

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION IN MEDIA AND REAL LIFE

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Abstract

The general public and members of the media have expressed an interest in the body of legislation. This is the result of previous and current interactions with members of the law enforcement community, criminals, and innocent people. This is not an unusual occurrence in the world of criminal justice; in the past, people who were wrongfully accused and then cleared have been executed, as have others who were falsely charged and then cleared. On both sides of the system, there have been outstanding and less-than-great performances.

The media regularly exaggerates or minimizes the gravity of police-involved incidents. This information is critical to the purpose of this research in various ways, particularly in connection to the alleged CSI Effect. Is it true that CSI and other forensic material displayed on television and in the media use real or false effects or a combination of the two? The facts and data presented in this abstract will be the topic of additional, and in-depth research.

Keywords: DNA, CSI, forensic scientist, media, social media, jurors, judges, lawyers, courts

Introduction

Television shows that attempt to depict the job of a crime scene investigation team usually present an exaggerated and inadequate view of their work. It takes time, expert scientific disciplines, and research methodologies to correctly identify and correlate a specific piece of evidence to a suspect. Despite the widespread belief that scientific theories are the most reliable sources of knowledge, people continue to investigate scientific hypotheses. Human error, which may or may not be foreseen, is thus always a possibility. A computer is used the majority of the time when matching fingerprints are presented on television. After performing a visual search of

a database to verify if they match, the computer prints two prints on top of one another.¹

Matching is done by hand in the real world and requires precise attention to detail. Although it is widely known that no two fingerprints are identical, there is still much scepticism about this. Despite the fact that fingerprint technology has been around for almost a century, no precise scientific research has been conducted to verify that a fingerprint is unique and cannot be replicated. This research would be required to back up the assertion.

There must be multiple similarities in order to find a match, thus an investigator would draw on both their own expertise and experience. Many people used to believe that a match required seven to ten, or even fifteen, points of similarity. Because there are fewer matching points, the information is more likely to be erroneous, making it impossible to draw conclusions solely from it. If only a small portion of the fingerprint is missing, the expert must “fill in the blanks” and “take a leap of faith” to determine whether there is a match. This adds another layer of complexity.²

Other matching techniques, such as bite marks and hair follicles, are beginning to exhibit a similar pattern. Due to a lack of evidence, several people have been wrongfully convicted and even executed. Surprisingly, neither the judge nor the jury is considered subject-matter experts; so, they must rely on expert testimony provided by forensic teams, medical specialists, and scientists. Due to the possibility of human error and the lack of corroborating scientific data, such testimony is not currently considered to be 100% accurate. It has also been established that people are cognitively influenced to take a particular course of action due to an unconscious bias. This frequently happens in relation to the facts of the case, particularly when the evidence appears to point in specific people or directions. The scientific approach is said to be correct because it has not been contested for a long time. Even if the wrongdoings had been committed for a long time and there was no evidence to refute them, one of the judges made the fairly true observation that time does not make a wrong right. The scientific method has been considered to be valid in this case because it has not been disproved over a long period of time.

¹Baskin, Deborah R and Ira Sommers B. “Crime-Show-Viewing Habits and Public Attitudes Toward Forensic Evidence: The CSI-Effect Revisited.” *The Justice System Journal* 31.1 (2010): 97-113. Print.

²Cole, Simon A and Rachel Dioso-Villa. “Investigating the CSI Effect: Media and Litigation Crisis in Criminal Law.” *Stanford Law Review* 61.6 (2009): 1335-1373. Print

Contrary to popular belief, forensic science investigation (CSI) is not as precise or flawless as previously thought. Jurors and judges are now aware that ostensibly scientific forensic evidence cannot be trusted.

Crime Scene Evidence Transfer in Real Life vs. TV Shows

Because forensics and crime shows are so prevalent on television, many viewers believe they have seen everything there is to know about investigating crime scenes. The CSI effect is a common example of this phenomenon.

Working in the industry, on the other hand, can only alert you of the significant differences between how crime scenes are handled in Hollywood and the real world. This is especially true when evidence is transferred during a criminal inquiry. Despite the fact that watching Law & Order and CSI is entertaining, there are certain ways in which television crime scene work differs from actual police work.

Time Discrepancies in Crime Scene Processing

One of the most noticeable differences between real crime scenes and those presented on television is the time it takes to evaluate the evidence. The results of evidence testing are usually broadcast on television right afterwards. This is done to placate the audience, who are already quite interested in the results.³

It may take many weeks for these forensic testing at a crime scene to be processed before results are available. In the case of DNA samples, for example, dozens of hours of laboratory work are typically required, and the samples taken may not always generate a match if handled poorly or are insufficient.

Chain of Custody Procedures

There is no chain of custody documentation or recording in television programs depicting the processing of crime scenes, which upsets individuals who work in this industry. This is one of the most important factors. Despite the fact that establishing a chain of custody is critical when investigating a crime scene, media representations frequently gloss over or overlook this concept. It's not fun to see a chain of custody unfold on television. The use of secure evidence bags and

³Durnal, Evan W. "Crime Scene Investigation (As Seen on TV)." *Forensic Science International* 199.1-3 (2010): 1-5. Web.

chain of custody documents, on the other hand, is one of the most effective strategies for winning a case and imprisoning convicted perpetrators.

Crime Scene Evidence Technology

Despite recent increases in both quality and utility, the possibilities of crime scene evidence technology remain confined. Many television viewers are enticed to the idea that with today's technology, anything is possible and that technological solutions are required to solve any challenging problem.

On the other hand, individuals frequently have misconceptions about what technology is capable of, how wide it may be, and how decisive forensic science can be. This is as a result of watching television shows. In fact, using technology to manage crime scenes isn't always as exciting as it appears in the movies, especially when dealing with mundane activities that don't provide the best results.

Job Duties for Crime Scene Processing

The protagonists of television shows frequently play “Jacks” or “Jills” of all trades who are skilled in all aspects of evidence gathering, investigation, and interrogation. This is because these “Jacks” and “Jills” of various skill levels control all aspects of these roles. Yet, the vast majority of American jurisdictions do not operate in this manner. It is nearly impossible to complete everything at once since investigating crime scenes and assisting with their processing necessitate the participation of a large number of professionals, each of whom plays an important role. Neither crime scene investigators nor police officers, for example, are frequently involved in direct criminal investigations or evidence processing.⁴

The correlation between the need for forensic evidence in court and the increase in crime-related programs

In order to analyse the extent to which the content of these television episodes has influenced jurors' expectations, it is critical to examine the relationship between the emergence of crime-themed television shows and the demand for forensic evidence in court proceedings. Baskin and Sommers' study, “Crime Show Viewing Habits and Public Attitudes Toward Forensic

⁴Hughes, Thomas and Megan Magers. “The perceived impact of crime investigation shows on the administration of justice.” *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 14.3 (2007): 259-276. Print.

Evidence”, was published Because there is empirical evidence to back this assertion, the authors argue that jurors' viewing of crime shows has a stronger impact on their decisions than pre-trial emotions.

The study's main purpose was to see if crime plays or other factors influence how trustworthy people interpret forensic evidence in comparison to other sorts of evidence. The authors concluded that the use of forensic evidence has grown over time.⁵

The poll's findings demonstrate that respondents had varying degrees of trust in the dependability and authenticity of various types of proof and testimony. Scientific evidence was given far more weight than other types of evidence, such as witness testimony. By far the most popular method for obtaining scientific confirmation was DNA testing. Then, in that order, the police testimony, the testimony of a medical expert, and the fingerprints were presented. The overwhelming majority of replies suggested that neither the injured party's nor any witnesses' evidence would be admissible at trial.

According to the review's findings, the majority of respondents did not believe that the presence of DNA in an assault case was critical. Even without this particular piece of evidence, the prosecution's case was strong. Nonetheless, assault litigants are more likely than murder responders to be found culpable in the absence of physical proof. This is because rape is a more serious offence.⁶

According to a bivariate study of the overview, the level of influence is determined by numerous distinct metrics. This means that numerous factors influence how CSI affects a person's life. Among these issues are the prevalence of television shows with a criminal theme, as well as variations in race, nationality, and sexual orientation. For example, a substantial proportion of white people are more likely to believe a police officer's testimony and fingerprint evidence than any other type of evidence.

On the other hand, if a forensic investigation reveals insufficient evidence, local white people are less likely to convict a murderer. In most cases, white people believe the law and the legal

⁵Mancini, Dante E. “The CSI Effect Reconsidered: Is It Moderated by Need for Cognition?” *North American Journal of Psychology* 13.1 (2011): 155-174. Print.

⁶Mann, Michael. “The CSI Effect: Better Jurors Throughout Television and Science?” *Buffalo Public Interest Law Journal* 24 (2005-2006): 211-237. Print.

system more easily and naturally than forensic science. This is not the case for women in academia or in general. Most highly educated individuals and women who stated their thoughts showed scepticism towards eyewitness testimony.

Respondents who supplied a narrative of being a victim of crime were more likely to discount medical expert testimony than those who did not. Among highly educated persons, the most reliable sorts of evidence were forensic evidence, fingerprints, and police officer identification. Individuals with court expertise were more inclined to agree that medical evidence was more reliable than police evidence.

The amount of time participants spent viewing crime-themed television was found to have a significant impact on their judgments of the accuracy of scientific truths.

The study's findings indicate that scientific evidence is the most trustworthy type of proof. Furthermore, research confirms the theory that the number of crime dramas jurors see has a major influence on their interest in hearing testimony. Finally, crime-themed television shows have a direct impact on the general public's and jurors' attitudes and opinions toward forensic evidence.

The 'CSI effect' effects

In their paper "Investigating the CSI Effect", Cole and Villa investigate the following topics: Dramatizations of criminal investigations, according to the media and those involved in the current crises in criminal law litigation, delay decision-making. The "CSI effect" has various consequences, regardless of whether a person is a jury, a prosecutor, a defence attorney, a television producer, or a member of the general public. CSI has a different impact on each of these people.⁷

Citizens, according to Hughes and his colleagues in their essay "The Perceived Impact of Crime Scene Investigation Shows on the Administration of Justice", try to hold law enforcement authorities accountable for their mistakes. This assertion will be used to back up the previous one. The parties' primary purpose is to meet the requirements of the jury. The sum of these effects is referred to as the "CSI effect" effect by the authors. Finally, the bulk of court decisions

⁷Trask, Tara. "The 'CSI Effect': Popular Culture's Effect on Civil Juries." *ABA Section of Litigation Annual Conference*, 2007. Print.

reflects CSI's impact on the criminal justice system.

The role of the media and “Junk science”

Mann stated in his article “The CSI Effect: Better Science and Television Judges” The media is to blame for jurors' skewed expectations, which jeopardize the court system's legitimacy. Hughes proposed that television could influence cognitive expectancies. This sentence demonstrates support for the claim. The amount of time jurors spends viewing criminal cases on television correlates with their exposure to crime and courtroom proceedings. They claim that getting fingerprints may be done in under ten minutes.

The jury, on the other hand, feels that each scene will offer genetic evidence from the culprit. Mann goes on to explain that another reason these shows are unrealistic is that gathering evidence takes a significant amount of time, and evidence is not always instantly accessible at the scene of the crime.

In conclusion, the crimes have been solved and the perpetrator has been found guilty. These are only 45 minutes long. Mann also emphasizes the difficulty for the prosecution and jury in meeting the new standards required by courtroom theatrics. The prosecution is under intense pressure to submit evidence that meets both legal and “Hollywood” standards.

The Robber's study “Blinded by Science: The Social Evolution of Reality in Measurable TV Programming and Its Effect on Criminal Jury Preliminaries” takes a similar stance. This point of view is investigated in Robbers in regard to forensic television programs. The author contends that a significant portion of criminal laws is misinterpreted or misrepresented, depending on the emphasis placed on them by television producers. In contrast, she claims that the media has influenced both the public and the jury.

Regardless of the agency's capabilities, Robbers believes that juries want the same amount of evidence in a courtroom as they see on television, and they want it quickly. Based on these allegations, the media has been blamed for the unfavourable changes in the legal system. This explains why the CSI impact addresses a threat to the legal system.⁸

Mann analyses the evolution of the law over time to show how the media led to the emergence of the claimed “CSI effect”. He argues that in the past, criminals could bully or buy less-skilled

⁸Stevens, D. (2011). Media and criminal justice. Sudbury, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett Pub.

prosecutors into dropping their accusations. When the threat to the administration of justice from this trend intensified, the government utilized forensic science in an attempt to modernize the legal system. But the jurors did not readily accept this type of evidence.

To persuade the general public of the relevance of scientific facts, the government employed a range of media-based strategies. Notwithstanding their success, these activities cannot be compared to the influence that crime-focused television programs have on jurors' decisions. Mann says that as a result of “the little time allocated to a single episode of a television show, as well as the public's desire for scientific answers to arrive immediately and riddles to be answered cleanly”, a picture of forensic science that could not be further from reality is the result.

The author makes no criticisms of the amount of information made available to the public by crime programs. Increasing knowledge, on the other hand, does not imply harming an organization that promotes the application of scientific information in real-world situations. Jurors today are unable to recollect watching television for the sole purpose of entertainment. In actuality, reproducing well-known story arcs based on real-world events that appeal to the audience is a lucrative financial potential for some television producers.

For example, in the trial of Oklahoma bomber Terry Nichols, a potential juror told the court that the defendant was guilty because Timothy McVeigh, another accused person, had been convicted of a related crime. This jury claimed that Terry Nichols committed the same crime as Timothy McVeigh, who was convicted of it. After some time had passed, the judge and the court realized that the jury's verdict was based on their readings of a well-known crime novel, rather than their thoughts of the McVeigh trial.

Another example is a mother who was cleared of drowning her five children due to the evidence of a responsible adult. The witness claimed that an earlier episode of the popular television show *Law & Order* featured a scene very similar to this one. In one case, the accused were found not guilty after claiming they were insane. Similarly, according to the defendant's psychiatrist in court, the mother lacked mental capacity.⁹

As this example indicates, even highly educated people can struggle to tell the difference

⁹Smith, S. M., Stinson, V., & Party, M. W. (2011). Fact of fiction? The myth and reality of the CSI Effect. *Court Review*, 47, 4–7.

between fiction and reality. Mann makes his point with a hypothetical question: How can we criticize a judge for being confused if a specialist couldn't tell the difference between fact and fiction?

According to the author, the CSI effect causes “junk science” to appear. This implies that, despite its dependability, scientific data may occasionally contain errors. Using Martha Stewart as an example, this principle might be highlighted. The prosecution called an expert witness who had been convicted of perjury in the past. Others were bewildered in another public instance as to why they had to wait two months for DNA results when the procedure at the crime scene only took a few hours.

The fact that forensic scientists work for a variety of institutions calls the credibility of their judgments into question. In each instance, the scientist has the choice of working for either the prosecution or the defence. Depending on the client, researchers may adopt the client's attitude as their own when working on a client's task. This demonstrates that scientists may be able to manipulate or skew data to support their conclusions. It's unsettling to think that changing the evidence on which the jury relies could influence its decision.

Conclusion

Law enforcement and detectives have profited significantly from advances in media technology. The evolution of media over time has increased its importance in our daily lives. Despite the fact that the media has many positive effects, including positive effects on populations and favourable benefits for law enforcement, crime scenes have been covered by media outlets all over the world. Partnerships with various media outlets have evolved as a result of the emergence of police forces and law enforcement agencies, altering how information is conveyed. Law enforcement can now easily obtain data on crime statistics, personnel, and other social demographics in the area being policed, thanks to the introduction of worldwide communication channels such as the internet. This enables them to take the necessary steps to reduce crime in the community or region.

Law enforcement has been able to take the necessary steps to reduce crime in the community or region as a result of this information. To reduce the effects of the CSI debate, it is vital to raise public awareness and regulate media coverage judiciously. This should also include measures to

educate the public and academia about the media's ability to impact public opinion. Further research on diverse media management approaches is needed to undertake effective criminal investigations. To further enhance inquiry methodologies, the news media and the investigative community must work together more closely.