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Murder She Watched: Does Watching News or Fictional Media Cultivate Fear of Crime?

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AQ: 1

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It has been a long-standing belief that exposure to media depictions of crime can influence fear of crime victimization through cultivation. However, previous research on the topic has been mixed. These issues were investigated in a sample of 3,003 adults in Trinidad. The impact of fictional media, news media, and reality TV as well as perceived crime risk were examined related to perceived fears of crime. Only perceived risk of crime victimization was related to fear of crime. No media variables predicted fear of crime. These results suggest that media exposure is not a primary route through which fear of crime develops.

Public Policy Relevance Statement

For decades, scholars have hypothesized that exposure to crime-themed media could influence viewers' fears of crime. However, prior evidence for this belief has been mixed. In a large sample from the Caribbean, it was found that viewing crime-themed media had little role in promoting fear of crime. This evidence suggests that watching crime-themed media is not related to beliefs about crime.

Keywords: fear of crime, mass media, victimization

Literature Review

Scary portrayals of violence permeate every facet of the Western world. Criminal victimization is depicted in our newspapers and flows from our TV programming—whether it be movies, series, advertisements, or our news shows, both national and local. It is reasonable to hypothesize that some of this must place caution and fear into the minds of its audience. Media exposure to depictions of violent crime, whether in news or fictional media, may have such an effect that audiences would overesti-

mate the frequency of criminal arrests and be unaware of the 25-year downward trend in criminal violence occurring in most industrialized nations (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 1951–2014; van Dijk, van Kesteren, & Smit, 2007). By contrast, depictions of violence on TV appear to be more frequent now than 20 years ago. The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania suggests that rising violence on TV has some relationship with the general fear of crime (Jamieson & Romer, 2014). However, other studies (Ditton et al., 2004; Ferraro, 1995, 1996; Reid & Konrad, 2004; Rountree, 1998; Smith & Hill, 1991; Warr, 1984) find weak or no relationship between TV viewing amounts and a generalized fear of victimization. These inconsistent data suggest that the relationship between TV crime viewing and generalized fear of crime may be more complex than originally hypothesized by early theorists (Gerbner, 1967). It may be that certain types of shows may be more predictive of crime fears than others. Our study aims to provide further evidence regarding the relation-

AQ: 2

AQ: 33 Derek Chadee, University of the West Indies; Sven Smith and Christopher J. Ferguson, Stetson University.

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ship between media, mostly TV viewing, and fear of crime, particularly by examining differences between viewing news media effects, “reality”-based programming and those of fictional media crime shows.

Cultivation Theory and Its Relevance

The most discussed and tested theory regarding the relationship between TV and fear of crime is Cultivation Theory. Although there have been different interpretations of this theory (Potter, 2014), most research treats it as a macro-level system of explanation concerning mass media. This interpretation was introduced by George Gerbner (1967, 1969a, 1969b, 1973), who, along with different partners, conducted a series of empirical tests to determine the strength of cultivation. In 1976, Gerbner and Gross postulated that increases in TV viewing cultivates a greater fear of victimization. Cultivation Theory argues that TV is the most prominent of modern media, and that TV creates a depicted reality that is often different from the actual. Of specific interest to Gerbner and Gross was televised violence’s effects on viewers, particularly their fear levels (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 178). They suggested that the accentuated and repeated images on TV may play a vital role in socialization and development of a skewed perception. Later, Gerbner et al. proposed that there is a “cultivation differential” between the perceptions of light and heavy viewers of TV (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994).

Gerbner and his partners were primarily concerned with the influence that a much broader scope of messages gradually exerted on the public, as people were exposed to media messages in their everyday lives. Gerbner and his partners claimed that there were certain mass-produced meanings that were widespread throughout the entire mass media environment. Concerned with how people would test his theory, he gave direction to future researchers. Cultivation Theory, Gerbner (1973) argued, “begins with the insights of the study of institutions and the message systems they produce, and goes on to investigate the contributions that these systems and their symbolic functions make to the cultivation of assumptions about life and the world” (p. 567). He directed other researchers to naturalistically study the mass

production and rapid distribution of “messages across previous barriers of time, space, and social grouping” to determine how those changes “bring about systematic variations in public message content” (Gerbner, 1969b, p. 124). Amid Gerbner’s suggested ways to measure the institutional and messaging systems of media, and he and his coauthors promoted two main procedures to look for evidence of cultivation’s effect. One procedure was to ask respondents their viewing level and look how this answer corresponded with the respondents’ belief about reality (whether it was closer to TV’s depiction of reality or the actual). His “cultivation differential” (as Gerbner later styled it) compared beliefs between the groups who watched much TV and those who watched less to determine whether heavy viewers had a view of reality more in accord with TV’s distortions (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 23, 1994).

Other media researchers followed suit. Cultivation Theory became one of the most cited theories in the literature considering media and its effects (Bryant & Miron, 2004). By the 1970s, other media scholars were attracted to the idea of cultivation, and within four decades, the cultivation literature grew to well over 500 published studies (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010).

Empirical Support for and Against Cultivation Theory

Despite early support, research regarding Cultivation Theory has often returned null or weak results. After Gerbner’s path-breaking study, other authors quickly questioned outcomes regarding this theory. In efforts to recreate Gerbner’s findings, some scholars interpreted their own results as disconfirmatory of cultivation (Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Hirsch, 1980). Overall, across studies, effects tend to be fairly small. Shanahan and Morgan (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of 97 studies/samples of tests of Cultivation Theory in the two and a half decades that followed Gerbner (1967) and found that the average correlation linking cultivation indicators with TV was equivalent to $r = .1$.

More recently, researchers have tested cultivation theories against other theories or effects that may predict fear. In these tests, Cultivation Theory is found to be weak by comparison (Allen et al., 2007; Banas & Rains, 2010; Han-

sen & Hyunjung, 2011; Paul, Salwen, & Dupagne, 2000; Timmerman et al., 2008; Tukachinsky & Tokunaga, 2013; Wanta & Ghanem, 2007). Although Gerbner claimed that cultivation occurred over the life course (and therefore took time to develop), cultivation differentials were smaller for older, than for the younger, viewers. Similarly, other longitudinal research directed at cultivation effects has found no or weak support for Gerbner's cumulative hypothesis. When an association is found to exist, it is only found in certain subgroups of the population (Hetsroni & Tukachinsky, 2006; Morgan, 1987) such as prior victims of crime.

Despite these findings, many scholars continue to promote the core points of Cultivation Theory and consider moderator variables to determine whether these may increase the theory's strength. Potter, in his critical analysis of the cultivation literature (2014) noted that newer variations on Cultivation Theory have considered perceived reality (Busselle, Ryabolova, & Wilson, 2004; Potter, 1986), transportation (e.g., Bilandzic & Busselle, 2008) and distance (e.g., Bilandzic, 2006; Hetsroni, Elpariach, Kapuza, & Tsfoni, 2007; Van den Bulck, 2003) regarding the relationship between viewer and media. Further, Potter (2014) notes that other researchers have attempted to strengthen Cultivation Theory by combining the principles of this theory with knowledge gap theory (Niederdeppe, Fowler, Goldstein, & Pribble, 2010), the theory of reasoned action (Beullens, Roe, & Van den Bulck, 2011; Nabi & Sullivan, 2001), spiral of silence (Shanahan, Scheufele, Yang, & Hizi, 2004), elaboration likelihood model (Schroeder, 2005; Williams, 2006), and mental models (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2004). Despite such theoretical reasoning, research continued to indicate an inconsistent relationship between TV viewing and being afraid of criminal victimization. Some studies observed no relationship (Gomme, 1986; Hughes, 1980) while other studies found that persons were afraid of victimization outside of their neighborhood but not within (Coleman, 1993; Heath & Petraitis, 1987). Nonetheless, Cultivation Theory, despite inconsistencies in empirical support, is still a dominant paradigm within the social science community.

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Developments of Cultivation Theory

Increasingly, in recent years, scholars have sought to examine the cultivation effects for specific media rather than general TV viewing. For example, some scholars have considered the effect of local and national news or reality-based programming as separate and apart from general programming. Researchers have looked at the effect of news (Chiricos et al., 2000) and newspaper reading (Ditton et al., 2004; Heath, 1984; Lane & Meeker, 2003; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990) on fear of crime. Regarding news sources, local news stands out as the most prominent effector in media when considering the potential for the cultivation of fear. Local news is tailored to the culture of its viewers more than other news shows (Ditton et al., 2004; McManus, 1994) and also emphasizes and makes violence within a community more salient through its programming (Hamilton, 1998; Klite, Bardwell, & Salzman, 1997). Thus, local news may be particularly salient in inducing fear of crime. The effect of national news is not as clear. Whereas some research shows a positive relationship between national news watching and fear of crime, a preponderance of it suggests it does not (Gross & Aday, 2003; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). These mixed findings suggest that national news can have an effect on its viewers but there may be a more complex process through which TV affects the perceptions or expectations of the audience. Researchers have suggested that the effect of national news on the viewer may rely on the viewers' understanding of the depictions and how they relate to their personal locale. In other words, the effect of national news depends on whether crime coverage is locally relevant to the audience—whether it could occur locally (Heath, 1984). If the viewer believes that it could occur locally, then their fear of crime will increase. Others suggest that if a viewer's perceptions of local crime are low, then viewing high levels of violence abroad will make them feel safer (Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). This social-comparison hypothesis suggests that viewers will form judgments of personal risk based on a comparison between perceived crime at the local level and other areas.

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Television Realism and Its Effects on Fear

Review of the larger body of literature beyond fear of crime points to the notion that one's perception of TV realism can impact their fear of crime. The perception that TV constructs are real has been found to directly impact a range of viewer beliefs (Greenwood, 2009; Harrison, 1997; Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010; Niederdeppe, Shapiro, & Porticella, 2011; Taylor, 2005), including beliefs about deviant behavior (Bahk, 2001). Constructs frequently portrayed on TV have been perceived as real (Buselle, 2001), affecting fear of crime levels (Busselle et al., 2004; Potter, 1986). Less clear is how. Some researchers have treated perceived realism strictly as a moderator (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2008) but others have suggested that there may be a reciprocal relationship between fear and perceived realism (Mckinley, 2013). More investigation is needed here.

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Television That Portrays Itself as Real and Effects on Risk Perception

It is important here to address the relationship between fear of crime and risk of victimization. Researchers have treated the terms as synonymous but their "status is quite different in that fear of crime pertains to the emotional sphere, while the roots of perceived risk of crime are mainly cognitive" (Durbow et al., 1979 as explained in Russo et al.). Some scholars have suggested that they may have the same predictors (Rountree & Land, 1996). Despite this, much of the literature explains a real difference between fear and the perception of risk. For example, Russo et al. (2013) argue that fear of crime is a feeling of dread or anxiety about personal safety or about the preservation of personal possessions. Additionally, fear of crime is conceptualized as "an affective—or emotional—response characterized by being afraid, worried and concerned about being victimized" (Ross & Jang, 2000, p. 405). On the other hand, perceived risk of crime, a predictor of fear of crime but also a reaction to crime, is the perception of the probability of being victimized, a cognitive evaluation (Ferraro, 1995; Perkins et al., 1992; Rountree & Land, 1996; Wyant, 2008).

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As noted earlier, viewers perceive and evaluate risk of crime on the basis of information that is available to them (Chadee et al., 2007; Kahneman & Fredrick, 2002). Local news me-

AQ: 13

dia can potentially influence crime beliefs, but this may also be true for "reality" TV, which purports to display real crimes for entertainment purposes. The easier the images of crime occurring are to imagine for the viewer, the more likely they are perceived to occur. Similarly, if images become difficult to imagine, perceived likelihood will decrease (Sherman et al., 2002). Chadee et al. (2007) explains that the degree to which individuals estimate their own likelihood of crime victimization may depend on the availability of similar instances of crime victimization in their local environments that are easy to recall. Both local news media and reality TV may contribute to this phenomenon.

Events will be easy to imagine if they are vivid and relatable (Anderson, 1991). We suggest that "reality" TV is more relatable because of its professed reality. Viewers may perceive of a person on a reality show as more like them and the events that transpire as more available than the counterparts on shows that admit their fictional content. Vivid, crime reality shows may generate in the perceiver a heightened sense of risk of crime. Anecdotally, if an HD TV show concerning gang murder is depicted in such a way that it is easy for the viewer to imagine such a "real" event occurring to them or in their local environment, then perceived risk will increase, driving up the viewer's fear of crime. By contrast, fictional media does not purport to display real events. Such consumers of such media may be quicker to discount these portrayals as inconsequential. Fictional media may be less "available" (Chadee et al., 2007) and as a result, not factor into individuals' perceptions of crime or crime risk. It is conceivable that the more relatable and vivid, the more "real" TV programming is, the more biased a viewer's perceived risk will be, thereby increasing their fear of crime.

AQ: 14

Given these previous findings, it is reasonable to hypothesize that news media, particularly local news, may produce a cultivation effect, though perhaps more on some viewers than others. By contrast, evidence for fictional media effects is less clear. Despite decades of research on media violence, for instance, little consensus has emerged that fictional violence is a particularly strong learning tool either for attitudes or behavior (Quandt et al., 2015). It is reasonable to speculate that this is because the brain may treat fictional media differently than it does

perceived real-life events, learning more from the latter than the former. News media may have more influence than fictional media.

The Current Study

The current study seeks to examine the potential influence of fictional, reality-based and news media on fear of crime among a sample of the general population in the Caribbean. Specifically, we assess the relationship between the news media, crime drama and crime-based reality TV viewing, perceived realism and risk of victimization and fear of crime.

Method

Participants

A stratified random sample of 3,003 respondents was selected from Trinidad, which has a population of about 1.3 million as part of a Fear of Crime Study. Sampling units were selected systematically using an equal probability of selection method (*epsem*). The 2011 Population and Housing Census data with respect to municipality, enumeration district, households and income groups were used as the frame for selecting the sample and the location of households. Enumeration districts were selected in proportion to the population density of each municipality in Trinidad. The sample aimed to be representative of the national population and consisted of 53% females and 47% males and an ethnic composition of 40% East-Indian, 36% African, 23% Mixed persons, an official category, specifically of African and East-Indian decent, 9% Mixed and 1% Caucasian, Syrian/Lebanese, Chinese and other ethnic groups. The age distributions of the sample were 22% 18–29 years, 18% 30–39 years, 15% 40–49 years, 18% 50–59 years, and 27% 60 years or more, with a mean age of 46.44 ($SD = 17.06$). With regards to the marital status of the sample, 34% were single, 40% married, 11% common-law relationships, 8% widowed, 5% divorced and 2% legally separated. Over two thirds of the population received at least secondary school education.

Institutionalized persons residing in places such as boarding houses, hostels, or prisons were excluded. Nonnationals were only included in the survey if they moved to Trinidad

before January 2013. The Last-Birthday Selection method was used to identify respondents, and data were collected from eligible respondents ≥ 18 years via a face-to-face household survey using a standardized questionnaire during the period January to May, 2015. Data were collected by interviewers, all of whom underwent training and were monitored by supervisors. Once a household was identified, interviewers invited participants to answer a questionnaire as part of a fear of crime study. Participants were also told that they could terminate participation at any time during the interview. Local IRB approval was obtained for this study.

Measures

The questionnaire was administered to all participants, and comprised demographic questions (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity), as well as other scales including scales representing the following variables—fear of crime, perceived risk of victimization, TV realism, TV viewing-local reality crime program, TV viewing foreign reality based crime programs, viewing TV crime drama, crime news from radio, newspaper and other media.

Fear of crime. Fear of crime was measured using an 11-item scale adapted from Ferraro (1995), who operationalized the construct to represent “an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that persons associate with crime” (p. 24). Participants were asked to use a 10-point scale (where 1 = *totally not afraid*, and 10 = *totally afraid*) to indicate how fearful they were of becoming victims of specific criminal acts including murder, break-ins, robbery, kidnapping. This scale ($M = 53.38$, $SD = 32.87$) was found to have high internal consistency, as evidenced by its high Cronbach’s alpha score ($\alpha = .946$).

Perceived risk of victimization. Participants’ perception of their level of risk concerning specific criminal activities was measured using an 11-item scale adapted from Ferraro (1995). To maintain consistency with the fear-of-crime scale, similar 11 items were adopted for this measure. Participants were asked to rate each item on a 10-point scale on how likely they were of becoming a victim of specific crimes, including murder, break-ins, robbery, kidnapping with 1 indicating *totally unlikely*, and 10

totally likely. This scale ($M = 44.79$; $SD = 29.26$) was high in internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .952$).

TV crime realism. TV crime realism (adapted from Busselle, 2003) measures perceived realism of crime TV programs. This variable was measured using three-item 5-point scale with each item ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strong agree* (6). The scale ranges from 3 to 15. The higher the score, the more realistic TV is to the respondent (example of scale item: "Criminals in television crime programs are just like criminals in the real world"). The scale had a Cronbach's alpha score of .816 ($M = 12.06$, $SD = 2.6$).

Crime-Social media, internet, newspaper and radio access. Crime news accessing from social media ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 1.14$), Internet ($M = 1.48$, $SD = 1.16$), newspapers ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 2.8$), and radio ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 3.05$) was measured by use of single items and then aggregated. How many days in a typical week do you read about crime in the newspapers? How many days in a typical week do you listen to crime-related news/discussions on the radio? The scale had a mean of 11.0 ($SD = 4.9$). When examining reliabilities for these items, we discovered that social media and Internet had a coefficient alpha of .775; however, newspaper and radio use did not load well with social media and Internet. As such, these other media were considered separately.

Social media and Internet crime information was measured using a 4-point scale from *Never* = 0, *a few times a month* = 1, *a few times a week* = 2, *Daily* = 3. Respondents were asked, "How often do you read or look at crime-related news/ articles/ videos on the Internet?" and "How often do you read or look at crime related news/ articles/ videos on social media?" Newspapers and radio crime information was measured using an 8-point scale from 0 days to 7 days a week. Respondents were asked, "How many days in a typical week do you read about crime in the newspapers?" and "How many days in a typical week do you listen to crime-related news/ discussions on the radio?" Missing data for the social media (57%) and Internet (47%) questions were high, potentially owing to lack of access among some respondents and confusion about how, thus, to respond to these items. To address this issue, analyses will be run

with and without these variables included as predictors.

Reality-based TV. Viewing of local ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 3.01$) and foreign ($M = 1.1$, $SD = 3.2$) reality-based crime programs was measured by number of hours via the use of single items. Respondents were asked, "How many hours per week do you usually spend watching local reality-based crime programs (e.g., *Crime Watch*, *Beyond the Tape* etc.)? How many hours per week do you usually spend watching foreign reality-based crime programs (e.g., *48 Hours Mystery*, *Unusual Suspects*, *America's Most Wanted*, *COPS* etc.)?"

Viewing time of crime drama. Viewing of crime drama ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 4.29$) was measured by number of hours via a single item. Respondents were asked, "How many hours per week do you usually spend watching crime dramas (e.g., *Law & Order: SVU*, *CSI*, *NCIS* etc.)?"

Viewing time of noncrime drama. Viewing time of noncrime drama ($M = 11.82$, $SD = 13.04$) was measured by subtracting weekly crime drama viewing from total weekly TV viewing.

Analyses

Main analyses conducted were Poisson regressions in SPSS with the robust estimator correlation matrix. Because of substantial missing data with the social media and Internet variables, regression equations were run both with ($n = 887$) and without ($n = 2,190$) these variables. Outcomes were similar under both conditions and samples. As such, for simplicity, in our discussion, we discuss the results using the full assortment of variables, although both models are presented in the tables. Multicollinearity diagnostics revealed absence of collinearity issues with maximum VIF of 1.211.

Results

Results from the Poisson regression are presented in Table 1. The overall model was significant ($\chi^2 = 6,390.826$, $p < .001$). In the model, gender, age, perceived risk of victimization and noncrime drama viewing were significant predictors of fear of crime. The size of these effects, in most cases however, was small, perceived risk of victimization being the exception. Noncrime drama viewing was associated with reduced fear

CULTIVATION AND FEAR OF CRIME

Table 1
Fear of Crime Regression Model 1 (n = 888) and Model 2 (n = 2,190)

Variable	b	Exp(b)	SE	Wald	Significance
Model 1					
Intercept	3.599	36.555	0.089	1,627.416	.000
Female gender	-0.168	0.845	0.032	27.400	.000
Age	-0.030	0.970	0.013	5.528	.019
Risk of victimization	0.010	1.010	0.001	359.021	.000
TV realism	0.008	1.008	0.006	1.576	.209
Noncrime drama	-0.002	0.998	0.001	4.177	.041
Crime drama	0.000	1.000	0.002	0.030	.863
Newspaper/radio	0.002	1.002	0.004	0.472	.492
Internet/social media	-0.007	0.993	0.008	0.821	.365
Omnibus χ^2 6,390.826		<i>p</i> < .001			
Model 2					
Intercept	3.665	39.074	0.066	3,112.468	.000
Female gender	-0.204	0.816	0.022	86.749	.000
Age	-0.030	0.971	0.007	17.718	.000
Risk of victimization	0.011	1.011	0.001	915.170	.000
TV realism	0.001	1.001	0.004	0.027	.870
Noncrime drama	-0.002	0.998	0.001	4.533	.033
Crime drama	-0.001	0.999	0.001	1.421	.223
Newspaper/radio	-0.001	0.999	0.002	0.203	.652
Omnibus χ^2 15,681.11		<i>p</i> < .001			

of crime. None of the other media exposure variables was related to fear of crime.

We also conducted exploratory follow up analyses using perceived victimization risk as the outcome. These results are presented in Table 2. The overall model was significant ($\chi^2 = 1,366.913$,

p < .001). Perceived victimization risk was associated with gender, age and TV realism, but not with other media exposure variables. The size of the effect of perceived TV realism related to perceived victimization risk was small, but larger than some of the trivial effects seen in the first set

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Table 2
Perceived Victimization Risk Regression Model 1 (n = 888) and Model 2 (n = 2,191)

Variable	b	Exp(b)	SE	Wald	Significance
Model 1					
Intercept	3.456	31.677	0.111	974.697	.000
Female gender	-0.207	0.813	0.040	26.788	.000
Age	-0.046	0.955	0.016	8.931	.003
TV realism	0.045	1.046	0.008	33.867	.000
Noncrime drama	0.002	1.002	0.002	0.835	.361
Crime drama	0.000	1.000	0.003	0.025	.874
Newspaper/radio	0.004	1.004	0.005	0.579	.447
Internet/social media	0.012	1.012	0.010	1.374	.241
Omnibus χ^2 1,366.913		<i>p</i> < .001			
Model 2					
Intercept	3.465	31.974	0.082	1799.202	.000
Female gender	-0.115	0.891	0.027	17.960	.000
Age	-0.062	0.940	0.009	46.784	.000
TV realism	0.040	1.041	0.006	46.092	.000
Noncrime drama	0.002	1.002	0.001	2.923	.087
Crime drama	0.001	1.001	0.002	0.264	.608
Newspaper/radio	0.010	1.010	0.003	10.613	.001
Omnibus χ^2 2,465.593		<i>p</i> < .001			

of regressions. When Internet variables were removed from the equation, the news media variable did become statistically significant as a predictor of perceived victimization risk, although the effect size was small.

Discussion

Gerbner claimed that increases in TV viewing encourages greater fear of crime (1976). His Cultivation Theory has become the most discussed and tested theory regarding the relationship between TV and fear of crime. However, many macro-level studies, sampling from either the United States or Western Europe, have returned weak or no correlation between variables of interest to this theory. Despite this, theorists have not forsaken the theory but have sought theoretical additions that could strengthen the empirical support for the notion. They have tested whether there is a more complicated process through which fear of crime is affected. They suggest that certain types of TV (e.g., news media vs. fictional crime drama) may be more effective than others; others have also suggested that the locality of reported crimes may increase or decrease fear based on perception of broader-based crime. If media suggests to viewers that crime occurs more locally as compared with the larger region in which their community is contained, then they may feel more afraid.

Our research finds none or very weak support for any of these suggestions. Testing a sample pulled from a region less investigated by cultivation theorists, the Caribbean, our results are consistent with the reviewed literature regarding the relationship between media and fear of crime (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999; Tukachinsky & Tokunaga, 2013). That is to say that, in most circumstances, our results support a null model of media effects. This was true for general media watching, crime dramas, and both local and foreign reality shows. For news media and social media, results were less clear. Results for these variables were not statistically significant, and effect sizes were trivial and not in the hypothesized direction. The exception was with regards to the exploratory model examining perceived victimization risk as the outcome. In a model excluding Internet variables to use the larger sample, news media viewing was associated with greater perceived victimization risk.

However, this finding is tempered by noting these analyses were exploratory and the effect size was small. As such, we maintain that the null hypothesis is the best fit to our data regarding the impact of media on crime. We do note that our research is correlational in nature, and causality and directionality cannot be determined from such data. However, the absence of correlation provides some evidence against causality and any direction regarding cultivation effects, with the possible exception of a small relationship between news media viewing and perceived victimization risk.

TV realism did predict perceived victimization risk, in an exploratory analysis, but not fear of crime in our main analyses. It thus remains possible that individual's perceptions of how realistic their TV viewing is may play a small role in some crime perceptions. However, we did not view our results in this domain to be consistent or provide clear evidence for this possibility. As such, more research to explore this possibility is warranted.

Although we resist concluding that there is no relationship between media and fear of crime, we do point to the consistencies between our study and previous macro studies. To respond to our hypotheses, crime dramas, local reality-based crime, nor international crime shows had an effect on fear sufficient to facilitate concern about victimization. We are more surprised not to find more effect owing to news media, which differs from the results of some other studies (Ditton et al., 2004). Based on this previous research, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that local news's greater potential for effect would be owing to the fact that local news is more tailored to the viewer, presents a more authentic and relatable explanation of a "true" crime story and, therefore, more of an impression on the minds of its audience than other sources of media (Hamilton, 1998). It may still be that local news media may play a small role, amid many other presumed nonmedia-related variables, in predicting the fear of crime of the audience. Similarly, Internet media may have the same effect if its viewership reviews if for local crime stories. Nonetheless, our sample demonstrated surprising resilience to even these media influences. It may be that cultivation, to the extent it occurs, may be owing to some specific confluence of circumstances, not a general principle. Future research should be cogni-

AQ: 17 zant of the refined relationship between crime events and the media. For example, Chadee and Chadee (2016) using a *Risk and Media Dependency Protective Motivation Model* discussed the complexity among some important variables in explaining the relationship between the media and fear of crime. They noted that the media can act as either a source of perception of risk amplification or attenuation (Renn, Burns, Kasperson, Kasperson, & Slovic, 1992) to a crime event. However, the social psychology processes involved in risk sensitivity (Chadee, Austen, & Ditton, 2007) will determine the rippling effect of risk amplification.

AQ: 18 The significance of the effects of perceived realism on fear of crime supports the literature suggesting the same. Worth noting, however, is the lack of effects of overall TV viewing on fear of crime, whether moderated by TV realism or not. This suggests a relationship between these two but no causal connection to overall TV viewing as suggested by Mckinley (2013) and others. However, it fails to support McKinley's findings regarding the connection between genre-specific TV viewing and beliefs (in our case fear of crime). As with all studies, ours has limitations that are worth noting. First, the study, although large, is correlational in nature and causal inferences cannot be made. Second, the missing information on social media and Internet reduced our ability to examine issues related to these media more effectively. Lastly, our sample is based on a specific population from the Caribbean and cannot be generalized to other populations, but the relationship identified in this sample appears to be consistent with other cultivation fear of crime research.

We have several suggestions for further research. First, our survey design did not consider previous crime victimization. Future research should introduce crime victimization as a moderator/mediator, as literature has suggested that victimization is another explanatory factor of risk and fear of victimization (Brewin, Andrews, Rose, & Kirk, 1999; Davis & Friedman, 1985). Also, given that our study used survey methodology, causality cannot be asserted. Complementary studies should consider an experimental design measuring pre- and postfear of crime after exposure to TV crime.

Additionally, we suggest that future research review the potential for cultivation effects through social media and news communications

in greater detail than was possible in our study. More questions regarding whether people who read national or local news crime stories are using social media would better understanding in this area. More in-depth analysis of these two forms of communication will assist in understanding whether social media and news media does indeed increase perceived crime victimization.

AQ: 19

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AQ: 32

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