AN INVESTIGATION OF TELEVISION NARRATIVES ON
INFLUENCING KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-EFFICACY ABOUT THE PROPER POLICIES
AND PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW AFTER THE OCCURRENCE OF RAPE:
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VIEWING LAW & ORDER: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT

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ABSTRACT

Although extensive research has been conducted on social cognitive theory (SCT) and education-entertainment (E-E), little is known about how they might aid our understanding of the social problem of rape. The current study explored the relationship between viewing the dramatic and sensitive narrative of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* and the knowledge of and feelings of self-efficacy related to the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. Results supported the hypothesis that suggested participants with exposure to an episode of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* that centered around rape would report higher self-efficacy levels than those with exposure to an episode centered around kidnapping. Results also showed some evidence that the more participants reported viewing episodes of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* in the past, the more they showed increased knowledge of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. The current study contributes to the existing body of literature that uses SCT and E-E research and indicates that more research is needed on observational learning from the mass media with a focus on sexual assault narratives.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rape is an ever-present aspect in society and in people’s lives as the percentage of women who have reported being raped in their lifetime is nearing 20 percent (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network, 2009, hereafter RAINN). Rape is a sensitive, unpleasant, and uncomfortable topic to discuss, perhaps to avoid wishing an ill situation unto someone else. This rapidly growing crime has become especially dangerous, as victims are not equipped with information about what to do until after the fact, if at all (RAINN). The stigma, vulnerability, and trauma associated with rape is compounded by the fact that people do not anticipate being raped and, therefore, do not prepare for it. This state of affairs has currently left many people without the necessary knowledge or information in order to know what to do during or after rape (RAINN). Information, while readily available for those proactive enough to seek it, may be highlighted and brought to people only after they have become victims of the crime. Since it is such a sensitive and frightening subject to openly discuss, there should be ways for people to obtain this information through other venues, as the information is invaluable. It is useful to see how this information, such as reporting the assault, preserving the crime scene if possible, and talking to a professional can be obtained in other ways. Thus, I will review social cognitive theory and education-entertainment research in order to discuss how Law & Order: Special Victims Unit can potentially teach people about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape.
Social Cognitive Theory

Theory Foundation

Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory (formerly social learning theory and hereafter SCT) is a psychological model of behavior that, in its simplest form, describes an individual’s learned behavior as directly related to watching others perform rewarded or punished behaviors. Based on how the observed behaviors were responded to, an individual then decides whether to replicate said behaviors. Social cognitive theorists proposed learning could be more than just the gaining of new behaviors. Learning can also be adjusting the frequency of current behaviors and the loss of inhibition of previously learned behaviors (Moyer-Gusé, Chung & Jain, 2011). Using the SCT lens, researchers have examined a variety of learned behaviors, such as physical activity, computer use, organizational behavior, and classroom motivation and achievement (Harrison, Rainer, Jr., Hochwarter & Thompson, 1997; Martin Ginis, Latimer, Arbour-Nicitopoulos, Bassett, Wolfe & Hanna, 2011; Pajares, 1996; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994, 1997).

Bandura (1999) argued that four core assumptions need to be met in order for SCT to explain learning a specific behavior. The first assumption is that learning is a product of the triadic reciprocal causation of personal, behavioral, and environmental (further broken down into selected, imposed, and constructed) factors (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 1999). Personal factors can be various cognitive, affective, and biological processes that occur within people. People’s moods, feelings, attitudes, thoughts, and biological disposition are all able to influence their learning. Behavioral factors refer to people’s physical actions such as kicking a football or brushing their teeth. People’s selected environment constitutes the choice of associates, activities, and surroundings (e.g., best friends and playing a sport of choice). Imposed
environment refers to the environment people have no control over (e.g., hometown, school classrooms, and biological parents). People also have the ability to control and change their immediate environment. This constitutes people’s constructed environment (e.g., room décor and room temperature).

The second assumption is that people have agency or the ability to control and impact their personal, behavior, and environmental factors to obtain a specific goal (Bandura, 2001b). When people are trying to reach a specific goal, they are able to select which aspect of the reciprocal triadic factors they want to change so as to achieve the goal. For example, if people are trying to change their behavior, then they will alter at least one of the other two factors (personal and environmental) to achieve desired behaviors. The third assumption is that people have the capability or necessary skill (e.g., physical ability) and knowledge (e.g., information) to perform a behavior. That is, to successfully perform a behavior, people must know what to do and how to do. The last assumption is that learning a behavior can take place without the need to perform or demonstrate that behavior. In other words, learning does not always have the direct result of performance. Under SCT, learning is not solely a change or acceptance of new behaviors but also the acquisition of new knowledge, concepts, and cognitive skills. SCT differs from other learning and behavioral theories in this way, as it does not qualify learning as a direct behavioral change. Instead, social cognitive theorists state that learning can occur without the need to immediately demonstrate that knowledge (Denler, Wolters, & Benzon, 2013).

Additionally, Bandura broke down SCT into five main concepts: (a) perceived self-efficacy, (b) observational learning/modeling, (c) outcome expectations, (d) goal setting, and (e) self-regulation. The first main concept of SCT is self-efficacy and is often included in research based on SCT. Self-efficacy refers to the personal beliefs of whether a task can be achieved by a
person with a certain level of success (Denler et al., 2013). According to social cognitive theorists, “self-efficacy is a direct determinant of behavior” (Martin Ginis et al., 2011, p. 127). Bandura (2004b) stated that people’s beliefs in their efficacy can be developed in four ways: (a) mastery experiences: peoples’ ability to encounter obstacles, face adversity, and succeed through perseverance; if people face complications and still manage to succeed, they will build self-efficacy; (b) social modeling: people build efficacy by watching those similar to them succeed; if similar others can accomplish a task, then people can believe they are able to as well; (c) social persuasion: when people are told to believe or persuaded that they are able to accomplish a task, people then will exert more effort in order to accomplish said task; if people feel they can try and succeed, they will be more willing to try than if they think they will try and fail; (d) physical and emotional states: peoples’ personal responses to certain experiences shape the self-efficacy they derive from them; if people feel stress before a task, they will have lower self-efficacy about that task and vice versa. Pajares (1996) found that higher self-efficacy is associated with higher confidence, higher levels of motivation, and higher effectiveness of performed behavior. Wood and Bandura (1989) suggested that individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to tackle challenges and have more successful performances than those with lower self-efficacy. Bandura (2004b) argued that the most important contributor of efficacy is direct experience or when you are able to successfully perform a behavior yourself. However, according to Bandura, since people are unable to directly experience everything, they mostly rely on modeling (2004b).

The second main concept, observational learning/modeling, stems from social cognitive theorists’ assumption that learning is not only acquired through direct experience but also through the observation of others. Observational learning/modeling is learning by watching others perform behaviors and then processing the observed consequences. An example would be
watching Robert save 20 dollars from every week’s paycheck (observed behavior) and witnessing him being able to afford a concert ticket to see his favorite band by the end of the month (observed consequence). If Sally is the observer, she learned that Robert saved a certain amount of money each week and was then able to afford a luxury item and that it is highly likely that if she saved money from her weekly paycheck, she too would be able to afford a luxury item; such as a concert ticket. She therefore learned to save money in order to afford luxury things. Learning through direct experience refers to processing the consequences of one’s own behavior. For example, Sally saving money from her weekly paycheck (behavior) and being able to buy a concert ticket to her favorite band (consequence) teaches her to save a small portion of money every paycheck as it will likely and desirably allow her to buy luxury items again. Bandura (1999) stated, “if knowledge and competencies could be acquired solely by direct experience, human development would be severely retarded, not to mention exceedingly tedious and hazardous” (p. 25). In fact, Bandura (1986) and Rosenthal and Zimmerman (1978) believed that practically all cognitive and affective learning from direct experience can be achieved vicariously through observing other people’s actions and their subsequent consequences. In other words, anything people can learn by themselves through direct experience can also be learned by watching other people’s (model’s) behavior. The more proficient, likeable, attractive, and intelligible a model is, the more productive learning will be (Bandura, 2001b).

Modeling can also broadly vary among live demonstrations, verbal or written descriptions, and audio or video recordings. Typifying the notion of modeling, live demonstrations are in person observations of an act or behavior. Verbal descriptions, written descriptions, and audio recordings involve only a description or instructions for a behavior and not the actual performance of said behavior. Video recordings may give both a description and
performance of a behavior but are not conducted by a live model available for immediate feedback. Verbal or written descriptions and audio or video recordings are less direct forms of modeling but nonetheless involve descriptions and explanations of a behavior (e.g., diagrams, podcasts, and movies) (Denler et al., 2013).

In addition to how likeable, attractive, and intelligible a model is, Bandura (2001b) stated that learning by observing a model, or observational learning, is promoted by four major factors: attention (what the observer chooses to pay attention to), retention (what the observer remembers in the form of rules and conceptions), production (the process of putting these conceptions into action), and motivation (understanding why the observer should learn this behavior and when it will potentially be useful in the future). People must first remember the observed behavior’s consequences and they must also decide if they should learn this behavior and when, if at all, this behavior could be used in the future. Bandura believed that the most important aspect of observational learning is to understand the motivation of why the observer performed a certain behavior.

The third main concept of SCT is outcome expectations. Outcome expectations are people’s beliefs about what rewards and consequences a certain behavior entails (Bandura, 2001b). For example, if Jessica is screaming and throwing a temper tantrum in the grocery store and her parent proceeds to buy her a candy bar, her sibling, Harry, might decide to replicate such behaviors in order to achieve similar rewards. Outcome expectations can also be shaped by past direct experiences. For example, Harry may remember that Jessica was rewarded with a candy bar after throwing a temper tantrum at the grocery store. Keeping that information in mind while shopping with his grandparent, Harry throws a temper tantrum because he has come to expect that such behavior will be rewarded with candy. Harry did not have to directly observe Jessica
modeling a behavior at that exact moment to decide what outcome such a behavior would entail. Harry was instead able to make a decision based on his outcome expectations of throwing a temper tantrum. Outcome expectations are vital to SCT as they predict people’s decisions to perform a learned behavior and their frequency performance. The frequency of behavior will increase when the expected outcome is positive. For example, if throwing a temper tantrum at the grocery store were rewarded, temper tantrums would likely happen rather often. The frequency of behavior will decrease when the expected outcome is negative. For example, if throwing a temper tantrum at the grocery store is punished, such as through a spanking or timeout, then temper tantrums would rarely occur. A very important aspect to outcome expectations is the understanding that a behavior’s consequences are only perceived consequences. For example, while grocery shopping, Billy is quiet and well behaved. The parent sees this as a positive behavior and therefore gives candy to Billy as a reward. Billy, however, hates candy and therefore perceives the candy as a punishment for his behavior.

The fourth main concept of SCT is goal setting. In regard to goal setting, people’s learned behaviors also reflect anticipated, preferred, and desired usefulness. Goal setting is critical to SCT because learned behaviors are not only used for the present but also the future since learning demands the effort to decide if and when it will be used later. If a behavior is likely to be used in the future, maintenance of such behavior is necessary, perhaps in the form of repetition. This forecasting of possible future behaviors also helps people decide if the consequences of certain behaviors will be the same in the future as they are in the present (e.g., that children still get candy in the future by throwing temper tantrums at the grocery store).

The final main concept is self-regulation, which is the controlling of a person’s own learning and behaviors. Self-regulation involves three underlying subprocesses: self-observation
(monitoring own behaviors), self-judgment (evaluation of actions), and self-reaction (response to
evaluations by modifying behavior) (Bandura, 1986; 1991; Denler et al., 2013). Although
Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) and Martin (2004) acknowledged that it is possible to attain self-
regulatory competence without the modeling of others, they also believed that learning would be
most beneficial when a model is available as a live demonstration and able to provide feedback,
guidance, and reinforcements.

**SCT and Television**

Scholars (e.g., Flerx, Fidler, & Rogers, 1976; Hawkins & Pingree, 1982; Metzger, 2007;
and O’Bryant & Corder-Bolz, 1978) found SCT to be highly applicable in mass media (e.g.,
television) because people tend to rely on what they see, read, and hear, when they are unable to
have direct experiences (Bandura, 2004b). They further endorsed SCT’s applicability to mass
media because they believed that these observed models seen on, for example, television
showcase knowledge, values, cognitive skills, and new behaviors, just as direct experience would
(Bandura, 2004b). Bandura (2001a) argued that a large amount of information and behaviors are
learned through modeling in the mass media. Bandura (2004a) believed that mass media
provides an avenue for learning to reach a vast number of people at once and over an extended
period of time.

Collins, Elliot, Berry, Kanouse, Kunkel, Hunter, and Miu (2004) looked at how watching
sex on television influenced adolescents’ sexual behavior. Collins and colleagues found that
viewing television led to an increase in learned sexual behaviors and higher initiation of sexual
behavior. A similar study done by Meischke, Finnegan, and Eisenberg (1999) examined the
effects an 8-month cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) campaign on people’s knowledge of
the basic steps to perform CPR. Researchers found that people who had seen the campaign
reported higher knowledge of the basic steps to CPR than those who had not seen the campaign. Additionally, Rice and Woodsmall (1988) analyzed children’s word learning while watching television. They, too, found that children who watched television were able to learn more novel words after having watched television than those who had not.

When SCT is applied to mass media, it offers a greater understanding of if and/or how viewers gain knowledge and learn behaviors through observation of the characters and models. However, not all studies found support for such a claim. Vos Post (1995) looked at aggression in Japanese and American television programming as well as aggression in Japanese and American people. Social cognitive theorists would assume that viewers of television programming with a higher amount of aggressive behaviors would report higher levels of aggression and violence. Vos Post (1995) found that although Japanese television programming had a higher level of aggression and violence than the United States, Japanese had lower levels of aggression. Vos Post suggested that his results indicated that behaviors might not be learned through observation or models on television. His suggestion, although a possibility, may be premature because there are a variety of other factors social cognitive theorists argue might impact whether learning can take place. These other factors (e.g., discrepancy between acting aggressive and not reporting acting aggressive or feeling aggressive but not acting aggressive, who is watching the television program, and low likeability of the characters) may have influenced the findings.

People do not just learn from every model; they selectively choose whose behaviors to observe and learn from. Social cognitive theorists assume that people have the agency to choose what they learn. This assumption can also be extended to people’s agency to choose from whom they learn. Using their research findings on SCT, Bandura (2001b) and Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010, 2011) suggested that behaviors by models (e.g., characters on a television program) that
are attractive and similar to the viewer are more likely to be imitated. Bandura (2001b) and Moyer-Gusé (2008) also emphasized that for behavioral learning from mass media to be the most effective, characters/models should be those toward which viewers have the highest wishful identification (i.e., the characters the viewers most want to emulate). Given this, another possible explanation of Vos Post’s results could be that Japanese viewers did not identify with the characters displaying aggressive behavior in the television programming, therefore did not learn the aggressive behaviors.

Denler et al. (2013) also believed identification is important (e.g., perception of attractiveness and character likability). Denler and colleagues suggested that to be the most effective, educational programming based on SCT and modeled behavior should include real-world situations with characters viewers identify with (positive characters) to promote a positive behavior and characters viewers do not identify with (negative characters) to promote a negative behavior. Although there are some exceptions, viewers will most likely emulate positive behaviors by positive characters (the hero saying “no” to drugs) because they want to be like them and resist negative behaviors by negative characters (the villain selling drugs) because they want to be different than them.

**SCT and Health-Related Behaviors**

The majority of studies on SCT showcase its applicability to a wide variety of contexts in regard to learning behaviors (Compeau, Higgins & Huff, 1999; Johnson & Marakas, 2000; Lin, 2010; Shu, Tu & Wang, 2011; Thatcher & Perrewe, 2002). For example, Compeau et al. (1999) examined SCT and the influence self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and anxiety have on computer use. Compeau and colleagues expected there to be a strong connection between participants’ self-efficacy and performance. Researchers found that self-efficacy and outcome
expectations about participants’ computer use did in fact have a significant association with their performance. As participants felt more confident in their ability to use the computer, as well as had higher expectations for their performance, their performance improved. Shu et al. (2011) also studied computer-related technostress and its consequences on computer self-efficacy and technology dependence. Consistent with the researchers’ expectations, results showed that employees who had lower levels of computer-related technostress tended to have higher levels of computer self-efficacy, which, in turn, led to better performance on a computer task.

Furthermore, with its wide applicability, SCT has been well recognized as a useful framework for both the learning of behaviors through models in the mass media and health-related behaviors (e.g., Conn, 1998; Glanz, Lewis & Rimer, 1997; McAuley, 1992; Bandura, 1994). Conn (1998) applied SCT constructs to exercise, dietary, and stress management health behavior. Conn expected self-efficacy and outcome expectancy to predict health behavior among older women. As anticipated, results found that self-efficacy was the strongest predictor of each of the health behaviors and that outcome expectancy was a significant predictor of stress management behavior. Rogers, Shah, Dunnington, Greive, Shanmugham, Dawson, and Courneya’s (2005) study on physical activity with breast cancer patients found that women with breast cancer who had an exercise role model (i.e., someone participants knew with breast cancer who exercised) were more likely to achieve a higher level of physical activity (measured in the number of steps per day) than those without. Additionally, researchers found support for SCT because participants were able to learn physical activity behaviors through observing their exercise role models and building self-efficacy.

While social cognitive theorists explain how people learn behaviors, learning only truly occurs if specific factors are in effect. For people to learn, they must have motivation to both
learn and perform a behavior and clear outcome expectations related to that behavior. People must also learn the skills and enhance self-beliefs needed to enable them to enact those learned behaviors in the future and against potential resistance, regardless of whether or not those learned behaviors will ever have to be performed (Bandura, 1994). Furthermore, as directly experiencing every behavior is unfeasible, social cognitive theorists place importance on social influence of behavior and skill acquisition with an emphasis on humans’ ability to learn through observation. Because people have the ability to control what they learn, they also have the ability to somewhat control how (i.e., direct experience versus observational learning). SCT is useful when trying to examine the observation of other people’s behaviors and gives researchers insight into how people learn through mass media and learn about health-related behaviors.

**Entertainment-Education**

**Foundation**

Entertainment-education (hereafter referred to as E-E) involves incorporating educational information within entertainment content. Singhal, Rogers, and Brown (1993) defined E-E as educational content placed in entertainment in order to create favorable attitudes, change behaviors, and increase knowledge of educational content. E-E typically embeds prosocial messages into a narrative format (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007; Moyer-Gusé, Mahood & Brookes, 2011). In television, these pro-social messages may be embedded in one or many episodes, an entire storyline, or a single educational scene of an otherwise purely entertainment program (Greenberg, Salmon, Patel, Beck & Cole, 2004; Singhal & Rogers, 2001).

The basis for E-E originated in Latin America during the late 1960s and 1970s through messages in telenovelas (soap operas), more specifically the telenovela, *Simplemente Maria*. *Simplemente Maria’s* starring character was a poor girl who found herself on hard times. She
bought a sewing machine, taught herself how to use it, proceeded to set up a clothing design business and became successful. After the airing of this telenovela, sales for sewing machines skyrocketed (see Singhal et al., 1993 for further discussion). Producers started to make the connection that their television program had an influence on viewers’ purchase behaviors.

Although Simplemente Maria was not E-E, it did provide the foundation for it. Television producers thought if a television show and storyline were able to influence the shopping behaviors of the audience, television programs in general would also likely have similar effects in regards to other behaviors and attitudes. Producers of television programs then started to make connections to Bandura’s work with SCT (at the time named Social Learning Theory). Sood, Menard, and Witte (2004) found that SCT is the most commonly applied theory to E-E. Social cognitive theorists suggested that actors in E-E programs are a source of social modeling and can in turn influence outcome expectancies and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; 2004b). By using elements that already capture a viewer’s attention (e.g., dramatic intensity, emotive music, attractive characters), producers were able to understand the power of their broadcasts. They then applied this understanding to influence viewers to be as motivated about socially desirable behaviors as they were inadvertently with purchasing a sewing machine (Green, Stranger & Brock, 2002).

**Application**

Both empirical and theoretic evidence suggest that E-E messages influence behavior (Bandura, 1986; 2004b; Green & Brock, 2000; Kincaid, 2002; Morgan, Movius, & Cody, 2009; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010; Slater & Rouner, 2002; Slater, Rouner & Long, 2006; Tukachinsky & Tokunaga, 2013; Wilkin, Valente, Murphy, Cody, Huang & Beck, 2007). E-E is a good complement to SCT since SCT has been criticized for providing no specifics as to how to explain
the resistance to learning behaviors (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). Most, if not all, behaviors, especially health-related, are going to inevitably encounter some resistance. However, scholars believe E-E is able to counteract resistance by being generally undetectable. Moyer-Gusé (2008) speculated that E-E might be more effective than overtly persuasive messages in certain circumstances, such as sexual behaviors and drug use, because the viewer will not feel they are being preached to (Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

**Viewer Involvement**

Another important element in E-E is viewer involvement since characters and narrative are key elements to influencing viewers’ behaviors. Most commonly referred to as *transportation*, narrative involvement refers to viewers being engaged in the storyline of the narrative rather than being primarily engaged in their immediate environment and responding both cognitively and emotionally to the narrative as it progresses (Green & Brock, 2000). Under E-E, viewers must have involvement with a narrative structure because the messages rely on the interaction viewers have with the story lines and characters (Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

Moyer-Gusé (2008) explained that immersing in a narrative mostly stems from character involvement, which is comprised of five categories that are related to how viewers interact with characters: (a) identification with characters, which is when viewers temporarily get lost in the narrative, forget their own reality, and take on the role of particular characters (Cohen, 2001); (b) wishful identification, which refers to when viewers look up to and want to be like certain characters (Lonial & Van Auken, 1986); (c) similarity, which refers to when viewers perceive and believe themselves to be similar to certain characters in regards to physical attributes, demographic variables, beliefs, personality, or values (see Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991); (d) parasocial interaction, which refers to the interaction between audience
members and media figures such as seeking guidance from them, and perceiving characters as part of their social world, like a friend (Hoffner, 1996; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985); and (e) liking, which refers to the positive evaluations of characters (Cohen, 2001; Giles, 2002; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991; Moyer-Gusé, 2008). As viewers become more interested and involved with the characters (models) and their behaviors, the higher the viewers’ self-efficacy of those behaviors and the more likely viewers would adopt those behaviors (Bandura, 1986; Perry & Bussey, 1979).

**E-E and Health-Related Behaviors**

E-E has been mainly applied to television narratives related to health-related behavior, such as HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, cancers, and unplanned pregnancies (Vaughan, Rogers, Singhal & Swalehe, 2000; also see Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2011). Brodie, Foehr, Rideout, Baer, Miller, Flournoy, and Altman’s (2001) study of an episode on the medical drama *ER*, which focused on unplanned pregnancy and human papilloma virus (HPV), revealed that those who were exposed to the program had increased knowledge and awareness of such issues. Kennedy, O’Leary, Beck, Pollard, and Simpson (2004) analyzed daytime soap opera plot integration of HIV prevention information, which included a STD and AIDS hotline number. The results showed that the number of phone calls significantly increased following the broadcast (Moyer-Gusé et al., 2011; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2011). In a survey of over 800 public high school students, Prati’s (2012) study on homophobic aggression found that homophobic bullies are likely to influence behaviors of peers. Because bullies are considered powerful, strong, and intimidating, they are models for others, especially those being bullied, who may have higher levels of wishful identification with the bullies. Therefore, when students observed aggressive homophobic behavior by bullies, those students adopted a more negative attitude.
towards homosexuals, which in turn increased self-reports of homophobic aggression (Prati, 2012). Farrar’s (2006) study on television depictions of sex on college students’ attitudes toward condom use found that females who watched a series of clips from a television drama in which condoms were used during sexual activity reported having more positive attitudes about condoms than those who saw similar television clips without condoms. Farrar (2006) suggested that television could influence a viewer’s knowledge of the health-related issues and behaviors being depicted (Moyer-Gusé et al., 2011). Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, and Hunter (2003) used an episode of the situation comedy Friends to analyze teen viewers’ learning about condoms, finding that those who viewed an episode about unplanned pregnancy were able to better recall the effectiveness rate of condoms than those who did not. While not a dramatic program, their study adds to the body of research that suggests a variety of programming, including dramatic and humorous, can convey information (DiClemente, 1990; Moyer-Gusé et al., 2011; Orr, Langlefeld, Katz, Caine, Dias, Blythe & Jones, 1992).

Although the effectiveness of E-E has received some empirical support, most research has been conducted in countries outside of the United States, many of them developing countries, that have much different media landscapes (Green et al., 2002; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2011; Sherry, 2002; Singhal & Rogers, 2001). For example, television programming in the United States tends to focus more on constructing the entertainment value first and embedding the messages later. Other countries, however, have an opposite focus as they tailor entertainment around a specific desired message (Greenberg et al., 2004; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2011; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). In the United States, 70 percent of all television programs include discussions or depictions of sex-related behaviors. As such, Moyer-Gusé and Nabi’s (2011) suggested that
carefully designed E-E messages could influence viewers’ social and health-related behaviors, attitudes, and awareness.

Law & Order: Special Victims Unit

Premise/Content

*In the criminal justice system, sexually based offenses are considered especially heinous.* In New York City, the dedicated detectives who investigate these vicious felonies are members of an elite squad known as the Special Victims Unit. These are their stories.

Modeled after the real-life New York Police Department’s Special Victims Unit, Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (hereafter *SVU*), a scripted series devoted to “ripped from the headlines” crimes of sexual assault and rape debuted in 1999 on NBC. In their analysis of the first five seasons of *SVU*, Cuklanz and Moorti (2006) noted that most *SVU* episodes begin with the uncovering of a crime and the subsequent investigation as to who the perpetrator is, with most—but not all—narratives ending with the positive identification of said perpetrator and the rare instance of including a trial. The show began its 15th season in September 2013, with a current total of 319 episodes, and airs for one-hour on Wednesday nights at 9 pm Central Standard Time. Typical audience demographics include an average of eight million viewers within the age range of 18-49 years old (de Moraes, 2006).

*SVU* is now syndicated on networks such as USA, TNT, WGN, and Bravo, with many of these networks showing marathon specials with as many as 12 episodes airing back to back. All seasons are available on HuluPlus and Seasons 8 through 12 of *SVU* are on Netflix, both subscription based services that provide on-demand television shows and movies. Furthermore, all episodes are available for purchase on DVD. *SVU* is the most successful series in the *Law & Order* franchise (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006) and received acclaim from both critics and fans alike (www.imdb.com).
**Characters**

*SVU* revolves around a relatively constant set of characters, including unit detectives Olivia Benson, Elliot Stabler, Odafin Tutuola, John Munch, Amanda Rollins, Nick Amaro, and Captain Donald Cragen. Other constant roles include an Assistant District Attorney, a medical examiner, and police psychologist.

Similar to other television crime dramas that focus on a main detective duo (e.g., *Bones* and *CSI*), *SVU* focuses on Detective Olivia Benson and Detective Elliot Stabler. While some changes to the cast were made during the 13th season (i.e., Detective Nick Amaro becoming Benson’s partner after Stabler’s exit from the show), Benson and Stabler are the core duo for the majority of *SVU* episodes. According to the character biographies on NBC.com, Detective Olivia Benson (played by Mariska Hargitay) is a crusader for justice while showing empathy, professionalism, and understanding towards rape victims, as she herself is a product of rape. Detective Elliot Stabler, an ex-Marine, is intensely protective of his family and quite often intertwines his domestic and work life.

**Setting**

*SVU* is set in current day and is shot on location in New York City, more specifically the island of Manhattan. Most scenes revolve around the unit’s squad room and detectives visiting the victim and places where people of interest or suspects are expected to be. *SVU* is most unique in the consistency of location in which they show the crime occurring—the victim’s home. RAINN stated that over half of all rape and sexual assaults happen within the home or very near. For example, perusal of all Season 9 episode descriptions (www.imdb.com) show that more than half of the episodes involving rape identified the victim’s home as the crime scene.
Application and Accolades

*SVU,* albeit a much less researched show than its counterparts (e.g., *NYPD Blue, Law & Order,* and *CSI*), has been analyzed for its representation of rape, the criminal justice system, and victimization. With rape being a symbol for women’s inferior status in society (Sielke, 2002), the fact that *SVU* has devoted a large portion of the program to the subject matter positions it in a body of television that could be characterized as feminist (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). Cuklanz and Moorti (2006) found that *SVU*’s narrative of victims legitimized, showcased, and emphasized key elements of sexual violence (e.g., the idea that rape is not the product of women “asking for it” but rather one of power and control for the perpetrator). *SVU* narratives also give voice to the concerns that victims, advocates, and organizations have about current rape laws (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). For example, episode 9 of Season 10 addressed the controversial issue surrounding the norms and laws surrounding rape in the military. What may be considered the most important representation on *SVU* is the accurate idea that there is the possibility of ‘life after rape’ (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). *SVU* shows that the women who have been raped have agency and can be proactive in seeking justice (Rajan, 1993). These elements, however, are most evident when episodes are viewed in succession rather than watching only a single episode (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006).

Cuklanz and Moorti (2006) found that characters on *SVU* voice understandings of gender, victimization, and rape. These understandings are not only applicable on the television screen but also off it. *SVU* has ties to the reality of sexual assault that extend beyond the show, which emphasizes the shows commitment to being a realistic representation of sexual assault victims’ perspectives (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). For example, Mariska Hargitay (Detective Olivia Benson) founded the Joyful Heart Foundation in 2004, which is dedicated to helping heal,
educate, and empower survivors of sexual assault—most of whom are female—as well as address the problem of society’s avoidance towards these issues. With SVU’s main characters, in particular Hargitay, being vocal and active about sexual assault, SVU is under some constraints due to responsibilities to intentionally portray a more accurate representation of sexual assault.

The narratives on SVU mainly focus on rape but also show a variety of issues including child-trafficking, child and internet porn, internet predators, teenage sexuality, fantasies, sexually transmitted diseases, hate crimes, incest, abduction, drug use, and fetal rights. In addition to topic variety, Blue (2012) suggested that SVU represents victims from a range of economic status, age, genders, racial backgrounds, and lifestyles. In their content analysis, Cuklanz and Moorti (2006) found that SVU episodes facilitate a feminism markedly different from similar shows in the past (i.e., lifestyle feminism of the 1970s, prime-time entertainment of the 1980s and postfeminism of the 1990s), suggesting that SVU narratives strive to accurately represent typical victim and perpetrator as well as the relationship between them. For example, crime statistics show that 73% of rapes occur by someone the victims knows, with most of those rapes being committed by family members and close friends (RAINN) and Catalono (2005) found that SVU did indeed represent most perpetrators of rape as a person known to the victim (not a stranger).

Although SVU echoes the timeline of other prime-time television crime dramas in regard to sexual assault, it differs in that its narrative does not include a depiction of the actual assault (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). Cuklanz and Moorti (2006) found that SVU normally starts the episodes post-rape in order to avoid having to document scenes with objectifying details about the victim that feed into the myth of rape being the victim’s fault. Episode narratives typically start directly after the claim or discovery of rape and then proceed to follow the investigation
and, at times, the prosecution of the perpetrator. Although narratives typically begin after the rape has occurred, *SVU* still identifies what a victim should do during and after a rape by showing characters repeatedly asking questions and explaining scenarios. Such behaviors include scratching the attacker, not showering or washing any clothing, completing a medical examination (rape kit), and filing an official report with law enforcement (i.e., the proper policies and procedures).

Cuklanz and Moorti’s (2006) content analysis showed *SVU*’s narrative debunks the many myths and misunderstandings that revolve around rape and sexual assault, especially by showing the majority of victims as innocent and blameless by the end of the episode. In other words, *SVU* showed that a victim’s personal activities and sexual practices does not nullify the need for consent and that, in fact, anyone can be violated (Britto, Hughes, Saltzman & Stroh, 2007, Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). Britto et al. (2007) found that *SVU* tended to have a balance of accurate facts and entertainment, therefore, although not perfect, *SVU* is an adequate model to investigate learning the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape.

**Hypotheses**

According to social cognitive theorists, learning can occurobservationally. Because all learning through direct experience is unrealistic, observational learning can occur by watching models perform behaviors and then processing the observed consequences of those behaviors. Specifically in this study, I will be examining observational learning through the television program *SVU*. Past research on SCT provided evidence to show that people can learn by vicariously observing the behaviors and consequences of others/models (Bandura, 1986). Past researchers also suggested that characters in television programming can act as models for particular behaviors (Moyer-Gusé, 2008). However, to be considered an effective model for
observational learning, several factors in regard to the observer must be in place: attention, retention, production, and motivation. Viewers of *SVU* must pay attention to the program. Viewers choose what they pay attention to in any given observation but they must be extracting information about particular behaviors as people can not learn a behavior if they do not recall observing it. Viewers must also retain this information in the form of rules and concepts (i.e., what to do, what not to do, and how to do it). Observers must then take these conceptions and formulate how to produce or put them into action. For this study, viewers must be motivated to learn and potentially use this information. If viewers do not find this information potentially useful, both in the present or future, they will have little desire to successfully learn the observed behavior.

Furthermore, past research on SCT and E-E supports the claim that observers must be involved with the narrative and characters for observational learning to occur (Moyer-Gusé et al., 2011). Observers become involved through various factors related to the characters such as attractiveness, perceptions of intelligence, and having high levels of likeability (e.g., high wishful identification with the characters and perceptions of similarity). High ratings and viewer accolades typically indicate that certain television programs have likeable, intelligible, and attractive characters. In this case, since *SVU* has a historically had a high number of fans, numerous accolades, and continues to garner high ratings, it can be assumed that viewers find characters on the show to be likeable, intelligible, attractive, and therefore, potentially effective models for observational learning.

Although past research identified how and why these television characters are effective models, it has neglected to focus on the information presented within the show and perhaps through characters behaviors, such as the proper policies and procedures to follow after the
occurrence of rape. For example, Benson and Stabler consistently tell victims what to do if they arrive to the crime scene or they ask victims a common set of questions that calls positive attention to behaviors that victims perhaps enacted during their rape (e.g., scratching attacker for possible DNA collection, calling police as soon as possible, and not taking a shower, brushing teeth or doing laundry afterwards). Beyond their verbal commands, Benson and Stabler are seen behaving in certain ways that allude to positive post-rape procedures (e.g., always seeing Benson or Stabler scraping under fingernails for skin cells could translate to an audience member that they should try scratch their attacker for DNA). While *SVU*’s narrative timeline of the crime may not model or present the viewer with proper policies and procedures during the actual rape itself, the consistent comments and actions made by detectives afterward may in fact imply them.

E-E theorists state the process of adding educational content in entertainment can create favorable attitudes, change in behavior regarding an educational topic, and increased knowledge of an educational issue. E-E is particularly valuable because it gets at these hard topics without making the viewer feel uncomfortable or that they are being preached to and without directly identifying that they are trying to influence specific attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors. Thus, television programming may provide models that, when viewed performing or discussing certain behaviors, will likely result in viewers learning from those behaviors. Clearly, there is a need to examine if observational learning allows for the observer to extract information (rather than just behavior) displayed by the model. This study aims to understand if characters on *SVU* can not only be used as behavioral models but can also act as informational models. If *SVU* portrays the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006; Blue, 2012), then viewers of *SVU* could be able to learn such information through observing the
characters’ behaviors within the show. This framework provided the basis for the first hypothesis:

H1: A viewer’s knowledge of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape will be higher for those exposed to an episode of SVU about rape than those who are not exposed.

As previously discussed, according to social cognitive theorists, self-efficacy can be developed as an outcome of learned behaviors. People mainly build confidence in their ability to perform certain behaviors through the process of either successfully performing said behaviors or believing they can perform learned behaviors when needed. However, since people are unable to directly experience all behaviors, social cognitive theorists state that learning can occur through observations. Thus, self-efficacy can also be built through observations of models. In relation to viewers of SVU, if viewers can learn through observing the behaviors of characters, then viewers should also be able to build self-efficacy about those behaviors. People build efficacy by watching those similar to them succeed because if similar others can accomplish a task, then people believe they are able to as well. If the characters on SVU are seen as likeable, intelligible, and similar to viewers, then viewers of SVU should build efficacy by watching characters such as Benson, Stabler, and the victims perform the proper policies and procedures of rape. SCT also proposes that self-efficacy expectations will influence individuals' actual ability to perform a behavior (Bandura, 1986). If people believe they can perform a specific behavior, they have a greater likelihood of doing so. Based on past SCT and E-E research, viewers of SVU are likely to build self-efficacy through the observation of characters successfully performing behaviors. Therefore, the following hypothesis is advanced:
H2: A viewer’s self-efficacy about their performance of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape is higher for those exposed to an episode of *SVU* about rape than those who are not exposed.

Past research has also explored cumulative viewing practices and their effect on observational learning. However, it has neglected to address the selection bias viewers have with certain shows. If given the free will to watch a television program of their choosing, they are likely to have a certain level of preexisting interest. Given this established interest in the television program, it would seem likely that people would in turn have higher levels of attention, retention, production, and motivation than those forced to watch the same television program. If people have higher levels of the aforementioned factors, based on previous research, those people would then have higher levels of observational learning. Similarly, if people watch a particular program by desire and choice, rather than by demand, then it is likely they will have a higher level of narrative and character involvement. For purposes of this study, viewers of *SVU* who have a history of voluntarily watching the television show may have a higher level of attention, retention, production and motivation as well as involvement with characters leading to more observed learning. Furthermore, if viewers have a history of voluntarily watching *SVU*, it is probable that they have a higher liking for the show and its characters. According to SCT, the more likeable models are (e.g., *SVU* characters), the more likely viewers will learn from the observed behaviors. The more viewers learn from the observed behaviors, higher self-efficacy about said behaviors is also likely to occur. Therefore,

H3: There will be a positive association between prior voluntary exposure to *SVU* and a viewers’ knowledge on the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape.
H4: There will be a positive association between prior voluntary exposure to *SVU* and viewers’ self-efficacy about their performance of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape.
CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Participants consisted of 105 undergraduate students at a large pacific university. There were 35 male (33%) and 70 female (67%) participants. Two participants were eliminated before completing the survey due to falling asleep and internet connection complications that caused the participant’s survey to erase half of his/her responses. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 55 years, with an average age of 21 years ($M = 20.92$, $SD = 4.13$). Participants reported that they were Asian ($n = 53$, 50%), Caucasian ($n = 19$, 18%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ($n = 6$, 6%), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 9$, 9%), Black ($n = 1$, 1%), American Indian/Alaskan Native ($n = 1$, 1%) and mixed ($n = 15$, 15%), with one participant not disclosing (1%). Additionally, data were collected on previous experience, either direct or indirect, with rape (see Appendix A). Twenty-six participants (25%) reported having experience with rape either personally or knowing someone who has, 75 participants reported having no experience (73%), and two participants preferred not to answer (2%). Participants were also asked if they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up study. Forty participants said no (39%) and 63 participants said yes (61%).

Procedure

A study sign-up page on Sona Systems, an online research tool used by the Communicology Department at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, was created to inform potential participants of the study as well as allow them to sign up for any available 75-minute timeslot of their choosing. After participants logged into the Sona Systems site, they were able to select this particular study among a list of other open studies. As many as four people were able to sign up for the same time slot and then come to the Communicology lab to complete the study. Each set
of time slots was assigned to one of four selected episodes of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (*SVU*). Two episodes centered around a victim surviving rape and two episodes centered around a child being kidnapped. These episodes served as the basis for observational learning. As in reality, the victim in the episodes shown did not know a lot of, if any, information about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. Social cognitive theorists (*SCT*) state that observational learning occurs from observing behaviors of the model (e.g., the victim). However, since information regarding behaviors come from a variety of characters within *SVU*, participants needed to look at other characters (e.g., Detectives Benson and Stabler) in addition to the victim as they, too, provided the basis for supplemental informational learning. All episodes shown featured the same main characters and similar characteristics (e.g., minor to no changes in character hair styles, clothing, demeanor, and narrative focus) in order to eliminate differences in identification with characters. Upon arrival at the laboratory, participants were asked to sit at one of four seats at a table. Participants then read the study consent form (see Appendix B), and after agreeing to participate, watched the pre-assigned episode about rape or kidnapping in its entirety on a nearby couch and chairs. Because multiple people were allowed to sign up for a single time slot, some participants were watching the television show with up to three other participants. Six participants viewed an episode alone (6%), 16 participants viewed an episode with one other person (16%), 41 participants viewed an episode with two other participants (40%), and 40 participants viewed an episode with three other participants (39%). If other participants were present, they were instructed to avoid talking to each other while viewing the episode and filling out the survey. In addition, the researcher was present to monitor the participants. After watching the episode, participants returned to their seats at the table and took an online (internet) survey. Social cognitive theorists identify four main factors that need to be
met in order to test the theory. Therefore, the survey included scales to assess viewer involvement, usefulness and motivation, and outcome expectations. The survey also included questions related to the main measures in this study. That is, they were asked to identify their knowledge on the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape, prior voluntary exposure (if any) to *SVU*, and self-efficacy in terms of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. Other ancillary questions pertained to demographic information to understand participant experience with rape (i.e., have they or someone they have know had experience with rape). Upon completion of the survey, participants received 1.5 Sona credits. Total time devoted to the study was approximately 70 minutes: 5 minutes for participation consent, 45 minutes for watching the assigned episode, 18 minutes to complete the survey, and 2 minutes for debriefing.

**Stimulus Materials**

Each participant was exposed to a single episode of *SVU* out of four possible episodes. Approximately half of the participants (*n* = 52, 50%) saw one of two episodes focused on rape (first condition). For the two episodes dealing with rape, the first episode, “Closure”, is episode 10 from season one, which originally aired January 7, 2000 (hereafter Rape A). Rape A is about Harper and her experience with a stranger rapist and her progression through the rape kit, coping, and perpetrator identification process. Twenty-five participants viewed Rape A (24%). The second episode, “Behave”, is episode three from season 12, which originally aired September 29, 2010 (hereafter Rape B). Rape B is about Vicki and her experiences with a repeat rapist and her progression through deciding to trust the police, the rape kit, and perpetrator identification process. Twenty-seven participants viewed Rape B (26%). Approximately half of the participants (*n* = 51, 50%) saw one of two episodes focused on kidnapping (second condition).
For the two episodes dealing with a kidnapping, the first episode, “Coerced”, is episode six from season five, which originally aired October 28, 2003 (hereafter Kid A). Kid A is about Adam and his abduction by a schizophrenic who believes Adam is his son. Twenty-five participants viewed Kid A (24%). The second episode, “Blast” is episode 13 from season seven, which originally aired January 10, 2006 (hereafter Kid B). Kid B is about Carly and her abduction by her older and drug-addicted brother who is in need of money. Twenty-six participants viewed Kid B (25%).

**Instrumentation** (see Table 1 for intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations)

**Prior voluntary exposure.** Participants were asked to provide information related to their past experiences viewing *SVU*. They were asked about their lifetime exposure and their familiarity with the episode they viewed in this study (see Appendix C). Exposure to *SVU* ranged from 0 to 350 episodes seen prior to participation in this study. Thirty-three participants had never seen any episodes in the *SVU* series (32%), 69 participants (67%, $M = 48.65$, $SD = 66.95$) had seen at least one episode in the *SVU* series, and one participant did not report an answer (1%). Ninety participants (87%) had not seen the episode of *SVU* that they viewed during the study before, while thirteen participants had seen the episode they viewed during the study before (13%) (see Table 2 for prior voluntary exposure by episode).

**Knowledge.** To measure knowledge of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence rape, a true and false question quiz was developed. The quiz was based on the suggestions for what to do after the occurrence of rape by the Rape Treatment Center at UCLA Medical Center checklist (2013). A list of all nine suggestions from the Rape Treatment Center at UCLA Medical Center were included in the scale and changed into 13 separate behavioral statements. For example, “Do not eat until after you have had a medical examination”, a true
statement from the Rape Treatment Center checklist, was changed to “After the occurrence of rape, a victim should try not to eat”. Participants were asked to answer the items by determining if they are either “True”, “False”, or respond with “I don’t know”. The correct answer for each item varied as ten of the behavioral statements were false and three were true. In other words, some true statements from the Rape Treatment Center checklist were changed to false behavioral statements. For example, “Place each item of clothing in a separate paper bag”, a true statement from The Rape Treatment Center checklist, was changed to “All clothing worn during the rape should be placed in a bag, either paper or plastic”, a false statement. Every correct answer was equivalent to one point (possible scores ranged from 0 to 13 points). Higher scores indicated an increased knowledge level of the proper policies and procedures for victims to follow after the occurrence of rape (see Appendix D). Participant scores ranged from 6 to 12 points ($M = 9.53$, $SD = 1.43$). After participants assessed whether they believed the statement to be true or not, they were given a list of the same statements but all 13 items now reflected only correct knowledge statements about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. Participants were then asked to identify which, if any, of the information presented in the statements was learned during the episode of $SVU$ that they just watched (see Appendix D). The average number of items learned in the rape condition was 9.66, with a standard deviation of 2.61 and the average number of items learned in the kidnapping condition was 3.70, with a standard deviation of 4.50 (see Table 3 for frequencies, means and standard distributions for each individual episode). This indicated that, on average, participants in condition one (i.e., viewers of an $SVU$ episode about rape) reported learning more of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape than those in condition two (i.e., viewers of an $SVU$ episode about kidnapping).
Self-Efficacy. Self-efficacy was measured using items based on Bandura’s Self-Efficacy to Regulate Exercise Scale (2006). Participants were asked to rate how certain they believe they are willing and able to perform the 13 correct behaviors (as identified in the learned statements checklist) after the occurrence of rape as (e.g., “resist cleaning up any mess or disturbance made to the location of the rape”) using a scale of zero to 100 (0 = not confident at all to 100 = highly confident) in increments of 10. Higher scores indicated a higher level of self-efficacy in regard to performing the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape (see Appendix E). Participant scores ranged from 50 to 100 ($M = 81.58$, $SD = 13.10$). This indicated that participants reported fairly high confidence in their willingness and ability to perform the proper policies and procedures after the occurrence of rape or participants reported fairly high self-efficacy regarding the proper policies and procedures after the occurrence of rape.

Viewer Involvement. Viewer involvement, a combination of narrative and character involvement, was assessed through a total of 50-items by testing transportation, character likeability and attractiveness, intelligibility and credibility, and similarity (see Appendix F). Transportation occurs when audience members become less aware of their surroundings due to being immersed in the narrative, characters, and events, both cognitively and emotionally. Items from Green and Brock’s 12-item Transportation Scale (2000) were modified to better fit the stimulus. For example, “I wanted to learn how the narrative ended” was changed to “I wanted to learn what happened after the episode of SVU ended” and “I found my mind wandering while reading the narrative” was changed to “I found my mind wandering while watching SVU”. The last item in the original scale was further modified so that all three main characters from the episode (Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and the victim) were included as individual scale
items. Since behaviors regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape can be observed and learned through multiple characters in SVU, it was necessary to include the three most influential characters in order to adequately test transportation. This change resulted in an additional two items, increasing the total number of scale items to 14. Participants were asked to select a number (1 = very strongly disagree, 7 = very strongly agree) that best represented how they felt about the episode (e.g., “the events in SVU changed my life”). The overall average for transportation was 4.76 (SD = 0.87). In other words, participants slightly agreed that SVU (i.e., the narrative, characters, and events) was cognitively and emotionally involving or participants reported being transported while watching an episode of SVU. The alpha reliability for transportation was $\alpha = .77$.

Character likeability and attractiveness (or characteristics such as being knowledgeable, friendly, warm, approachable, and physically attractive) was assessed using Reysen’s Likability Scale (2005). Items from the Reysen Likability Scale were modified to better fit the stimulus. For example, “This person” was changed to “The characters”. Only nine of 11 items from the original scale were used because two items (i.e., “I would like this person as a coworker” and “I would like this person as a roommate”) were not relevant to this study. The scale was further modified so that higher scores indicated a higher level of character likeability and attractiveness. Participants were asked to select a number (1 = very strongly disagree, 7 = very strongly agree) that best represented how they felt about the characters (e.g., “the characters were friendly” and “the characters were likeable”). The overall average for character likeability and attractiveness was 4.77 (SD = 0.97). This indicated that participants slightly agreed that the characters in SVU would be people they would like and find physically attractive in reality. In other words, the characters (i.e., Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and the victim) were judged as being
likeable and attractive. The alpha reliability for character likeability and attractiveness was $\alpha = .86$.

Intelligibility and credibility (or characteristics such as being honest, an expert, and trustworthy) was evaluated by adapting McCroskey’s Source Credibility Scale (1966). Five items from the original 18-item scale were removed due to irrelevance (e.g., “cares about me/doesn’t care about me” and “self-centered/not self-centered”). Items were answered using a semantic differential scale of 1 to 7. Participants were asked to select the number between each pair of opposite meanings words (e.g., “1 = unintelligent to 7 = intelligent” and “1 = uninformed to 7 = informed”) that best represented how they felt about $SVU$. The overall average for intelligibility and credibility was 5.96 ($SD = 0.91$). In other words, participants reported the characters in $SVU$ (i.e., Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and the victim) were quite intelligent and credible. The alpha reliability for intelligibility and credibility was $\alpha = .92$.

Similarity, a feeling of understanding and identification to the characters in the narrative, as well as their emotions and behaviors, was evaluated using a 14-item scale to evaluate identification with characters developed by Igartua and Páez (1998). The Likert-type scale used in the original measure was changed for consistency to match the other scales used in this study and participants were asked to answer how they felt about the statements (1 = very strongly disagree, 7 = very strongly agree). Higher scores indicated a higher level of perceived similarity. Example items included “I thought I was like the characters or very similar to them” and “I thought that I would like to be like or act like the characters”. The overall average for similarity was 4.57 ($SD = 0.99$). In other words, participants slightly agreed that they understood and identified with the emotions and behaviors of the characters in $SVU$ or the characters (i.e.,
Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and the victim) were judged as being slightly similar to the participants. The alpha reliability for similarity was $\alpha = .90$.

**Usefulness and motivation.** To measure usefulness and motivation (how well a narrative helps a viewer to learn), three out of 27 scale items were used from Rubin’s adapted Television Viewing Motives Scale (1983; originally adapted from Greenberg’s, 1974) due to irrelevancy of other items, such as, “I watch television because it’s something to do when friends come over” and “I watch television so I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching”. Items were also adapted to reflect SVU. For example, the statement, “I watch TV because it helps me learn things about myself and others” was changed to “Watching this episode of SVU helps me to learn things about myself and others”. The Likert-type scale used in the original measure was changed for consistency to match the other scales used in this study and participants were asked to answer how they felt about the statements (1 = *very strongly disagree*, 7 = *very strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated a higher level of usefulness and motivation toward the behaviors observed in the show (see Appendix G). The overall average for usefulness and motivation was 4.85 ($SD = 1.45$). In other words, participants slightly agreed that the narrative of and behaviors shown in SVU were helpful in learning certain information or the narrative of and behaviors shown in SVU were judged as being somewhat useful and motivating. The alpha reliability for usefulness and motivation was $\alpha = .89$.

**Outcome expectations.** Outcome expectations are defined by the perceived realism and accuracy of the narrative. In other words, outcome expectations measure if viewers believe that the SVU narrative and its outcome is a good representation of real life. To measure outcome expectations, Rubin’s 5-item Perceived Realism Scale (1981) and Gaziano and McGrath’s 12-item News Credibility Scale (1986) were adapted (see Appendix H). Both scales were used to
measure the realism and accuracy of the narrative in *SVU*. The Perceived Realism Scale was modified for the assessor. For example, “Television presents things as they really are in life” was changed to “*SVU* presents things as they really are in life”. The Perceived Realism Scale was changed for consistency to match other scales within the survey and participants were asked to answer items using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *very strongly disagree*, 7 = *very strongly agree*) in order to understand their thoughts and feelings towards *SVU*. The News Credibility Scale was adapted by using seven of the original 12-item scale as five items were removed due to irrelevance (e.g., “*SVU* invades peoples privacy” and “*SVU* has poorly-trained reporters”). For items from the News Credibility Scale, participants were asked to select the number between each pair of opposite meanings words (e.g., “1 = unfair to 7 = fair” and “1 = inaccurate to 7 = accurate”) that best represented how they felt about *SVU*. For both scales, higher scores indicated a higher level of outcome expectations towards the behaviors observed in the show (see Appendix E). The overall average for outcome expectations was 3.22 (SD = .94). In other words, participants reported that *SVU* (i.e., the behaviors, characters, and plot) was marginally realistic and relevant to their lives. The alpha reliability for outcome expectations was $\alpha = .83$. 
CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Pre-analysis Plan

In order to adequately test all four hypotheses, some participants were removed from the analyses. First, fifteen participants were removed because they indicated that they did not know one or more of the main characters (i.e., Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and the victim), which demonstrated that they were not actively watching or paying attention to the episode shown in the study. Second, given the small sample size, outliers could have a biasing effect on the results and thus 13 participants were removed from the statistical analyses because they were more than two standard deviations away from the mean regarding one or more of the following variables needed to adequately test SCT: transportation, character likeability and attractiveness, intelligibility and credibility, similarity, usefulness and motivation, and outcome expectations.

In addition, univariate ANOVAs were run in order to see if there were differences among the episodes on viewer involvement, usefulness and motivation, and outcome expectations. The results indicated there were significant differences among the episodes on viewer involvement, specifically for transportation, $F(3, 71) = 4.80, p < .01, \eta^2 = .17$, and similarity, $F(3, 71) = 3.32, p = .03, \eta^2 = .12$; and there were no significant differences among the episodes for character likeability and attractiveness, $F(3, 71) = 1.08, p = .37, \eta^2 = .04$, and intelligibility and credibility, $F(3, 71) = 2.52, p = .07, \eta^2 = .10$. The results also showed there were significant differences among the episodes on usefulness and motivation, $F(3, 71) = 2.95, p = .04, \eta^2 = .11$. Further, there were no significant differences among the episodes on outcome expectations $F(3, 71) = .49, p = .69, \eta^2 = .02$ (see Table 4 for means, standard deviations, and post hoc analysis results by episode).
Analysis Plan

To test Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 that predicted differences between viewing an *SVU* episode on rape and an *SVU* episode on kidnapping, univariate ANOVAs were employed. The results were further probed with post hoc analyses to examine differences among all of the episodes viewed by participants because the preliminary tests indicated that there was some variability among the episodes in terms of transportation, similarity, and usefulness and motivation.

Hypothesis 3 and 4 were tested using Pearson Product-Moment correlations and univariate ANOVAs. Again because there was variability among the episodes in the preliminary analyses, additional correlational tests were conducted separately for each episode.

The significance level of all statistical tests conducted for the current study was set at \( p = .05 \). Additionally, all analyses were based on two-tailed tests.

**Knowledge and Exposure**

Hypothesis 1 predicted that a viewer’s knowledge of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape will be higher for those exposed to an episode of *SVU* about rape than those who had not. Contrary to the prediction, the results did not show a significant difference in the knowledge scores for those who saw an episode of *SVU* about rape \((M = 9.50, SD = 1.39, 95\% CI [9.04-9.96])\) and those who did not \((M = 9.57, SD = 1.48, 95\% CI [9.09-10.04])\); \(F(1, 73) = .04, p = .84, \eta^2 < .01\). The post hoc analyses did reveal, however, that viewers of episode Kid B \((M = 10.16, SD = 1.17, 95\% CI [9.53-10.80])\) had significantly higher knowledge scores than viewers of episode Kid A \((M = 8.94, SD = 1.55, 95\% CI [8.30-9.60])\). In general, the results did not support Hypothesis 1.
Self-Efficacy and Exposure

Hypothesis 2 predicted that viewers’ self-efficacy about their performance of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape will be higher for those exposed to an episode of \textit{SVU} about rape than those who had not seen an \textit{SVU} episode about rape. As predicted, the results showed a significant difference in the self-efficacy scores for those who saw an episode of \textit{SVU} about rape \((M = 8.50, SD = 1.15, 95\% \ CI [8.09-8.91])\) and those who did not \((M = 7.81, SD = 1.38, 95\% \ CI [7.39-8.22]); F(1,73) = 5.63, p = .02, \eta^2 = .07.\) Additionally, the post hoc analyses revealed that viewers of episode Rape A \((M = 8.47, SD = 1.17, 95\% \ CI [7.87-9.07])\) and Rape B \((M = 8.53, SD = 1.16, 95\% \ CI [7.96-9.10])\) had significantly higher reports of self-efficacy than viewers of episode Kid A \((M = 7.61, SD = 1.40, 95\% \ CI [7.01-8.21]).\) In general, there was support for Hypothesis 2 in that viewers of an episode of \textit{SVU} involving rape reported higher levels of self-efficacy pertaining to performing and following proper policies and procedures after the occurrence of rape than viewers of an episode of \textit{SVU} that did not involve rape.

Prior Exposure and Knowledge

Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive association between prior voluntary exposure to \textit{SVU} and viewer knowledge on the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. The results did not reveal a significant positive correlation between having seen an episode of \textit{SVU} in the past and knowledge of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape, although it was in the anticipated direction, \(r(73) = .20, p = .09\) (See Table 1). Increases in viewing an episode of \textit{SVU} in the past was not significantly related to increases in knowledge of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. However, in the correlation tests analyzing each episode separately, there was a significant effect
for viewers of episode Rape A, \( r(16) = .49, p < .05 \). There was no significant effect for the other episodes (Rape B, \( r(18) = .31, p = .19 \), Kid A, \( r(16) = -.24, p = .36 \), and Kid B, \( r(17) = .39, p = .10 \)).

Hypothesis 3 was also analyzed by using a univariate ANOVA to test if viewer knowledge on the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape will be higher for those who had prior exposure to the \( SVU \) series, regardless of the number of episodes seen, compared to those who had no prior exposure to the \( SVU \) series whatsoever. The results did not reveal a significant difference in the knowledge scores for those who had prior exposure to \( SVU \) (\( M = 9.75, SD = 1.38, 95\% \text{ CI} [9.35-10.14] \)) and those who had not (\( M = 9.13, SD = 1.46, 95\% \text{ CI} [8.55-9.72] \)); \( F(1, 72) = 3.03, p = .09, \eta^2 = .04 \).

Another univariate ANOVA was to be run in order to test if viewer knowledge of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape will be higher for those who had prior exposure to the same episode of \( SVU \) shown during the study versus those who had no prior exposure to \( SVU \) whatsoever. However, there were insufficient cases to run the analysis because only three participants reported having previously seen the same episode of \( SVU \) shown during the study.

In general, there was very limited support for Hypothesis 3. There was a near significant effect for the association between prior viewing of \( SVU \) and knowledge and a significant correlation between prior viewing of \( SVU \) and knowledge for the subsample who saw Rape A. There was also a near significant difference between those who had and those who had not seen an episode from the \( SVU \) series on knowledge of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape.
Prior Exposure and Self-Efficacy

Hypothesis 4 predicted a positive association between prior voluntary exposure to SVU and viewer feelings of self-efficacy regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. The results did not reveal a significant positive correlation between having seen an episode of SVU in the past and self-efficacy related to the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape, although it was in the expected direction, $r(73) = .15, p = .20$ (See Table 1). Likewise, results did not reveal significant differences when each episode was analyzed separately (Rape A, $r(16) = .28, p = .26$, Rape B, $r(18) = .17, p = .47$, Kid A, $r(16) = .03, p = .91$, and Kid B, $r(17) = .30, p = .22$, see Table 4).

As with Hypothesis 3, to further test Hypothesis 4, a univariate ANOVA was conducted to examine if self-efficacy was higher for those who had prior exposure to the SVU series, regardless of the number of episodes seen, compared to those who had no prior exposure to the SVU series whatsoever. The results revealed no significant difference in self-efficacy between those who had seen any episode of SVU ($M = 8.32, SD = 1.32, 95\% CI [7.96-8.68]$) and those who had no prior exposure to SVU whatsoever ($M = 7.90, SD = 1.18, 95\% CI [7.37-8.44]$); $F(1, 72) = 1.68, p = .20, \eta^2 = .02$.

Another univariate ANOVA was to be run in order to test if viewer self-efficacy related to the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape will be higher for those who had prior voluntary exposure to the same episode of SVU shown during the study versus those who had no prior voluntary exposure to SVU whatsoever. However, as stated above, there were insufficient cases to run the analysis because only three participants reported having previously seen the same episode of SVU shown during the study.
In general, there was no support for Hypothesis 4. There was no significant positive relationship between prior exposure to $SVU$ and self-efficacy.
CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The current study examined *SVU* through the frameworks of SCT and E-E in order to assess whether the dramatic narrative of *SVU* is effective in increasing knowledge and self-efficacy about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. Consistent with predictions, the results suggested that episodes of *SVU* centered around the topic of rape increase self-efficacy regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. These findings give value to claims that someone can gain self-efficacy about behaviors by watching an observational model. For example, participants who viewed the episode “Closure” observed the victim, Harper, perform appropriate behaviors including calling 9-1-1, agreeing to a rape kit during a medical examination, and pressing charges even though Harper did not know her rapist. Through watching Harper engage in these behaviors, participants reported higher self-efficacy regarding their ability to perform the same proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape than the participants who watched “Blast” or “Coerced”, the episodes centered around kidnapping.

**Knowledge and Exposure**

The results from this study did not support the prediction that episodes of *SVU* centered around the topic of rape increase knowledge regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape compared to episodes of *SVU* centered on a topic other than rape. One possible explanation that the current study’s results did not support the prediction that episodes of *SVU* centered around the topic of rape are advantageous towards increasing knowledge regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape relates to participant interpretations of *SVU*. Although the episodes of *SVU* shown during this
study exhibited a large number of behaviors regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape, E-E and social cognitive theorists suggest that the success of persuasive effects (e.g., the acquisition of knowledge) in narratives are largely dependent on viewers. Moyer-Gusé and Nabi’s study (2011) found that these effects depend on the interpretation of program or messages made by the viewers. For example, in their study on safe sex intentions, they found after exposure to an E-E message, males’ intentions for safe sex were lower than pretest level. Post hoc analyses suggested that specific interpretations, such as males’ dislike for the program, might explain such an adverse reaction (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2011). While certain E-E messages may be effective for some, they may be ineffective or even detrimental to others depending on how the message is perceived. This research gives a possible explanation as to why results for the current study indicated no significant relationship between knowledge and exposure to an episode about rape. In the current study, participants may have interpreted events and behaviors in an unintended way. A goal of the current study was for viewers to learn based on observing the behaviors shown in an episode of SVU. For example, one item of information viewers were expected to learn was that evidence should be placed into a paper, not plastic, bag. However, in the episode Rape B (“Behave”), participants would have seen that the evidence kept in a box within a paper bag was degraded, ruined, and moldy. Although it is the proper procedure to place rape evidence, such as clothes, into a paper bag, participants could have wrongly interpreted this information to mean that all evidence should be placed in neither boxes nor paper bags as it results in contamination. In other words, the lack of support for episodes of SVU centered around the topic rape, compared to other episodes, being advantageous towards increasing knowledge regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape could stem from variance in participant interpretation of
events and behaviors within the *SVU* narrative, causing the E-E message (i.e., the ability for participants to learn knowledge about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape) to be diluted.

The ceiling effect is an additional explanation for the lack of difference found between knowledge levels of participants exposed to an *SVU* episode about rape and knowledge levels of participants exposed to an *SVU* episode about kidnapping. The ceiling effect refers to when independent variables no longer have a noticeable effect on dependent variables, or in this case, when exposure to an episode of *SVU* about rape no longer has a noticeable effect on knowledge scores because all scores tend to be high. Considering the surprisingly high average for knowledge scores (9.53 out of 13), especially among the participants who viewed *SVU* episodes centered around kidnapping, it seems possible the knowledge level among participants was already relatively high prior to the study, which may suggest that participants already knew much of the information asked on the knowledge test. Additionally, viewing an episode of *SVU* may be activating participants’ knowledge about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape that was learned prior to and not during the episode they were shown. Therefore, the study instruments may not have provided enough opportunity or room for participants to demonstrate any increase in knowledge as only a small amount of information was previously unknown to participants or provide an opportunity to parcel out the effects of prior knowledge that may have been activated while viewing an episode.

Yet another explanation for the lack of support found for a relationship between knowledge and exposure to an *SVU* episode about rape is due to the negative correlations between outcome expectations and other study measures. Social cognitive theorists would expect that if viewer involvement (i.e., transportation, character attractiveness and likeability,
intelligibility and credibility, and similarity) and usefulness and motivations were high, that outcome expectations, or the perceived realism and relevance of narrative to life, would be high as well. Additionally, social cognitive theorists would predict that if the aforementioned variables were met, then learning would occur. However, contrary to this study’s predictions, outcome expectations had a negative correlation with viewer involvement and usefulness and motivations. Social cognitive theorists argue that when participants report narratives to be unrealistic and not relevant, then observational learning may not occur. If participants felt that the episode of *SVU* was realistic and relevant to their lives, they in some way had to accept that rape could happen to them. Therefore, participants who were shown the rape episodes during the study could have had an adverse reaction to the episodes causing them to report *SVU* as unrealistic and irrelevant to their lives. As previously discussed, since rape is a crime that most people do not believe will ever happen to them, rather than accept the realism and relevance of rape to their lives, participants could have perceived *SVU* to be less realistic. Thus, similar to arguments of social cognitive theorists, because participants perceived the narrative to be less realistic, observational learning did not occur. Again, although participants may have reported high viewer involvement and felt the information was useful to know, due to the narrative’s subject matter being rape, participants may have felt the narrative was not realistic or relevant to their lives, therefore resulting in a lack of learning.

**Knowledge, Self-Efficacy, and Prior Voluntary Exposure**

The results also indicated very limited support for the prediction that increases in prior viewing of *SVU* would be related to increases in knowledge of the policies and procedures related to the occurrence of rape. The overall correlation was near significant and when the correlational analyses were separated by episode, the correlation between prior viewing and
knowledge was significant for viewers of Rape A and near significant for viewer of Kid B, with viewers of three out of the four episodes showing a positive association between prior viewing and knowledge. The findings also showed a near significant difference between those who had and did not have prior viewing of SVU on knowledge. Additionally, the results did not support the expectation that increases in viewing episodes SVU prior to the study is advantageous towards increasing self-efficacy regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape.

One possible explanation for the minimal or lack of support found for a positive relationship between PVE to SVU and viewers’ knowledge and self-efficacy about their performance of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape is the way PVE was measured. The current study measured PVE by asking participants to report an educated guess about the number of SVU episodes that they had seen prior to the study as well as if they had seen the episode they were shown during the study and if so how many times. However, the measurement of PVE did not ask participants to specify the content of each episode. For example, participant may have reported that they saw 25 episodes of SVU prior to participating in this study. However, the content of all 25 episodes could have been about kidnapping or all 25 episodes could have been about rape. The measurement of PVE did not differentiate between those who had PVE of SVU episodes of rape versus those who had PVE of SVU episodes NOT about rape. Thus, the effect of PVE was weakened.

Another possible explanation for the minimal or lack of support found for a positive relationship between PVE to SVU and viewers’ knowledge and self-efficacy about their performance of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape stems from the subject matter of SVU’s narrative heavily including rape. Because rape is a special
topic (e.g., sensitive, uncomfortable, and unpleasant), the element of PVE may not work the same as it has in other E-E research. Because learning and having self-efficacy about a behavior entails the notion that you may anticipate having to use this knowledge at some point or another, the topic matter of rape may cancel out the effects of PVE. Participants, especially men, may not believe that rape is an imminent threat and therefore may not believe that they will have to use information or enact learned behaviors regarding rape. In other words, the topic of rape may have caused those with PVE to \textit{SVU} to decide not to learn behaviors and the self-efficacy that accompanies them. It is for this reason that those with PVE to \textit{SVU} and/or rape may be similar to those who have had no PVE.

Yet another possible explanation for the minimal or lack of support found for a positive relationship between PVE to \textit{SVU} and viewers’ knowledge and self-efficacy about their performance of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape is a lack of strong parasocial relationships between participants and the actors of \textit{SVU}. Parasocial relationships, commonly between celebrities and audiences, occur when Person A knows a lot of information about Person B, but Person B does not know a lot of information about Person A. Lauricella, Gola, and Calvert (2011) found that the ability to learn from media, such as \textit{SVU}, is directly related to the strength of the parasocial relationship with those modeling the behaviors. Additionally, more learning occurs when a model is a well-recognized and socially meaningful character (Lauricella et al., 2011). Furthermore, research shows that higher character likeability and attractiveness are directly related to stronger parasocial interactions and relationships; however, this is not a causal relation. In other words, although the actors in \textit{SVU} (Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and sometimes the victims) are generally widely known and participants reported high character likeability and attractiveness (perhaps because characters
were portrayed by celebrities that they recognized and knew) it did not necessarily cause participants to also have a strong parasocial relationship with them. To further support this idea, although 67% of participants had seen an episode of *SVU* prior to the study, out of those participants, close to 71% of them report having seen less than a full season’s worth of episodes. Given this, it is plausible that while participants enjoyed the characters and deemed them likeable and attractive, they still lacked a strong parasocial relationship because they had simply not been exposed to the characters enough times.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to the current study. One limitation is the episode selection as the stimulus material. The results indicate that the episodes chosen may have been problematic; especially since participants who viewed episode Kid B reported quite high knowledge scores even though the episode included no behaviors or information regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. Although Rape B (40%) had significantly higher reports of having had experience with rape, either personally or knowing someone who has, than viewers of Kid A (11%), *p* = .02, there is still a lack of explanation as to why Kid B had such high knowledge scores. Additionally, differences between episodes in the pretests of validity measures seemed to indicate abnormality. Therefore, although the episodes chosen reflected many of the behaviors regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape, perhaps other episodes in the *SVU* series would have created a different effect. Changing the episodes used as a stimulus material may produce different effect than those chosen for the current study.

A second limitation to the current study is how knowledge was measured. The current study only measured knowledge levels after viewing the episode of *SVU*, which made it
impossible to determine if participant knowledge about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape was learned prior to watching the episode of *SVU* or during. Furthermore, it is possible that participants were unaware or unable to distinguish when (prior to study or during) their reported knowledge about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape was learned. Asking participants to complete a pre-test about their knowledge regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape before viewing an episode of *SVU* may give insight into, on average, how much and what kind of information is known about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape prior to watching an episode of *SVU*.

A third limitation of the current study is how outcome expectations were measured. In this study, outcome expectations were assessed through perceived realism or how participants to perceive *SVU* to be a good representation of real life. However, social cognitive theorists describe outcome expectations as beliefs about the rewards and consequences of behaviors. Thus, the potential problem with the perceived realism measure was that it did not directly assess whether a behavior was positive or negative, but rather if behaviors seen within *SVU* were perceived to be realistic and relevant to real life. This is less of a problem when the narrative of a show is specifically designed to convey certain educational content. However, in this investigation the narrative came from an intact show with an entertainment focus. This entertainment focus resulted in the narrative having a mixture of positive and negative outcomes for behaviors. For example, a victim in an episode of *SVU* about rape may first refuse to complete a rape kit and then later decide to, which represents a positive and negative behavior. This mixture of positive and negative outcomes could have made it difficult to identify the cumulative or ultimate rewards or consequences for behaviors.
A fourth limitation is the size and type of sample used. The study was likely underpowered to adequately tests all of the hypotheses. Additionally, this study used a convenience sample of 105 collegiate students from a pacific university, of which only 75 participants were used in the analyses. Participants may have been more privy to information regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape as collegiate campuses often provide this type of information through awareness posters, flyers, and brochures. Furthermore, this information is often placed in areas where students are highly likely to view it (e.g., bathroom stalls, university websites, and posting areas in and around campus centers) in order to gain exposure to a large number of students. Conducting this study with people of all ages and occupations would both increase and diversify the sample size and could lead to more generalizable results.

A fifth limitation to the current study is the setting in which participants viewed the episodes of *SVU*. In order for the researcher to monitor participant behavior (e.g., participants falling asleep and talking to or touching others), participants came to the laboratory and watched the episode with up to three strangers. This control caused participants to watch *SVU* in a setting dissimilar to that of which would be considered a normal or typical setting for them. Since most television is consumed in personal homes, behaviors such as lying down on a couch or bed, leaving the vicinity during commercial breaks, or eating, may minimize the overall attention being given to programs being watched. Therefore, the laboratory setting may have created a stronger effect as participants may have had higher overall attention, as participants were unable to watch television and perform behaviors as they would in their own home.
Future Research

Given the findings from this study, further research that investigates the intentional placement of positive behaviors in entertainment content is warranted. First, future research could reproduce this study using a variety of population samples. The current study used a convenience sample of students enrolled in a pacific university. This sample, based on the demographic makeup, may have been prone to receiving and learning information regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape as they perhaps learned this information before or upon entering and immersing themselves in the collegiate campus and culture. Therefore, focusing on a sample of different demographics who may be less informed (e.g., high school students or older adults who have either never attended college or have been removed from a collegiate campus for an extended period of time) could help researchers examine different effects as well as determine if certain populations are more or less impressionable by dramatic narratives.

A second direction for future research could explore if reported knowledge and self-efficacy levels regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape increase, decrease, or stay stable over time. The current study did not explore the long-term effects of SCT and watching an episode of *SVU*. While this study only examined observational learning after viewing one episode of *SVU*, social cognitive theorists believe learning can take place over time. Because of this, it would be useful to check participant knowledge and self-efficacy levels beyond the time period of immediately after viewing the episode of *SVU*. Because participants were surveyed immediately after the episode, participants could have found that recalling information asked on the knowledge test was easy. Past research indicated that the more recent an idea has been activated, the easier that idea is to recall (Higgins, Rholes, & Jones,
Thus, had participants been asked a week later, they might have found recalling information to be a harder task and thus resulting in lower knowledge test scores. Again, future research should explore testing knowledge over a variety of time periods to understand if recalled information was the product of short-term memory recall or in fact knowledge learned.

A third direction for further research should continue to add emphasis on studying E-E within the United States. Given that the United States produces and consumes such a large amount of media, there is an equally large opportunity for United States audiences to become engaged in observational learning through narratives. However, much research on E-E lacks empirical and applicable research within the United States (Sherry, 2002). E-E has been largely specialized and focused on health messages and although highly successful (Sherry, 1997), most E-E research analysis has been completed on messages that have taken place in other countries. Other countries usually offer few media outlets creating a lack of competition for audience attention (Sherry 2002). With less competition for their attention, viewers will be more likely to focus on and learn from the E-E messages. Not only are United States viewers faced with more messages competing for their attention, but also the messages are much smaller in regards to length, context, and quality than other countries (Sherry, 2002; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2011). Therefore, further research should focus on E-E within the United States in order for E-E producers to properly produce a program in which effective observational learning can occur.

Similarly, in order for E-E producers to properly produce a program in which effective observational learning can occur, a fourth direction of future research could be to expand upon the current study’s measurements to include questions that ask participants to indicate which characters they learned certain behaviors from. A criticism of SCT is that research on modeled
behavior has difficulty pinpointing exactly which modeled behavior is responsible for behavioral change. For example, an individual may observe the behavior of a rape victim deciding not to shower after her/his attack because one character, such as Detective Benson, has told the police to tell the victim not to shower while another character, such as Detective Stabler, has directly told the victim not to shower. The viewer observing these characters learns that a victim should not shower after her/his attack; however, it is unclear which character’s behavior was responsible for the learned information. Because there were two characters that engaged in the same behavior of telling the victim not to shower after her/his attack, it is unclear as to which character the viewer learned from, especially if character identification was similar was similar for each character. Pinpointing which character is responsible for the learning or change of behavior is important in terms of future learning. By exploring which characters viewers learn particular behaviors from, researchers can understand which characters provide consistent information and which character’s behavior was effective and which was not. E-E program producers can then apply this information in order to successfully assign characters to the type of modeled behaviors they hope or intend viewers to learn from.

A final suggestion for future research might be to expand on the current study’s PVE measure by first exploring the benefits of repetitious viewing. Bromage and Mayer (1986) found what they refer to as the “repetition effect”, in which repeated information caused an increased in amount of correctly recalled information. Similarly, Crawley, Anderson, Wilder, Williams, and Santomero (1999) and Skouteris and Kelly’s (2006) studies supported that repeated presentation had a positive effect on attention and comprehension levels. Social cognitive theorists believe that learning can take place after observing a behavior only once and any modeled behaviors, especially in television programs, are not only shown once but numerous times (e.g., different
settings, different characters, and different episodes). It is for this reason why the current study probed participants about their PVE. However, the current study’s measure of PVE did not specify which episodes of *SVU* the participants viewed. Using past research on SCT and repetition, it would be worth exploring if repeated viewing of *SVU*, especially episodes about rape, would increase attention. Increased attention increases knowledge retention, increases the amount of correct knowledge recall, and also increases imitation performance. Furthermore, research shows increased performance stems from higher self-efficacy about a particular behavior (Bandura, 1997). Given the relationship between repetition and observational learning, further research could be conducted to test if repetitious exposure to *SVU* episodes about rape increases a viewer’s knowledge and self-efficacy regarding the proper policies and procedures of rape. Second, research regarding the current study’s PVE measure could explore the parasocial relationships between participants and the actors of *SVU*. Researchers suggest that the strength of parasocial relationships with those modeling behaviors is directly related to the ability to learn from media. However, the current study’s measure of PVE did not specify the strength of parasocial relationships that the participants had with the characters in *SVU*. Since the lack of strong parasocial relationships may cause participant’s PVE to play a less effective role than predicted, further research could test if parasocial relationships to characters within *SVU* would create a different effect between PVE to *SVU* and viewers’ knowledge of and self-efficacy about their performance of the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape.

**Implications**

Despite the limitations, the present study opens doors for research exploring SCT, E-E, and narratives with sensitive content such as rape. The current study found support that exposure to episodes of *SVU* about rape increased viewer self-efficacy and found minimal support that
PVE to episodes of *SVU* increased knowledge levels. Considering the results of the current study, there was minimal support for SCT and E-E. It appears that the entertainment within the program causes SCT to not work well with E-E, especially with programming that includes sensitive content like *SVU*. Additionally, E-E may have less impact because these programs must include entertaining and dramatic effects to retain the attention of viewers. When additional dramatic effects are added to the narrative, attention towards and perceived realism about the educational content may become diluted. While the results of the current study showed support for the increase in self-efficacy while viewing an episode of rape, it did not support the increase in knowledge. Viewers of E-E who see a new program may be distracted by the entertainment elements rather than recognize the educational information being presented. However, repeat exposure to the same program may reduce the novelty of the entertainment elements, allowing viewers to start receiving E-E messages. Researchers should be cautious of SCT when using it in E-E research regarding sensitive narratives, as the importance of entertainment over education is potential for a large variety of external factors to play a role in the outcome of study predictions.

Second, the results of the present study have applied value in that *SVU* acts as a positive resource to increase self-efficacy towards the proper policies and procedures to follow after the officer of rape. For example, the results of the current study show that participants of an *SVU* centered around rape were more likely than those who viewed an episode about kidnapping to report higher self-efficacy towards performing behaviors relating to the proper policies and procedures to follow after the officer of rape. Considering the results of this study indicated that episodes about rape increased self-efficacy, it might be a useful intervention strategy for people to watch episodes of *SVU* centered around rape. Perhaps more importantly, people who are perceived to be “at risk” populations such as collegiate campuses who have a higher prevalence
of reported rapes, should make episodes of *SVU* centered around rape readily available. For example, collegiate campuses could show episodes of *SVU* centered around rape on televisions in campus centers.

A third implication to the current study is the suggestion that repeat exposure to *SVU* will increase the amount of knowledge learned regarding the proper policies and procedures to follow after the officer of rape. Although results from the current study suggest the amount of knowledge learned seems to depend on the content matter within the episode, any increase in *SVU* episode exposure will also increase the likelihood of viewing episodes about rape. Given these results, it may be useful for people to watch episodes of *SVU* centered around rape in order to increase their knowledge on the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape. In particular, since 44% of rape victims are under the age of 18-years-old (RAINN), episodes could perhaps be shown throughout semester or year long health courses in junior or senior high school in the effort and hope to provide a strong base of knowledge that will decrease the occurrence of rape.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the current study adds to the research on SCT and E-E by looking at *SVU*, a dramatic narrative with sensitive content. The findings suggest that viewers of an *SVU* episode about rape gain self-efficacy through observational learning and that PVE to *SVU* has the potential to be related to increases the amount of learning. In contrast to prior SCT and E-E research, the content within the *SVU* narrative was not significantly related to increased knowledge level about the proper policies and procedures to follow after the occurrence of rape and PVE to *SVU* was not significantly related to self-efficacy. Future research assessing dramatic narratives, such as *SVU*, should further investigate how viewers of entertainment
programming can learn positive health-related behaviors regarding what to do after the occurrence of rape.
Table 1

*Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Validity and Main Measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Validity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. VI-T</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. VI-CLA</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. VI-IC</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. VI-S</td>
<td>.71**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. UM</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. OE</td>
<td>-.27*</td>
<td>-.27*</td>
<td>-.35**</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.32**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. PVE</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. KNOW</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.22†</td>
<td>.20†</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. SE</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.22†</td>
<td>.21†</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>9.53</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Items 1 through 6 refer to the validity measures. VI labels refer to the variables included in understanding viewer involvement: VI-T = transportation, VI-CLA = character likeability and attractiveness, VI-IC = intelligence and credibility, VI-S = similarity. UM = usefulness and motivations. OE = outcome expectations.

Items 7 through 9 are main measures used in hypotheses tests. PVE = prior voluntary exposure, KNOW = knowledge test, SE = self-efficacy.

* p < .05
** p < .01
† p < .10
Table 2

*Frequencies of Prior Voluntary Exposure to the SVU Series and Episode Shown*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Rape (n = 38)</th>
<th>Kidnapping (n = 37)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rape A (n = 18)</td>
<td>Rape B (n = 20)</td>
<td>Kid A (n = 18)</td>
<td>Kid B (n = 19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed</td>
<td>Series</td>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>Series</td>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 (56%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>15 (83%)</td>
<td>5 (28%)</td>
<td>12 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not View</td>
<td>8 (44%)</td>
<td>16 (89%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>19 (95%)</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 (70%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (37%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table shows the frequency distribution of prior voluntary exposure to *SVU* in cases where the participant saw at least one episode in the series (Series) and in cases where the participant viewed the same episode shown during the study (Episode).
### Table 3

Summary of Frequency and Percentages of Knowledge Items Learned Per Episode Including Chi Square Test Between Items Learned In Rape Condition Versus Kidnapping Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Learned in Rape A (n = 18)</th>
<th>Learned in Rape B (n = 20)</th>
<th>Total Learned in Rape Condition (n = 38)</th>
<th>Learned in Kid A (n = 18)</th>
<th>Learned in Kid B (n = 19)</th>
<th>Total Learned in Kidnapping Condition (n = 37)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 (61%)</td>
<td>7 (39%)</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>24 (63%)</td>
<td>5 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17 (94%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>17 (85%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>34 (89%)</td>
<td>5 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16 (89%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>18 (90%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>34 (89%)</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
<td>15 (83%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
<td>11 (29%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>17 (85%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>35 (92%)</td>
<td>5 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>16 (89%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>13 (65%)</td>
<td>9 (24%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>14 (78%)</td>
<td>4 (22%)</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>26 (68%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>17 (94%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>29 (76%)</td>
<td>4 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>18 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>14 (70%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>32 (84%)</td>
<td>6 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>17 (94%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>17 (85%)</td>
<td>3 (15%)</td>
<td>34 (89%)</td>
<td>4 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>18 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>16 (80%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>34 (89%)</td>
<td>6 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>15 (83%)</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
<td>18 (90%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>33 (87%)</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>14 (78%)</td>
<td>4 (22%)</td>
<td>18 (90%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>32 (84%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. The items listed in this table correspond to the item numbers (in order) as they appeared to study participants. See Appendix B for the complete listing of learned items.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$
Table 4

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, and Post Hoc Analyses Using LSD for Validity and Main Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Rape (n = 38)</th>
<th>Kidnapping (n = 37)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rape A (n = 18)</td>
<td>Rape B (n = 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI-T</td>
<td>4.85 (.90)</td>
<td>5.27 (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI-CLA</td>
<td>4.90 (.94)</td>
<td>5.00 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI-IC</td>
<td>5.92 (.94)</td>
<td>6.36 (.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI-S</td>
<td>4.46 (1.20)</td>
<td>5.14 (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UM</td>
<td>4.95 (1.47)</td>
<td>5.52 (1.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE</td>
<td>3.22 (.82)</td>
<td>3.01 (.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVE</td>
<td>.55 (.51)</td>
<td>.70 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOW</td>
<td>9.28 (1.22)</td>
<td>9.70 (1.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>8.47 (1.17)</td>
<td>8.53 (1.16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. VI labels refer to the variables included in understanding viewer involvement: VI-T = transportation, VI-CLA = character likeability and attractiveness, VI-IC = intelligence and credibility, VI-S = similarity. UM = usefulness and motivations. OE = outcome expectations. Main variables were used in hypotheses tests. PVE = prior voluntary exposure, KNOW = knowledge test, SE = self-efficacy. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at \( p < .05 \) in the LSD comparison.

†For transportation, Rape A differed from Kid A at the \( p < .10 \) level. For usefulness and motivation, Rape B differed from Kid B at the \( p < .10 \) level. For knowledge test, Rape A differed from Kid B and Rape B differed from Kid A at the \( p < .10 \) level.
APPENDIX A

Demographic Information

Instructions: Please provide some additional information about your background by answering the following items.

1. Sex
   • Male
   • Female

2. Age: _________

3. Have you had a previous experience with rape (either personally or know someone who has been)?
   • Yes
   • No

4. Race/Ethnicity
   • Asian
   • Caucasian
   • Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
   • Hispanic/Latino
   • Black/African American
   • American Indian or Alaska Native
   • Two or more races
   • Other: _______________
APPENDIX B

Instructions and Participant Consent Form

My name is Caroline Kennedy, and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. A requirement of my Master’s degree program is to conduct a research project as part of my thesis. The purpose of my project is to assess student understanding of television narratives. Participation in this study will involve the completion of viewing a television program and a follow-up online (internet) survey. I am asking you to participate in this project because you are a college student enrolled in Communicology courses.

Project Description – Activities and Time Commitment: Participation in this study will involve watching an episode of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit, a primetime television program covering topics such as rape, child and internet porn, sexually transmitted diseases, and abduction, and then answering a set of questions about yourself and what you viewed. The total time for participation will be about 75 minutes. Approximately 80 people will take part in this project. You will receive SONA research credits for your participation in this study.

Benefits and Risks: There are little risks and no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, the results of this project may contribute to our understanding of how people can more effectively communicate information on social issues. Because Law & Order: Special Victims Unit deals with topics such as rape, child and internet porn, sexually transmitted diseases, and abduction, and if you have had personal experience with any of these topics, the subject matter may be uncomfortable. At the end of your participation in this study, you will be given an information sheet that includes contact information for on-campus and local resources that you may use for assistance if needed.
**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this project is voluntary. You can freely choose to participate or to not participate in the viewing of the television program and the survey. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits for either decision. If you do not agree to participate, other options will be available for you to receive SONA credits. If you agree to participate, you can stop at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Confidentiality and Privacy:** Your personal and contact information (e.g., name, email address) will remain strictly confidential. This information will only be used to remind you of your scheduled participation and to award you credit for your participation. Following the completion of this research project, this information will be permanently deleted.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this study, you can contact me, Caroline Kennedy, at 808.956.6354 or cdkenned@hawaii.edu. You can also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Amy Hubbard, at 808.956.3321 or aebesu@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Human Studies Program at 808.956.5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu.

**To Access the Study:** If you choose to participate, you will be shown an episode of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, which will take approximately 45 minutes. Once you have completed the viewing, you will return to this computer to complete an online (internet) survey. Please continue to the following page (click next) for instructions to view the television program. Clicking “next” will be considered as your consent to participate in this study.

You will be given a copy of this page for your reference.
APPENDIX C

Prior Voluntary Exposure

Instructions: We would now like to know about your previous (if any) viewing habits of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit.

1. How many times (including repeat viewings of the same episode) have you watched episodes of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit before beginning this study? ____________

   (FYI: Law & Order: Special Victims Unit has 14 seasons as of August 2013 and each season has an average of 23 episodes).

2. Have you seen the episode that you just viewed before today?
   • Yes
   • No

3. If yes, how many times? ___________
APPENDIX D

Knowledge (The Rape Treatment Center at UCLA Medical Center, 2013)

Instructions: The following statements indicate hypothetical situations of what you should do after the occurrence of rape. Please select whether you believe each statement to be “True” or “False”. For a statement to be true, it has to be true in its entirety. If you believe any part of the statement is false, then it is false. Please read each statement carefully.

1. If I were raped and had the choice to either call 9-1-1 or get to a safe place, I should call 9-1-1 first. (False)

2. If my friend were raped, my friend should clean up any mess or disturbance made to the location of the rape because even if it might destroy some evidence, it is more important to establish a sense of normalcy and remove reminders to reduce further trauma. (False)

3. If my friend were raped, I should tell my friend to preserve everything worn at the time of the assault, including all clothing, jewelry, shoes, and even hair accessories. (True)

4. After the occurrence of rape, a victim should try not to eat. (True)

5. If I were raped, I only need to seek professional medical treatment if I am cut, bleeding, or have other physical injuries. (False)

6. All clothing worn during the rape should be placed in a bag, either paper or plastic. (False)

7. If I were raped, I should wash my hands to reduce the chance of bodily fluids further contaminating me. (False)

8. If my friend were raped, I should encourage my friend to avoid writing down details of the rape, as they could later be used as evidence against my friend if there were any inconsistencies with statements my friend made to the police. (False)

9. Even if a rape victim and his/her family and friends believe the victim is coping well with the assault, the victim should still seek counseling and other trauma services. (False)

10. If my friend were raped, I should tell my friend to agree to complete a rape kit if he/she goes to a hospital. (True)

11. If I were raped, adding what I think is irrelevant information in my statement(s) to the police will distract the police from the important information that will help identify and gather evidence against my rapist. (False)

12. If my friend were raped, my friend can only file a charge of rape if my friend knows who the perpetrator is. (False)
13. If I were raped, I should take a shower only if the attack involved unprotected sex. (False)

Note. Correct answers are indicated in parentheses following each statement.
Knowledge (The Rape Treatment Center at UCLA Medical Center, 2013)

Instructions: The next set of statements that you will see are TRUE statements regarding what to do after the occurrence of rape. Please place a check mark next to the statements (if any) that were learned in the Law & Order: Special Victims Unit episode that you just watched.

I learned the following by watching Law & Order: Special Victims Unit:

1. A rape victim should get to a safe place.
2. A rape victim should NOT clean up any mess or disturbance made to the location of the rape.
3. A rape victim should preserve all clothing worn at time of assault.
4. A rape victim should NOT eat until after she/he has received medical treatment.
5. A rape victim should seek medical treatment as soon as possible.
6. A rape victim should place all clothing worn during the rape in a paper, NOT plastic, bag.
7. A rape victim should NOT wash her/his hands until after she/he has received medical treatment.
8. A rape victim should write down all the details of her/his rape, being as specific as possible, as soon as she/he can.
9. A rape victim should seek counseling and other trauma services if she/he needs help coping with the assault.
10. A rape victim should agree to complete a rape kit if she/he goes to a hospital.
11. If a rape victim remembers something about her/his assault, even something she/he thinks is irrelevant, she/he should report it to the police because it could be useful information.
12. A rape victim has the right to file a charge of rape, regardless of who the perpetrator is, even if she/he doesn’t know.
13. A rape victim should NOT take a shower until after she/he has received medical treatment.
APPENDIX E

Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 2006)

Instructions: Please rate how CONFIDENT you feel regarding your WILLINGNESS to do the behaviors described. If you feel not confident at all, choose 0. If you feel highly confident, choose 100.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not confident at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately confident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly confident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are raped, how CONFIDENT are you that you are WILLING to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior Description</th>
<th>Confidence (0 – 100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Get to a safe place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Resist cleaning up any mess or disturbance made to the location of the rape.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Preserve all clothing worn at time of assault.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Put all clothing worn during the rape into a paper, NOT plastic, bag.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Write down all the details of my rape while being as specific as possible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Seek counseling and other trauma services if I needed help coping with the assault.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Agree to complete a rape kit if I went to a hospital.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Report to the police immediately if I remember anything about my assault, even something I think is irrelevant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. File charges, regardless of the perpetrator, even if I do not know who the perpetrator is.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructions: Please rate how CONFIDENT you feel regarding your ABILITY to do the behaviors described. If you feel not confident at all, choose 0. If you feel highly confident, choose 100.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not confident at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Moderately confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Highly confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are raped, how CONFIDENT are you that you are ABLE to…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence (0 – 100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Get to a safe place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Resist cleaning up any mess or disturbance made to the location of the rape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Preserve all clothing worn at time of assault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Put all clothing worn during the rape into a paper, NOT plastic, bag.</td>
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<td>11. Report to the police immediately if I remember anything about my assault, even something I think is irrelevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. File charges, regardless of the perpetrator, even if I do not know who the perpetrator is.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

Viewer Involvement

Transportation (Green and Brock, 2000)

Instructions: Think about the episode of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU) that you just watched. Then, select a number from 1 to 7 (1 = very strongly disagree, 2 = strongly disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree, 7 = very strongly agree) that best represents your disagreement or agreement with the statement.

1. While I was watching SVU, I could easily picture the events in it taking place.
2. While I was watching SVU, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind.*
3. I could picture myself in the scene of the events seen in SVU.
4. I was mentally involved in SVU while watching it.
5. After SVU ended, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.*
6. The story in SVU affected me emotionally.
7. I wanted to learn what happened after the episode of SVU ended.
8. I found myself thinking of ways SVU could have turned out differently.
9. I found my mind wandering while watching SVU.*
10. The events in SVU are relevant to my everyday life.
11. The events in SVU have changed my life.
12. I had a vivid mental image of Detective Olivia Benson.
13. I had a vivid mental image of Detective Elliot Stabler.
14. I had a vivid mental image of [Harper, Adam, Carly, Vicki].

Notes. Items 2, 5, and 9 are reverse-coded for data analysis and are indicated with an asterisk. The victim’s name in item 14 was changed to be appropriate for the SVU episode the participants viewed.
Character likeability and attractiveness (Reysen, 2005)

Instructions: Think of the characters, Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and [Harper, Adam, Carly, Vicki], in the episode of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU) that you just watched. Then, select a number from 1 to 7 (1 = very strongly disagree, 2 = strongly disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree, 7 = very strongly agree) that best represents your disagreement or agreement with the statement.

In the SVU episode I just watched...

1. The characters were friendly.
2. The characters were likeable.
3. The characters were warm.
4. The characters were approachable.
5. I would ask the characters for advice.
6. I would like to be friends with the characters.
7. The characters were physically attractive.
8. The characters were similar to me.
9. The characters were knowledgeable.

Notes. The victim’s name in the instructions was changed to be appropriate for the SVU episode the participants viewed.
Intelligibility and credibility (McCroskey, 1966)

Instructions: Think of the characters, Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and [Harper, Adam, Carly, Vicki], in the episode of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU) that you just watched. Then, select the number between each pair of words with opposite meanings that best represents your thoughts and feelings about the characters.

The characters were:

1. Unintelligent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Intelligent
2. Untrained 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Trained
3. Dishonest 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Honest
4. Untrustworthy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Trustworthy
5. Inexpert 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Expert
6. Dishonorable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Honorable
7. Uninformed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Informed
8. Immoral 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Moral
9. Incompetent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Competent
10. Unethical 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ethical
11. Insensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Sensitive
12. Stupid 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Bright
13. Phony 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Genuine

Notes. The victim’s name in the instructions was changed to be appropriate for the SVU episode the participants viewed.
Similarity (Igartua and Páez, 1998)

Instructions: Think of the story line and characters, Detective Benson, Detective Stabler, and [Harper, Adam, Carly, Vicki], in the episode of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU) that you just watched. Then, select a number from 1 to 7 (1 = very strongly disagree, 2 = strongly disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree, 7 = very strongly agree) that best represents your disagreement or agreement with the statement.

In the SVU episode I just watched…

1. I thought I was like the characters or very similar to them.
2. I thought that I would like to be like or act like the characters.
3. I identified with the characters.
4. I felt as if I were one of the characters.
5. I had the impression that I was really experiencing the story of the characters.
6. I felt as if I formed part of the story.
7. I myself have experienced the emotional reactions of the characters.
8. I understood the characters’ way of acting, thinking or feeling.
9. I tried to see things from the point of view of the characters.
10. I tried to imagine the characters’ feelings, thoughts and reactions.
11. I understood the characters’ feelings or emotions.
12. I was worried about what was going to happen to the characters.
13. I felt emotionally involved with the characters’ feelings.
14. I imagined how I would act if I found myself in the place of the protagonists.

Notes. The victim’s name in the instructions was changed to be appropriate for the SVU episode the participants viewed.
APPENDIX G

Usefulness and Motivation (Rubin, 1983)

Instructions: Here are some statements people may make about the Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU) episode you just watched. Select a number from 1 to 7 (1 = very strongly disagree, 2 = strongly disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree, and 7 = very strongly agree) that best represents your disagreement or agreement with the statement.

1. Watching this episode of SVU helps me to learn to do things which I haven’t done before.

2. Watching this episode of SVU helps me to learn about what could happen to me.

3. Watching this episode of SVU helps me to learn things about myself and others.
APPENDIX H

Outcome Expectations

Perceived Realism Scale (Rubin, 1981)

Instructions: Here are some statements people may make about the Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU) episode you just watched. Select a number from 1 to 7 (1 = very strongly disagree, 2 = strongly disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree, and 7 = very strongly agree) that best represents your disagreement or agreement with the statement.

1. SVU presents things as they really are in life.
2. If I see something on SVU, I can’t be sure it really is that way.*
3. SVU lets me really see how other people live.
4. SVU does NOT show life as it really is.*
5. SVU lets me see what happens in other places as if I were really there.

Note. Items 2 and 4 are reverse-coded for data analysis and are indicated with an asterisk.

News Credibility Scale (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986)

Instructions: Think of the episode of Law & Order: Special Victims Unit that you just watched. Then, select the number between each pair of words with opposite meanings that best represents your thoughts and feelings about the episode.

The episode of SVU that I just watched:

1. Is fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Is unfair
2. Is unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Is biased
3. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn’t tell the whole story
4. Is accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Is inaccurate
5. Does separate fact and opinion 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn’t separate fact and opinion
6. Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Cannot be trusted
7. Is factual 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Is opinionated
REFERENCES


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