

[Dartmouth College](#)

Between TV and Reality:

**A Meta-Analysis of Literature Examining the Validity of the CSI Effect and its Impact on
Trial Decision-Making**

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INTRODUCTION

On October 6, 2000, the crime drama *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* premiered in the United States with 17.3 million viewers (De Moraes, 2000). By 2009, the show had earned itself the title of “most watched drama in the world” with more than 73.8 million viewers worldwide (Andreeva, 2010). Its influence expanded as it prompted a host of *CSI* offshoots and inspired the creation of similar forensic dramas. According to anecdotal evidence from attorneys and judges, the popularity of the crime drama genre of television had another unintended consequence: the CSI effect. The CSI effect describes the idea that *CSI* and other similar crime dramas can lead juries to inflate the importance of forensic evidence in criminal trials, impeding their ability to fairly assess a case and arrive at a just verdict. Mainstream news outlets, including articles from *Time* and *USA Today*, began disseminating public awareness of the effect in the early 2000s. At a time when television, movies, social media, and other forms of entertainment media are both readily available and overwhelming in number, the CSI effect seems intuitive. Yet, academic studies on the effect’s validity have, by and large, concluded against it.

This paper conducted a meta-analysis of 10 studies from the existing academic literature examining the validity of the CSI effect. Studies ranged from 2006 — two years after the *USA Today* article popularized the phenomenon — to 2021, one of the most recent studies available. The hypotheses, methodologies, and conclusions of each of the studies were analyzed, placed on a timeline, and compared to those empirical studies that preceded and/or followed it. References to previous research cited in the literature review as well as questions posed by the researchers in the discussion and limitations sections were also noted. From the analysis conducted, this paper contends that, though there may be some validity to a pro-defense CSI effect, the idea that viewership of crime dramas and related media impacts juror deliberation is, as a whole, invalid.

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This paper also extends discussion of the CSI effect beyond validity. Despite the general academic consensus that the CSI effect is, at most, a minimal source of concern and more likely nonexistent, several empirical studies on the public perception of the CSI effect indicated that members of the public continue to believe that the CSI effect exists. These studies further concluded that the general public tends to receive their information about the CSI effect from the media. In order to explore this potential connection between public perceptions and media representation of the CSI effect, the paper conducted a small-scale content analysis of several news articles, including early news coverage published by *CBS News* and more recent articles by *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*. The results of this analysis were synthesized alongside other content analyses and key findings on public perception of the CSI effect. Taken collectively, these results indicate a disparity between the academic characterization of the CSI effect and that of news media — the news media outlets tended to portray the effect dramatically and as a legitimate problem — while also laying the foundation for an investigation into CSI effect as a social construct.

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In the context of a media environment continually dominated by crime and legal dramas, the question of the CSI effect's validity — and public awareness of its lack thereof — is increasingly imperative. The paper will aid in that awareness as it crafts a more comprehensive portrait of the CSI effect. By concluding whether there is credence to what the CSI effect suggests and examining the potential ramifications of media on jury deliberation, this paper aims to publicize the potential threat media viewership poses to the functionality of the justice system.

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DEFINING THE CSI EFFECT

The history of the term "CSI effect" is not straightforward. It initially referred to the idea that viewing *CSI* raises juror expectations for forensic evidence in criminal trials, making it more

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difficult for prosecutors to obtain convictions. However, as research surrounding the effect developed and further phenomena were observed and associated with the CSI effect, the term's definition expanded. Within the academic literature, the CSI effect has been defined in three ways. The following section will explore each of these definitions in greater detail.

1. Anti-prosecution/pro-defense argument

The definition first linked to the term "CSI effect" and, thus, the one studied by many of the studies conducted in the early years of investigation (early 2000s) holds that "CSI creates unreasonable expectations on the part of jurors, making it more difficult for prosecutors to obtain convictions" (Podlas, 2006, p. 433). Prosecutors complain that those jurors who watch CSI and other similar shows expect the cases to reflect the representation of forensic evidence and procedure presented to them in the shows. When the prosecution's presentation deviates from the script — when the collection of evidence does not align with the show, when scientific evidence is inconclusive, or, more broadly speaking, when there is a lack of definitive forensic evidence — jurors are less likely to convict (Podlas, 2006, p. 434). The prosecution might then struggle to meet increased expectations that have effectively raised an already-high bar in criminal trials (beyond a reasonable doubt¹); the juror is more likely to favor the defense and acquit the defendant.

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Support for this definition of the CSI effect has been predominantly anecdotal. A 2005 study conducted by the Maricopa County Attorney's Office surveyed 102 prosecutors with jury trial experience and found a "significant CSI influence in Maricopa County juries" (Maricopa County Attorney's Office, 2005, pp. 4-5). The study noted that 74% of prosecutors reported they

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¹ the legal standard of proof requiring a high degree of certainty – not absolute certainty – to convict a defendant in a criminal trial. The evidence must be strong enough such that a reasonable person would not doubt their decision. In all trials, the burden of proof rests with the prosecution/plaintiff.

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have prosecuted a case “in which the jury “expected to be presented with scientific evidence””

([Maricopa County Attorney’s Office, p. 6](#)). It further cited at least [five](#) criminal cases in which

this expectation has been demonstrated (and resulted in refusal to convict), [insisting that](#)

measures be [implemented](#) to ensure defense attorneys do not “use the CSI Effect to sway juries”

([Maricopa County Attorney’s Office, 2005, p. 10](#)). Interestingly, this study was conducted

following the [publicization](#) of the CSI effect [via](#) such mainstream news outlets as *Time magazine*

and *USA Today*. [Given the popularity of the CSI effect in the news, the](#) timing of the survey, and

[the prosecutors’ opinions presented in the survey raise](#) further questions as to the [validity of the study’s conclusions](#).

2. [The inverse CSI effect: anti-defense/pro-prosecution argument](#)

Though the anti-prosecution/pro-defense [definition](#) of the CSI effect is considered the most

widely known, another [definition](#), ironically converse to the first, emerged from [investigation](#)

[into the CSI effect](#). Podlas’s 2006 study, the first empirical study of the CSI effect, [introduced](#)

the possibility of this [inverse CSI effect](#), defining it as “the way that *CSI* elevates scientific

evidence to an unsupported level of certainty thus bolstering the prosecution’s case” ([Podlas,](#)

[2006, p. 437](#)). From this perspective, science is represented as virtually infallible in *CSI*-like

shows, potentially promoting a blind trust in forensic evidence. Defense attorneys fear that this

[belief will bias juries in favor of the prosecution, particularly in cases where they present](#)

[scientific evidence](#), and [leave](#) jurors unwilling or less likely to consider the limitations of

[forensics \(e.g. the compromising of evidence via human error, faulty evidence collection, etc.\)](#).

Roughly half ([4/10](#)) of the empirical studies [analyzed in](#) this paper included the [inverse CSI](#)

effect as part of their investigation.

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3. Interest in forensic science

The last definition of the CSI effect “refers to the way that the CSI television program popularizes the field of criminal forensics” (Podlas, 2006, p. 442). This area of study explores the possibility that crime procedural shows and crime dramas have broadened public awareness of forensic science, increased laypeople interest in forensic science, and motivated more students to explore criminal forensics as a career. Some studies have observed an increase in funding to the forensic sciences, increased interest in jury duty, and an expansion of educational programs centered around the investigatory sciences (Podlas, 2006, p. 442). Though this spillover effect remains an interesting notion, particularly in an era of continued fascination with crime and justice, in order to narrow the scope of the research, the paper will only address studies concerning the pro-defense and pro-prosecution aspects of the CSI effect.

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META-ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Among the large body of academic literature relevant to examination of the CSI effect, a number of studies investigate the empirical basis of the CSI effect. The following meta-analysis evaluates the conclusions of ten of these studies, particularly as they pertain to the validity of the CSI effect and what impacts, if any, viewing crime drama television has on juror deliberation.

The consensus among the literature is clear: though there may be some credence to an inverse CSI effect, there is little significant evidence to indicate that the CSI effect as a whole exists. Notably, this conclusion has been long-lasting; doubt has been cast on the CSI effect almost from the moment the term was introduced. Both Podlas (2006) and Shelton et al. (2006), the two earliest — and most foundational — empirical studies in the corpus of literature,

concluded that “there was certainly no statistical relationship between the respondents who specifically watched the CSI program and those who insisted upon some scientific evidence for

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Podlas’s 2006 study was the first empirical study to be conducted on the CSI effect. Particularly contextualized at a time when the only evidence to support the CSI effect was anecdotal and the media had been publicizing the CSI effect through such outlets as *Time* and *USA Today* in the years prior, Podlas situated her study within a void of credible, quantitative research. Her study’s purpose is reflective of its foundational role in the academic literature, aiming to “in the broadest sense possible...test for an anti-prosecution “CSI Effect” (____) by investigating ‘whether the “not guilty” verdicts of frequent viewers of CSI rested on CSI-oriented reasons’ (____). In this purpose, Podlas’s study specifically targets the primary definition of the CSI effect of its time, while also acknowledging the preliminary nature of its findings. Yet Podlas also ensures that her ____ serves as a concrete foundation in other ways. Of all the 3 empirical studies analyzed, hers contains the most clearly defined definitions of the CSI effect. She outlines the presumptions of the CSI effect that must be demonstrated before its existence can be concretely proven. Watching *CSI* is: (1) associated with a tendency to hold specific beliefs consistent with the images and values seen on that program; (2) that those beliefs will pertain to the presence of forensic evidence in every case and its necessity for conviction; and (3) that this will lead CSI viewers, when jurors, to wrongfully render “not guilty” verdicts on these grounds. The methodology of Podlas’s study was relatively narrow, and as she acknowledges in the limitations section, flawed. She surveyed 254 jury eligible college students on their television and CSI viewing habits. Her study, which ... [1]

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conviction” (Shelton et al., 2006, p. 362). In both studies, “the empirical evidence does not support any anti-prosecution “CSI Effect” (Podlas 461). This pattern of discrediting the CSI effect continues in nearly all of the following studies. Brewer & Ley (2010), Cole & Dioso-Villa (2007), and Hayes-Smith & Levett (2011) all “[echo] previous accounts that failed to find evidence of an anti-prosecution CSI effect in a jury decision-making context” (Brewer & Ley, 2010, p. 109). As Hayes-Smith & Levett concluded “this study appears to be yet another study indicating a mostly null finding of the proposed CSI effect,” their word choice — “yet another study,” “mostly null” — highlights the overwhelming number of academic studies that found the CSI effect invalid (Hayes-Smith & Levett, 2011, p. 43). The two most recent studies, conducted in 2020 and 2021 respectively, are more precise and concretely positioned against the existence of a CSI effect. Klentz & Chapman (2020) determined several conclusions:

1. that there was no relationship between crime television viewing and guilt judgements
2. viewing level was unrelated to the mention of forensic evidence as an influence for guilt judgements, and
3. high viewership did not result in more frequent mentions of missing forensic evidence in jury deliberation (Klentz & Chapman, 2020, pp. 564-566).

With data that indicates “26% of high viewers still found the defendant guilty in the no DNA control” and “less than half of the mock jurors mentioned forensic evidence as influential,” the study not only serves as “another indication to question confidence that the CSI Effect reliably occurs” but proof that *CSI* might not even play much of a role in jury deliberation at all (Klentz & Chapman, 2020, p. 565). Ling et al. (2021)’s conclusions point to the same lack of support; ‘belief in the accuracy of forensic TV shows did not moderate the relationship between the presence of forensic evidence and verdict...there was no interaction effect between belief in the

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accuracy of forensic TV shows and presence of forensic evidence for rape...these results provide evidence against the presence of a “CSI effect” (Ling et al., 2020, p. 146). Ling et al.’s conclusion, with its use of blunt, straightforward statements, conveys a sense of solidification; all of its evidence indicates the nonexistence of a CSI effect.

By the time all of the ten studies analyzed in this meta-analysis were conducted, ideas of a pro-prosecution CSI effect — otherwise known as the “inverse CSI effect” — had already begun to circulate. In their conclusions, Podlas (2006), Cole & Dioso-Villa (2007) as well as Brewer & Ley (2010) and Hayes-Smith & Levett (2011) noted this possibility. Though these results ultimately provide some support for the pro-prosecution argument, the support is generally minimal and the conclusions inconclusive. Podlas’s study found that a ‘lower proportion of *CSI* viewers rendered “not guilty” verdicts relying on *CSI* reasons,’ hinting at a potential pro-prosecution effect (Podlas, 2006, p. 461). Cole & Dioso-Villa’s analysis of acquittal rates from before and after *CSI* premiered arrived at a similar conclusion. Their data indicated a “remarkably stable” acquittal rate in federal trials preceding and succeeding 2000; however, a sharp drop in acquittals in 2005 — “precisely the time that media frenzy concerning the CSI Effect really kicked in” — offers weak support for the pro-prosecution CSI effect. Brewer & Ley’s and Hayes-Smith & Levett’s conclusions are exceptions amongst these studies. In addition to discrediting the anti-prosecution/pro-defense CSI effect in a jury decision-making context, Brewer & Ley “also [cast] doubt on the notion of a pro-prosecution CSI effect in a such a context” (Brewer & Ley, 2010, p. 109). Hayes-Smith & Levett’s study presented mixed results, with heavy crime drama viewers “less likely than light television viewers to select a guilty verdict in the lower forensic evidence conditions” but “more confident than light crime drama

viewers that the defendant committed the crime in the no forensic evidence condition" (Hayes-Smith & Levett, 2011, p. 43).

There are two notable exceptions to the consensus against the CSI effect: Smith et al. (2007) and Baskin & Sommers (2010). Smith et al. concluded that their empirical evidence supports the existence of a CSI effect. Baskin & Sommers found that "crime-show-viewing habits directly affected a respondent's belief about their willingness to convict without scientific evidence" (Baskin & Sommers, 2010, p. 107). However, these statements should be taken with a grain of salt. Smith et al.'s actual findings indicate that watching crime television shows like CSI are related to the perceived accuracy and reliability of some types of scientific forensic evidence — not a jury's willingness to convict or acquit a defendant, which remains a key element of the CSI effect (Smith et al., 2007, p.192). Baskin & Sommers studied only participants' individual responses to a survey, whether they themselves believed they would convict without scientific evidence. Not only are the individuals' responses speculative, but unlike other studies that conducted jury simulations or studied juror deliberations in a group setting, Baskin & Sommers's study also fails to account for the group dynamics at play in a jury environment. Given that both federal and state criminal trials require a unanimous decision in order to convict a defendant for any non-petty charge, these social dynamics are especially important to consider.

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These results are not to say that *CSI* and other crime drama lack any effect on juries, however; 6 of the 10 studies analyzed indicate some level of effect, though not to the extent that a significant impact on verdicts — such as the CSI effect presumes — can be determined. Shelton et al. (2006) was the first to conclude that "watching *CSI* and related programs may marginally increase the expectation of scientific evidence in certain types of cases," though these increased expectations "did not translate into demands for such evidence as a prerequisite for a

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finding of guilt or innocence,” thus failing to support a CSI effect (Shelton et al., 2006, pp. 358-359). Brewer & Ley (2010), Baskin & Sommers (2010) and Ling et al. (2021) agreed. They noted that, though their conclusions do not support a CSI effect, the data does indicate that viewership can affect “knowledge and beliefs about science and technology” (Brewer & Ley, 2010, p. 109), “potential jurors’ pretrial attitudes and predispositions regarding scientific evidence and testimony” (Baskin & Sommers, 2010, p. 107), and “decisions on guilt and punishment” (Ling et al., 2021, p. 142).

Notably, however, in Shelton et al. (2006)’s study, the increased expectations were not limited to CSI watchers; “almost half of the summoned jurors who were surveyed (46.3 percent) expected the prosecutor to present scientific evidence of some kind in every criminal case” (Shelton et al., 2006, p. 357). As Shelton et al. suggests, then, the CSI effect focuses on too narrow a scope of media; all blame for increased expectations of forensic evidence cannot be laid on one genre of television (Shelton et al., 2006, p. 364). Instead, the study speculated that these demands for scientific evidence stemmed from “broader changes in popular culture related to advancements in both technology and information distribution” — what they called a “tech effect” (Shelton et al., 2006, p. 368). Shelton et al.’s follow-up study, Kim et al. (2006), provided evidence for this possibility. The study found that not only were “jurors’ expectations about scientific evidence...significantly related with their age, race, gender, education, and political views,” CSI-viewers also tended to watch “various other law-, crime-, and criminal justice-related TV programs frequently” (Kim et al., 2006, p. 459). Viewing CSI was then not the only element influencing increased expectations about scientific evidence; “exposure to other relevant sources and materials” may be connected as well (Kim et al., 2006, p. 459). Hayes-Smith & Levett (2011) further corroborated this conclusion, noting that “stronger effects for heavy daily

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viewing for both types of television viewing (general and crime)” (Hayes-Smith & Levett, 2011, p. 42). These conclusions indicate the possibility that — not just viewing of crime television — but viewing television as a whole has “a stronger, more consistent influence on people’s perceptions of their social world (and therefore their perceptions of evidence and verdict)” (Hayes-Smith & Levett, 2011, p. 42).

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE CSI EFFECT IN MEDIA: AN ANALYSIS

As we progress into an age of media prominence, awareness and understanding of the validity of the CSI effect becomes increasingly important. Though the empirical studies examined in this paper were conducted at different times and employed varying methodologies, meta-analysis of their results yielded a consistent conclusion: though there is minimal evidence to support a pro-prosecution CSI effect, the pro-defense argument of the CSI effect is almost assuredly invalid. Yet despite this overwhelming consensus from the academic community, studies conducted on public perceptions of the CSI effect conclude that “the majority of participants believed that watching shows like *CSI* could affect trial outcomes without specifically describing the nature of that effect” (Hayes & Levett, 2013, p. 230).

Hayes & Levett (2013)’s study also found that people’s perceptions of the CSI effect appeared to align with the media, an observation that is perhaps associated with another one of Hayes & Levett’s findings; most participants received their information about the CSI effect from the media (Hayes & Levett, 2013, p. 229). Considering the widespread popularity of the CSI effect in news media, these conclusions are perhaps unsurprising. Between 2002 and 2005, at least five news articles from mainstream news outlets — including *Time* magazine, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and CBS News — were published on the CSI effect. In 2007, the term “CSI effect” was mentioned in the headline or body of at least 416 different news articles (Cole &

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Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 444). Cole & Dioso-Villa (2007) noted that the popularity of the CSI effect as a news story could be attributable to "localization," a phenomenon in which news articles recast local players in relation to such themes as the CSI effect (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 444). Hayes & Levett's conclusions on media viewing in conjunction with the popularization of the CSI effect indicated in Cole & Dioso-Villa's study become problematic when considering how the media characterizes the CSI effect. Indeed, many of the articles Hayes & Levett's participants likely drew upon to form their opinion of the CSI effect were published before the vast majority of comprehensive empirical studies were even conducted. The techniques used to represent the CSI effect in news coverage reflect this lack of scientifically-sound support.

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CBS News, whose website was among the top 20 global news destinations in 2005, published two articles on the CSI effect in early 2005 (Hansell, 2005). The introduction to the articles are impactful, using statistics — "Three nights a week more than 60 million Americans watch the heroes of "CSI" use high-tech tools to catch the crooks. That's millions of potential jurors hooked on forensic science" — and dramatic sentences — "Call it "The CSI Effect" — that sensationalize the subject matter (Nanji, 2005; Dakss, 2005). As news outlets who profit from reader subscriptions and dedicated viewership, these strategies are effective. However, by employing these techniques, the articles contextualized the CSI effect within an environment of drama. They filtered the CSI effect through a lens tinged with exigency, and as news cycles duplicated stories from neighboring media, they made that lens not only highly visible, but significantly impactful on public perception (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 445).

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Yet news media's portrayal of the CSI effect went beyond dramatization; coverage also tended to represent the CSI effect, not as a theory under continued investigation, but as a legitimate threat. The first *CBS News* article wrote that being "hooked" on *CSI* and similar

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forensic science shows “impacts real crime fighters” (Nanji, 2005). The second was phrased similarly: “it seems the popular CBS TV show on crime scene investigators is having an effect on *real-life* jurors. They want a clear trail of evidence, or they won't vote “guilty.”” (Dakss, 2005). Even more recently, a 2023 guest article published in *The New York Times* wrote that “research shows that the show has an impact on the evidence jurors expect to see in order to deliver a guilty verdict in court” (Fox, 2023). In all three of these statements, there is no room for flexibility, no indication that the effect is only a possibility; framed in the articles, the CSI effect legitimately exists, or worse, in the case of *The New York Times* article, is already concretely proven. Cole & Dioso-Villa (2007)’s content analysis corroborates this conclusion, while also noting how this concrete characterization of the CSI effect functioned within an “increasingly alarmist” coverage pattern (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 445). While earlier stories on the CSI effect used terms like “worry” and phrases such as “could undermine cases...,” “these cautious, conditional phrases became declarative assertions of fact” (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 445). What was first depicted as nothing more than a minor source for concern in 2002, “was being reported as a full-fledged social problem by 2005” (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 445).

The lack of awareness as to the CSI effect’s academic discreditation has even impacted legal policy. This past January an article from *The Boston Globe* titled “‘CSI effect’ still a key issue in jury selection” reported that the Supreme Judicial Court ruled in favor of continuing to allow the voir dire² of potential jury members about the CSI effect (Ellement, 2025). The decision was unanimous, noting that “prosecutors have demonstrated the need to root out such bias when choosing juries” (Ellement, 2025). Notably, neither *The New York Times* nor *The*

² the preliminary examination of a witness/juror by counsel to determine their competence, either to testify or serve as a juror

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Some of the confusion around the study of criminology, I believe, is rooted

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Boston Globe 2025 article ¶
Prosecutors can still question possible jurors about the “CSI effect,” the theory that jury members who have watched crime-based fictional television shows are less likely to convict without forensic evidence, the state’s high court ruled Friday ¶

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Boston Globe article — examples of the most recent coverage reporting on the CSI effect — referenced the phenomenon's vast discreditation within the academic community.

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Other studies have previously commented on the implications of this discrepancy. Cole & Dioso-Villa (2007) noted that the CSI effect could be "nothing more than a media phenomenon" (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 463). The study further introduced the idea of "media panic," a concept associated with sociology, "in which the media exaggerates the danger of some supposed social problems" (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 463). In the case of the CSI effect, the media panic would essentially be functioning in reverse, with the media themselves generating "the social phenomenon that is characterized as problematic" (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2007, p. 463). Hayes & Levett (2013)'s preliminary literature review on the CSI effect provides further support for the possible characterization of the CSI effect as a social construct. They noted that this construction was likely made possible by the media: "the media assists in the creation of the public's knowledge regarding crime and justice in part because the average individual is unlikely to have had much contact with the criminal justice system" (Surrette, 2007, as cited in Hayes & Levett, 2013, p. 218). Cole & Dioso-Villa's and Hayes & Levett's conclusions not only relate to the alignment of public perception of the CSI effect with that of media characterization; they propose a possible explanation for the continued public belief in the CSI effect's existence in spite of the academic community's wide discrediting of the phenomenon. Given the preliminary nature of this research, exploring the possibility of the CSI effect as a social construction serves as a promising direction for future study.

CONCLUSION

I'll admit it; when I first heard of the CSI effect, I was inclined to believe it valid. If I hadn't selected the CSI effect as the topic of my paper, hadn't conducted as much in-depth

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¶
CONCLUSION - further research questions¶
- Summarize general consensus¶
- Opportunities for future research: alternate explanations for increased expectations (tech effect, etc.)¶
o Tyler, T.R. (2006). Viewing CSI and the Threshold of Guilt: Managing Truth and Justice in Reality and Fiction. *The Yale Law Journal*, 115(5), 1050-1085. <https://doi-org.dartmouth.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/20455645>

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research as I have, I likely would have continued to maintain this assumption in its existence. After all, if social media consumption impacts attention spans, body image, and other aspects of our perceived social reality, why can't the same be said for TV shows? Is it really too much of a stretch to believe that media could infiltrate our decision-making — even in the courtroom? These questions highlight a central component of what makes the CSI effect so dangerous: it sounds entirely plausible — and yet it isn't. Even after the academic community arrived at a consensus largely discrediting the CSI effect, their conclusions aren't the ones with the greatest public visibility; the news articles that continue to misrepresent the CSI effect are.

In this sense, the CSI effect serves as a cautionary tale: don't believe everything you see. Trusted news sources like *CBS News* and *The New York Times*, whether intentionally or not, can misrepresent the truth. What may at first appear like a legitimate threat to justice may actually be a socially produced phenomenon. The increasing flood of popular media paired with a lack of consistent exposure to academic literature makes it difficult to differentiate fact from fiction. Especially in the courtroom where the lives of real people hang in the balance, it is then our prerogative to ensure our beliefs align with reality such that we as citizens can act as responsible instruments of justice. We must take it upon ourselves to engage more considerately with the media we consume and assume a greater awareness of the effect our perceptions, and by proxy our actions, can have, whether in a courtroom, a voting booth, a school classroom — or beyond.

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Discussion of paper implications in context of modern discourse. What does it say that there continues to be a discrepancy between large-scale academic consensus and popular opinion? What implications does this have? Natural segue from meta-analysis and "tech effect" -- the "broadest" level relevant to this topic

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Helps to contextualize paper within modern age - why is it significant?

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Development of this section also multi-layered. Organization flows from what issue is/what evidence for issue has been found to "case study" of issue via rhetorical analysis to implications of discrepancy. Structure aims to progressively build understanding of WHAT and WHY this observed difference between academic and public opinion is an issue.

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