

The CSI Effect and How it Has Affected the Administration of Justice: Jury Expectations

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Abstract

An unbiased jury is imperative to every court case; civil, criminal, or otherwise. Due to the mass influence of police dramas and hospital soap operas, the public perception of how forensic science works is different than reality. These police procedurals distort what actually happens within a criminal investigation and case disposition. This leads to jurors having unrealistic expectations within the courtroom. These expectations lead to outcomes that can be difficult to overcome within the criminal justice system. One of the mechanisms that has been disrupted by the CSI Effect is the proper administration of justice. The perception of the jury can affect how well the prosecution and the defense deliver their arguments. It also affects how well the judge can do their job and administer justice appropriately. By gathering literary evidence, one can understand how prominent the bias is within the courtroom, and how it can affect the courtroom process. This is also not a problem that is strictly U.S. based, international studies show their difficulty with the CSI Effect on their jurors. The CSI effect has caused immense damage to the administration of justice, as it is now impossible to have an unbiased jury.

Background

The Television show that has produced the CSI syndrome, CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, first piloted on October 6, 2000. It was created by Anthony E. Zuiker, who then created three spin off series. It portrays unreasonably fast forensic technology and crimes that can be solved by the end of the program. By studying the effects that the CSI syndrome had on jurors can help improve methods to combating the negative effects in the courtroom. It has disrupted the administration of justice, which is a mechanism of the judicial system. A mechanism has three parts: input, throughput, and output. The perception of the jurors, which is the input; affects the success of the attorneys' arguments as well as how convinced the jury is, the throughputs, which finally affects the final decision from the jurors and in turn, the judge who delivers the sentencing, the output. The perception of the jury can affect how well the prosecution and the defense deliver their arguments. It also affects how well the judge can do their job and administer justice appropriately.

Methodology

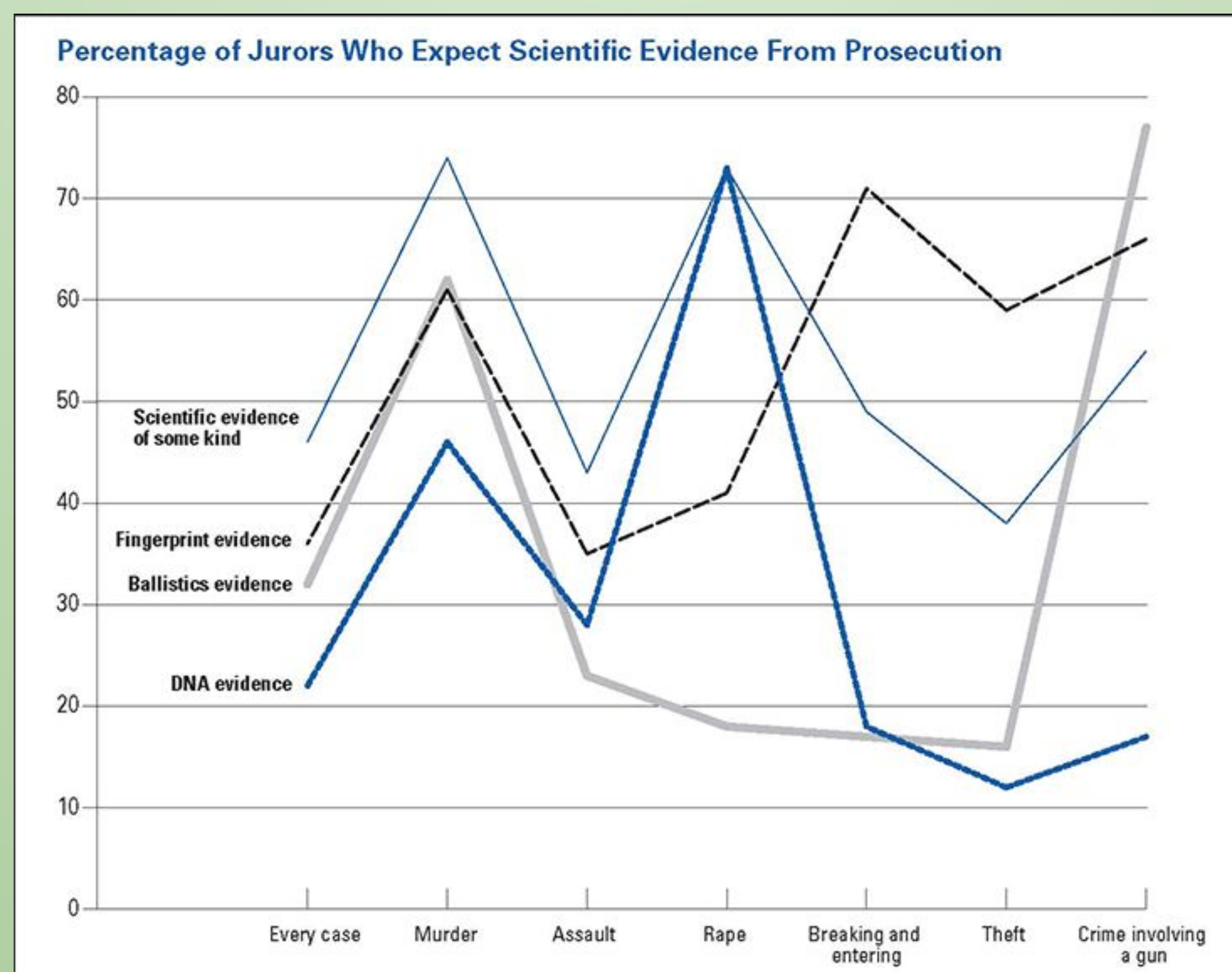
- Research Methods: Case Literature
 - Pulled together multiple resources and visited some older work to put together a literature review.
 - Researched and reviewed many case studies about juror expectations, perspectives, and outcomes.
 - Reviewed previous class notes about the CSI Effect.
 - Examined global reviews of the CSI Effect on other countries.
- Research Methods: Multimedia
 - Viewed TV shows that portray the CSI Effect and compared television methods to current forensic knowledge.
 - Reviewed multiple media sources on news articles and stations.

Figure 1:

- Scientific evidence of any kind expected: 46%; Murder Cases: 74%; Assault cases: 43%; Rape cases: 73%; B & E cases: 49%; Theft cases: 38%; and Crimes involving a gun: 55%
- Fingerprint evidence in every case: 36%; Murder cases: 61%; Assault: 35%; Rape: 41%; B & E: 71%; Theft cases by 59%; and Crimes involving a gun: 66%
- Ballistics evidence in every case: 32%; Murder cases: 62%; Assault cases: 23%; Rape cases: 18%, B & E: 17%; Theft cases: 16%, and Crimes involving a gun: 77%
- DNA evidence in every case: 22%; Murder cases: 46%; Assault cases: 28%; Rape cases: 73%; B & E: 18%; Theft cases: 12%; and Crimes involving a gun: 17%

Results

- Positive Effects of the CSI Effect:
 - Increased Interest in Criminology and Forensic related fields.
 - Jurors are becoming more knowledgeable in how the judicial system operates, even if it is portrayed falsely by the media.
- Negative Effects of the CSI Effect:
 - Lawyers shift their focus on obtaining DNA evidence when it is not necessary.
 - Lawyers also shift their focus onto popular courtroom media tropes in order to win the jury's favor.
 - Judges feel pressure to rule in favor of media portrayal.
- Negative Effects Outside the Courtroom
 - Increased spending on Forensic testing that is unnecessary.
 - Causes more strain on forensic technicians who are already backlogged with evidence testing.
 - Manipulation of evidence at a crime scene.
 - Criminals watch TV too!



Conclusions

- According to Research:
 - More Negative Impacts than Positive on Jurors
 - Amount of Jurors who have not been affected are extremely slim
 - Administration of Justice has shifted to cover popular media portrayals instead of the equal balance of justice and proper legal enforcement.
 - Reality TV
 - Other countries are feeling the impact of the CSI Effect on their own judicial systems.
- Further Steps:
 - Research to help aid in proper media portrayals.
 - Educating the public about how proper law enforcement, forensic, and judicial work is done.

References

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