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EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Examining the Evidence: Portrayals of the Careers in *Criminal Minds*

Honors Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of The

Requirements of HON 420

Spring 2023

By

Natalie Decker

Faculty Mentor

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School of Communication

## Examining the Evidence: Portrayals of the Careers in *Criminal Minds*

Natalie Decker

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Abstract: Within the fields of forensic science and criminal justice there is the hot topic of crime show representations in addition to their accuracies and inaccuracies. Some people owe these shows for exposing the career choice to them while other people within the field blame these shows for common misconceptions about their career. This study utilizes the research done concerning the two main theories that apply to the effects of crime shows: the cultivation theory and the CSI Effect. By examining the current research, a new study was conducted to further confirm or deny the claims made by both theories which aim to say that these crime shows are impacting people's perceptions of what is often depicted in these shows (crime, evidence, occupations, etc.). To accomplish this, a content analysis was done over the popular crime drama *Criminal Minds*.

Throughout the season of the show, factors about evidence, occupations, and any other important themes that stuck out were taken note of. After compiling these notes and themes a more educated decision was made over how "true" the CSI Effect was based on evidence directly from the source. The evidence collected agreed with most of the ideas that the research surrounding the CSI Effect has described. There was a great disparity in the type of evidence shown and which ones had positive or negative representations which in turn can cause people to have unrealistic expectations of evidence within the courtroom. This evidence disparity also supported the idea that rather than simply being coined the 'CSI Effect' a better name may be the 'tech effect'. In addition, the occupations represented throughout *Criminal Minds* were mostly positive and could

account for students' motivations to enroll in certain majors and pursue certain career goals. More research still needs to be done but it is clear that the depictions within crime shows have the ability to influence people's views of criminal investigations.

*Keywords and Phrases:* Cultivation theory, CSI Effect, *Criminal Minds*, perceptions, representations, evidence, occupations

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## **Introduction**

The present study examines the influences that the media can have on the people. The specific lens that the study aimed to observe was the impacts from television shows depicting crime or criminal investigation. The theories used to guide this research included the cultivation theory and the CSI Effect. To put this research into action, a content analysis was conducted over the popular crime show, *Criminal Minds*. Through analyzing the episodes, direct evidence from the show itself was collected and then analyzed by comparing to the theories and findings that previous studies and researchers had collected. To appreciate the research done and the findings collected, it is crucial to understand the literature over this specific field of study.

## **Literature Review**

There is little argument over how large of a role the media plays today, especially with the rapid advancements in technology in the last several decades, allowing the media to be right at people's fingertips. Social media has the ability to start popular trends and television shows can influence people's thoughts and opinions. One main theory describes the way in which the media can inform opinions and it is known as the cultivation theory. This theory becomes even more worthy of consideration when investigating how crime television shows can impact the general public's perceptions of crime, evidence, law enforcement, etc. This specific impact of the cultivation theory and crime television has led to the development of another popular theory known as the "CSI Effect." Though there has been lots of research over these two theories, there are gaps that need to be filled. To understand the gaps, it is important to understand the type of research that has already been done over the cultivation theory and the CSI Effect. As

research had been gathered over these two theories, there were two specific aspects that stuck out: evidence representation and occupation representation. More specifically evidence representation within crime shows can have the ability to influence people's perceptions of certain evidence types (Kim et al., 2009a; Baskin & Sommers, 2010). Occupation representation is also an important factor to take note of because research indicates that media greatly influences people's career choices (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2019; Slak, Erkulj et al., 2020). For example, one study found that 58% of employed persons indicate that some form of media influenced their career decision (Cooper, 2013). By employing both of these theories, the findings of this research may provide further insight into the understudied area.

### **Cultivation Theory**

George Gerbner originated the "cultivation theory" in 1967 as a way to describe the phenomenon surrounding the influence of mass media's messages on people's thoughts. "[M]ass production and rapid distribution of messages create new symbolic environments that reflect the structure and functions of the institutions that transmit them" (Gerbner, 1967, p. 69). Providing further insight, W. James Potter (2014) offers a critical analysis of the ideas discussed by Gerbner and other media effects researchers. This analysis examines how the cultivation theory has adapted to new forms of media. The theory began when Gerbner was describing impacts from literature, but now there have been more studies about TV media and other forms of digital media. Potter (2014) summarizes how cultivation theory can be applied to a variety of ideas and thoughts that can ultimately be cultivated by the media. Some examples that Potter provided include experiments over media representation of mental illness, substance abuse, homosexuality,

the environment, and others. Potter (2014) also argues about improvements to be made to the theory if it is to still be reliable in the future: “[the cultivation theory] might still have potential as a viable system of explanation of media effects moving into the future if it can deliver a higher level of precision in articulating its core ideas and if those articulations stimulate researchers to test those core ideas” (pg. 1030). In addition, L. J. Shrum (2017) argues that the primary hypothesis investigated with the cultivation theory is that “the more people watch television, the more their views of the world reflect the dominant narrative messages transmitted by television” (p. 1). Bilandzic et al. (2019) agrees with this argument with the results of their own experiment which indicated that “narrative engageability in the television program has a positive correlation in informing the viewers’ idealistic moral expectations” (p. 622). One study conducted by Hefner & Kretz (2021) aimed to extend the research on the cultivation theory by examining how Disney princess films inform people’s romantic beliefs and ideals. One of the main findings from their research was that there was a positive association between exposure to Disney princess films and elevated levels of relationship-contingent self-esteem (Hefner & Kretz, 2021). Another application of the cultivation theory was conducted on medical dramas. Within this study, there was also a focus on perceived realism - an idea that is often found in addition to cultivation theory research. This study found that perceived realism of medical dramas played a significant role in perceptions of physicians (Cho et al., 2011). Cho et al. (2011) argued that perceived realism of the show itself had more significance than the amount of exposure to the show or how many episodes of the show were watched. This is a common theme within research about cultivation theory.

Kohm et al. (2012) applies the cultivation theory to a more specific example by examining how certain media plays a role in impacting how college students view crime along with their fear of crime. Their experiment consisted of giving surveys to students in order to determine how fearful they were of being a victim of specific crimes along with their degree and type of media consumption. Based on the results they received, Kohm, et al. (2012) argued that TV news is the strongest impactor on fear of crime. However, it is important to note that TV shows were not considered in this specific experiment. Similar to Kohm, et al. (2012), Garcia-Castro & Perez-Sanchez (2018) applied the cultivation theory to fear of crime. Garcia-Castro & Perez-Sanchez (2018) used general television and TV news as their media variables. Students were asked to fill out questionnaires where they indicated how often they watched television, the types of television they watch, and the level of their fear of crime. Garcia-Castro &

Perez-Sanchez's (2018) results presented a counterargument against cultivation theory. They argued that based on their results that the number of hours spent watching television and newscasts does not directly predict the fear of crime when controlling for the psychological variables. Instead, they ultimately claimed that fear of crime is more directly related to several social factors including system justification, low social class, and crime rate in the area of residence.

Kim (2008) takes a different approach when investigating the cultivation theory. With their study, Korean students were interviewed and they were asked about their perceptions of fear of crime and crime scene investigations in the U.S. and how often they viewed U.S. crime dramas, specifically *CSI*. Ultimately, Kim (2008) argued that the participants' perceptions of U.S. crime was significantly related to U.S. crime show

consumption. Kim (2008) did note, however, that there was a limitation in the study with only including the show *CSI* and the participants could have been influenced by other types of media as well.

### **CSI Effect**

The term 'CSI Effect' was originated in 2002 by journalist Robert Franzen to describe the fear that prosecutors had regarding jurors' perceptions of court aspects based on their representations in the popular crime drama *CSI*. Though this theory was developed not too long ago, Melissa Littlefield (2011) argues that the idea behind the 'CSI Effect' has been around for much longer. Littlefield (2011) believes that the 'CSI Effect' has been around since the rise in detective novels in the late 1800's. So, even though the term 'CSI Effect' was not around during those times, evidence indicates that similar impacts were occurring and impacting the general population's perceptions of crime and criminal investigation. This term has become more common in recent years due to the rise in television crime dramas. Deborah Jermyn (2012) describes how there had been a strive for 'forensic realism' in television since the 1990's as 'forensic fascination' has increased. Jermyn also argues in the more recent years there has been more of a representation of, "what makes people 'tick', rather than the tangible, material science and evidence at stake in the cultural turn to forensics" (pg. 109). So, while there were some years where people were more interested in forensic realism within crime shows, there has more recently been greater interest in character-driven crime dramas.

There is a significant amount of research about how the 'CSI Effect' can impact different groups of people. One of these groups is students. Forensic professor Erica Bergslien (2006) argues that the 'CSI Effect' is such a big issue for students that the

curriculum should be tweaked in order to address these issues. Some of her tweaks include connecting more class assignments to real life cases, developing more activities where the suspect is innocent, developing activities where the evidence is inconclusive, and more statistical relevance activities. One study conducted by Roslyn Weaver et al. (2012) surveyed undergraduate forensic science students concerning their perceptions of shows depicting forensic science and their impacts. Based on their results, Weaver et al. (2012) argued that the CSI Effect may have some benefits in the form of enhancing recruitments for forensic science careers and overall exposure of the variety of careers forensic science has to offer. However, Weaver et al.'s (2012) data also revealed that even with the positive aspects students still indicated that the depictions in these forensic/crime shows are unrealistic.

The other group that is often the focus when investigating the CSI Effect are jurors or potential jurors. One study that was interested in how the CSI Effect impacted jury members sent out questionnaires to a variety of prosecutors, public defenders, and judges. These participants were asked about instances where juries were influenced by forensics television programs and whether they felt that these types of shows were impacting jury decisions and their jobs. Their results revealed that the majority of participants (79%) believed they experienced an instance where jury members were persuaded by forensic shows. Majority (85%) also felt that their job had changed as a result of forensic shows (Robbers, 2008). These high numbers are indicative of how important the research over the CSI Effect is as it is impacting the court at high rates according to court/law officials. John Alldredge (2015) claims that most of the studies done over the CSI Effect and jury members indicate that the more that a person watches

crime dramas the less likely they are to convict someone without the presence of forensic evidence. Katie Dysart (2012) demonstrates different ways that lawyers have attempted to avoid the CSI Effect in their cases. Some of these strategies include trying the case on a mock jury, screening for potential CSI Effect problems with a consultant, and a voir dire in which juries are questioned about aspects of their media consumption which could give an inclination of whether they may be impacted by the CSI Effect. Amber Ferris (2011) argued that those who have a higher viewing rate of crime dramas view forensic science and forensic evidence as more infallible than those who had lower viewership. Ferris also argued that genre exposure may be more significant on impacts than the amount of time spent viewing the show.

One experiment conducted by Hayes & Levett (2012) illustrated that the majority of people are unaware of the CSI Effect or have a simple understanding of what it is, leaving them more susceptible to the impacts of the CSI Effect. Hayes & Levett (2012) also argued that there can be either a pro-defense or a pro-prosecution effect on people depending on whether or not forensic evidence has been presented. While most of the research associated with the CSI Effect usually indicates viewing time as a major factor, Maeder & Corbett's (2015) experiment takes a different approach by using perceived realism of the show as its major factor instead. Overall, they argued that frequency of consumption and perceived realism of the media should both be considered when investigating the CSI Effect. Their results also indicated that participants were more reliant on DNA evidence. This reliance on specific types of evidence is an area often investigated with the CSI Effect and will be discussed in more detail later. Smith et al. (2011) conducted a content analysis of *CSI* in order to determine the legitimacy of the

CSI Effect. They argued that the phenomenon may be more properly described as the 'tech effect' because the expectations of forensic evidence may be more dependent on the advances in technology and science in recent years. Smith et al. also argued that the countermeasures being taken by lawyers may actually be doing more harm than good but more research in that area would need to be conducted to know for sure.

### **Evidence Perceptions**

One of the main impacts from the CSI Effect is perceptions of forensic evidence. An example is Baskin and Sommers' (2010) research in which they were able to demonstrate how DNA evidence is the most reliable evidence type amongst those who watch crime shows while eyewitness testimony evidence is the least reliable. Overall, they argued that many of the science-related evidence would be more relied upon than other evidence types. On the other hand, some studies have found no significant direct impacts from watching *CSI* and perceptions of evidence (Hayes & Levett, 2011). In one study conducted by Kim et al. (2009a), evidence perceptions were investigated while also taking into consideration varying social factors of the participants. They argued that jurors who were of color, were older, or were male had a higher likelihood of convicting someone without the presence of scientific evidence and vice versa. Their data also indicated that exposure to crime dramas did not directly affect a person's willingness to convict; however, it did directly impact people's raised expectations for scientific evidence. An additional study conducted by Kim et al. (2009b) further proved their argument that jurors expect to see scientific evidence presented in a court case. However, they also argued that the tech effect may have played a role in this phenomenon in addition to the CSI Effect.



Another study examined evidence type frequencies within a variety of crime television shows. The researchers hypothesized that crime shows centered around police investigators would mention more scientific evidence than shows that revolved around FBI agents; their results indicated that this hypothesis was acceptable. Their research also indicated that DNA was mentioned often in the shows and their clearance rate in cases was 100% (Rhineberger-Dunn et al., 2016). The frequency with which these types of evidence show up in episodes can play an important role in developing people's perceptions of such evidence types.

### **Occupation Perceptions**

In addition to evidence perceptions being one of the main impacts investigated with the CSI Effect, the perception of occupations from crime shows are also a main aspect of investigation. Firstly, overall research indicates that media can play a major role in people's decisions regarding their career. For example, as mentioned earlier, one study which interviewed employed persons found that 58% claim that their career choice was impacted by the media (Cooper, 2013). One implication of such a finding is how occupation representations in crime shows vary by race and gender. For example, one study found that historically most of the actors who played agents or investigators were white males. However, in more recent years there has been an increase in females and people of color playing these leading roles in crime dramas but there is still a lack of any transgender persons playing these roles (Chatelain, 2020). In addition, another study discovered that many of the victims in crime shows are played by white females followed closely behind by black males (Parrott & Parrott, 2015). A multitude of the research in regard to occupations and the CSI Effect is about how crime shows have impacted

students' major and career choices. One study revealed that crime shows did not necessarily impact students' choice of majors, but it did play a role in students' career goals based on the positive or negative portrayal of different occupations (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2019). A similar study indicated that the most important factor in students' enrollment decisions was the intrinsic values associated with that major. However, there were also indications that the number of crime shows watched in addition to the perceived reality of the shows was also connected to motivating enrollment (Slak et al., 2020).

### **Rationale**

Overall, this variety of research illustrates the great impact and potential for impact by crime dramas and their portrayals of aspects of forensics. As revealed by the many studies over the cultivation theory, television representations can greatly change and dictate a person's perception about various aspects of the world around them. Crime shows are no stranger to this phenomenon as demonstrated by the CSI Effect. Evidence and occupation representations within these crime shows are especially important to the impacts made by the CSI Effect because they have the potential to change the outcome of a court case/criminal case. Though the literature reveals several insights, there are some gaps that need to be filled. Some of these gaps include few content analyses of these crime shows have been conducted, and most of the research only focuses on a handful of shows (namely *CSI* and *Law and Order*). A content analysis would be beneficial to perform because much of the current research only relies upon people who watch crime shows and their answers to questionnaires. By performing a content analysis of the show, there can be tangible data from the show itself that proves whether these people's

perceptions are being informed by these shows. With most of the research focused on the same few shows, it would be beneficial to conduct a content analysis over a show not considered as often: *Criminal Minds*. This examination of the show will allow for a better understanding of what is actually being represented in the show and using the research to consider the potential impacts of these representations. More specifically, the content analysis conducted for the present study examined the representations of evidence and occupations (in addition to any other interesting findings throughout watching the show) because of their impacts on jurors and students going into the fields depicted in crime shows.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to understand representations in the popular crime drama *Criminal Minds* and how the cultivation theory and the CSI Effect may have played a role. In order to achieve this purpose, the following questions were answered through the content analysis:

RQ1: What is the frequency count of the types of evidence collected in *Criminal Minds*?

RQ2: How are specific evidence types portrayed in episodes of *Criminal Minds*?

RQ3: How are occupations portrayed in episodes of *Criminal Minds*?

RQ5: How are common themes portrayed throughout the show?

These questions were used greatly when setting up the coding format and when deciding what the most important notes were to take from the episodes.

## Methods

To determine which season of *Criminal Minds* to watch, a random number generator was used. Based on the results of the generator, season 9 of the show was chosen. Only one season was watched due to the time constraints of the study and wanting to dedicate adequate time and effort to each episode. Prior to watching through the season, a Google Sheet was set up to write specific notes for each episode, including the following: episode number, evidence shown, whether evidence was shown positively or negatively, whether evidence was associated with conviction, occupations represented, the role of the occupation in the episode, whether the occupation had positive or negative representation, and other important details. After viewing all the episodes and writing all the notes, frequency counts were calculated for the different evidence types in each episode. Then the common themes of the episodes were recorded to write a theme summary to summarize the season's themes. These theme summaries were modelled after the coding process presented in Creswell and Baez's book, "*30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher*" (2021).

Within the coding process, evidence types had to be properly categorized. The evidence groups that were decided upon included digital evidence, documentary/testimonial evidence, DNA evidence, scientific evidence (excluding DNA), physical evidence, and miscellaneous evidence.

### **Description of *Criminal Minds***

The popular crime drama *Criminal Minds* follows a group of special agents working in the Behavioral Analyst Unit (BAU) within the Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI). A majority of these agents are known as supervisory special agents, which essentially means they are higher up and are responsible for giving briefings. The regular supervisory special agents consist of Derek Morgan (played by a black male), Dr. Spencer Reid (played by a white male), Jennifer “JJ” Jareau (played by a white female), and Dr. Alex Blake (played by a white female). The senior supervisory special agent is David Rossi (played by an Italian male). Aaron “Hotch” Hotchner (played by a white male) is a supervisory special agent who is the BAU unit chief and communication liaison. The only main character who is not a supervisory special agent but just a regular special agent is Penelope Garcia (played by a white female). Garcia is the BAU technical analyst and co-communications liaison. Each episode follows the team being sent out to wherever a major crime is happening so that they may take over the investigation while also working with the local departments. There is usually one case per episode with it ending with the team successfully solving the case.

## **Findings**

### **Theme Summaries**

To come up with the themes from the content analysis, once again the “30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher” was used (Creswell & Baez, 2021). Based on the guidelines provided in this book, themes for each episode were highlighted and written out. Then, episodes were grouped together based on common themes. Themes which contained more episodes and had compelling representations were used as the “major” themes. Then, theme summaries were written summing up how the themes were represented throughout the season. The three major themes from this season were

determined to be: teamwork, fingerprinting, and sexual assault. The theme summaries for each of these themes are written below.

### **Teamwork**

A reoccurring theme throughout season 9 of *Criminal Minds* is teamwork - whether within the team or with other teams such as law enforcement, medical examiners, etc. From the very first episode, the main team is depicted working with the local police department where the crime has taken place. This happens a lot throughout the season because of the nature of the team's occupations because they are sent to different states within the U.S. to deal with major crimes. Therefore, they often must collaborate with the local police departments (Kershaw et al. 2013) and medical examiners/coroners (Kershaw et al. 2013). The collaborations with the police officers and medical examiners were always positive except for in two episodes (Hardy, Davis, Joy, & Gordon, 2013; Bailey, Davis, Dunkle, Frazier, & Gordon, 2014). Some of the other positive cooperation that took place within the episodes were with a surveillance analyst, bomb squad, and witnesses (Rooney et al. 2013). There were two other negative collaborations that took place with the U.S. Department of State and a paralegal and attorney together in one episode (Teng, Davis, Frazier, & Gordon, 2013).

### **Fingerprinting**

While a majority of the evidence represented in *Criminal Minds* stayed consistent with positive or negative representation, the fingerprint evidence's representation was inconsistent which made it hard to decipher whether the main team liked or disliked fingerprinting evidence. There are four main times within the season where the team has

the opportunity to utilize fingerprint evidence. Two of these times take place in each episode of the two-part season opener. In episode one, fingerprint evidence is able to be enough to prove that the wrong guy had been arrested since the prints did not match up (Kershaw, Davis, Barrois, & Gordon, 2013). One episode later however, the team opts out of utilizing fingerprint evidence and say, "Fingerprinting isn't an exact science; a good defense lawyer can poke holes in it" (Teng, Davis, Frazier, & Gordon, 2013, 39:06). In episode four, though fingerprints were found they ended up not being helpful because the person they were looking for did not have their fingerprints in the system (Bailey, Davis, Messer, & Gordon, 2013). One of the more positive representations of fingerprint evidence was in episode 19 when the team was able to identify the first victim's prints on the weapon (Culpepper, Davis, Barrois, & Davis, 2013).

### **Sexual Assault**

Another theme that reoccurred throughout season 9 was sexual assault. In addition, the sexual assault victims were almost always females - white females. In the very first episode of season 9 the white male perpetrator raped white women in their 20's and eventually began to rape women of color as well (Kershaw, Davis, Barrois, & Gordon, 2013). The next depiction of sexual assault in the season is in episode five when a 16-year-old white female is almost raped by her boyfriend before her father intervenes (Aarnioski, Davis, Williams, & Gordon, 2013). The third other rape crime represented is in episode 15, which centers around a couple who kills for sexual gratification and though their victims do not appear to be sexually assaulted at first, they eventually discover that the husband has been raping the victims (Alcalá, Davis, Harrison, & Gordon, 2013). Perhaps one of the even more interesting aspects of this episode though is

when special agent Dr. Spencer Reid says this when they still believed there was no sexual assault occurring, “it's strange considering most crimes involving women have some sort of sexual component” (Alcalá, Davis, Harrison, & Gordon, 2013, 5:27). In one episode, one of the female special agents - “JJ” - became a victim and was sexually assaulted by a past male coworker (Teng, Davis, Dunkle, & Gordon, 2013). Then, in episode 12 and 21 majority of the victims were sexually assaulted (McKiernan, Davis, Frazier, & Gordon, 2013; Hardy, Davis, Joy, & Gordon, 2014).

**Table 1**

*Frequency and Representation of Evidence in Season 9 of “Criminal Minds”*

| Evidence Type                       | Evidence Frequency | Number of Episodes | Percent of Positive Representation |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Digital Evidence                    | 41                 | 20                 | 74%                                |
| Documentary or Testimonial          | 23                 | 14                 | 90%                                |
| DNA Evidence                        | 9                  | 6                  | 100%                               |
| Scientific Evidence (Excluding DNA) | 16                 | 10                 | 81.3%                              |
| Physical Evidence                   | 10                 | 7                  | 90%                                |
| Miscellaneous                       | 4                  | 4                  | 100%                               |



**Table 2***Representation of Occupations in Season 9 of "Criminal Minds"*

| Occupation                | Percent of Positive Representation | Important Aspects of Representations  |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Supervisory Special Agent | 100%                               | Depicted as the "heroes" of the show  |
| Technical Analyst         | 100%                               | Depicted as a "hero" - she did not go through any proper training to get her job though   |
| Medical Examiner/Coroner  | 89%                                | Supporting roles; one negative representation was of someone who was voted into the position rather than having the education necessary |
| Police Officers           | 75%                                | Supporting roles; negative representations only occurred in rural areas   |
| Surveillance Analyst      | 100%                               | Supporting role; only showed up once  |
| Paralegal                 | 0%                                 | Does not trust the BAU; shows distrust between legal persons and law enforcement agencies   |
| Bomb Squad                | 100%                               | Supporting role in one episode  |
| Forensics                 | 100%                               | Very brief appearance   |
| SWAT Team                 | 100%                               | Very brief; assist in severe situations   |

**Table 3***Sample Table of Coding Formatting*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Season & Episode  | “Season 9, Episode 1 ‘The Inspiration’”   |
| Evidence Type(s)  | “DNA Evidence 1: tongue found at one of the crime scenes was sent for DNA testing and was able to find a link between a victim and DNA”   |
| Positive/Negative Representation of Evidence            | “DNA Evidence 1: positive; helped to identify a victim”   |
| Association with Conviction or Non-Conviction           | “DNA Evidence 1: played a role in conviction”   |
| Occupation Type(s)                                      | “Coroner: performs autopsies and gives a rundown of to the agents based on their examination of the body”                                 |
| Role of Occupation in Episode (Include Gender and Race) | “Coroner: important role but rarely shown; played by a white female”  |
| Positive/Negative Representation of Occupation          | “All of the occupations in this episodes were portrayed positively and they all worked together well in order to solve the crime”         |
| Other Important Details of Episode                      | “The perpetrator was a white male who raped and then killed all of his victims (all of which were females that were predominantly white)” |
| Director  | “Glenn Kershaw”   |
| Writer  | “Jeff Davis & Janine Sherman Barrois”   |
| Producer  | “Mark Gordon”   |
| Stats/Frequency of Evidence Types                       | “1 documentary evidence, 2 DNA evidence, 2 digital evidence, 1 scientific evidence”   |

*Note* To see full coding notes, see Appendix I

## Discussion

Overall, the findings collected from the season of *Criminal Minds* provide qualitative data that mostly supports the findings from previous research over the CSI Effect, though there are some areas of disagreement. First, the notes and qualitative data collected from the show supports the idea that the CSI Effect may be better described as the ‘tech effect’ instead. Another content analysis that was done over *CSI* came to the same conclusion (Smith et al., 2011). Similar results were found in another study that indicated jurors have an increased expectation of scientific evidence, and this may be a result of the tech effect and the increased representation of advanced digital tools being used to enhance or produce evidence (Kim, et al., 2009b). The content analysis of season 9 of *Criminal Minds* supports those same conclusions. One of the reasons this conclusion can be made is because one of the main occupations and main characters of the show is a technical analyst. Penelope Garcia is the team’s technical analyst and she is in every single episode providing vital information to the team’s case. She was such a major character that she even had an entire episode dedicated to her backstory and how she became a technical analyst to begin with (McKiernan, David, Frazier, & Gordon, 2014). With the nature of Garcia being a main character, her evidence analysis and collection was depicted more than the other evidence types, especially because she has 100% positive representation throughout the season (Table 2).

Digital evidence also had a much higher frequency of introductions within the episodes (Table 1). Although it did have a lower percentage of positive representations overall with 74% positive representation. However, this is most likely due to the higher overall representation of the digital evidence type in addition to the wider range of

evidence which fits into the digital evidence category. For example, in one episode the technical analyst refers to “metadata” as “the dirty word” (Teng, Davis, Frazier, & Gordon, 2013, 3:05). However, she also greatly utilizes evidence from people’s phones in a multitude of episodes throughout the season.

Something that has often been debated within the literature when concerning the CSI Effect is DNA evidence. Several studies have found that people who watch crime shows tend to find DNA evidence as the most reliable evidence type (Baskin & Sommers, 2010; Maeder & Corbett, 2015). In addition, another study examining evidence frequencies and a variety of crime shows found that DNA had a 100% clearance rate when used in the show (Rhineberger-Dunn et al., 2016). Based on the findings collected for season 9 of *Criminal Minds*, it is logical to conclude that the increased reliability on DNA evidence amongst those who watch crime shows is more due to its positive representation rather than the frequency with which it is shown. Though DNA evidence had one of the lower frequencies overall it had a 100% positive representation throughout the show (Table 1). There were also several times in the season where one of the agents wished they had DNA evidence but they did not, further putting DNA evidence in a positive light. One specific example is when Special Agent Hotch says, “Juries expect DNA and DNA isn’t gonna make the case here” (Teng, Davis, Frazier, & Gordon, 2013, 40:00). This quote from Special Agent Hotch is especially interesting because of the way he described jury members as “expecting” DNA, though he does not go on to explain exactly why juries expect DNA. It indicates that even the writers of *Criminal Minds* may potentially be aware of the CSI Effect or other similar phenomena –

though more research would need to be done here to fully grasp the intentions the writers may have had.

Though the digital evidence and DNA evidence representations and frequencies support the findings within CSI Effect research, there is one particular evidence type that does not support the literature. This evidence type would be eyewitness testimonial evidence. Research regarding the CSI Effect has found that those who watch crime shows tend to find eyewitness testimonial evidence to be the least reliable type of evidence (Baskin & Sommers, 2010). However, the qualitative data collected from *Criminal Minds* does not fit this conclusion. This is due to there being a generally positive overall representation (90%) and higher frequency overall (Table 1). In addition, with a majority of the main characters being special agents within the BAU, they rely heavily on interviewing people and hearing their own explanations of the events which occurred. The team utilizes these testimonies greatly within their investigations and determining their mental states. With those occupations having 100% positive representation (Table 2), it can be assumed that the investigations they conduct on the victims/perpetrators/witnesses are mostly positive as well. Therefore, this positive representation of eyewitness testimonial evidence cannot be used to explain why those who watch crime shows have a low reliance on that evidence type. Perhaps there is a different media form that is impacting those people's negative views of eyewitness testimony evidence, but more research would need to be conducted to confirm or deny this suggestion.

In terms of the major themes found for season 9, they each have their own potential implications. For the teamwork theme, it was an effective way for the show to

positively represent a variety of careers. This was mostly due to the nature of the main characters' careers and how they must travel around the country to solve cases. Therefore, they must work together with the local departments whether that be with medical examiners, police officers, etc. This was demonstrated by the mostly positive representations of the occupations throughout the season (Table 2). Most of the negative teamwork is done with legal persons such as the paralegal in one episode (Table 2; Appendix I). Most of these negative occupation representations were either due to distrust between the team and whomever they were working with, or a certain stereotype they were portraying. For example, a majority of the negative representations of the medical examiner/coroner and police officers was due to stereotypes surrounding investigations within rural areas. They depicted those officers and that specific coroner as being “dumb” and “lazy” with their jobs (Hardy, Davis, Joy, & Gordon, 2014; Bailey, Davis, Dunkle, & Gordon, 2014; see Appendix 1 for episode notes).

The fingerprinting theme was another interesting representation throughout the season. With the conflicting portrayal of this evidence type throughout, there are some potential impacts on watchers. For those who watch *Criminal Minds*, they may begin to subconsciously have their own conflicting views of fingerprint evidence. Therefore, their desire to convict or not convict someone when fingerprint evidence is present may be affected. This is similar to how there have been opposing findings with CSI Effect research about how watching crime shows impacts people's willingness to convict someone with the presence of certain evidence – usually scientific evidence (Alldredge, 2015; Kim, et al., 2009a). These conflicting conclusions in the research may potentially

be a result of mixed representation of certain evidence types like how the fingerprint evidence is represented throughout this particular season of *Criminal Minds*.

Lastly, there was the main theme of sexual assault which has its own set of implications and its own place within the CSI Effect research. As mentioned previously with the research, an important factor to consider when investigating the CSI Effect is the fear of crime of the individuals who watch the show. Some researchers found that those who watch crime shows have a higher fear of crime overall (Kim, 2007). Other researchers found that certain social factors played a larger role in fear of crime (Garcia-Castro & Perez-Sanchez, 2018). Taking this research into consideration, the implications of the high degree of sexual assault crimes in *Criminal Minds* can be better understood. With a majority of the victims of these sexual assault crimes being played by women, it is logical to assume that the women who watch *Criminal Minds* may have a higher fear of sexual assault crimes compared to women who do not watch *Criminal Minds* and men who watch *Criminal Minds*. However, it is also important to consider the social factors of the viewers that could impact their fear of sexual assault crimes as noted by Garcia-Castro & Perez-Sanchez (2018).

### **Limitations**

While this research did provide substantial qualitative data to help confirm or deny some aspects of the research regarding the CSI Effect, there were several limitations for this research. One such limitation is that only one season of the show was watched due to the time constraints of the research. This may have led to an incomplete depiction and evaluation of the show as a whole. If the entire show could have been watched and coded, more overall qualitative data could have been collected and a more wholistic

analysis of the entire show could have been completed. This would have led to more theme summaries in addition to further conclusions about evidence and occupation representations. It would have also been useful to watch how the show adapted over time and how the writers maybe could have attempted to address the issues related to the CSI Effect as the show progressed.

Another limitation was the researcher's lack of experience with doing content analyses or coding for a form of media prior to conducting this research. Though several sources were used to assist in the set-up of the coding and content analysis process (Creswell & Baez, 2021; Smith et al., 2011), there were most likely some mistakes made in the process. As the content analysis progressed, some strategies were developed that may have been underemployed during the beginning stages.

In addition to a lack of experience with conducting content analyses, only one content analysis was done by one researcher. It would have been beneficial to have multiple researchers conducting their own content analyses of the show too in order to collect more qualitative data to evaluate and to ensure there were not any personal biases impacting the data collection and the coding for each episode.

### **Future Research**

While this study yielded some important findings, there are ample opportunities for future research. To further the research that has been done with this project, firstly it would be important to conduct a similar content analysis but while taking into consideration the limitations of this particular content analysis and taking the proper steps to avoid these limitations. One way to avoid these limitations would be to watch the



entire show and code for each episode of every season so that a more well-rounded analysis of the show would be done. It would also be beneficial to include a researcher who is more experienced with content analyses in the actual content analysis of the show via taking their own notes and doing their own coding as well. This would ensure that the content analysis and coding was being done properly. In addition to having a more experienced researcher perform their own content analysis, it would also be helpful to have several people watch *Criminal Minds* in its entirety and have them conduct their own content analysis after explaining the goals of this research. This would allow for more educated decisions and conclusions to be made having obtained data from the whole show.

Some other ways to further this research would be to compare the data obtained from this content analysis, or similar content analyses, with data from the court rooms and criminal cases themselves to have a better perception of the difference between evidence submitted in court and evidence shown in crime shows. Though there has been some data out there aiming to do similar investigations, there needs to be more statistical comparison between evidence in court and in shows.

### **Conclusion**

The research and theories like the cultivation theory and CSI Effect make it clear that the media have the ability to influence the thoughts and opinions of people, even if it is subconsciously. This influence can lead to an inaccurate view of the world or aspects about the world. As the CSI Effect describes, television shows that depict crime or criminal investigation can impact viewers' perceptions of investigations, fear of crime, certain criminal justice careers, evidence types, etc.. While a majority of the research

conducted about the CSI Effect relies on viewers and non-viewers answering questionnaires and making conclusions based on those answers, this content analysis provides real, qualitative data from one of these shows itself in order to legitimize or not legitimize the claims that are often made about the CSI Effect. After reviewing the evidence and occupations representations, along with the major themes throughout the season, it can be concluded that the CSI Effect is a legitimate phenomenon that can be explained by the way that crime shows portray evidence, occupations, and a variety of themes. Based on the disparities in evidence frequencies and representations, it can also be concluded that *Criminal Minds* is no stranger to the impacts associated with the CSI Effect.

Knowing the great impacts that the media can have on people it is crucial to take the time to be mindful of the type of media that is often consumed and the extent of which it exaggerates or underexaggerates real life. By taking the time to analyze media consumption, unrealistic perceptions and expectations within the world can be better avoided. Within this thought, it is also necessary to consider from a student perspective or from the perspective of someone endeavoring a career often depicted in shows like *Criminal Minds*. Some criminal justice/forensic science professors already feel that the impacts from crime shows on students is so great that the curriculum should be changed to account for any unrealistic ideas about their major/career (Bergslien, 2006). With this in mind, it is even more crucial to analyze media consumption when that media is depicting a potential major or career path. Otherwise, there may be some disappointments or dissatisfaction with that career in the future if it does not meet those expectations set by the media. One way to avoid these dissatisfactions is to reduce the perception of

realism of the particular media being consumed. This is especially important when considering that some researchers argued that perception of realism has higher significance on the viewers' perception of a career than the overall exposure to that media (Cho, et al., 2011).

Through taking these findings into consideration the media's influence can be mitigated. Overall, being mindful of the type of media being consumed and whether or not it is realistic will help in avoiding unrealistic expectations of the world around - and potentially within - the courtroom.

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## Appendix 1: Coding for Season 9 of *Criminal Minds*

| Season & Episode                       | Evidence  | Positive/Negative Representation  | Association with conviction or non-conviction  | Occupation   | Role in episode (include gender and race)   | Positive/negative representation   | Other important details   |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| 9. 1, "The Inspiration"                | Documentary - husband of one of the victims was interviewed and Spencer Reid used this information to come up with a criminal profile Digital Evidence (1): technical analyst is able to find bank records and evidence of tax fraud DNA Evidence (1): a tongue found at one of the crime scenes was sent for DNA testing and was able to find a link between a victim and the DNA (17-23 minutes) DNA Evidence (2): the technical analyst was able to discover that a suspected victim had a DNA sample on file. They used DNA from a tooth found at a crime scene and performed DNA analysis to match the suspected victim to the crime scene. (26-30 minutes) Fingerprint Evidence: fingerprints taken from the perpetrator after taken into custody did not match up the fingerprints found at one of the crime scenes - this was enough to indicate that the had arrested the wrong guy Digital Evidence (2): technical analyst was able to find restraining order records from one of the victims in order to narrow down who the perpetrator was | Documentary: positive though it did not play as big of a role as other evidence types Digital (1): negative, did not have an impact DNA Evidence (1): positive, helped identify a victim DNA Evidence (2): positive, once again used to identify a victim Fingerprint: positive, helped in determining that they had arrested the wrong person  | Documentary - played a role but no as much as other evidence types Digital (1): no role DNA Evidence 1: played a role in conviction DNA Evidence 2: played a role in conviction Digital 2: played a role in conviction Fingerprint: played a role in non-conviction  | Supervisory Special Agent: most of the main characters have this occupation though it seems like they have their own designated roles. Only some of them have their doctorates (namely Dr. Spencer Reid) They are all a part of the FBI's Behavioral Analyst Unit so their primary focus is their psychological factors of crime however they are all also depicted as going to crime scenes, being in pursuit, interrogating people, sending in evidence to be analyzed. Technical Analyst: Peneople Garcia is the technical analyst. She is often depicted sitting at a computer and communicating directly to the agent via phone calls. She quickly finds information that agents request or finds things on her own and lets the agents know about what she has found. Police Officers: depicted as the side characters usually only there as backup or to help in looking through crime scenes. Coroner: performs autopsies and gives a rundown to the agents based on their examination of the body | Supervisory Special Agents: played by mostly white people though there is one black male and one hispanic male. There are two women who play supervisory special agents while the rest are males Technical analyst: played by a woman. Police officers: played by a variety of people. The main sergeant the team communicated with in this episode was a black woman Coroner: played by a white female | All of the occupations in this episode were portrayed positively and they all worked together well in order to solve the crime   | -perpetrator was a white male who raped and then killed all of his females which at the beginning were only white women but he then broadened his scope and begin raping and killing some women of color as well. All of his victims were also in their 20's. -the perpetrator is diagnosed with acute delusional disorder -DNA analyses were performed very quickly which is quite unrealistic -the BAU team is depicted as having to miss vacations in order to come in for work calls and also pulling all nighters to finish up performance appraisals. |
| Season 9 Episode 2 "The Inspired" 2013 | Documentary - birth records and adoption records are used by the technical analyst to determine that the perpetrator has a twin Digital Evidence 1: technical analyst uses metadata to track down perpetrator Digital evidence 2: records of train trips by perpetrator Interrogation: perpetrator's mother is interviewed Biological Evidence: sperm clusters found on one of the victims proves a rape occurred Digital Evidence 3: technical analyst is able to figure out who the perpetrator's mother has been calling Fingerprinting could have been used by the team opts out  | Documentary - positive, leads to helpful information Digital Evidence 1: though helpful, the technical refers to the word "metadata" as the "dirty word" Digital Evidence 2: positive, they use this information to find the perpetrator's mother Biological evidence: positive, proves a rape occurred Digital Evidence 3: positive, links to other people involved in crime Fingerprinting: negative, "fingerprinting isn't an exact science. A good defense lawyer can poke holes in it. Juries expect DNA, and DNA isn't gonna make the case here." (39:06) | Documentary: conviction Digital evidence 1: conviction. Digital evidence 2: conviction. Biological evidence: conviction Digital evidence 3: conviction Fingerprinting: opted out of using  | Paralegal: job in this episode was to represent the perpetrator and prove he is not guilty Attorney: assisted family (the family of perpetrators that is) in setting up a trust SWAT team: assist in a more severe situation   | Paralegal: played by a white male Attorney: played by a white male SWAT team: played by a variety, shown very briefly   | Paralegal: portrayed more negatively, sort of the "bad guy". He makes it clear that he does not trust the BAU and does not think profiling is accurate. He also claimed that the FBI and the police "jumped the gun" and that is why they arrested the wrong guy Attorney: negatively portrayed, does not really want to cooperate at first but finally he does. SWAT team: positive, provide backup as needed | -There is a theme of distrust between the BAU/special agents and the legal professionals -more of the victims in this episode are women of color  |
| Season 9 Episode 3 "Final Shot" 2013   | Surveillance evidence: a special agent who specializes in reviewing surveillance footage looked at footage taken of a shooting in order to determine the location of the victims and a possible location of the sniper Firearms Evidence: special agents investigate the first crime scene and are able to retrieve bullets and send them for forensic analysis documentary evidence: a prisoner is questioned as he may have connections to the crime or the person who committed the crime Firearms evidence: the team investigates another crime scene and once again retrieve bullets and investigate location of the bullets: Digital Evidence: technical analyst was able to retrieve the last text message sent by one of the victims  | Surveillance evidence: positive, helped in figuring out how the crime was committed Firearms evidence 1: positive, was used to figure out the type of weapon the sniper was using documentary evidence: neutral, ended up being less helpful though it did rule out that one person Firearms evidence 2: positive, helped in determining that the sniper had to have some military experience and they were only "missing" shots to "throw off forensics" Digital evidence: positive, helped team figure out who other victims were                             | Surveillance evidence: association with conviction though it did not play as big of a role Firearms evidence 1: association with conviction Documentary evidence: association with conviction though it played a minor role Firearms evidence 2: association with conviction, proved very helpful. Digital evidence: association with conviction | Surveillance analyst: wasn't in the episode for too long, mainly just the beginning portion of the episode. She was a special guest. CSI: seen very briefly in the episode   | Surveillance analyst: played by a hispanic woman. Worked for the FBI, was called in to give her report of the surveillance footage being used for this specific case CSI: played by a variety, assisted in investigating crime scene  | All occupations had positive representations and they worked together well   | -The main perpetrator was a black male -There was a wide variety of victims (male, female, white, black, hispanic, asian) -episode overall did feature as much evidence for the entirety of the episode was the firearms evidence; it is not mentioned specifically who performed the bullet analyses   |

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| Season 9<br>Episode 4 "to<br>Bear Witness"<br>2013 | Demonstrative: crime scene photo depicting victim as he was found Eyewitness: victim is questioned Physical evidence: clothes, shoes, and other materials left behind by the perp and his victim Fingerprints: fingerprints from the victim were ran through the database Digital evidence 1: overview of the universities in the area and the number of students attending each university Documentary: medical examiner's report of a deceased victim Digital evidence 2: facial recognition system is ran on foreign exchange students with visas at the local universities | Demonstrative: positive, team uses it to determine the type of abuse the victim may have endured Eyewitness evidence: more negative, due to the injuries that the victim faced, it was hard for them to communicate with the agents as they asked questions, there was a bit of miscommunication as well, when they were able to properly communicate it was positive though Physical evidence: positive, team uses this evidence to determine that the perpetrator also had a female victim Fingerprints: more negative as the victim did not have their fingerprints in the database so it did not help Digital evidence 1: neutral, provided team with too many possible victim identifications at first Documentary: positive, team used the report to figure out that the deceased victim underwent a lobotomy and then was shot in the head Digital evidence 2: positive, led to an identification of some of the victims | Demonstrative: association with conviction, though it was not relied upon as much Eyewitness evidence: association with conviction, once it was successfully communicated Physical evidence: association with conviction though it is important to note that no analyses of the physical evidence was performed Fingerprints: no association Documentary: association with conviction Digital evidence 2: association with conviction, one of the more beneficial pieces of evidence in this episode | Medical examiner: not shown, just referenced   | Medical examiner: provides a report of the deceased victim's autopsy   | Medical examiner: positive even though they were only referenced   | -digital evidence was the most relied upon type of evidence for this episode -two of the victims are white males, one of the victims is a white female, the perpetrator is a white male who is related to the white female victim. The perpetrator and female victim were foreigners, they came from Germany  |
| Episode 5<br>"Route 66"                            | Digital evidence 1: past robberies in the area most likely involving the perpetrator Physical evidence 1: telephone of the daughter is found left behind Physical evidence 2: receipt left behind by the perpetrator Digital evidence 2: tech analyst lets team know about a shooting that occurred in the area  | Digital evidence 1: positive, assisted in understanding the perp's motive Physical evidence 1: positive, helped confirm the daughter's whereabouts Physical evidence 2: positive, helped the team to figure out what unsub's next plans were and where they were most likely heading Digital evidence 2: leads team to a more exact location of the unsub which ultimately led to his arrest  | Digital evidence 1: association with conviction Physical evidence 1: association with conviction physical evidence 2: association with conviction Digital evidence 2: association with conviction  | Police officers: in every episode the police are always represented as underneath the team as the FBI takes hold of the investigation. | Police officers: played by a variety of races and genders, didn't have too big of a role they mainly assisted in looking through some of the crime scenes.   | Police officers: positive though they did not have much of a role  | -episode opens with a 16 year old white female about to get raped by her white boyfriend. Then, her dad appears and harms the boyfriend. The female is later reported to be missing but we see that she is with her father and they are leaving to go to another state -perpetrator uses a gun several times throughout the episode   |
| Episode 6 "In the Blood"                           | Digital evidence 1: past arrest records of the third victim is found Digital evidence 2: ancestry of the perpetrator is found  | Digital evidence 1: positive, led to the team discovering the types of ppl that the perp was targeting Digital evidence 2: positive, allowed the team to understand the motive of the perp better   | Digital evidence 1: association with conviction Digital evidence 2: association with conviction  | Medical examiner: brief appearance police officers: brief appearance   | Medical examiner: white female, provided an overview of the types of injuries found on the victim Police officers: various races and genders, basically just follow what the team tells them to do   | All occupations had positive representations and they worked together well   | First two victims are white females, third victim was a white male. Perp was a middle-aged white male.  |
| Episode 7<br>"Gatekeeper"                          | Digital evidence 1: phone number of someone close to one of the victims Digital evidence 2: death records from perp son along with divorce records from the perp   | Digital evidence 1: positive, allows team to better understand the types of people the perp is targeting Digital evidence 2: positive, allows team to understand the perp's motive  | Digital evidence 1: association with conviction Digital evidence 2: association with conviction  | N/A  | N/A  | N/A  | Most of the victims in this episode are white males It is important to note that the tech analyst was struggling to find stuff for most of the episode, it wasn't until 23 minutes in that the tech analyst was able to find anything   |
| Episode 8 "The Return"                             | Digital evidence 1: list of active gangs in Chicago area Documentary evidence 1: medical examiner report Scientific evidence: toxicology results Physical evidence 1: clothes that the perp was wearing Digital evidence 2: trace of one of the perp's calls to find location Digital evidence 3: ran badges numbers in the Chicago P.D. system Digital evidence 4: last known address of someone close to main perp   | Digital evidence 1: positive, helped in tracking down possible perp Documentary evidence: Positive, explains injuries and gun shot wounds Scientific evidence: positive, though it didn't really impact anything Physical evidence 1: positive, helped in identifying perp Digital evidence 2: positive, allowed team to locate one of the perps Digital evidence 3: positive, helped team in figuring out that the main perp used to be a police officer before having his badge stripped Digital evidence 4: positive, helped in finding perp   | Digital evidence 1: association with conviction Documentary evidence: association with conviction Scientific evidence: association with conviction Physical evidence: association with conviction Digital evidence 2: association with conviction Digital evidence 3: association with conviction Digital evidence 4: association with conviction  | Bomb squad: appears twice in this episode Medical examiner: brief appearance in episode  | Bomb squad: various races and genders, they come after an explosion has occurred and explain what type of bomb is used. They come again when someone comes into the police station with a bomb strapped to them and they assist in disabling the bomb Medical examiner: black female, provided a report of the injuries and gun shot wounds along with a toxicology report | Positive representations of both occupations, they both played vital roles in assisting the team's investigation and the wellbeing of the public | the main perp in this episode was a white male who used to be a cop before having his badge stripped. He then coerced younger people to commit crimes for him. These people consisted of a young hispanic male, young black male, and a young white female. The episode opened with the young hispanic male shooting a white female waitress in a diner and then the young black male acting as the getaway driver. |

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| Episode 9<br>"Strange Fruit"       | Scientific evidence 1: analysis of body's bones<br>scientific evidence 2: bone analysis of both female bodies<br>DNA Analysis 1: taken from the male victim's body<br>Digital evidence 1: dental records of one of the victims<br>Documentary evidence 1: perp's handwritten confession | Scientific evidence 1: positive, shape of bones reveal that the person was female<br>scientific evidence 2: positive, revealed that the two female bodies had to have been buried around 10 years ago<br>DNA Analysis 1: positive led to the identification of the male victim<br>Digital evidence 1: allowed one of the bodies to be identified because of the match made with the jaw on the body and the jaw in the dental records<br>Documentary evidence 1: positive, led to full conviction | Scientific evidence 1: association with conviction<br>Scientific evidence 2: association with conviction<br>DNA Analysis 1: association with conviction<br>Digital evidence 1: association with conviction<br>Documentary evidence 1: association with conviction | Medical examiner: had more of an appearance than most of the other M.E.s<br>Forensics: very brief appearance<br>Technical analyst: not quite as big of a role | Medical examiner: asian woman, arrived at the backyard where the remains were found. She explained the genders of the bodies and how long they had been buried for.<br>Forensics: various races and genders. In the background looking through microscopes and looking at the bones<br>Technical analyst: I thought it was interesting that she was responsible for matching up the jaw bones from one of the remains to dental records - I feel like this would be performed by a forensic odontologist or a scientist at least | Positive representations of all, they all provided very beneficial information  | the perp was a black male that was purposefully murdering white people based on his experiences with racism. The victims were two white females and one white male   |
| Episode 10<br>"The Caller"         | DNA Analysis 1: analyze blood spatter found on the victim's door<br>DNA Analysis 2: used on victim<br>Digital evidence 1: found the last five people that the victim played video games with<br>Digital evidence 2: track phone call locations  | DNA Analysis 1: positive, led to the realization that the blood was pig's blood rather than human blood<br>DNA Analysis 2: additional DNA analysis led to the identification of the victim<br>Digital evidence 1: neutral, did not ultimately lead to any answers<br>Digital evidence 2: neutral, turned out to be a decoy  | DNA Analysis 1: association with conviction though it did not play a major role<br>DNA Analysis 2: association with conviction<br>Digital evidence 1: neutral<br>Digital evidence 2: neutral  | N/A   | N/A  | N/A   | The perp was a white middle aged male and the victim was a white 10 year old male  |
| Episode 11<br>"Bully"              | Documentary evidence 1: images of the victims' beating<br>Documentary evidence 2: M.E. report<br>Documentary evidence 3: father of one of the victims is interrogated   | Documentary evidence 1: positive, allowed the team to determine if the beatings were done by the same perp<br>Documentary evidence 2: positive, provided the cause of death which was asphyxiation<br>Documentary evidence 3: provided the team a better description of how the victim appeared when found dead   | Documentary evidence 1: association with conviction<br>Documentary evidence 2: association with conviction<br>Documentary evidence 3: association with conviction   | medical examiner: appeared briefly  | Medical examiner: white female, provided the team with the cause of death  | Medical examiner: positive even though they were only referenced  | episode opened with a white female victim and her white male captor. Most of the victims of the episode were white males   |
| Episode 12<br>"The Black Queen"    | Digital evidence: computer hacking<br>Miscellaneous evidence: linguistic analysis   | Digital evidence: positive, tech analyst was able to track a hacker by hacking into their own system<br>Miscellaneous evidence (linguistic analysis): positive, one of the special agents, who specializes in linguistics, was able to determine the author of a post on social media   | Digital evidence: association with conviction<br>Miscellaneous evidence: association with conviction  | Linguistic specialist: one of the main characters, though she very rarely utilizes this skill   | linguistic specialist: hispanic female, helped in determining the identity of perp   | Linguistic specialist: positive though not shown often  | majority of victims are female prostitutes, main perp is a white male  |
| Episode 13<br>"The Road Home"      | Digital evidence: pieces of surveillance footage<br>Documentary evidence: M.E. report   | Digital evidence: helps in identifying the unsub<br>Documentary evidence: assisted in determining the unsub's M.O.  | Digital evidence: associated with conviction<br>Documentary evidence: association with conviction   | CSI: briefly shown  | CSI: various races and genders, assist in investigating the crime scenes   | CSI: positive, cooperate well with the team   | Unsub is a white male who was about to commit suicide but ended up shooting three hispanic males who were holding an elderly white male at gunpoint. He then goes after people who he deems committing crimes like a vigilante.  |
| Episode 14<br>"200.0"              | Digital evidence: encrypted phone   | Digital evidence: neutral<br>tech analyst struggles to get anything off of the victim's phone because it is heavily encrypted   | Digital evidence: neutral   | US Department of State: play a pretty big role in this episode  | US Department of State: head person is a white female and the rest are various races and genders, they are shown as knowing more information than the team and are willing to share some information but are not very happy about it   | US Department of State: slightly negative from the perspective of the team because they have withheld information, though for good reason. They are willing to cooperate eventually though. | main victim of this episode is actually one of the main special agents, a white female named JJ. It is revealed that she used to work with the State but had to keep that a secret. The episode shows her being sexually assaulted by a former coworker during her time working with the state who turned out to be a double agent |
| Episode 15 "Mr. and Mrs. Anderson" | Documentary evidence 1: M.E. report<br>DNA Analysis 1: DNA from condom<br>Digital evidence 1: health insurance statements   | Documentary evidence 1: positive, revealed that the first two victims were not sexually assaulted<br>DNA Analysis 1: positive, revealed that the perp was raping his victims and he had acquired an STD<br>Digital evidence 1: positive, allowed the team to understand that the perps were seeing a marriage counselor and they were able to get a lot of information that way   | Documentary evidence 1: association with conviction<br>DNA Analysis 1: association with conviction<br>Digital evidence 1: association with conviction   | N/A   | N/A  | N/A   | The perps were a married couple - white male and white female. Most of the victims are females. The couple's killings are done as a sort of sexual gratification though they do not sexually assault them. However, the husband starts to do his own killings and begins to rape his victims.                                      |

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| Episode 16<br>"Gabby" | Digital evidence 1: van model Miscellaneous evidence: K-9 unit finds dead body scientific evidence 1: coroner examines body Digital evidence 2: victim's babysitter's phone calls scientific evidence 2: UV light used to detect blood Digital evidence 3: perp's search history and communications via library computer Digital evidence 4: facial recognition | Digital evidence 1: positive, revealed the plumbing company that the perp worked for by matching his van model to the company's van model Miscellaneous evidence: positive, body of the main suspect was found Scientific evidence 1: positive, revealed the body had been dead for 72 hours Digital evidence 2: positive, revealed that the victim's babysitter had been in contact with one of the suspects Scientific evidence 2: positive, detected blood in the house Digital evidence 3: positive, helped in determining the motive of the perp and where they worked Digital evidence 4: positive, led to the identification of other perps | Digital evidence 1: association with conviction though it played less of a role Miscellaneous evidence: association with conviction Scientific evidence 1: association with conviction Digital evidence 2: association with conviction Scientific evidence 2: association with conviction Digital evidence 3: association with conviction Digital evidence 4: association with conviction | N/A | N/A | N/A | -first victim in this episode was a young white female, the perps were all older people of various genders |
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| Episode 17<br>"Persuasion" | Documentary evidence 1: M.E. report Digital evidence 1: ID of a victim toxicology report Digital evidence 2: surveillance footage Digital evidence 3: police records Documentary evidence 3: M.E. report Digital evidence 4: recovered text messages | Documentary evidence 1: positive, revealed that the first two women drowned and suffered blunt force trauma to the wrists Digital evidence 1: positive, was able to ID one of the victims Documentary evidence 2: positive, revealed the tox report came back negative Digital evidence 2: positive, allowed team to better understand the jobs of those involved in the crime Digital evidence 3: positive, police records allowed them to narrow down the perp Documentary evidence 3: positive, revealed that the third victim died by strangulation and had the presence of sewer water Digital evidence 4: positive, found location referenced in the text messages | Documentary evidence 1: association with conviction Digital evidence 1: association with conviction Documentary evidence 2: association with conviction Digital evidence 2: association with conviction Digital evidence 3: association with conviction Documentary evidence 3: association with conviction Digital evidence 4: association with conviction | Medical examiner: occasional appearances and references | Medical examiner: asian male, provides several different reports for the team that indicate cause of death, injuries, and tox reports | Medical examiner: positive, assisted the team a lot in this episode | first two victims are white females in their 30s, third victim was a white males |
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| Episode 18<br>"Rabid" | Documentary evidence 1: M.E. report DNA Analysis 1: samples from bite marks Documentary evidence 2: Coroner's report DNA Analysis 2: identify confirmation scientific evidence 1: dental analysis | Documentary evidence 1: positive, reveals cause of death and injuries on victims DNA Analysis 1: positive, they weren't able to acquire any DNA from the bite samples but the team indicated they wished they had some therefore putting DNA in a positive light Documentary evidence 2: positive, revealed some of victims died of rabies DNA Analysis 2: positive, team reveals that even though they are pretty sure of the identity of a body that was found they are awaiting DNA confirmation scientific evidence 1: positive, revealed the victims had human bite wounds that came from other victims | Documentary evidence 1: association with conviction DNA Analysis 1: neutral Documentary evidence 2: association with conviction DNA Analysis 2: association with conviction scientific evidence 1: association with conviction | Medical examiner: brief appearance coroner: mentioned | Medical examiner: white male, provided cause of death and overview of injuries found on the body coroner: provided cause of death | Medical examiner: positive coroner: positive | Victims were of different races, it was confirmed there were at least two females and two males. Perp was a white male. |
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| Episode 19<br>"The Edge of Winter"          | Documentary evidence 1: witness is interviewed<br>Miscellaneous evidence: forensic artist's victim picture<br>scientific evidence: fingerprint analysis<br>documentary evidence 2: confession  | Documentary evidence 1: neutral, helps agent understand the victim's story though it turns out they weren't being super honest at first<br>Miscellaneous evidence: positive, victim's sister was able to recognize the picture and they were then able to ID the victim<br>Scientific evidence: positive, revealed that the weapon had the initial victim's prints on it<br>documentary evidence 2: positive, once the agent convinced the "victim" to be more honest she confessed to willingly aiding in some of the crimes committed  | Documentary evidence: association with non-conviction<br>Miscellaneous evidence: association with non-conviction<br>Scientific evidence: association with conviction<br>Documentary evidence 2: association with conviction   | Special Agent/Profiler (Derek Morgan, who has a specialization in fixation and obsessive behaviors); main character, prominent role in this episode | Special Agent/Profiler: black male, rather than the usual roles the special agents are shown in, in this episode special agent Derek Morgan is assisting a "victim" in putting together their testimony and is preparing them for cross-examination. Derek Morgan mentions that profilers only do profiling as part of their job - the other part is assisting in prosecution | Special Agent/Profiler: positive  | First victim is a black female (who turns out to also be a perp), second victim is a middle eastern female, third victim is a white male. The main perp is a white male and the black female forms a relationship with him and becomes a perp as well. |
| Episode 20<br>"Blood Relations"             | Physical evidence: drugs   | Physical evidence: positive, revealed the presence of methamphetamine  | Physical evidence: association with conviction  | Police officers: somewhat prominent role  | Police officers: mostly white males, they attempted to assist the team but not well   | Police officers: negative though I think this was more based on the appalachian stereotype of them being "dumb" and not following the law as vigorously | First victim was a white male, second victim was a white female, this episode utilized a multitude of appalachian stereotypes  |
| Episode 21<br>"What Happens in Mecklinberg" | Digital evidence 1: phone records<br>Digital evidence 2: school records<br>physical evidence: physical observation of a surviving victim<br>Digital evidence 3: digital identification<br>Digital evidence 4: hospital notes<br>DNA Analysis 1: victim DNA results | Digital evidence 1: positive, able to see who the victim called before being abducted<br>Digital evidence 2: positive, able to narrow down possible perps based on who the victim went to school with<br>Physical evidence: positive, revealed that the perp may be sexually assaulting her victims<br>Digital evidence 3: positive, able to identify the perp based on medical bills, text messages, and social media posts<br>Digital evidence 4: positive, allowed for a better understanding of how one of the victims died<br>DNA Analysis 1: positive, DNA results revealed that the victim had sex with multiple partners before checking into the hospital | Digital evidence 1: association with conviction<br>Digital evidence 2: association with conviction<br>Physical evidence: association with conviction<br>digital evidence 3: association with conviction<br>Digital evidence 4: association with conviction<br>DNA Analysis 1: association with conviction | N/A   | N/A   | N/A   | Variety of victims in this episode: one black female, one white female, two white males (all in college). The perpetrator is a white female  |
| Episode 22<br>"Fatal"                       | Scientific evidence 1: toxicology report<br>Digital evidence 1: surveillance footage   | Scientific evidence 1: positive, revealed that the victims ingested arsenic<br>Digital evidence 1: revealed all of the victims were in the same location shortly before their deaths   | Scientific evidence 1: association with conviction<br>Digital evidence 1: association with conviction   | N/A   | N/A   | N/A   | first victim was a white male, second victim was a white female, third victim was a hispanic male, fourth victim was a black female. The perp was a white male   |
| Episode 23<br>"Angels"                      | Miscellaneous evidence (demonstrative): crime scene photos<br>Documentary evidence 1: M.E. report<br>Digital evidence 1: bank records  | Miscellaneous evidence (demonstrative): positive, team is able to better understand the nature of the crime<br>Documentary evidence 1: positive, revealed that the cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head<br>Digital evidence 1: positive, was able to narrow down a potential perp based on suspiciously large amounts of money being deposited into an account   | Miscellaneous evidence (demonstrative): association with conviction<br>Documentary evidence 1: association with conviction<br>Digital evidence 1: association with conviction   | Medical examiner: longer appearance than most M.E.s   | Medical examiner: white male, provided cause of death but failed to run a toxicology report, there was a running joke throughout the episode that he didn't really know what he was doing cause he was voted into his position  | Medical examiner: negative, was voted into position   | victims consist of two white females and one white male.   |
| Episode 24<br>"Demons"                      | Scientific evidence: blood spatter<br>physical evidence 1: bullets<br>physical evidence 2: victim's house<br>digital evidence: birth certificates  | Scientific evidence: positive, indicated the victims were shot<br>physical evidence 1: positive, revealed what they originated from<br>physical evidence 2: positive, revealed the victim did not leave their house willingly<br>digital evidence: positive, discovered the victim's son   | Scientific evidence: association with conviction<br>physical evidence 1: association with conviction<br>physical evidence 2: association with conviction<br>digital evidence: association with conviction   | N/A   | N/A   | N/A   | N/A  |