The Misleading of the American Public through Deceptive Crime Tactics.

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Does the American public irrationally fear crime?

- Given that a great deal of Americans rely on mass media for their perceptions on crime, does the public have an accurate view on crime rates and the criminal justice system?
Research Question

• What is the American public’s perception of crime and what are the possible causes and consequences of these perceptions?
The Survey Sample

• Convenience sample administered in Market Square, downtown Portsmouth on Saturday, March 11\textsuperscript{th} 2006.
• Administered 12:30pm – 4:00pm
• Surveyed a total of 53 people
Methods

• My analysis consisted mainly of comparing interval ratio and constant variables in different combinations to find relationships.

• Additionally I performed one regression analysis.
Descriptive Statistics

Mean Age: 30 years

- Urban: 34%
- Suburban: 28%
- Rural: 35%
- Traveler: 3%

- Females: 54%
- Males: 46%
Descriptive Statistics

• Participants had a mean of 7.3 hours of news a week
• 67% felt their news was presented in a fair and balanced manner
• 33% watched at least one crime show a couple of times a month
Descriptive Statistics: Death Penalty

Why Should the Death Penalty Continue to be Employed?

- **Deters Criminals**: 15%
- **Save Money**: 11%
- **Religious**: 11%
- **Brutal Crimes**: 7%
- **Save Money**: 7%
- **Child Crimes**: 4%
- **Insanity**: 4%
- **Rehab Does Not Work**: 7%

Legend:
- Deter Criminals
- Retribution
- Religious
- Brutal Crimes
- Save Money
- Child Crimes
- Insanity
- Rehab Does Not Work
Descriptive Statistics: Crime Rate

What has the Crime Rate done over the past 30 years?

- Increased: 48.1%
- Stayed the Same: 21.2%
- Decreased: 30.7%

Property crime rates
Adjusted victimization rate per 1,000 households

Violent crime rates
Adjusted victimization rate per 1,000 persons age 12 and over

Source: Bureau of Justice, September 25, 2005
Data Analysis

- 60% of those who watched the local news felt the crime rate had increased.
- 60% of those who read the local paper felt the crime rate had increased.
Data Analysis

- 50% of those who read the national paper felt the crime rate had increased.
- 33% of those who watched the national news felt the crime rate had increased.
Data Analysis

- Participants were asked how much they agree with the following statement: “Television crime dramas accurately represent typical American crimes.”
- This was then compared with how often they watched one or more crime shows.
- The more often someone watches a crime show, the more likely they are to think those shows are accurate.
Data Analysis

- Death Penalty costs **more** = abolish it.
- Death Penalty costs **less** = keep it.

![Cost of Death Penalty VS. Keeping the Death Penalty](chart)

- Keep Death Penalty: 31% Costs More, 42% Costs Less
- Abolish Death Penalty: 59% Costs More, 25% Costs Less
Conclusion

• The more often a participant watches crime shows, the more inclined they are to agree that these shows accurately represent the typical American crimes.
Conclusion

• Conversely, as a participant watched less crime dramas, the more likely they were to disagree with that statement.
Conclusion

• There exists a relationship between participants utilizing local news programs and newspapers and their tendency to view the crime rate as having gotten worse.
Limitations

• Small sample size.
• It was a convenience sample.
• Would like to have crossed the state border to involve people from various regions of the country.
Future Research Questions

• I hypothesize that those who live in states with local news stations would tend to think the crime rate is worse because of the constant exposure to the crime stories that are in their own neighborhood.
Future Research Questions

• Therefore, those who live in New Hampshire, which is a state that lacks local news stations, may view the crime rate as being better than those who reside in a state that does have local news stations.
Future Research Questions

• Would be interesting to survey around election time when the public is inundated with politician’s speeches and where the crime statistics could be manipulated to favor a candidate’s platform.
Thank you for your time.