

9TH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CONFERENCE ON LOCAL SAFETY AND SECURITY



University of Maribor

Faculty of
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Erasmus+



Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency

Media Representations of Crime and Local Safety

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SELECTIVE PORTRAYAL OF CRIME

- media have historically shaped public opinion (e.g., Jack the Ripper murders)
- they select and dramatize crime to attract attention
- Albert Bandura: people learn behavior through observation (risk of imitation)
- overrepresentation of violent crime distorts public perception



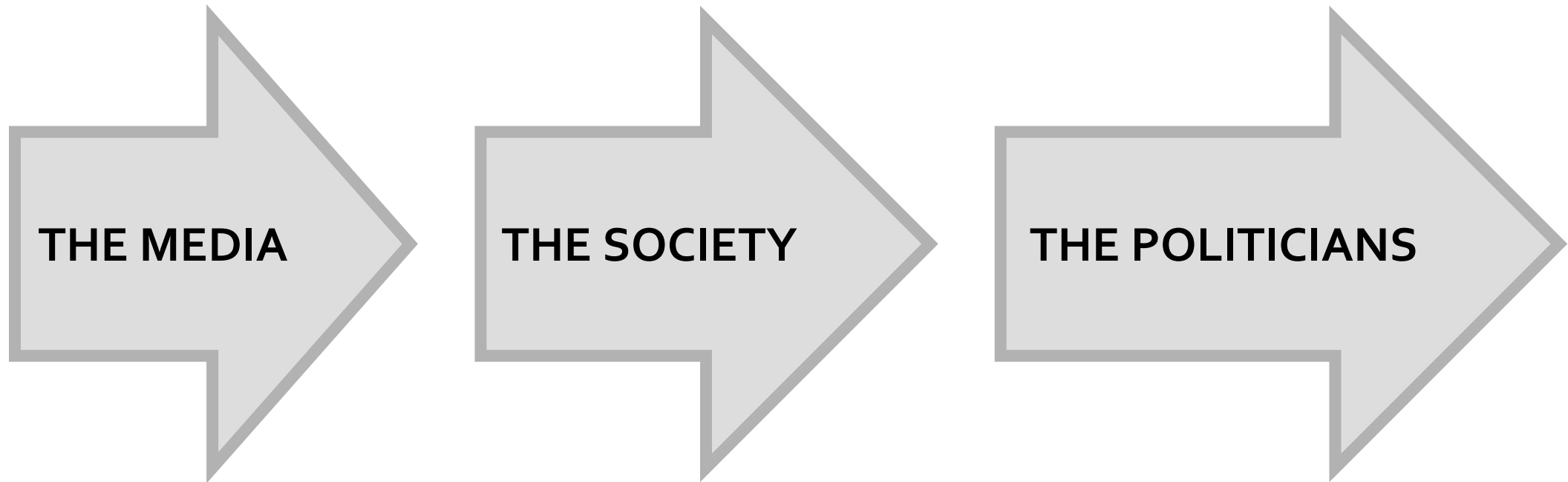
STEREOTYPICAL CRIMINALS IN THE MEDIA

Media selectivity often leads to stereotypical portrayals of perpetrators

- psychopaths and lunatics
- criminals from the social underclass
- "mystery" perpetrator



PENAL POPULISM



ROMANTICIZING CRIMINALS

- romanticization of criminals portrays them as heroic or fascinating, creating a distorted view of crime and its consequences.
- media often glorify perpetrators and overlook victims
- nicknames (e.g., Richard Ramirez, Jeffrey Dahmer) make criminals seem like fictional characters



SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF CRIMINALS – OWN STUDY

My study used two surveys with the same questions but different descriptions of Jeffrey Dahmer. One version focused on the brutality of his crimes, while the other highlighted his personal problems. A total of 116 people participated.

- **Violent version** → anger, fear, strong condemnation, no belief in rehabilitation
- **Softer version** → more sympathy, openness to remorse and rehabilitation

CONCLUSION

As one of the primary channels of information the media play a significant role in shaping public opinion about criminals. Their narratives not only influence public attitudes towards the perpetrators themselves but can also shape approaches to law, justice, and security.

This presentation highlights the need to increase awareness of the media's responsibility.

Accurate and unbiased reporting is crucial to maintaining healthy community attitudes toward crime.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION