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Fear of Crime Through the Ears of a Murderino: The Effect of True Crime Podcasts on Fear of Crime

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FEAR OF CRIME THROUGH THE EARS OF A MURDERINO:
THE EFFECT OF TRUE CRIME PODCASTS ON FEAR OF CRIME

By

Elizabeth June Bailey, B.S.

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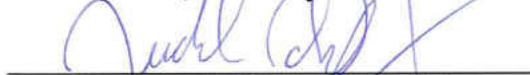
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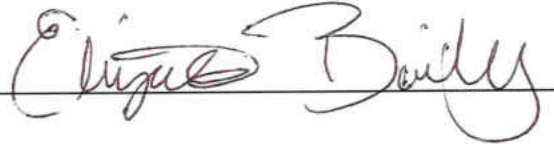


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FEAR OF CRIME THROUGH THE EARS OF A MURDERINO:
THE EFFECT OF TRUE CRIME PODCASTS ON FEAR OF CRIME

By

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Bachelor of Science

University of Kentucky

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2014

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Eastern Kentucky University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

May, 2017

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Ed and Judy Bailey.

Mom and dad, thank you for every opportunity you have given me the past twenty-five years. Without you I never could have gotten to this point.

To Maw Maw & Paw Paw,

Thank you for always supporting me and being my biggest cheerleaders.

And

To my partner in life, Tim Michl

Without whom I would not have had the motivation or focus needed to chase my dreams.

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I would like to thank everyone who has had any hand in assisting me on this journey. Specifically, Dr. Kristie R. Blevins, who worked tirelessly to acquire resources that ensured achievement of this study while also guiding me to work to my fullest potential. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Judah Schept, Dr. Victoria Collins, and Dr. Gary Potter, for their honest and productive comments to make this paper the best it could be. Finally, a great thank you goes to my fellow Murderinos all over the World – without you, this project would not have been possible. --SSDGM!

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore levels and correlates of fear of crime among a sample of individuals who listen to true crime podcasts. An online survey was used to gauge respondents' levels of fear of crime before and after listening to a true crime audio podcast entitled *My Favorite Murder*. The survey also included items designed to measure some individual characteristics and personal experiences. Results indicate that some of these factors were related to listeners' fear of crime before, after, and/or the overall change in fear of crime levels from before exposure to after. Specifically, age, race, known victims, personal victimization history, and frequency of true crime podcast exposure were all associated with fear of crime in some way; type of residential area the respondent lived in was the only factor shown to have no important impact on fear of crime levels.

There were interesting patterns where relationships did exist, in that one group showed lower levels of fear than other groups before listening to the podcast, but the same group then showed the most significant increase in fear of crime after listening to the audio podcast, meaning that characteristic had a greater impact on fear of crime for said group over others that may have presented higher levels of fear before listening to a specific podcast. The findings of this study indicate that exposure to true crime media does have an impact on fear of crime, but unlike studies on other types of media, regular exposure to true crime podcasts tend to predict a lowered fear of crime. Future studies should explore further this

relationship and study the content of this and other podcasts to decipher what might cause these relationships, and also look into what it is about the groups who began with higher fear but were affected less from exposure that caused this phenomenon.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Growing up we hear it all the time, parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, essentially any adult to whom a child complains will at some point come back with a story of how things were different – often better – when they were younger as opposed to the way they are now. But who is to say life was better then? They were just children themselves, so were things really better, or was their perception on life just more optimistic?

Gauging the value or meaning of an object, era, or place is relative in that an infinite number of factors could contribute to how different individuals perceive the value of something, and those factors vary in order of weighted importance from one person to the next. This means that if two people who do not have many attributes in common are exposed to the same stimuli, chances are each individual will have a different reaction; if exposed to the true story of a murder, a suburban mother will have a dissimilar reaction to that of a mob boss from New York City.

Feelings, such as fear, can be challenging to operationalize, so defining fear of crime is difficult. Much of the existing research is based on the definitions from one of two leading scholars in the field. Initially, Garofalo (1981, p.840) defined the fear of crime as “an emotional reaction characterized by a sense of

danger and anxiety”, followed later by Ferraro (1995) who added that a person must associate this emotional reaction with crime. For this paper, I will use the latter, terming fear of crime as “an emotional reaction of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime” (Ferraro, 1995, p. xiii).

Merriam-Webster (2017) defines crime as “an illegal act for which someone can be punished by the government.” The FBI collects data on crime, including type of incident, location of the crime, and the demographics of victims and offenders. They do not define crime as a general term but classify all crimes into one of two categories: violent crime and property crime. The category of property crime here consists of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017). Violent crime is defined as “those offenses which involve force or threat of force” and include murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017). For a more pointed focus, the remainder of this paper will be referring to these types of violent offenses when using the term “crime.”

The true crime genre emerged in 1550 in England with pamphlets of true stories meant to reinforce moral standards for citizens, although it quickly led to an interest in the causes of criminal actions instead of the intended lesson of right and wrong (Burger, 2016). The sociology of the act of deviance has ever since been a topic of interest for a portion of the World population. Burger (2016) writes, “even as true crime evolves through the centuries, it continuously

engages with the culture that surrounds it” (p. 6). Now, almost five hundred years after the British pamphlets of gruesome murders attempted to deter illegal behavior, true crime events are wildly more accessible to anyone interested in the topic – there are true crime stories reproduced through novels, films, documentaries, television series, Netflix series, and audio podcasts.

Defined by Merriam-Webster (2017), a podcast is “a program (as of music or talk) made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet.” In 2004, Adam Curry and Dave Winer first recorded what Ben Hammersley would shortly after label as a podcast (International Podcast Day, 2016). Initially created in order to share information to a small group of listeners, podcasting has been widely utilized ever since for a multitude of reasons. In 2005, President George W. Bush was the first President to have his weekly address recorded as a podcast. Along with the initial idea of self-help, other genres have melded into the realm of the podcast in order to expand viewer/listenership. Depending on advertising and subscription details, most podcasts are free for the consumer to download and are available in genres ranging from technology to religion, spanning science, sports, film, culture, medicine, and education. There are podcasts available for almost any interest today, including true crime.

True crime is a popular genre of entertainment and has recently merged with the introduction of the audio podcast. Since they are a relatively new medium, there is a dearth of research concerning how podcasts of any type can influence individual perceptions, attitudes, or beliefs. The purpose of this study is

to explore which factors, if any, affect an individual's levels of fear of crime he or she may experience after being exposed to a true crime audio podcast on a regular basis. Some potential factors that will be discussed are individual demographic characteristics, exposure type, exposure time, daily environment, past victimizations, and community forum interactions online. One of the main goals of this research is to determine if true crime audio podcasts can impact individual behavior due to reactions from increased fear of crime.

The following chapter is a review of relevant literature in the areas of fear, crime, and podcasts. Chapter 3 contains the methods of the present study, followed by a display of the study results in Chapter 4. Chapter 5, is a discussion of the findings, policy implications, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proceeding chapter is a review of literature currently available on the topics of fear, crime, and podcasts. Studies on podcast effectiveness have only recently been conducted, so there are little findings on their effects, though fear and its relationship to crime have been widely studied. This chapter will summarize the findings of scholars who have questioned media's effect on fear of crime, a theoretical background of the study of fear, and the few findings on podcast effects on audience members.

Factors Associated with Fear of Crime

Hu and colleagues (2015) found a statistically significant, positive relationship between viewing crime shows on TV and audience fear of crime. Scarborough et al. (2010) found that demographic characteristics are conditionally related to fear of crime, mediated by several factors about the audience member's neighborhood. The cause of increased fear of crime in audience members has been widely studied, but still no factors have been overwhelmingly supported by these studies.

The first academic to theorize what could increase individuals' fear of crime was Gerbner (1976), who offered an explanation through what he termed cultivation theory, which offered the idea that fear of crime would increase

relative to the amount of exposure time. But even Gerbner himself has since acknowledged that many factors other than exposure time must go into the process of media consumption that results in fear of crime. Along with the media (Garofalo, 1979, Mesko et al., 2009), other factors that scholars have asserted could have an effect on an individual's fear of crime level are: age (Box et al., 1988, Chiricos et al., 1997, Mesko et al., 2009), gender (Box et al., 1988, Chiricos et al., 1997, Mesko et al., 2009), race (Box et al., 1988, 1997, Callanan 2012, Chiricos et al., 1997; Mesko et al., 2009), education (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000), socialization (Garofalo, 1979), past victimization experience (Box et al., 1988, Garofalo, 1979), the type of media (Callanan, 2012), frequency of media consumption (Chiricos et al., 1997), perceived realism of the media message (Callanan, 2012), actual media content (Callanan, 2012), the framing of media content (Callanan, 2012), personal assessment of offense seriousness (Box et al., 1988), actual risk of victimization (Garofalo, 1979), perceived risk of victimization (Box et al., 1988, Callanan, 2012), prevalence/likelihood/vulnerability/consequences of victimization (Garofalo, 1981), individual confidence in police (Box et al., 1988), perceived effectiveness of crime prevention (Garofalo, 1979), neighborhood cohesion (Box et al., 1988, Chiricos et al., 1997, Mesko et al., 2009), and levels of local incivility (Box et al., 1988).

The present study will take some of these into consideration when determining true crime audio podcasts' impact on listeners' fear of crime. Though

it is acknowledged that all of these have an important impact on fear of crime, those that will be looked into further in the study are age, gender, race, past victimization, frequency of media exposure, and perceived victimization risk.

Age. Age plays a significant role in determining an individual's fear of crime, though findings about the relationship between age and fear of crime are conflicting in their conclusions: some have found a positive relationship (Lagrange and Ferraro, 1984; Scarborough et al., 2010), some have found the relationship to be negative (Callanan, 2012; Rountree and Land, 1996), while others have found there to be no significant relationship between age and fear of crime (Hraba et al., 1998; Mesch, 2000). Warr (1990) found that both female and elderly respondents showed more fear of crime than did males and younger respondents.

Callanan (2012) found that newspaper reading affected the fear of crime in whites more so than any other media form. Though he was analyzing different media forms and race, his findings could point to an age difference because younger generations do not generally read the newspaper on a regular basis, as do older generations. Similarly, Livingston et al. (2001) found a difference in the way that one generation understands media as compared to later generations. Those that grew up fifty years ago were not exposed to violence in the media, but people of this generation have been exposed to visual violence and are thus affected less emotionally by the images. "In another age, there was the mass

media and there was reality; in our age, there is popular culture—everywhere—and even ‘reality’ is presented to us as entertainment programming” (Altheide, 2003, p. 10). This speaks to the fact that the general public is losing sight of the line between information and entertainment, taking on new truths that involve a world of crime and violence.

Gender. According to the FBI, Of the 5,723 homicides in 2015, 3,976 (69%) victims were male, 1,679 (29%) victims were female, and the sex of 68 (1%) victims was unknown. 3,505 (88%) offenders of male victims were also male and only 410 (10%) offenders were female. Of the 1,679 female victims, 1,515 (90%) offenders were male and 146 (9%) were female. Overall, this means that only 26 percent of homicides involved a male offender and female victim, though I would argue most mainstream crime media depict this dynamic as most prevalent.

Because of this phenomenon, gender is an interesting factor in this area of study. Many studies have found support for the idea that women have higher fear of crime than do men (Callanan, 2012; Chiricos et al., 1997; Gerbner, 1980; Scarborough et al., 2010). Though all of these studies found support in favor of this idea, Erdonmex (2009) determined that gender, alone, is the only factor in fear of crime resulting from media consumption. He went on to claim that females are naturally more fearful of crime than males for no reason other than their status as female. Other than this one outlier, most all other findings were

conditional in regards to gender; the way in which a stimulus affects an individual is determined based on several different considerations, with gender being the most obvious. This is to say that gender does not always determine an individual's fear of crime without first interacting with other characteristics taken into consideration. There is, more often than not, a difference in fear between men and women, but sometimes older men have different fear than younger men, or white women have different fear than Hispanic women. Gender is not experienced the same for every member of each gender group – there are numerous other mediating factors that help create an individual's experience. Further examples of this will be explained in following sections.

Race. Along with age and gender, the demographic characteristic of race is one of the most widely studied factors when analyzing fear of crime. Though many have considered this as a determinant factor, results have offered little clarity. Gerbner et al. (1980) found that whites have higher fear of crime, though a multitude of others have found the opposite – that nonwhites have higher fear of crime (Callanan, 2012; Chiricos et al., 2000b; Funicane et al., 2000; Wilcox et al., 2003).

Not only is race one of the most influential variables in determining levels of fear of crime, it is often the most powerful characteristic portrayed through the media that results in the hegemonic narrative those in power want in place.

There is a systematic racism that is inherent in media, especially local TV news,

that goes unnoticed by the majority of both consumers and producers of media messages (Entman, 1990). Han Er (2014) found that the media's depictions create fears of people being victimized by minorities, specifically African Americans, where the victim is white, though the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Program shows that, in the year 2015, a majority of all homicides were committed intraracially, meaning that most offenses were committed by a person of the same race as the victim.

In 2015, there were a total of 5,723 homicides in America according to the FBI. Of these, 3,005 (53%) victims were white, 2,491 (44%) victims were black, 159 (3%) were of another race, and the race of 68 (1%) victims was unknown. In the 3,005 homicides where the victim was white, 2,509 (83%) offenders were also white. 409 (14%) white victims were killed by a black offender, 49 (2%) victims by people of other races, and 38 (1%) by offenders of an unknown race. 2,491 homicide victims in 2015 were black, and 189 (8%) of these were committed by a white offender, 2,245 (90%) by a black offender, 20 (1%) by an offender of another race, and 37 (1%) black victims were killed by an offender of an unknown race. The offenders of the 159 homicides committed against a victim of another race (American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander) had the following racial makeup: 32 (20%) offenders were white, 27 (17%) were black, 96 (60%) were other races, and 4 (3%) were of an unknown race (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017).

These numbers show that homicides are most often committed by and against people of the same race; 83% of homicides with a white victim were committed by a white offender; 90% of homicides with a black victim were committed by a black offender; 60% of homicides with a person of a race other than black or white were committed by an offender of a race other than black or white. These data help to build a case against the fear of random victimization that is the focus of most fear of crime amongst the public, especially the fear of the white population of being victimized by a black individual.

Pickett, Chiricos, & Golden (2012) found that the race of the victim and perpetrator in the news/media plays a role in conditioning the relationship between perceived victimization risk by whites. Other studies have found that, in TV news, whites are overrepresented as both victims and law defenders (Romer et al., 1998, Dixon et al., 2003, Dixon & Linz, 2000), nonwhites are overrepresented as the perpetrators of law (Romer et al., 1998, Dixon & Linz, 2000), nonwhites are underrepresented as victims (Dixon et al., 2003), and nonwhites are also represented as more violent perpetrators than when whites are represented as the perpetrator (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002, Mastro & Robinson, 2000).

Displaying both socially constructed reality and associative priming, when the local TV news depicts this picture that the nonwhite human is violent and criminal while the white human is likely to be a victim of this unlawful action, this becomes the hegemonic narrative, characterizing not just anyone who goes

against the norm as deviant, but placing race as a determinant factor as to who will likely commit these deviant actions, putting the film of racial prejudice on those who fall victim of this conditioning. Entman (1994) said, "The essence of racial prejudice is homogenizing and generalizing about the disliked outgroup: a tendency to lump most individual members of the outgroup together as sharing similar undesirable traits, while seeing one's own group as a diverse collection of clearly differentiated individuals" (p. 517). When white individuals see a nonwhite individual and place the label of criminal or potential criminal upon them, it is possible that racism and the media are fueling this discriminatory thought process.

Location. Related to and often dependent upon race, along with age, education, and income, location is also an important factor to consider in asking why levels of fear of crime vary from person to person. Scarborough et al. (2010) found that race is only a significant indicator of fear of crime when the individual's neighborhood is taken into account. Hale (1996) found that the racial makeup of an individual's neighborhood might be more influential to the individual's fear of crime than is the individual's race. The racial makeup of an individual's neighborhood can have an impact on how safe a neighborhood is deemed. Eschholz et al. (2003) found that for people who perceived their neighborhood to be made up of more blacks than whites, that individual's fear of crime was higher. Garofalo (1981) asserts, "position in social space strongly influences the

amount and nature of information about crime to which the person is exposed” (p. 844). If a child grows up in an environment where education is not strongly regarded as valuable, that child may not regard a formal education as important and thus be exposed to a different set of influences than a child in a family focused on formal education, which could in turn determine how each child perceives crime and their neighborhood around them. Skogan (1986) looked at how an individual’s immediate surroundings play a role in painting the picture of crime in that individual’s mind. He examined fear of crime in declining neighborhoods and deduced that levels of fear were formed based chiefly on discernable social and physical disorder, primary and secondary knowledge of neighborhood crime, and factors related to changes in neighborhood ethnic composition (Skogan, 1986). Similarly, Schafer and colleagues (2006) concluded that, even when gender is taken into account, the most prominent factor in predicting fear of crime comes from looking at the individual’s perception of their neighborhood as orderly and satisfactory. Like most all of these factors, location’s effect has been found to sometimes be the most important factor or simply a mediating factor. Though it is not clear exactly how an individual’s immediate neighborhood of residence plays into his/her fear of crime, it has been shown to be an important factor to consider.

Education/Income. Education and income are closely associated, as one usually means the presence of the other. Though not analyzed in the present

study, it is important to note that several studies have been done on income as it relates to fear of crime. Hraba et al. (1998) found higher income to lead individuals to have higher perceived risk of victimization, whereas others have found that lower income and education resulted in higher fear of crime (Callanan, 2012; Chiricos et al., 2000a; Hal, 1996; Vacha & McLaughlin, 2004)

Past Victimization History. Equally as ambiguous is an individual's past history of personal victimization. Several studies have found that those who had been victimized by crime in the past had higher levels of fear (Callanan, 2012; Wicox and Colleagues, 2006). Others have found that nonvictims show the highest levels of fear of crime (Weaver and Wakshlag, 1986), while others have found no relationship between prior victimization and fear of crime (Weiter and Kubrin, 2004). A few have even broken this question down further into type of victimization (direct and indirect, concrete and abstract) finding that both concrete and abstract fears were increased most in those who had recently been the direct victim of a crime, whereas both recent and multiple indirect victimization experiences influenced only concrete fear of crime (Russo and Roccato, 2010), while others have found only indirect victimization (known acquaintances who have been victimized) increases fear of crime (Mason, 2000; Warr and Ellison, 2000).

In an effort to better understand how personal victimization affects individuals, several perspectives have been offered: the assumptive world

perspective and the neutralization technique perspective. Janoff-Bullman (1989) explains that the assumptive world perspective can be taken when victimization jeopardizes an individual's assumptions on the positive experiences in life, focusing only on possible negatives, which in turn fosters a fear of crime. Agnew's (1985) neutralization technique perspective offers the possible explanation of how, unlike the assumptive world perspective, people sometimes cope with victimization, thus neutralizing the negative effect and lessening fear of further criminal victimization.

Other Contributing Factors. In past research, studies have looked into fear of crime being determined by an array of other factors in addition to those previously explained: the degree of seriousness determined objectively by the audience, the difference in actual versus perceived fear, the way the media depict suspects and victims, the difference between the effect of local versus national news, frequency of media consumption – the list goes on.

Several studies have been conducted in order to measure which of these factors actually affect an individual's fear of crime, but no overarching consensus has been made. From these studies though, small findings have been shown. Rhineberger-Dunn (2013) found that, in regards to juvenile offenders, the media was accurate in depicting the types of crimes most common among these offenders as being sexual assault with females as the primary victims, though the study found that a majority of media depictions of these crimes committed by

juveniles were perpetrated against a stranger, when in reality most of these crimes were committed against someone the offender knew.

Type of Media. Several scholars have considered the type of media and the differences in effect from exposure to a range of media types. The forms of media that have been most heavily studied are TV news, fictional crime dramas, newspapers – and with less emphasis – radio and films. Callanan (2012) concluded that the most influential component contributing to an individual's perceptions of neighborhood crime are TV news and crime-based reality television shows, while also finding that crime dramas increased the fear of crime in African Americans only (p. 107). Callanan (2012) had an interesting conclusion that crime dramas did not affect fear of crime in white or black respondents but it lowered fear of crime in Latinos (p. 107).

Surette (2007) writes that modern TV news' focus on crime is designed to entertain, which puts a great emphasis on the rare, dramatic criminal acts that will capture attention. As Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) conclude, television news is episodic in nature, meaning that little context or time is given to each crime story, therefore leading viewers to believe crime is caused by individuals rather than social constraints, ultimately harvesting a fear of random crime. Potter (1986) posits that television crime dramas are viewed as less realistic than television news and therefore have less of an impact on audience fear of crime. Likewise, Callanan (2012) found that TV news and reality-based crime shows are the only

media to significantly increase an individual's fear of crime, with O'Keefe and Reid-Nash (1987) finding the same only for television news. Chiricos et al. (2000a) found that local TV news has a stronger relationship with viewers' fear of crime than other media sources. Within that, they found that, along with type of media, frequency of viewership also contributed to fear of crime: females were more affected than males, blacks more affected than whites, and black females more affected than white females.

Seriousness. Warr (1989) looks at how the seriousness of a crime is judged, breaking the term down into two ways in which seriousness is judged: "wrongfulness" and "harmfulness" (p. 796). He concludes that people judge a crime's seriousness based on their own definition – some may always judge based on one method, some may weight each, and some may pick and choose depending on the type of crime in question. This study showed that not all people judge the seriousness of any crime the same; so different crimes affect different people in different ways.

Actual vs. Anticipated Fear. Garofalo (1981) offers the acknowledgement of recognizing the difference between actual fear and anticipated fear. By this, he means that if an individual has once felt fear in a particular situation, that person is likely to anticipate fear in a similar situation even if there is nothing physically present to cause that fear. Similarly, if a person

anticipates feeling fear in a specific situation, said person is more likely to experience that fear once in that situation (p. 845).

Frequency of Exposure. The study conducted by Ditton et al. (2004) looks at the importance, or lack there of, of the frequency of media consumption as it relates to fear of crime. They found that individuals' perceptions and interpretations are the most important aspect of media consumption relating to fear of crime. The way that a person understands a story or image will determine what effect it has. This is the same in almost any aspect of life – just because a person says the word “sorry” does not actually mean they are sorry for whatever it is they did. Words only have meaning if that meaning is relayed properly and accurately.

Higher Fear, Lower Victimization. Garofalo (1979) found that both females and older respondents, who express the highest levels of fear, have lower levels of victimization. He further hypothesizes that this could be the case because these two groups are more fearful; they take actions that in turn reduce their victimization risks (p. 95). The victim in most crime dramas and stories is a female – this could impact the increased level of fear this demographic has in regards to crime. We could look at this study's findings through the substitution theory, in that female viewers see that their personal characteristics are common among victims, thus increasing fear of crime.

Personal Loss vs. Personal Harm. Moore and Shepherd (2007) came to four important conclusions from their study; fear of personal loss is greater than fear of personal harm, fear of personal harm is greatest among those aged 16-25, fear of personal loss is greatest among those aged 40-60, and fear of personal loss is greater in men while fear of personal harm is greater in women. These findings align with the results I would anticipate for the present study. The fear of personal loss is common in a capitalistic society where a person must earn what he/she receives. Tangible goods are a sign of success in our American way of life, and to take away those achievements is scarier to some than that of personal harm. Likewise, for those that have lived longer and have had more time to work their way up and accumulate more goods and wealth, the fear of personal loss is greater than personal harm, whereas for people who are just now starting off their life's journey, personal harm could be more damaging to overall happiness. And it is stereotypical that men care more about their belongings and females are more careful about personal safety. This study is fascinating in that all of these stereotypes were supported.

Gender and Age Combined. Box et al. (1988) found that women are always more fearful of crime than men, but as each group age, the gap closes in, meaning that relative to women, men become more fearful with age. This same study also found that victimization is negatively related to fear, meaning that once victimized by crime, people are less fearful of it happening again. This conclusion

is interesting as it goes completely against the resonance theory, saying that once a person experiences victimization, the fear of crime is lessened because it is now less unknown, therefore less scary.

Political Conservatism. Edwards (2007) conducted a study beginning with seven hypotheses. Of these seven, none were fully supported by his study examining media exposure and its effects on fear of criminal victimization. Though none were fully supported, there was support for two of the four hypothesized audience characteristics having a significant impact on fear of criminal victimization: audience race and audience political conservatism. As previously discussed, many scholars recognize race as an important contributing factor to fear of crime levels. But political conservatism is not commonly cited as such a factor, though it does show support of the propaganda model in that politics have a great say in the media. If a group of liberal viewers watch the same story that a conservative group see about a new law that is to be voted into place soon, the reactions among the groups are sure to be conflicting. One's political conservatism affects how he/she views most anything in life.

No Relationship. Though the above scholars each came to a conclusion based on significant data, some studies have shown there is no relationship between media exposure and fear of crime (Chadee & Ditton 2005; Ditton et al., 2004; Doyle, 2006; Eschholz, 1997; Martinez 2012). Callanan and Rosenberger

(2015) concluded there is no difference in fear of crime regardless of race or gender.

Fear of Crime and Media

Many scholars agree that the presence of a fear of crime is necessary in that it keeps citizens from being reckless with their actions and inactions when it comes to safety (Altheide, 2003; Cashmore, 2014; Garofalo, 1981; Jackson, 2011). If no one were afraid of being victimized by crime, basic precautions may be forgotten, which could create easier targets and more opportunities for crime and consequently increase actual crime rates. Altheide (2003) takes this idea a step further and illustrates that when these people are taking precautions in order to reduce their chances of encountering crime, “these activities reaffirm and help produce a sense of disorder that our actions perpetuate” (p. 19). Thus, humans are in a never-ending cycle with fear and crime because taking steps to reduce crime requires the acknowledgement that the chance of being victimized is real, therefore increasing levels of fear, perpetuating further precautions and fear.

Adding to this cycle of fear and crime is the idea that those in authoritative positions want the public to be fearful of crime so that their crime, justice, and safety policies will be widely accepted (Cashmore, 2014). When people are more fearful of crime and continually being reminded of the potential for personal harm and property loss, they may be more likely to support those that have the power to promise safety. Though politicians make these promises, whether empty or

not, an outlet is needed to deliver these messages of proposed change, which is where the media have proven to be the most influential player in the democratic system.

Watchdogs. Media outlets know how to market to their audience, how to keep their viewers watching day after day. A news station that knows its audience is heavily conservative will not promote liberal ideas and policies, as to not oppose the beliefs of their loyal viewers. The media produces what their audience wants to be exposed to – further reinforcing beliefs already held by said viewers.

To speak generally, the media reproduce ideals and content that their audience will respond well to. A 2015 Gallup Poll named the U.S. Government as the most important social issue of America for the year. Receiving 16 percent of the vote, the national government beat out other issues such as the economy (13%), unemployment and immigration (both receiving 8%), and healthcare (6%). Issues that received five percent of this vote were ethics/moral decline, race relations/racism, terrorism, federal budget/federal debt, and education; receiving three percent were poverty/hunger/homelessness, national security, the gap between rich and poor, crime/violence, foreign aid/focus overseas, and the situation in Iraq/ISIS; receiving two percent of the vote for most important issue in America for 2015 were the issues of the judicial system/courts/laws, the

environment/pollution, guns/gun control, a lack of respect for others, a lack of money, international issues, and wars/war (non-specific)/fear of war.

Though Americans rank issues in this order of importance, this is not reflected in media coverage. For example, even though poverty/hunger/homelessness and crime/violence both received three percent of the vote for most important issue in America today, multiple studies show that these two issues receive media attention that is heavily weighted in favor of crime/violence. Miller (2013) used an annual research study done by a local high school in Louisville, Kentucky to show the devotion of local news air time to individual crime stories that have little to no effect on community members' daily lives. The study focused students' attention on four local news programs where students categorized each story that was aired. In 2012, they found that 37 percent of news stories were crime stories, which increased a year later to 52 percent. Miller (2013) acknowledges that in the year 2013, a high-profile case had gone to court, resulting in the large increase of crime story coverage. But he also points out that at the same time, the federal government had shut down and the 2014 Senate race had already begun, yet petty crime and court cases stole the attention of local news media. Altheide (2003) concluded from a study of nearly 6,000 news stories that poverty, welfare, and homelessness were only discussed in nine of these stories, which is not even one percent of local news coverage. Two issues that are regarded as equal in importance have a contrast in news coverage of roughly fifty percent.

“Freedom” of the Press. The media are supposed to be the watchdogs of the government – alerting us when actions are being made. So why is that not consistently the case? Freedom of the press is a constitutional right. Just like our freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, we are free to be individuals with an opinion – yet it is difficult to find truthful opinions coming straight from journalists without an inherent bias toward a big player in politics or capital. Opinions are naturally biased, but if all facts were presented objectively, viewers should be able to make an informed well-rounded opinion on important topics such as social issues and elections. When the owner of a business makes a rule, the manager then informs employees who must then follow said rule. The same applies to the media. If the CEO/President of a company believes an issue is important enough, any media outlet he/she has authority over will support that issue publicly. The media are the megaphone for those with money and power.

Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) argue that news coverage in general follows a script in which both crime is violent and there is a specific suspect, thus supporting racial stereotypes. “Viewers exposed to the ‘racialized’ element of the script become more supportive of capital punishment, mandatory sentencing, and other deterrent measures” (p. 561), which are all policies that the government claims will eliminate crime but in reality only bring more violence into the world. Eschholz (1999) agrees and goes on to further argue that the American public have been confused by the difference between information and entertainment because of the media incentive to further political policies and

hegemony. What Americans are seeing on the television, whether fiction or not, is becoming the real world in which viewers are living in.

The Propaganda Model. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988) published *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* in which they point out the powers that the media hold in regards to policies and society; “the media serve the ends of a dominant elite” (p. 1). Through the explanation of their propaganda model, Herman and Chomsky expose a tangled web of connections that link companies to other companies with power and the means to elicit change that positively affects partner companies. Though the companies, connections, and overall entangled web have changed in the past thirty years, an interwoven web still exists in the media today. Recently, mergers and buyouts have led this web to be compressed into feeding nearly all media power into just six separate public corporations in the media. In descending order of net profit as of February 2017, these six media leaders are Comcast, Disney, Time Warner, CBS, Viacom, and News Corp.

Noam Chomsky (1988) argues that mass media has essentially fallen victim to an overarching system that has created the norms of the media we are exposed to every day. He believes that the system creates a bias that feeds into and supports the hegemonic narrative that those in power positions want reinforced to the audience. Gerbner (1970) also touched on this same point, adding that the media do not freely say what they want but “reflect the structure

and functions of the institutions that transmit them” (p. 69). To this, Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) add that, “social problems are projections of collective sentiments rather than simple mirrors of objective conditions in society” (p. 53). If social problems were simply mirrors of objective societal conditions, the results from that 2015 Gallup Poll would be more closely portrayed in our news media, giving attention to what our government officials are doing, issues that are causing concern, and ways in which viewers could instill change for the better. If this were the case, more power would be given to the individual and less given to the big names that the media speak for.

Power. Individuals do not merely get handed power, it is worked for and many decisions and actions go into getting to a point where power is attainable which must then be maintained. Schur (1980) states “power of any sort is more like a process than an object” (p. 7). In the process of maintaining power, scapegoats have been created that point out a source of social problems – the deviant. A deviant is “a person or thing that deviates or departs markedly from the accepted norm” (Merriam-Webster, 2017), which means that the criteria that must be met in order to be referred to as a deviant is static and socially constructed. Peter Kraska (2011) is well known for his work on socially constructed reality, of which he claims “the most dangerous delusion of all is that there is only one reality” (p. 152). In this, he says that what we know as reality is not simply the way things are, but the way that our truths have been shaped by

all people - in both the past and present. Howard Becker claimed that crime “is not the quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender” (p. 152). Crime is not defined the same way in all regions of the globe. An action that is considered criminal in Richmond, Kentucky may not necessarily be considered a crime in Beijing, China. That is, a person labeled deviant by a society is not necessarily a bad character; the label just indicates he or she has gone against the norm that has been previously established by those in power.

Altheide (2003) captures this sentiment best: “...Fears limit our lives and make us vulnerable to tyrants who would ‘save us’” (p. 25). When the public is fearful of an agreed-upon enemy - the deviant, among others - and those in power offer a solution to keep the community safe, that offer is likely going to be heard and trusted. It is like we are being tricked into being scared in order for politicians to be the hero, but those same politicians planted the seed of fear in the first place. Sacco (1995) and Partington (2013) both echo the idea that those in power are inclined to keep at bay the hegemonic narrative with fear in order to keep their positions of power.

Summary. Overall, these past studies have shown that there is a great deal of contributing factors that have an impact on the way in which an individual experiences the fear of crime. Academics have considered nearly every characteristic of an audience member – age, gender, race, location, etc. – and

even an array of media forms. In my study, I will be looking into the effects of a newly introduced medium that little research has focused on: the audio podcast.

Podcasts

As earlier defined, a podcast is “a program (as of music or talk) made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet” (Merriam-Webster, 2017). Podcasts can come in audio/video format, or just audio. I will be looking at only audio podcasts in the true crime genre.

Studies on Podcast Effectiveness. Only a handful of studies have looked at the effects of podcasts because the medium is so new, but a few studies have examined students’ learning outcomes from podcasts. A study conducted by Chan et al. (2011) found that students who listen to a podcast teaching a foreign language while the student was physically moving were both more open to podcast learning and more open to learning the language being taught after experiencing the podcast learning. Nozari and Siamian (2015) looked at the same subject of study in high school students and found that using podcasts to teach a foreign language in high schools increased learning but had no effect on motivation in learning the language. Similarly, Van’t Hooft and Denzer (2011) conducted a study on college students where an in-classroom class was enhanced by a weekly podcast sent to all students in one group. In this study, the students with the weekly podcast felt as though they had a better

handle on the material than the control group with no podcast exposure. None of these proved that podcast learning is any more significant than in-person learning, but the repetition of the podcast did seem to help enhance the learning process and improve motivation to pay attention and learn. I look to use these concepts of easy access and optional repetition as support for my hypothesis.

My Favorite Murder. The target population for this study is adults who listen to true crime podcasts. One such podcast is *My Favorite Murder*, which is an audio podcast that began in early 2016 and has grown immensely in popularity over the last year. The hosts, two ladies that are good friends, casually discuss their favorite murder of the week on each episode. Though the topic of this show is murder, the podcast is classified in the genre of comedy due to the light-hearted nature of the discussion hosts Georgia and Karen have during each episode. One new episode is released weekly, with the occasional “minisode” where Georgia and Karen read listeners’ emails of their own hometown murders. The hosts created a fan page on Facebook in order for listeners to be able to interact with some of the stories featured on the show. To date, that page has 110,737 members (My Favorite Murder Podcast, 2017). Since the population of the current study includes listeners of *My Favorite Murder*, adult subjects for the current study were recruited through a post made to this Facebook page containing the link to the survey to be completed anonymously.

Theoretical Framework

There are several different theories that have been offered over the years trying to define factors that determine an individual's fear of crime. George Gerbner's cultivation theory was the first of its kind, shortly followed by the additions of many others, including resonance theory, substitution theory, differential sensitivity (Warr 1984), associative priming (Oliver 2003), and the real-world thesis (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004). This study will focus heavily on the differences between resonance theory and substitution theory, as they are closely related to the variables studied here.

Cultivation Theory. As briefly mentioned already, Gerbner's cultivation theory laid the foundation for fear of crime studies. It posits that exposure to any stimuli should have an effect on an audience. The problem with this initial theory is that Gerbner (1976) claimed simply that exposure to crime media will have an effect on audience members, and the difference in the extent of a reaction is due to exposure time. This theory has been critiqued over the last several decades by scholars claiming that exposure time is not the only factor that goes into increased levels of fear of crime (Box et al., 1988; Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000; Callanan, 2012; Chiricos, Eschholz, & Gertz, 1997; Garofalo, 1979; Garofalo, 1981; Eschholz, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2003; Mesko et al., 2009; Warr, 1984; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004). These scholars acknowledge that exposure time is a factor, but

argue that there are a multitude of mediating factors that differentiate one individual's fear of crime from another person's fear of crime.

Associative Priming. Associative priming concedes that exposure to stimulus A prior to exposure to stimulus B will have a different effect than if exposure were limited to only stimulus B. For example, if a suburban white soccer mom sees a story of a black man being arrested for a crime and shortly after reads a newspaper story that a neighborhood store was robbed, she could associate that criminal act with the suspect of the other crime – a black male. This is the way that stereotypes are instilled in mainstream media consumers, and “once a stereotype is in place, the priming of any element of the stereotype can serve to prime associated characteristics” (Oliver, 2003, p. 279). When viewers see news stories or crime dramas where the victim is a middle-class white suburbanite and the suspect is a black male, that image becomes yet another reason people succumb to racial stereotypes. This works with most anything we see on television: fairytale endings, dramatic love stories at work, and prevalent violent crime.

Differential Sensitivity. Mark Warr explains that differential sensitivity refers to differences in the perceived seriousness of the offense. “The more serious the offense is perceived to be, the faster fear will increase with perceived risk and/or the greater the fear at all levels of perceived risk” (Warr, 1984, p.

695). The way in which people rank seriousness of offenses on their own personal scale will determine how that crime will affect their consciousness. Say Mike ranks armed robbery low in seriousness but Earl ranks it high, Earl will be more affected by a stimuli involving armed robbery than will Mike. As humans, we care more about that which we consider high in importance, and our ranking systems depend on our own unique past and personality.

Substitution Theory. The substitution theory looks at how an individual's fear of crime is influenced strongly by media, especially in the lives of audience members who do not encounter crime in their daily lives (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004). These people not regularly encountering crime can live vicariously through media images and stories about crime and take on the fear that comes with being surrounded by crime. They may feel that, up until this point in their lives, they have been lucky enough to avoid serious victimization, so that at any point it is inevitable to happen, especially since it happens all around them in the media. Several researchers have found evidence in favor of the substitution theory (Adoni & Mane, 1984; Gunter, 1987). Specifically, studies done by both Weave and Wakshlag (1986) and Chiricos and colleagues (1997) found support for the substitution theory when data showed that people who had not previously been victimized by crime personally had higher levels of fear of crime, and, likewise, victims had lowered fear of crime when exposed to the media stimuli in the study. Most studies on fear of crime as a result of media exposure have

generally found most support for either this theory of substitution, or its reverse, resonance theory.

Resonance Theory. The resonance thesis is the opposite of the substitution theory in that it asserts that individuals who have had past victimizations and have seen criminal acts in real life will be more susceptible to an increased fear of crime since they have already been victimized (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004, p. 500). This makes sense, because once a person experiences a negative, traumatic experience, chances are their fear of that occurring again should be high. Most studies that do find support for the resonance theory do so in areas of higher crime rates (Chiricos et al., 2000a; Doob & McDonald, 1979; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004).

Real-World Thesis. The real-world thesis declares that fear of crime is primarily determined by “objective conditions,” such as past victimizations, perception of neighborhood safety, and city crime rates and dismisses the media as a significant variable in determining one’s level of fear of crime because the media show stories of instances that seem “atypical, serious, or spectacular” (Weitzer and Kubrin, 2004, p. 498). This real-world thesis includes many factors but discounts the media as an influential consideration.

Hypothesis

Fear of crime has been studied for several decades. The literature has produced several theories about the distribution of fear levels in relation to criminal victimization, either personal or vicarious through knowledge directly from victims or media outlets, but no theories have been consistently supported, or falsified, from one study to the next. Heath and Gilbert (1996) summarized this frustration by concluding that, though not all media messages affect all people the same way every time, sometimes media messages affect some people some of the time. I hope to add a bit of certainty to this amorphous area of study.

One of the primary purposes of my study is examine possible relationships between degrees of exposure to true crime podcasts and levels of fear of crime. I hypothesize that a podcast that discusses true crime cases will increase the fear of crime in those that listen to this podcast on a regular basis. Altheide (2003, p. 22) stated “Fear has become a perspective or orientation to the world, rather than a response to a particular situation or thing.” My study was designed to investigate whether dedicated fans of *My Favorite Murder*, self-proclaimed “Murderinos,” have the perspective and orientation of the world through fear and explore potential sources of existing levels of fear. Using results from an online study, I will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. Does an individual's demographic characteristics have an impact on their fear of crime? Specifically, do age, gender, and/or race contribute to fear after listening to a true crime audio podcast?
2. Does an individual's residential area have a mediating effect on their fear of crime levels after listening to a true crime audio podcast?
3. How does an individual's own personal experience with victimization affect their fear of crime when they listen to a true crime audio podcast? Does victimization of others close to the individual have an equal impact on fear of crime?
4. Is an individual's perceived victimization risk equal to their fear of crime after listening to a true crime audio podcast?
5. Will individuals with higher levels of fear of crime alter daily routines and activities in hopes to reduce their risk of victimization after they listen to a true crime audio podcast?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Data for this study were collected via a self-administered, online, survey that was designed to measure respondents' demographic and other background characteristics, their exposure to true crime podcasts, and their fear of crime levels before and after listening to the podcast. Respondents were asked to report their exposure to an audio podcast entitled *My Favorite Murder* in terms of frequency of episodes listened to each week. In addition, respondents were asked to list all other true crime podcasts they listened to regularly along with other types of exposures to true crime they experience regularly (e.g., work environment, other entertainment sources, or education). Respondents were asked to rate their fear of crime on a scale of zero to 100 both before they first listened to *My Favorite Murder* and after they begun listening to *My Favorite Murder*. Each respondent's overall change in fear of crime was found from the difference between these two ratings of fear. The results of this difference could be positive or negative and range from -100 to 100. The full survey is available in the Appendix.

After receiving instrument and protocol approval from Eastern Kentucky University's Institutional Review Board, the survey was converted to an online format using SurveyMonkey®. Respondents were recruited from a Facebook page created for fans of the *My Favorite Murder* podcast, where an approved

recruitment script for individuals aged 18 years or older and the survey link was posted after gaining permission from administrators of the online fan page. All survey responses were anonymous; no identifying information was collected from respondents or their computers. It should be noted that the first item on the survey asked if the respondent was at least 18 years of age. If an individual chose no, he or she was automatically diverted out of the survey and to a page expressing thanks for the interest and explaining that the questionnaire was only available to persons at least 18 years old.

This *My Favorite Murder* fan page had 110,737 members on February 23, 2017, the date when the survey went live. The survey was left online for three days, during which time 5,827 responses were received. There were 488 responses in which individuals did not answer items pertaining to fear of crime, so they were excluded from all analyses. Therefore, the final convenience sample for this study included 5,339 survey responses. The small amount of missing data for these cases (e.g., when a respondent skipped a question) was treated as blank. In other words, if a value for a variable being analyzed was missing, that case was excluded from that analysis; no data replacement methods were used.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

As discussed in the previous chapter, there was information regarding fear of crime for each element in the final sample. More Murderinos reported a level of fear between a 41 and 50 than any other category both before (21.61%) and after (20.16%). Listening to *My Favorite Murder*, as shown in Figure 1, a general shift in fear levels occurred in nearly all ranges from before to after. Within most of the ten-point fear level categories, more respondents reported lower levels of fear before exposure and then higher levels after listening to *My Favorite Murder*.

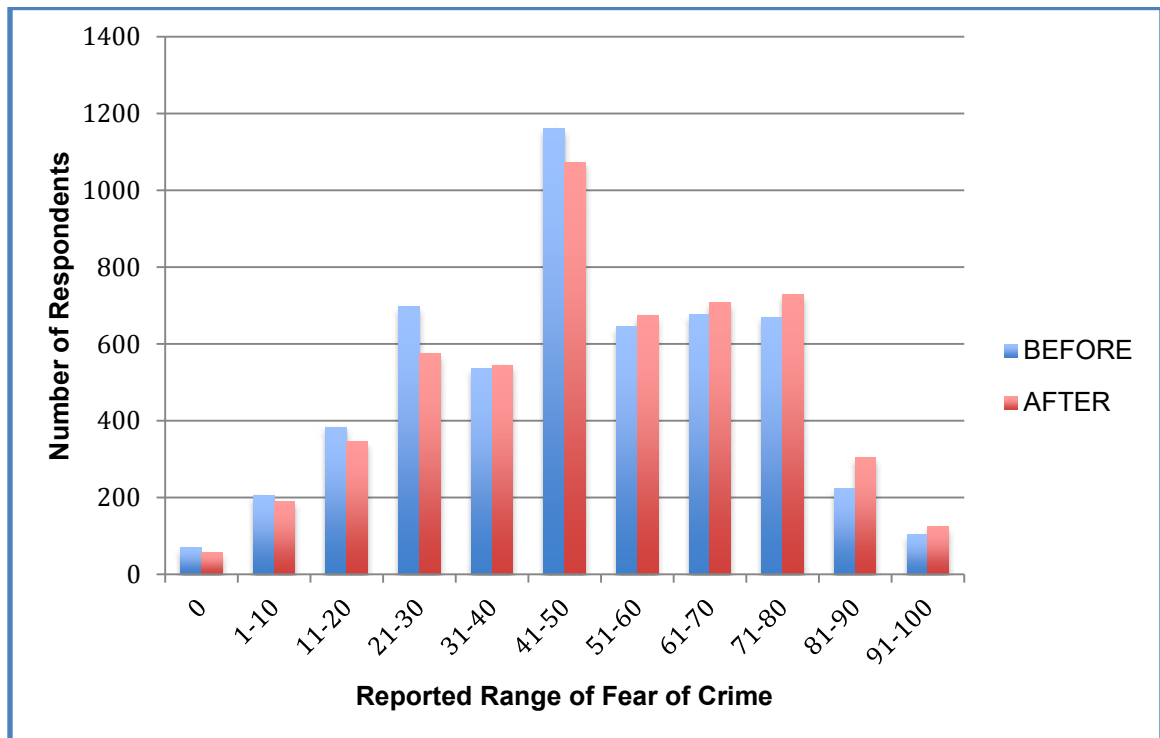


Figure 1: Fear of Crime Before and After Listening to MFM

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics for levels of fear of crime both before and after listening to *My Favorite Murder*, the change in fear levels, as well as age and the number of true crime podcasts listened to each week. The overall average change in fear of crime from before respondents listened to *My Favorite Murder* to after listening was 2.04. The range of respondent age was 18 to 74 years old, with average age of 29.69, but a mode age of 25. The average number of podcasts listened to weekly by respondents was 3.86 with a mode of just one podcast weekly. The minimum change in fear was -75, or a decrease in 75 points. The maximum increase in fear of crime levels was 85.

Table 1: Mean, Median, Mode, Minimum, and Maximum of Nominal Responses

	Mean	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
Age	29.69	28.00	25.00	18.00	74.00
Total number of podcasts listened to Weekly	3.86	3.00	1.00	0.00	24.00
Fear of crime before listening to MFM	49.60	50.00	50.00	0.00	100.00
Fear of crime after listening to MFM	51.63	50.00	50.00	0.00	100.00
Change in fear of crime	2.04	0.00	0.00	-75.00	85.00

Even with this wide range of change in fear of crime, the average change overall was only 2.04. To break this down further, Figure 2 shows clearly that the bulk of respondents experienced zero change in their levels of fear of crime, along with the infrequency of reported changes in fear of crime on either extreme end of the scale. No respondents reported a 91-100 point increase in fear of crime, nor did anyone report a change of -100 to -91 or -90 to -81. The bulk of

respondents reported a change in fear of crime between the fear levels of -30 and 30.

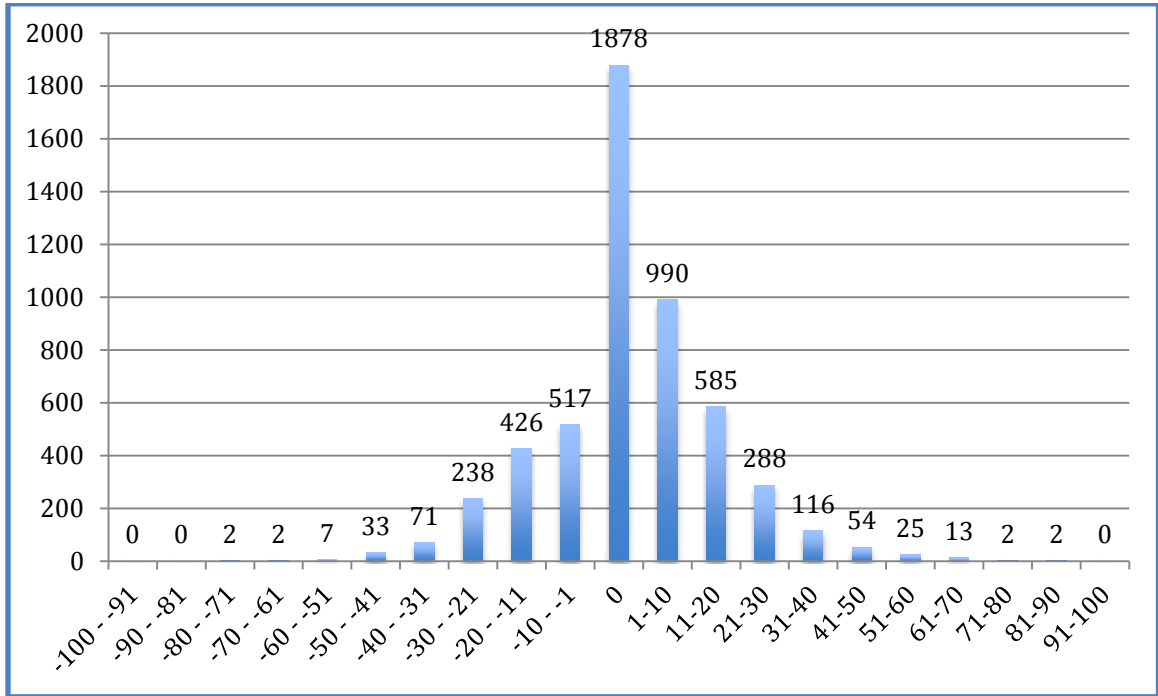


Figure 2: Change in Fear of Crime from Before to After Exposure to MFM

Factors Affecting Chance of Victimization

Humans have not yet figured out how to predict crime, though many ideas on how to do this have been offered. Common factors thought to be influential on criminal victimization chance are the aforementioned age, gender, and race, but also factors such as an individual's education, the city in which they live, who they are acquainted with and/or related to, among many other possibilities.

Question 17 of the current survey asked respondents to select all factors they

believe to have an effect on victimization chance from a given list. Figure 3 shows all 14 factors presented in the survey and how many respondents felt each factor played a significant role in an individual's chance of victimization. More than two-thirds (67%) of individuals believe that a significant factor affecting this chance of victimization is simply luck. The next three most common factors, in descending order, are walking/running outside alone (45%), the neighborhood of residence (44%), and a predictable daily routine (42%).

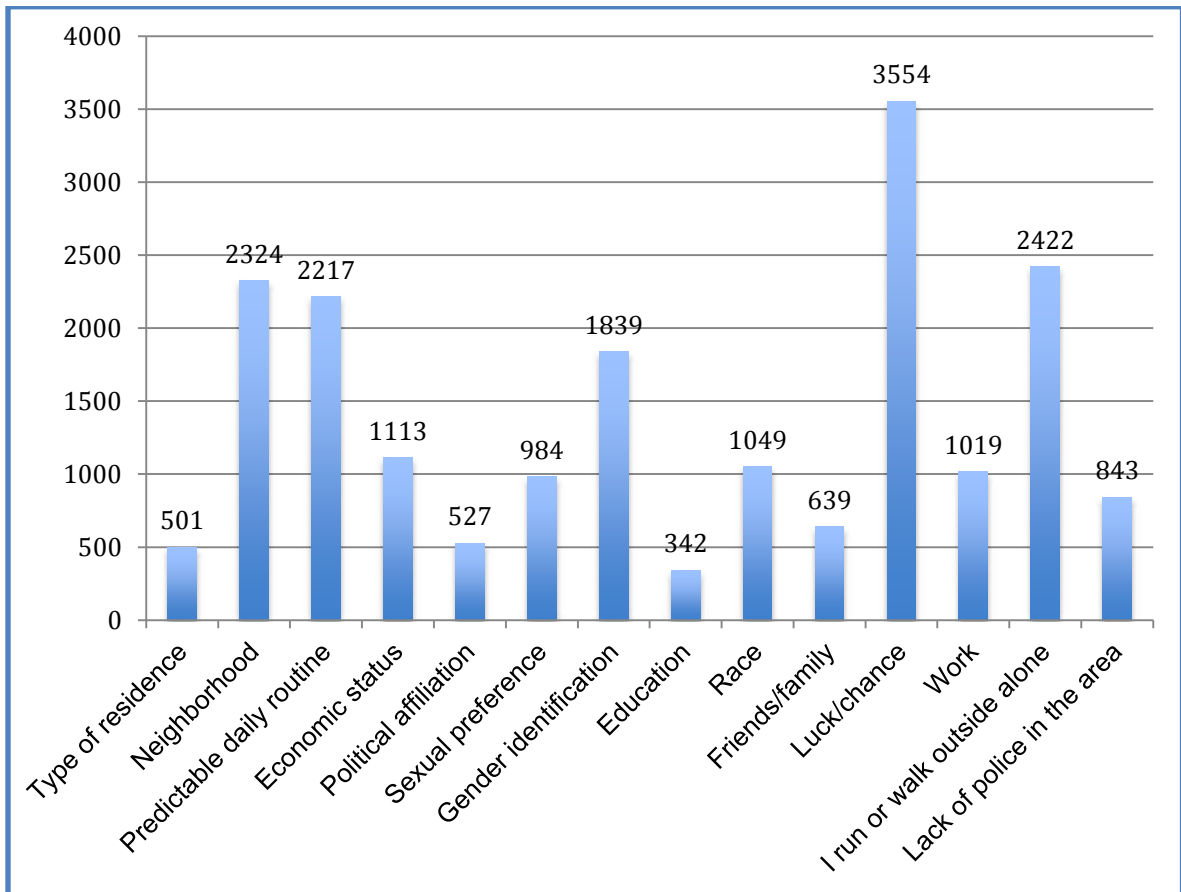


Figure 3: Factors Affecting Chance of Victimization

Characteristics of Respondents

Summaries of respondents' and other background characteristics are presented in Table 2. Most of the Murderinos who responded to the survey were white, female, between the ages of 18 and 33, and have never been the victim of a personal crime. Only 2.9 percent of those who responded identified themselves as male, and only 14.1 percent of those who responded classified themselves as non-white. The most common age among Murderinos is 25 and the average age is 29.69. Additionally, the majority of respondents live in either an urban city (36.5%) or a suburb of a city (41%), and nearly two-thirds (60%) of respondents have never been the victim of a personal crime.

Also found in Table 2 is the most common number of people Murderinos know who have been victimized by personal crime is four or more (22.9%), with two known victims (21.3%) and zero known victims (19.7%) close behind. To the question of victimization risk, the largest percentage of respondents believe they are "neither likely or unlikely" to become a victim of a personal crime (32.3%). Table 2 also shows that 52.1 percent of Murderinos report having NOT altered daily routines or activities since listening to the podcast.

Table 2: Summary of Survey Responses

Survey Question	Response Options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	18-25	1552	29.1	32.8	32.8
	26-33	2014	37.7	42.6	75.4
	34-41	771	14.4	16.3	91.7
	42 or older	391	7.3	8.3	100
	Total	4728	88.6	100	
	Missing	611	11.4		
	System Total	5339	100		
What is your gender?	Female	4651	87.1	97.1	97.1
	Male	139	2.6	2.9	100
	Total	4790	89.7	100	
	Missing	549	10.3		
	System Total	5339	100		
Race	Nonwhite	675	12.6	14.1	14.1
	White	4113	77	85.9	100
	Total	4788	89.7	100	
	Missing	551	10.3		
	System Total	5339	100		
Which best describes the area in which you live?	Urban City	1948	36.5	40.6	40.6
	Suburb	2190	41	45.7	86.3
	Rural Area	527	9.9	11	97.3
	Other	128	2.4	2.7	100
	Total	4793	89.8	100	
	Missing	546	10.2		
	System Total	5339	100		
Have you ever been the victim of a personal crime?	Yes	1660	31.1	34.1	34.1
	No	3204	60	65.9	100
	Total	4864	91.1	100	
	Missing	475	8.9		
	System Total	5339	100		

Table 2 (continued)

Survey Question	Response Options	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How many people do you personally know who have been the victim of a personal crime?	0	1052	19.7	21.6	21.6
	1	737	13.8	15.1	36.7
	2	1139	21.3	23.4	60.1
	3	718	13.4	14.7	74.8
	4 or More	1224	22.9	25.1	100
	Total	4870	91.2	100	
	Missing	469	8.8		
	System Total	5339	100		
Do you feel you have altered any daily routines/activities since you have begun listening to MFM?	Yes	2554	47.8	47.9	47.9
	No	2781	52.1	52.1	100
	Total	5335	99.9	100	
	Missing	4	0.1		
	System Total	5339	100		
How likely do you think you are to become the victim of a personal crime now or in the future?	Extremely likely	76	1.4	1.6	1.6
	Moderately Likely	525	9.8	10.8	12.3
	Slightly likely	1185	22.2	24.3	36.7
	Neither likely or unlikely	1723	32.3	35.4	72
	Slightly unlikely	514	9.6	10.6	82.6
	Moderately unlikely	653	12.2	13.4	96
	Extremely unlikely	195	3.7	4	100
	Total	4871	91.2	100	
	Missing	468	8.8		
	System Total	5339	100		

Individual Characteristics, Fear of Crime, and True Crime Podcast

Exposure

The remainder of this chapter contains information based on statistical analyses of both the respondents' frequency of podcast exposure and the rating of their fear of crime as each compare to other factors that might be related to these items. Specifically, bivariate analyses using independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs to compare means and chi-square tests to compare joint frequencies of two measures were conducted to examine potential relationships among the variables. Alpha was set at .05 for all statistical analyses, and the results are presented below.

Contained within most of the remaining Tables throughout this chapter, along with fear levels, are the average number of podcasts each group discussed in the Table is exposed to on a weekly basis. This addition was made to each of these Tables in order to remember Gerbner's (1976) cultivation theory in hopes to find evidence either in favor of or in opposition of the founding theory that exposure time increases fear of crime.

Age. A significant ($F=25.167, p=.000$) relationship was found between age and the average number of podcasts a respondent listens to weekly, revealing that Murderinos in the age group of 18 to 25 reported listening to significantly fewer outside podcasts than all other age groups. Age also shared a significant relationship with fear of crime. Particularly, older respondents had significantly

lower average levels of fear than younger respondents both before ($F=23.025$, $p=.000$) and after ($F=26.419$, $p=.000$) they starting listening to *My Favorite Murder*. It is important to note, though, that it cannot definitely be said that age directly effects fear of crime. Other variables were not controlled for, so it can only be said that generally, as age increased in our study, fear decreased. There was, however, no significant relationship between age and the overall change in fear levels before and after listening to *My Favorite Murder* (see Table 3).

As reported in Table 3, fear of crime before and after listening to *My Favorite Murder* increased the most in individuals 18 to 25 years old, with an average increase of 2.6012. Not only did this age group have the largest increase in fear of crime, but they also had the highest level of fear before ($\bar{X}=51.7932$) and after ($\bar{X}=54.3943$) listening to the podcast, as can be seen in Figure 4 and Figure 5. Respondents in the age range of 42 and older had the lowest level of fear of crime before and after listening, though Murderinos between the ages of 34 and 41 had the lowest average increase in fear of crime ($\bar{X}=1.808$). This same group also had the highest average number of podcasts listened to weekly ($\bar{X}=4.266$).

Table 3: Podcast Exposure, Fear of Crime, and Age

Item	Age	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Number of Podcasts Listened to Per Week	18-25	1552	3.4439	2.30425
	26-33	2014	4.0849	2.69002
	34-41	771	4.1505	2.60333
	42 and Older	391	4.266	2.67387
	Total	4728	3.9002	2.57327
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	18-25	1552	51.7932	22.28649
	26-33	2014	50.0978	22.01855
	34-41	771	47.7925	22.65107
	42 or Older	391	41.7647	23.59804
	Total	4728	49.5893	22.49993
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	18-25	1552	54.3943	22.14585
	26-33	2014	51.9429	22.29322
	34-41	771	49.6005	22.39808
	42 or Older	391	43.6957	24.11653
	Total	4728	51.6836	22.59857
Change in fear of crime before and after listening to MFM	18-25	1552	2.6012	18.33066
	26-33	2014	1.8451	15.09157
	34-41	771	1.808	13.44057
	42 or Older	391	1.9309	13.45202
	Total	4728	2.0943	15.8658

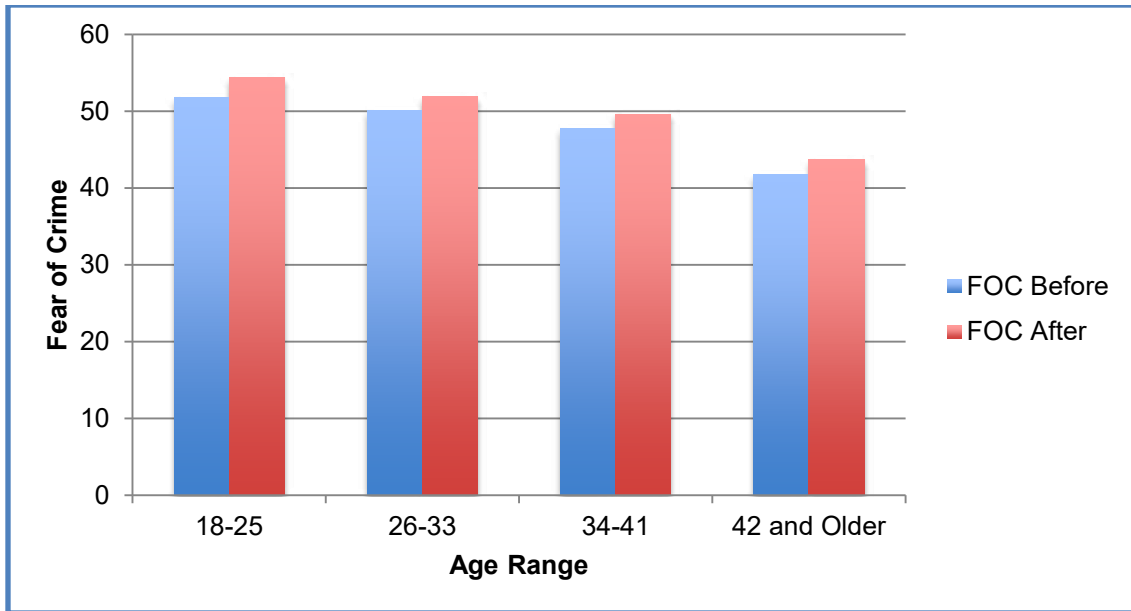


Figure 4: Fear of Crime by Age

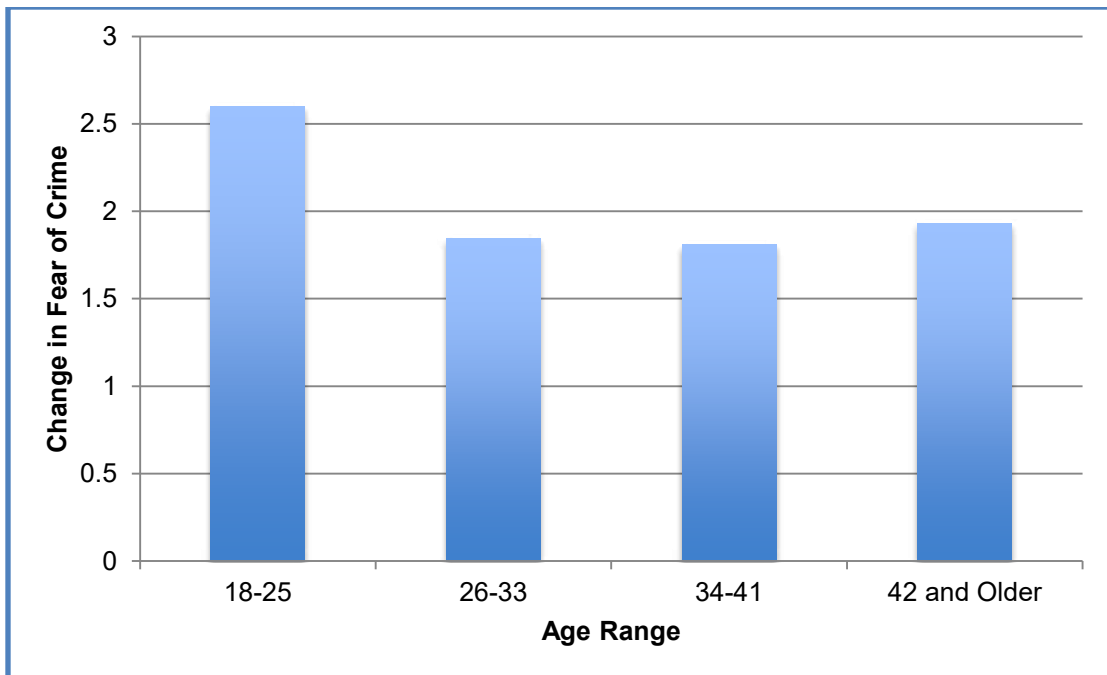


Figure 5: Change in Fear of Crime by Age

Gender. Gender played a role in predicting frequency of podcast exposure in our study: female respondents reported listening to significantly ($t=2.403$, $p=.016$) more podcasts than did males. Similarly, females reported significantly ($t=4.260$, $p=.000$) higher levels of fear before exposure to *My Favorite Murder* than did males. Likewise, after listening to *My Favorite Murder*, females reported significantly ($t=4.459$, $p=.000$) higher levels of fear than did males. Figure 6 illustrates the gap between male and female fears before and after listening to the podcast.

Although levels of fear before and after listening to *My Favorite Murder* were significant based on gender, the change in levels of fear of crime were not statistically different between males and females. It is interesting to note, though, that females had an increase of fear whereas males had a slight decrease after listening, shown clearly in Figure 7. As can be seen in Table 4, females reported a larger increase in average levels of fear of crime than did males. Females had an average overall increase of 2.1284, whereas males reported much lower fear both before and after, as well as an overall average decrease of 0.2374.

Table 4: Podcast Exposure, Fear of Crime, and Gender

Item	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Podcasts Weekly	Female	4651	3.9202	2.58646
	Male	139	3.3885	1.98732
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	Female	4651	49.8233	22.40385
	Male	139	41.597	23.46095
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	Female	4651	51.9516	22.51922
	Male	139	41.36	23.19858
Change in fear of crime	Female	4651	2.1284	15.90197
	Male	139	-0.237	14.95335

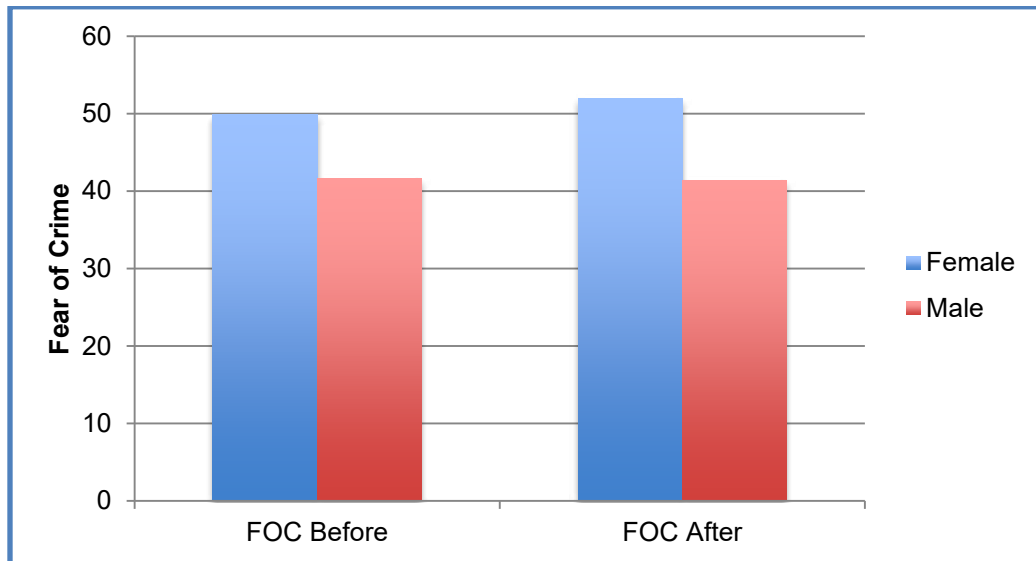


Figure 6: Fear of Crime by Gender

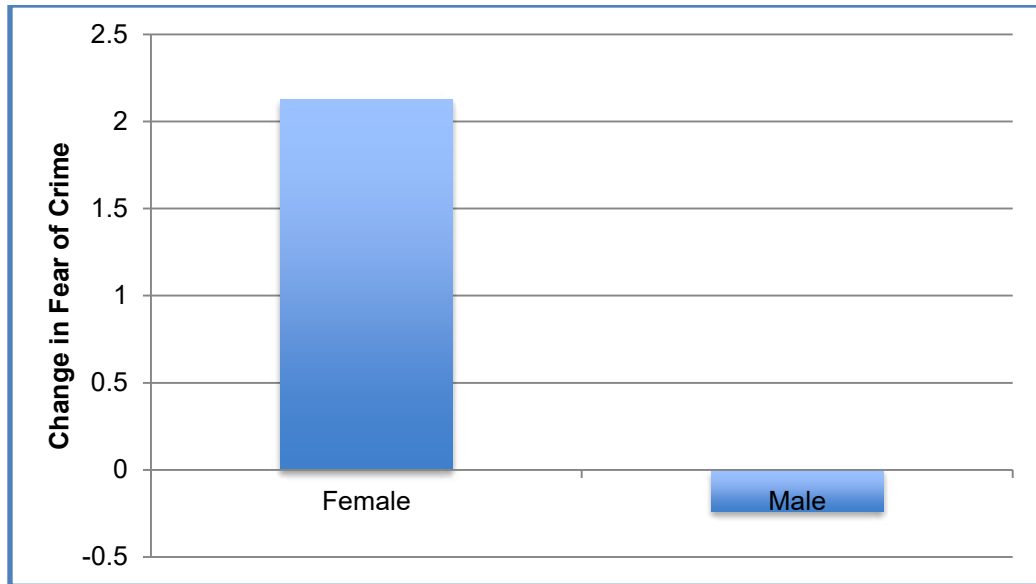


Figure 7: Change in Fear of Crime by Gender

Race. Nonwhite respondents reported significantly higher fear of crime than white respondents both before ($t=3.043$, $p=.002$) and after ($t=2.648$, $p=.008$) listening to *My Favorite Murder*, but the increase in fear for whites from before to after was larger than that of nonwhites. Respondents that classified themselves as white had the lowest beginning fear of crime at 49.1731 and an average increase of fear by 2.1327 units. Table 5 shows a further breakdown of this comparison of how race impacted listeners' fear of crime. Figures 8 and 9, respectively, show graphically the separation between fears before and after listening, along with the change in fear of crime of those who identify as white and those who identify as nonwhite.

Table 5: Podcast Exposure, Fear of Crime, and Race

Item	Race	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Podcasts Weekly	Nonwhite	675	3.9096	2.50622
	White	4113	3.9003	2.58396
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	Nonwhite	675	52.0119	23.57443
	White	4113	49.1731	22.27674
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	Nonwhite	675	53.7896	23.07072
	White	4113	51.3059	22.51067
Change in fear of crime	Nonwhite	675	1.7778	18.74017
	White	4113	2.1327	15.34104

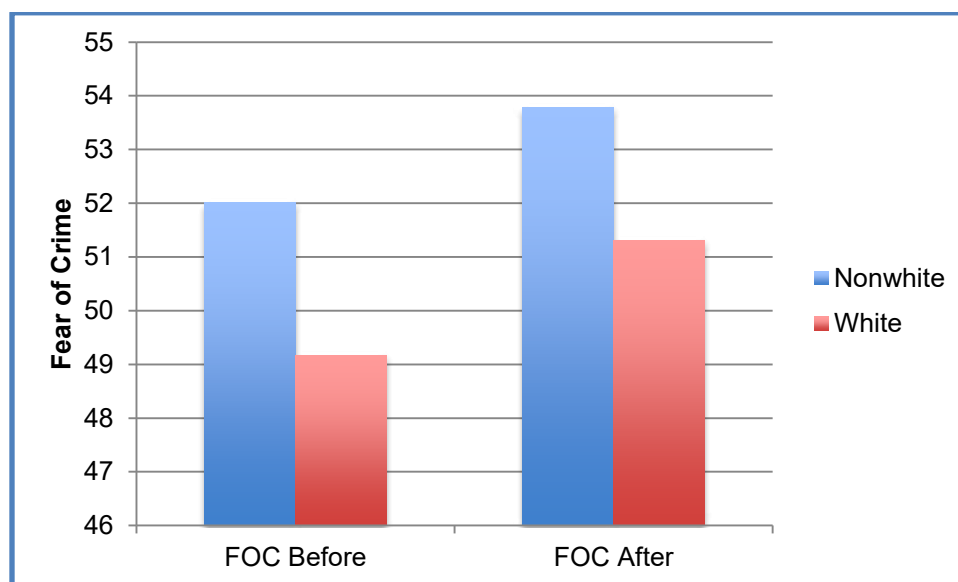


Figure 8: Fear of Crime by Race

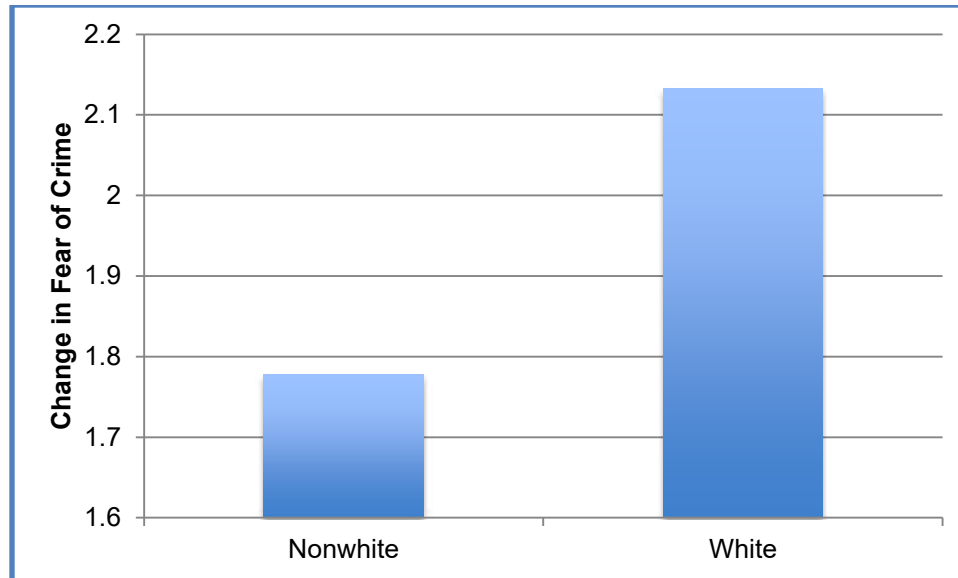


Figure 9: Change in Fear of Crime by Race

Area of Residence. Respondents living in suburban areas reported significantly greater levels of fear than those in rural areas both before ($F=4.706$, $p=.003$) and after ($F=3.052$, $p=.027$), though there were no statistical differences among any other types of residential areas. Table 6 shows the only slight difference to be found when analyzing respondents' area of residence. Those who live in rural areas had the lowest level of fear of crime before listening to *My Favorite Murder* at 46.8273. This group's fear rating after being introduced to the podcast was still the lowest among all residence area types, at 49.8102, but that, interestingly, was the largest increase from before to after among all types of residence area types. Figure 10 is a great visual representation of these data, showing how low fear was for those who live in rural areas before listening, while

Figure 11 displays the drastic increase in fears among those who live in rural areas as opposed to all others.

Table 6: Podcast Exposure, Fear of Crime, and Area of Residence

Item	Area of Residence	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Podcasts Weekly	Urban City	1948	3.8445	2.48941
	Suburb	2190	3.9306	2.63697
	Rural Area	527	3.9829	2.59234
	Other	128	3.9922	2.60071
	Total	4793	3.903	2.57175
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	Urban City	1948	49.078	22.42813
	Suburb	2190	50.6251	22.15533
	Rural Area	527	46.8273	23.76026
	Other	128	50.9766	22.78882
	Total	4793	49.5881	22.49051
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	Urban City	1948	51.019	22.42048
	Suburb	2190	52.6292	22.31467
	Rural Area	527	49.8102	24.35671
	Other	128	52.0234	22.66895
	Total	4793	51.6487	22.6145
Change in fear of crime	Urban City	1948	1.941	15.86577
	Suburb	2190	2.0041	16.12099
	Rural Area	527	2.9829	14.85256
	Other	128	1.0469	15.85061
	Total	4793	2.0605	15.8743

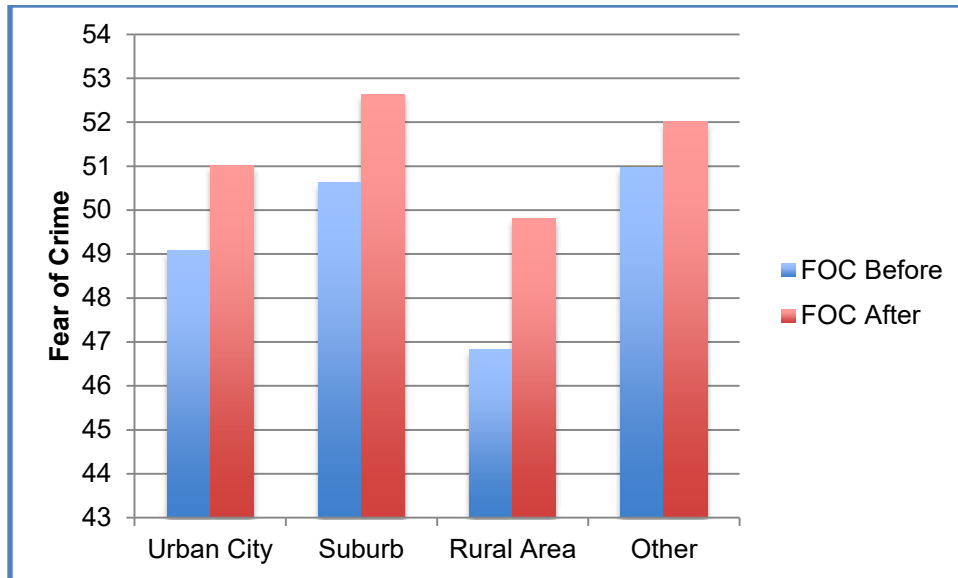


Figure 10: Fear of Crime by Location

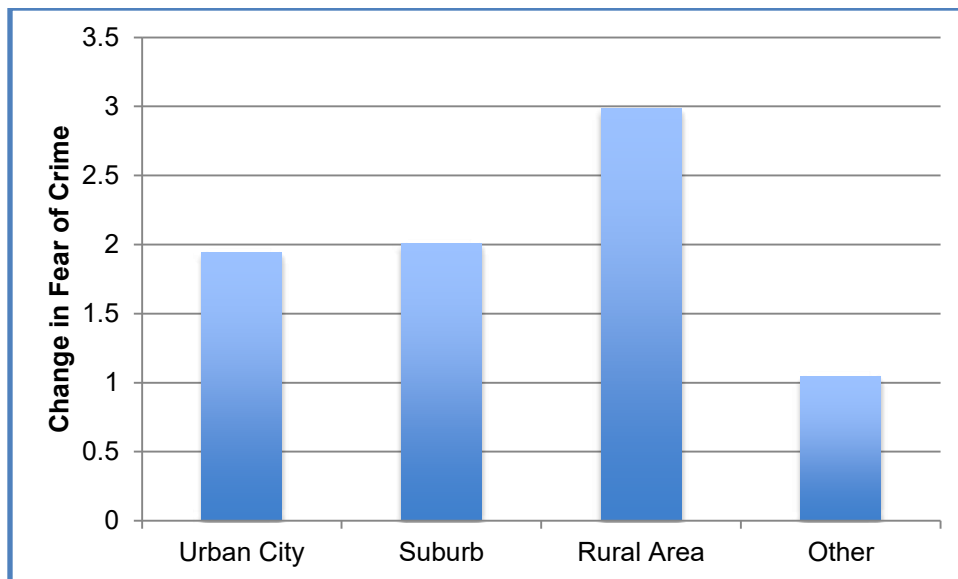


Figure 11: Change in Fear of Crime by Location

Known Victims of Personal Crimes. The number of podcasts listened to weekly shared a significant ($F=9.421, p=.000$) positive relationship with the

number of victims of personal crimes known by respondents. The same goes for fear of crime levels; those who knew more victims had significantly ($F=4.549$, $p=.000$) higher levels of fear before exposure to *My Favorite Murder*.

Respondents who reported knowing several people who had been victims of personal crime had less statistical ($F=16.618$, $p=.000$) change in fear levels from before to after exposure to *My Favorite Murder* than did respondents who knew fewer people who had been victimized, displayed in Figure 12.

Figures 13 and 14 visually show that Murderinos who reported knowing zero people who have been the victim of a personal crime had the lowest fear of crime levels before listening to *My Favorite Murder* at 47.27. As seen in Table 7, the continuing trend as the number of known victims increases is that fear of crime decreases before respondents listened to *My Favorite Murder*. Though there was no statistical difference in fear levels between the groups after listening to the podcast, the group that reported the lowest beginning fear levels (respondents who know zero victims) had the largest increase of fear overall (5.153). Though fear of crime before *My Favorite Murder* and the reported number of known victims were positively related, the fear of crime change from before to after listening to the podcast was negatively related to known victims (those who knew four or more victims had a decrease in fear of .06552).

As can be seen in Figure 12, followed by Figure 13 for further emphasis, known victims are an important predictor of fear levels among respondents before listening to *My Favorite Murder*, while Figure 14 depicts the negative

relationship of known victims and the impact that *My Favorite Murder* has on fear of crime in listeners.

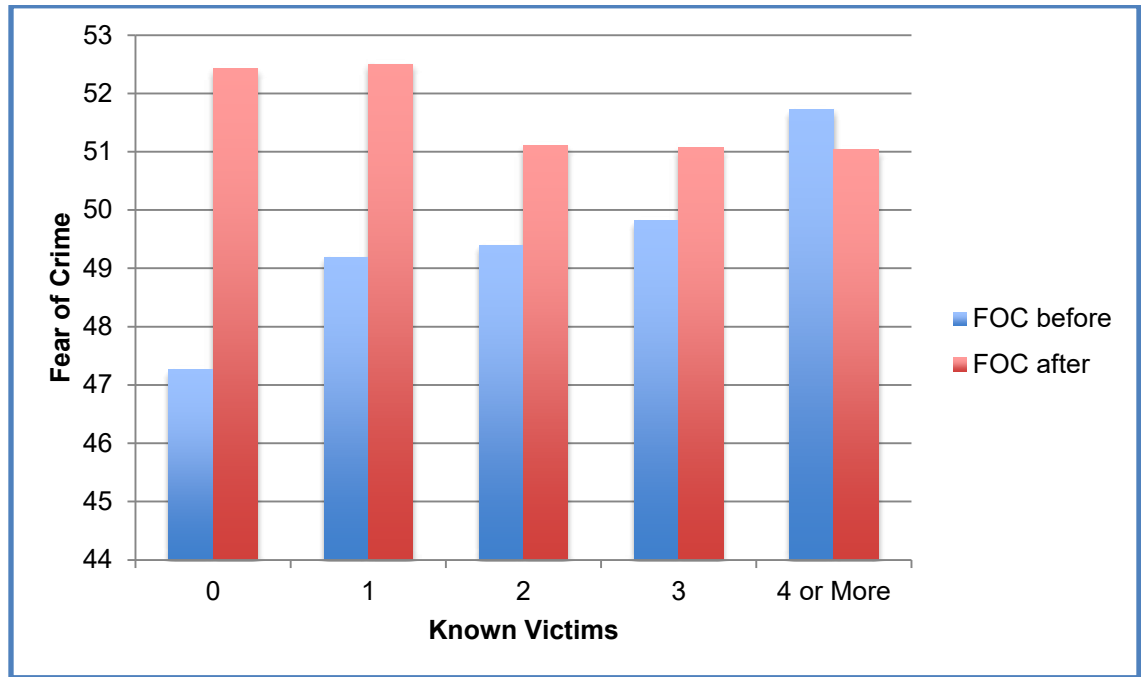


Figure 12: Fear of Crime by Known Victims

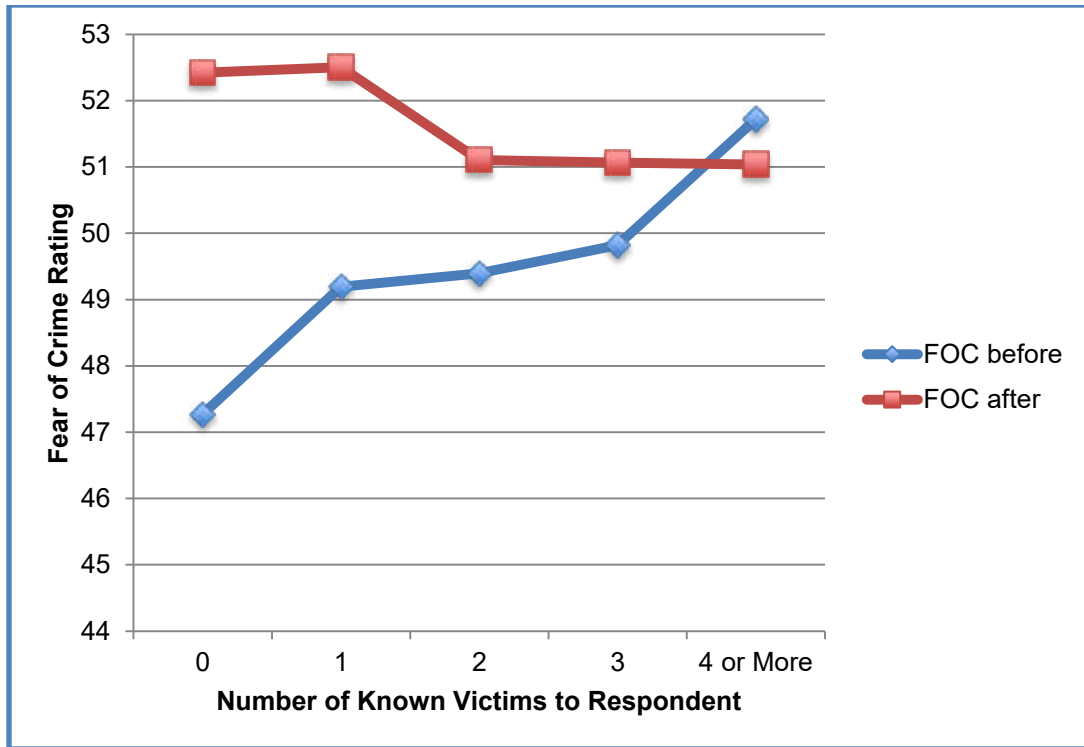


Figure 13: Fear of Crime Before and After by Known Victims

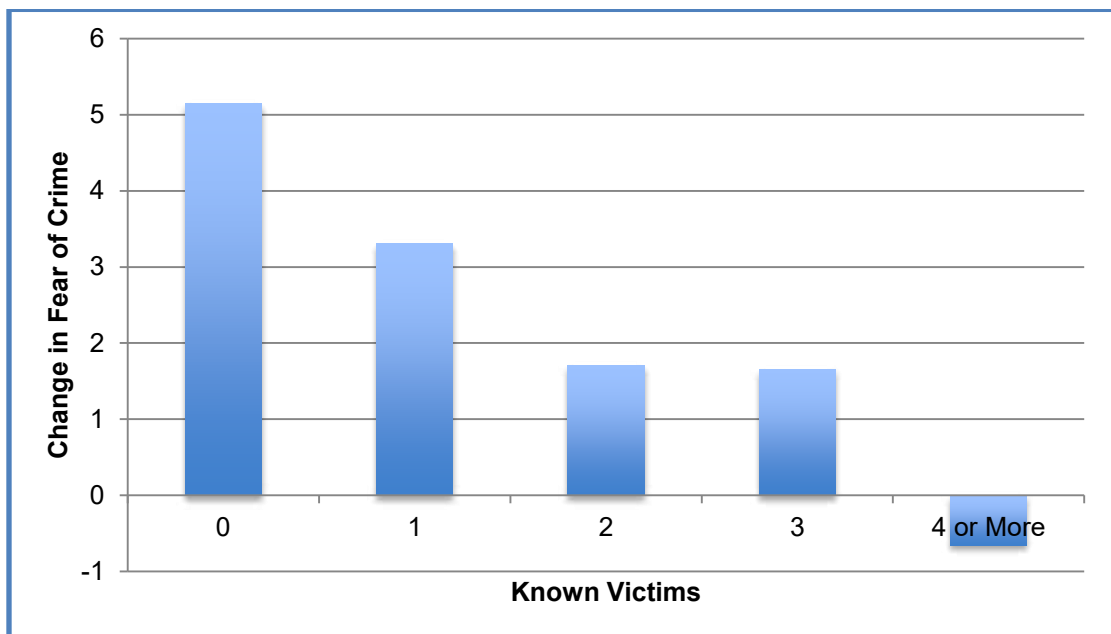


Figure 14: Change in Fear of Crime by Known Victims

Table 7: Podcast Exposure, Fear of Crime, and Number of Known Victims

Item	Known Victims of Personal Crime	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Podcasts Weekly	0	1052	3.6046	2.59427
	1	737	3.7057	2.5003
	2	1139	3.8165	2.38784
	3	718	4.1295	2.38784
	4 or More	1224	4.2328	2.71133
	Total	4870	3.9047	2.58683
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	0	1052	47.27	22.2666
	1	737	49.194	23.2692
	2	1139	49.3968	22.11411
	3	718	49.8217	22.25048
	4 or More	1224	51.723	22.50558
	Total	4870	49.554	22.48647
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	0	1052	52.423	22.53583
	1	737	52.502	23.3315
	2	1139	51.1045	22.67782
	3	718	51.0678	22.42563
	4 or More	1224	51.0382	22.4214
	Total	4870	51.6454	22.61156
Change in fear of crime	0	1052	5.153	17.86513
	1	737	3.308	15.69405
	2	1139	1.7076	15.38372
	3	718	1.6476	14.54843
	4 or More	1224	-0.6552	14.75204
	Total	4870	2.0914	15.85803

Perceived Victimization Risk. Ferraro (1995) differentiated perceived risk of victimization from fear of crime in that perceived risk involves a cognitive judgment while fear of crime is an emotional response. Fear of crime and

perception of victimization risk are very similar, so it makes sense that there are vast differences in individuals' fear of crime when looking at how they view their risk of victimization. Those who view themselves as extremely unlikely of being victimized reported an average fear of crime level of 37.2513, whereas those who see themselves as extremely likely of being victimized had a reported 61.8158 level of fear of crime before listening to the podcast. Further details can be found in Table 8. An individual's perception of his or her own victimization risk was positively related with their fear of crime before listening to *My Favorite Murder*, as that fear level was significantly ($F=56.926$, $p=.000$) higher for those that perceived their risk as greater. Analogously, individuals who reported a higher perception of risk for victimization rated their fear of crime significantly ($F=48.880$, $p=.000$) higher than those reporting lower risk.

Figure 15 shows the positive relationship between respondents' belief of their own likelihood of victimization and their fear of crime. Figure 16 shows the overall change in fear of crime from before listening to after as compared to these perceived victimization risks, which solidify the idea that the two are very closely related. Those who believe they are extremely unlikely to become victimized had virtually no change from before to after, relaying the idea that those who feel safe are not affected by *My Favorite Murder* exposure.

Table 8: Podcast Exposure, Fear of Crime, and Perceived Victimization Risk

Item	Perception of Victimization Risk	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Podcasts Weekly	Extremely likely	76	4.1842	2.76507
	Moderately likely	525	3.7943	2.6254
	Slightly likely	1185	3.8363	2.59942
	Neither likely or unlikely	1723	4.0099	2.60024
	Slightly unlikely	514	3.9222	2.52662
	Moderately unlikely	653	3.8132	2.4692
	Extremely unlikely	195	3.8	2.74256
	Total	4871	3.9031	2.58658
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	Extremely likely	76	61.8158	23.08749
	Moderately likely	525	58.499	21.54018
	Slightly likely	1185	53.0608	20.64332
	Neither likely or unlikely	1723	48.2908	22.08277
	Slightly unlikely	514	49.3307	21.27779
	Moderately unlikely	653	41.7688	22.57252
	Extremely unlikely	195	37.2513	25.6801
	Total	4871	49.5559	22.47365
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	Extremely likely	76	64.3947	23.73862
	Moderately likely	525	61.4971	21.04418
	Slightly likely	1185	55.2759	20.54746
	Neither likely or unlikely	1723	50.5537	22.22721
	Slightly unlikely	514	50.7335	21.60854
	Moderately unlikely	653	43.585	23.08581
	Extremely unlikely	195	37.4051	24.30763
	Total	4871	51.6563	22.61172
Change in fear of crime	Extremely likely	76	2.5789	18.0955
	Moderately likely	525	2.9981	16.69284
	Slightly likely	1185	2.2152	16.42716
	Neither likely or unlikely	1723	2.2629	14.79072
	Slightly unlikely	514	1.4027	15.76012
	Moderately unlikely	653	1.8162	16.51082
	Extremely unlikely	195	0.1538	15.98604
	Total	4871	2.1004	15.84751

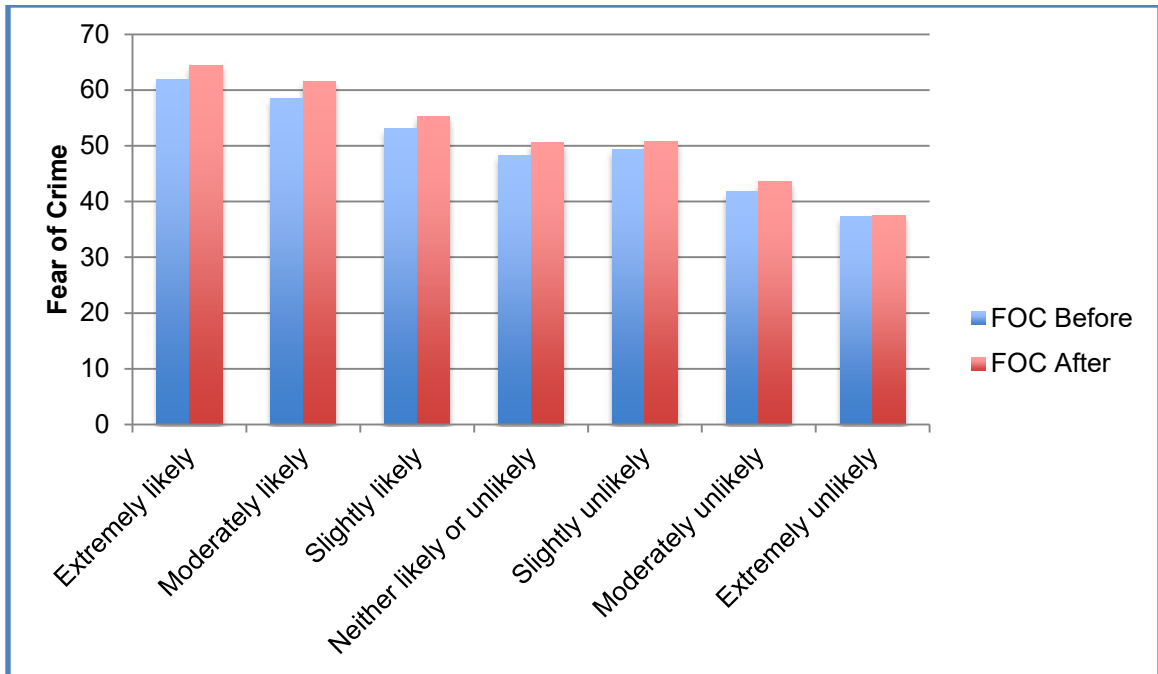


Figure 15: Fear of Crime by Risk Perception

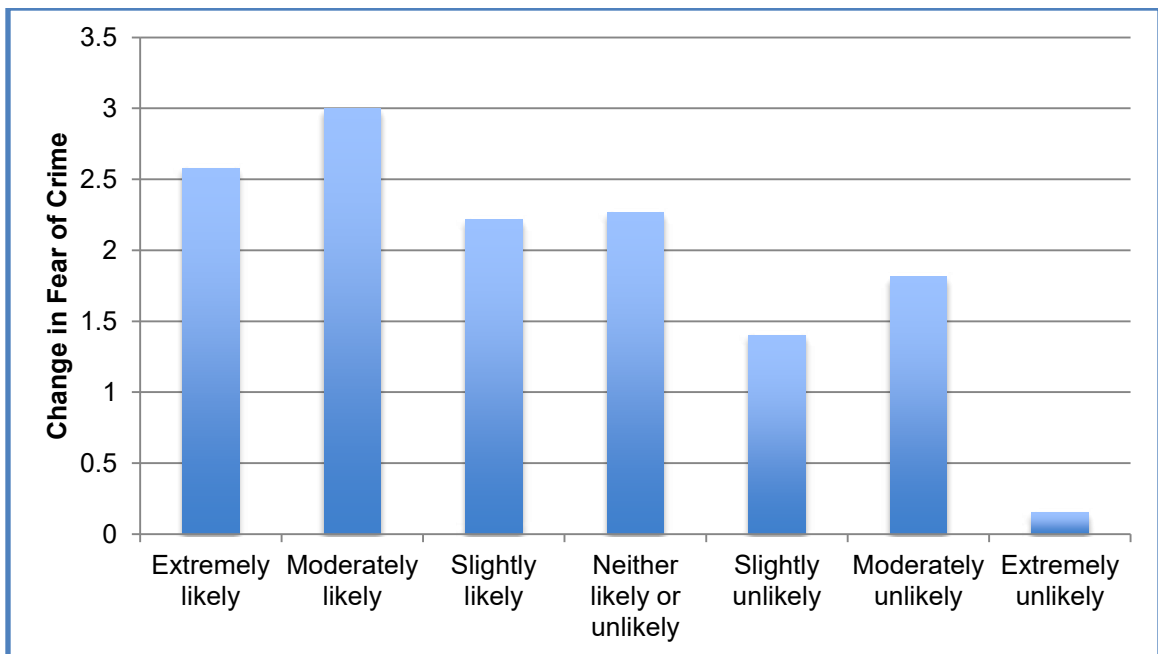


Figure 16: Change in Fear of Crime by Risk Perception

Past Victimization History. Those who reported having been the victim of a personal crime in the past listen to significantly ($t=6.348$, $p=.000$) more podcasts than those who have not previously been victimized. Furthermore, these same listeners who have previously been victims of personal crime reported significantly ($t=4.101$, $p=.000$) higher average levels of fear before exposure than people who had not previously experience victimization. Those who had not been victims had significantly more of a change ($t=-6.234$, $p=.000$) in fear; non-victims had an average increase of 3.1180 whereas victims increased by only .1298. Table 9 shows that the difference in fear of crime change from before to after was much higher for those who had not been victims of personal crime ($\bar{X}=3.116$) than those who had been victims ($\bar{X}=0.1398$). Continuing this common trend of those with higher fears being least affected by exposure to *My Favorite Murder*, Figures 17 and 18 visually compare victims' and nonvictims' fears before and after, as well as the overall change.

Table 9: Podcast Exposure, Fear of Crime, and Past Victimization History

Item	Have you ever been the victim of a personal crime?	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Podcasts Weekly	Yes	1660	4.2289	2.67836
	No	3204	3.7344	2.5165
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	Yes	1660	51.3976	22.88296
	No	3204	48.615	22.2101
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	Yes	1660	51.5373	22.73055
	No	3204	51.733	22.5602
Change in fear of crime	Yes	1660	0.1398	14.96827
	No	3204	3.118	16.2103

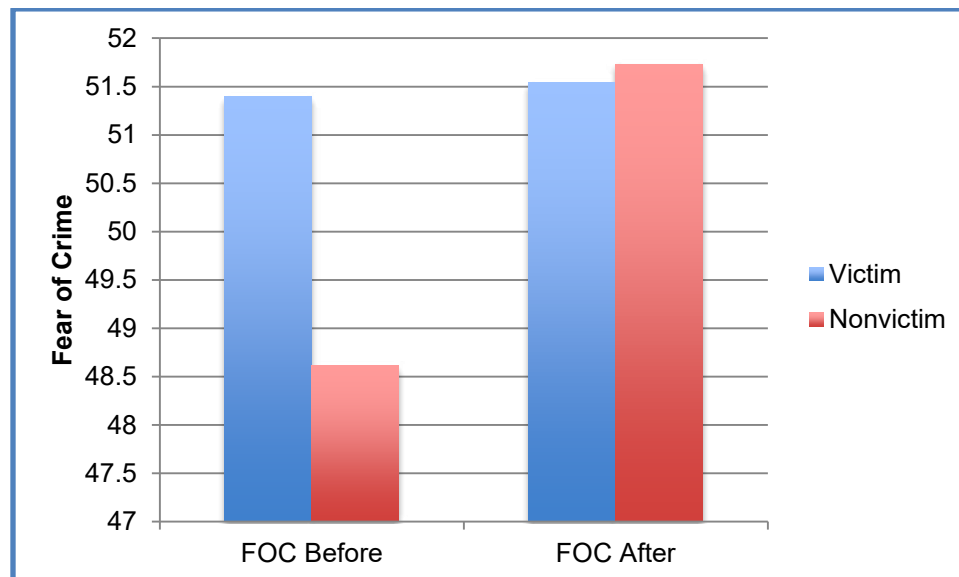


Figure 17: Fear of Crime by Past Victimization

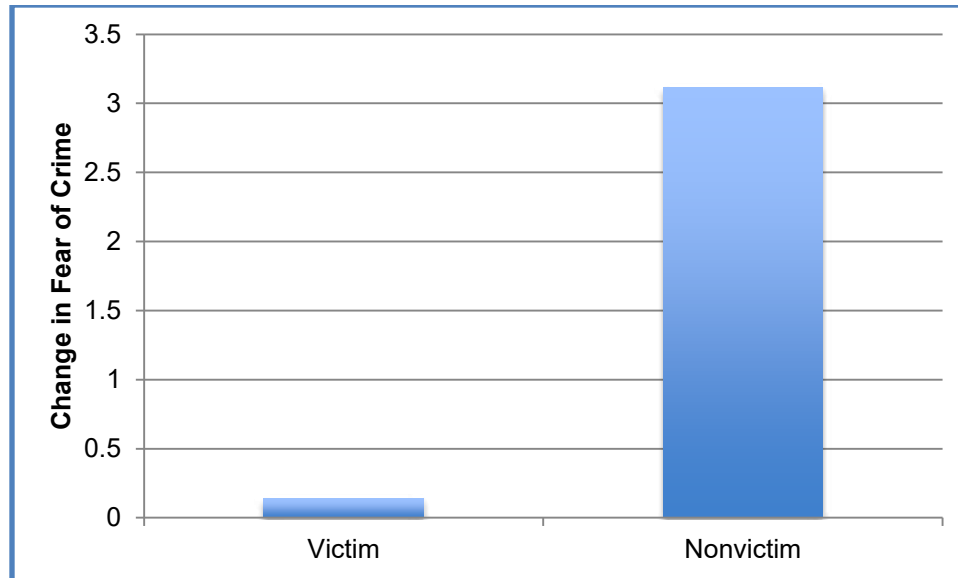


Figure 18: Change in Fear of Crime by Past Victimization

Frequency of MFM Episodes Per Week. In regards to the regularity of *My Favorite Murder* exposure, fear of crime levels were significantly ($F=8.324$, $p=.000$) higher in respondents who are regular listeners exposed to the podcast once per week than those who report they only listen occasionally. Regular weekly listeners, similar to before exposure, reported significantly ($F=4.990$, $p=.001$) higher levels of fear of crime than those who only listen occasionally. Murderinos who are regular, consistent listeners, catching the episode once a week when it is released, had significantly ($F=8.727$, $p=.000$) less of a change in fear than others did.

Table 10 shows that the largest difference in fear of crime levels when looking at frequency of podcast exposure comes from those who indicated that they only listen to the podcast occasionally, which is not on a regular basis (not

necessarily an episode every week). Respondents in this group reported an average fear of crime level before listening to the podcast of 44.1154. The mean level for the same group after listening was 47.7692. Examining the change in levels from before to after exposure to *My Favorite Murder*, those who listen to one episode every week had the lowest increase of fear (0.9188) and those who claim they just discovered the podcast and are bingeing episodes (4 or more episodes per week) had the largest increase in fear from before to after listening ($\bar{X}=4.0775$).

There was no significant relationship between number of podcasts per week and level of fear before or after, but the number of podcasts listened to weekly was significantly ($r=0.052$, $p=.000$) related to total change in fear of crime. Total change in fear of crime after exposure was negatively related to the number of podcasts listened to per week, meaning that as Murderinos reported listening to more podcasts per week, total change in fear of crime decreased.

Figure 19 does not seem to show too much visually because most categories had very close average fear levels, but then focusing on Figure 20 enlarges the change in average fears before to after. Here, it can be seen that regular, once per week listeners had the smallest increase in fear, while those who binge multiple episodes per week, along with those who only listen occasionally had the largest change in fear increase after listening.

Table 10: Fear of Crime and Frequency of MFM Episodes Per Week

Questions on Fear of Crime	Frequency of MFM episodes per week	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	Once per week when the episode is released	2819	50.9475	22.33172
	I binge every couple of weeks	941	47.8023	22.50402
	I just discovered the podcast so am casually bingeing	427	46.637	21.76457
	I just discovered the podcast and am super bingeing	994	49.6247	22.20583
	I catch occasional episodes when I can	156	44.1154	23.53034
	Total	5337	49.602	22.39109
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	Once per week when the episode is released	2819	51.8663	22.13678
	I binge every couple of weeks	941	50.2412	23.27267
	I just discovered the podcast so am casually bingeing	427	49.7658	21.7137
	I just discovered the podcast and am super bingeing	994	53.7022	22.62363
	I catch occasional episodes when I can	156	47.7692	23.49409
	Total	5337	51.6339	22.47249
Change in fear of crime	Once per week when the episode is released	2819	0.9188	16.18971
	I binge every couple of weeks	941	2.4389	15.22895
	I just discovered the podcast so am casually bingeing	427	3.1288	15.14018
	I just discovered the podcast and am super bingeing	994	4.0775	15.59711
	I catch occasional episodes when I can	156	3.6538	15.64883
	Total	5337	2.0319	15.86185

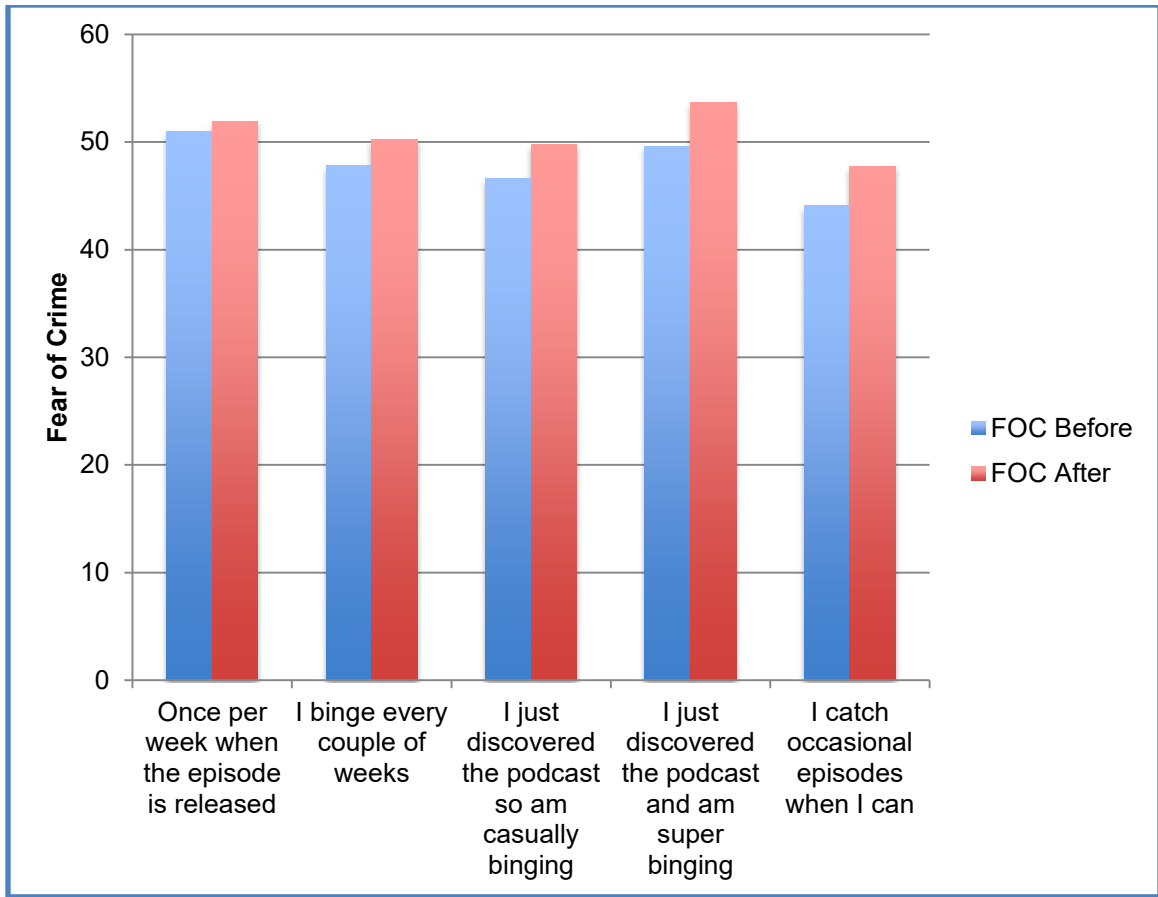


Figure 19: Fear of Crime by MFM Exposure Frequency

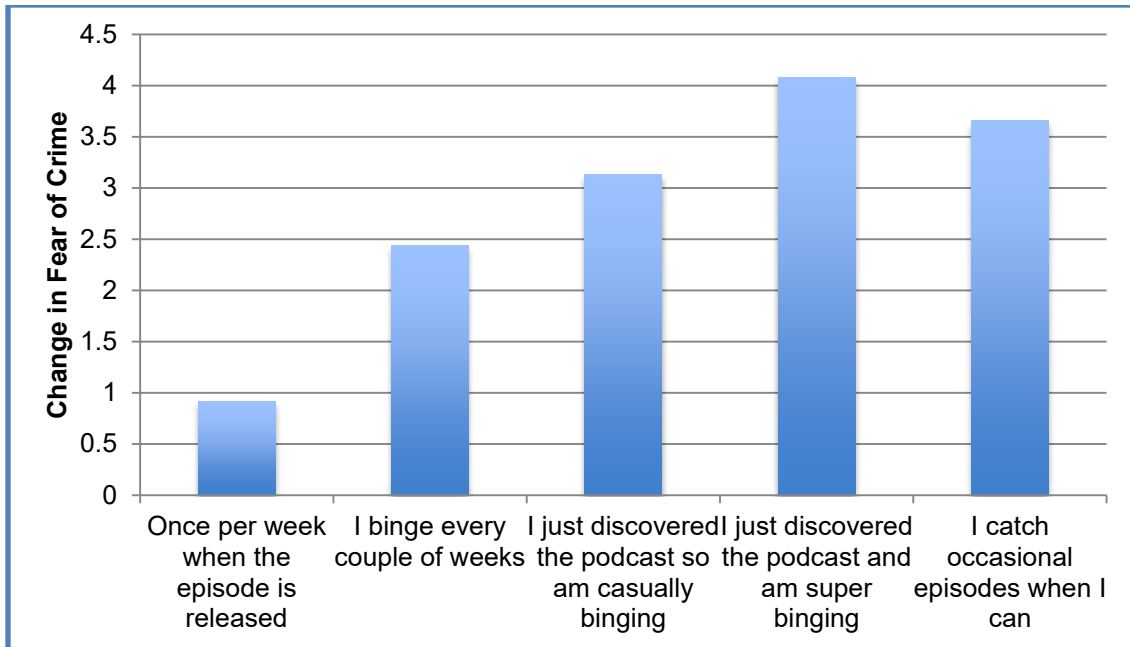


Figure 20: Change in Fear of Crime by MFM Exposure Frequency

Other Podcasts Murderinos Listen To. Question 2 of the survey asked respondents to report all other true crime podcasts they listen to regularly (about once per week). Individuals were asked to select all that apply to their weekly podcast consumption, and the results can be seen in Figure 21. Ten different podcasts were listed for respondents to select, and there was an “other” option asking for further listing of podcasts outside of the list given. Some of these “other” podcasts that respondents reported in this section were *Last Podcast On The Left*, *Generation Why*, and *True Crime Garage*. The quantity of these “other” podcasts each respondent listed was calculated manually and taken into account for analysis involving total podcast exposure, though the frequency of each

individual “other” podcast was not recorded for this study, though it could be for future research using the current survey data.

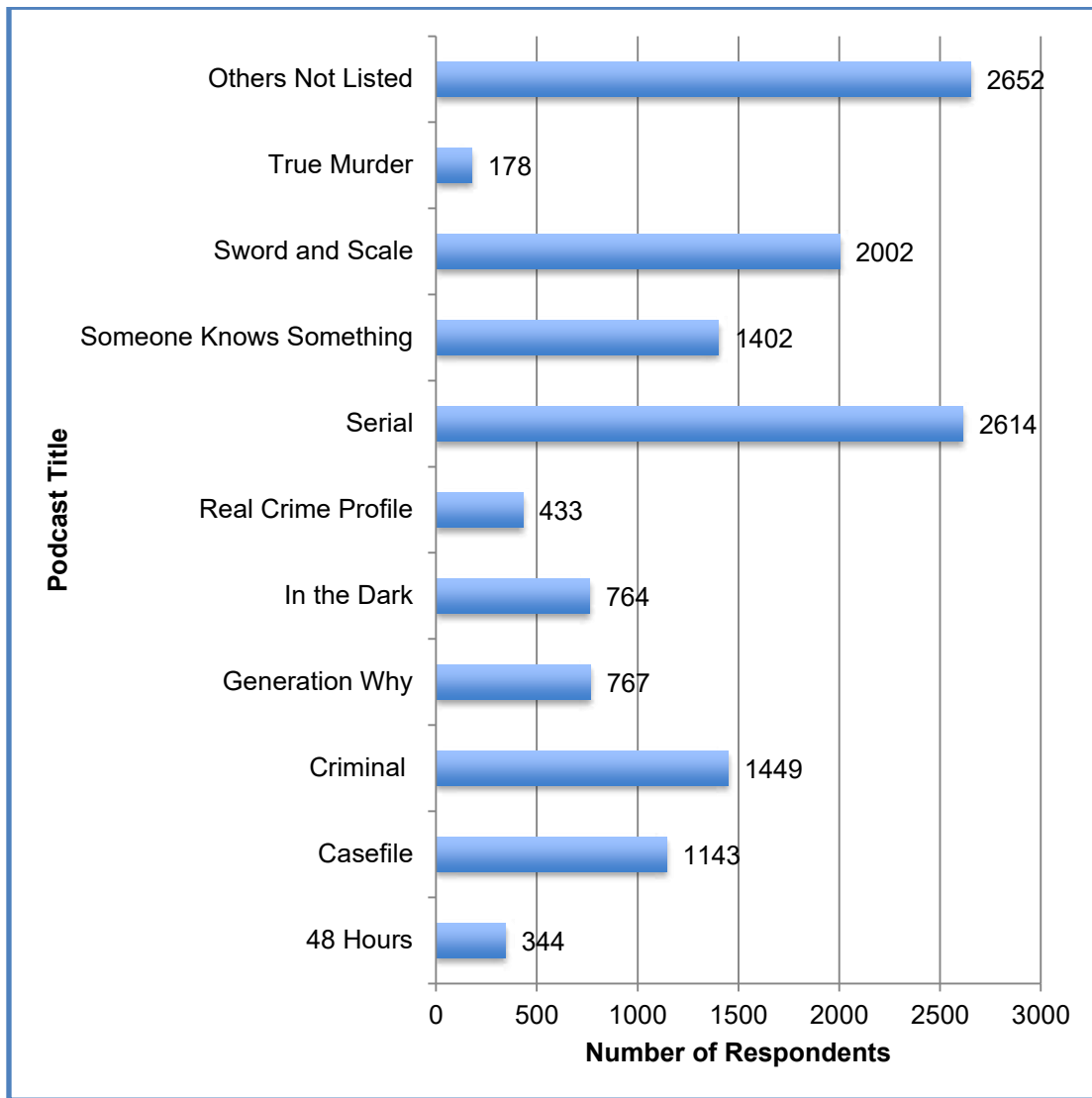


Figure 21: Other Podcasts Murderinos Listen to Regularly

In looking at these data, there are several podcasts that, when listened to in addition to *My Favorite Murder*, will affect a Murderino’s fear of crime. As seen in Table 11, no significant relationship was found between *My Favorite Murder*

and these five podcasts: *48 Hours*, *Generation Why*, *In The Dark*, *Serial*, and *Sword and Scale*.

Murderinos who also listen to *Casefile* had a significantly ($t=3.509$, $p=.000$) lower change in fear of crime. This group had only a 0.5774 increase after listening to *My Favorite Murder* as opposed to those who don't listen to *Casefile*, with an increase of 2.4323. *My Favorite Murder* fans also reported significantly ($t=2.820$, $p=.005$) lower fear of crime rates after listening to *My Favorite Murder* and a lower ($t=2.400$, $p=.016$) overall change in fear if they reported listening to *Criminal. Real Crime Profile* had the same effect, lowering significantly Murderinos' fear of crime both after listening ($t=3.135$, $p=.002$) to *My Favorite Murder* and also the overall change ($t=2.867$, $p=.004$) in fear of crime from before exposure to after. *Someone Knows Something* listeners also reported significantly ($t=2.156$, $p=.031$) lower overall change in fear of crime after listening to *My Favorite Murder*. Similar to others, the podcast *True Murder* lead Murderinos to have a significantly lower fear of crime rating both after ($t=3.189$, $p=.001$) listening to *My Favorite Murder* and the overall change ($t=3.427$, $p=.001$) in fear of crime. The only podcast selection that Murderinos chose that had a significant ($t=-2.420$, $p=.016$) effect on fear of crime BEFORE listening to *My Favorite Murder* was the selection of "Other (please specify)." Those who selected this exposure had an average rating of fear before listening to *My Favorite Murder* of 50.6907, whereas those who did not select they listened to

“other” podcasts outside of these choices had an average fear of crime of 49.0937 before listening.

I also find it interesting to note that the trend of those who listen to the outside podcast have lower fear of crime changes from before exposure of *My Favorite Murder* to afterward, with two exceptions: *Someone Knows Something* and *Sword and Scale*. I think this is interesting because I feel both of these podcasts are the most realistic in their storytelling. To me, it makes logical sense that those who listen to *Sword and Scale* would have a higher fear of crime than those who don't, regardless of other podcast exposure. *Someone Knows Something* is also very realistic in that the first season was about the random kidnapping of a child in the woods. I predict that these two podcasts are outliers in the general trend of the change in fear of crime once listening to *My Favorite Murder* because of their lifelike, chilling content.

Aside from these two exceptions, the consistent tendency of Murderinos' change in fear of crime from before listening to *My Favorite Murder* to after is that those who listen to outside podcasts have less of an increase in fear. Listeners of both *Real Crime Profile* and *True Murder* even had a decrease in fear of crime once listening to *My Favorite Murder*. One of the most graphically informative charts in this project can be seen in Figure 22. This graph shows how much more of a fear-increasing impact *My Favorite Murder* has on those who do not listen to other true crime podcasts.

Table 11: Murderinos' Fear of Crime When Listening to Other Podcasts

	Murderino Listens to this Other Podcast?	Average FOC before listening to MFM	Average FOC after listening to MFM	Average overall change in FOC
48 Hours	Yes	50.7623	51.2609	0.4986
	No	49.515	51.6564	2.1414
Casefile	Yes	50.0289	50.6063	0.5774
	No	49.4776	51.9099	2.4323
Criminal	Yes	49.0296	50.2134	1.1838
	No	49.8073	52.1608	2.3536
Generation Why	Yes	50.5228	51.5528	1.03
	No	49.4401	51.6439	2.2038
In The Dark	Yes	50.2993	51.8588	1.5595
	No	49.4779	51.5927	2.1148
Real Crime Profile	Yes	48.4483	48.3954	-0.0529
	No	49.6974	51.9178	2.2204
Serial	Yes	49.8248	51.4782	1.6534
	No	49.3748	51.7779	2.4031
Someone Knows Something	Yes	49.8511	51.1033	2.3146
	No	49.5044	51.8191	1.2521
Sword and Scale	Yes	49.3209	51.5479	2.227
	No	49.7607	51.6807	1.9199
True Murder	Yes	48.3202	46.3539	-1.9663
	No	49.6396	51.8128	2.1732
Other (please specify)	Yes	50.6907	52.0685	1.3778
	No	49.0937	51.4302	2.3365

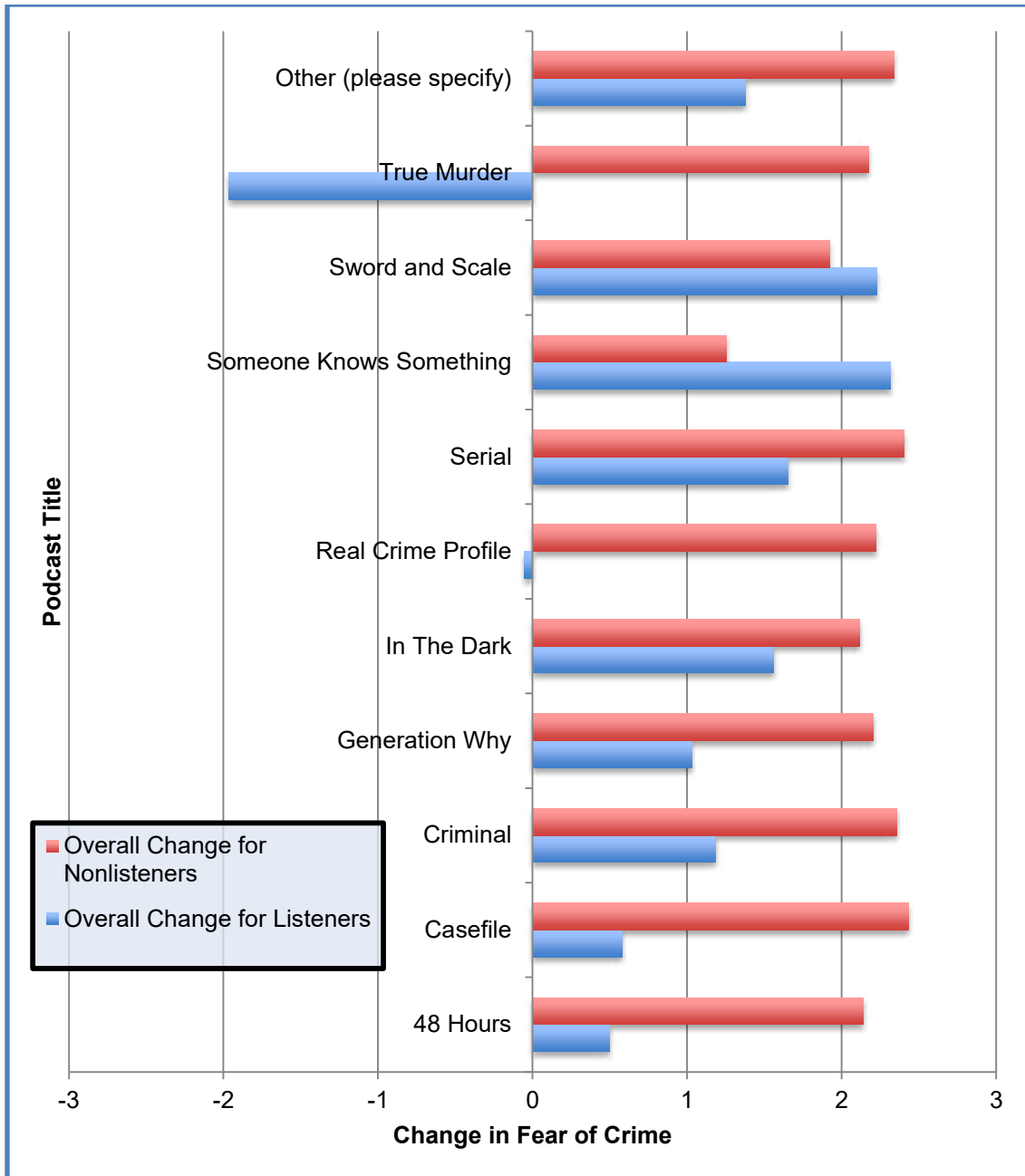


Figure 22: Change in Fear of Crime by Exposure to Other Podcasts

Outside Exposure to (True) Crime. Similar to question 2 of the survey, question 4 asked Murderinos to select all other exposures that they encounter on a regular basis that involve crime or true crime stories. As can be seen in Figure 23, the most popular responses were, in descending order, watching true crime documentaries, watching television shows based on true crime, and watching movies based on true crime stories. Very few respondents reported working in a field dealing closely with crime, living with someone who works in said field, or receiving an education where crime and law are discussed regularly.

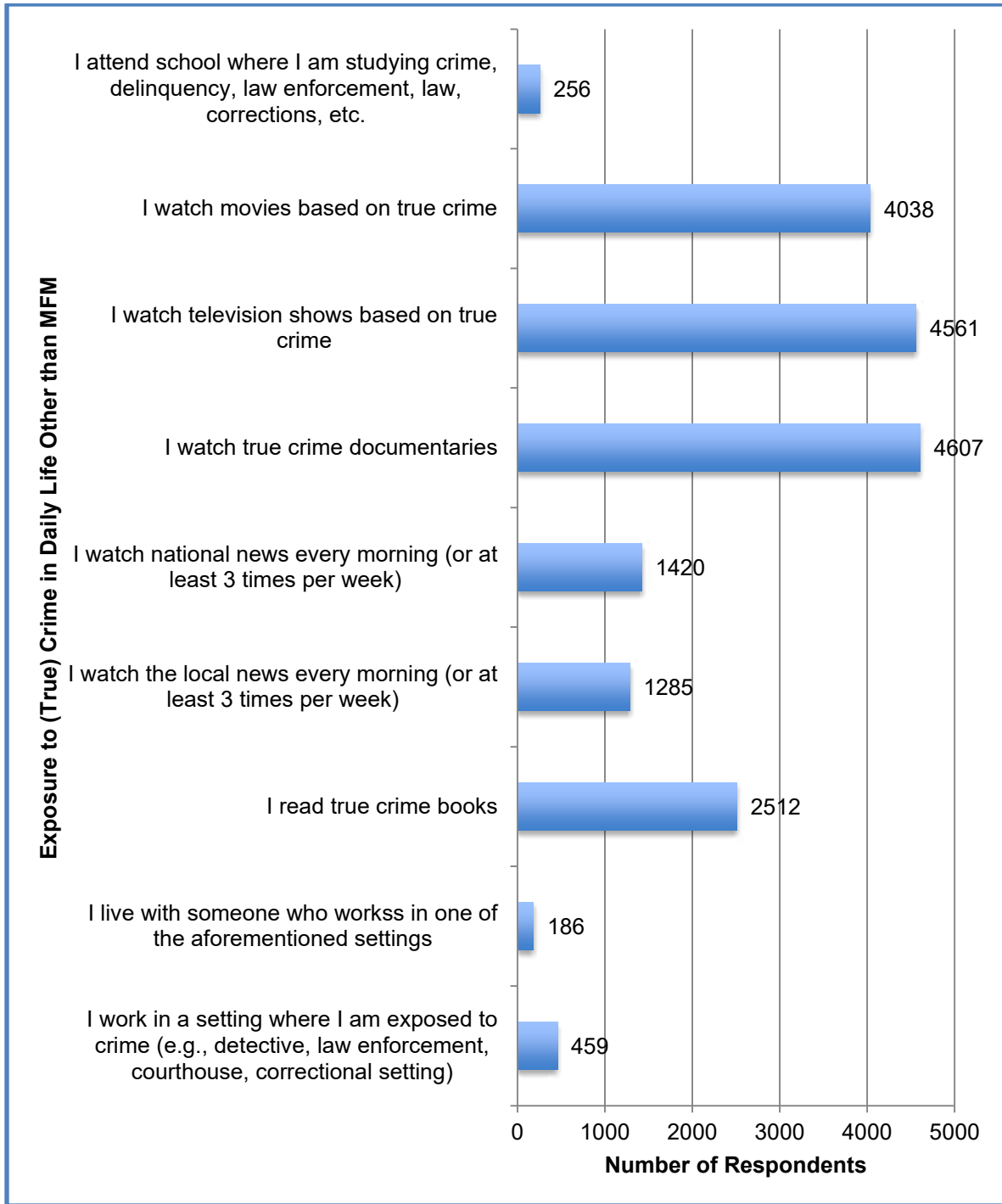


Figure 23: Regular Outside Exposures to (True) Crime

There were several important relationships when looking at other outside exposures to crime and/or true crime. Table 12 shows that *My Favorite Murder* listeners who also work in a field that involves close proximity to crime/law had a significantly ($t=2.180$, $p=.029$) lower fear of crime after listening, as well as a significantly ($t=2.222$, $p=.026$) smaller increase in overall fear. Respondents who report reading true crime books had significantly different fear of crime than those that do not read these books in all three categories: before listening ($t=-3.082$, $p=.002$), after listening ($t=2.427$, $p=.015$), and the overall change in fear ($t=7.829$, $p=.000$). *My Favorite Murder* listeners also had significant fear before ($t=-2.774$, $p=.006$) listening and overall change ($t=2.195$, $p=.028$) in fear when they reported watching the local news at least three days per week. No such relationship was present with national news though. Documentaries affected Murderinos' fear of crime before ($t=-3.032$, $p=.002$) listening and their overall change ($t=3.991$, $p=.000$) in fear of crime. Both television shows and movies based on true crime stories had significant effects on Murderinos' fear of crime levels before, after, and total change if fear from before to after listening to *My Favorite Murder*, but the tendency here is interesting. Those who regularly watch television shows reported significantly higher fear of crime both before ($t=-3.956$, $p=.000$) and after ($t=-2.056$, $p=.040$) exposure to *My Favorite Murder*, but have a significantly ($t=2.666$, $p=.008$) lower overall increase in fear from before to after. This same trend is present in those who report watching movies based on true crime: significantly higher fear of crime before ($t=-3.843$, $p=.000$) *My Favorite Murder*

and after ($t=-2.140$, $p=.032$), but a lower average increase in fear of crime ($t=2.388$, $p=.017$) from before to after.

Table 12: Murderinos' Fear of Crime When Exposed to Other (True) Crime

	Murderino has this exposure?	Average FOC before listening to MFM	Average FOC after listening to MFM	Average overall change in FOC
I work in a setting where I am exposed to crime (e.g., detective, law enforcement, courthouse, correctional setting)	Yes	48.9826	49.4478	0.4652
	No	49.6534	51.8366	2.1832
I live with someone who works in one of the aforementioned settings	Yes	49.6022	50.1129	0.5108
	No	49.5954	51.6856	2.0902
I read true crime books	Yes	50.5948	50.8407	0.2459
	No	48.7045	52.3356	3.6311
I watch the local new every morning (or at least 3 times per week)	Yes	51.1016	52.2925	1.1908
	No	49.1163	51.4202	2.304
I watch national news every morning (or at least 3 times per week)	Yes	50.1356	51.7505	1.6149
	No	49.3994	51.5873	2.1879
I watch true crime documentaries	Yes	49.9634	51.6559	1.6925
	No	47.2514	51.471	4.2196
I watch television shows based on true crime	Yes	50.0926	51.8903	1.7978
	No	46.646	50.0909	3.4442
I watch movies based on true crime	Yes	50.2608	52.003	1.7422
	No	47.5162	50.4675	2.9513
I attend school where I am studying crime, delinquency, law enforcement, law, corrections, etc.	Yes	49.8516	51.4141	1.5625
	No	49.5827	51.6417	2.059

Similar to other podcasts, outside exposures to crime and/or true crime entertainment effects are important to note and can be seen in Figure 24.

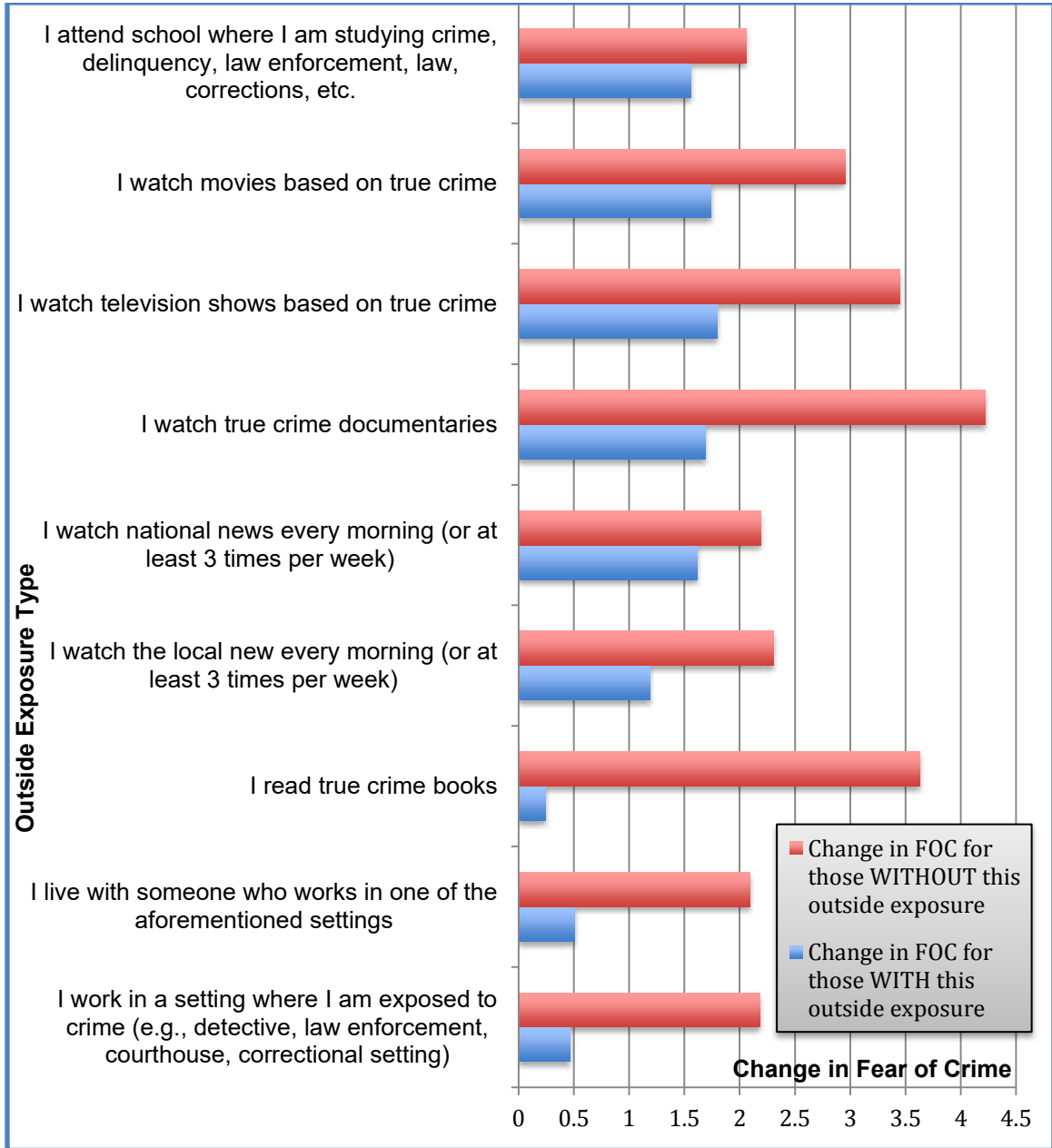


Figure 24: Murderinos' Change in Fear of Crime With Other Exposures to (True) Crime

Altered Daily Routines. Those who reported they had altered daily routines since listening to *My Favorite Murder* had significantly ($t=12.207$, $p=.000$) higher fear of crime before listening. Likewise, this same group of respondents that altered daily activities had significantly ($t=15.389$, $p=.000$) higher levels of fear after listening than did respondents who did not alter any activities. Finally, the change in fear of crime levels was significantly ($t=4.219$, $p=.000$) larger in individuals who reported altering daily routines than those who did not.

Table 13 shows that, intuitively, those who reported altering any daily routines in order to increase personal safety reported much higher fear of crime levels both before (53.4679) and after (56.464) being introduced to *My Favorite Murder*. Those who reported not altering any such daily routines had much lower rates of fear both before (46.0198) and after (47.1852) listening to *My Favorite Murder*. These trends can be seen in Figures 25 and 26.

Table 13: Fear of Crime and Altered Daily Routines

Item	Have you altered any daily routines since listening to MFM?	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Podcasts Weekly	Yes	2554	3.872	2.51896
	No	2781	3.8536	2.6035
How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM?	Yes	2554	53.4679	21.13925
	No	2781	46.02	22.91371
How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM?	Yes	2554	56.464	21.0477
	No	2781	47.185	22.83864
Change in fear of crime	Yes	2554	2.9961	19.32078
	No	2781	1.1654	11.74945

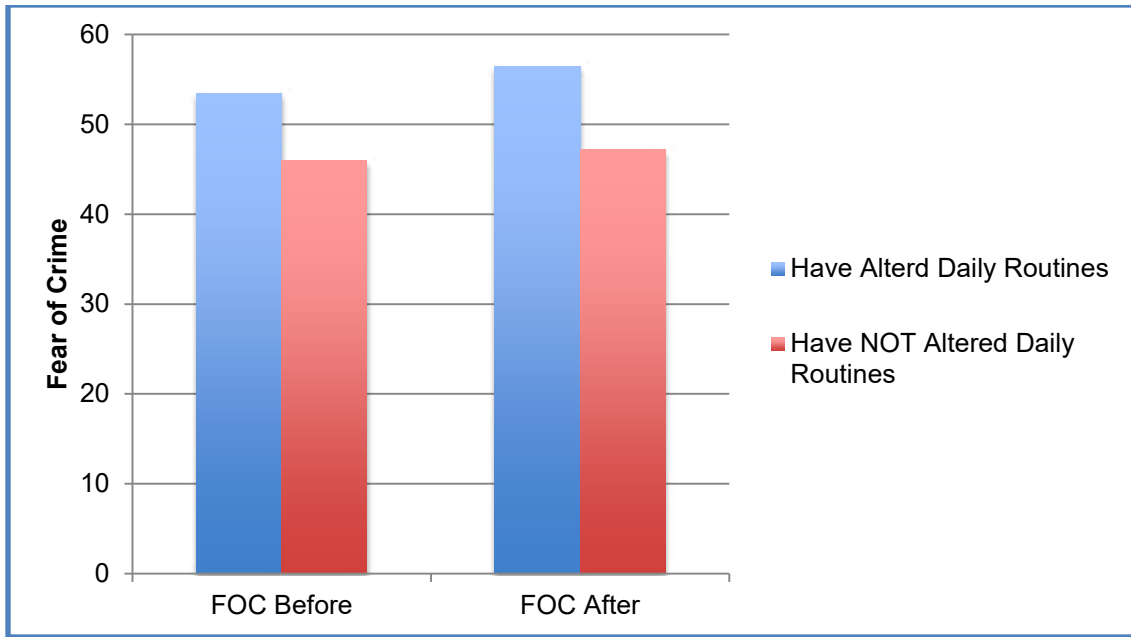


Figure 25: Fear of Crime by Altered Routines

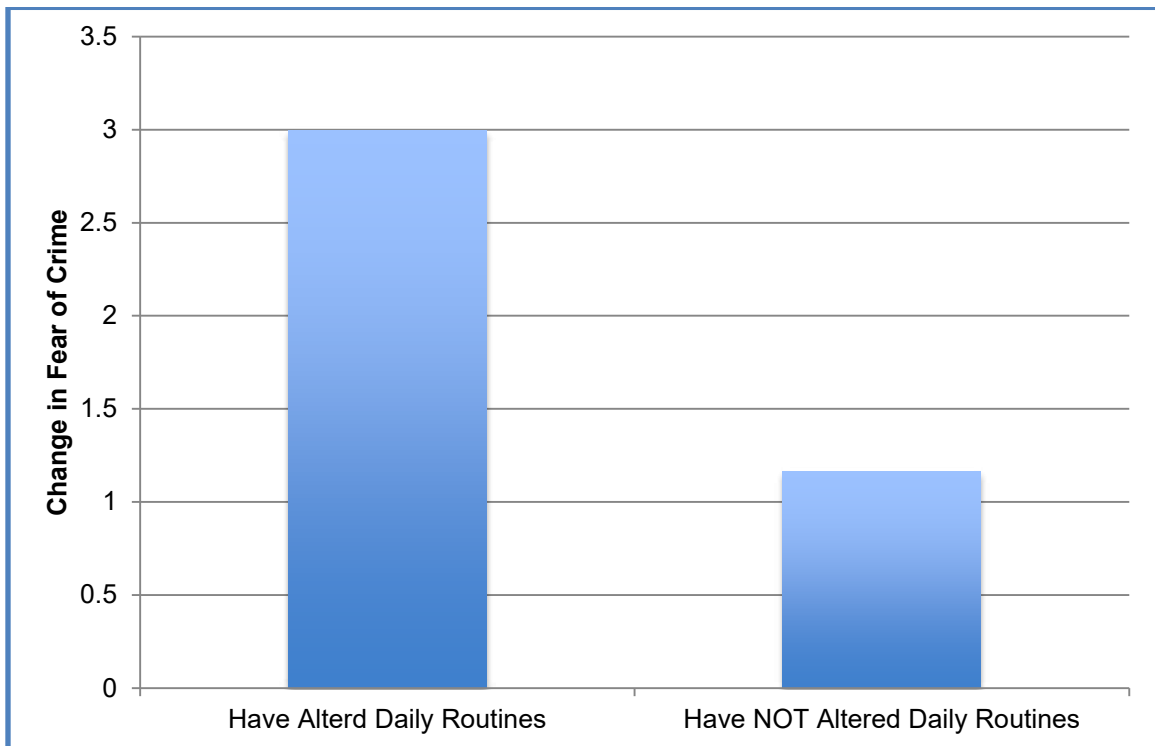


Figure 26: Change in Fear of Crime by Altered Routines

Total Perceived Victimization Risk. Rader (2004) suggests that researchers should take on the view of fear as though it is one part of the three dimensions to “‘threat of victimization,’ where fear of crime, perceptions of risk, and constrained behaviors act as interrelated pieces of the larger threat of victimization” (Rader et al., 2007, p. 482.). Likewise, a similar manipulation was formed from the current data. The total perceived victimization risk was calculated as the summation of known victims, personal victimization history, perceived chance of victimization (range of 1 to 7, whereas 1 is extremely unlikely victimization and 7 is extremely likely to be victimized), the total number of factors believed to be influences on personal risk of victimization (range of 0 to 14 – question 17 depicted in Figure 3 above), and for the 277 respondents that selected “I feel I have zero chance of being a victim” 1 point was subtracted from this formula. As a result of this manipulation, all respondents were assigned a total perceived victimization risk rating. This number could have been as low as -1, though the minimum scored was 0, and the maximum perceived victimization risk level possible was 23. Figure 27 is an illustration of these levels scored by respondents. Similar to Figure 1, a bell-curve is present in these results, showing the most common perceived victimization risk level is 10 (average of 9.9672). Several individuals had very low total perceived victimization risk scores, which means they know very few people, if any at all, who have been the victim of a personal crime, have likely never been victimized themselves, and feel there are very few factors that increase their chance of victimization. These people that

scored between a 1 and 4 on this scale have little fear of victimization.

Contrastingly, those who scored between 20 and 23 have some combination of several known victims, a history of victimization themselves, believe they have a higher chance of victimization, and/or they selected most, if not all, possible factors that affect victimization risk.

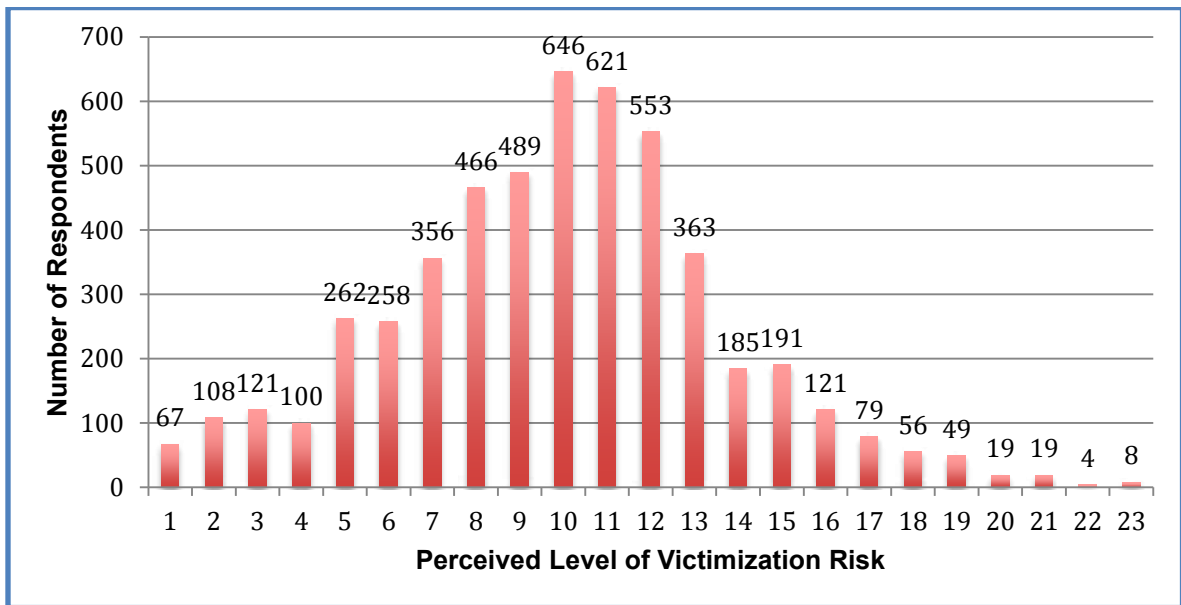


Figure 27: Total Perceived Victimization Risk

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted in order to find a relationship between an individual's exposure to *My Favorite Murder*, a true crime podcast, and their fear of crime. After looking at the data gathered from the present survey, it is noted that, on a scale of zero to 100, there was an average increase in fear of only two points after listening to the podcast. This would lead one to conclude that exposure to true crime podcasts does not have a significant effect on a listener's fear of crime. Generally speaking, that is an accurate supposition. But when all other measured factors are analyzed, different deductions can be made.

Figure 1 is a helpful illustration of the overall general trends in Murderinos' shift in fear of crime from before listening to after listening regularly to *My Favorite Murder*. In this figure, fear of crime ratings have been categorized into ten-point ranges. There are higher blue (before) ratings in each ten-point range on the left part of the graph and higher red (after) on the right side of the graph. What this means is that there was an overall shift in fear of crime toward higher ratings once respondents began listening to *My Favorite Murder*.

As already discussed, Figure 2 shows the range of individuals' overall change in fear of crime from before exposure to after. It can be seen that roughly 1,000 respondents had a negative change in fear after listening to the podcast. There can be several reasons for this, some of which could be the hosts' light-

hearted way of discussing serious crime, the sense of community gained from interacting with other fans of the podcast, or other specific characteristics of the individual. None of these factors have been analyzed in the current study, but could be looked into further in future endeavors.

Age

Murderinos that are 42 and older reported significantly lower levels of fear of crime both before and after listening to *My Favorite Murder*. Though this would appear to show support for a negative relationship between fear of crime and age, acknowledging the findings that those aged 42 and older had the second largest increase from before to after and also reported listening to the highest total number of podcast episodes weekly complicates that assumption. Because the oldest group of listeners had the lowest beginning fear of crime levels, had the second highest increase in fear after exposure, and report listening to the most podcasts weekly of any other age group, it could be summarized that older people become more fearful of crime as a result of listening to true crime podcasts than any other age group, agreeing with Lagrange and Ferraro (1984) and Scarborough and colleagues (2010) that there is a positive relationship between fear of crime and an individual's age. This could also lend support for Gerbner's (1976) cultivation theory in that exposure time could have affected this group of older respondents.

Gender

As many other studies have found, females in this study reported higher fear of crime than males both before and after exposure. Females are generally more fearful of crime than males, regardless of their exposure to true crime podcasts. The interesting finding in regards to gender comes from males' negative change in fear from before listening to after. This could be due to the number of crimes in which the hosts discuss a male victim, which is very few. In most all stories discussed on *My Favorite Murder*, the victim is a female and the perpetrator is male, which could give male listeners a sense of control over crime.

Race

Similar to both age and gender, race played a significant role in how an individual's fear of crime changed after exposure to *My Favorite Murder*. Individuals who classified themselves as white had the lowest starting fear of crime level but had a higher increase after listening to *My Favorite Murder* than did those who classify themselves as nonwhite. These findings indicate that white individuals generally have lower rates of fear of crime but are more affected by true crime podcast exposure, combining the previous study findings by both Gerbner et al. (1980) – stating whites have higher fear of crime – and Callanan (2012), Chiricos et al. (2000b), Funicane et al. (2000), and Wilcox et al. (2003) concluding that nonwhites have higher rates of fear of crime. Again, this is a

variable that is dependent upon other personal characteristics that may not have been controlled for in the present study.

Area of Residence

There were no real significant trends resulting from an individual's fear of crime when compared to the type of area in which they reside. Those who live in either an urban city or a suburb constitute a majority of respondents, but those that live in a rural area reported the lowest fear of crime both before and after listening to *My Favorite Murder*, but they also had the largest increase overall. This could have resulted from rural listeners beginning to acknowledge that crime can happen in a small town, not just large urban cities. There was not much else looked into in regards to listeners' surroundings. Though an attempt was made with question number 22 of the survey, an analysis of these answers has not yet been accomplished. This will be further discussed in the limitations section of this chapter, as the question format makes the data difficult to analyze wholly. Hale (1996) found that an individual's fear of crime was most influenced by the racial makeup of the immediate residential surroundings. In future studies, this aspect of personal characteristics should be measured with a question of the individual's neighborhood racial makeup; even if the respondent is not sure of the actual racial dimensions, the individual's perception of race in the immediate area could have an important impact on fear of crime, as Schafer and colleagues (2006) argue.

Known Victims

These data show a positive relationship between respondents' frequency of podcast exposure and the number of victims known to the individual. With this, one could assume that as people know others close to them who become victimized, the individual becomes more interested in crime, therefore listening to more true crime podcasts. Parallel to the findings of studies done by Russo and Roccato (2010), Mason (2000), and Warr and Ellison (2000), indirect victimization increases fear of crime. The data also show that Murderinos who report knowing zero people that have been victimized by personal crime had the lowest starting levels of fear but then had the largest increase in fear after listening to *My Favorite Murder*. This could be due to these listeners' realization that people are regularly victimized by personal crime, even though they themselves have not experienced it. This shows support for the substitution theory, in that those who have not experienced crime personally adopt a higher fear once exposed to crime stories.

Also shown in the data is a positive relationship with known victims and an individual's fear of crime, yet a negative relationship in the overall change in fear of crime after listening to *My Favorite Murder*. What this means is that people who knew more people victimized had higher fear before listening, but once exposed to *My Favorite Murder*, their fear of crime decreased, lending support for the resonance theory.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the highest number of known victims reported was four or more (22.9%), followed closely by two known victims (21.3%) and zero known victims (19.7%). The relationship between fear of crime and how many victims the respondent knew showed to be a positive relationship only prior to listening to *My Favorite Murder*, then a negative relationship both after exposure and the overall change in fear levels. As respondents reported knowing more victims, they reported higher fear of crime levels before listening to the podcast. But after listening, as known victims increased, fear decreased. This was the same for the overall change in fear, leaving individuals who knew four or more victims with a negative change in fear levels.

The substitution theory claims that those who do not experience fear of crime will be more fearful, whereas the alternate resonance theory posits that those exposed to crime will have higher levels of fear of crime. This, like most other results from this study, show that those not indirectly victimized (those who know zero victims) have the lowest levels of fear before exposure but ultimately experience the greatest increase in fear of crime as a result to listening to the true crime audio podcast.

Perceived Victimization Risk

The question of a respondent's perceived victimization risk was very closely related to their level of fear of crime, but a more focused rationalization of their individual chance of becoming a victim, when taking into account all of their

own demographic characteristics and daily practices. The initial thought behind this question was to gauge the difference in an individual's acknowledgement of general crime risk as compared to how they themselves live their lives.

In the present study, those who responded that they are "extremely likely" to become a victim of a personal crime had the highest ratings of fear of crime both before and after listening to *My Favorite Murder*. Likewise, the other end of the spectrum, "extremely unlikely" had the lowest fear of crime ratings both before and after exposure to *My Favorite Murder*. The only slight difference in results in this category was from the overall change in fear of crime once exposed to the podcast: those who believe they are "moderately likely" of being victimized had a marginally larger increase in fear. But, as expected, those who feel they are "extremely unlikely" to be victimized of a personal crime increased their fear of crime least of all groups in this category.

As Reiner (2007) concludes, true crime media disproportionately focuses on random violent crime, thus distorting audience's perception of criminal reality. It could be posited that the same is true for *My Favorite Murder*. Most, if not all, episodes feature a story of a forceful, intentional, and gruesome crime event. When Murderinos listen to an average of two episodes per week, their perception of realistic crime risks could be distorted.

Analyzing these groups' exposure frequency also lends minimal support for the cultivation theory, in that those who felt they were "Extremely Likely" to

become a victim listened to the podcast more each week than other groups, and also experienced higher fear increases.

Past Victimization

Providing support for the resonance theory, Murderinos who have been victimized by a personal crime in the past both listen to more true crime podcasts and also have a higher fear of crime, before and after exposure to *My Favorite Murder*. Similar to Callanan's (2012) findings, as well as those of Wilcox and colleagues (2006), that victims are more fearful of crime, these data also show support for the resonance theory. As previously defined, the resonance theory claims that individuals who have experienced crimes will then have a higher fear of crime when exposed to stimuli involving true crime stories.

Looking further into the data though, evidence in favor of substitution theory is found in that individuals who have not been victimized by a personal crime reported higher fear of crime ratings after listening to *My Favorite Murder*, resulting in a much larger increase in fear than victims. Though victims began with higher fears, nonvictims were more affected by the true crime audio podcast stimuli. This is support for the substitution theory, where people will become more fearful without past victimization.

This group of data also provide support for the cultivation theory as victims listen to more episodes weekly than do nonvictims and also had higher starting

points of fear, though going against cultivation theory, this same group of victims who listen to more episodes were affected least by exposure.

Frequency of MFM Weekly

Contrary to the findings of Ditton et al. (2004), frequency of exposure showed to be a significant factor in fear of crime in respondents. Murderinos who report listening to episodes of the podcast regularly, once per week when the episode is released, had the highest fear before listening to *My Favorite Murder*. This could be because this group of people was most interested in the podcast because they were knowingly fearful of crime. But this group also had the lowest increase once listening to the podcast, potentially meaning that, once hearing true stories of horrific crimes, they became more educated and therefore felt less threatened. This, of course, is simply a guess as to this trend's source. This could also have been due to other factors, like an increased awareness and therefore precautions taken to avoid crime.

Respondents who selected that they had just recently discovered *My Favorite Murder* and were thus binging the podcast, listening to 4 or more episodes weekly had the largest increase in fear of crime after listening. This could show support for Gerbner's original cultivation theory, that effect is most controlled by the frequency of exposure.

Other Podcasts Murderinos Listen To

As seen in Figure 9, the podcast entitled “Serial” is most frequently listened to by Murderinos. This is to be expected, as Serial was one of the first podcasts to discuss a true crime story thoroughly that gained mainstream popularity. It is the podcast that first introduced me to true crime podcasts, and likewise many other Murderinos. Serial has a different layout than does *My Favorite Murder*, as the entire first season walked listeners through the evidence, both presented and not, along with personal testimony of the suspect and witnesses of a murder that happened nearly fifteen years ago. The attitude of the podcast is very serious and investigative, but, again, only focused on one individual crime that took place in one location several years ago. It could be said that Serial laid the groundwork for many other true crime podcasts to come, including *My Favorite Murder*.

I would attribute the significant findings of fear of crime as related to Murderinos who listen or do not listen to other podcasts to personal interest. It is my opinion that those who are interested in true crime stories seek out *My Favorite Murder* along with other true crime podcasts for entertainment, and these are the people that, according to the current data, have the highest fears initially but are least scared by the podcast itself.

Outside Exposure to (True) Crime

Figures 23 and 24, as already discussed, illustrate outside exposures to crime/true crime stories that listeners may be exposed to regularly. The most common of these are, of course, true crime entertainment, including television shows, documentaries, books, and movies. Though, less anticipated, the least selected exposures listeners reported were a work environment close to crime/law, living with someone in the field, and going to school to study crime/law. This question was written with the anticipation that many listeners have this interest in true crime because they work closely or know someone intimately who works closely in the realm of crime, which these data do not support. Those who are formally trained or educated on crime/law are a great minority of *My Favorite Murder* listeners. This could itself be a significant factor in the overall increase of fear of crime, or even the average beginning level of fear, which is close to 49.

The pattern of higher fear of crime both before and after listening to *My Favorite Murder* but lowest overall increase in these fears suggest that those who encounter crime and/or true crime stories more regularly are less effected by exposure to *My Favorite Murder*. These people could have higher fears to begin with because of their proximity to crime/true crime or they could have this proximity to crime/true crime because of a natural interest in the field. There is no way to tell which way this happens – like the chicken and the egg phenomenon. We cannot determine if interest leads to exposure or exposure leads to fear, but

we can conclude that those who are regularly exposed to these outside crime stories are effected less with fear by listening to *My Favorite Murder*.

Altered Daily Routines

Ferraro (1995) groups actions that people take in response to fear of crime into two types of behaviors: defensive behaviors and avoidance behaviors. Though not specifically analyzed in this study, the relationship of generally altered routines and an individual's fear of crime was measured. Similar to other factors, respondents' fear of crime, as to be expected, is positively related to those who admit to altering daily routines after listening to *My Favorite Murder*. This means that many people who are fearful of crime recognize their fear and have taken precautions after hearing the podcast's true crime stories.

When respondents answered "yes" to this question if they had altered anything about their daily lives, they were taken to a question that those who answered "no" were not taken to. This question gave listeners five spaces to input aspects of their lives they have changed or altered since listening to *My Favorite Murder*. Similar to other open-ended questions in this study, the individual responses were not categorized fully, but most responses were along the lines of not walking alone at night as much, being more conscious of locking doors always (home and car), carrying car keys in between fingers as a "shiv," and, as the hosts say in the podcast, "fuck politeness." By this, Karen and Georgia mean to tell women to not talk to strangers, even if they feel the stranger

may be well meaning. This is a common catchphrase among Murderinos and was one of the most commonly cited altered-daily activities from this survey question.

The fact that fear of crime is positively related to individuals' acknowledgement of altered daily routines relays that Murderinos, in general, acknowledge their fear of crime. Ultimately, this can be related back to the cycle of fear and crime discussed earlier that states that crime causes fear, which leads to precautions to be taken to avoid crime, but actionable precautions force individuals to recognize their chance of crime, further increasing their fear and doubling back into a cycle.

Seriousness

As both Surette (2007) and Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) concluded, the type of media will have an effect on the overall message received by the audience. Specifically, the seriousness of the media message is distorted from one media delivery type to the next. Echoing the fantastical crime story selection and episodic nature of television news, *My Favorite Murder* could be said to rely little on details on more on entertainment, which is no secret on the podcast. The hosts do not claim to be accurate in their research, but focus more on comedy and community with listeners. Though this is the intended and embraced nature of the podcast, because, like the news, these episodes contain the gory, exciting, rare crime stories while also leaving little room or access to information

surrounding each crime could distort the perception of prevalence and seriousness of crimes and their underlying causes.

Though the current data do support these scholars' prior claims, what Potter (1986) wrote about crime dramas being viewed as less realistic to the viewer, thus less fear-provoking, *My Favorite Murder* contains an element that lessens the distance between host and listener. Georgia and Karen, on every episode, encourage Murderinos to email their own personal hometown murders so that they can be read on later "minisodes." This link of personalization, combined with the accessibility to the *My Favorite Murder* Facebook fan page could bring the rare, fantastical murders even closer to the audience.

Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations of this research that should be discussed. Some of these limitations were pointed out by respondents themselves. For example, Facebook, the medium to which the survey was posted, allowed for unsolicited comments by people after they had taken the survey. From these comments, several issues with survey were found. The biggest problem with the survey questions came with the last question about the respondents' zip code. Initially, the format of the question allowed for only a five-digit numerical value response because all American cities have a five-digit zip code, but people outside of the U.S. were in the sample surveyed, resulting in a lot of confusion by respondents. Halfway through the first day the survey was

open to Murderinos I changed the format of allowable responses to this question. From this point on, people outside of the U.S. were able to text type their location of residence. Before this point, however, those who tried to enter their location said they either made up a fake zip code or left it blank. This location data was not taken into consideration for this study though, since there were several opportunities for skewed data. In further research, it could be useful to measure respondents' type and location of residence in order to factor that into fear of crime levels.

Another question that was brought up a lot in comments by respondents was the lack of gender options available in the survey. Because previous research compared male and female fear of crime, those were the two options offered in this survey, but respondents voiced their opinions that many more options could have been offered to better represent the sample and population.

Similarly, more options for race and ethnicity should have been offered as options in order to be taken into consideration for analysis. This question did allow for a text input answer in the "other" category, but these specific responses were not grouped due to sheer volume of responses, therefore not recorded as a percentage of respondents other than in the "other" race category.

Respondents also pointed out confusion with the question of factors influencing victimization (question 17). This question asked respondents to check all factors they believe to be influencing factors on victimization risk. It was not made clear in the question whether or not the responses were supposed to be

personal factors affecting the individual respondent's chances of victimization or just a person in general and anyone's chance of victimization. There was also a question as to whether or not this was a positive or negative effect on victimization risk, as there were several respondents who claimed several factors selected decreased their chance of victimization, while others would select the same factors as increasing victimization risk. Future research should differentiate and distinguish the subject and positive/negative effects on victimization risk.

One helpful comment from a respondent suggested that, for future research, the option of multiple instances of past victimizations be considered. In the current survey, the question about past victimization could only be answered by a yes or no, not a numerical response. If an individual had been the victim of five past victimizations, he/she could have drastically different fear of crime than someone who experienced one prior victimization.

An obvious limitation to this study is that not all people are on Facebook, so there is a chance that not all Murderinos (the population) had access to take part in the study.

After seeing the data collected, it is obvious that the sample was not very diverse by gender or race. A vast majority of those who completed the survey were white females, but it is unknown if that is representative of the entire population of Murderinos. Even if it is, the lack of racially diverse respondents could have left a large demographic characteristic unstudied, which could have been particularly important in today's socio-political atmosphere.

One other thing that could have proven useful to this study is a content analysis of *My Favorite Murder* episodes' crime topics, including the age, gender, race, and location of each victim and suspect. This could have added another layer of analysis when looking at the demographic characteristics of respondents and how each group reacted to exposure to the podcast.

Conclusion

Because podcast media is a relatively recent introduction to the general public, not a lot of social science studies have focused on them, especially in regards to their effect on listeners' fear of crime. But, referring to the few studies that have looked into podcasts' effectiveness in relaying information to audiences, it was hypothesized for this study that true crime podcasts would significantly increase listener's fear of crime.

The most obvious trend seen in the data of the current study on Murderinos' fear of crime levels are that most categories studied found one group to have higher levels of fear of crime before listening, but that same group was most often least affected by the true crime audio podcast stimuli. Falling in the opposite category of groups with lower starting fears but greater effects from the podcast are those 42 and older, white individuals, those who know zero people who have been victimized by personal crime, those who have not been victims themselves, and those who listen to four or more episodes per week.

To reiterate, age was found to a factor in that as age increases, beginning fear levels decrease, but effects of true crime podcast exposure increases. Analyzing race showed that white individuals have fewer fears overall but are impacted more significantly by the true crime podcast exposure. Respondents' number of known victims were an important factor to study because those who knew no one who had been victimized had the lowest beginning levels of fear but had significantly higher increases in fears after being exposed to the podcast. Nonvictims reported lower beginning levels of fear than did victims, but also were affected more drastically than victims when exposed to the podcast. And finally, frequency of podcast exposure had an effect through the difference between regular, one episode per week Murderinos versus recently discovered listeners. Those who listen regularly reported higher fears before listening, but those catching up and listening to four or more episodes per week had much greater effects of increased fear of crime after listening.

If more people could fully understand the difference between actual victimization risk and fear of crime, fears could possibly be decreased in a great amount of those who experience a negative reaction to the thought of potential criminal actions harming them or their way of life. Also being able to pinpoint certain characteristics that cause either an increase or decrease in levels of fear of crime could assist researchers in helping podcasters relay this information to audience members. True crime audio podcast listeners are a devoted audience, and if their favorite podcast hosts ever tried to explain to them why certain people

feel increased fear of crime after listening to such podcasts, perhaps fans could acknowledge those characteristics in themselves and thus feel less threatened by a fear of criminal victimization.

Though gender findings in this study paralleled other studies claiming females are more fearful than males, perceived risk and fear of crime are intuitively positively related, and location had no significant impact on fear of crime levels, this study found a great wealth of support for established theories and prior research findings by others. This study on how a true crime audio podcast can impact its listeners has offered many insights that can hopefully lend a hand in furthering the study on the causes and effects of the fear of crime.

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APPENDIX: SURVEY

SURVEY

Fear of Crime - Muderino Style

Welcome!

Hello Fellow Murderino!

Please note that the following survey could contain triggers in regard to crime victimization.

If you are easily affected by discussing crime risk, please reconsider participation.

This survey should be completed voluntarily and without coercion or personal incentive.

You will not be compensated for your time.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

1

Fear of Crime - Muderino Style

1. Are you at least 18 years old?

Yes

No

2

Fear of Crime - Muderino Style

This series of questions have to do with true crime podcasts, other types true crime stories, and your personal experiences. Please provide answers that best apply to you.

2. Please select all other true crime podcast(s) you listen to regularly (about once per week).

- 48 Hours
- Casefile
- Criminal
- Generation Why
- In The Dark
- Real Crime Profile
- My Favorite Murder
- Serial
- Someone Knows Something
- Sword and Scale
- True Murder
- Other (please specify)

3. How often do you listen to MFM?

- Once each week when the episode is released
- I sometimes miss a week or two so I binge every few weeks
- I just recently discovered the podcast so am casually bingeing (1-3 episodes each week)
- I just recently discovered the podcast and am addicted (4 or more episode each week)
- I just catch occasional episodes when I can

3

4. Please select all that apply to your regular activities that might expose you to information about true crime.

- I work in a setting where I am exposed to crime (e.g., detective, law enforcement, courthouse, correctional setting)
- I live with someone who works in one of the aforementioned settings
- I read true crime books
- I watch the local news every morning (or at least 3 times per week)
- I watch national news every morning (or at least 3 times per week)
- I watch true crime documentaries
- I watch television shows based on true crime
- I watch movies based on true crime
- I attend school where I am studying crime, delinquency, law enforcement, law, corrections, etc.

Other (please specify)

5. What types of activity/activities (e.g., exercising or driving/commuting) are you usually doing while listening to MFM?

6. Have you ever posted anything to the MFM Facebook page?

- Yes, I frequently do
- Yes, I have a few times
- Yes, I have once
- No, but I comment on posts
- No, but I "like" posts
- No, I don't pay much attention

7. How would you rate your fear of crime BEFORE the first time you ever listened to MFM (0 is lowest and 100 is highest)?

4

8. How would you rate your fear of crime NOW after listening to MFM (0 is lowest and 100 is highest)?

0 100



9. Do you feel you have altered any daily routines/activities since you have begun listening to MFM?

- Yes
- No

5

Fear of Crime - Muderino Style

10. What types of daily routines/activities or security measures have you altered since you started listening to MFM?

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>

6

Fear of Crime - Muderino Style

11. Does the MFM Facebook page give you a sense of belonging/community?

- Yes, I have found my people
- Somewhat
- Neutral
- No, it's just a Facebook page
- Definitely no, these people are crazy

12. Please list three to five separate words that, in your opinion, most accurately describe MFM

1

2

3

4

5

13. How many people have you told about MFM?

- 0
- 1
- 2-5
- 6-9
- Tons! (10 or more)

14. How many people do you personally know who have been the victim of a personal crime?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

7

15. Have you ever been the victim of a personal crime?

- Yes
 No

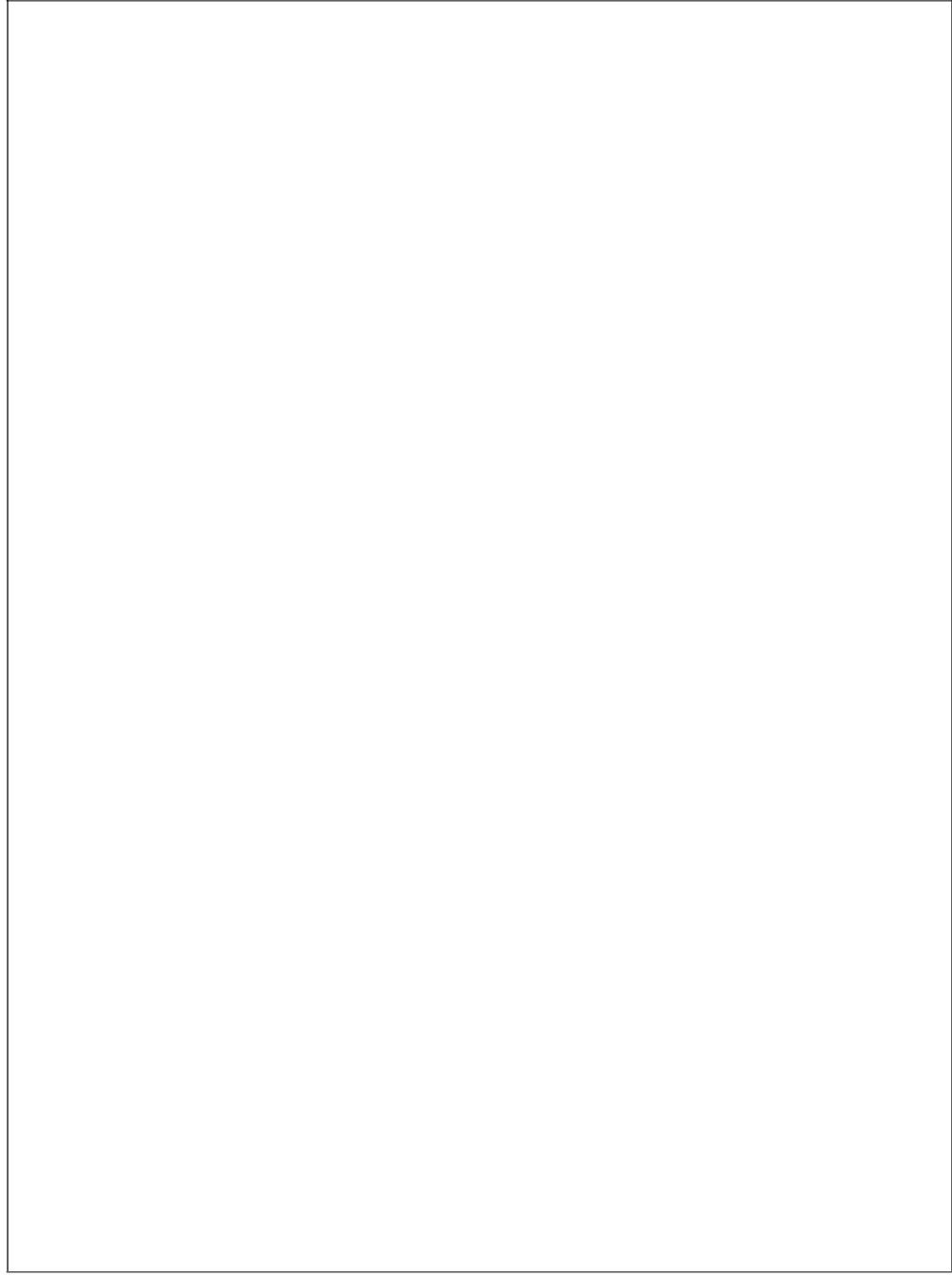
16. How likely do you think you are to become the victim of a personal crime now or in the future?

- Extremely likely
 Moderately likely
 Slightly likely
 Neither likely or unlikely
 Slightly unlikely
 Moderately unlikely
 Extremely unlikely

17. Which of the following items do you think affect your chances of becoming a victim of a personal crime (choose all that apply)?

- Type of residence
 Neighborhood
 Predictable daily routine
 Economic status
 Political affiliation
 Sexual preference
 Gender identification
 Education
 Race
 Friends/family
 Luck/chance
 Work
 I run or walk outside alone
 Lack of police in the area
 I don't feel I have a chance of being victimized
 Other (please specify)

8



9

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These final questions focus on your individual background. Please mark the answer that most appropriately identifies your characteristics.

18. In what year were you born?

19. What is your gender?

- Female
 Male

20. What is your race?

- White
 Black
 Hispanic
 Asian
 Other (please specify)

21. Which best describes the area in which you live?

- Urban City
 Suburb
 Rural Area
 Other

22. For your current place of residence, what is your 5-digit zip code? If outside the U.S., please type city and country.

10

VITA

Elizabeth Bailey was born in Union, Kentucky in 1992. She received her education from Boone County Public Schools and graduated from Larry A. Ryle High School in 2010. For her freshman year of college she attended Murray State University, then in 2011 transferred to the University of Kentucky, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Media Arts and Studies in 2014. After taking a year off, she attended Eastern Kentucky University where she is working to receive her Maser of Science degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice in May of 2017.