pre-existing stereotypes of police. That is, someone who has positive attitudes of police before a contact is likely to have a favorable encounter with police, and vice versa. The current study measured a general favorability of police instead of asking the respondent to rate a particular experience with police. Thus, this study can never be sure of this association among this sample population. If pre-existing stereotypes do affect one's contact with police, the effect of a particular contact on one's attitude toward police is tempered.

Overall, the second hypothesis has moderate support by these results. Four of the eight audience trait variables were significant in the regression model, and one of the audience trait variables (age) that failed to be significant has a logical explanation. Very little support is provided by these results to support the hypothesis that media related variables have significant effects on one's attitude toward police when audience traits are controlled. Only total time spent watching television was significant in the regression model. Also, media format and perceived reality of the television show were both found to be non-significant using Chi-square tests of independence.

Fear of Crime

The first concept tested regarding fear of crime was Gerbner and Gross's (1976) original cultivation hypothesis, where simply watching more television, regardless of content, can lead to an increased fear of crime. In fact, the correlation between fear of crime and hours spent watching television was .019, a very weak and statistically non-significant relationship. This lends no support to the cultivation hypothesis. It is likely that Gerber and Gross's results were spurious, or that the dynamics of media have changed in the past 30 years to have a lesser impact on fear.

Next, certain audience traits were believed to be significant predictors of a respondent's fear. Victim of a crime was first isolated in a Chi square test to determine whether being a victim of a crime significantly influences one's fear of crime. The results show no significant difference in the levels of fear among those who had been a victim compared to those who had not been a victim. Therefore, this audience trait variable would seem to have no impact on fear.

The idea that the perceived reality of crime related shows impacts fear of crime differently was also not supported by this data. Chi-square tests showed no significant difference

between those who view crime shows as realistic and those who do not. This would seem to support Chiricos et al.'s (2000) results showing that perceived reality of crime was not nearly as significant in predicting fear as other variables such as demographics, time spent watching television, and whether the respondent had been a victim of a crime. Slater and Elliot (1982) had previously found that perceived reality of crime shows significantly increased a respondent's fear. Potter (1986) had also found through multivariate analysis that perceived reality of crime contributed to increased fear of crime and was about as important as demographic variables such as age and sex. Because perceived reality of crime was measured at the ordinal level, this variable could not be included in the multivariate analysis in the current study.

Independent samples t-tests were used to help determine the significance of some additional audience trait variables. Specifically, gender and race were analyzed to see if belonging to any of these groups significantly impacts the respondent's responses. Results found that females had a far greater level of fear than males. This is consistent with prior literature (Clemente & Kleiman, 1977) and was included in the later regression models. No significant differences were found between levels of fear for Whites and Non-Whites. As race was also not found to be a significant factor determining fear in the literature, this variable was not included in the regression models.

The notion that certain media formats (e.g., television, radio, etc.) affect fear of crime differently was also tested using the Chi-square test of independence. Chiricos et al. (1997) had found that radio and television news increase fear much more than newspaper and newsmagazine articles. In this study, no significant differences were found to exist between those who watch television and those who use other media formats to get their news. It must be noted, however, that the because of the lack of variation in the variable, the current research was forced to use

only two categories: television and all other, in the chi square tests. This might mask some differences between the individual categories.

Finally, a series of Ordinary Least Squares regression models were created that included both audience trait and media variables. Models 1 through 5 included every audience trait variable while introducing the media variables in a stepwise manner. Model 6 included only media variables, and model 7 included every variable of interest. While age and gender remained significant in models 1 through 5, watching local news was the only media variable that was significant in these models. Local news was also the only significant variable in model 6. However, the effects of watching local news disappeared when every variable was included in model 7, while age and gender remained strongly significant.

The results from the regression models suggest that demographic variables, specifically age and gender, are more important predictors of fear than media variables. Remember that Hypothesis 5 was: Audience traits will have significant effects on the media-fear of crime relationship. Hypothesis 6 was: When controlled for audience traits, differences in media content will significantly impact fear of crime. These results would seem to provide moderate support for Hypothesis 5, while providing very little support for Hypothesis 6.

Finally, Hypothesis 7 anticipated a significant relationship between the two dependent variables. A correlation matrix revealed a positive but non significant correlation between fear of crime and attitude toward police. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no difference cannot be rejected. This is contrary to Baker et al.'s (1983) finding that those having a positive attitude toward police typically had less fear of crime.

Limitations

This study does have some important limitations that must be discussed. While most of the scales used in this study were used in previous research, the validity of some measures in this study can still be questioned. First, political conservatism was measured by subjectively choosing six variables in a much larger Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale. While the RWA scale has been widely used, this is the first time the particular combination of variables included in this study has been used. Therefore, while every effort was made to choose questions that would logically measure political conservatism, no definite claims can be made that this scale actually measured conservatism. Secondly, the deviant behavior scale was designed by the primary author of this study. While every effort was made to tap different dimensions of deviant behavior, other types of deviant behavior might have been inadvertently left out.

The sample of this study presents some limitations to this research. First, this sample of college students cannot be used to generalize to the general public. This sample can also not be used as a representative sample of college students throughout the country. East Tennessee State University is located in a fairly small, relatively crime free area of Tennessee. Results might differ if this sample was taken from a larger university, a university in a more crime ridden area, or a university not located in the Southeast region of the United States. The random sample of classes did, however, help ensure that the results are a valid representation of this university's student population.

The questionnaire used in this study might also have led to validity problems. First, any self-report questionnaire requires that the participants remember past events accurately and answer each question honestly. Some participants might have been unable or unwilling to

answer some questions honestly or accurately. The actual questionnaire consisted of 116 questions, and the participants were also asked to read a one-page introduction. This might have led some participants to experience fatigue or not take the study seriously. The questionnaire contained some scales that were not used in the final analysis but might instead be used by other research in the future. Finally, socioeconomic status was measured by three variables, only one of which was used in the final analysis. The exclusion of these extra items might have helped decrease fatigue.

Implications

These findings suggest that the impacts of media on fear of crime and attitudes toward police are not as far reaching as anticipated. It seems that factors such as age and gender have the most significant impact on one's fear of crime. The amount of deviant behavior respondents engage in, as well as their race and political orientation, are the most influential factors to their attitude toward police. Perhaps media are simply a form of entertainment to most people, with little long-term impact on their views of police or fear of crime.

One important finding of this research must be noted. While the effect of watching local news on fear of crime was found to be marginally significant, watching national news was not found to be significant in any model. This finding gives credence to the resonance idea (Chiricos et al., 2000). That is, local news would logically have a greater impact on fear than national news because the viewer has a stronger connection with news about their immediate surroundings. On the other hand, this finding might be the result of the local news sensationalizing crime more often than national news. While national news is likely to focus on the less typical, shocking crime stories, local news is likely to focus on everyday crimes around the particular region. In either scenario, it is important that local news outlets give accurate and

reliable information to the viewers. Inaccurate or biased news programs might unduly increase their audience's level of fear.

This study did provide important contributions to the existing literature regarding the effects of the media in relation to fear of crime and attitudes toward police. The existing fear of crime literature largely focused on citywide representative samples (i.e., Baker et al., 1983). These telephone or mailed questionnaires of a particular city are most likely reaching a population far different from the average college student. It is possible, therefore, that media have different effects among college students than many other populations. While the media might not have as far reaching effects among this unique population, this finding is an important addition to the existing literature.

Future Research

In the current study, the impact of the media on a respondent's fear of crime and attitudes toward police was much lower than expected. This does not, however, indicate that the media's impact on individuals should be abandoned in future research. First, a similar study using a sample more representative of the general public likely would have produced different results. For example, the maximum age in the current study was 48, with an average of just over 22 years old. Age was found to be negatively associated with fear in the correlation and regression analysis, meaning that younger people have a higher level of fear than older respondents. This is in contradiction to the almost unanimous prior research finding that older respondents have a higher level of fear (Antunes et al., 1977; Baumer, 1985; Warr, 1984).

Future research can also analyze these data in more complex ways than were used in this study. This research analysis focused on the relative explained variance by audience traits and media variables respectively. Instead, a future study could use these same data to analyze such

things as whether the effects of the media were different among certain groups in the data. For example, these data tells us simply that variables such as race are more important predictors of fear and attitudes toward police than is media. It might be the case that media are more influential among Whites than they are among Non-Whites, or vice versa. This type of analysis was beyond the scope of the current research but is likely to uncover interesting results. Also, it was reported that being a victim of a crime did not significantly impact one's level of fear. More complex analysis could show whether the media's effect on fear was greater among those who had been a victim, or vice versa. It is possible that being a victim of a crime could increase the media's impact, but that the low number of respondents who report being a victim of a crime disguises the overall impact of the media on fear in the multivariate analysis. It is hopeful that this study will serve to inspire other researchers to examine other aspects of the media's influence on perceptions of police and fear of crime.

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APPENDIX

Data Collection Instrument

Thank you in advance for your help and participation in this research. The results of this study will be used for my thesis to fulfill the requirements for a master's degree in Criminal Justice/Criminology. I may also present the findings to the scientific community at professional and research conferences.

Please answer each question accurately and to the best of your memory. Participation in this study is voluntary. You are under no obligation whatsoever to participate in this study. Do not complete this questionnaire if you feel coerced or unduly pressured to do so. Some questions contained in this questionnaire are somewhat sensitive in nature. Since some questions in the questionnaire deal with past criminal and deviant behavior, it might cause you to feel uncomfortable. You are not required to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. If you become uncomfortable at any time during the completion of the questionnaire, you may terminate your participation without penalty. However, you may also feel better knowing that you have participated in a potentially useful research project. Since you will be taking this survey in a group setting, and in order to protect privacy, please do not look at any other participant's questionnaire. If you feel that your privacy will be compromised by completing the survey in class, you are welcome to request an envelope to return the questionnaire via campus mail at your convenience.

It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Do not put your name or any other identifying marks on this questionnaire. All of the data will be kept confidential and anonymous. In other words, there will be no way to connect your name with your responses.

If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me via email at zbde2@imail.etsu.edu or call me at (423) 439-6453. I am also in my office at 201F in the department of Criminal Justice/Criminology. I am working on this project under the supervision of Dr. Wayne Gillespie. You may reach him at (423) 439-4324. Below you will find a list of resources available to individuals who are experiencing problems related to drug or alcohol abuse. If you or someone you know could use these resources, please feel free to take this top page with you or copy down the numbers that would be of help.

Thank you
Bradley Edwards

RESOURCES:

Alcoholics' Anonymous (423) 928-0871

Victim-Witness Services (423) 279-3288

Alcohol & Drug Counseling & Prevention Center (423) 928-6581

Johnson City Bureau of Police Crisis Intervention Unit (423) 975-2654

Johnson City Police Department (423) 434-6000

24 Hr. Crisis Intervention Hotline (423) 926-0144

Section 1

Please answer each question by marking the appropriate response or filling in the blank space provided.

What is your age?
Before attending college, where was your primary residence? (Note: Be sure to enter <u>only</u> county and state, not street address).
County & _____ State
What is your gender? <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Which best describes your race? <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic Other (please specify) _____
What was your approximate income last year(in dollars) \$ _____
What was the highest level of education achieved by your father (substitute mother if you had no father)? <input type="checkbox"/> Less than high school <input type="checkbox"/> High school <input type="checkbox"/> 2 year college degree <input type="checkbox"/> 4 year college degree <input type="checkbox"/> More than 4 year degree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
What was the approximate combined income made by your primary caregivers when you were growing up? <input type="checkbox"/> \$0-10,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 10,001-40,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 40,001-60,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 60,000+
Are you currently majoring or minoring in criminal justice? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Approximately how many hours do you spend watching television on an average day? _____ Hours
Which of the following is your primary news source? (select <u>only</u> one) <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Social interactions / Word of mouth

Which of the following television programs do you watch on a regular basis? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> Law and Order Criminal Intent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> America's Most Wanted | <input type="checkbox"/> Law and Order SVU |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boston Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> Medium In Justice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Close To Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Monk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cops | <input type="checkbox"/> Navel Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Court TV Daytime Programming | <input type="checkbox"/> Numbers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crossing Jordan | <input type="checkbox"/> NYPD Blue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CSI | <input type="checkbox"/> The Shield |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CSI Criminal Minds | <input type="checkbox"/> Other crime dramas: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CSI Miami | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CSI New York | <input type="checkbox"/> Other crime related reality shows: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homicide Life on the Street | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Law and Order | <input type="checkbox"/> Local News (Example: WJHL) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> National News (Example: FOXNEWS, CNN, Etc.) |

Would you say that news programs:

- Exaggerate crime a lot
- Exaggerate crime a little
- Get it just about right
- Underestimate crime

Would you say that TV crime dramas: (example: CSI, Law and Order, etc.)

- Are very realistic
- Are somewhat realistic
- Are somewhat unrealistic
- Are very unrealistic

Approximately how many times in the last 12 months have you had direct contact with an on duty police officer?	
If you have had direct contact with a police officer within the last 12 months, approximately what percentage of such contact was initiated:	By you _____ By the police _____
Have you or anyone in your family been a victim of any of the following crimes in the last 12 months: (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Burglary <input type="checkbox"/> Theft <input type="checkbox"/> Robbery where someone threatened to harm you <input type="checkbox"/> Assault <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Theft <input type="checkbox"/> Any other crime
Have you been a victim of a <i>non-violent</i> crime in the past 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Approximately how many of your relatives or close friends have had direct contact with a police officer within the past 12 months?	
I feel that the quality of police protection in this area is	<input type="checkbox"/> Exactly what I would like <input type="checkbox"/> About what I would like <input type="checkbox"/> Below the level I would like <input type="checkbox"/> Very much below the level I would like

Section 2

The following set of questions asks about possible deviant/illegal behavior committed by you in the past twelve (12) months. Please circle the appropriate response.

1= never	2= once or twice	3= three to five times	4= six to twelve times	5= over twelve times				
Stolen someone else's property				1	2	3	4	5
Vandalized property				1	2	3	4	5
Taken illicit drugs (eg., marijuana, cocaine, etc.)				1	2	3	4	5
Sold illicit drugs (eg., marijuana, cocaine, etc.)				1	2	3	4	5
Illegally downloaded songs from the internet				1	2	3	4	5
Driven an automobile while intoxicated				1	2	3	4	5
Got into a physical fight				1	2	3	4	5
Threw something at another person				1	2	3	4	5
Pushed or shoved another person				1	2	3	4	5
Physically injured another person				1	2	3	4	5

Section 3

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the number that best represents your opinion

1 = Strongly Agree	2 = Agree	3 = Neutral	4 = Disagree	5 = Strongly Disagree				
My local police department does a good job				1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable in asking the police department for assistance				1	2	3	4	5
Police respond to minorities fairly				1	2	3	4	5
I have a lot of respect for the police in my town				1	2	3	4	5
The police always have a good reason when they stop somebody				1	2	3	4	5
Police provide services that residents want				1	2	3	4	5
If I disobeyed a police officer's orders and no one knew, I would feel bad				1	2	3	4	5
Police officers can punish me if I do something wrong				1	2	3	4	5
The facts on crime, sexual immorality, and the recent public disorders all show we have to crack down harder on deviant groups and troublemakers if we are going to save our moral standards and preserve law and order				1	2	3	4	5
Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.				1	2	3	4	5
In these troubled times laws have to be enforced without mercy, especially when dealing with the agitators who are stirring things up.				1	2	3	4	5

Young people sometimes get rebellious ideas, but as they grow up they ought to get over them and settle down.	1	2	3	4	5
One way to teach certain people right from wrong is to give them a good stiff punishment when they get out of line.	1	2	3	4	5
Capital punishment should be completely abolished.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 4

Below is a series of questions about the neighborhood you live in. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number. Use the following scale:

1= Strongly Agree	2= Agree	3= Neutral	4= Disagree	5= Strongly Disagree	
Trash/litter is a problem in my neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5
Dogs being loose is a problem in my neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5
Graffiti is a problem in my neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5
Vacant and unkempt homes are a problem in my neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5
Unsupervised youth is a problem in my neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5
There is too much noise in my neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5
People in my neighborhood are often drunk in public	1	2	3	4	5
There are many abandoned cars in my neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5

Section 5

Below is a series of questions about perceptions of gender and race in today's society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number. Use the following scale:

1= Strongly Agree	2= Agree	3= Neutral	4= Disagree	5= Strongly Disagree	
Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States	1	2	3	4	5
Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5
It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television	1	2	3	4	5
On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally	1	2	3	4	5
Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement	1	2	3	4	5
It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups in America	1	2	3	4	5
It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women's opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
Discrimination against Blacks is no longer a problem in the United States.	1	2	3	4	5
It is easy to understand the anger of black people in America.	1	2	3	4	5
Blacks have more influence upon school desegregation plans than they ought to have.	1	2	3	4	5

Blacks are getting too demanding in pushing for their equal rights.	1	2	3	4	5
Blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted.	1	2	3	4	5
Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve.	1	2	3	4	5
Over the past few years, the government and news media have shown more respect to Blacks than they deserve.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 6

Most of us have experienced fear about becoming a victim of crime. Some crimes probably frighten you more than others. I am interested in how afraid people are in everyday life of being a victim of different kinds of crime. Please rate your fear of crime on a scale of one to ten where 1 means you are not afraid at all and 10 means you are very afraid. Rate your fear of the following scenarios by circling the most appropriate number.

Being approached on the street by a beggar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Being cheated, conned, or swindled out of money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Having someone break into your home while you are away	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Having someone break into your home while you are there	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Being raped or sexually assaulted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Being murdered	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Being attacked with a weapon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Having your car stolen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Being robbed on the street	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Having property damaged by vandals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section 7

If confronted with the following conflicts, please indicate how likely you would be to use physical force to settle the dispute. Use the following scale, where 1 means that you would under no circumstances use force, while 10 indicates that you would absolutely use force to resolve the conflict.

You are verbally insulted when you accidentally bump into a stranger on the street.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A member of your family (mother, father, spouse, child, etc.) is insulted by a co-worker.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A co-worker lies about your performance at work in order to get ahead.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
As you return to your vehicle after shopping, you see two teenagers keying or vandalizing it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
You witness a criminal shove an elderly gentleman down on the street and take his wallet.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
You are in a bar with friends when a drunken stranger strikes you in the face for no apparent reason.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
You are going from your vehicle to your home and a stranger jumps out and begins to physically assault you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

VITA

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