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## The CSI Effect: Fact or Fiction?

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## The CSI Effect: Fact or Fiction?

### Abstract

The CSI effect has been a subject undergoing intense scrutiny in recent years. With the ever-increasing number of television shows, such as CSI and all of its spinoffs, that poorly represent the field of forensic science, there has also been a growing concern over the effects that media has on the legal system. Prosecutors argue that the CSI effect raises their burden of proof and makes jurors more likely to acquit in cases involving little or no forensic evidence, while defense lawyers claim that jurors are more inclined to wrongfully convict based on their unrealistic perceptions of forensic evidence. This paper aims to determine if the CSI effect exists by exploring the effects that crime-show-related media has on the community, analyzing jurors' perceptions of forensic evidence, and comparing the currently published statistics on pre- and post-CSI acquittal rates.

### Keywords

CSI effect, forensic science, jurors, acquittal rates

Justice Studies Department Paper of the Year  
Award Winner

The CSI Effect: Fact or Fiction?

*Kavita Alejo*

**Abstract**

The CSI effect has been a subject undergoing intense scrutiny in recent years. With the ever-increasing number of television shows, such as *CSI* and all of its spinoffs, that poorly represent the field of forensic science, there has also been a growing concern over the effects that media has on the legal system. Prosecutors argue that the CSI effect raises their burden of proof and makes jurors more likely to acquit in cases involving little or no forensic evidence, while defense lawyers claim that jurors are more inclined to wrongfully convict based on their unrealistic perceptions of forensic evidence. This paper aims to determine if the CSI effect exists by exploring the effects that crime-show-related media has on the community, analyzing jurors' perceptions of forensic evidence, and comparing the currently published statistics on pre- and post-CSI acquittal rates.

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### Introduction

Forensic documentaries, such as *Forensic Files* and *Cold Case Files*, document real investigations of cold cases by detectives and forensic scientists. However, people seem to be more interested in fictional crime dramas such as *NCIS*, *Criminal Minds*, *Bones*, *Law and Order*, *Castle*, *Without a Trace*, *Cold Case*, and more. In 2006, “30 million people watched *CSI* on one night, 70 million watched at least one of three *CSI* spinoffs, and 40 million watched *Without a Trace* and *Cold Case*” (Shelton, 2008, p. 2). With the growing number of *CSI*-related shows and viewers, legal experts have become increasingly concerned with the *CSI* effect and whether it is fact or fiction.

Also known as the *CSI* Infection or *CSI* Syndrome, the *CSI* effect is the belief that media has altered the public’s opinion of forensic science. It is a phenomenon that affects jurors, investigators, forensic scientists, legal experts, universities, and the general public (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2011). The two groups that are most publicly affected are college students and jurors. *CSI*-like television shows have glamorized the profession, leading some students to believe that their jobs will resemble those on television; this is not the case. Forensic laboratory jobs are harder than they appear and involve a great deal of detailed work, with long hours and exposure to biohazards. Crime scene investigators (CSIs) often work on call with long hours and are also exposed to gruesome crime scenes and dangerous conditions. Nevertheless, forensic science programs are emerging all over the United States, and those programs are seeing record-breaking enrollment numbers. Unfortunately, the job market cannot stand up to the growing number of applicants. Santa Clara County Crime Lab Director, Ian Fitch, warns forensic science students that for every job

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opening he has, hundreds of people apply (Do, 2014). This career uncertainty, however, only affects a small percentage of the population.

Of greater concern is how the CSI effect is influencing jurors' perceptions of forensic science. Most legal experts agree that the CSI effect has unrealistically raised jurors' expectations of forensic science, which has raised the prosecutor's burden of proof, and lead to more wrongful acquittals of guilty defendants (Podlas, 2009). Fictional crime dramas portray forensic evidence as something that is easily found, always found, and infallible; jurors expect forensic evidence in every criminal trial (Heinrick, 2006). Therefore, in cases where little or no forensic evidence is found, prosecutors argue that jurors are inclined to wrongfully acquit guilty defendants. Defense attorneys, however, argue that when any forensic evidence is found, even if it is of poor quality, jurors are inclined to wrongfully convict a defendant. The "defendant's effect" claims that forensic scientists' perceived credibility is unrealistically enhanced by the CSI effect, thus benefiting the prosecution (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2011). Both the prosecution and defense have strong arguments, but what if the CSI effect does not exist?

There are also those that argue that the CSI effect is non-existent. Podlas (2009) claims that lawyers overestimate the weight of forensic evidence and the strength of their cases while underestimating their weaknesses, using the CSI effect as an excuse for unexpectedly losing a case. Whether or not the CSI effect exists is an important issue because it affects not only the jurors and legal experts, but also the defendants, as well as the rest of the community. It could mean the difference between sending an innocent person to prison and letting a guilty one go free. The CSI effect is a rather new phenomenon, but many

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studies have already been conducted to try to determine if it exists. This paper aims to do the same by examining cultivation theory, juror's *CSI* viewing habits, acquittal data, and the community's perspective. If the CSI effect exists, then jurors are more likely to wrongfully acquit guilty defendants in cases involving little or no forensic evidence.

### **Cultivation Theory**

Cultivation theory is brought up in a number of studies, including Mancini (2013) to explain the CSI effect. It is the belief that people's perceptions of reality are formed by their long-term exposures to the media (Potter, 1993). Potter (1993) conducted a review of George Gerbner's cultivation theory to examine how short-term and long-term media exposure can exert "subtle but cumulative effects" on a person's psyche. He explains that television exposure, among other influences such as family, peers, church, and school, can be directly related to a person's changing perceptions of reality. However, he suggests that before cultivation can be blamed for any of society's problems, the exact mechanism of cultivation must be understood (Potter, 1993). While some authors believe the CSI effect is a direct result of watching too much *CSI* and its related programs, others believe that it is the cumulative response to general television viewing habits.

Hayes-Smith and Levett (2011) define the CSI effect as "a phenomenon proposed by the media and attorneys in which crime show viewing is thought to affect jurors' trial decisions" (p. 29). They conducted a study of 104 dismissed jurors to determine if fictional crime shows and general television viewing affected jurors' verdicts based on general and forensic evidence, and if it affects how jurors perceive the strength of said

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evidence. Jurors were asked about their demographics, and general television habits, including how many hours they spend watching *CSI* and other crime dramas. There were three scenarios containing three levels of forensic evidence: none, low (fingerprints), and high (fingerprints and ballistic evidence). After reading a trial vignette, jurors were asked about their verdicts, confidence of said verdicts, and confidence of the defendants' guilt. They were also asked to rate the strength of the testimony and physical evidence. Instead of a specific "CSI" effect, Hayes-Smith and Levett (2011) expected to find evidence of a general "tech" effect, stemming from the jurors' general television viewing habits.

Hayes-Smith and Levett (2011) found that as jurors' general television viewing habits increased, they were more likely to acquit a defendant—64% less likely to convict in the "low evidence" scenario, 70% less likely in the "high evidence" scenario, and strongest in "no evidence" scenario—but crime-show-viewing did not significantly affect the results. They also found that in the "no forensic evidence" scenario, jurors' *CSI* viewing habits were more likely to affect their strength ratings of police testimony. They concluded that general television viewing habits have more of an effect on jurors' decision-making processes than *CSI* and other related programs (Hayes-Smith & Levett, 2011).

### **Domestic Jurors**

Mancini (2013) defines the CSI effect as "the influence of heavy forensic television program viewership on perceptions of scientific evidence and juror decision-making" (p. 543). His study aimed to determine if watching fictional crime dramatizations or investigation documentaries affected jurors'

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decision-making processes differently by showing 80 jurors a video of a real murder trial, followed by a series of questionnaires. Jurors were asked about their demographics, including gender, age, race, education, and income. Next, they were asked a series of questions regarding the documentary they had watched, which included information about the case, verdicts, and their perceptions of forensic evidence, specifically DNA evidence. The last questionnaire was on forensic television viewing habits, documentary or fiction, and the jurors' perceptions on the shows' realism. Mancini (2013) predicted that jurors who watched more crime dramas would be more inclined to acquit a defendant because of lacking forensic evidence, perceive themselves as being more knowledgeable about forensic procedures, and be less satisfied with prosecutorial forensic evidence than the defense's.

Mancini (2013) found that the documentary was rated more realistic than fictional crime dramas, but increased viewing of fictional shows increased the realism ratings of both genres. He found that jurors who watched more crime TV were slightly more inclined to acquit a defendant, but forensic evidence, specifically DNA evidence, was not the reason. Heavy viewers also did not report being more knowledgeable about forensic procedures than non-heavy viewers, and they were not less satisfied with prosecutorial forensic evidence than the defense's. He concluded that there may be a CSI effect, stating that heavy viewers were more likely to acquit defendants and find them less guilty than non-heavy viewers, but those decisions were not based on scientific evidence, which does not support the existence of a CSI effect.

Call, Cook, Reitzel, and McDougale (2013) define the CSI effect as "the phenomenon that has reportedly come to

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influence the way jurors perceive forensic evidence at trials based on the way forensic evidence is presented on television” (p. 52). They analyzed a study conducted by a mid-Atlantic police department on 60 jurors from five malicious wounding cases to determine if *CSI* viewing habits influenced their deliberations and verdicts. The jurors were asked to complete a questionnaire after serving on a trial jury; demographical data was gathered from the 2010 Census Bureau of the area. The questionnaire asked for the jurors’ opinions on a number of factors that are said to be impacted by the CSI effect: if they believe defendants should only be found guilty in the presence of prosecutorial forensic evidence, if they believe physical evidence should be found at every crime scene, their *CSI* viewing habits, if they believed the media affected their verdicts, what their verdicts were, the weight of forensic test results in conviction determinations, and if they believed the forensic procedures portrayed in fictional crime dramas to be real and accurate.

Call et al. (2013) found that 91% of the jurors believed the presence of prosecutorial evidence should be a precursor to conviction and 76% believed evidence should be found at every crime scene. They found that 95% of the jurors had watched *CSI*, 73% self-reported having been influenced by the show in their decisions, and 60% believed *CSI*’s portrayal of forensic science to be real and accurate. The only statistically significant variable that was found to have an effect on the jurors’ decision-making processes was their belief in *CSI*’s accurate portrayal of forensic science; heavy viewers were 78% less likely to convict a defendant. Call et al. (2013) resolved that there is some empirical support of the CSI effect on jurors, but the lack of substantial empirical research on actual trial jurors makes it inconclusive.

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### International Jurors

Holmgren and Fordham (2011) describe the CSI effect as a high demand for DNA and other forensic evidence before jurors will convict a defendant. They compared the results of two studies, one of which consisted of 605 Canadian students who were jury-eligible; the other was a survey of 146 real trial jurors. For the Canadian study, the students were questioned about their demographics, experiences with criminal trials, perceptions of forensic techniques, and assertions of a suspect's guilt or innocence. For the Australian study, post-trial jurors were given surveys that questioned their experiences as jurors, expectations of expert testimony, perceptions of evidence effectiveness, and the deliberation process. While some of their findings were bound to overlap, one study supported the existence of a CSI effect while the other did not.

In the Canadian study, Holmgren and Fordham (2011) found that 458 (75.7%) of the 605 participants had regularly watched between one and six hours of crime shows like *CSI* per week (light to moderate viewers), and 38 (6.3%) watched between 6 and 22 hours per week (heavy viewers). The most popular shows amongst participants were *CSI* and *Law and Order*, and their spinoffs. Results showed that 430 participants (71%) claimed to have learned about DNA from the media and 461 (76.2%) said DNA was the most important evidence that could be presented in a criminal trial; 506 (83.6%) believed DNA evidence should be collected and used for convictions in every sexual assault case. In this study, women were statistically more significant than men to demand DNA evidence in all cases. Results also showed that *CSI* viewers were more likely to believe forensic science can solve any case; 166 (27.4%) believed that human errors and corruption were unlikely in forensic labs

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because of the availability of advanced technology. The results of the Canadian study support the idea of a CSI effect, however, the Australian results varied.

In the Australian study, Holmgren and Fordham (2011) found that 59 of the participants (40.4%) said the experts were “extremely helpful” in helping them understand the evidence, while 15 (10.3%) said their own knowledge was “extremely useful.” Only one participant (0.7%) felt the expert was of no help, while 8 (5.5%) said their own knowledge was not useful. Of the 146 participants, 125 (85.6%) agreed that the evidence presented by the experts played an important role in their deliberations. Many of the jurors also found the opposition’s evidence important; only five (3.4%) did not think the opposition’s evidence was important. Some of jurors thought an absence of DNA samples were a result of laziness because television portrays DNA as being so easily obtained. On the other hand, jurors tended not to accept evidence at face value. Based on varying results, Holmgren and Fordham (2011) stated that they “cannot support the existence of a CSI effect as it has been popularly understood” (p. S68); in other words, they do not believe jurors are handing out unjust verdicts based on their *CSI* viewing habits.

### **Demographics**

Many of the studies on the CSI effect have focused solely on the statistics relating *CSI* viewing habits and jurors’ verdicts. Kim, Barak, and Shelton (2009) aimed to further previous research. They examined previous studies’ samples and their limitations, and decided to study how demographics and other factors might interact with jurors’ *CSI* viewing habits and decision-making processes. This study consisted of 1,027 jurors

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in Washtenaw County, Michigan, who were summoned for actual trials. They aimed to determine the participants' inclinations to convict a defendant based on circumstantial evidence and eyewitness testimony if no forensic evidence was presented. They tested these dependent variables with trials comprised of murders, attempted murders, physical assaults, and other criminal cases. The independent variables consisted of jurors' *CSI* viewing habits and their expectations of forensic evidence, as well as demographics including their neighborhood crime rates and political views. After analyzing the effects of the individual independent variables on verdicts, they combined the independent variables with jurors' *CSI* viewing habits to determine if there was a correlation between the two. Each set of analyses was done for the circumstantial evidence and eyewitness testimony scenarios (Kim et al., 2009).

In the scenario involving circumstantial evidence, Kim et al. (2009) found three individual characteristics that had a statistically significant effect on jurors' decisions in cases lacking forensic evidence. White jurors, those with higher education levels, and those from low-crime neighborhoods were less likely to convict a defendant based solely on circumstantial evidence. After adding *CSI* viewing habits to the equation, they found that younger persons were less likely to convict based solely on circumstantial evidence, but race lost its significance and education became only marginally significant. *CSI* viewing habits did not directly influence jurors' verdicts. However, jurors' expectations of evidence significantly decreased jurors' willingness to convict a defendant without forensic evidence, but it was an indirect effect of their *CSI* viewing habits. Analyzing the interactions between jurors' *CSI* viewing habits, demographics, and verdicts produced no statistically significant

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results, indicating that the CSI effect does not exist.

In the scenario involving eyewitness testimony, Kim et al. (2009) found that age and gender had a significant impact on verdicts in cases lacking forensic evidence. Female and younger jurors were less likely to convict a defendant based solely on eyewitness testimony. After taking CSI viewing habits into consideration, they found that age and gender remained statistically significant, along with political views; those with more liberal political views were less likely to convict based solely on eyewitness testimony. Similar to the previous scenario, *CSI* viewing habits did not influence jurors' verdicts. In contrast with the circumstantial evidence scenario, neither did their expectations of evidence. Analyzing the interactions between jurors' *CSI* viewing habits, demographics, and verdicts produced no statistically significant results, indicating that the CSI effect does not exist.

Based on their findings, Kim et al. (2009) concluded that jurors' increased expectations of forensic evidence were mostly due to independent factors other than the CSI effect. To determine if the "CSI effect" is more of a general "tech effect," they studied the impact of news programs, forensic documentaries, and other criminal justice-related programming on jurors' decisions. Exposure to general criminal justice-related programming significantly increased the jurors' inclination to convict a defendant based only on circumstantial evidence or eyewitness testimony in cases lacking forensic evidence; these results were opposite of what the CSI effect suggests. The totality of their research indicates some weak connections between *CSI* viewing and a decreased inclination to convict in cases lacking forensic evidence, but the results cannot fully support the existence of a CSI effect, as it is commonly

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understood.

### Acquittal Rates

Most of the studies relating jurors' *CSI* viewing habits and verdicts have been of mixed results. The main issue that prosecutors, researchers, and law enforcement officials are concerned with in regards to the *CSI* effect is its resultant increase in acquittals in cases involving little or no forensic evidence. However, there is no substantive evidence of an increased rate of jury acquittals since the birth of *CSI* and its spinoffs. In an earlier review of federal trial outcomes, no data was found to indicate an increase in acquittal rates (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2009). On the contrary, they found an insignificant decrease in acquittal rates, which would support the opposing theory of a "defendant's effect," suggesting that prosecutors are benefiting from the *CSI* effect.

Cole and Dioso-Villa (2009) conducted a study in an attempt to collect data from all U.S. jurisdictions; sufficient data was collected from 11 states, eight of which had started collecting data pertaining to trial outcomes before *CSI* first aired in 2000. Although the rates are very different from state to state, they found no statistically significant difference in pre- or post-*CSI* acquittal percentages from year to year in each state. However, when analyzing the overall rates in proportion to the total number of cases, they found a statistically significant increase in acquittal rates for only two years post-*CSI*. However, they attributed those increases to a general trend of pre-*CSI* rising acquittals. Studies examining acquittal rates in four large states and Canada by Loeffler and Benoît Dupont, respectively, also do not support the existence of a *CSI* effect (Cole & Dioso-Villa, 2009).

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### Community Perspectives

Research on the CSI effect has primarily been conducted to determine if it even exists by analyzing jurors' television viewing habits, demographics, and verdicts. With media being the culprit in CSI effect studies, it is no surprise that the media has also covered the CSI effect itself. As a result, Hayes and Levett (2013) decided to examine the jurors' exposures to, and perceptions of, the CSI effect, defined as "the notion that crime show viewing influences jurors to have unrealistic expectations of forensic evidence, which then affects their trial decisions" (p. 216). They sent surveys to 259 community members, 191 of whom completed it. They were questioned about their crime drama and documentary viewing habits, jury service, and definitions, knowledge, and perceptions of the CSI effect.

Hayes and Levett (2013) found that only 29% of participants had heard of the CSI effect, 68% of whom thought they knew what it was. They also found a statistically significant positive correlation between crime drama viewing habits and participants' knowledge of the CSI effect. Participants who watched more television, especially Caucasian and higher-income participants were more likely to think that crime dramas provide a legitimate education on investigative and forensic procedures. However, those who watched more crime dramas were less inclined to believe said shows influenced people's expectations of forensic evidence, with the exception of Caucasian participants. Participants with higher educations were more likely to believe that *CSI* viewing habits could affect jurors' verdicts. After analyzing the participants' perceptions of the CSI effect, they determined that all of those who had heard of it, believed it to be a "prosecutor's effect." In other words, people believe the CSI effect increases the prosecutor's burden

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of proof by raising jurors' expectations of forensic evidence. Since most of the participants who had heard of the CSI effect were also more inclined to believe that *CSI* viewing habits could affect jurors' verdicts, Hayes and Levett (2013) suggest further research to determine if those potential jurors would be able to correct for the potential bias stemming from the CSI effect.

### **Prisoners**

Most studies conducted on the CSI effect focus on how it affects criminals by way of jurors' verdicts in response to *CSI* viewing habits. However, very little is known about how criminals are directly affected. Prisoners have gotten an intimate look at how forensic evidence, specifically DNA and fingerprint evidence, can affect investigations and verdicts, and therefore might be immune to the CSI effect as it is popularly understood. Machado (2012) predicted that the further removed people are from the criminal justice system, the more likely they are to believe how the media portrays investigative and forensic techniques. By conducting 31 semi-structured interviews in a Portuguese prison, Machado (2012) aimed to analyze the prisoners' knowledge and perceptions of the CSI effect, specifically related to DNA evidence.

Machado (2012) found that prisoners were much more skeptical of DNA evidence as it is currently used in Portugal. Contrary to the CSI effects on jurors' perceptions of forensic evidence's infallibility, inmates alluded to its weakness due to human error and authoritative abuses. While many of the prisoners were able to distinguish real and fictional forensic techniques as they are portrayed in the media, they also had high hopes for the advancement of forensic and investigative technology; they believe that advanced technology, as well as a

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population-wide DNA database, will curb the number of wrongful convictions. Lastly, the interviewees suggested that criminals are being educated on how to better commit crimes from *CSI* and other crime-related programs. They admitted to being more cautious at crime scenes, making sure to prevent leaving, or eliminate, DNA and trace evidence. This substantiates the existence of a “police chief’s effect,” which has little empirical evidence and should be further researched.

### **Limitations**

Current research on the CSI effect has aimed to determine if such a phenomenon even exists, with studies on mock jurors, real jurors, students, law enforcement officers, the general public, and even prisoners. Such studies, however, are not without limitations. One of the main limitations was sample selection. Many of the studies on the CSI effect, some of which are mentioned in this paper, had fairly small sample sizes. When sample sizes are too small, they cannot be generalized. Since juries consist of very diverse groups of people, larger sample sizes are preferred.

Another sampling issue was that of demographics. Once again, diversity is key when sampling for a jury-related study. Some of the samples chosen for these studies were students. As Kim et al. (2009) notes, the use of college students as subjects for studies on the CSI effect is insufficient because the results cannot be generalized. Juries consist of people of all ages (18 and over), occupations, educations, and life experiences, whereas college students are generally in their late teens and early 20s with some outliers, unemployed or working “filler” jobs, and are all getting a higher education. Participants’ genders and races were another issue in many of the studies reviewed. For

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example, in the southeast Michigan study, 82.2% of the participants were white (Kim et al., 2009). For a study that was focused on comparing jurors' demographics and *CSI* viewing habits with their verdicts, the sample was disconcertingly uniform. However, according to Kim et al. (2009), the sample was representative of the racial distribution in Washtenaw County. Another example is that of Hayes and Levett (2013). They used a "convenience sample" for their study, which uses any subjects that are available and willing to participate. This resulted in an overrepresentation of white and female participants (Hayes & Levett, 2013). Choosing random samples of people would best suit a jury-related study.

Another issue regarding *CSI* effect studies was the frequent inability to use real jurors. Holmgren and Fordham (2011) explain that some countries limit the use of real jurors through legislative barriers; under S. 649 and 644 of the Canadian criminal code, solicitation of active or discharged jurors, even for research purposes, is strictly prohibited. Other studies, some of which are mentioned in this review, use students or convenience samples as mock jurors but do not provide an explanation of legislative barriers that prevented them from using real jurors. If real jurors, active or discharged, cannot be obtained for use in a jury-related study, a random sampling from the population would be advisable.

One of the most common limitations in almost all of the studies reviewed was the absence of a definition for what "forensic evidence" is. When questioning participants about their perceptions of forensic evidence, many only focused on DNA evidence and fingerprints, while some just defined it as "scientific evidence." For jurors, "scientific evidence" could mean anything. For example, Podlas (2009) conducted a study

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on the CSI effect, asking jurors which of the following CSI factors they used in their decision-making processes:

victim has reason to lie, evidence not tested for fingerprints, defendant may have committed offense, but prosecution did not prove beyond a reasonable doubt, prosecution did not perform forensic tests that could have shown defendant was innocent, no DNA evidence/no DNA test completed, defendant's story seemed more believable, prosecution did not perform forensic tests to prove defendant was in apartment or bedroom, and/or other (p. 115).

Podlas (2009) determined that the CSI effect does not exist based on the number of "CSI factors" jurors used in their deliberations. However, many of the factors do not relate to forensics and the CSI effect. Forensic evidence consists of the following: fingerprints, DNA evidence, blood spatter, gunshot residue, shoeprints, bullets and casings, trace evidence, and much more. If the CSI effect results in the increased expectations of forensic evidence, studies should address evidence other than DNA and fingerprints.

### Conclusion

Many people believe the CSI effect is a fairly new phenomenon, with the phrase being coined shortly after *CSI*'s television debut in 2000 (Call et al., 2013). However, similar phenomena have been reported from television shows and movies before *CSI*. In the 1960s, *Perry Mason* influenced the public's perception of attorney behavior, *Dragnet* (1950s and 1960s) and *NYPD Blue* (1990s) educated people on the Miranda rights, and *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) is reported to have peaked the public's interest in forensic profiling careers (Call et

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al., 2013). Even *The X-Files*, a popular supernatural show in the 1990s, showcased turn of the century forensic techniques such as computer forensics and forensic pathology. Crime dramas have been some of the most popular programs, pre- and post-*CSI*, and they will continue to be. Whether this phenomenon began in the 1950s, 1960s, or 2000s is not the question; the question is whether or not the CSI effect exists.

Most of the studies, however, have had inconclusive results. If research cannot prove or disprove the CSI effect, precautions must be taken in the mean time to ensure an unbiased verdict. Some researchers suggest asking jurors to disclose their *CSI* viewing habits during the jury-selection process. While this has already been implemented in many institutions, it is not the only solution. Holmgren and Fordham (2011) found that jurors were confused by scientific jargon and probabilistic explanations of evidence. A solution that might help a jurors' understanding of forensic evidence is a simplistic explanation of it and how the results differ from what they might have seen in the media. Educating potential jurors about the possibility of a CSI effect may also help them to correct for any biases that might occur during their deliberations; knowledge is the first step towards improvement. However, like many of the investigative and forensic techniques portrayed in the media, the totality of current research suggests the CSI effect as it is popularly understood may, in fact, be fiction.

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