

THE PUBLIC'S VIEW OF TERRORISM IN THEIR COMMUNITIES
AS RELATED TO MEDIA-VIEWING HABITS

by

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Dedication

For my grandmother, who tried so hard to make it until I finished my master's degree but couldn't hold on quite long enough.

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First of all, I want to thank Dr. Alex del Carmen, my supervising professor, for his assistance and expertise in this endeavor. Seldom have I seen someone as dedicated to success of his students and his department. His passion for criminology is addicting, and I'm grateful to have caught it.

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to analyze the beliefs and behaviors of criminology and communications students in regards to general media and terrorism media exposure, as well as fear of terrorism. It was conducted using a survey, which concentrated on the participants' media-viewing habits; perceptions of current terrorism trends; fear of terrorism; viewer characteristics; and demographic information.

Results revealed more frequent media exposure among communications students than among criminology students. Criminology students were more likely to believe another terrorist attack is likely in the United States, while being less fearful of such an attack on a personal level; communication students were more likely to be fearful on a personal level, but were less inclined to believe that the United States will suffer another terrorist attack. Further differences between the groups regarding viewer characteristics and fear of terrorism were also found.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On October 2, 2001, Robert Stevens, an employee of The Sun tabloid in Boca Raton, Florida, checked into the hospital with a severe, unexplained illness. Three days later, Stevens died of what was discovered to be inhalation anthrax. During the subsequent investigation, two other workers contracted inhalation anthrax, which authorities concluded must have come from a letter, since two of the victims worked in the mailroom. Several other letters containing anthrax – as well as some hoax letters containing suspicious white powder – were discovered, causing a media uproar about potential bioterrorism. As a result, some Americans perceived themselves to be at risk from their own mail. Evidence indicates that the widespread media coverage of bioterrorism could have influenced the public's fear of anthrax in their mail (Fahmy & Johnson, 2007).

According to Low and Durkin (1997) media coverage of crime and terrorism is high, due to demand from viewers for information and entertainment involving court, police, crime, and terrorism. For the week of November 19-25, 2007, according to Nielsen ratings, ten of the twenty top rated television programs were related to crime and violence (Nielsen Media Research, 2007). Also, Internet media, news broadcasts, and newspapers generally contain a great deal of crime and terrorism coverage (Fahmy & Johnson, 2007; Mythen & Walklate, 2006; Nacos, 2007; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday,

2003). With the popularity of these programs, it is important to discover how these viewing habits are related to the perceptions of the public, specifically regarding their fear of terrorism. There has been extensive research on television viewing and its relationship to fear of crime (e.g., Garofalo, 1987; Gerbner, 1998), but few studies have focused on other media outlets. Additionally, there has been little research on the relationship between the media and terrorism. It is essential that these subjects be explored and revisited periodically in research in order to observe possible changes to this relationship over time.

One could argue that media content is exaggerated for entertainment purposes and that the general public is often unaware of the extent to which this is true. As a result, it is possible that people's media-induced perceptions of crime and terrorism might affect their real-life behavior. It is possible that frequent exposure to crime and terrorism stories might influence their thoughts and perception of how common these acts are.

Several studies (e.g., Brown, Skeen, & Osborn, 1979; Heath & Petraitis, 1987; Macaulay, 1987; Pandiani, 1978) show that the public's perceptions or misconceptions of crime, terrorism, and the criminal justice system could even enhance or diminish people's fear of crime, as crime occurs much more frequently on television than it does in real life. Other studies (e.g., Dominick, 1973; Eschholz, Blackwell, Gertz, & Chiricos, 2002) have addressed the commonality of violence as a focus of the media, which could leave the audience with the assumption that they are likely to be victimized at any time and in any place. Even news stories are predominantly about crime. And,

as newscasts freeze a moment in time, the stories can be repeatedly rerun, increasing the image of constant crime (Drori-Avraham, 2006; Haridakis & Rubin, 2005). It is therefore essential that both criminal justice personnel and the media be aware of the perceptions of the public in their day to day interactions in order to combat any false assumptions (Drori-Avraham, 2006).

As evidenced by past and current literature (e.g., Baker, 1997; Lovell, 2001; Low, & Durkin, 2001), research has often focused on specific aspects of the criminal justice system, for instance law enforcement, court processes, or crime. A few studies (e.g., Haridakis & Rubin, 2005; Lepre & Luther, 2007; Rubin, 2003) have focused on the media and terrorism, with most of them published just after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11). For the purpose of this study, the media will be all inclusive, including both broadcast and print media, such as television, radio, Internet, and newspapers.

Many previous studies (e.g., Gerbner, 1998; Dominick, 1973; Eschholz et al., 2002; Low & Durkin, 2001) seem to be in agreement that the media sensationalizes the criminal justice system, most significantly law enforcement, as well as crime in general. Television programs show a greater number of violent crimes against people and a fewer number of nonviolent property crimes than crime statistics demonstrate. Research also suggests that criminal justice occupations are misrepresented on television, and mundane tasks common in real life seldom make it to the small screen. After 9/11, terrorism became a focus of media stories, keeping terrorists' messages in the public eye (Drori-Avraham, 2006; Nacos, 2007). Although people understand that

TV programs are not accurate representations of real life, viewers still retain perceptions about crime and the criminal justice system based on what they see or read in these programs or stories (Dominick, 1973; Eschholz et al., 2002; Low & Durkin, 2001). A series of articles by Gerbner (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan et al., 1980, Gerbner, 1998) looked at the relationship between the perceived reality acquired through heavy television viewing and the fear of crime over the course of 30 years. Since then, a great deal of research has been conducted in support of or in opposition to Gerbner's cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998).

This study is quantitative, employing a survey administered to undergraduate college students at the University of Texas at Arlington. The researcher concluded that a survey was the best instrument to measure the participants' media exposure and fear of terrorism, as subjects' responses can be coded and analyzed to determine if there are any significant differences between criminology/criminal justice and communication students or any significant relationships between responses and media-use habits. In addition, participants' responses can be analyzed to establish whether any statistically significant variations exist among different demographic groups.

Previous research on perceptions and television has been focused primarily on fear of crime, typically focusing only on one aspect of television (i.e., violence) or only on a particular population (i.e., children's perception of television by developmental researchers). This study addresses the need for more research about the relationship

between media exposure and fear of terrorism. The results of this research can then be used as a direction for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the author will provide a review of current and previous literature on the public perception as it relates to the criminal justice system, the media, and fear of terrorism.

2.1 A History of the Crime, Terrorism, and Public Perception

The face of the criminal justice system has changed over time, and the public's perception of it has had to adjust. Society's views of criminal justice have altered with the system, to an extent. According to Kelling and Moore (1988) the evolution of policing, specifically, can be grouped into three eras, based on the values inherent to police in that time period. For example, in the 1840s-1900s, the criminal justice system was closely related to local politicians. The political leader of a region would hire police officers for his area, meaning that those officers held jobs for as long as the politician was in office (Kelling & Moore, 1988).

After the criminal justice system began to distance itself from its previous attachment to political leaders, an emphasis was placed on a "professional" police department that focused solely on "real" police work but did little toward crime prevention or citizen fear. There was seldom any form of communication between law enforcement and the community other than reporting crimes and giving statements, and

there was even little communication among different divisions within the police department. During this time period, each division operated separately, which posed problems in cross-over crimes (e.g., robbery and homicide). This traditional style of policing also lacked social, community, and victim services within the department, and law enforcement officers concentrated mainly on gathering evidence and solving crimes. Any other services were left to social workers (Kelling & Moore, 1988).

Since the late 1980s, many police departments have begun to gravitate toward a community-oriented form of policing. With community-oriented policing, law enforcement has once again shifted the focus to the public. By keeping society happy, police can reduce fear of crime and increase confidence in the criminal justice system. Therefore, society's perceptions are exceedingly important in this era (Kelling & Moore, 1988; Kelling & Coles, 1996).

The advent of television and other mass media outlets has resulted in the public forming opinions based more upon media representations of crime and the criminal justice system than on real life. The resulting belief is that crime is out of control (Herrington & Millie, 2006). Citizens are convinced that they are in constant danger, even if they have never been the victim of any type of crime. Age, race, and gender can also have an impact on public perceptions and fear of crime (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Eschholz et al., 2002). It is important to note that personal contact can still affect a person's opinion when it is available, as a person tends to depend more on direct observation if such observation is available (Wright et al., 1995).

The history of public perception and terrorism has been different than that of crime. Before the terrorist attacks on 9/11, terrorism was seldom the focus of any media attention in the United States. Americans believed that terrorism did not affect them, and consequently devoted little attention to the subject. Immediately following 9/11, though, stories on terrorism dominated every available media outlet for an extended period of time. More recently, the focus on terrorism has lessened somewhat, however such a focus is never completely absent due to efforts of the current administration to keep terrorism at the forefront of Americans' minds (Drori-Avraham, 2006; Haridakis & Rubin, 2005; Lepre & Luther, 2007; Propper, Stickgold, & Keeley, 2007; Rubin et al., 2003).

2.2 Television and Perception

As previously mentioned, with the advent of television, public opinions based upon television representations of crime and the criminal justice system became more common. Age and race can also have an impact on public perceptions (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Eschholz et al., 2002). Personal contact can still affect public opinion when it is available, as people tend to depend more on direct observation if they can (Wright et al., 1995).

2.2.1 Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory is the belief pioneered by George Gerbner that when a person views television often, that person's perception of reality is affected – most often in the area of fear of crime. Cultivation, then, occurs when frequent television-viewing creates in viewers' attitudes or mores consistent with the images seen in the media. It is

gradual and cumulative, with effects building up over time. Gerbner studied television programs and those who watched them – specifically children – and developed various violence profiles based upon his work. Specifically, Gerbner performed longitudinal studies that contained both content analyses of crime and violence on television and cultivation analyses of the subjects. These studies focused on television dramas specifically. Periodic updates were published to determine the amount of cultivation that occurred over time (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980).

Essentially, Gerbner claimed that by watching programs with extensive crime and criminality, viewers begin to believe that their chances of being victimized are greater than in actuality, that their neighborhoods are unsafe, and that crime rates are increasing. There is even a correlation between heavy television viewing and the likelihood to purchase some sort of personal protection (i.e., dog, gun, security) (Gerbner, 1999). Additionally, there is evidence that high exposure to terrorist stories on television is linked to changes in dream features, indicating a subconscious effect might be present even if conscious effects are not (Propper et al., 2007).

Another consequence of frequent television viewing identified by Gerbner is called mainstreaming. This is the tendency for television to model the predominant beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes of a given society, causing viewers, after extensive exposure, to adopt the mainstream ideology (Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). Television characters that violate social norms can be ostracized on television, providing viewers with reinforcement that the dominant views of society are right, while other attitudes are wrong. This can convince the public that violating

social norms is not worth the cost (as seen on television). Therefore, people give up their beliefs in exchange for the mainstream perspective, choosing instead to conform to the majority (Head, 1954; Macaulay, 1987).

Gerbner's studies focused on television dramas specifically. In a later study, researchers conducted random phone interviews asking participants what they believed to pose great risk to society. They also questioned respondents about their exposure to media outlets. The results from this study indicated that those who viewed news sources believed to have an excessive number of violent news accounts were likely to have an increased fear of crime (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003).

Indeed, when Wakshlag, Vial, and Tamborini (1983) conducted an experiment in which viewers were primed with watching a crime documentary, those "apprehensive" viewers were less likely to choose to watch a program with excessive victimization later on, suggesting that they were indeed influenced by the crime they saw on television. Similarly, heavy viewers who are "primed" with high crime and violence rates in their neighborhoods are more likely to interpret violent television as true. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, et al. (1980) called this resonance, as real life mimicked television, causing a person's perceptions from television to resonate (Garofalo, 1979; Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, et al. 1980).

It should be noted, however, that frequency of viewing crime programs seems to be a major factor in whether the viewer is affected. Limited exposure to these programs appears to have little effect on a person's opinions and perceptions. When Baker (1997) attempted to find cultivation effect on undergraduate students at Michigan State

University, it did not appear – most likely due to the fact that exposure to the stimulus was very short-term (Baker, 1997). Gerbner (1998) also emphasized that it is “repetitive, long-range, and consistent exposure to patterns common to most programming” that can produce cultivation (p. 181). Conversely, there is evidence that children who watch a great deal of criminal justice-based television programming have a better understanding of legal vocabulary than those who do not (Low & Durkin, 2001).

However, it is important to note that this influence is not always negative. According to Low and Durkin (1997), there is evidence that children who watch a great deal of television criminal justice programs are often able to recognize patterns. In this experiment, the researchers interviewed children ranging from first through seventh grade, asking them what happened in police dramas. In a second task, participants were asked to put a series of pictures in order of hypothetical occurrence. Results from this experiment indicated an increased awareness among older viewers of the predictable nature of crime programs, which could indicate improved logic and pattern recognition (Low & Durkin, 2001).

Some research does not provide support for cultivation theory. One study proposed that television does have an effect on fear of crime, but that this effect is not necessarily local to the person’s neighborhood. Researchers conducted telephone interviews with 372 respondents, asking about participants’ crime program viewing habits and fear of crime in New York City and in their communities. Additionally, college students were surveyed regarding their crime drama exposure and fear of crime

in their own neighborhood, in their own city, and in New York City. Results from these studies indicated that heavy viewers tended to exhibit a perception of high crime and related fear in urban areas but not in their immediate area. So a person in suburban Dallas might fear crime in New York City or even downtown Dallas, but not necessarily in his or her own neighborhood (Heath & Petraitis, 1987).

It has also been suggested that the results of Gerbner's studies on cultivation could better be explained by other factors. When Gerbner's surveys were reissued while controlling for demographics (i.e., age, gender, population size, etc.), the cultivation effect was not found (Hughes, 1980). It is important to note, however, that Gerbner did state that cultivation varied across age and gender, that television was only a factor in cultivation, and that the effect was only evident over time, as indicated in Gerbner's own longitudinal studies (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck et al., 1978; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan et al., 1980, Gerbner, 1998).

According to Rubin et al. (2003) several other factors must be considered when looking at cultivation and fear of crime and terrorism. First, a person's locus of control can affect cultivation. This means that whether a person uses external or internal controls will affect whether he or she succumbs to cultivation. A person who subscribes to external controls would, for example, believe that luck plays a strong role in the events in his or her life. Someone who uses internal controls, on the other hand, views destiny as completely subject to self. Cultivation, then, is more likely in those with external controls (Haridakis & Rubin, 2005; Rubin et al., 2003).

A person's motivation for watching television might also affect the extent to which cultivation can occur. Some people watch for entertainment, others for information, and still others for companionship. Research has shown that those who watch for companionship – to feel less lonely – are more likely to experience cultivation effects (Haridakis & Rubin, 2005).

Next, a person's personal experience with crime can affect his or her fear of crime. In addition, simply knowing someone who has been the victim of crime can increase a person's predisposition to fear of crime. This can be tied back to explanations that personal experience always beats out vicarious experience through television (Haridakis & Rubin, 2005). Victims and those close to them might be fearful of their personal safety due to the previous violation (Keane, 1995).

Finally, the level of fear or faith in others can affect cultivation. If a person is naturally fearful or distrustful of others, then a cultivation of fear is more likely than it would be in a person who has natural faith in others (Haridakis & Rubin, 2005). Each of these factors has also been analyzed in one study regarding terrorism stories and has shown to be more predictive of fear of terrorism than is frequently viewing terrorism stories (Rubin, et al., 2003). However, Rubin's study was conducted immediately after 9/11, which might not have allowed time for a cultivation effect to occur.

2.2.2 Television and Perceived Reality

Several previous studies on television and perception were conducted with children (e.g., Brown, Skeen, & Osborn, 1979; DeFleur & DeFleur, 1967; Low, & Durkin, 2001). Although these studies cannot be generalized to the overall population,

the results are still of interest. One area addressed primarily in research with children is the idea of perceived social reality. This is the idea that what is seen on television is realistic, a representation of life in the real world. Research suggests that this phenomenon is greater among children with a high frequency of television viewing, while having little to do with age. In fact, when Wright et al. (1995) interviewed second and fifth graders about real-life or television perceptions of police or nurses, they found that perceived social reality is actually higher in older children. The researchers hypothesized that this was due to the children's involvement with the programs they watched. This social reality can lead to an acceptance that television is real (Wright et al., 1995).

Other research proposed that it is not children's ages, but rather their cognitive development that can impact their perceptions of reality as they relate to television. In this study, the researchers administered scales to measure perceived reality and concept assessment to 6- and 7-year-old public school children. Their results indicated that children with higher cognitive ability are affected by television to a lesser extent than are those with lower cognitive ability. This relationship was evident independent of chronological age (Brown, Skeen, & Osborn, 1979).

Some research with children (Gerbner, 1998; Wright et al., 1995) also reveals a different set of expectations of an occupation (e.g., a police officer) on television than they do for the same occupation in real life. These differences are more pronounced when children have had real-life experience with the occupation in question. If questioning a child (grade 2 or older) about real-life police versus television police, he

or she will have already developed an idea as to the differences between the two.

However, if the child has had any opportunities to observe police behavior both on television and in person, he or she will be better able to express the differences between television police and real police (Gerbner, 1998; Wright et al., 1995).

Even so, television still plays a part in shaping a child's beliefs. Images seen on television tend to teach a child stereotypes of occupational behavior, even when the child recognizes that the stereotype is not true. When children were presented with cartoon images of common occupations, direct experience was the best predictor of knowledge about a particular career. Occupations that children had seen on television, however, elicited homogenous results, most likely due to the stereotypical behavior of television characters (DeFleur & DeFleur, 1967). According to Wright et al. (1995), "Understanding what is factual or fictional on television is not a guarantee of being able to avoid undue influence by fictional television" (p. 1717).

As previously stated, children are typically aware that there are differences between occupations seen on television and in real life. In the case of law enforcement, children understand that the television and real-life duties of police officers are not always the same. However, this understanding does not indicate that there is no relationship between television and perceptions. In fact, children's perceptions are influenced by television. Activities frequently seen on TV criminal justice programs are perceived as being frequent in real life. Combined with this (often false) television knowledge are the real-life experiences of the child. Observation is used to develop impressions when available, but as television is more accessible to children, it is likely

to be a significant source of information for them, however inaccurate (Low & Durkin, 2001).

Television also has an affect on how society views different populations. Age, race, gender, and occupations are usually stereotyped – and not always favorably. Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan (1980) looked at television portrayals of the elderly and discovered a tendency for them to be narrow-minded, rigid, unintelligent, and slow. Viewers had a tendency to accept some of these negative stereotypes. In addition, elderly people are seldom viewed on television in any positive light, and older women are often missing from most programs (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, et al., 1980).

2.2.3 Television, Perception, and the Criminal Justice System

Television criminal justice programs became popular during the traditional era of policing, and subsequently, officers on television reflected the values of the current system. Both officers and criminals were macho, with embellished masculine characteristics. Violence has also been a consistent theme. Explicit violent behavior on prime time television has increased greatly over time, from a rate of 58 percent in 1974 to 75 percent in 1994 (Gerbner, 1999).

In addition, Scharrer's 2001 analysis of crime dramas indicated that there is a connection among "hypermasculinity," criminal behavior, and aggression within television programs. This connection is unrelated to whether the character is good or bad, meaning a "good guy" could be macho, aggressive, and prone to criminal acts. Also, those viewers who identify with a macho character are more likely to view his or

her behavior in a favorable fashion, regardless of the television role (i.e., good guy, bad guy). Although criminal characters on television have changed little over time as related to macho behavior, police characters have become less macho, which supports the statement that television police mirror real police in regards to ideology (Scharrer, 2001).

As previously mentioned, the purpose of television is entertainment, and it is frequently dramatic and sensational as a result, often to the point of being an incorrect representation of real life. Characters, including police officers, lawyers, judges, and criminals, are stereotyped and glamorized (Smythe, 1954). If one accepts that society is influenced by what is viewed on television, then it follows that some of the public's assumptions are incorrect.

2.2.3.1 Themes in Criminal Justice Programming

Various content analyses have been conducted on criminal justice programs on television, and results have been consistently similar. First of all, certain non-routine activities are seen more often on television than are others. For example, television offers many examples of high-speed chases, murders, shootings, and illegal police searches. In fact, many violent crimes are frequently represented. Consequently, these activities are presented far in excess of their occurrences in real life. On the other hand, many staples of a law enforcement officer's day are left out. Patrolling, doing paperwork, and responding to complaints are duties often performed by real-life police that seldom make it into police dramas. Property crimes, white collar crimes, drug

offenses and family violence are all underrepresented as well (Dominick, 1973; Garofalo, 1981; Low & Durkin, 2001).

Content analyses also suggest that victims and criminals are frequently misrepresented in age, race, and socioeconomic status (Soulliere, 2001). These overrepresentations of violent crime and misrepresentations of perpetrators and victims can lead to an increase in fear of crime and fear of people who are different, as was discussed under cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, et al. 1980). Indeed, a telephone study by Eschholz, Chiricos, and Gertz (2003) found that people's perception as to the racial composition of their neighborhoods was essential in the relationship between news exposure and fear of crime. The authors claim that without this factor, there is little relationship between TV news exposure and fear of crime (Eschholz, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2003).

In addition, television typically depicts a greater number of employees within the criminal justice system than are usually present. For example, real-life police departments are often understaffed, resulting in long waits for police assistance. On television, however, police officers respond immediately to each crime and seem to have inexhaustible resources. This could result in dissatisfaction with the real criminal justice system when police departments have hours-long response times to non-emergencies (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1978).

Another interesting proposition is that constantly viewing violence, crime, and criminals in action could influence the public to accept or justify more violence and brutality from law enforcement and to seldom question the established authority. In

other words, people believe that crime is rampant and out of control, so they think police officers need to use brutality and violence to keep the criminals in check. Similar to mainstreaming, this also suggests that society chooses to conform rather than challenge the status quo due to the influence of television programs (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1978).

Even non-entertainment television is saturated with violence. News broadcasts frequently begin with a crime story and remain focused on crime for most of the program. One study found that crime stories on the news are not even necessarily local. Gerbner (1999) found that 80 percent of crime and violence in Philadelphia newscasts were stories from other cities or states (Gerbner, 1999). News stories depicting violent crime are also presented with just the facts and no context, prohibiting people from forming opinions other than what they are told (Gaines & Miller, 2003).

In 1997, Chiricos, Eschholz, and Gertz conducted telephone surveys to explore this relationship between the news and fear of crime. They found that frequency of exposure to news both on television and the radio was related to a person's fear of crime. When the data was further broken down, the researchers discovered that White women aged 30-54 was the only group whose fear of crime was related to their frequency of media consumption. The authors postulated that this effect was at least partially due to these women's affinity with the majority of victims seen in the media (Chiricos, Eschholz, & Gertz, 1997).

A later study, however, found that the relationship between frequent local news exposure and fear of crime is significant for other groups, as well. Chiricos, Padgett,

and Gertz (2000) analyzed previously collected survey data and determined that Blacks are affected more than Whites, and that Black females are more affected than White females. Additionally, the researchers found that exposure to local news has a greater effect on viewers than exposure to national news, although both are related to fear of crime (Chiricos, Padgett, & Gertz, 2000).

Another criminal justice area often misrepresented on television is law and the legal system. Most television programs support the crime control model of policing, with little importance placed on due process (Gerbner, et al, 1980; Low & Durkin, 1997). Because due process is the basis of the American judicial system, this is a significant deviation. This can lead to dissatisfaction among the public when reality deviates from the conviction-rich television norm (Dominick, 1973; Hans & Dee, 1991).

In addition to most of the legal process being omitted from many programs, television also has a distorted number of successful convictions. Criminals are almost always apprehended and convicted within the program, even though this does not often happen as quickly in real life (Dominick, 1973; Hans & Dee, 1991). On the other hand, some research indicates that criminal justice processes as seen on television programs are at least accurate to some extent. Television broadcasts related to law and court processes seem to be more correct than those about criminal and police behavior and violent crime (Pandiani, 1978; Soulliere, 2001).

2.2.3.2 Factors Affecting Perception of Media Crime

In earlier research, both gender and race have had a relationship to television and public perception of police. A study by Eschholz, Blackwell, Gertz, and Chiricos (2002) consisted of telephone interviews questioning respondents about their fear of crime, confidence in the police, and television-viewing habits. Minorities tend to have less favorable perceptions of law enforcement than do whites. One reason proposed is that many reality police programs frequently deal with minority offenders. Therefore, watching reality police shows, such as “Cops,” increases confidence in police for Whites but not for Blacks (Eschholz et al., 2002).

It has also been suggested that news programs most often air stories with Black or Hispanic perpetrators and White victims, which could decrease confidence in the police and feelings of estrangement for minorities while increasing racial discord and mistrust among both Whites and minorities (Gerbner, 1999; Gerbner et al., 1978; Gerbner et al., 1979). Alternately, a study by Chiricos and Eschholz (2002) analyzed news content in Orlando, FL, and determined that perpetrators’ races were representative of the population and arrest rates. However, the authors also found that minority offenders were shown to be more threatening in news stories. Additionally, Blacks and Hispanics are seen four times as often as offenders than as victims, while Whites are shown as offenders the same amount they are shown as victims (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002).

The news, in addition, seems to have a relationship with positive attitudes toward the police for women but not for men (Eschholz et al., 2002). Women, it seems,

see criminals apprehended on the news and feel more secure and confident in the police. The flip side of this, then, is that women are also more afraid of crime after viewing the news than are men (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

Along those lines, public opinion of crime and terrorism seems to be related to media coverage as well. The criminal justice system itself has a great deal of input as to how the public views it, as most news media information comes directly from the police or courts. And this can be useful in situations requiring society to work with police. For example, an Amber alert relies heavily on the public to find a missing child. Another example would be police releasing a drawing or photograph of a suspected criminal in order to have the community assist in the suspect's apprehension (Lovell, 2001; Siegel, 2003).

Police officials who best understand the media are more likely to enhance society's satisfaction with the police. This is important because it suggests that what the public sees on television has a greater impact on confidence in the police than does local crime statistics (Lovell, 2001). It is important for policymakers to recognize this relationship, because if society has an incorrect view of crime and the criminal justice system, then society will also have an erroneous idea of what is needed in the form of policies, laws, and law enforcement (Pandiani, 1978).

Similarly, the news seems to impact the public's attitudes and opinions on topics other than just the behavior of law enforcement officers. During the Vietnam War, media coverage had an impact on public opinion as well as public actions and support of the war. This, in turn, influenced American foreign policy (Lowe, 2001). Another

example of this phenomenon is the public's reaction to American efforts in Somalia. In this case, public opinion – based on news coverage – influenced the military's withdrawal from the country. It has been suggested that, if public perception is not under control, this type of official reaction to an uninformed American society could occur again (Adcock, 1997).

According to Hickman, Barlow, and Chiricos (1995), news coverage of crime is important in developing criminal justice policies but that these policies might be designed as a means of stabilizing the economy rather than actually deterring crime. In their study, the researcher analyzed articles in *Time* magazine following World War II. They determined that crime coverage increased, while actual crime rates did not. The crime stories, the authors also stated, were ideological and distorted. Additionally, these stories left out important social issues of the time that also relate to crime, such as unemployment (Barlow, Barlow, & Chiricos, 1995a). As a result, *Time* magazine did not recommend any social changes to address the crime problem (Barlow, Barlow, & Chiricos, 1995b).

It follows, then, that public opinion can turn against the criminal justice system when media coverage turns negative. Jefferis, Kaminski, Holmes, and Hanley (1997) analyzed police satisfaction survey data and discovered that when news programs show videotaped examples of police brutality, viewers tend to have a less favorable perception of the police. They are more likely to state that law enforcement officers are unnecessarily aggressive after such an incident than they would be if said incident never

happened. This trend is also more pronounced among minorities than Whites (Jefferis et al., 1997).

One area in which there is limited research is the effect of television criminal justice programs on those within or going into the criminal justice system. Many people planning to go into law enforcement or corrections know very little about what real-life criminal justice involves. This could account for high turnover rates as well as dissatisfaction among police and corrections officers. Also, forensic science is popular among current television programs, leading to increased interest in the field. However, the reality of the physics and chemistry required for criminalistics is frequently daunting to the uninformed (O'Sullivan, 2005).

2.2.3.3 Terrorism and the Media

Scholarly research about media coverage of terrorism is sorely lacking. Much of such information must come from opinion polls and unverified sources (e.g., the Internet). Several studies on various aspects of terrorism have been published since 9/11 (e.g., Lepre & Luther, 2007; Mythen & Walklate, 2006; Oberschall, 2004; Ross, 2007), but more is needed.

The most important problem with the media coverage of terrorism and terrorist-related stories is that, by airing these programs repeatedly, the media is doing for the terrorists exactly what they were trying to do with terrorist action: Increasing fear and getting their message out to the public. Terrorists are often aware of the benefits of media coverage and utilize it whenever possible. Staggered attacks, advanced warnings, and claims of responsibility are all ways that terrorists have used the press in

America. The unfortunate result is a vicious cycle of terrorism and coverage – the more sensational, the better. Terrorist groups are encouraged to aim for more violence and more victims, as that will ensure more media coverage (Naco, Bloch-Elkon, & Shapiro, 2007; Oberschall, 2004; Ross, 2007).

Research has shown a correlation between increased media coverage of terrorism and increased concessions from affected governments to terrorists. This supports the idea of terrorism coverage being a balancing act. Added to that is the fact that most reporters are not trained to cover terrorism: They are told to treat it as any other tragedy. The consequence of this is that reporters do not understand the impact of the stories they are sharing and end up, in essence, helping terrorists spread their message (Lepre & Luther, 2007).

There is also an indication that focusing on the risk of terrorism can create a broader sense of fear and crime. Mythen and Walklate (2006) examined the United Kingdom's terrorist risk assessments and media coverage of such. They believed that such coverage added to a sense of fear, as well as added to the public's fear of "others" – in this case, minorities who are viewed as being possible terrorists (Mythen & Walklate, 2006).

According to Naco, Bloch-Elkon, and Shapiro (2007), the specific source of news on terrorism is important to the public's fear of terrorism. In their content analyses of terrorism news on various television newscasts and on the Internet, the researchers found that terrorist threat information released by the president or other government officials equated to fear of terrorism soon, while the same information from

the mass media resulted of fear of terrorism occurring some time in the future (Naco et al., 2007).

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, several studies were conducted on the vicarious trauma suffered by those who repeatedly witnessed the attacks on television. One study questioned participants as to their media exposure after the attacks, as well as their dream patterns afterward. The authors concluded that dream features changed after 9/11, and these changes were related to exposure to terrorism in the media. The authors found that after the terrorist attacks, participants' dreams contained certain features associated with the attacks (e.g., specific reference, emotion, theme). Additionally, participants were more likely to experience threatening dreams following 9/11 than they were before the attacks (Propper, Stickgold, Keeley, and Christman, 2007).

Additionally, Drori-Avraham (2006) presented the idea that the constant re-showing of the attacks led to survivors being unable to process their grief and move on to mourning. The media kept the tragedy in the forefront of people's minds by repeatedly showing images of their grief. As a result, many of those people most affected were unable to move on (Drori-Avraham, 2006).

Another study published following the 9/11 attacks was by Rubin et al. (2003). The researchers surveyed undergraduates at Kent State to determine if a person's fear of terrorism is related to their exposure to terrorism in the media. They determined that viewer characteristics were more important in determining generalized fear than was their terrorism exposure. This exposure, however, was related to fear of terrorism,

specifically (Rubin et al., 2003). This research provides the framework for the present study.

2.3 The Present Study

Upon the evaluation of current and previous literature on the relationship between television, public perceptions, and terrorism, it becomes apparent that there is a need for further research addressing the public's exposure to terrorism, fear of terrorism, and any continuing correlations between the two. The purpose of this study is to analyze the beliefs and behaviors of criminology and criminal justice and communications students in regards to general media and terrorism media exposure, as well as fear of terrorism.

This examination will be operationalized by the administration of a survey addressing participants' media-use habits, terrorism media exposure, various characteristics previously linked to fear, and fear of terrorism. With the proposed study, the researcher will attempt to address the current need in the literature. This study is important to the understanding of perception and media because it compares two groups that, many would believe, could eventually be at odds. Significant results would contribute a great deal to the current body of knowledge.

The author expects to find more frequent media exposure among communications students than criminology and criminal justice students, as well as more exposure to terrorism stories among criminology students than communication students. Further, the author expects to find differences between the groups regarding viewer characteristics and fear of terrorism. This fear was expected to be greater among

students majoring in communication than those majoring in criminology and criminal justice.

In the following chapter, the author will discuss the methodological processes for this study, as well as the sampling frame, participants and design. Chapter 4, then, will present the results of the statistical analyses, which will then be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the author will discuss the participants used in this study, as well as the sampling methods and any ethical considerations involved with this research.

3.1 Participants

This study was conducted on a sample of undergraduate college students attending the University of Texas at Arlington. The sample included those attending randomly selected criminology and criminal justice (CRCJ) and communication classes. As the sample includes only college students, it is important to note that the results cannot be generalized to the overall population.

This study had a sample size of 241 students. This included 84 students majoring in criminology and criminal justice and 97 students reporting a major in communication. The remaining 60 participants were students with other majors who were enrolled in the surveyed CRCJ or communication courses. Participants included 116 females and 125 males.

The classes surveyed were selected randomly from a list of all CRCJ and communication courses offered on campus during the 2008 spring semester at the University of Texas at Arlington. Professors from the selected courses were provided with copies of the surveys and asked to offer approximately 20 minutes of class time for their students to complete the survey. Students were asked to voluntarily participate and

were told they could decide not to answer any of the questions at any time or decide not to complete the survey without consequence. No identifying participant characteristics were distinguishable upon completion of the survey. The professors then collected all survey instruments and returned them to the principal investigator.

The researcher does not see any ethical considerations for the participants of this study. Participation was not mandatory, and subjects were free to decline to take part in the study at any time during participation. The researcher does not anticipate that any questions will produce undue harm to any participant.

3.2 Measurement

In this section, the author will discuss the variables in the study. This study was conducted using a survey instrument with 76 questions (Appendix A), which the researcher adjusted from that used by Rubin et al. (2003). This instrument was chosen as the subject matter investigated by Rubin et al. was directly related to the theme of the present study. Additionally, as the instrument has been used previously, it can lend reliability to the data obtained.

The first four questions concentrated on the participants' media exposure by asking them to estimate the number of hours they typically spend utilizing each kind of media – television, radio, Internet, and newspapers or newsmagazines. The following eight questions asked participants to estimate the number of times they had seen particular terrorism topics in the past week, a method developed and used by Rubin et al. (2003).

The survey then addressed participants’:

1. viewing motivation,
2. perception of media realism,
3. viewing intention,
4. attention to what is on,
5. involvement with the stories,
6. locus of control, and
7. social attitudes, including fear, safety, and faith in others.

In addition, the survey asked participants whether they, their friends, family, or acquaintances had ever been victims of crime.

Questions 1-4 had responses ranging from *none* to *more than 7*, with participants’ indicating the number of hours they used the media. For 5-12, responses ranged from 1-5, with 1 being *never* and 5 being *very often*, to indicate the number of times participants saw particular terrorism subjects. The questions measuring viewing motivation had responses ranging from *not at all* (1) to *exactly like* (5) to indicate how much each question was like their reasoning for using the media. Questions addressing experience with crime had *yes* or *no* answers, and all other questions (with the exception of demographic questions) were measured by a 5 point Likert scale, with 1 being *agree strongly* and 5 being *disagree strongly*.

3.3 Data Collection Method

Data in this study was collected via a survey instrument. The researcher had class professors administer the survey to students in the randomly selected courses.

These courses were Introduction to Broadcasting, Introduction to Advertising, News Editing, Public Affairs Reporting, Criminal Investigation, Victimology, Introduction to Research Methods, Comparative Criminal Justice Systems, and the Innocence Project. Data was collected during regularly scheduled classes, and all data were collected within a two-week period. The survey responses were coded and analyzed to identify significant trends, relationships, and differences.

3.4 Design and Analysis

The author will outline the design of the study in this section, as well as discuss the types of analyses utilized for the results. This study was cross-sectional, as the researcher had contact with the subjects at only one time. This is the most appropriate choice of design because the researcher was attempting to measure differences among various subjects' habits and perceptions. As such, there will be no additional testing or control groups.

The data was analyzed using SPSS software. For demographic data, percentages were computed, as well as means where appropriate. For non-Likert scale data, the researcher computed the differences between means. The researcher then conducted t tests to determine if there were any significant differences between the mean responses of students majoring in CRCJ versus those majoring in communication.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The following chapter will present the results of the statistical analyses conducted in this study. The primary statistical analysis utilized in this study was the t test, which is designed to determine statistically significant differences between the means of two groups (Patten, 2005). As discussed in the previous chapter, t tests were used in this study to determine the differences between the mean responses of criminology and criminal justice majors versus communication majors. Additionally, the researcher compared the differences between the means for questions without Likert-scale responses.

This chapter will present four groups of findings. First, the researcher will focus on demographic variables and percentages. Next, the percentages of exposure to media in hours are given. Third, the differences between means will be presented for questions with response choices representing non-Likert data. Then, the t test results will be outlined.

4.1 Demographic Variables

For this study, 241 participants completed the survey. Their demographic data is shown in Table 4.1. Of the participants, 77% were between the ages of 18 and 24, 16% were aged 25-31, 4% were aged 32-38, 1% were aged 39-45, 2% were aged 46-52, and less than 1% fell between the ages of 53 and 59. No

participants were 60 or older. Males accounted for 51% of the sample, and females for 49%.

Most of the participants were Caucasian (51%), followed in number by African-American (18%), Hispanic (15%), and Asian or Pacific Islander (10%). Other races composed just over 6% of the sample. Few of the participants were international students (4%). The greatest percentage of students claimed to be from suburban areas (54 percent), followed by urban (34 percent) and rural (12 percent).

In terms of major, 35% were criminology/criminal justice majors and 41% were communication majors. The remaining 24% claimed other majors. Of the participants, only 8% were freshmen, followed by 24% sophomores. Thirty-five percent were juniors, the largest percentage, and 34% were seniors.

Table 4.1 Demographic Variables and Percentages

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
		(%)
Age		
18-24	184	77
25-31	38	16
32-38	9	4
39-45	3	1
46-52	4	2
53-59	1	<1
Gender		
Males	122	51
Females	116	42

Table 4.1 – *Continued*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
		(%)
Race/Ethnicity		
White	120	51
Black	43	18
Hispanic	35	15
Native American	2	1
Asian or Pacific Islander	24	10
Other	13	6
Major		
Criminology/Criminal Justice	84	35
Communication	97	41
Other	56	24
Student Status		
Freshman	18	8
Sophomore	57	24
Junior	82	35
Senior	79	34
Home Community Type		
Rural	28	12
Suburban	127	54
Urban	79	34
International Student		
Yes	9	4
No	229	96

The author has included participants' experience with crime in the demographic variables, as each question had yes or no answers and was regarding life experiences. These questions were numbers 63-66 on the survey (Appendix A). Fifty-four percent of respondents stated that they had been crime victims, and 78% claimed to have had a

family member who had been a victim of crime. Eighty-one percent said they had a friend who was a crime victim, and, finally, 88% claimed to have known someone who had been a victim of crime.

Table 4.2 Experience with Crime

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
		(%)
Have you ever been a victim of crime?		
Yes	129	54
No	111	46
Has anyone in your family ever been a victim of crime?		
Yes	186	78
No	54	22
Have you had a friend who was a victim of crime?		
Yes	194	81
No	46	19
Do you know anyone who was a victim of crime?		
Yes	211	88
No	29	12

4.2 Media Exposure and Sources

This section will present participant's media exposure and sources in hours. Participants utilized the Internet most often as compared to other media sources, with 51% claiming to spend more than 7 hours online per week (Table 4.2). No subjects

reported 0 hours of Internet usage, though 1% claimed less than an hour per week. Additionally, 2% stated they used the Internet 1 hour per week, 8% said they were online 2 hours per week, 5% reported 3 hours weekly, 12 percent claimed 4 hours per week, 8% professed to using 5 hours per week, 6% reported 6 hours weekly, and 7% claimed 7 hours online weekly.

Television was the second most commonly used media, with 35% of respondents stating they watch more than 7 hours per week. Six percent claimed to watch 7 hours in a week, 10% said they watch 6 hours weekly, and 14% claim to watch 5 hours weekly. Nine percent reported 4 hours per week, 10% reported 3 hours, 6% claimed 2 hours, 5% claimed 1 hour, and 5% stated they watched less than 1 hour each week.

As far as listening to the radio, 4% reported no weekly usage, 9% claimed less than 1 hour, 7% claimed 1 hour, 15% reported 2 hours, and 14% reported 3 hours. Eight percent stated they listen to the radio 4 hours per week, 8% said they listen 5 hours weekly, 3% maintained that they listen 6 hours per week, and 5% claimed to listen 7 hours per week. Finally, 27% professed to listen to the radio more than 7 hours weekly.

Newspapers and news magazines were the least frequently used media, with only 4% of participants claiming to spend more than 7 hours weekly reading them. Two percent reported 7 hours, as well as 6 hours, and 3% claimed to spend 5 hours reading. Ten percent stated they spend 4 hours weekly reading newspapers, 12% said they spend 3 hours weekly, 22% profess to spend 2 hours per week, 17% said they

spend 1 hour per week, and 23% claim to spend less than 1 hour reading newspapers per week. However, only 7% report no use of news magazines or newspapers weekly.

Table 4.3 Media Exposure and Sources (in hours)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Television		
None	3	1
Less than 1	11	5
1	11	5
2	15	6
3	24	10
4	22	9
5	33	14
6	23	10
7	15	6
More than 7	84	35
Internet		
None	0	0
Less than 1	2	1
1	5	2
2	18	8
3	12	5
4	29	12
5	20	8
6	15	6
7	16	7
More than 7	122	51
Radio		
None	10	4
Less than 1	22	9
1	17	7
2	35	15
3	33	14
4	20	8
5	19	8
6	8	3
7	13	5
More than 7	64	27

Table 4.3 – *Continued*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Newspaper		
None	17	7
Less than 1	55	23
1	41	17
2	53	22
3	29	12
4	23	10
5	6	3
6	4	2
7	4	2
More than 7	9	4

4.3 Differences in Means of Media and Terrorism Exposure by Major

In this section, the author will present the differences in means of participants' use of media outlets and media terrorism exposure between CRCJ and communication majors. The differences between means were appropriate for this data, as survey responses were non-Likert. It is important to note that these differences between the group means do not constitute statistical tests. Therefore, these results cannot be used to make inferences, as their significance is not known.

4.3.1 Differences in Media Exposure Means

CRCJ participants reported that they watched television almost 5 hours per week, while communication majors claimed to watch just over 5 and one-half. The exact difference between the two was 0.7312 (Table 4.3).

Regarding the Internet, CRCJ majors averaged more than 5 and one-half hours weekly, and communication majors were online an average of approximately 6 and one-half hours weekly. The difference between the two was 0.7365.

Radio use showed the least amount of difference in the means in media exposure. CRCJ students claimed to listen an average of almost 4 and one-half hours weekly. Communication participants, on the other hand, reported listening an average of just over 4 hours weekly, a difference of only 0.385.

Finally, reading newspapers and news magazines accounted for the greatest difference between the means of these majors. CRCJ students reported spending an average of 1 and one-half hours reading. Communication students, however, averaged more than 2 hours weekly. This is a difference of 0.8006.

Table 4.4 Differences of Means of Participants' Media Exposure by Major

	CRCJ	(in hours)	Communication	(in hours)	Difference
How many hours of television do you usually watch in a typical week?	6.9	4.9	7.7	5.5	0.7
How many hours do you usually spend on the Internet in a typical week?	7.8	5.8	8.6	6.5	0.7
How many hours do you usually listen to the radio in a typical week?	6.5	4.5	6.1	4.0	0.4
How many hours do you usually spend reading a newspaper or news magazine in a typical week?	3.5	1.5	4.3	2.3	0.8
*Note. The numbers in the table do not directly correlate to hours, so the approximate hour equivalent is presented as well.					

4.3.2 Differences in Terrorism Exposure Means

This section will focus on the amount of mean exposure to different terrorism topics as sorted by major. Criminology and Criminal Justice students claimed to have been exposed to airplane and airport security an average of almost 3 times in the past week. Similarly, communications students stated they had been exposed to airplane and airport security an average of 2.5 times in the last week. This difference comes to 0.1965 (Table 4.4).

When considering the hunt for bin Laden, CRCJ students reported an exposure frequency of about 1.5 in the previous week. Communication students claimed to have a similar frequency of 1.6 times in the previous week, a difference of only 0.0194.

CRCJ participants had an average exposure rate of 2.3 times regarding exposure to media on terrorist suspects and 2.4 on Homeland security, while communications had frequencies of 2.2 and 2.3, respectively. The difference between exposure frequencies for media about terrorist suspects is 0.0985, and the difference for frequency of exposure to media about Homeland security is 0.1058.

For media regarding terrorist networks, CRCJ majors had an exposure frequency of an average of almost 2 times in the past week, while communication majors had an exposure frequency of just more than 2. The exact difference between the two was 0.1491. And with media about bioterrorist attacks, criminology students averaged a frequency of 1.4 times in the preceding week, and CRCJ students averaged 1.6, a difference of 0.1659 between the two means.

Next, CRCJ students had an exposure frequency for media on potential terrorist targets an average of 1.9 times in the last week, and communications students had an exposure frequency of an average of 2.0 – a difference of 0.1055. And finally, CRCJ majors had an exposure frequency of an average of 2.3 times to media on kidnapping and hostages, while communication majors had a 2.5 average frequency of exposure. This difference comes to 0.2139 – the largest difference among the means presented.

Table 4.5 Differences of Means of Participants' Exposure to Terrorism Media by Major

	CRCJ	Communication	Difference
How often in the past week have you seen, heard, or read about each of the following subjects?			
Airplane and airport safety	2.7738	2.5773	0.1965
The hunt for bin Laden	1.5476	1.5670	0.0194
Terrorist suspects	2.2738	2.1753	0.0985
Homeland Security	2.4048	2.2990	0.1058
Terrorist networks in and out of Afghanistan	1.9643	2.1134	0.1491
Bioterrorist attacks on water supplies, smallpox, etc.	1.4217	1.5876	0.1659
Potential terrorist targets	1.9048	2.0103	0.1055
Kidnapping hostages	2.2500	2.4639	0.2139

4.4 Measure of Systematic Difference

This section will present the results of the t tests for the Likert-style questions. A t test is a statistical test measuring the systematic difference between two means (Keppel, Saufley & Tokunaga, 2000). In this study, the t tests were conducted to determine if any significant differences exist between the mean responses of criminology and criminal justice majors versus communication majors. The following section has been divided into five subsections based upon the types of questions being analyzed. These subsections will present the analyses of questions regarding locus of control; involvement, attention, and belief; reasons for using the media; faith in others; and fear of terrorism.

4.4.1 Reasons for Using the Media

This subsection will present data from questions 13-27 (Appendix A). These questions focused on participants' reasoning for utilizing the media. Results from the first four questions were significant, beginning with number 13, "Because it relaxes me," in which CRCJ students' mean response was 3.1071, and communication majors' average response was 3.4845. This was significant at the .01 level, with a p-value of 0.001, although both averages were on to the *exactly like* side of the scale.

On question 14, "Because it allows me to unwind," CRCJ majors' responses averaged 3.1667, and communication majors' answers averaged 3.6392, which was also significant at the .01 level ($p=0.000$). Again, both means were on the *exactly like* side of the scale, though communication majors related more to the statement. Question 15, "So I can forget about work, school, or other things," produced results significant at the

.05 level, with CRCJ versus communication mean responses of 3.1566 versus 3.4639 and a p-value of 0.027. Both means were again closer to *exactly like* than *not at all like*, with communication majors relating more strongly than CRCJ majors. For the next question, “So I won’t have to be alone,” CRCJ participants’ responses averaged 1.6429, and communication students’ responses averaged 1.9588. This result was significant at the .01 level ($p=0.005$). Neither group particularly related to this question.

The following five questions produced no significant results. For number 17, “Because it makes me feel less lonely,” CRCJ majors’ mean response was 1.5357, and communication participants’ average response was 1.6598. This produced a p-value of 0.229. On the next question, “So I can talk with other people about what’s on,” CRCJ versus communication responses were 2.4405 versus 2.5155, with a p-value of 0.537. Question 19, “Just because it’s there,” produced mean responses of CRCJ versus communication majors of 2.8452 versus 2.9063, $p=0.644$. Neither group seemed to relate to these statements.

The following question, number 20, “Because it is a habit, just something that I do,” had a CRCJ average response of 3.0119 and a communication mean response of 3.2371, with a p-value of 0.106. And on question 21, “Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time,” criminology and criminal justice participants had an average response of 3.2381, and communication majors had a mean response of 3.1753. The p-value was 0.628. Both groups tended to related to these questions, although the means tended toward the middle range.

The next three questions were all significant at the .01 level. On number 22, “Because it entertains me,” CRCJ students’ responses averaged 3.7381, and communication students’ mean response was 4.0309, with a p-value of 0.003. Both of these averages were on the *exactly like* side of the scale. The following question, number 23, “Because it’s enjoyable,” produced CRCJ versus communication means responses of 3.6905 versus 4.0619, $p=0.000$. Again, both means were closer to *exactly like* than *not at all like*. And on question 24, “Because it amuses me,” CRCJ participants’ average response was 3.5238, and communication students’ average response was 3.9278. The p-value for this was also 0.000. Both responses were on the *exactly like* side of the scale. Communication students seemed to relate more strongly to these statements than did CRCJ students.

On question 25, “Because it helps me learn things about myself or others,” CRCJ versus communication students mean responses were 2.8095 versus 2.8144. This was not significant ($p=0.966$). Neither group seemed to relate to this statement. And for number 26, “So I learn things I didn’t know before,” CRCJ majors’ mean response was 3.4524, and communication students’ average response was 3.6186. This also was not significant, with a p-value of 0.151. Both groups seemed to mildly relate to this statement, though they tend toward the middle range.

The last question regarding reasons for media use is question 27, “So I can learn about terrorism.” CRCJ participants’ responses averaged 2.1905, and communication majors’ mean response was 1.9588. This produced results that were significant at the .05 level ($p=0.029$). This was the only significant response in which criminology and

criminal justice majors had a higher mean (closer to *exactly like* than to *not at all like*, although neither group seemed to relate to the statement) than did communication majors.

Table 4.6 Reasons for Using Media by Major

	CRCJ	Communication	P-value
How much is each response like your own reason for using media outlets?			
Because it relaxes me	3.1071	3.4845	0.001**
Because it allows me to unwind	3.1667	3.6392	0.000**
So I can forget about work, school, or other things	3.1566	3.4639	0.027*
So I won't have to be alone	1.6429	1.9588	0.005**
Because it makes me feel less lonely	1.5357	1.6598	0.229
So I can talk to other people about what's on	2.4405	2.5155	0.537
Just because it's there	2.8452	2.9063	0.644
Because it is a habit, just something I do	3.0119	3.2371	0.106
Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time	3.2381	3.1753	0.628
Because it entertains me	3.7381	4.0309	0.003**
Because it's enjoyable	3.6905	4.0619	0.000**
Because it amuses me	3.5238	3.9278	0.000**
Because it helps me learn things about myself and others	2.8095	2.8144	0.966

Table 4.6 – *Continued*

	CRCJ	Communication	P-value
So I learn things I didn't know before	3.4524	3.6186	0.151
So I can learn about terrorism	2.1905	1.9588	0.029*
* Significant at .05 level. ** Significant at .01 level.			

4.4.2 *Involvement, Attention, and Belief*

In this subsection, the author will discuss the results of questions from the survey dealing with participants' involvement, attention, and belief in media. This accounted for questions 28-38 of the survey (Appendix A).

For question 28 on the survey, "It is important for me to see my favorite shows," CRCJ participants had a mean response of 2.8929, and communication students' average response was 2.6186. This result was significant at the .05 level ($p=0.028$). Both means were closer to *agree strongly* than to *disagree strongly*, though communication students tended to better relate to the statement. Results for question 29, "I plan my evenings around the shows I watch on television," were not significant, with CRCJ majors versus communication majors responding 3.4524 versus 3.6082, a p-value of 0.272. Means for this question were on the in the middle range.

The following two questions produced significant results. On question 30, "I select the programs I watch every evening," CRCJ students had a mean response of 3.2976. Communication majors' average response was 2.6598. This was significant at the .01 level, $p=0.000$. Communication students seemed to relate more strongly to this

statement than did CRCJ majors (who tended toward the middle range). And for number 31, “I get very involved with the stories I see,” CRCJ participants’ average response was 3.2024 and communication students’ mean response was 2.9691, which was significant at the .05 level ($p=0.038$). Both groups tended toward the middle range for this statement.

The following five questions, numbers 32-34a, produced no significant results. For number 32, “I often think about the programs I watch,” CRCJ students’ mean response was 3.1905 and communication students’ mean response was 3.0104, $p=0.100$. On number 33a, “When I watch TV or listen to the radio, I’m often doing housework,” CRCJ versus communication average responses were 3.0357 versus 3.0619, $p=0.840$. Both groups tended toward the middle range on these statements.

Next, on number 33b, “When I watch TV or listen to the radio, I change the station when news briefs come on,” CRCJ majors’ responses averaged 3.6667, while communication majors’ responses averaged 3.4845, $p=0.189$. The next question, “When I watch TV or listen to the radio, I’m often reading a book or magazine,” generated responses for CRCJ versus communication students of 3.5833 versus 3.4948, $p=0.470$. And for question 34a, “When I read newspapers or magazines or surf the Internet, I’m often eating,” CRCJ students’ mean response was 3.2381 and communication majors’ average response was 3.0833, $p=0.220$. Neither group seemed to particularly relate to these statements.

On question 34b, “When I read newspapers or magazines or surf the Internet, I’m often talking to friends about what I read or other things,” criminology and criminal

justice participants' responses averaged 2.9881. Communication students, on the other hand, had a mean response of 2.7396. This was significant at the .05 level ($p=0.025$). Both averages were in the middle range, though communication majors tended toward agreeing.

Questions 35 and 36 produced no significant results. CRCJ responses versus communication responses for 35, "Television presents things as they really are in life," were 3.9405 versus 3.7396, $p=0.059$. And mean responses for number 36, "Television lets me see how other people live," were 3.3690 and 3.2292 for CRCJ and communication majors, respectively, with a p-value of 0.204. Both groups tended toward disagreeing with these statements.

For number 37, "If I see something on TV, I can't be sure it really is that way," CRCJ majors' mean response was 2.5119, while communication students' averaged 2.2396. This was significant at the .05 level ($p=0.031$). Both groups tended to agree with this statement, though communication students tended to agree to a greater extent. And on question 38, "Television lets me see what happens in other places as if I were really there," CRCJ versus communication responses were 3.2143 versus 2.9271, with a significant p-value of 0.007. Both groups tended toward the middle range on this statement, with CRCJ students tending more toward disagreeing and communication students tending more toward agreeing.

Table 4.7 Involvement, Attention, and Belief in Media by Major

	CRCJ	Communication	P-value
It is important for me to see my favorite shows.	2.8929	2.6186	0.028*
I plan my evenings around the shows I watch on television.	3.4524	3.6082	0.272
I select the programs I watch every evening.	3.2976	2.6598	0.000**
I get very involved with the stories I see.	3.2024	2.9691	0.038*
I think about the programs I watch.	3.1905	3.0104	0.100
When I watch TV or listen to the radio, I'm often doing housework.	3.0357	3.0619	0.840
When I watch TV or listen to the radio, I change the station when news briefs come on.	3.6667	3.4845	0.189
When I watch TV or listen to the radio, I'm often reading a book or magazine.	3.5833	3.4948	0.470
When I read newspapers or magazines or surf the Internet, I'm often eating.	3.2381	3.0833	0.220
When I read newspapers or magazines or surf the Internet, I'm often talking to friends about what I read or other things.	2.9881	2.7396	0.025*
TV presents things as they really are in life.	3.9405	3.7396	0.059
Television lets me see how other people live.	3.3690	3.2292	0.204
If I see something on TV, I can't be sure it really is that way.	2.5119	2.2396	0.031*
Television lets me see what happens in other places as if I were really there.	3.2143	2.9271	0.007**
* Significant at .05 level. ** Significant at .01 level.			

4.4.3 Locus of Control

In this study, questions 39-50 (Appendix A) address a participant's locus of control, and results from these questions will be presented in this subsection. For the question "Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interests from bad luck happenings," criminology and criminal justice majors had a mean response of 3.0617, and communication majors had 3.2151. This was not a significant difference ($p=0.163$). Both groups were in the middle range on this statement.

For the next question on locus of control, "Although I might have good ability, I will not be given leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power," CRCJ students mean response was 3.0244. Communication students averaged a response of 2.7684. This difference was significant at the .05 level ($p=0.034$). For this question, both means were toward the middle range, though CRCJ students' mean tended toward disagreeing, while communication students' average tended toward agreeing.

The results of the following three locus of control questions ("Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am," "I have often found that what is going to happen will happen," and "Getting what I want requires that I please those people above me") were not significant, with p-values of 0.364, 0.175, and 0.067, respectively.

For question 44 on the survey, "Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on the other driver," the sixth question on locus of control, CRCJ students had an average response of 2.7857. Communication majors, on the other hand, had a mean

response of 3.0206. This was significant at the .05 level ($p=0.014$). CRCJ students' mean tended more toward agreeing, but communication students' mean tended toward disagreeing.

On the following question, "When I get what I want, it's usually because I'm lucky," CRCJ versus communication majors mean responses were 3.7262 versus 3.8351, which were not significant ($p=0.290$). Both groups tended to disagree with this statement. And for question 46, "People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups," mean responses were 3.4819 versus 3.3542. This also was not significant, $p=0.230$. Both groups tended toward the middle for this question.

The next question on locus of control, "Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability," produced results significant at the .01 level, $p=0.003$, with CRCJ majors average response of 1.8751 and communication majors average response of 2.2062. Both of these means tended toward agreeing, though CRCJ majors agreed more strongly.

The remaining three questions on locus of control ("I am usually able to protect my personal interests," "Whether I get into a car accident is mostly a matter of luck," and "When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it") did not produce significant results, with p-values of 0.191, 0.830, and 0.089, respectively.

Table 4.8 Locus of Control by Major

	CRCJ	Communication	P-value
Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interests from bad luck happenings.	3.0617	3.2151	0.163
Although I might have good ability, I will not be given leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power.	3.0244	2.7684	0.034*
Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am.	3.1687	3.2917	0.364
I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.	2.5952	2.4375	0.175
Getting what I want requires that I please those people above me.	3.2262	3.0208	0.067
Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on the other driver.	2.7857	3.0206	0.014*
When I get what I want, it's usually because I'm lucky.	3.7262	3.8351	0.290
People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.	3.4819	3.3542	0.230
Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability.	1.8751	2.2062	0.003**
I am usually able to protect my personal interests.	1.9167	2.0313	0.191
Whether I get into a car accident is mostly a matter of luck.	3.6548	3.6804	0.830
When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.	1.6429	1.8247	0.089
* Significant at .05 level. ** Significant at .01 level.			

4.4.4 Fear of Terrorism

This subsection will present the results for numbers 51-59 (Appendix A). These questions focused on participants' fear of terrorism. On number 51, "I fear being a victim of a terrorist attack," CRCJ majors' mean response was 3.6667, and communication students' average response was 3.5773, with a non-significant p-value of 0.512. Similarly, question 52, "I believe my community is at risk of a terrorist attack," produced CRCJ versus communication mean responses of 3.8810 versus 3.7732, with a p-value of 0.334, which was not significant. Both groups tended to disagree with this question.

On the next question, "I believe I am at risk of being a victim of a terrorist attack while on campus," CRCJ participants' mean response was 4.0000, while communication students' average response was 3.9175, with a p-value of 0.460. Both groups tended toward disagreeing. And question 54, "I believe another terrorist attack on U.S. soil is imminent," produced a CRCJ average of 2.7381 and a communication mean of 2.9375, $p=0.108$. Both groups were toward the middle range, leaning toward agreeing.

For number 55, "I feel more protected from a terrorist attack on campus than off campus," CRCJ participants had a mean response of 3.8313. Communication students' had an average response of 3.3299. This result was significant at the .01 level ($p=0.000$). Both means tended toward disagreeing, though CRCJ disagreed more strongly. On question 56, "I feel my community is safer than other communities in the U.S.," the mean CRCJ response was 2.7976, while communication average response

was 3.0515. This was also significant, but at the .05 level ($p=0.015$). For this question, CRCJ students' mean leaned more toward agreeing, while communication students' mean in the middle range. And number 57, "I believe the federal government can protect me from terrorist attacks," produced a CRCJ mean of 3.2619 and a communication average of 3.5052. This was again significant at the .05 level, with a p-value of 0.049. Both of these means were in the middle range, leaning toward disagreeing.

On questions 58 and 59, no significant results were found. Mean responses for CRCJ majors versus communication majors on number 58, "I believe the U.S. is safe from future terrorist attacks," were 3.8333 versus 3.7732, $p=0.549$. Both groups generally disagreed with this statement. And on question 59, "I think the government is doing everything it can to protect U.S. citizens from terrorism," CRCJ participants' mean response was 2.9286, and communication majors' average answer was 3.0309, with a p-value of 0.417. Both groups were in the middle range on this statement.

Table 4.9 Fear of Terrorism by Major

	CRCJ	Communication	P-value
I fear becoming a victim of a terrorist attack.	3.6667	3.5773	0.512
I believe my community is at risk of a terrorist attack.	3.8810	3.7732	0.334
I believe I am at risk of being a victim of a terrorist attack while on campus.	4.0000	3.9175	0.460
I believe another terrorist attack on U.S. soil is imminent.	2.7381	2.9375	0.108

Table 4.9 – *Continued*

	CRCJ	Communication	P-value
I feel more protected from a terrorist attack on campus than off campus.	3.8313	3.3299	0.000**
I feel my community is safer than other communities in the U.S.	2.7976	3.0515	0.015*
I believe the federal government can protect me from terrorist attacks.	3.2619	3.5052	0.049*
I believe the U.S. is safe from future terrorist attacks.	3.8333	3.7732	0.549
I believe the government is doing everything it can to protect U.S. citizens from terrorism.	2.9286	3.0309	0.417
* Significant at .05 level. ** Significant at .01 level.			

4.4.5 Faith in Others

In this subsection, the author will focus on the results for questions addressing participants' faith in others. These were questions 60-62 on the survey (Appendix A). For number 60, "I think most people can be trusted," CRCJ majors had a mean response of 3.5595, and communication students had an average response of 3.4227, with a non-significant p-value of 0.223. Both groups tended toward the middle range, leaning toward disagreeing. On question 61, "I think most people generally try to be helpful," CRCJ students averaged 3.0238, and communication majors averaged 2.8021. This difference was significant at the .05 level ($p=0.022$). Both group means were in the middle range, though CRCJ students' mean tended toward disagreeing, while communication students' mean leaning toward agreeing. And number 62, "I believe most people would try to take advantage of me," produced CRCJ versus communication

means of 3.1429 versus 3.7396 with a p-value of 0.059, which was not significant.

Both of these means were in the middle range.

Table 4.10 Faith in Others by Major

	CRCJ	Communication	P-value
I think most people can be trusted.	3.5595	3.4227	0.223
I think most people generally try to be helpful.	3.0238	2.8021	0.022*
I believe most people would try to take advantage of me.	3.1429	3.7396	0.059
* Significant at .05 level.			

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to analyze the beliefs and behaviors of criminology and criminal justice students and communications students in regards to media exposure, terrorism media exposure, and fear of terrorism. To this end, a survey was administered to 241 undergraduate students at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Conclusions drawn from this study indicate that criminology and communications students significantly differ in several key areas. First, they differ in their media exposure. Next, there are differences in their exposure to terrorism media. Then, the two groups vary in their personal and media-viewing characteristics. Finally, they differ in their fear of terrorism and faith in others.

5.1 Media Exposure

Considering students' media exposure overall, the results from this study indicate that the Internet is by far the most common form of media used. More than half of those surveyed indicated they used the Internet for more than 7 hours per week. This is followed by television, which 35% of participants indicated spending more than 7 hours weekly using. Radio was next with 27% of students claiming to listen more than 7 hours per week. And finally, 23% of participants reported that they spent less than an hour every week reading the newspaper or news magazines.

When comparing the media exposure of CRCJ and communication students, one primary trend is worth noting. Communication students claimed to spend more time using all media outlets except the radio. The differences in these means varied, but all three were by more than 0.50. This was not a statistical test, so the significance of these differences is not truly known and is pending further analysis. It seems likely that any difference can at least partially be explained in that communication students utilize the media more because it is their field of study.

5.2 Exposure to Terrorism in the Media

Results regarding terrorism exposure were not derived from statistical analyses, so significance is not known. Based solely on the numbers, though, results indicate that criminology students were more often exposed to stories on airplane and airport safety, terrorist suspects, and Homeland Security. These three subjects appear to be very “crime-focused,” in that they have to do with law enforcement and the government. Additionally, these types of stories are the kind seen less frequently on mainstream news programs.

On the other hand, communication majors claimed to have seen more programs regarding the hunt for bin Laden, terrorist networks in and out of Afghanistan, bioterrorist attacks, potential terrorist targets, and kidnapping and hostages. Many of these subjects are consistently seen on regular news broadcasts. They each have a military focus or victim angle, which is possibly why they are covered extensively by the media. The significance of these findings is pending further analysis.

It is important to note that the overall amount of exposure to terrorism in the media was low for both groups. Perhaps due to the amount of time that has passed since 9/11 and the public's desensitization to the continued terrorist threats, media programs regarding terrorism have decreased. Indeed, most terrorism-related news recently involves the increasing number of casualties in the War on Terror (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008).

5.3 Personal and Media-Viewing Characteristics

In this subsection, the author will discuss the results regarding three viewer characteristics. Participants' reasons for using the media will be discussed first, followed by subjects' locus of control. Finally, the author will discuss participants' involvement, attention, and belief in relation to the media.

5.3.1 Reasons for Media Use

In the survey, three questions were designed to measure participants' use of the media as a pastime, and three others were designed to measure their use of media as entertainment. Communication majors were significantly more likely to agree with all of these questions. This indicates a fundamental difference in these students' reasons for using the media. Communication students use the media to pass time or for entertainment, while criminology students use the media for other reasons.

Most other reasons for using the media did not significantly differ between the two groups, with the exception of two questions. Communication students were significantly more likely to use the media to not be alone, although the other question designed to measure media use for company did not show significant results. And

finally, criminology students were significantly more likely to agree that they use the media to learn about terrorism. This finding is significant in that it indicates that criminology students are more inclined to seek out information on terrorism.

5.3.2 Differences in Locus of Control

Only two questions regarding locus of control produced significant results. First, communication students were more likely than criminology students to disagree that their likelihood of getting into a car accident depended mostly on the other driver. This could be explained by the likelihood that criminology students have had more exposure to the unreliability of some drivers and more exposure to the criminal element. Whether through their classes or personal research, professors or peers (some of whom are probably in law enforcement or corrections), criminal justice students often discuss and study deviant behaviors like drunk driving. Second, communication students were more likely to disagree that leadership depends mostly on ability. Careers in communications often have many factors other than ability that are important for advancement, of which these students might be aware.

The remaining results from these questions are interesting in their lack of significance. A similar range of responses for both groups could indicate that, overall, criminology and communication students have similar feelings of control over their own lives.

5.3.3 Differences in Involvement, Attention, and Belief in the Media

First, it is important to note that the differences between CRCJ and communication majors in involvement, attention, and belief are in degree, not direction.

Most responses were on the same side of the Likert scale. Even so, three out of five measures indicated that communication students are significantly more likely than criminology students to get involved with the stories they see. Additionally, communication majors were more likely than criminology students to be talking with friends while reading newspapers or magazines, indicating less attention to what they are doing.

As for belief, communication majors were more likely to agree that they cannot be sure something they see on television really is the way it seems. This is an indication of less belief in what they see in the media. Alternately, communication students also claimed that television lets them see what happens in other places as if they were really there – an indication of more belief in the media. This dichotomy could be explained by the differences in the phrasing of the questions. People can be hesitant to accept that what they see on television is as it seems while believing that what they see actually exists. The first suggests certainty – a surety that something is as it seems, which people may be hesitant to agree with. The second question, however, simply suggests that what is shown on television is actually happening. Because involvement, attention, and belief in the media are all linked to fear of crime in cultivation theory, these findings have important implications.

5.4 Fear of Terrorism and Faith in Others

Several variations were found in regards to fear and faith. First, communication students were more likely to agree that they feel more protected from terrorist attacks on campus than off campus. It is possible that such a finding is due to an increased

awareness of terror threats among criminology students due to higher levels of education on the topic, resulting in fewer feelings of protection from terrorism.

On the other hand, criminology students were more likely to agree that their communities were safer than others in the United States and that the government could protect them from terrorist attacks. This could indicate among communication students a lack of trust in governmental safeguards and increased fear of victimization, possibly attributable to their higher frequency of viewing terrorism news stories relating to victimization.

When looking at these results overall – not simply those that are significant – criminology and criminal justice students tend to be more likely to believe another terrorist attack is likely in the United States, while being less fearful of such an attack on a personal level. Communication students appeared more likely to be fearful on a personal level, while less inclined to believe that the United States will suffer another terrorist attack.

As for faith in others, criminology students were less agreeable that people generally try to be helpful, indicating a lower level of faith in others than communication students. Responses to the other two measure of faith in others were not significant. This could indicate a somewhat similar outlook on human nature between the two groups.

5.5 Implications

Results from this study indicate several fundamental differences between criminology and communication students, as well as a few unexpected similarities.

These findings are most likely to affect the media, the legal system, criminologists, policy-makers, the general public, and higher education establishments.

5.5.1 The Media

One area likely to benefit from this study is the media. Any information on media-use habits is potentially beneficial to the media, and many of the results of this study have to do with those habits. First of all, one of the most important findings for the media is that the most frequently used media source is the Internet. Television is a distant second, and newspaper use is very low. The more studies that turn out this information, the more likely the media is to take notice and adjust their companies. Additionally, the media can gain a better understanding of their consumers by analyzing viewer characteristics. Any salesman knows that he or she must know the target audience, and the same holds true for the media. Understanding viewers' involvement or belief in media programming can impact what the media shows.

Furthermore, by understanding the connection between television and public perception, networks can work on reducing misconceptions, especially those resulting from news programs. Perhaps if reporters understood how they were contributing to the public's fear of crime, they would be more likely to address local trends, especially if crime rates were low. Also, by acknowledging the possible impact reporting could have in a war or other foreign efforts, reporters might be more unbiased in their reporting. In addition, increasing knowledge on terrorism and related coverage to both media professionals and university communications programs (discussed later in this chapter) could decrease misunderstandings about the inherent differences between terrorism and

other tragedies. It is conceivable that such education could help diminish the impact of terrorism on American society.

5.5.2 The Legal System

Those who work in the legal system could also benefit from this research. If society exhibits involvement with television programming and belief in the media, then members of the public who are interacting with the legal system (e.g., jurors) are likely influenced by their media exposure. Attorneys and judges need to understand how public misconceptions based on television can influence trials. Because little emphasis is placed on due process in media representation of the legal system, this influence could drastically affect trials. It is likely that real life would have little to do with what these people saw on television. This is something that should probably be investigated at the jury selection level, as someone who expects showy evidence and witness “performances” might be unconvinced by the evidence, and a person who follows the TV tenet that most people who make it to trial are guilty might be prejudiced against the defendant. Some viewers might also believe in stereotyped ideas of judges and lawyers, seeing them as antagonists to justice rather than keepers of due process. Lastly, television-induced misconceptions about the legal system could lead to an expectation of excitement by juror, followed by disappointment and boredom when participating in a real trial.

The answer, then, could be in working with the media, as opposed to against it. By educating potential jurors – or even the general public – the legal system can minimize any influence the media has. And the best way to educate the public?

Perhaps the best way to reach the most people would be through the media. Regardless, identifying trends from media exposure can help the legal system know what presumptions need to be addressed.

5.5.3 Criminologists

It is important to note that, even among criminology students, exposure to terrorism media stories was not common. Terrorism is not as much at the forefront of the news today as it once was – an occurrence that would likely change drastically were another terrorist attack to occur. Additionally, even though criminology students seem to be more inclined to believe another terrorist attack in the United States is not unlikely, these students also are likely to use the media to learn about terrorism. This is a disturbing trend of which criminologists should be aware.

Although students are often dependent upon the media for gaining information about events in far-off places, it is essential that they recognize the sensationalized content for what it is: entertainment. Criminologists, then, have a responsibility to educate their students not only on crime and terrorism, but also on the media's reporting habits as they relate to crime and terrorism.

Practically, criminologists can use this type of information in training law enforcement officers. By determining how and to what extent the media impacts society's perception of terrorism, law enforcement officials can discover ways to emphasize positive perceptions while minimizing negatives. Knowing how the public perceives police on the news could affect police departments' public information policies. In addition, police academies would be able to view the results of this study to

determine what misconceptions to address with police recruits in order to minimize job dissatisfaction and turnover. Most importantly, an understanding of society's perceptions as related to their expectations of law enforcement can lead to better strategies toward counteracting dissatisfaction and lack of confidence in the police. Essentially, it is important for criminologists and other criminal justice professionals to acknowledge that the media is incredibly powerful and utilize that power to their benefit.

5.5.4 Policy-makers

It would be beneficial for policy-makers to see and understand the relationship between television and perception, especially with regards to the public's "wants." If society is mostly uninformed or misinformed, then their desires will be based upon that. Policymakers, in turn, usually bow to the wishes of their constituents. This means that many of our policies could be the result of fabricated problems and incorrect assumptions. This would seem to be an exceedingly hazardous, and potentially disastrous, trend. Representatives, perhaps, should labor to combat such misconceptions rather than capitulating to an uninformed public.

5.5.5 The Public

Society itself could gain from this study as well. Countless people might not recognize that their involvement and belief in television and the media could be influencing their perception of the world. This research could convince some people to look beyond the news, sitcoms, and reality shows to form an opinion. Many would be upset to learn that what they hear and see in the media is incorrect or distorted. In a

post-9/11 society, it is essential that people recognize the value of researching information themselves. The public cannot continue to rely on the media to direct their attitudes and beliefs about the world.

It is up to the public, therefore, to demand accuracy from the media or to acknowledge that a great deal of the information obtained from such sources is unreliable or sensationalized. Accepting media content at face-value has resulted in countless instances of moral panic among the public – where the public latched on to a report from the media and blew so-called “dangers” out of proportion. Were people to better understand the media and how it works, it is likely some effects of moral panic could be reduced.

Also, further research in this area could benefit minority and marginalized groups of the public. When looking at research on mainstreaming, it seems likely that it could work in reverse. That is, if television represents the dominant views of society and the public embrace conformity as a result, is it not possible that if television showed programming that rewarded eccentricity, then society would in turn begin to adopt those same eccentric ideas? If this is true, it could be of interest to groups whose cultural, religious, or individual beliefs differ from the dominant views of society. Perhaps television could be a medium of tolerance, progressiveness, and open-mindedness.

5.5.6 Higher Education Institutions

Institutions of higher education, specifically those with communications programs, could benefit from this study in that it exhibits several limitations in the education of the future media. First, communication students reported very little

exposure to terrorism in the media. Since terrorism is so relevant to society now, it seems odd that the subject was not of interest to these students. This reflects back on the research of Lepre and Luther (2007), which indicated that few journalism programs in the United States had any formal education on terrorism.

It is essential, therefore, that institutions of higher learning address this shortcoming. This research can help them understand the dangers associated with neglecting the training of future members of the media in terrorism. It cannot be treated as any other disaster, because it is not. The theories, reasons, and results for terrorism are all vastly different from those of crime and disasters. Due to the potential for the media to unintentionally aid terrorists in their causes, this deficit must be addressed and remedied.

5.6 Limitations

It is important to note that, although the design and analysis were constructed to the highest possible standards, several limitations were present. First, there is the inherent limitation to survey research: Participants can fabricate their answers. Because this study involved a one-time survey with no pretest or posttest to follow up, reliability is limited (Patten, 2005).

Additionally, this research is limited by the fact that it was conducted on a limited group – undergraduate students at the University of Texas at Arlington. As a result, the findings are only generalizable to the departments analyzed within that university (Patten, 2005). College students are not an accurate representation of the

general public, and therefore, their responses can not be assumed to be those of the general public.

Finally, there is always the possibility of some unknown factor skewing the results. The author attempted to combat this phenomenon by adjusting a survey instrument that had been used in the past (Rubin et al., 2003). Even so, such a possibility must be mentioned.

5.7 Future Research

As a preliminary investigation, this study could provide a basis for multiple experiments in the future. Most important would be a follow-up study on the relationship between frequent exposure to terrorism in the media and fear of terrorism. Such a relationship was supported in previous research (Rubin et al., 2003), and it should be revisited to determine if it continues. Additionally, seeing the differences between that relationship for CRCJ and communications students could be enlightening. Further, any changes in this relationship over time should be explored.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the media has had indirect influence over some United States policies. This is worth noting in the wake of terrorism. It seems likely that several current policies are currently in effect as a result of the media's portrayal of terrorism (Mythen & Walklate, 2006). The enhanced fear following the terrorist attacks and media coverage of 9/11 resulted in a reorganization of the government to develop the Department of Homeland Security. The Patriot Act, which allowed for roving wiretaps and sneak-and-peak search warrants among other provisions, (USA Patriot

Act, 2001), might never have passed if the media had not kept the fear and horror of the attacks in the public's minds.

Other further research could be conducted on media exposure and influence on the fear of terrorism among more diverse populations. Most previous research on fear of terrorism has been conducted on undergraduate college students, so more research is certainly needed. Also, additional research is needed regarding the formal education of journalism students on terrorism and terrorist theory. It is essential that these future journalists understand the roles they play in the terrorist cycle and develop possible ways to combat some of the problems.

In addition, it is essential that future studies focus on fear of crime and terrorism as related to other media outlets. As shown in the results of this study, the Internet has become increasingly important to Americans, so television can no longer be considered a person's primary exposure to the media. Furthermore, the current "War on Terrorism" keeps terrorist activity in the back of citizens' minds. Therefore, it is important to continue to have periodic research into the effects of prolonged exposure to terrorist-related materials.

Finally, it is imperative that researchers look at possible differences in the relationships between (1) the media and fear of crime and (2) the media and fear of terrorism. Any such differences should be studied in order to gain an understanding of how best to combat the mission of terrorists and the fear of the American public.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Please circle the answer that best corresponds with your response.

1. How many hours of television do you usually watch in a typical week?

None Less than 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 More than 7

2. How many hours do you usually listen to the radio in a typical week?

None Less than 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 More than 7

3. How many hours do you usually spend on the Internet in a typical week?

None Less than 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 More than 7

4. How many hours do you usually spend reading a newspaper or news magazine in a typical week?

None Less than 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 More than 7

How often in the past week have you seen, heard, or read about each of the following subjects?

5. Airplane and airport safety

Never *Very often*
1 2 3 4 5

6. The hunt for bin Laden

Never *Very often*
1 2 3 4 5

7. Terrorist suspects

Never *Very often*
1 2 3 4 5

8. Homeland security

Never *Very often*
1 2 3 4 5

9. Terrorist networks in and out of Afghanistan

Never *Very often*
1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

10. Bioterrorist attacks on water supplies, smallpox, etc.

Never *Very often*
1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

11. Potential terrorist targets

Never *Very often*
1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

12. Kidnapping and hostages

Never *Very often*
1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

How much is each response like your own reason for using media outlets (TV, radio, Internet, magazines, etc)?

13. Because it relaxes me.

Not at all like *Exactly like*
1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

14. Because it allows me to unwind.

Not at all like *Exactly like*
1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

15. So I can forget about work, school, or other things.

Not at all like *Exactly like*
1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

16. So I won't have to be alone.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1 2 3 4 5

17. Because it makes me feel less lonely.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1 2 3 4 5

18. So I can talk with other people about what's on.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1 2 3 4 5

19. Just because it's there.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1 2 3 4 5

20. Because it is a habit, just something I do.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1 2 3 4 5

21. Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1 2 3 4 5

22. Because it entertains me.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1 2 3 4 5

23. Because it's enjoyable.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1 2 3 4 5

24. Because it amuses me.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1

2

3

4

5

25. Because it helps me learn things about myself or others.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1

2

3

4

5

26. So I learn things I didn't know before.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1

2

3

4

5

27. So I can learn about terrorism.

Not at all like

Exactly like

1

2

3

4

5

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements in regard to your habits?

28. It is important for me to see my favorite shows.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

29. I plan my evenings around the shows I watch on television.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

30. I select the programs I watch every evening.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

31. I get very involved with the stories I see.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

32. I often think about the programs I watch.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

33. When I watch TV or listen to the radio,

a. I'm often doing housework.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

b. I change the station when news briefs come on.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

c. I'm often reading a book or magazine.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

34. When I read newspapers or magazines or surf the Internet,

a. I'm often eating.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

b. I'm often talking to friends about what I read or other things.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements in regard to your perceptions?

35. Television presents things as they really are in life.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

36. Television lets me see how other people live.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

37. If I see something on TV, I can't be sure it really is that way.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

38. Television lets me see what happens in other places as if I were really there.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

39. Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interests from bad luck happenings.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

40. Although I might have good ability, I will not be given leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

41. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

42. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

43. Getting what I want requires please those people above me.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

44. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on the other driver.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

45. When I get what I want, it's usually because I'm lucky.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

46. People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

47. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

48. I am usually able to protect my personal interests.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

49. Whether I get into a car accident is mostly a matter of luck.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

50. When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

51. I fear being a victim of a terrorist attack.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

52. I believe my community is at risk of a terrorist attack.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

53. I believe I am at risk of being a victim of a terrorist attack while on campus.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

54. I believe another terrorist attack on U.S. soil is imminent.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

55. I feel more protected from a terrorist attack on campus than off campus.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

56. I feel my community is safer than other communities in the U.S.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

57. I believe the federal government can protect me from terrorist attacks.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1 2 3 4 5

58. I believe the U.S. is safe from future terrorist attacks.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

59. I think the government is doing everything it can to protect U.S. citizens from terrorism.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

60. I think most people can be trusted.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

61. I think most people generally try to be helpful.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

62. I believe most people would try to take advantage of me.

Agree strongly

Disagree strongly

1

2

3

4

5

Please fill out the following information about yourself.

63. Have you ever been a victim of crime?

Yes

No

64. Has anyone in your family ever been a victim of crime?

Yes

No

65. Have you had a friend who was a victim of crime?

Yes

No

66. Do you know anyone who was a victim of crime?

Yes

No

67. What is your age?

Less than 18 *18-24* *25-31* *32-38*
39-45 *46-52* *53-59* *60 or over*

68. What is your gender?

Male *Female*

69. Which best describes your race/ethnicity?

White *Black* *Hispanic* *Native American*
Asian or Pacific Islander *Other* _____

70. What is your major?

CRCJ *ADVT* *BCMNI* *CTEC* *COMS*
JOUR *PREL* *Other* _____

71. What is your student status?

Freshman *Sophomore* *Junior* *Senior*

72. How best can your town or city be classified?

Rural *Suburban* *Urban*

73. Are you registered at UTA as an international student?

Yes *No*

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Renee Bradshaw received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2004. She is a member of Alpha Phi Sigma, the National Criminal Justice Honor Society, and served as her university's graduate chapter vice-president from 2007-08. Her research interests include terrorism, gender issues, domestic violence, and the media. Ms. Bradshaw will begin working on her doctorate in Public Administration in fall 2008. She plans to become a professor after obtaining her degree.