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Crime Media, Punitiveness, and Fear

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Crime Media, Punitiveness, and Fear

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Motivating Questions
Public opinion and media framing of crime and race issues tend to ebb and flow, but they are generally in line with government policy (Kellstedt, 2003). Only recently has TV stations become a more prominent source of news for many Americans (Rosenthal, 2007), and many claim that this media’s focus on certain types of violence and certain types of criminals elicits harsher punitive attitudes among viewers and reinforces racial & criminal stereotypes. Violence and crime are a national problem, not a racial problem (Convovn, 2010).

Kellstedt (2003) writes that the media coverage of minorities have generally told of their crippling poverty and crime. Yet the question of whether there is bias in the judicial system remains controversial. Unspoken hierarchies (Durkheim’s Anomie) may have slowly formed and are being reinforced. Over time, Gardner’s Cultivation Hypothesis (Dyson, 2011) would say TV socializes its viewers into feeling more antipathy towards criminals, to overestimate the heinous crimes are given priority. Given the injustice in determining punishment.

Accordingly: crime, crime media consumption, and the belief that the crime rate was on the rise. Accordingly: the crime rate was increasing the popularity increase parallel to each other. This is almost the most significant predictive power (β = 0.222, p<0.001). The next most predictive term was crime media consumption, and the belief that the crime rate was increasing the popularity increase parallel to each other.

H1: Consuming real crime media predicts higher perception of crime rate change than fictional crime media
H2: Fear of violent crime predicts higher perception of crime rate change
H3: Holding punitive attitudes towards criminals increases the perception of crime rate change
H4: Mixed.

Correlational Data

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>H1</td>
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Interpretation
After checking correlations between the variables, multivariate regression analysis was performed to test the effects of 4 IVs on Perception of Crime Change Battery (DV). Model 1 summarizes the results of this analysis. They suggest that these 4 factors explain 17.1% of the variance in the perception of crime rate change. The most significant predictive power (β = 0.222, p<0.001). The next most predictive term was crime media consumption, and the belief that the crime rate was increasing the popularity increase parallel to each other.

Findings
H1: Confirmed. Crime media consumption fits well into the model, and concerns about television shows that crime is indeed different than fiction or TV in general.
H2: Confirmed. Fear of violent crime fits well into the model, and features crimes that news typically covers.
H3: Confirmed. Viewing crime as due to a moral problem predicted both crime rate change and punitive attitudes.
H4: Confirmed. This almost the foundation of the model, where punitive attitudes and crime rate perception are positively correlated. Using ‘should criminal justice should be more effective in reducing crime’ as a measure of endorsing harsher enforcement, we can link punitive attitudes towards criminals to increased perceived crime rate.

Conclusions
The data seems to support the basic premise that crime media consumption, punitive attitudes, and crime rate perception tend to increase parallel to each other. Nevertheless, the connection between the three is not straightforward. Crime rate perception is still somewhat substantial even without crime media consumption. Missing from the equation are the economic causes of crime predicts seeing racial bias in justice system. Believing crime media caused crime was insignificant.

References