Counter-Stereotypical Exemplars of Drug Users in Contemporary Media:

How Humanizing Efforts in Film and TV Positively Affect Attitudes Towards Drug Users

by

Quyncc Johnson*

University of Colorado, 2018

Defended April 9th, 2018

Primary Advisor:

Michaele Ferguson, PhD

Department of Political Science

Committee Members:

Jennifer Fitzgerald, PhD

Department of Political Science

Joanne Belknap, PhD

Department of Ethnic Studies

Abstract:

This study analyzes the effects of counter-stereotypical depictions of drug users in popular media and film, and the abilities of these media exemplars in eliciting positive attitudes towards drug users and progressive drug policy. Psychological theories of framing and priming effect were used to understand the mechanisms of how beliefs in media are communicated and absorbed in audience members, and their historical use in demonizing drug users in the past. Through content analysis of *Moonlight* and *Orange is the New Black,* I use Exemplification Theory to show the profound effects of stereotypical and counter-stereotypic characters in film to incite new and progressive cultural understandings of who drug users are as a group and their role in civil society. This paper utilizes experimental survey research and regression analysis to relate theoretical conclusions drawn in this thesis to real world applications and effects on policy. This study's findings show that counter-stereotypical themes and characters yield more progressive and lenient drug policy attitudes in audience members.

Introduction

Opioid and heroin overdoses are reaching record rates[1] in the United States, prompting the necessity for more inventive and progressive drug policy, and a change in American attitudes towards drug users and drug use. The proliferation of opioid addiction and heroin use has ravaged communities around the United States and continues to reinvigorate political discourse on drug policy and drug-related crime. In 2016 alone, 11.8 million people reported misusing Opioids in the past year, with 891,000 of those respondents being under the age of 18 (SAMHSA, 2016). This level of opioid use, especially in younger adults and children, has potential in creating a chronic level of addiction across generations.

With this intensified attention on opioids and other illicit drugs, most Americans (62%)[2] believe that there is some sort of serious problem with substance abuse in the U.S. and that current policies are underwhelming in their ability to address the responsibilities associated with a drug crisis. As public attitudes in America towards marijuana become more accepting (Romano 2017), and the demonization of other illicit drugs still persisting, drug user stigmatization has become all the more central in understanding how the American public democratically support specific drug policies and in how we cohabitate with one another.

---

[1] National Institute on Drug Policy (2017, September) *Overdose Death Rates.* Retrieved from drugabuse.gov

[2] The Associated Press-NORC Center for Political Affairs (2016, February) *American Attitudes Towards Substance Use in the United States.* Retrieved from apnorc.org

One profound source of this dilemma is the negative public perception of drug users and

drug use, instigated historically by U.S media[3]. The "anti-drug" tactic heavily used in the 20th

century has realigned federal drug policy from a topic of public health to one of criminality.

This political strategy, rooted in cultural misunderstanding, flies in the face of research that

shows drug addiction to be a form of brain disease (Leshner, 1997). Rather, the drug debate is

rooted in Western fears and prejudices to drug use that spread through propaganda and ads in the

20th century and eventually made its way to television and film.

The study of media, film, and television becomes crucial in understanding how

contemporary society reacts to and perceives recreational illicit drug use and how federal drug

policy ought to address it. The debate over the legality and politics of drug use has been

explored and addressed in American culture for decades and is a major theme in much of TV and

film today.

Moonlight, Breaking Bad, and *Orange is the New Black* are just a few, of many, pieces of

media that have recently won academic awards, from Most Outstanding Drama series (*Breaking

Bad*) to Academy Award for Best Picture (*Moonlight*), and whose themes largely center around

drug policy and substance abuse. These films not only contain drug user narratives but have been

widely seen and acclaimed. As Samuel Chambers puts it in his book, *The Queer Politics of

Television*, television and films, such as the ones mentioned, are important political artifacts that

can be analyzed and interpreted using hermeneutic tools. For Chambers and for the purposes of

this thesis, TV and film can help us understand how political ideologies form and are

---

[3] Penal Reform International (2013) *The Unintended Negative Consequences of the "War on Drugs".* Retrieved
from Penalreform.org

disseminated through a population. The relationship between audience members and a piece of media is not merely superficial entertainment, but a permeable membrane where the audience is influenced by the images, themes, characters, and sounds within that film or show.

From writers and producers to showrunners and costume design, television and film entail thousands of man hours and careful construction. Television series and films act as stewards, facilitating the transportation of audience members into another space and time. Themes and topics in television are the result of conscious decision making and intentional writing that is informed by the larger cultural narrative of the country in which they are written. TV and Film represent small cultural and political artifacts that give insight into U.S. contemporary political attitudes and sentiments, while also echoing, challenging, and enforcing those same attitudes and beliefs.

In this text, I will be drawing upon the idea that television effects public drug policy through its influence on voter attitudes and biases about illicit drug use. The Reagan era "War on Drugs" created an association of drug use to crime, debased morality, and tacit fear and hate of those who partake in recreational drug use. In tandem with this portrayal, racialized undertones were utilized throughout this anti-drug campaign, to associate criminal drug activity with brown and black bodies.

What resulted from these heightened tensions was an increased focus on attacking and demonizing the drug user, often Latino and black men, and propagating misconceptions of drug users as depraved, immoral, and dangerous (Robinson, 2014). The solution to this phantom drug crisis was the legalization of institutional policies that persecute and punish, rather than seek to understand, the motives for drug addiction. Films such as *Reefer Madness,* or the "Just Say No"

campaign by the D.A.RE. organization, embody a tacit fear and criticism of drug addiction. These campaigns and stereotyped depictions of drug user were a form of political propaganda to create a racialized national villain, who could be used for political gain and as a common public issue to unite the country[4]. These negative views still persist and have continued to circulate in various avenues of American culture and politics.

These ideas are shifting; however, with the current opioid crisis and the increasing respectability of pot smokers, reframing the drug debate as a dilemma that affects the white, middle or lower-middle class sector of the country[5]. Evidence of this emerging cultural shift in how society perceives drug use is apparent in a variety of forms already (Romano, 2017). For example, Rachel Leigh starred in a revised version of the "THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON DRUGS" commercial that cites systemic racism and classism as the cause of the U.S. drug crisis and mass incarceration[6].

For better or worse, alternative beliefs about drug use and the narrative of the drug user are now entering mainstream consciousness, prompting a perfect opportunity for analysis of these different counter-stereotypical, counter-hegemonic messages on TV and film. Movies such as *Moonlight* or TV programs like *Orange is the New Black* and *Shameless*, depict a more

---

[4] Drug Policy Alliance. (2016, March 22) *Top Adviser to Richard Nixon Admitted that "War on Drugs" was Policy Tool to Go After Anti-War Protesters and "Black People"* retrieved from drugpolicy.org

[5] Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation. (2016) *Opioid Overdose Deaths by Race/Ethnicity*. Retrieved from KFF.org

[6] [Green Point Creative] (2017, April 20). *Your Brain on Drug Policy* [Video File] https://youtu.be/AKXN6Vdr3g0

nuanced story of the drug user in which drug use is the symptomatic response to an emotional, social, or physical ailment, rather than a lapse in morality.

What these various counter-stereotypical narratives do is act as pseudo-anecdotal stories of addiction that dispel previously held beliefs in the hearts and minds of the public. By showing the very complex, earnest, and devastating ways people enter addiction, a new depiction of the Western drug user surfaces in the minds of the public. The stigmatizing and damaging reputation of "addict" can be exchanged for an image of someone struggling with a serious disease or mental illness.

The importance of understanding film and TV's messaging is that how society perceives a political and social problem, the root of its cause and the damaging nature of its effects, determines the type of reaction of the government in the form of policy legislation. Just as anti-drug commercials can scare the public into rallying around damaging drug policies, so too can that method swing the other way. Policy writing through the mindset of drug addiction being a symptom of a disease or systematic inequity leads to solutions that could not have been politically viable in the 80's, 90's, or even the early 2000's. Solutions involving mass rehabilitation instead of incarceration, for example, may be closer to fruition with the further propagation of television shows that humanize rather than villainize the drug user in contemporary film and storytelling.

In this thesis, I theorize that political attitudes towards drug use and drug policy are informed and interact with counter-stereotypical drug user identities and narratives in television and film. Rather than seeing audience members as passive observers, my thesis asserts a more interactive model, in which ideas and depictions through television interact, inform, and

assimilate with the observer's pre-existing beliefs. Therefore, television and film have a role not in simply entertaining viewers, but also in influencing their opinions on drug use and policy. By considering this relationship as interactive, rather than passive consumption of content, the impact of stereotypical and counter-stereotypical representations of drug users, can inform viewers on how they assimilate their policy decisions in terms of who they vote for, what policies they support, and how they perceive the average American drug user.

My research focuses on the counter-stereotypic portrayal of drug users in new media that works in creating positive beliefs about drug users in the minds of TV and film viewers. Through content analysis of contemporary and historical television programs and movies, I note the tactics used in creating monolithic drug stereotypes, and also the shifting attitudes towards these monolithic characterizations as seen in newer pieces of media. In this aim, I will be analyzing *Orange is the New Black* and *Moonlight* on their content and how they convey specific messages that humanize drug users and give a nuanced viewpoint to addiction.

In Chapter one, I extrapolate on the previous research explored in the field of media and film's influence on political attitudes. I outline the historical formulation of the villainized drug user and use political psychology research to explain the mechanics of political inundation to specific policy attitudes. As well, drawing on the work of Dorothy Roberts' *Killing the Black Body*, I outline and transcribe the prevalent archetypes associated with drug use: the Tweaker, Gangbanger, and the Not-So-Functional addict. I mobilize the use of these characters in my writing to concisely describe a set of archetypes of various drug users across multiple forms of media.

In Chapter two, I employ empirical techniques and experimental survey data to better understand, measure, and quantify the aspects of counter-stereotypical identities that elicit positive versus negative attitudes in the public. This technique is a means of rooting political theorization in my previous chapters to real-world applications.

The main goal of the experimental survey is to test the effects of stereotypical/counter-stereotypical and racialized depictions of drug users on survey responses. My theory is that showing vignettes that have been altered to be more counter-stereotypical will elicit a more understanding and caring response from survey takers. I hope to better understand and observe how attitudes about drug use are influenced, which aids in applying political theory to political policy, while also commenting on our current cultural inclination, or lack thereof, to drug use.

The research provided throughout this text is seeking to argue and present a multitude of ideas and conclusions. First in Chapter One, I argue that historically we have seen the use of media and film to demonize the drug user. Through these demonized depictions, through the Reagan-era "War on Drugs", stereotypes of drugs users have proliferated and persist to this day. These stereotypes have caused a cultural consensus that drug use is associated with criminality, immorality, and often involve people of color. I then categorize these stereotypes into identifiable tropes to be referenced throughout my work. I analyze, using political psychology, the effects of these stereotyped depictions and their maintained impact on drug use communities. Second, I note the emergence of new depictions of drug use that are counter-stereotypical to the aforementioned drug use tropes. By drawing on previous research showing the effects of stereotypical depiction of drug use on creating negative attitudes towards drug users, I hypothesize the ability for these emerging narratives to create positive attitudes conversely.

Because my research relies on a different set of subjects than does my literature review, I conduct an experimental survey in Chapter Two to validate my analysis and overall hypothesis concerning counter-stereotypical effects on attitudes. What I found was a correlation between receiving counter-stereotypical stimuli and being more lenient or having a more favorable attitude towards drug use.

In my Final Chapter, I reflect on my research and summarize my findings. I discuss the implications of my work on the concept of "positive propaganda", which is the media's ability to support humanizing policy. And I also discuss the limitations of my work and the possibilities of continued research.

<div align="center">

Chapter One

The "How"

</div>

<div align="center">

Exemplification Theory and TV

</div>

Before analyzing the effects of stereotyped characteristics of drug users, it is important to outline and describe the caricatured stereotypes that have played out on the stage of American cultural and political discourse. These characters were many of the antagonists and protagonists in the national rhetoric about drug use. For decades, depictions of users as criminals and a threat to civil society, were used to incite fear and loathing in the public towards drug use and create an "us" versus "them" rhetoric about drug users. The results of these negative sentiments aided in creating groundswells of public support and institutional funding to coordinate bigger and bigger campaigns, and even a federal, regulatory entity, in the form of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), in the name of protecting communities from the ever-present, evil drug user (Robinson, 2014). These campaigns have cost staggering amounts of money, and has produced negligible results, and worsened aspects of the problem.[7]

Exemplification theory may explain, in part, the locus of this influence. This theory, when applied to political communication strategies, states that media exemplars act as vivid and concrete examples or cues that inform people's attitudes towards specific issues or groups (Ramasubramanian, 2015). I extrapolate on this concept later in the chapter, however what is understood is that the recourse of President Reagan's anti-drug campaigns is a nation-wide interpretation of drug users based off what they have seen in television and film. Because of the

---

[7] Branson, R. (2012, December 7) *War on Drugs a Trillion Dollar Failure* retrieved from cnn.com

often negative, violent, and threatening presentation of drug users in media, these same emotions are felt within the public and are used when approaching the topic of drug use and addiction. Rather than seeing drug use as a medical issue, it is seen as a threat to civil society and a criminal act.

These stereotypical depictions are one aspect of a larger socio-economic and cultural narrative, aimed at rationalizing punitive measures rather than rehabilitative efforts in combating the continuous drug use in the United States. By painting drug users as deviant, and addiction as a consequence of moral failing rather than citing institutional and socioeconomic factors, the drug debate has been effectively switched from a topic public health and welfare to one of criminality and legality. In an effort to further his political appeal and target people of color and the poor[8], Reagan and his predecessors, villainized rather than sought to understand drug use.

During this time excessive force through legislation and military-grade tactics were routinely used by the federal government. Anti-drug sentiment began to leach into the popular culture of the United States, most notably in form of TV ads[9]. From meth commercials that show adolescent boys and girls bleeding and bruised after doing meth "just once" to eggs being smashed by frying pans as a symbol of one's brain on drugs, these all propagate attitudes of fear and hatred in audience members, and associates drug use as an irredeemable action.

Far from being relegated to mere 30-second advertisements, television shows have also used drug-addicted characters as symbols of villainy, pity, or weak-mindedness. Scarface is a

---

[8] Nunn, K. (2002, Fall) *Why the "War on Drugs" was a "War on Blacks".* Retrieved from udayton.edu

[9] The New Yorker (2013, May 7) *Anti-Drug TV Ads.* Retrieved from newyorker.com/video

great exemplar of drug use's association with criminality. Tony Montana embodies a classic stereotype as the drug kingpin. He's unstable, violent, and mal-tempered. His demeanor and criminal nature rationalizes the message that him, and drug users as a community, are deserving of death or who at least bring harm upon themselves.

Dave Chappelle's character, Tyrone Biggums, is an alternative example of a drug user character that models itself from the crack epidemic era. More so, his character asserts the image of the drug user as someone who is a moral failure, destitute, weak-minded, and most likely black or brown.

What may seem like comedic characters in the case of Tyrone Biggums, or edgy main protagonist in the case of Tony Montana, are actually stereotypical depictions of users that create negative ideas of drug users in the public consciousness. Dr. Ramasubramanian calls this the "Exemplification Theory" in which media exemplars act as vivid and concrete examples or cues that inform people's attitudes towards specific issues or groups (Ramasubramanian, 2015). Essentially, the ingestion of repeated negative stereotypes about drug users creates negative beliefs about those who are associated or partake in drug use.

Ramasubramanian's work largely focuses on the negative depictions of African-Americans in media, however many of the characteristics associated with blacks in the media are similar if not exactly the same as most drug users. Specifically, he notes characteristics of being lazy, aggressive, of low professional status, and unintelligent as major traits associated with blacks in media portrayals, which are similarly attached to the drug community (Ramasubramanian, 2015).

What these depictions do, as discussed by Frank Gilliam and Iyengar (1996), is alter the "scripts" people have in their mind about the world. As they put it, people have behavioral scripts that they use to make inferences about the world. For example, people have a "script" about dining out in which they know that they eat first and pay after. The result of these script formations is the creation and reproduction of what "types" of drug users there are, their assumed behavior, followed by a moralistic judgment towards these stereotyped drug users.

The Different Flavors of Addiction in film and TV

The outcome of using "role models" such as Tony Montana and Tyrone Biggums, is that they create false perceptions of blame and choice when it comes to drug use. In the case of Tony Montana, an observer may imagine all drug users to be connected to violent cartels, or in the case of Tyrone Biggums people begin to infer that all drug users are unstable, unhealthy, and willing to do anything for money.

In the process of describing and organizing these tropes and stereotypes, I modeled my analysis after Dorothy Robert's approach in her book *Killing the Black Body*. Roberts distills various historical and cultural misgivings about black women into identifiable characters that can be easily tracked throughout her novel, and which add immediate nuance and understanding when deployed in subsequent chapters.

Drug users are thought of as criminals, lazy, unhealthy, and immoral (Boyd, 2002). These damaging stereotypes merge to form a strong message: it is the lack of morals and responsibility that lead people to addiction and that drug use is a threat to "proper American values". These values reward self-control, especially with immoral actions such as sex, and Anglo-Saxon ideals of superiority. Roberts notes in her book, that similar stigmatizing and prejudice ideologies find

root in associating the oppressed with being inferior by nature or design, rather than through systemic inequality, trauma, or individual factors.

For the purposes of my study, I will be drawing on Dorothy Roberts book, *Killing the Black Body,* to create identifiable tropes of the drug user into separate, identifiable categories that can be easily referenced and understood throughout my work.

The problem with these stereotypical tropes I outline is that they flatten people into pre-constructed identities without that willfully ignore human diversity and personhood. By focusing legislative energy on panics over the morality of the country, or the demonizing of individuals, these stereotypes get in the way of analyzing the systemic and cultural factors that bring about and inflame addiction throughout the country. In this next section I go about identifying tropes of addiction, and I analyze the nuanced perceptions and impacts of these characters.

The Gang Banger/ Mob Boss

From the early onset of American culture, the dispersal of drugs has been villainized and deemed an act of moral failing. Those who traffic drugs have been publicly shamed and pushed to the fringes of societal acceptability. As Susan Boyd puts it, "Drug traffickers are constructed as "outsiders" that threaten the world order of white, middle-class Protestant morality." (Boyd, 2002) The drug trafficker persona possesses a racialized component to it, often being depicted as a black or Latino male of low social class. Drug dealers who are of a higher economic class, still are associated with irrationality and lack of self-control through their purchases of lavish items, such as diamond encrusted guns, exotic pets, jewelry, and expensive cars[10]. Along with the

---

[10] British Broadcasting Company (2014, March 01) *Inside Mexican Drug Lord's Houses.* Retrieved from BBC.com

notion of the drug dealer's irrational spending comes the perception of violence, aggression, and danger.

In television, these archetypes of violent drug lords are then placed in stark contrast to the super cop or some protagonist who is championed by the audience against the villainous, black drug dealer, creating an expected norm of police violence and brutality against drug offenders (Boyd, 2002). The dealer is thought of as an evil force, lurking in the shadows of alleyways and school playgrounds waiting to lure innocent youth and women down a path of drug addiction and crime. (Boyd, 2002)

By evoking this depiction of the drug dealer, politicians for centuries, as recent as the 2016 election, construct arguments and rhetoric aimed at stopping phantom brown and black people from entering our country as a means of preventing increased drug addiction and crime. This "law and order approach" emerged in the south around the 1950's as a means of stopping "hoodlums" and other degenerates (Beckett, 2000).

Most importantly, by framing dealers and drug use as a criminal issue rather than a public health concern, punitive solutions (increased law enforcement, surveillance, and harsher sentencing) have pursued and prioritized into use rather than rehabilitative measures. This has further rooted the drug dealer as not someone who is a byproduct of socioeconomic and cultural factors that make drug dealing appealing, but rather they are seen as a criminal deserving of punishment.

The Tweaker

Akin to the Tyrone Biggums character, the tweaker is often depicted as a drug user who is unstable, disconnected from reality, or just "not quite there". Their lives are thought of as

unpredictable, violent, and chaotic (Copes, 2014). Even in drug circles, hierarchies form, as drug users differentiate themselves from the so-called "crack head", who is thoroughly associated with the negative stereotype of the tweaker. When asked to describe a "crackhead" or "tweaker", other addicts considered them to be unclean both physically and morally, cowardly, and uncontrollable (Copes, 2014).

The Tweaker is depicted as someone is accustomed to using demeaning and humiliating means to procure their next supply of drugs (Copes, 2014). This feeds into the notion of the shameless drug addict, that will do anything and everything to get any quantity of drugs, primarily theft and prostitution, even at the cost of the integrity or morals.

The uncontrollable Tweaker stereotype has been used in meth commercials in the United States for years now through the "not even once" campaign. The Montana Meth and Meth Project commercials, feature pretend users, after some time of repeated use, and they are depicted as unhygienic dangerous, and untrustworthy. Following graphic images of meth addicts in corners and alleyways, with blisters and sores covering their body, a teen, just before using meth, says "He won't be like 'that guy'". Through commercials like this, the stereotype of the degenerate tweaker is reproduced and placed in opposition to what a good citizen is, and the outcome being a narrative of bad choices, immorality, and someone not deserving of compassion.

The Not-So Functional Addict

The not-so functional addict is arguably the most privileged depiction of the American drug user. They are someone thought of as "better" than the tweaker both within and outside the drug community (Copes 2014). These users are able to hold down a job, legally finance their addiction, and are perceived as not having much in common with the Tweaker or the Gang Banger. Often these drug addicts are depicted as occupying high socio-economic status, are driven, and considered high achieving. Yet, as in the case of such films like *Great Gatsby* and *Wolf of Wall Street*, they meet their end due to the reckless stupidity and drug induced stupors.

For the not-so functional addict, drug use is merely a performance-enhancing method. They see themselves as a moral failing or a severe addiction, drug use is seen as a way to increase productivity, drive, and achieve the edge needed to reach goals[11]. Because of the linkages to often white, middle to upper-middle-class status, and productivity, these functional addicts occupy a privileged position in the world. Amounting to a privileged "ideal" user who can ingest the same drugs but are shielded from the consequences due to their race and class for a time being but ultimately succumbs to the dangers of drugs.

Outwardly, this persona seems to be beneficial, but negative outcomes still arise from this privileged depiction. Though functional addicts, at least on TV, seem to be coping through their addiction, that does not translate into cultural or legal acceptability of their drug use. Functional addicts are not perceived as dangerous or unstable as the Tweaker or Criminal, but they still must keep their addiction shrouded and secretive. Depictions of functional addicts also glorify the use

---

[11] Zimmerman, E. (2017, July 15) *The Lawyer, the Addict.* Retrieved from nytimes.com

of drugs and overestimate the ability of an individual to self-monitor their addiction without consequence, creating false ideas of functionality.

So, while functional addicts are economically privileged, they still lack the mobility to outwardly disclose their addiction and seek help without the threat of incarceration or social stigma. This characterization still places addiction as a detestable trait, one that should be hidden and still causes issues.

By categorizing these stereotypes, I note the function and effect of these figures on public perceptions of drug use. By highlighting the ways in which negative characters act to demonize drug users, I precisely identify how media negatively impacts public perceptions and drug policy. By addressing this historical villainization, I give validity to my argument that counter-stereotypical depictions have promise in reversing these negative effects in both the minds of the public and in drug-related legislation.

The Villainization Process

These depictions come from decades of propaganda and advertisement that entered the public stream of consciousness through radio, newspaper, and most importantly, film and media. Before the start of the "War on Drugs" by Nixon and Reagan came a film by Harry Anslinger and the US Federal Bureau of narcotics called Refer Madness[12]. The film seems comical by today's standards, with depictions of young white men and women dancing sporadically after smoking a joint, energetically and uncontrollable laughing and kissing, and even committing sexual assault after one joint. A woman in the film even jumps out of a window, whilst a guy in a

---

[12] Schlosser, E. (1994, August) *Reefer Madness.* Retrieved from theatlantic.com

fit of paranoia beats and murders a man, while a woman maddeningly laughs while watching. The film ends in a common warning to the viewers to not smoke weed, as the children of the country may be at risk.

Modern-day anti-drug commercials, in a different exaggerated way, still rely on fear tactics and the protection of the nation's children to scare audience members away from drugs. The result of this is less likely to create a fear of drugs but more likely to create a fear of the user (Buchannan and Young, 2000). Often these negative ad campaigns and Television portrayals depict use *the tweaker* archetype as the main character of their commercials. Involving scenes of someone who has been driven out of control by drugs, who must be stopped, arrested, or killed by a heroic cop or DEA agent.

As a result, two salient characters are formed: the villainous drug user and dealer and the heroic government authority that will stop at nothing to defeat the immoral, destructive plague of drugs. This battle between "good" and "evil" is continuously reproduced in crime dramas and on TV and is a cornerstone in framing the narrative of the "War on Drugs". As drug tensions heightened in the 1970's and the 1980's, the refer madness argument turned from a conversation of fear and caution to one of war, battle, and assault.

In the UK, Margaret Thatcher took inspiration from the U.S. and started the "Heroin Screws You Up" campaign. This similarly created a dichotomy separating bad, deviant heroin users and innocent, pure civilians.

Western society persists today in pushing this debate with no avail. Just in 2000 alone, the US government spent over one billion dollars in a 5-year propaganda effort to convince US citizens that the war on drugs is needed. Furthermore, scripts written for TV show networks with

anti-drug messaging are rewarded with advertising deals from the government for accurately portraying the issues and the adverse effects of drug use. By aligning drug use with immorality, criminality, and destitution these various narratives impose negative beliefs about drug users.

The importance of my political reading of television and film, and how they interact with audience member's other identities and political attitudes, lies in how humans conceive of their particular ideologies in the first place. Ideologies can be defined as "set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved" (Erickson and Tedin, 2003). Ideologies about drug users and illicit drug use are not unique to individuals or the consequences of an isolated events, but how we depict drug users and are attitudes towards drug users and drug use are consequences of larger cultural conversation happening amongst citizens and national institutions such as local, state, and federal government and the entertainment industry.

The influence of television, media, and news reporting, in general, has been studied through multiple lenses and with increased fervor, these last few decades as television has increased its tendrils of access[13] and influence. With this ever-expanding influence of media, the challenge in observing those effects have perplexed and enthralled social scientist, political researchers, policymakers, and program content professionals for decades. What these characteristics suggest is a salient relationship between the audience member and the producers of television shows.

Television shows take months of production to be created. Over these months several things occur that all go into creating the flavor of the television show. From hiring showrunners,

---

[13] Howard, J. (2016, July 29) *Americans Devote More Than 10 Hours a Day to Screen Time and Growing.* Retrieved from CNN.com

the casting director, and editors to the actual set design and casting of actors, these all take place before we ever see a show on the air. How creators of television choose to present characters and ideas related to real life influences what audience members think about when they think of drugs and determine their emotional reaction. (Iyengar, 2000)

The process of how these shows depict drug user narratives, what they choose to include or omit, is known as a type of framing. In her research, Kari Lancaster describes framing more broadly as a selection of "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." (Lancaster, 2010) She notes that framing allows what is said about a topic to be managed with certain opinions opted in or out of the discussion.

Furthermore, televisions ability to frame allows only key voices in the mix and allows the show to define the optimal solution in that scenario. She later notes that when it involves drug users, the framing of "victim" and "villain" are heavily dispersed throughout news representations of drug users and drug criminality.

Shanto Iyengar offers his own ideas on Television and framing in his book, "Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues." (Iyengar, 2010) Similarly, with Lancaster, Iyengar links the influence of television to the sphere of the political. He notes that television creates a system of accountability in which certain groups based on race, gender, sexuality, and other defining characteristics are highlighted as victims or perpetrators of social problems.

For the purposes of my study, I will define what Iyengar calls "social problems" in terms of a television show or film's central tensions or conflicts. Iyengar takes note not only of the way shows highlight certain people as victim or perpetrator, but also how authority figures in these shows define and solve these problems. Through the interplay of defining the actors involved in a social problem or plot point, and through the actions of authority figures and how they deal with those actors, Iyengar outlines how framing in television creates a sense of casual accountability in the audience where the drug user is the villain and the cop the hero.

Yet, research done by Dr. Ramasubramanian shows promise for changing the ways we see addicts. Her work largely focused on using counter-examples of stereotypical blacks in news, to see if racist and prejudice thoughts could be altered. By giving participants news clippings that depicted blacks in a positive light, she showed not only a decrease in racist sentiment but an increase in legislation such as affirmative action (Ramasubramanian, 2015). She showed that exposure to admirable depictions of black celebrities is an effective and proactive strategy in reducing prejudice and promoting intergroup harmony (Ramasubramanian, 2015). These results show promising work that can be done in the field of drug addiction and stigma within drug communities. By increasing exposure to positive, more nuanced narratives of how drug users undergo the process of becoming addicted, their backstories, their lives before and after addiction, a greater sense of empathy can form in the user.

In the next chapter, I will give a content analysis of major films and TV shows that I believe incorporate counter-stereotypic drug users in their storyline. These shows follow characters as they battle addiction, fall in and out of addictive episodes, and paint the struggle of addiction as not a demoralizing spiral into depravity, but a complex set of decisions and choices, some out of the control of the user.

Chapter 2

From Fiction to Fact: The Assimilation of Political Beliefs Through TV

In this chapter, I investigate and analyze the popular television and media programs: *Moonlight, Shameless, Orange is the New Black.* I believe these shows to be political artifacts, each being an isolated and contemporary campaign for hearts and minds, that work to humanize drug users as a group, among many different races and genders, to better capture the nuanced origins of drug behavior. By doing so, these films present counter-stereotypical drug user identities, and if Dr. Ramasubramanian's research is correct, may be a catalyst in inciting empathy and understanding in the public. By portraying humanized drug users and dealers, drug policy in our country may transition from being a criminal problem to a public health concern.

The film *Moonlight* and the episode "Empathy is a Boner Kill" from *Orange is the New Black* examine the personal lives of drug use through a lens that is humanizing and complex. Having won Best Picture in 2017, Moonlight, is a film dedicated to examining communities in the largely black, heroin-impacted communities of Miami. *Moonlight's* success in the academy, as well as its featured position on Amazon video, make it a film worth studying for its nuanced perspective and far reaching prevalence. This film portrays well the tension between black males and drugs, the havoc drugs impose on communities of color, and the tenderness found in black relationships. These culminate in a film that underscores the humanity within a group of people largely associated with drugs in the United States and challenges the assumption of black men who are routinely associated with drugs and criminality.

Orange is the New Black is a film in this same vein in that it challenges the misgivings of criminality and drug use. Instead, *Orange is the New Black* in "Empathy is Boner Kill" gives a

comedic take on the life of Nicole, a drug addict, and uncovers the inner hypocrisies of drug policy in the United States.

Moonlight

To begin, I analyze the film *Moonlight* which I assert presents a counter-stereotypical depiction of the black male drug dealer and the crack addict black mother, two notorious identities that are implicitly linked to drug misuse, crime, poverty, and violence. The film is set in 1980's Miami, and follows the protagonist, Chiron, from 9 years old to adulthood. Chiron, as child, meets Juan, a local drug dealer, as he is running away from bullies. Juan befriends little and becomes a father figure to him. Juan's partner, Teresa, acts as his mother. While his real mother spirals through depression, addiction, and neuroses throughout most of the film. The film follows Chiron as he ages, and deals with bullies, his homosexuality, and his mother's addiction.

Through the portrayal of "black tenderness", *Moonlight* shows the intimacy of black relationships, from mother to son, boy to man, and lover to lover. Facets of the black community are highlighted in this film, giving breath and life to blacks, specifically men and mothers, that has never really been explored in the mostly white industry of Hollywood. Barry Jenkins, the black male director, captures the humanity within the black male experience, while also using Chiron's mother to probe and shine light on the struggle of addiction, its ups and downs, and the ability for addicts to recover and make amends. These characters confront the common association of violence, danger, and criminality with African-Americans, and show the beauty and sophistication of black relationships and community that is relatable across races. Through this relatability and understanding, *Moonlight* dispels common beliefs that aid in the association of blacks with criminality and drug use.

Because the War on Drugs was so heavily influenced by a fear of minority men, specifically black and Latino men, *Moonlight* critiques the stereotypes of men of color being aggressive and dangerous, by showing them as compassionate, kind, and loving. I define this general trend in the film as "black tenderness". *Moonlight* portrays men of color in new and counter-stereotypical ways, humanizing the villain of many anti-drug campaigns. In conjunction, this film evokes the crack-addicted mother figure, Paula, and combats decades of racialized criticism of black motherhood[14].

"Black tenderness" is a term to define one of the central themes of the film, which is the complex depth of love shared between men of color. This black tenderness is evident in many of the scenes throughout the film. Some of these scenes incorporate dialogue and main characters, while others tend to be journalistic, candid-like scenes of everyday black life.

First, I argue that Moonlight uses black male relationships and black mothers and sons to humanize these connections and the subjects involved, by framing the characters in a complex and endearing manner, humanizing them. An example is Juan, the local drug dealer, who jokes with his employees, laugh together, discuss their feelings, and behaving as if family. There are shorter scenes, candid in nature, of black boys wrestling and playing soccer with wadded up newspapers as a ball, reminiscent of the care free nature of youth that we all go through.

Barry Jenkins, *Moonlight'*s director, conveys a multitude of non-verbal messages with his directing decisions, from a train shooting past the children's playground to hint that Chiron's community is in the poorer side of town or, in the elderly black male security guard, that aids

_____

[14] *Killing the Black Body, Dorothy Roberts 2017*

Chiron, showing the care within the community. All throughout the film, black men show their compassion and love for one another. They are far from the hyper-masculine and aggressive stereotype normally associated with black men. The portrayal of black male tenderness is important in undoing centuries of propaganda aimed at villainizing the black male in that these new depictions push back on inaccurate misgivings of black men.

Another storyline includes Chiron and his mother, who have a pressured and strained relationship, that leads to stark emotional separation from one another as Paula delves further into addiction. The relationship between Paula and her son exemplifies the emotional pinball-like and chaotic environment that is produced from mixing addiction and parenting.

Paula is not quite stable most of the time but has bursts of love for Chiron through her drug-induced stupors. And when she finally gets clean, a different Paula is evident. Chiron visits her and sees this. And even though she is a major source of trauma in his life, as evident by his night terrors about her, he forgives her. This relationship highlights the severely private, and often misunderstood by historical media, nature of addiction, family, and motherhood. Later in this chapter, I delve more into their relationship, and its specific linkages to the Crack Epidemic in the 90's. I believe that black tenderness is not only evident in the familial sense but is clearly represented by platonic and romantic relationships between black men throughout the film.

Chiron and Juan exhibit a central relationship to this effect. Juan is introduced to Chiron as his savior and protector. After rescuing him from bullies, Juan takes a very silent Chiron to get food and gives him a bed to sleep in. Juan is patient with Chiron, and he lives in a nice house with a single female partner. Juan is calm for most of the film, never aggressive but always patient, and is even brought to tears when he discovers that Chiron's mother is client of his. And

by extent, he is the source of a lot of Chiron's suffering, a boy that he has considered a son. These traits make Juan explicitly different than the gang banger archetype in Chapter One. They differ in their compassion for others and ability to be gentle or caring. The film portrays him as a man willing to do what it takes, like Walter White from Breaking Bad, for the survival of his family and himself.

Juan is the father that Chiron never had. Even as Chiron ages and begins to deal drugs himself, he exhibits the same compassion to his employees as Juan did. In one scene in particular, Chiron pretends to be mad at his subordinate drug seller, all in an attempt to give him a lesson to always be tough on the streets. This lesson is not out of maintaining his business security standards, but to encourage his employee to protect himself.

Chiron, the lead of the film, is pivotal in exhibiting the theme of black tenderness throughout *Moonlight*. He is shy, reserved, and genuinely does not want to hurt others as a youth. This is apparent in his relationship with Kevin, an Afro-Latino classmate, and their developing relationship. Kevin teaches Chiron how to fight and is Chiron's first love interest. When Chiron, a teen at this point, is at the beach and sitting on the sand, Kevin comes up behind him and sits down. They begin talking and joking, and there's a moment where Kevin pushes Chiron just a little, and his hand lingers on the nape of Chiron's neck. They look into each other's eyes and kiss. Chiron is hesitant for a bit, but they eventually orgasm with one another.

Kevin asks, "You ain't never done that before, have you?" and Chiron replies, "No." Kevin drives Chiron home and they linger a bit, and Chiron finally goes inside. This scene is impactful in the beauty and delicacy of their relationship. Kevin is gentle with Chiron, which

seems counter-intuitive to his usual machismo personality and his constant boasting about having sex with women.

This tenderness with one another remains, even years after and they are adults, when Kevin calls Chiron and invites him to his restaurant promising to cook him a "good meal". Chiron is different as an adult as he is more muscular and exhibits a "hardened" drug dealer swag about him. Yet, he has moments of being visibly nervous, checking himself in the mirror before walking in to see Kevin at his restaurant. Kevin, after coming back from prison, is a cook and offers Chiron a meal and some wine. They drink wine in the diner-style restaurant, talking about their lives and flirting with each other. A passion is still felt between them. The audience is shown two men of color, one a drug dealer and the other an ex-con, be romantic with one another.

Kevin, Chiron, and Juan are an example of the caring nature found in the black community that has not been adequately represented in media. Citing Dr. Ramasubramanian's research finding as evidence, this relationship and others I the film, provide a counter-stereotypical archetype of black socio-cultural relationships with one another. This demystifies a sector of American culture that is never really explored in a white majority country. Because black men make up a majority of those incarcerated for drug use, giving an alternative view of them as non-threatening and normal, is a political tool to critique how black men are given unfair representation. A representation that has led to their mass incarceration for years, and further violence from the state towards the black community.

Moonlight also challenges the crack-addicted, black mother figure. Chiron's mother is an unstable, selfish, and severely mentally ill woman. Paula is a relatively little-seen character in the

film but is a major source of trauma for Chiron. He is quieter and more reserved during, and for a long time after, being around her. As well, Paula is often seen in the beginning of the movie, yelling at him as a boy or dragging him around.

Just before the film flashes forward to Chiron as a teenager, Juan confronts Paula about her drug use. The tension in the scene is heightened in that Juan turns out to be her dealer and is ultimately the source of Chiron's precarious living conditions. The scene begins with Juan pulling her out of a car, as she is smoking crack, saying:

> *Juan: "What the fuck you doing? Whats wrong with you?"*
>
> *Paula: "Who the hell you think you is? What so you gonna raise my son now, huh?!"*
>
> *Juan is silent and shocked.*
>
> *Paula: "Yeah… that's what I thought."*
>
> *Juan: "You gonna raise him!?"*
>
> *Paula: "You gonna keep selling me rocks! Huh!?"*
>
> *And then she lights the crack pipe in front of his face.*
>
> *Paula: "And don't give me any of that 'you gotta get it from somewhere shit' I'm getting it from you!"*

Afterward, she drives off and Juan is almost in tears.

Paula possesses a vicious and unstable quality about her, evoking the "tweaker" stereotype. Their family home becomes increasingly sparse with furniture and devoid of electronics, probably pawned for drug money, while random men come in and out of the house. It is unclear why these men seem to appear, until a bully of Chiron's makes fun of his mom for being a prostitute. The bully retorts, "A rock can get your rocks off!" and runs away. Paula is

unstable, manipulative, and will perform sex work for drugs. A major source of Chiron's depressive and reserved tendencies, Paula, haunts Chiron until adulthood.

Though her character is selfish, when she is high and strung out, there are moments of motherly love in her. She tells Chiron when she is high on the couch, "You don't love me anymore, do you? You're my only and I am your only. You're my only." And then she passes out.

These moments are poignantly heart-breaking because Paula's inconsistent actions not both hurt and seek to love Chiron. Paula is unable to control her use of crack, her actions, or her words, this indicates there is trauma in Paula as well, driving her addiction. In moments of complete removal from the world, she taps into the motherly love she feels for Chiron. As if her true self is only able to swim to the surface for brief moments at a time when she is drugged up. But for the majority of the time, she is driven by addiction. Chiron's mother is a pivotal character in this campaign, as she embodies that drug-addicted black female, an identity that was regularly attacked in the cocaine epidemic of the 90's in the U.S.

One of the last scenes of the films is Chiron's confrontation with his mother in rehab at 1 hour and 17 min. Outside, in the courtyard of the rehabilitation center, Chiron sits awkwardly in front of his mother dawning a large "VISITOR" name tag. After a bit of awkward small talk, Paula discovers he is selling drugs and says, "I messed it up. I fucked it all the way up.…But your heart don't gotta be black like mine…I love you Chiron, I do. You ain't gotta love me, Lord knows I did not have love for you when you needed, I know that. But I love you."

Paula is on the verge of tears and begins to light a cigarette, but her hands are too shaky, and a single tear falls down Chiron's face. Chiron lights the cigarette, hands it to her, and wipes the tears on her cheek that have begun to fall as well.

The pain of Chiron's traumatic childhood and Paula's motherly regret is palpable between them, and maybe these feelings will never go away, but there is also love between them. A love that was dulled by years of crack and addiction and is just now presenting itself. Paula has been mended and put back together, after decades of poverty and drug use, just enough to love Chiron in a way that she could not before.

This scene is the culmination of Chiron's trauma in one cathartic moment, and ends with Paula saying, "I'm sorry baby, I'm so sorry." As these last words come out, Paula's face begins to crumble, and she hunches over into a soft weep. Chiron stands up and hugs her, enveloping her in his arms in an act of forgiveness, love, and empathy. The confrontation of his mother, sober and present, is jarring and uncomfortable but filled with hope. Paula has improved and is now working at the rehab center helping others through their addiction, and her future feels less bleak. In her journey of addiction and Chiron's coming of age tale, a rarely witnesses narrative has been told. A story not only of black tenderness and compassion but one also of triumph over addiction.

The authenticity of these portrayals is that they show the poverty in the black community, as well as the unique subculture of black, Miami through the lens of black writers and directors. While it may confirm some stereotypes, such as homophobia in the black community, the film also pushes back on the idea that black people are not capable of complex relationships, that is usually only afforded to white people in movies. The film highlights the criminality in the black

community in tandem with humanizing minorities and explaining through empathetic filming the situations that lead people of color to sell or use drugs. Rather than using Juan as the antagonist and the unemotional drug dealer, Director Barry Jenkins highlights that like every human being there are multiple facets to their actions and their views on themselves and their community. *Moonlight*'s characters operate because of their pasts and their current struggles. What makes black people as a historical group, and in this film, unique is that their actions are rarely investigated in such a non-threatening light. Whether it be due to system poverty and violence that lead black men to crime, or mental and emotional trauma, *Moonlight* gives a voice and a platform for these alternative perspectives to be viewed and seen by the public. And by doing so, offer an alternative view to a group that is currently the most targeted in our nation's drug policy.

Orange is the New Black: "Empathy is a Boner Killer"

Orange is the New Black humanizes convicted drug users and dealers by giving insight into the traumatic past of these ex-addicts in prison, along with a critique of drug policy that unscrupulously sends drug users to federal prisons. Episode 3 of season 3, titled "Empathy is a Boner Killer" is a pivotal political artifact for this work in understanding contemporary drug policy reform discourse. This episode also gives a compelling critique of the ways in which the U.S. criminal justice system abuses the inmates their sworn to watch over, and societal construction of good versus bad, and those deserving of punishment.

"Empathy is a Bonner Killer" begins with the pivotal character in this episode and an inmate, Nicky Nichols, meeting with an officer, Joel Luschek, to discuss a heroin deal they have arranged in a previous episode. Nicky, an ex-heroin user, has "lost" the supply and so the drug deal cannot go forward. Luschek responds in anger and retorts, "This is why you women ended

up in prison, you guys suck at crime!" Luschek and the other guards are often hypocritical in their responsibilities and their tendency to use the prisoners for their own gain. Patterns of abuse by authorities in correction facilities are common, and Luschek exhibits this trend.

The line between "what a criminal actually is" versus "what a criminal is supposed to be" is continually blurred between the guard's actions and the prisoners. The question is always: who is the criminal in this situation? Luschek can operate freely with his own criminal activity and even possesses the power to oversee "real criminals" like Nicky, so is a criminal merely someone who was not smart enough or lucky enough to not get caught?

The guards' illicit behavior throughout the show conveys the message that outside status and respectability, like being a cop, does not necessarily mean someone is good. And that who society tells us to trust and distrust is not a matter of moral fixedness, but one of perceptions and nuance. The scene between Luschek and Nicky opens up the viewer to the possibility that outside appearances are not a complete assurance of someone's goodness. OINTB challenges the reader to rethink their preconceived notions of how we should think about who is respectable or trustworthy and who is not.

As Luschek walks away from her, after calling her a junky, the episode flashes to her before she was clean and in the middle of New York City. Nicky is talking to her friends about how they are going to get their next supply of heroin. Her appearance and mannerisms are markedly different from her usual in the present day. She has always been presented throughout the show as someone who is gruff and straightforward, yet compassionate, calculating, and most of all loyal to her friends.

Throughout the many flashback scenes, she embodies the "tweaker". Nicky is shifty, fidgety, and consumed with getting her next fix, which prompts her to steal a taxi with her friends in order to get to their dealer before he leaves from New York and they're "stuck being sober for the weekend." However, after stealing the taxi, she immediately crashes into another car because it turns out she doesn't actually know how to drive. Classic.

A seasoned viewer of this show is struck with the sharp contrast of old Nicky and the one they've come to love. One quick example of her character difference is her aggressive use of calling stores "fag shops", even though in present form she clearly professes to be gay.

This Nicky, the old one, is someone separate from the one in the future, and almost a completely different person. The implicit message in this dichotomy between old and new Nicky is that classic scared straight slogan, "You're not you when you're on drugs."[15]

If Nicky, arguably one of the most beloved characters on the show, can have such a profound shift in her personality due to heroin, what does that say for other heroin users? What does that say about the power of alteration that drugs can possess? Here again, through one scene, information is conveyed to the audience that drug use and someone's innate morality are not one and the same but operate on separate planes of existence.

In keeping with the critique of the personnel who operate our nation's prison system, the episode shifts to Warden Caputo, the warden, as he sits in his office. He's sitting in his chair just as one of his officers step in to ask him questions. The camera shifts to an over the shoulder view

---

[15] Retrieved from abovetheinfluence.org

of Caputo's work computer and multiple porn pages that are open that he then hurriedly closes in order to speak to his officer.

It is clear that there is a sense of unprofessionalism, and in some cases, outright stupidity inherent in the officials of this prison. As well, the officers are constantly disingenuous and manipulative with one another and the inmates. Caputo exemplifies this inauthenticity when he tells the guard, who is worried about losing his job, a multitude of inconsistent facts followed by an outright lie that he will notify him if he hears anything about him losing his job.

What the audience knows, that the guard doesn't, is that his job is long gone, and Caputo is lying to him in order to save face. OINTB uses the characters responses to situations as an insight to who they are as people, and more importantly allows the viewer to further question which group lacks more morality: the prisoners or the staff?

The correction officers seem to have total unchecked power, as is the case between one Prisoner, Red, and the prison counselor, Healy, who wipes her schedule for the day so that he can use her as a translator for him and his wife. Red cannot say no out of fear of getting a "shot" (amounting a certain number of shots can put someone in solitary confinement), and so Healy has her under his thumb. Or in a later part of this episode Officer Luschek, the guard conspiring with Nicky to sell heroin, threatens to Kill an inmate and even admits to being a former meth addict.

Not only are the lines blurred on whose actions are deemed morally correct, the officers or the prisoners, but the viewer must ask themselves again, "who is the criminal?" Should Luschek be able to run around the prison as an authority, if he has also consumed illicit drugs, an offense that has put many of these women in jail? Criminality as a consequence of bad luck

seems to boil under the surface of this episode, and chips away at the implicit idea that criminals are in prison because of their moral failing.

While prisoners are socially constructed to be the bane of civil, decent society, the guard's behaviors in juxtaposition with the inmates imply that good and bad don't exist in the neat categories our criminal laws make them out to be.

OINTB underscores, through its highlighting of contradictory situations and compelling character's hardships, dreams, and fears, that criminals are not necessarily who they are portrayed to be. Behind the cement walls, iron bars, and orange jumpsuits, real people exist and inhabit the federal prison facilities scattered across the nation. The receive a message that the current system of retributive justice, one tasked with taking a citizen's freedom, is not yet fine-tuned enough to decipher between the nuances inherent in all people's lives and actions. And more importantly, in the vein of my thesis, this episode expresses the idea that something should be done to improve and better measure how we assign criminality to drug use.

 Along this message comes the prison guards who care about the prisoners and seek to protect them. One such guard is Birdie, who listens to the women, openly admits that the prison system is "fucked up" and tries to teach the women how to survive once they are released. Birdie, as a character, acts as a political tool as a symbol for what criminal justice can be if done with compassion and understanding. Many of the inmates find comradery with her, and her techniques in rehabilitation rely on expression and creativity to funnel volatile emotions into constructive acts. Her methods as shown in the show, may or may not be viable in the real world, but they elicit the possibility of a new way of running things at Litchfield.

Her interactions with other officers is evidence of her "unusual" practice of compassion towards the inmates. Officers like Healy question her methods and criticize her effectiveness even in the face of positive results. Healy is a much older counselor than Birdie and approaches the women in an awkward and impersonal way. He talks to them and treats them as if they were not people before coming into Litchfield, and that they do not matter as individuals. He represents older modes of dealing with the prisoners, while Birdie creates tension by introducing a newer and more effective way to teach the inmates. This strain seems to represent the struggle inherent in altering for the better a long-standing institution, and the multitude of roadblocks that appear in the form of those who benefit from it getting in the way.

Orange is the New Black is not only conveying messages about the effects of the prison industrial system on the individuals in which it incarcerates, but also critiques the routine dysfunctionality of an institution that is managing and facilitating the daily care of millions of people. A population that is continuously rising[16].Due to budget cuts, increased prison populations, and decreased staff, the prison is running on fumes and is barely getting by.

By acknowledging the flaws in the fictional prison of Litchfield, the show *Orange is the New Black* critiques the entirety of the Prison system. The current prison system, with its high incarceration rates and low federal funding, is a hotbed of mistreatment and abuse. One scene in this episode exemplifies this when an inmate named Leanne cleaning a bunch of sneakers infested with bedbugs in a loud and crowded laundry room. A C.O. confronts her about the deafening noise and asks her to confirm the work order that called for such a loud task to be done. Upon the confirmation of her work order, the C.O. turns to her and says, "You should

---

[16] The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences (Travis et al. 2014)

really have ear protection for this." Leanne asks him if he has anything he could give her, and he blankly replies, "well I mean in a perfect world you would."

As this conversation suggests, it is not necessarily the bad intentions of individual officers that lead to the mistreatment of prisoners, but that the prison, stretched so thin, just doesn't have the funds for crucial protective gear like earplugs. This episode teases at these question and others, and through the use of subtle, unassumingly offhand comments, points to the United States' dysfunctional policies around drugs as a culprit in bringing droves of individuals to prison.

The episode progresses, the audience is flashed backward again to Nicky's storyline in which she is confronted by her mother for crashing the taxi earlier in the episode. Her mother chides her about the accident:

> Mom: "Thank god they didn't find drugs on you."
>
> Nicky: "Praise the Lord. 'Cause getting caught with drugs is so much worse than, uh... grand theft auto in the eyes of the law. Doesn't that make a fuckload of sense?"

This scene emphasizes the unjust weight given to drug crimes is miscalculated and unfair. Drug addicts are faced with inflated sentences and penalties if they are caught. This, in turn, feeds a continuous cycle of criminality and incarceration that expands prison populations to their maximum capacity and further exacerbates an already broken system. This scene further delegitimizes institutional voices and opinions that demonize drug use, by highlighting the relative low danger of caring drugs versus driving a car illegally. The counter-intuitive nature of the miscalculated severity of these respective crimes, leads the audience to question the narrative of drug users as sever criminals. This further humanizes drug use, by reducing the stigma associated with drug use, especially in relation to crime.

The episode ends with Nicky and Luschek being ratted out by the inmate Luschek threatened to murder. Using his position as an officer, he pins the heroin on Nicky yelling, "It's her! She's the fucking junkie!" And with absolutely no evidence, Nicky is taken "down the hill" to maximum security. As she leaves, the song "Coming Down" by the Dum Dum Girls plays, and she is swarmed by her friends and loved ones, who are shocked and heartbroken that she's leaving.

A crucial thing happens as she leaves, which is that Red, her "mother", begs her to help her understand what happened and that she thought Nicky was doing okay. Evoking the sense that Red is not the only mother in America who has had to ask their child why they're being hauled away on drug charges. And as she is dragged out to the van to be taken away, Nicky responds, "I'm a fuck up." And with that, she is hauled away, and the episode ends with her friends crying and telling her they love her.

The ending is a pivotal moment because it mimics the reality of people going to prison. The show makes an effort of putting Nicky in an unfair position, going against someone with more power than her, who is equally culpable in the crime, and through luck and a failed system, she is punished. As she is dragged away, surrounded by crying loved ones, the feeling of a miscarriage of justice is palpable in the scene. The observer cannot help but feel for Nicky, and in juxtaposition with the flashbacks from her previous life, one is struck with an intuition that this sort of treatment of drug users is pervasive and rampant.

And so, as the episode ends, the show has completed the transcription of a deep political message with a multi-pronged critique of the U.S. Criminal Justice System. By using carefully written scripts, emotive acting, and cinematography, the creators of *Orange is the New Black* are

able to put viewers in the shoes of these characters. The viewers are able to empathize with the prisoners and the guards and achieve the sense that something is not exactly right about how drug offenders are handled in this country.

Just like the title "Empathy is a Boner Killer" suggests when we empathize with drug offenders we lose the metaphorical boner citizens have for the justice system that professes to keep society safe from "them". Additionally, like the episode hints at, we are all one misstep, one bad decision away from being marked as a criminal rather than a human being.

Though the show routinely invokes the tweaker stereotype when showing Nicky as a past user, its juxtaposition with current day Nicky underscores the idea that drug users are separate from the drugs they use. The dichotomy of new versus old Nicky breaks down the illusion that drug use ruins people's lives.

Orange is the New Black Is not merely a show but a political artifact that seeks to challenge Reagan era "War on Drugs" propaganda that imagine drug use as an irredeemable quality. By pointing at the hypocrisies inherent in Luschek's own drug use, and his ability to threaten and frame the inmates, OINTB shows that our societies constructions of criminality are purely subjective. And that we cannot trust the respectability that is given to one set of people and not to others. *Orange is the New Black* may not inspire a radical reformation of our justice system, but it provides critiques of our system in a palatable way to most audiences. This subtle critique has promise in helping break down the constructions of what is or is not a criminal, and who deserves to go to jail.

OINTB does not necessarily seek to answer these questions, per se, but invites the viewer to ponder over them. And most importantly, OINTB gives faces, names, and backstories to the

types of criminals society often dismiss to its periphery. OINTB provides an insight into the lives of criminality in the United States, that isn't merely through a medium of a flashy newspaper headline. By giving dignity and empathy to drug offenders, OINTB calls into question the assumed immorality of these people and critiques the standards of punishment the criminal justice system doles out to small-time offenders.

Chapter 3

Using Counter-Stereotypical Depictions of drug users to measure the locus of drug-related attitudes.

This chapter aims to root the counter-stereotypical narratives previously analyzed in *Orange is the New Black* and *Moonlight* to empirically gathered data and analysis. The data collected in this experimental research is used to validate and test the analysis of the counter-stereotypical drug user narratives and verify that these depictions do have qualities that affect attitudes in the viewers. In this chapter, I make an account of the academic literature surrounding this type of experimental survey research and then give an overview of my methods and results. I conclude by discussing my results, the implications of my data, and the possibility of future research.

Previous Literature and Academic Background

Within the field of psychology, there are two phenomena widely discussed in being influential on human behavior: priming and framing. In an article titled, "Illicit drugs and the media: Models of media effects for use in drug policy research" Lancaster et al. (2010) discuss framing as the media's ability to tell audiences how to think about an issue. Entman, in his article on framing, discusses, "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." (Entman, 1993)

So, through framing, media has historically positioned the drug policy debate as a war between the "good" and the "bad", while largely placing drug users in the role of "criminal" or "other". By framing the debate in this way, much of the nuance and complexity of how people first encounter drug users, their journey and struggle through addiction, is lost and the larger socioeconomic factors that lead to drug use are ignored.

Media and TV have also shown the ability in being able to prime viewers into modes of thought and behavior in correspondence to certain images or stimuli. Hurley et al. (2015) describe framing as the mental shortcuts people make about the world that are formed form frequently seen or "activated" stereotypes that they then use to make social judgments. Attitudes towards drugs and users, television has acted as an instigator in creating negative thought and behaviors towards drug users, by framing them as criminals or those who are declining morally. By positioning a subsect of the population in that way, audience members become inundated with images and narratives that they then incorporate to the schema of how the world works. What this does is inform viewers to associate drug users with the dregs of society, which in turn leads people to be less empathetic with users, less willing to give aid, and less willing to interact with these individuals or see them as members of a community. Lancaster et al. (2010) discuss this by describing media's ability to influence audience's perception of risk in interacting with drug users as well as medias involvement in community discourse and policy building.

In arguing for the positive effect of counter-stereotypical depictions of drug users on attitudes towards drugs and drug use, using experimental research showed the most promise in rooting my theories in the real world. By conducting experimental research, the isolation of certain narratives in interaction with the surveyor's specific identities, allowed the correct environment to measure the effects of images and representations. Experimental data gives

insights to how theories operate outside of black ink on a page and is able to show how theory can be applied to the current world.

Historically, drug use has routinely been negatively depicted in Western culture such as it being associated with criminality and immoral values. Scholars have long probed the effects of these and other representations in general on audience's perception and endorsements of those stereotypes (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). And what research points to is the ability of these representations to prime and frame nuanced situations to audiences based off the scenarios and characters they represent.

The research I conducted utilized the concepts of framing and priming, to measure how effectively shows alter audience member's perception of characters who use drugs, and the larger drug policy framework. The purpose of the study was to measure any changes on attitudes towards drugs use after being exposed to counter-stereotypical or stereotypical depictions of drug use. The experiment also asked questions assigning monetary value, in the form of tax dollars, to drug-related federal programs and the willingness in survey-takers to pay for increased access to both standard and more radical drug programs (such as safe injection sites or needles exchanges).

The United States exhibits some of the highest levels of drug use in the world, with some total of about 25 million users, over the age of 12, who reported using illicit drugs in the last month[17]. With such a high-level of use, and reports of drug use increasing, a larger and larger population of U.S. citizens are becoming a part of this category of people: "the drug user". Similar studies in the U.K. gathered survey data on the attitudes of Scottish citizens and their

---

[17] drugabuse.gov

feelings toward drug use and their "willingness to pay" for these surveys in the form of tax

dollars (Matheson et al., 2013).

What is promising about this research data is its potential in connecting "pseudo-anecdotal" stories of drug use and overall attitude towards drug use and drug policy. Using

theories of revolution and political campaigning, these narratives, those that represent drug-use

in a counter-stereotypical way, can be seen as similar to the hearts and minds campaign

archetype. By using this framing, *Orange is the New Black* and *Moonlight*, are impactful in their

ability to create groundswells of liberal drug support at the grassroots level. Still more research

needs to be conducted to more accurately parse the number of variables that go into a citizen's

opinions on drug policy and drug use. However, this research does present a first step in

analyzing cultural influences on these political attitudes.

Study Overview and Hypothesis

One possible explanation for the differences in audience perception of drug users after

viewing positive/negative portrayals of drug users is the priming and framing effect. As these

scripted narratives enter our everyday lives they have also become the bedrock for how a lot of

people associate themselves with the outside world. In other words, people view television as a

mirroring of reality in which positive or negative traits is felt to have some permanence in what

is going on in reality.

Furthermore, the racialized history of the drug wars in American discourse has forever

linked drug users and people of color in the broader social consciousness. Thus, there will be

another factor of white or non-white drug users playing a role in shifting attitudes towards drug

users. This study seeks to observe shifts in attitudes towards drug users and drug policies after

viewing media content in which drug users are presented in either a negative, positive or with no drug users present at all.

My first hypothesis is that regardless of race, participants who view the negative depictions of drug users will be less inclined to think highly of drug users and be less willing to support drug rehabilitation programs over incarceration.

My second hypothesis is that regardless of negative or positive depictions, participants who view black drug users will be less inclined to think highly of drug users and be less willing to support drug rehabilitation programs over incarceration.

Method

Design

An experimental survey design was used in this study to measure the effects of representation (stereotypical or counter-stereotypical) and race (African-American or white) on the dependent variables (a) attitudes towards individual drug users, (b) attitudes towards drug users as a whole, and (c) attitudes towards drug policy (more progressive or stricter). Each participant was randomly given one of four vignettes: white stereotypical (N=716), black stereotypical (N=716), white counter-stereotypical(N=716), or black counter-stereotypical(N=716). The participants were asked to read these vignettes followed by a three-part survey. The total number of questions asked was 17, followed by demographic questions (race, age, income, political identity, employment status, education, cannabis use, previous exposure to drug users, and hours of TV watched a day.)

I developed my research design by using Dr. Ramasubramanian's model as an archetype for my own. In this experiment, participants will randomly receive one of four possible vignettes

that they will read and then be asked to answer questions about. There will be no clips used from the film and show that I analyze, nor clips from other shows, in the experiment due to the variability of videos. Using vignettes allows specific things to be changed among the vignettes, while keeping certain variables the same throughout. This aids in pinpointing specifically changed variables as having had an effect or no effect on the participants.

The vignette each participant receives will be one out of a possible four that they can receive. These vignettes consist of an image of a woman smoking followed by a narrative. The vignettes will vary in two ways, one way is that participants will be given either a stereotypical narrative or a counter-stereotypical narrative. The other way that the vignettes will vary is the race of the woman presented in the image, either a black woman or a white woman.

After the treatment is given, participants will be asked to answer survey questions about what they think about Bianca, what they think about drug users as a community, and how they feel about federal drug policy and programs. These questions were not developed by myself but were drawn from a survey questions bank and specific questions from Matheson et al. survey design in Scotland. The participants will then fill out demographic information and be given a consent form.

Randomization procedures will be used in the form of the randomization action assigned to each vignette in Qualtrics and in the form of the participants themselves who take the quiz. However, the survey questions and demographics collected will remain the consistent across all participants.

There will be no control group given. This is based on the rationale that only a difference between the vignettes needs to be analyzed. It is thus not necessary to have an untreated group,

because there is no baseline that my results need to be measured against. What is important is measuring attitude responses in comparison to each of the vignettes with one another. A sample size of 110-30 participants maximum was calculated as the necessary minimum to achieve a power of .8 or .9, based off the assumptions that α=.5, and Srividya Ramasubramanian's research was used as a basis of the number of respondents necessary.

Post data collection, multiple linear regression analytics will be used to determine any correlations based of what vignette each participant was given. Objectives for the completion of my survey will be time dependent and my survey will conclude when that deadline is met. The duration of the study will be held from January of 2018 to March of 2018.

Participants

Participants were recruited using the Amazon mechanical Turk system. They participated voluntarily in exchange for a small payment ($.10-$.50) depending on the time it took to complete the survey (between 5 to 10 minutes).

Procedure

Participants were asked to read a randomized vignette in which drug users are depicted in a positive or negative light, and that feature either a black or white drug user. Afterwards, they were invited to complete a survey on their attitudes towards drug users, the legality of drugs, drug policy, and the funding of federal rehabilitation. Finally, participants were asked to complete a section on their demographics such as age, race, religiosity, education, income, smoking or non-smoking, previous drug use, and media consumption.

Stimuli

The vignettes utilized two different narratives, about a drug user named Bianca, formulated by the researcher. The narratives included one mimicking stereotypical characteristics of drug users found throughout my research. The stereotypical depiction mentions Bianca's lack of a legal income and her dependency on selling drugs. As well, Bianca in the negative depiction was more obviously low income, "immoral", and her backstory was shallower and contrived. The negative depiction relied on Bianca being a party girl, and not delving deeper into the reasons behind her actions.

Conversely, the positive vignette was written to evoke a counter-stereotypical drug user persona. Her name was also Bianca, and her narrative involved her holding down a job and funding her addiction legally. She also had a more emotional justification for her drug use, which was the death of her son. By placing this detail in the narrative, I hope to measure what I saw in my analysis chapter, which focused on the nuance of relationships and past trauma as a reason for audience empathy towards drug use. The narratives are transcribed below:

Counter-Stereotypical Narrative:

"This is Bianca, she lives in Colorado and is a 30-year old cashier at a local supermarket. She is single, with one child, and she lives with a single roommate. Bianca has been smoking heroin for 2 years. She began using heroin after her oldest son died in a car accident in which she was the driver. A few months after the death of her son, Bianca was offered her first dose of heroin a few weeks later by a co-worker who believed it would help her copes with her depression. Since then she has become increasingly addicted to heroin, smoking it about once a

day. Bianca manages to go to work regularly and uses her paycheck to pay her

bills and to pay for heroin addiction."

<u>Stereotypical Narrative:</u>

"This is Bianca, she lives in Colorado and unemployed. She is single, with no

children, and she lives with multiple roommates in a small apartment. Bianca has

been smoking heroin for 2 years and has been arrested for drug possession 3

times. She began smoking heroin after she was offered it casually at a

party. Since then she has become increasingly addicted to heroin, smoking it

about once a day. Bianca has dedicated most of her time to selling heroin and

marijuana to make ends meet and feels no need to look for another job."

These narratives were preceded by an image of either a black or white woman smoking a cigarette. In both pictures the woman has he eyes looking down and is lighting the cigarette in the same position. These images were chosen because of the little variation between the pictures, except for the race of the woman. This invariability is needed to correctly infer that the race of the women in each pic, rather than other outside factors, is the source of difference a surveyor may express. (Appendix A)

Results

<u>Response Rate and Demographics</u>

Of the 716 respondents, 24 surveys were returned incomplete. The racial breakdown is as follows: 79% white, 6% black, 4% Hispanic, 8% Asian, and 3% Other. The majority were white, and either employed full or part time. The participants were over the age of 18, self-selected into

the survey, and were gathered from the Amazon Mechanical Turk bank of survey takers. Respondents were not originally asked their specific age or gender, and when running regressions with these demographics being asked, they yielded no statistical significance, so they were left out.

Previous Exposure to Drug Use

The respondents showed high levels of previous experience with drug users, which became specifically important when analyzing the data. Of the respondents 35% had personal experience of use, 39% had familial experience, 22% had professional experience, 52% had friendships with current or previous addicts, and 29% had no experience at all. These percentages are important to note, because the exposure to drug users in real life showed statistical significance in effecting the responses of survey takers. Previous exposure lends itself to my thesis in that I note a main drive of producing positive feelings towards drug] is the personalization of the drug user through media representation. Surveyors who have had previous exposure to drug addiction may have received this positive framing and priming effect I describe in their personal interactions with users. This exposure may account for the results below, and I extrapolate on this further in the results.

Interpreting the Tables

The answer choices were given on "strongly agree to strongly disagree" scale, with each subsequent answer from strongly agree to strongly disagree being assigned 1 to 5. This means that respondents who reported disagree were given higher numbers than those who were more likely to agree. Therefore, when reading the tables below, a coefficient that has a negative sign (meaning a negative slope) indicates that given the specific independent variable respondents

were more likely to agree with the statement. Vice versa, coefficients with a positive sign or slope, indicate that given the Independent variable, respondents were more likely to disagree with the statement. As well, asterisk indicate the level of statistical significance, with a higher number of asterisk indicating higher statistical significance. This striation is further explained in the notes below each graph.

Attitudes Towards Bianca's Drug Use

The regression results of section 1 of the questionnaire are displayed in Table 1. These questions were designed using stigmatization scale from Palmer et al.'s (2013) research. These questions measure the stigma associated with Bianca post treatment. The results show that when given the stereotypical treatment, respondents were .558 more likely to agree that Bianca should be sent to jail than those who received the counter-stereotypical example. These findings concur with my thesis hypothesis that positive/counter-stereotypical depictions of drug users alter attitudes towards that user. These results also support the argument that counter-stereotypical depictions of drug users result in audience members being less likely to associate criminality with the actions of the drug user. Furthermore, the respondents who received the vignette featuring a black woman were more likely to agree that Bianca should go to prison. This seems to suggest that race is critical in its linkages to assigning culpability and crime to drug use.

Figure 1 shows a margins plot of these coefficients, which graphs the slope of the responses based on whether or not they received the black or white treatment and whether they received the counter-stereotypical and stereotypical treatment. The figure shows that regardless of race, the negative depiction is more likely to create negative attitudes in observers. It also shows that when given the stereotypical depiction, race becomes more important in stratifying

how much more likely someone will be willing to send a drug user to jail. This is articulated by the red line (indicating the black treatment) being significantly lower than the white line, showing more agreeability with Bianca going to jail in those who received the black treatment.

Similar findings are seen when respondents were asked if Bianca will have a meaningful future. Those who received the stereotypical treatment were .405 points more likely to agree that Bianca has no meaningful future compared to those who received the counter-stereotypical depiction. It seems that when given the counter-stereotypical depiction, survey takers were more likely to believe that Bianca's would be able to turn her life around and improve her future.
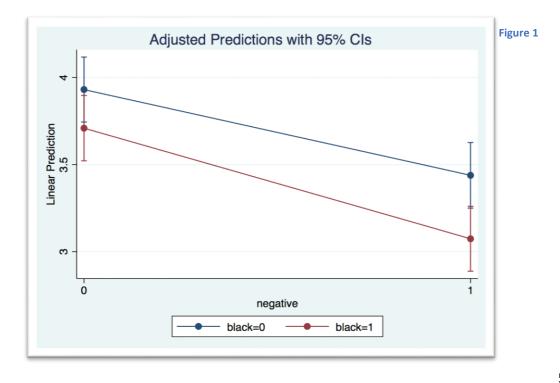
In general, previous exposure seemed to correlate heavily with a more lenient understanding of Bianca as a drug user and were statistically significant results. Respondents with previous exposure were more likely to disagree with Bianca being immoral, with Bianca going to jail, with Bianca not being well educated, and with Bianca having no meaningful future. Though this is not what I was specifically testing, these personal experiences may act as the "humanizing" experience that I assert TV can provide. Previous exposure to drug users did correlate, however, with people agreeing that Bianca is unhealthy.

Table 1

Survey Question	When Given S Treatment (in comparison to CS treatment)	When Given Black Treatment (in comparison to White Treatment)	When given both Black and Stereotypical Treatment	Previous Exposure
Bianca's drug use is morally wrong	.079	-.053	-.036	Personal: .270***

Bianca's drug use is physically unhealthy	-.084	.054	-.121	Family: -.195*** Friend: -.194** None: -.283***
Bianca should go to prison	-.558***	-.257***	-.019	Personal: .229** Work: .332***
Bianca is weak-minded	-.136	.119	-.369***	None: -.285**
Bianca is not well educated	-.029	-.098	-.181	Family: .180*
Bianca has no meaningful future ahead of her	-.405***	.029	-.270	None: -.278*

Note: *p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

Figure 1

<u>Attitudes Towards Drug Users as a Group</u>

The most fascinating results of section 2 of the questionnaire is that the vignettes seem to have little statistically significant effect on generating positive attitudes towards drug users. However, previous exposure to drug use was highly correlated with respondent's likelihood to agree or disagree with the statements. Respondents with family members or friends who are or previously were drug users were in complete agreement with surveyors who had no previous experience.

The design of the questionnaire was to measure surveyor's overall attitudes on the reputation of drug users as a whole. This was meant to show whether the viewing of a counter-stereotypical narrative could alter the overall perception of drug users. This similarity between exposure and non-exposure could have a variety of causal sources.

The belief that most people believe drug users to be untrustworthy in 1 (table 2) could mean that regardless of exposure, someone's overall opinion of drug users may remain unchanged. It may also mean that those who have previous exposure are eyewitnesses to the mistreatment of drug users that they know personally, and thus agree with this hegemonic opinion.

It is not clear whether the results of table 2 refute my thesis. Although the counter-stereotypical treatment did not yield significant results, this may be due to the vignette's limitations as an influencer. initial judgements can be made in 30 seconds about Bianca specifically. However, repeated exposure to a variety of drug users and topics may be necessary to alter surveyor's opinion of drug user's overall reputation.

Table 2

Survey Question	When Given CS Treatment (in comparison to S treatment)	When Given Black Treatment (in comparison to White Treatment)	When given both Black and Stereotypical Treatment	Exposure
Most people believe that illicit drug users cannot be trusted	-.029	.109	-.116	Family: -.216*** Friends: -.185** None: -.216**
Most people believe that illicit drug users are dangerous	.039	.058	-.117	Family: -.199** None: -.231**
Most people think less of a person who uses illicit drugs	.046	.024	-.120	Family: -.197*** Friends: -.240*** None: -.237**
Most people would treat an illicit drug user as they would anyone else	-.065	-.085	.214	Family: .219** Friends: .364***
Most people would accept an illicit drug user as they would anyone else	.037	.020	.126	Family: .193** Friends .336*** None: .245**
Most people would not hire someone who uses illicit drugs	.164	.038	-.188	Family: -.251*** Friends: -.336*** None: -.337***

Note: *p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

The questions below were developed from the Matheson et al (2013) survey in which Scottish respondents were asked their "willingness to pay" for drug rehabilitation programs funded by tax dollars. The use of these questions in my thesis is to determine the transitional effect of having a poor attitude towards drug dealers on attitudes towards lenient drug policy. These results are similar to Table 2 in that the vignette seemed to be ineffective in skewing the attitudes towards respondents. However, previous exposure to drug use via work, family, or friends seems to have a major impact. This may still yet support my theory that positive, humanizing experiences with drug users (in real life or through television) can affect people's perception of drug use and drug policy.

My results show that when given the counter-stereotypical treatment, respondents were .249 points more likely to agree that the federal or state government should give access to clean needles for drug users. These results seem to contradict my theory, and further research needs to be undertaken to understand why these results are appearing.

Previous exposure to drug use correlated with more lenient and more progressive attitudes towards drug policy. Those who had previous exposure were more likely to agree that tax dollars should be spent to pay for drug centers, to be in favor of clean needles, to be against stricter laws, and agree in eliminating prison sentences. I find these exposure results interesting and compelling in arguing for the power of humanization in creating more lenient attitudes and policy towards drug users.

Table 3

Survey Question	When Given S Treatment (in comparison to CS treatment)	When Given Black Treatment (in comparison to White Treatment)	When given both Black and Stereotypical Treatment	Exposure
Some specific percentage of tax dollars should go towards paying for drug treatment centers	-0.064	.071	.105	Friends: -.241**
Illicit drug users should be given access to clean needles by either the federal or state government	-.249**	.026	.302	Work: -.286** None: .333*
Medication to reduce drug withdrawal should be given to all who need it	-.044	.066	.097	N/A
Stricter laws against those who use illicit drugs should be implemented	-.138	-.176	.097	Personal: .315** Work: .285**
Prison sentences for non-violent drug use should be eliminated	-.056	.172	-.043	Personal: -.367*** Work: -.277**

Note: *p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

Discussion

<u>Key Findings</u>

Findings from the study support the assertion that counter-stereotypic representations can serve as a tool in creating more favorable attitudes towards drug use. Those who received the counter-stereotypical vignette were more likely to disagree with the statement that Bianca should go to prison and they were more likely to believe that Bianca has the capacity to have a meaningful future. These findings indicate that the counter-stereotypical vignette did produce more positive and more lenient feelings towards Bianca as a person. These findings not only support my hypothesis that counter-stereotypical depictions have a positive effect on observers, but they also show the correlative occurrence of criminality with stereotypical depictions of drug use.

The regression analysis of my question, "Bianca should go to prison" indicate that the stereotypical treatment was more persuasive in associating criminality to Bianca's actions and character. This supports my theory that more positive/counter-stereotypic depictions of drug users illicit more lenient and understanding feelings in observers. The margins plot I created (figure 1) indicate that those who witnessed the counter-stereotypic vignette, regardless of the race of Bianca, were less likely to send her to prison.

The race of Bianca did have an effect, however, in that respondents who received the black Bianca were more likely to send her to jail as well. These findings indicate some cultural prejudice at work against people of color, which supports my assertion of the validity in linking racism and criminality in the arena of drug policy. It is clear, not only in witnessing film and media but also in my statistics, that black people are thought of as deserving of punishment more

than their white counterparts. These findings have importance in steering drug policy reform to include provisions aimed at uncoupling the black identity from topics of criminality and drug use.

The importance of previous exposure to drug use, whether it be family, friends, or through work, showed considerable influence in the surveyor's responses. Survey takers with previous drug exposure were more likely to feel positively towards drug use and were more progressive in their ideas towards drug policy. When asked about Bianca's morality and whether she should go to jail, previous exposure was shown to produce more lenient attitudes. Respondents were less likely to send her to jail, think she is immoral, and were more likely to think that she has the potential in having a meaningful future. They were also more likely to pay for rehabilitation programs such as drug centers and clean needle exchanges using tax dollars. Previous exposure also correlated with more progressive ideas such as eliminating jail time for drug offenders and disagreeing with the proposal of enforcing stricter laws towards drug use.

What these results show is that having a personal connection with drug users, at some point in life, creates more positive attitudes in people. This is influential in my thesis in that the basis of my claims lie in the assertion of the humanizing effect of counter-stereotypic depictions of drug use in reducing stigma and negative sentiment. These results indicate the importance of personal connection with drug users, and the ability for counter-stereotypic depictions to better cultivate a relationship between drug users and audience members through the telling of visceral, atypical narratives of drug users. This also points to the negative consequences of reducing drug user personas in media to the tweaker, gang banger, and functional addict stereotypes I mentioned in previous chapters.

Shortcomings of the Study

The findings did not produce results in supporting all the claims that I made throughout my thesis with regards to the influencing effects of media depictions on perceptions of drug users as a group and attitudes towards progressive policy. My research did not yield as many statistically significant results as I would have liked, especially within section 2 and 3 of questions. There were no significant results in linking drug user perceptions with morality, health, or more lenient drug policies. These findings push back on my claims of immorality being a significant assumption of stereotypic drug users, and the influencing effects of film and media on drug policy. I believe that I did may have changed too many things between the individual vignettes to properly single out once consistent variable. By changing one thing, such as her number of children or employment rather than the mix of these, I would have gotten more consistent results.

Additionally, some findings seem contradictory to my hypothesis. When given the stereotypical vignette, respondents were more likely to agree that the government should provide clean needles to users through federal programs. This does not fall in line with my assumptions that negative portrayals produce more conservative, less forgiving sentiments in the public. The reason for this could be that participants misinterpreted my question. Another source for this inconsistency might also be that participants are not familiar with clean needle programs and do not associate them with increased drug use.

Some drawbacks to how the survey was conducted concerns the naming of the drug user persona. The name Bianca was inspired by a drug user character in the show *Shameless* which could negatively affect participant's responses and prime them to think of that character. This is

not a great concern, however, due to the potential of eliciting similar negative results within almost any name. Studies in the future might use a generic title such as "drug user" in their work instead, though this might reduce the ability for participants to feel close with the drug user in the stimuli.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Summary

This thesis sought to understand the political impacts of how drug users are portrayed in media and film, specifically when counter-stereotypic depictions of drug users are prioritized in the narrative. By giving a historical account of the war on era drugs and the anti-drug propaganda, the argument of this thesis was placed in conjunction to the contemporary discourse of drug users in media and how drug users fit into the framework of civil society. The beginning of the thesis looked at the negative connotations of drug users and the production of repeated stereotypes of drug users that circulate throughout the media and in our cultural discourse.

By distilling these stereotypes into three identifiable characters: the tweaker, the gang banger, and the not so functional addict, I made an attempt to categorize and define how drug users are discussed in contemporary media. This allowed me to more precisely identify the negative consequences of these stereotypes, root them in cultural artifacts such as the movie Scarface or in Dave Chappelle's work. This not only gave validity to assumptions I make about the narratives of drug users that circulate in media but provided specific examples of these stereotypical archetypes at work.

These archetypes were then used in my analysis chapter to provide visceral and intuitive references when discussing the work of Moonlight and *Orange is the New Black*, giving more nuance to how I discuss characters such as Nicole (*Orange is the New Black*), Paula (*Moonlight*), and Chiron (*Moonlight*). *Moonlight* provides a tender look at relationships in the black community and gives a sympathetic understanding of the cyclical nature of the selling of drugs and drug use. The film also explored the subject of black motherhood, and the tension held within the relationship of drug abusers as parents and their children. "Empathy is a Boner Kill" did similar work in humanizing drug users in prison and giving a back story of how drug users enter the prison industrial complex. Through comedy, this episode gives a more nuanced perspective of drug users relationship with their past addiction and with prison guards and criminal justice institutions. "Empathy is a Boner killer" not only exhibited new understandings of drug users, but also critiqued the heightened persecution of drug users in the United States criminal code.

The analysis of *Moonlight* and the episode "Empathy is a Boner Kill" uncovered the detailed ways that these films subvert previously held beliefs about drug use, which my research on exemplification theory and framing effect, presents a possibility in changing these biases in people after viewing these films. Exemplification theory is the process of using individual characters in media to paint a picture about the group as a while, and through counter-stereotypic characters, this theory supports the claim that media such as *Moonlight* and *Orange is the New Black* can give more positive understandings of drug use. Framing effect also supports the idea that how are portrayed in the media is influential in how the issue of drug use is thought of in the public. Depictions of drug use as a criminal activity will yield to more criminal and legal framing of drug policy in the minds of observers. And vice versa, portraying drug use as a consequence

of trauma or systematic oppression, frames the drug debate to be more concerned with public health, stigmatization, and prejudice.

By using experimental survey techniques, I hoped to root my analysis in real world applications and see if what I am predicting occurs when viewing these films translates in attitudes of my participants. The results of the survey showed that thee was linkages with counter-stereotypic depictions and reduces feelings of criminality. The results also showed that previous exposure to drug use was influential in creating more lenient policy decisions and cultivating more positive sentiments towards drug users.

Implications

The analysis work done on the *Orange is the New Black* and *Moonlight* exhibit the many nuanced and prevalent details that go into film and TV, and how they can affect drug user attitudes. By using the framing and exemplification theory, the I can assert the effects of negative stereotypes on observer's attitudes towards drug users as a whole. This implies that the film industry has more responsibility in providing better representations for drug users a group, and to take ownership in how their films and TV shows influence the perception of drug users and other groups.

This should lead the industry to include more research and first-hand accounts of drug use, and to be more thoughtful in their depictions of drug use and the effects it has on the community. The film industry may also promote and fund the work of more diverse writers and directors who have previous experience with drug use to better articulate the challenges that go into being an addict.

My research also calls into question the reality of these drug user depictions and the need for an overall cultural shift in the attitudes towards drug users and their hierarchy in civil society. Rather than viewing drug users as potential criminals, American culture should seek to better understand and accept these users. By doing so, drug stigma can be challenged, which can reduce the threat of incarceration or outlasting by the public. Research done in other countries who have decriminalized drug use show that decreased anti-drug legislation increases the likelihood of addicts seeking rehabilitation, decreases rates of overdose, and decreases the prevalence of diseases associated with intravenous drug use[18]. The threat of arrest and incarceration is a major detractor in people seeking rehabilitations and sanitary spaces and utensils. The media's ability to produce more lenient drug attitudes in the public could play a key role in introducing decriminalization legislation in the United States down the road.

The impact of my survey further indicates the need for more nuanced perceptions of drug users in media depictions, as the results show that stereotypical depictions yield more negative results. These findings further emphasize the need for the entertainment industry to include more sympathetic directors and writers when filming drug-related media.

The implications of having previous exposure to drug use, while not my initial question, does indicate the power of personal relationships with drug users and the effects of those relationships on sentiment to drug use. These findings make a case for continued efforts of film makers and producers, as well as policy writers to encourage more progressive and humanizing portrayals of drug users in their work. The ability for media to influence voter attitudes and

---

[18] Transform (2014, July 14). *The Success of Portugal's Decriminalization Policy* [Charts and Visual Format]. Retrieved from tdpf.org.uk

legislation creates a burden on these institutions to not regurgitate conventional perceptions of drug users but to perpetuate diverse narratives of drug use. By creating bonds between characters on TV and the audience, drug-related film has promise to dissolve the barrier between drug users as a group and the average American citizen that watches TV.

The results of these efforts promise to play a key role in reducing negative sentiment in the public towards drug use, allowing more lenient policies to be enacted. These new depictions promise to encourage alternative ways of reimaging the relationship between drug users, the federal government, and the general public. This relationship has historically been one seen through a lens of criminality, but my thesis shows the ability to use media portrayals of drug addicts to humanize drug users and frame drug policy as a public health crisis.

Limitations

When thinking critically about the results of the survey analysis, it is clear that there was not as much influence as I would have liked between my respondents and surveyors. This could be due to a multitude of factors inherent in the study itself. One such idea is that there was not enough content and dialogue to adequately produce sentimental feelings within the participants who took my survey. Another study should be done in which participants are asked to watch a whole episode of television or a film and then respond to questions. The medium of a vignette, while useful in underfunded research, might not give as much breath and vivaciousness to drug user narratives, which in turn might reduce perceptions of personhood in Bianca.

Although exemplification theory and the mediated contact between the vignettes and the survey takers is present, there is no confidence in my research to show that the vignettes had any influence in the overall opinions of survey takers, except for a few questions. It may be

determined that a more consistent and prolonged exposure to these counter-stereotypic depictions is needed to see observable, positive changes in attitudes.

Another limitation is my use of only two out of hundreds of examples in the media. Given the constraints of time and resources, only two cultural artifacts could be analyzed. This limits the scopes to which I can accurately describe the other ways in which media exhibits counter-stereotypical examples of drug use. As well, the limited sampling, specifically in the case of *Orange is the New Black*, ignores other episodes and scenes in the series that may incorporate stereotypical characters. This means that while I discuss the ways in which shows deconstruct stereotypical narratives, these shows also have moments where they play to the stereotypes. It is not all together clear whether reduction of negative sentiment can occur in tandem with stereotypical perceptions.

Future Research

Future research should be conducted to better understand the mental processes that people undergo in terms of assimilating broad cultural beliefs into their psyche. This can be used to better understand the mechanisms at play in how beliefs are translated from media to reality. A variety of media samples, durations, and media forms (music, film, art, etc.) should also be used in order to gauge the most impactful form of culture and art in altering the attitudes towards drug use and policy. This can aid in the creation of more effective prejudice reducing campaigns who are seeking to enhance the position of addicts and create more robust and protective legislative campaigns towards drug use.

More research should also be done on the parsing between portrayals found in media and ideals already held in the public, and the interaction between the two. Better understandings in

this field will help researches define whether new depictions in media are the result of a larger public yearning that already exists, or whether the films themselves produce these feelings. By understanding the chronicling of these beliefs between the broader cultural framework and the films themselves, researchers can better identify which of these two are influencing the other, or if the relationship is reciprocal.

Despite the limitations of this work, this thesis makes a valuable contribution in understanding the interconnectedness of media and public policy as it pertains to 21st century film and Television. This study contributes the area of media-based prejudice reduction literature and gives insight to new experimental evidence linking counter-stereotypical and racialized portrayals of drug users with drug attitudes in people. This research shows that some amount of brief exposure or personal history with drug users is critical in cultivating more lenient sentiments in the broader public towards acts of drug use. Increased positive portrayals to drug use may produce more lenient criminal laws against drug use and also increase funding to federal drug rehabilitative efforts.

Works Cited

Boyd, Susan. "Media Constructions of Illegal Drugs, Users, and Sellers: A Closer Look at Traffic." *International Journal of Drug Policy*, vol. 13, no. 5, 2002, pp. 397–407., doi:10.1016/s0955-3959(02)00079-8.

Buchanan, Julian, and Lee Young. "The War on Drugs - a War on Drug Users?" *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2000, pp. 409–422., doi:10.1080/713660130.

Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2007, pp. 103–126., doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054.

Copess, Heith, et al. "Identities, Boundaries, and Accounts of Women Methamphetamine Users." *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2014, pp. 134–158., doi:10.1080/07418825.2014.897365.

Ferestad, Jaysen, and Melissa Thompson. "Im Not Gonna Be Like That Guy: Examining Antidrug Shock Advertising through the Eyes of That Guy: *Deviant Behavior*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2016, pp. 173–187., doi:10.1080/01639625.2016.1196971.

Hawdon, James E. "The Role of Presidential Rhetoric in the Creation of a Moral Panic: Reagan, Bush, and the War on Drugs." *Deviant Behavior*, vol. 22, no. 5, 2001, pp. 419–445., doi:10.1080/01639620152472813.

Iyengar, Shanto. "Framing Responsibility for Political Issues." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 546, no. 1, 1996, pp. 59–70., doi:10.1177/0002716296546001006.

Iyengar, Shanto. *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. University of

    Chicago Press, 2010.

Palamar, Joseph J. "An Examination of Beliefs and Opinions about Drug Use in Relation to

    Personal Stigmatization towards Drug Users." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, vol. 45,

    no. 5, 2013, pp. 367–373., doi:10.1080/02791072.2013.843044.

Roberts, Dorothy E. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*.

    Vintage Books, 2017.

Rosentiel, Tom. "Public Knows Basic Facts about Politics, Economics, But Struggles with

    Specifics." *Pew Research Center*, 17 Nov. 2010,

    www.pewresearch.org/2010/11/18/public-knows-basic-facts-about-politics-economics-

    but-struggles-with-specifics/.

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3168750/The-Rich-Kids-Cartel-Mexico-drugs-lord-El-

    Chapo-s-blinged-children-fabulous-wealth-flash-cars-guns-Paris-Hilton-selfies-pet-

    lions.html.

ZIMMERMAN, EILENE. "The Lawyer, the Addict." *The New York Times*, New York Times,

    15 July 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/07/15/business/lawyers-addiction-mental-

    health.html?_r=0.

Denham, Bryan E. "Sports Illustrated: The Mainstream Press and the Enactment of Drug Policy

    in Major League Baseball." *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism* 5.1 (2004): 51-68.

    Web.

Anderson, Tammy L. "DRUG ABUSE AND IDENTITY:. Linking Micro and Macro Factors."

    The Sociological Quarterly 35.1 (1994): 159-74. Web.

Ahern, Jennifer, Jennifer Stuber, and Sandro Galea. "Stigma, Discrimination and the Health of

    Illicit Drug Users." *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 88.2-3 (2007): 188-96. Web.

Hathaway, A. D., N. C. Comeau, and P. G. Erickson. "Cannabis Normalization and Stigma:

    Contemporary Practices of Moral Regulation." *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 11.5

    (2011): 451-69. Web.

Hurley, Ryan J., Jakob Jake Jensen, Andrew Weaver, and Travis Dixon. "Viewer Ethnicity

    Matters: Black Crime in TV News and Its Impact on Decisions Regarding Public Policy."

    Journal of Social Issues 71.1 (2015): 155-70. Web.

Lancaster, Kari, Caitlin E. Hughes, Bridget Spicer, Francis Matthew-Simmons, and Paul Dillon.

    "Illicit Drugs and the Media: Models of Media Effects for Use in Drug Policy Research."

    Drug and Alcohol Review 30.4 (2010): 397-402. Web.

Matheson, C., M. Jaffray, M. Ryan, C.m. Bond, K. Fraser, M. Kirk, and D. Liddell. "Public

    Opinion of Drug Treatment Policy: Exploring the Public's Attitudes, Knowledge,

    Experience and Willingness to Pay for Drug Treatment Strategies." *International Journal*

    of Drug Policy 25.3 (2014): 407-15. Web.

Mcarthur, Morag. "Pushing The Drug Debate: The Media's Role In Policy Reform." *Australian*

    Journal of Social Issues 34.2 (1999): 149-65. Web.

Mitchell, Ojmarrh, and Michael S. Caudy. "Examining Racial Disparities in Drug Arrests."

    Justice Quarterly 32.2 (2013): 288-313. Web.

Waddell, T. Franklin. "The Effect of Counterexemplars and Victim Expectations on Crime

    Perceptions and Hostile Attitudes Toward Racial Minorities." *International Journal of*

    Communication [Online], 11 (2017): 21. Web. 17 Oct. 2017

Ramasubramanian, Srividya. "Using Celebrity News Stories to Effectively Reduce Racial/Ethnic

Prejudice." *Journal of Social Issues* 71.1 (2015): 123-38. Web.

Abuse, National Institute on Drug. "Nationwide Trends." *NIDA*,

www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/nationwide-trends.

Romano, Andrew. "Weed Hits Home: In a New Yahoo News/Marist Poll, Parents and Children

Are Surprisingly Open about Pot Use." *Yahoo! News*, Yahoo!, 17 Apr. 2017,

www.yahoo.com/news/weed-hits-home-new-yahoo-newsmarist-poll-parents-children-

surprisingly-open-pot-use-091457209.html.

Robinson, Matthew B., and Renee G. Scherlen. *Lies, Damned Lies, and Drug War Statistics: a

Critical Analysis of Claims Made by the Office of National Drug Control Policy*. State

University of New York Press, 2014.

Branson, Richard. "War on Drugs a Trillion-Dollar Failure." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 7 Dec.

2012, www.cnn.com/2012/12/06/opinion/branson-end-war-on-drugs/index.html.

Center for Behavioral Health Statistics. "Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the

United States: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health." *Key

Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2016

National Survey on Drug Use and Health*,

www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR1-2016/NSDUH-FFR1-2016.htm.

Netherland, Julie, and Helena Hansen. "White Opioids: Pharmaceutical Race and the War on

Drugs That Wasn't." *BioSocieties*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2017, pp. 217–238.,

doi:10.1057/biosoc.2015.46.

Appendix

A. Survey:

This is Bianca, she lives in Colorado and unemployed. She is single, with no children, and she lives with multiple roommates in a small apartment. Bianca has been smoking heroin for 2 years and has been arrested for drug possession 3 times. She began smoking heroin after she was offered it casually at a party. Since then she has become increasingly addicted to heroin, smoking it about once a day. Bianca has dedicated most of her time to selling heroin and marijuana to make ends meet and feels no need to look for another job.

Black Stereotypic

This is Bianca, she lives in Colorado and is a 30-year old cashier at a local supermarket. She is single, with one child, and she lives with a single roommate. Bianca has been smoking heroin for 2 years. She began using heroin after her oldest son died in a car accident in which she was the driver. A few months after the death of her son, Bianca was offered her first dose of heroin a few weeks later by a co-worker who believed it would help her cope with her depression. Since then she has become increasingly addicted to heroin, smoking it about once a day. Bianca manages to go to work regularly and uses her paycheck to pay her bills and to pay for heroin addiction.

Black Counter-Stereotypic

This is Bianca, she lives in Colorado and is a 30-year old cashier at a local supermarket. She is single, with one child, and she lives with a single roommate. Bianca has been smoking heroin for 2 years. She began using heroin after her oldest son died in a car accident in which she was the driver. A few months after the death of her son, Bianca was offered her first dose of heroin a few weeks later by a co-worker who believed it would help her cope with her depression. Since then she has become increasingly addicted to heroin, smoking it about once a day. Bianca manages to go to work regularly and uses her paycheck to pay her bills and to pay for heroin addiction.

White Counter-Stereotypic

This is Bianca, she lives in Colorado and unemployed. She is single, with no children, and she lives with multiple roommates in a small apartment. Bianca has been smoking heroin for 2 years and has been arrested for drug possession 3 times. She began smoking heroin after she was offered it casually at a party. Since then she has become increasingly addicted to heroin, smoking it about once a day. Bianca has dedicated most of her time to selling heroin and marijuana to make ends meet and feels no need to look for another job.

White Stereotypic

Q1 Please select the best answer that describes Bianca.

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Bianca's drug use is morally wrong (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Bianca's drug use is physically unhealthy (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Bianca should go to prison (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Bianca is weak-minded (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Bianca is not well educated (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Bianca has no meaningful future ahead of her (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Q2 Please choose the answer you most agree with.

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Most people believe that illicit drug users cannot be trusted (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Most people believe that illicit drug users are dangerous (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Most people think less of a person who uses illicit drugs (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Most people would treat an illicit drug user as they would anyone else (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Most people would accept an illicit drug user as they would anyone else (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Most people would not hire someone who uses illicit drugs (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Q3 Please choose the answer you most agree with.

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Some specific percentage of tax dollars should go towards paying for drug treatment centers (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Illicit drug users should be given access to clean needles by either the federal or state government (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Medication to reduce drug withdrawal should be given to all who need it (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Stricter laws against those who use illicit drugs should be implemented (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Prison sentences for non-violent drug use should be eliminated (5)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Stigmatization Scale

Start of Block: Demographics

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?

○ White/caucasion (1)

○ Black (2)

○ Hispanic (3)

○ Asian (4)

○ Native American (5)

○ Other (6)

○ Prefer not to answer (7)

Q5 What is your employment status?

○ Full-time (1)

○ Part-time (2)

○ Unemployed (3)

○ full-time student (4)

○ Retired (5)

○ Long term disabled (6)

Q6 What is your average household income?

○ $15,000 or below (1)

○ $15,000-50,000 (2)

○ $50,000-100,000 (3)

○ $100,000-150,000 (4)

○ $150,000 or more (5)

Q7 What is your political ideology?

○ Strong liberal (1)

○ Liberal (2)

○ Moderate (3)

○ Conservative (4)

○ Strong Conservative (5)

Q8 What is your education level?

○ High school/GED (1)

○ Associates or some level of college (2)

○ Bachelors (3)

○ Advanced Degree (4)

Q9 Do you smoke weed?

○ Yes, regularly (1)

○ sometimes (2)

○ rarely (3)

○ No, but I used to smoke weed (4)

○ No, never smoked (5)

Q10 a.   Do you have previous exposure to illicit drugs? <u>Select all that apply</u>

☐ Personal Use (1)

☐ Family member (2)

☐ Professional/Coworker (3)

☐ Friend/Acquaintance (4)

☐ No previous exposure (5)

Q28 What is your age?

○ 18 - 24 (12)

○ 25 - 34 (13)

○ 35 - 44 (14)

○ 45 - 54 (15)

○ 55 - 64 (16)

○ 65 - 74 (17)

○ 75 - 84 (18)

○ 85 or older (19)

Q29 What is your gender?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Prefer not to answer (3)