COPS & ROBBERS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION'S PORTRAYAL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND RELATED ISSUES

Thesis for the Degree of M. S.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
JACK RAYMOND GREENE
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ABSTRACT

COPS & ROBBERS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF TELEVISION'S PORTRAYAL OF LAW
ENFORCEMENT AND RELATED ISSUES

By

Jack Raymond Greene

This study examined television's characterization of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers and compared these images with information contained in the professional literature in an effort to delineate any disparities which may have existed.

The study essentially pursued the following questions:

1. To what extent is violence portrayed in television's depiction of the law enforcement officer? Violence perpetrated by the police? Violence perpetrated against the police?
2. How is police authority presented on television?
3. How are victims of crime portrayed on television? How are criminals portrayed? What relationship between victim and criminal is presented?
4. How are the police portrayed in their occupational setting?

5. What proportion of a police officer's time is devoted to law enforcement? To service-related functions?
6. To what extent does television accurately portray crime in America?

To investigate the preceding questions, two major hypotheses, which were further operationalized in the form of eight subhypotheses, were advanced. To facilitate data collection, two detailed observation schedules were constructed. The study involved a content analysis of television programing using four independent researchers to insure reliability of the coding instruments.

A selected sample of 48 hours of television programing portraying police officers in a modern context was observed during the research period. Twelve variables were identified for observation using the structured observation schedules.

Data analysis consisted in tabulating the recorded observation for each variable and a series of cross-tabulations to determine network and individual program variations. The resultant information was then compared with survey and research materials contained in the professional literature.

The analysis revealed that television's portrayal of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers is

incongruent with the existing literature in that television portrays:

1. disproportionate levels of violent crime,
2. criminals as belonging to the middle and upper classes, to the exclusion of lower class criminality,
3. victims as predominantly from the middle and upper classes,
4. the image that criminals are victimizing strangers, and
5. the police in a strict law enforcement context with little reference to service-related functions.

The major implications derived from the findings indicate that television may function to reduce community understanding regarding the prevention of crime, reinforce criminal behavior, particularly in the lower class, and impede the selection and retention of qualified police personnel. Finally, the conclusion which was drawn from the findings indicated that the television industry has abrogated its social responsibility to inform the public on issues relating to the control of crime in favor of a more sensational approach.

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By

Jack Raymond Greene

A THESIS

Submitted to
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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School of Criminal Justice

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To my parents, whose love and encouragement have been continuing sources of inspiration.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES viii

LIST OF FIGURES ix

Chapter

I. THE PROBLEM 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM 4

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM 5

SCOPE OF THE STUDY 9

DEFINITION OF TERMS 9

OVERVIEW 11

II. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS 12

The Authoritarian Model 13

The Libertarian Model 15

The Soviet-Totalitarian Model 17

The Social Responsibility Model 20

FOUR FUNCTIONS OF TELEVISION 24

The Information Function 25

The Instructional/Educational Function . . 29

The Advertising Function 32

The Entertainment Function 34

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS 37

Chapter

		Page
	TELEVISION AND ITS EFFECTS	46
	HYPOTHESES	52
III.	DESIGN OF THE STUDY	55
	POPULATION AND SAMPLE	55
	METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION	58
	OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	62
	Setting	62
	Age	64
	Estimated Socio-Economic Level	64
	Sex and Race	65
	Criminal/Victim Relationship	66
	Additional Themes	67
	Police Authority Level	68
	Scene Tone	69
	Police Violence Level	69
	Police Viewed in Other Social Contexts	70
	Time	70
	DATA ANALYSIS	71
	LIMITATIONS IN DESIGN	72
IV.	ANALYSIS	74
	THE NATURE OF TELEVISION CRIME	74
	TELEVISION AND ITS CRIMINALS	81
	Offender Age	81
	Sex	82

Chapter Page

Race 83

Socio-Economic Level 85

Legitimacy of Occupation 87

TELEVISED VICTIMIZATION 89

Victim Age 89

Sex 90

Race 90

Socio-Economic Level 92

Victim/Criminal Relationship 94

THE POLICE FUNCTION 96

POLICE AUTHORITY 100

POLICE SOCIAL INTERACTION 103

THE POLICE AND VIOLENCE 107

VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY THE POLICE 110

VIOLENCE AGAINST THE POLICE 113

AUTHORITY AND VIOLENCE 117

POLICE AUTHORITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION . . 120

POLICE VIEWED IN OTHER SOCIAL CONTEXTS . . . 123

NETWORK VARIATIONS 123

SUPPORT OF MAJOR HYPOTHESES 126

V. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 132

SUMMARY 132

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS 136

Chapter Page

The Police and Crime Prevention 136

Reinforcing Criminal Behavior 137

The Selection and Retention of Police Officers 139

CONCLUSION 141

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 142

BIBLIOGRAPHY 145

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Selected Sample of Television Programs Relating to the Law Enforcement Occupation	57
2.	The Nature and Frequency of Television Crime	76
3.	Crimes Against People/Crimes Against Property	77
4.	Racial Distribution of Televised Offenders	83
5.	Television Offenders by Socio-Economic Level	86
6.	Comparison Between Socio-Economic Level and Legitimacy of Occupation for Criminal Characters	88
7.	Racial Distribution for Victim Characters	91
8.	Distribution of Victim Characters by Socio-Economic Level	92
9.	Justification for Police Involvement	97
10.	Police Authority Index	104
11.	Rank by Police Social Interaction Index	106
12.	Frequency of Occurrence for All Violent Acts	108
13.	Violence Index for Sample Programs	111
14.	Sample Programs by Police Violence Index	112
15.	Police Danger Index	114
16.	Comparison Among Networks for Violence, Authority, and Social Interaction Indexes	125
17.	Rank Order of Networks by Violence, Authority, and Social Interaction Indexes	126

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Rationales for Mass Media	23
2.	Basic Communication Process	39
3.	Successive Communications	39
4.	Mechanical Model for Communications	40
5.	Communication With Feedback	41
6.	Communication With Noise	42
7.	Frames of Reference	44
8.	The Communication Process in Social Situations	45
9.	Data Collection Schedule of Demographic Information	60
10.	Television Observation Schedule	61
11.	Matrix of Criminal/Victim Relationship	66
12.	Police Authority Index by Police Violence Index	118
13.	Police Authority by Police Social Interaction	121

Chapter I

THE PROBLEM

> Most conceptions, and misconceptions, of law enforcement are derived from motion pictures, television shows, and mystery stories. . . . The myths persist, and the over-dramatized portrayals of the past, plus the few misfits of the present, have succeeded in cruelly smearing the ordinary policeman, in fact the entire police service.[1]

Law enforcement activities have recently acquired a high degree of visibility in the press, motion pictures, and television. As the public's concern over the rising crime rate has increased, and the slogan "Law and Order" has become the political platform for many a would-be candidate, the mass media have begun to focus their attention on the activities of the police. In particular, the television industry has demonstrated a dramatic increase in its programing of police shows over the past two decades.

The police officer has been portrayed on television since the early 1950's. Police programing has increased each year, and today the adept viewer may, with almost no interruption, view the "police-in-action" every night of the week. To the casual observer, this television fascination

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[1]Michael J. Murphy, "Improving the Law Enforcement Image," The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science, LVI, 1 (1965), 106.

with the activities of the police appears to be entertaining and harmless; however, upon closer examination the question may be raised whether the content of these police shows contributes to the public's understanding of the police role.

There is a strong possibility that the media, particularly television, have become a major source contributing to the public's misunderstanding of the police officer's role. Both the media and the public seem somewhat ambivalent about what the role of a police officer is, or, for that matter, what it should be. "Television drama and the literature of detective fiction illustrate this ambivalence toward policemen, portraying them either as supersleuths or as mental pygmies, constantly outwitted by daring criminals and dashing private eyes."[2]

Additionally, the police officer's role is misunderstood in terms of function. Television portrays the police officer in the sensational role of "crime fighter and "crook catcher," with little attention to his service responsibility. This skewed presentation of the police function led one commentator on the subject to note:

> This is the season of the cop shows. There are dozens of them. They are all around us. The only thing they all share is heroes carrying shields and guns. That plus an incredible collection of

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[2]Charles B. Saunders, Jr., Upgrading the American Police (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1970), p. 15.

prime-time half-truths, illusions, stupidities, and outright lies.[3]

It must be noted that television, or the mass communications industry, is not totally responsible for its content. After all this industry, like any other, must be responsive to its consumers. George Gallup once wrote, "There is no denying that a constant and ready market exists for anything sensational, whether it be in a newspaper, a magazine, a book or a motion picture"[4]--or, one might add, a television program. However, if the laws of supply and demand are left to operate regardless of their effect on the community, we as a civilization may cease to exist. For this reason, government regulation has been imposed upon the television industry and certain "evils" have been legislated against. For instance, such topics as sex and overt violence may not be shown on television. But what about depicting an occupational role in an unreal fashion, particularly when a public understanding of that role is crucial to its fulfillment?

Arthur Niederhoffer, in Behind the Shield, considered the media image of the police officer as a major

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[3]Robert Daly, "Police Report on the Cops Shows," The New York Times Magazine, November 19, 1972.

[4]George Gallup, "What Is Public Opinion?" National Probation and Parole Association Journal, IV (October, 1958), 306, cited in Stephen Schafer and Richard D. Knudten, Juvenile Delinquency: An Introduction (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 239.

obstacle in the professionalization of the police. "A warped conception of policemen has been cultivated in the mass media. The public holds fast to the derogatory stereotypes of the grafting cop, the sadistic cop, the dumb cop, and the thick-brogued cop."[5] These stereotypes pervade citizen attitudes and contribute immensely to the low status accorded the police.

If we are to attempt rationally to confront the problems of the police image, we must determine what image is being projected to the public by means of television. If no attempt is made to ascertain the image television is projecting to the public, the police will remain relegated to the position of playing cops and robbers in the public's eye, and, accordingly, to low professional status.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study involves an examination of the content of television programing relating to the law enforcement occupation. Additionally, the study seeks to establish any discrepancy that might exist between television's characterization of the law enforcement occupational role and the role enunciated in the professional literature. Essentially, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

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[5]Arthur Niederhoffer, Behind the Shield (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1969), p. 21.

1. To what extent is violence portrayed in television's depiction of the law enforcement officer? Violence perpetrated by the police? Violence perpetrated against the police?

2. How is police authority presented by television?

3. How are victims of crime portrayed by television? How are criminals portrayed? What relationship between victim and criminal is presented?

4. How are the police portrayed in their occupational setting?

5. What proportion of a police officer's time is devoted to law enforcement? To service-related functions?

6. To what extent does television accurately portray crime in America?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

For the police to function effectively within the community, the public and the police must understand the role of law enforcement in a democratic society. "Law enforcement in America is not the maintenance of a monarch, the suppression of popular opinion, or the protection of elites. It is every man's function of maintaining security of person and property, delegated to specialists--the policemen."[6]

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[6]Victor G. Strecher, The Environment of Law Enforcement--A Community Relations Guide (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 15.

However, despite efforts to develop community understanding regarding the law enforcement occupation, certain evidence suggests the community is not fully aware of the occupational role of the law enforcement officer. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice noted that "there is limited understanding by the public of the nature of the police task."[7] The Commission also noted that the public's image of the police or "police work" "conjures up in some minds a dramatic contest between a policeman and a criminal in which the party with the stronger arm or the craftier wit prevails."[8]

An additional variable that further exacerbates this already complex situation is the pervasiveness of television in American society. The Surgeon General, reporting on television's importance in American culture, noted the significance of television, in America, as a twentieth century cultural medium:

> In the span of only a quarter century, television has achieved a place in American homes unmatched by any other appliance, convenience, or medium of communication. Not only is it ubiquitous--over 96 percent of our homes contain at least one set--but audience rating services indicate that the amount of daily use

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[7]The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, Task Force Report: The Police (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 134.

[8]The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968), p. 239.

> made of these sets is truly staggering. The average home set is said to be turned on more than six hours per day.[9]

Television crosses ethnic, socio-economic, age, and cultural barriers; research indicates that "television plays a part in our daily lives far beyond actual viewing."[10]

Research in the area of mass communications has indicated television is a primary source of information about occupational roles,[11] and that individuals use the information obtained from viewing television to reinforce existing values and attitudes and to serve as a source of norms and values that offer solutions to personal problems.[12] Theoretically, the information obtained from television will be contrasted and compared with additional sources of information, i.e. the school, the family, the peer group, and contact with individuals in their occupational roles. However,

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[9]George A. Comstock, Eli A. Rubenstein, and John P. Murray (eds.), Television and Social Behavior: Reports and Papers, A Report to the Surgeon General's Scientific Committee on Television and Social Behavior, Vol. III (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 1.

[10]Ibid., p. 15.

[11]For a complete review of the information potential of television regarding occupational roles, see: Melvin L. DeFleur, "Occupational Roles as Portrayed on Television," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXVIII, 1 (1964), 57-74.

[12]Walter M. Gerson, "Mass Media Socialization Behavior: Negro-White Differences," Social Forces, XLV, 1 (1966), 40-50.

information regarding the occupational role of the police officer is difficult to obtain. Police contact is often very minimal, with few people encountering the police officer in his occupational role. The police acting as intervention agents are seldom called by the majority of the public; consequently, the police role as perceived by the general public becomes largely a product of television's depiction of the law enforcement occupation.

It is hypothesized that given the significance of the law enforcement occupation in an urbanized, heterogeneous, and sometimes frustrating society, the difference between television's presentation of the law enforcement agent and the reality of that occupational role creates many problems for modern law enforcement. These problems manifest themselves in terms of the public's ambivalence toward police, police applicants' distorted expectations of "police work," and working police officers' role dissonance.

The significance, then, of this research is that it attempts to ascertain the police image as depicted on television and to separate fact from fiction, in an effort to assist in the resolution of a practical problem confronting modern law enforcement--namely, improving public and police understanding of the law enforcement occupational role.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

From a criminal justice viewpoint, research in mass communications has traditionally centered upon the controversy over free press and fair trial. There is a veritable plethora of literature on this subject; however, research undertakings relating to the police image as presented by the media are, for all practical purposes, nonexistent.

This study, then, deals specifically with the image of the police that television is presenting to the public. Television programing, for the purpose of this research, is restricted to those television programs appearing on the three major networks between the hours of 7:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. Program selection includes only those programs dealing specifically with the law enforcement occupational role in a modern context.

This study also attempts to assess the difference between the television police image and the reality of the occupation as depicted in the writings of leading police experts on the subject.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In an effort to acquaint the reader with terms used in subsequent chapters, it seems appropriate to delineate these terms in the contexts in which they are used. The following terms are defined in an attempt to fulfill this task.

Communication: Refers to the process through which thoughts, images, ideas, and attitudes are communicated to the audience. In the case of television, this communication is presented in two distinct forms--visually and audibly. The term also refers to the message itself.

Communications: Refers to more than one communication or message. The term denotes either multiple messages that are received by the audience or multiple institutions, i.e. radio, television, movies, newspapers.

Mass Communications: Refers to the process through which communication is carried out to a widely scattered, heterogeneous audience through the use of multiple communications institutions, i.e. television, radio, movies, newspapers.

Networks: For the purpose of this study, the term refers to the three major national mass communications networks--The American Broadcasting Company (ABC), The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), and The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).

Media: Refers to the plural of medium; the term is synonymous with mass communications.

The Press: Refers to the print media in mass communications, i.e. books, magazines, and newspapers.

OVERVIEW

The primary concern of this research is to conduct a content analysis of television programing relating to the law enforcement occupation and to compare these data with the established norms contained in the professional literature. Additionally, this research is concerned with assessing the role of television as an agent in the socialization process. Therefore, in Chapter II the philosophical, political, sociological, and psychological considerations of mass communications in general and television in particular are reviewed.

Chapter III delineates the research methods employed in this study, including the population and sample, variables to be examined, and operational definitions. An analysis of the results of the study is presented in Chapter IV using as a comparative base available survey and literary materials collected from the professional literature. Chapter V is devoted to presenting the major findings, the implications of these findings, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this section of the study is to acquaint the reader with certain philosophical and theoretical considerations that define the operation of the mass communications industry.

To comprehend fully the impact of mass communications on society--any society--it is first necessary to examine the nature of the society in which mass communications operates. It must be realized at the outset that mass communications does not exist in a vacuum; it is molded and shaped by the society it serves. To study mass communications, then, is to study the political, economic, and cultural parameters that delimit its operation.

> Mass communication is shaped and colored and flavored from the beginning by society. Each society controls its mass media in accordance with its policies and needs. The controls may be legal and political (through laws and censorship), economic (through ownership and support), or social (through criticism and the giving and withholding of patronage).[1]

Since the beginning of mass communication there have existed four climates or philosophies that have influenced

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[1]William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communications (Rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 29.

its structure, its relationship to society, and its subsequent effect upon society. It has been argued that two of these philosophies are merely extensions of the others; however, for the sake of perspective, it is necessary to highlight each historically and operationally. These philosophies have commonly been known as the Authoritarian, Libertarian, Soviet-Totalitarian, and Social Responsibility philosophies of the mass media.[2]

The Authoritarian Model

The Authoritarian model of mass communications has been the most pervasive of all the models, from both a historical and a geographical context. This philosophy had its origins in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries during the Renaissance period, and has continued to influence mass communications in modern times.

During the Renaissance period much political and social thought was engaged in contemplating the relationship between the individual and the state. The early influences of Plato and Machiavelli, and later, Thomas Hobbes, were used by the state to justify its superiority over the individual. In that period the individual could not realize his potential without the state, and when the press emerged

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[2]Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, Four Theories of the Press (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956).

it was destined to assume its place as a subordinate to the state. The monarch was absolute; therefore, the chief purpose of the media was to serve the state by advancing the policies of the government. "The press therefore functioned from the top down. The rulers of the time used the press to inform the people of what the rulers thought they should know and the policies the rulers thought they should support."[3] The state, in attempting to coerce compliance from the press, constructed licensing and patent regulations that enabled the state to regulate the flow of information. Additionally, if the press ventured into a critical posture toward the state, legal sanctions were imposed to force compliance.

Truth, under the Authoritarian model, emanates from those in power. Under this philosophy, the source of truth has two characteristics: "(1) It is restricted: not every man has access to it. (2) It becomes the standard for all members of the society."[4] The leaders of the time, for whatever reason they were empowered to lead, dispensed the only truth for that society. "An Authoritarian state always places a man or a few men in position to lead or to be obeyed; these rulers and their advisors stand at the locus of power."[5]

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[3]Ibid., p. 3.

[4]Rivers and Schramm, op. cit., p. 30.

[5]Ibid.

The Authoritarian model of mass communications is not restricted to the past. Many modern nations have embraced this philosophy, particularly "Japan, Imperial Russia, Germany, Spain, and many of the Asiatic and South American governments."[6]

The Authoritarian model has most definitely influenced the operation of mass communication over many years, and has become the foundation from which additional philosophies have developed.

The Libertarian Model

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, political and social thought began to drift from the established Authoritarian views, and a new theory of mass communications emerged. The sovereignty of the monarch came under attack and the political, social, and economic writings of Locke, Milton, Mills, and Jefferson rejected the Authoritarian principles of the past and proclaimed the rights of the individual.

No longer was the individual subordinate to the state; instead the reverse was true. The essence of the Libertarian model of mass communications was captured in the following excerpt:

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, op. cit., p. 10.

> The task of society is to provide a free market place of ideas so that men may exercise reason and choice. In place of more formal controls, libertarianism choses to trust the self-righting process of truth. This implies that ideas must have an equal chance and that everyone must have access to the channels of communication.[7]

Under the Libertarian model, the press could not be coerced by the state to maintain or advocate the support of state policies. To the contrary, "It [the press] was charged with the duty of keeping government from overstepping its bounds. In the words of Jefferson, it was to provide that check on government which no other institution could provide."[8]

The media, under the Libertarian model, served society additionally by providing information, entertainment, and advertising goods and services. Access to media ownership was no longer controlled by the state; instead, ownership was based on the economic ability to sustain such an enterprise.

> The libertarians opposed government monopolies of the owners of communication. They argued that anyone, citizen or alien, who had the inclination should have the unrestricted opportunity to own and operate a unit of mass communication. The field was open to all.[9]

Ownership was based on free enterprise and operated in the open marketplace. Success or failure would result from

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[7]Rivers and Schramm, op. cit., p. 39.

[8]Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, op. cit., p. 51.

[9]Ibid., p. 52.

the product produced; government control was considered intolerable.

The Libertarian model embodied the philosophy of individualism. Under this system the press flourished, particularly in Great Britain and the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Media ownership increased at a tremendous rate, and "many small, privately owned newspapers represented every shade and variety of viewpoint."[10]

This philosophy was embraced by the many western democracies, and even today the spirit of the Libertarian movement is vital. However, the unrestricted activities of the media eventually were challenged and a more sophisticated philosophy has emerged. This is not to say that the Libertarian movement or philosophy was uneventful, for despite the criticism it has received, its presence marks a profound departure from the philosophies of the past; "it has struck off the manacles from the mind of man, and it has opened up new vistas for humanity."[11]

The Soviet-Totalitarian Model

The Soviet-Totalitarian model or philosophy of mass communication may be viewed as an extension or modification

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[10]Rivers and Schramm, op. cit., p. 39.

[11]Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, op. cit., p. 71.

of the earlier Authoritarian philosophy. This concept, ironically, had its origins during the nineteenth century when most of the world was caught up in the Libertarian movement. At that time Karl Marx, the father of modern communism, developed his theory of the relationship between the individual and the state.

"Marx concluded that productive forces would always change faster than the relationships of the producers--workers and capitalists--thus throwing society out of balance."[12] This imbalance would be evidenced by a growing and more desperate working class, which eventually would "rise, liquidate the surviving capitalists, take over the means of production, and then build a classless society."[13] As history has witnessed, the Marxist philosophy never reached fruition; instead, it was modified by Lenin and Stalin and the state once again became supreme.

Marxist-Leninist doctrine became the political philosophy of the Soviet Union, and "far from the concept of the press as a Fourth Estate that would watch and report on and criticize the government, Soviet Mass Communication became an instrument of government."[14] Mass communication, under

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[12]Rivers and Schramm, op. cit., p. 41.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., p. 42.

the Soviet system, is seen as an instrument of the state to indoctrinate, persuade, mobilize, and direct the population.[15]

The Soviet-Totalitarian philosophy of mass communications initially appears to be closely identified with the Authoritarian philosophy of the past; however, closer examination reveals important distinctions. Under the Authoritarian approach, the chief purpose of the media, it will be remembered, was to support the policies of those in power. However, since under Marxist-Leninist doctrine the Party reigns supreme, and theoretically the Party encompasses the body politic, the media are seen as supporting the entire social system rather than the individual policies of those in power. The second major distinction between the Authoritarian and Soviet-Totalitarian models lies in the control and ownership of the media. The Soviet-Totalitarian model affords no private ownership; everything is the property of the state. No licensing and patent regulations are imposed on the media, as was the case in the Authoritarian model. In fact, even the direction the media take is controlled by the state. "Communist rulers direct the communication media primarily through careful selection and training of journalists and other personnel concerned with the spreading of

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[15]See: W. Phillips Davison, International Political Communication (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965), p. 103.

ideas, general directives, and a series of mechanisms for supervision and guidance."[16]

The Soviet-Totalitarian philosophy of mass communications has dominated such modern nations as the Soviet Union, Communist China, and Chile, and represents a philosophical orientation toward mass communication that has had a lasting impact on much of the world's population.

The Social Responsibility Model

The Social Responsibility philosophy of mass communication is largely a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Social, political, and technological advances made at that time ultimately affected the communication industry and reshaped the existing Libertarian philosophy.

Although the Social Responsibility model adheres to the Libertarian principles, greater emphasis has been placed on the effects of the communication process. Under Libertarian philosophy, the media were unrestrained and free to conduct their own affairs. However, it was soon realized that "freedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary

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[16]Ibid., p. 109.

society."[17] If the press or the mass communications industry realizes this obligation and attempts to operate in a responsible manner, then the Libertarian system of communication is operable. However, if responsibility is not realized and attempts to operate in a responsible manner are not undertaken within the industry, "some other agency must see that the essential functions of mass communication are carried out."[18]

What are the functions of mass communications that fall under the Social Responsibility model? The following six functions have generally been assigned to the mass communications industry under the Libertarian approach:

1. To provide a medium for discussion, debate, and exchange of information on public affairs.
2. To enlighten the public so as to enhance the system of self-government.
3. To act as the Fourth Estate as a check on the powers of government.
4. To service the economic sector by advertising products.
5. To provide entertainment.
6. To maintain its own financial resources so as not to be controlled by special interest groups.

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[17] Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, op. cit., p. 74.

[18] Ibid.

These six functions have generally been accepted under both the Libertarian and Social Responsibility models. However, the Social Responsibility model is much more critical of the operation and ownership of the media.

An additional factor that has led the press into a position of assuming responsibility for its operation is the increased emphasis on professionalism in the field of journalism.

> Today, when newspaper publishers speak about their calling, such phrases as "the public's right to know" and "the public responsibility of the press" are likely to creep into their talk. Such ideas and the press performance resulting from them represent an important modification of traditional libertarian theory, for nothing in libertarian theory established the public's right to information or required the publisher to assume moral responsibility.[19]

This feeling of personal responsibility in the mass communications industry is generally advocated by those in the industry, and government regulation has been employed to intervene where the media have overstepped their bounds.

The preceding discussion has outlined the historical, philosophical, and operational development of the mass communications industry. Figure 1 presents a comparison of those rationales.

The mass communications industry in America has evolved from the early Libertarian philosophy, in which the media operated in an unrestricted manner, to the Social

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[19]Ibid., p. 73.

FOUR RATIONALES FOR THE MASS MEDIA

	AUTHORITARIAN	LIBERTARIAN	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	SOVIET-TOTALITARIAN
Developed	in 16th and 17th century England; widely adopted and still practiced in many places	adopted by England after 1688, and in U.S.; influential elsewhere	in U.S. in the 20th century	in Soviet Union, although some of the same things were done by Nazis and Italians
Out of	philosophy of absolute power of monarch, his government, or both	writings of Milton, Locke, Mill, and general philosophy of rationalism and natural rights	writing of W. E. Hocking, Commission on Freedom of Press, and practitioners; media codes	Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist thought, with mixture of Hegel and 19th century Russian thinking
Chief purpose	to support and advance the policies of the government in power; and to service the state	to inform, entertain, sell — but chiefly to help discover truth, and to check on government	to inform, entertain, sell — but chiefly to raise conflict to the plane of discussion	to contribute to the success and continuance of the Soviet socialist system, and especially to the dictatorship of the party
Who has right to use media?	whoever gets a royal patent or similar permission	anyone with economic means to do so	everyone who has something to say	loyal and orthodox party members
How are media controlled?	government patents, guilds, licensing, sometimes censorship	by "self-righting process of truth" in "free market place of ideas," and by courts	community opinion, consumer action, professional ethics	surveillance and economic or political action of government
What forbidden?	criticism of political machinery and officials in power	defamation, obscenity, indecency, wartime sedition	serious invasion of recognized private rights and vital social interests	criticism of party objectives as distinguished from tactics
Ownership	private or public	chiefly private	private unless government has to take over to insure public service	public
Essential differences from others	instrument for effecting government policy, though not necessarily government owned	instrument for checking on government and meeting other needs of society	media must assume obligation of social responsibility; and if they do not, someone must see that they do	state-owned and closely controlled media existing solely as arm of state

Source: Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, Four Theories of the Press (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956).

Figure 1. Rationales for Mass Media

Responsibility model, in which responsibility for media content has been assumed by the media and government intervention into media affairs has been undertaken to ensure responsible media.

As noted earlier, the media perform essentially six functions in modern society. Let us turn our attention to four of these functions that relate to the content of media presentations.

FOUR FUNCTIONS OF TELEVISION

The television industry in America, operating within the constraints of the Social Responsibility model of mass communications, serves essentially four functions in modern society. First, it serves society by providing information and informing the public about current situations in the political, social, and economic sectors. Second, television performs an instructional or educational function by cultivating and molding public opinion. Third, television is engaged in an advertising function in which the consumer and the supplier are provided a medium for exchange. Finally, television fulfills an entertainment function, thereby providing the public with a means of relaxation from the frustrations of everyday life. Each of these functions may be reviewed in terms of individual segments of television programing, i.e. news programs, documentaries and educational programing, commercial air time, and the bulk of television

programing--the specials, movies, and situational dramas. It should be realized, however, that separating these tasks becomes difficult when faced with programing which, in effect, simultaneously performs all of these functions.

Although the major concern of this study is to analyze the police image as presented in the entertainment sector, it is necessary to identify each of television's functions in an effort to ascertain the impact television has had on the lives of millions of Americans. The television industry has a tendency to emphasize its entertainment and advertising functions rather than its information and educational functions. "Typically, the broadcast media prefer entertainment while the print media favor news and information."[20] However, closer examination reveals television fulfills the educational function, as well.

The Information Function

> The mass media are society's institutionalized channels of communications. Like all institutions, they must have a raison d'etre which is functional for the society. They must fill an existing need or a need that is created and, unless they are responsive to changing conditions within the society and the complex of interrelated institutions serving it, they may cease to be functional and will disappear.[21]

Americans, like any modern people, thrive on information. We collect it, store it, disseminate it, and

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[20]Robert K. Baker and Sandra J. Ball, Mass Media and Violence, Vol. IX (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 29.

[21]Ibid., p. 187.

occasionally reevaluate it. "To survive, individually or grouped into societies, we need continuing inputs of information both on changes in the physical environment and on the activities of other individuals and societies."[22] This insatiable need for information was well documented in research conducted during World War II.[23] Studies conducted during that period found that because of the war effort the mass communication industry was unable to fulfill the public's need for information. Because of this "information shortage," the public began to seek out other sources of information. When this occurred, rumors began to flourish and continued to do so until the media were able to fill that void.

Television, in particular, has an extraordinary ability to disseminate information. In recent years television has brought the Viet Nam War into the homes of millions of Americans, projected to the viewing public the surface of the moon, and probed its lenses into the sensitive political debates over the Watergate incident. At no other time in American history, or for that matter the history of the world, has the public at large had the opportunity to witness, through television, the making of history.

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[22]Ibid., p. 188.

[23]Gordon W. Allport and Leo J. Postman, "The Basic Psychology of Rumors," Process and Effects of Mass Communication, ed. Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts (Rev. ed.; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955).

Recently, however, television has been severely criticized for what is perceived to be the manipulation of information and a distortion of reality. Much of the criticism has been directed at the amalgamation and consolidation of mass communications and its control by large corporate interests.

> Economic conditions have pressured the media toward bigness and consolidation. This has produced within some segments of the public a perception of increasing uniformity and blandness in media content which these people feel reflects manipulation of the media by the agencies or persons in control. . . . These persons feel the "free and open marketplace of ideas" on which a democracy is predicated is diminishing.[24]

Proponents of this position argue vehemently that media manipulation of information has succeeded in reducing public understanding of crucial issues confronting modern society, and, as a result, many of these groups "now feel it necessary to launch their own periodicals to present their side of the argument."[25] This phenomenon is not limited to the print media, but pervades the entire mass communications system.

Additional criticism leveled at the media refers not to the quantity of information disseminated but to the quality of that information. Critics from a law enforcement vantage point have begun to realize that much of the

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[24]Baker and Ball, op. cit., p. 189.

[25]Ibid.

information that is disseminated fails to reflect the problems of law enforcement. The media have been criticized for portraying the sensational nature of crime and urban violence. The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders captured this widespread dismay about the sensationalizing effects of media coverage in the following excerpt:

> We have found a significant imbalance between what actually happened in our cities and what the newspaper, radio, and television coverage of the riots told us happened. . . . Lacking other sources of information, we formed our original impressions and beliefs from what we saw on television, heard on the radio, and read in newspapers and magazines. We are deeply concerned that millions of other Americans, who must rely on the mass media, likewise formed incorrect impressions and judgments about what went on in many American cities last summer.[26]

The Commission did relieve the media of some of their responsibility for distorting reality during those disburbances, but also stated that the media should be more responsible and operate more professionally when covering riot situations. The Commission concluded that "the media too often did not achieve this level of sophisticated, skeptical, careful news judgement during last summer's riots."[27]

However credible the media are in their efforts to disseminate information, their impact on American society

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[26] Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 363.

[27] Ibid., p. 366.

is tremendous. Fulfilling society's need for information has become and will continue to be a function of the television industry in modern society.

The Instructional/ Educational Function

In addition to being a primary source of information, television serves society by educating the public and by cultivating and molding public opinion. It is hardly necessary to belabor the potential television possesses as an educational or opinion-modification instrument. One need only view the local news commentator delivering an editorial essay or a political candidate proposing a political platform to appreciate the instructional value of television. Additionally, television has matured over the years in its efforts to educate those in society who, for one reason or another, have been unable to participate in formal educational institutions. Not only are educational institutions broadcasting on local UHF channels, but the television industry itself, in the form of the Public Broadcasting Corporation, has established educational and cultural programing to educate the public on various political, social, economic, and cultural subjects.

Television usage does not stop here, for in thousands of educational institutions across the country television technology has been applied to educate students in the classroom setting. Closed-circuit television has invaded the

education sector and has become firmly entrenched as a modern educational tool.

Educational television was given its initial impetus by many philanthropic organizations and in 1952, after much debate, the Federal Communications Commission established 252 channels exclusively for educational television.[28] Since that time public television has increased its programing and audience, and offers a variety of educational programs.

The commercial television industry, as well, has realized its potential and responsibility in the area of public education. The National Association of Broadcasters, to which the television industry subscribes, has established a set of guidelines for television programing. The "Television Code" clearly recognizes the educational responsibility of television, and states:

> Commercial television provides a valuable means of augmenting the educational and cultural influences of schools, institutions of higher learning, the home, the church, museums, foundations, and other institutions devoted to education and culture.[29]

Furthermore, the "Television Code" states that:

> It is in the interest of television as a vital medium to encourage and promote the broadcast of programs

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[28]For a critique on public television see: Charles S. Steinberg, "EYT: Public Television," Mass Media and Communication, ed. Charles S. Steinberg (2nd ed.; New York: Hastings House, 1972), pp. 341-350.

[29]"The Television Code," cited in William L. Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (Rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 257.

> presenting genuine artistic or literary material, valid moral and social issues, significant, controversial and challenging concepts and other subject matter involving adult themes.[30]

The "Television Code" also vilifies those broadcasters who would ignore their educational responsibility for more sensationalized programing:

> The highest degree of care should be exercised to preserve the integrity of such programs and to insure that the selection of themes, their treatment and presentation are made in good faith upon the basis of true instructional and entertainment values, and not for the purpose of sensationalism, to shock or exploit the audience or to appeal to prurient interests or morbid curiosity.[31]

Criticism, from a criminal justice or law enforcement perspective, has been directed at television and the media regarding their educational or instructional abilities. The Kerner Commission reported a failure on the part of the media to educate the public on the causes of social disorder and the underlying problems inherent in the urban city.[32] Television was severely criticized for its coverage of the riots that accompanied the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Allegations have also been made, and in some instances substantiated, that certain media employers actually

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 258.

[32] Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, loc. cit.

staged riot situations in an effort to make their coverage more sensational.[33]

Instances like these point heavily to a reevaluation within the television industry of the content of its educational material. Without this reevaluation, the value of commercial television as a viable educational source will quickly dissipate and its potential as an educational resource will be lost forever.

The Advertising Function

> Advertising has come to play a unique and central role in the functioning of the American economic system. Our skills in producing goods and services have grown so great that production no longer is our primary concern. . . . Instead, distribution has the principal task of maintaining a high level of employment and general prosperity. And the distribution of goods and services depends largely upon the effective use of advertising in the media.[34]

Television not only provides an extensive medium for the producers of goods and services to advertise their products to the public, but also receives its economic support from those advertisers. In 1968, the television industry received 49 percent of the total annual expenditure for advertising in this country;[35] the estimate of advertising

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[33]Ibid., p. 377.

[34]Edwin Emery, Philip H. Ault, and Warren K. Ager, Introduction to Mass Communications (3rd ed.; New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1970), p. 324.

[35]Ibid., p. 140.

revenue paid to the television industry exceeded three billion dollars.[36] It is estimated that by 1975 the annual expenditure for advertising in all media will exceed 25 billion dollars,[37] much of which will be captured by the television industry. The sheer dollar expenditure allocated to the television industry establishes it as the most extensively used vehicle for advertising in American society. But what of the content of these advertisements? What effects do they have and how are they presented?

Stan Freberg, comedian and satirist, addressing the state of the art of American advertising in the television industry, commented: "I have been asked to bring what light I could to the underdeveloped area of television and the overdeveloped area of advertising. . . . First, let us appraise the state of advertising in television, and secondly, the programming which interrupts it."[38] Although Freberg's commentary has been written off by many, his ironic statement strikes the core of the issue.

Television advertising is unduly repetitious, vulgar, and irritating. It is biased, involves conflicting claims,

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[36]Ibid., p. 139.

[37]Ibid., p. 324.

[38]Stan Freberg, "The Freberg Part-time Television Plan," Mass Media in a Free Society, ed. Warren K. Agee (Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1969), p. 63.

and appeals to the emotions of the viewer rather than to his intellect.[39] McLuhan saw advertising as a "redundant barrage of repetition,"[40] and likened the advertising process to brainwashing.

Law enforcement officers have been portrayed in television advertising to elicit sales for cars, tires, throat lozenges, and motorcycles, to mention only a few. In many of these commercials the officer is pictured in a demeaning manner or, even worse, totally removed from his occupational setting. The automobile commercial, depicting a belligerent, degraded, and otherwise stupid southern sheriff, provides an excellent example of this type of characterization.

Whether advertising has any effect on attitudes about law enforcement remains to be seen. What can readily be appreciated, however, is that this type of image presented through advertising does not help the law enforcement occupation.

The Entertainment Function

In 1946 there were six television stations on the air in the United States. Twenty-five years later the

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[39] Emery, Ault and Ager, op. cit., p. 141.

[40] Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 227.

total exceeded 800.[41] The growth of television as an entertainment institution in America has been phenomenal. "A leading show, such as 'Here's Lucy,' may be viewed by over 40 million persons, and NBC's "Saturday Night Movie" may have an audience equal to two-thirds of the total paid attendance for all the nation's movie houses during the entire week."[42] People, for the most part, appear to use television for personal enrichment and as an agent for escape or relaxation. Jack Lyle, commenting on television usage, noted that "the crucial question, of course, becomes the degree to which persons may become so dependent upon this relief that they begin to divorce themselves from the real world."[43] Although the concern of this study lies with the content of television programing rather than the individual's use of that programing, Lyle's statement becomes axiomatic to the resolution of the inquiry at hand. How close to reality is the image television presents?

An investigation of television's reality orientation regarding occupational roles led DeFleur to comment:

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[41]Broadcasting Yearbook, "The ABC's of Radio and Television," Mass Media and Communication, ed. Charles S. Steinberg (2nd ed.; New York: Hastings House, 1972), p. 250.

[42]Baker and Ball, Mass Media and Violence, p. 207.

[43]Jack Lyle, "Television in Daily Life: Patterns of Use Overview," Television and Social Behavior: Reports and Papers, A Report to the Surgeon General's Scientific Committee on Television and Social Behavior, Vol. III, ed. George A. Comstock, Eli A. Rubenstein and John P. Murray (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 15.

> TV provides children with much superficial and misleading information about the labor force of their society. From this they acquire stereotyped beliefs about the world of work. Given the deep significance of occupational roles for both the individual and his society, any learning source which distorts reality . . . may be laying the foundations for difficult personal and social problems.[44]

DeFleur's statement hinges on the assumption, alluded to earlier in this section, that while television may be channeling its efforts toward entertaining the public, in reality the television-audience relationship is a communicator-receiver transfer of information. This transfer of information induces learning, whether consciously or unconsciously. Schramm contended that much "incidental learning" takes place from vicarious contact with television. "Children, like adults, go to the television receiver primarily for entertainment rather than edification, but while being entertained they absorb much 'incidental' information about their society."[45] Additionally, Schramm asserted that the latent content of the communication may be more significant than the manifest.[46]

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[44]Melvin L. DeFleur and Lois B. DeFleur, "The Relative Contribution of Television as a Learning Source for Children's Occupational Knowledge," American Sociological Review, XXXII, 5 (1967), 789.

[45]Ibid., p. 778.

[46]Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts (eds.), The Process and Effects of Mass Communications (Rev. ed.; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 19.

Bearing this in mind, a review of the communication process would seem appropriate to define more clearly the relationship of television as a communicator to its viewing audience. The following section of this study attempts to delineate the television communication process, with particular regard to the projection of the law enforcement image.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

A discussion of the entire communicative process is beyond the scope of the present study. However, it is possible to glean from the existing literature a communications model that may be applied in an explanation of the television industry. To accomplish this task, it is necessary to oversimplify the communicative act and to accept the existence of language as a uniquely human phenomenon.

Communication between and among human beings is fundamental to society's existence.

> The communicative act is the means by which a group's norms are expressed, by means of which social control is exerted, roles are allocated, coordination of effort is achieved, expectations are made manifest, and the entire social process is carried on.[47]

The communicative act may be simplified in the following manner: Language may be viewed as a set of signs or symbols that have been learned by the society and that have

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[47]Melvin L. DeFleur, Theories of Mass Communication (New York: David McKay, 1966), p. 90.

a conventionalized meaning to those individuals.[48] This conventionalized meaning relates to referents that are internalized within the individual and give "meaning" to the signs and symbols. When an individual communicates with another, the communicator selects from his repertoire of referents, translates this into a symbol or sign, and projects it to the individual with whom he is communicating (the receiver) in the form of a message. The receiver, through his senses, receives the message, which is in the form of a symbol or sign, translates it into a referent, and thus finds "meaning" in the communication. It is important to note, however, that to have effective communications the symbol or sign used to convey the message must arouse the same general response within both the individual initiating the communication and its receiver.[49] This concept of "shared meaning"[50] is essential in comprehending the communicative act.

Communications, then, may be visualized in the following manner (see Figure 2). A communicates to B by selecting a referent, assigning it a symbol, and producing it as a communication. B accepts the communicated symbol and

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[48]Ibid., p. 89.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Franklin Fearing, "Human Communication," People, Society, and Mass Communication, ed. Lewis Anthony Dexter and David Manning White (New York: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 37-67.

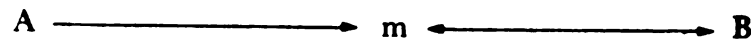

Figure 2. Basic Communication Process[51]

assigns it a referent, thus internalizing A's communication. It must be noted that the message does not simply pass from A to B, but is encoded by A, transmitted to B, and then decoded by B. Accordingly, successive communications or interactions between A and B might be diagramed as shown in Figure 3.

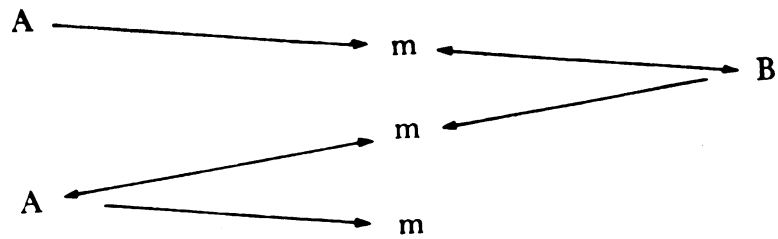

Figure 3. Successive Communications[52]

A communications model developed by Shannon,[53] reproduced as Figure 4, represents this encoding-decoding

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[51]Schramm and Roberts, op. cit., p. 23.

[52]Ibid.

[53]C. Shannon and W. Weaver, The Mathematical Theory of Communication (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

process in the communicative act and incorporates the concept of feedback, which can best be described as the reaction of the receiver to the message of the sender (Figure 4).

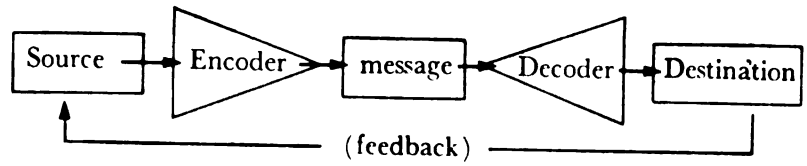

Figure 4. Mechanical Model for Communications[54]

This reaction may manifest itself in compliance with a directive, acceptance or rejection of an idea, or acknowledgement of the interaction, to name only a few possibilities. The form of the feedback, for our purposes, is not as significant at this time. What is significant is the concept that feedback is integral to the communication process. Although the mechanical scheme presented incorporates a feedback component, two forms of feedback are actually necessary to complete this system. Figure 5 shows a return to the original diagram of A communicating with B, and includes the essential feedback components.

When the individual forms and sends a message, two elements of feedback become operable. First, the message

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[54]Schramm and Roberts, op. cit., p. 23.

is encoded by the communicator and presented as a message. Thus the communicator receives his own message and can determine for himself whether or not he has used the proper symbol or sign to convey it. Second, the receiver of the message, after encoding and internalizing it, produces feedback to the communicator. From this feedback the communicator may determine the effectiveness of his communication and its impact on the receiver.

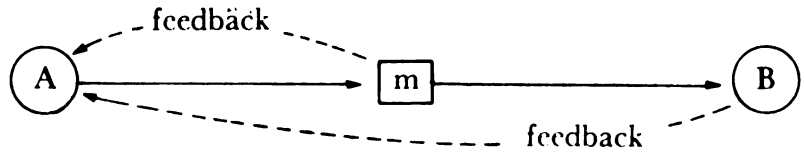

Figure 5. Communication With Feedback[55]

There is, however, an additional variable that complicates the communication process. This variable may be called noise,[56] and it operates as shown in Figure 6.

The receiver may not be totally receptive to the communicator. He may be distracted, disinterested, or oblivious to the incoming message. Additionally, the message itself may be foreign to him and a response on his

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[55]Ibid., p. 26.

[56]Ibid.

part may be misunderstood, avoided, or ignored. Factors such as these reduce the possibility of effective communication.

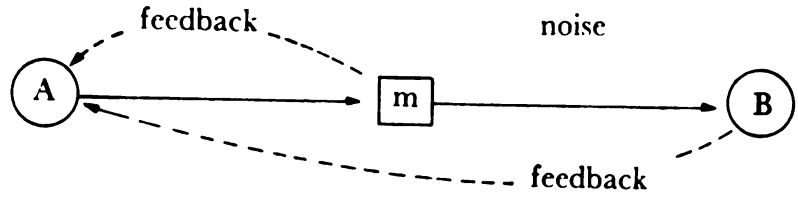

Figure 6. Communication With Noise[57]

While it is highly improbable that an individual has any effect on certain types of noise, i.e. distraction or disinterest, he does have an effect on or can be effective in reducing other forms of noise. These other forms of noise can best be referred to as semantic noise, a term that refers to an improper selection of signs transmitted to the receiver. To appreciate this concept fully, let us return to our initial example of A communicating with B.

It will be remembered that when A first decided to communicate with B he selected a symbol that corresponded to a referent with which A was familiar. A then processed this referent into a message for B's edification. Beyond this, if the communication was to be effective, A, either

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[57]Ibid., p. 27.

consciously or unconsciously, selected a symbol that would correspond to a referent in B's repertoire of experiences. To be an effective communicator, A has made certain assumptions about the referents B would use to interpret A's symbol. A has done this to ensure a "common meaning"[58] for both himself and B. To illustrate this further, in a rather simplistic manner, let's assume that A is a rural farmer and he is trying to communicate with B, an urban city resident, about the type of livestock A is raising. Additionally, let's assume that A raises chickens for sale in the local market. But instead of just raising chickens, A specializes in raising South American chickens called the Aracuana. If A tells B he raises Aracuanas it is doubtful that the message will be understood or the communication effectively transmitted. If A realizes this prior to communicating with B, he may choose to select a symbol that will have more meaning to B. Thus, A tells B that he is raising chickens and, consequently, has included B's reference point in the choice of the symbol. The message, then, can be said to include both A and B's frames of reference,[59] and semantic noise has thus been reduced. Figure 7 represents a visual depiction

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[58]Fearing, "Human Communication," p. 41.

[59]Schramm and Roberts, op. cit., p. 31.

of the message being contained or subsumed within the frames of reference of the participants.

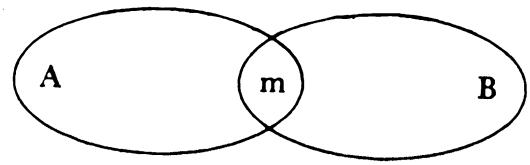

Figure 7. Frames of Reference[60]

Within the context of any social situation or relationship, the communication process requires all the aforementioned criteria to be effective. Particularly important is the concept of "shared meaning" in this process. Without messages being encoded and decoded from similar frames of reference, the process is reduced to people talking past one another rather than to one another. Figure 8 represents a series of communicative acts using all of the previously mentioned principles.

To be effective, the mass communications industry, particularly television, must operate within the parameters of the communicative act; the television industry holds no mystical power to circumvent these principles. Although

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[60]Ibid.

McLuhan[61] would disagree with this position, because he asserted that the medium alone constitutes the message, most observers of the mass communications phenomenon would agree with this statement.

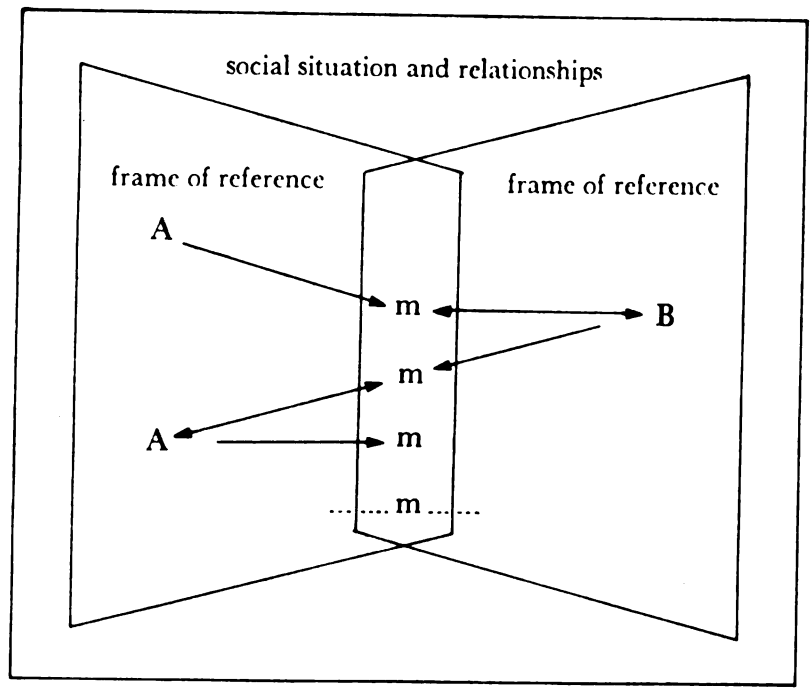

Figure 8. The Communication Process in Social Situations[62]

Now that the basic process of communications has been established, it is important to explore just what effect television has on the viewing public. The following section

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[61]McLuhan, Understanding Media.

[62]Schramm and Roberts, op. cit., p. 33.

briefly reviews research on the effects of television, with particular attention to the socialization process.

TELEVISION AND ITS EFFECTS

The socialization or behavioral modification effects of mass communications, particularly television, on modern culture have been openly debated for many years. Arguments, both pro and con, abound in the literature without reaching conclusive results.

Positions on the subject may be viewed on a continuum from a conservative extreme, asserting that television has little effect on the viewing audience, to a radical extreme, which contends that television has ruined modern civilization. Most positions, however, are assumed to lie between these extremes and, although they may vary by degree, most accept the notion that television has become a primary agent in the socialization process of modern society.

> Mass media have broadened the scope of modern communications, as they have extended the influence of actions and ideas. . . . Theoretically whatever is written, said, or pictured in mass media is either learned or at least unconsciously absorbed by the masses of readers, listeners and viewers.[63]

Research generated in the early 1900's viewed mass communications as having a profound effect on its audience.

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[63]Stephen Schafer and Richard D. Knudten, Juvenile Delinquency: An Introduction (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 238.

Schramm and Roberts[64] called this influence the "Bullet Theory" of media effect. Under this proposition, the audience is considered passive and open to suggestion. The medium provides the necessary suggestion and the audience immediately modifies its behavior to conform to the position the medium is presenting.

As research continued, however, the concept of a passive and inactive audience came under heavy attack. Research of a more sophisticated nature, conducted in the late 1950's, rebuffed the notion of audience passivity and replaced it with the idea that the individual is an active participant in this communication process.[65]

In 1960, Joseph T. Klapper[66] delineated the selectivity and activeness of the media audience. He proposed that individuals "selectively expose" themselves to the media on the basis of their existing opinions and beliefs. Once the individual has exposed himself to certain media content, he "selectively perceives" that which reinforces his existing attitudes, values, and beliefs. Additionally, the individual exercises selectivity in his perceptions by

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[64]Schramm and Roberts, op. cit., p. 10.

[65]See: Raymond Baner, "The Obstinate Audience," American Psychologist, XIX, 5 (1964), 319-328.

[66]Joseph T. Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communications (New York: The Free Press, 1965).

"selectively retaining" that information with which he identifies.[67] Klapper additionally identified those variables that mediate the influence of the media upon the individual viewer. The individual's personal commitment to his group's norms, the effects of opinion leaders who disseminate information, the process of interpersonal dissemination of information, and varied effects of different media are seen as intervening variables that mediate the impact of the media.[68] "These mediating factors are such that they typically render mass communication a contributory agent, but not the sole cause, in a process of reinforcing the existing conditions."[69]

Unfortunately, longitudinal studies on media effects have not been undertaken. As a newly emerging field, research in mass communication regarding prolonged periods of viewing time is painfully absent. Researchers such as Lazarsfeld and Merton, Lang and Lang, Gerson, and DeFleur[70] have

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[67]Ibid. [68]Ibid. [69]Ibid., p. 8.

[70]Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, ed. Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts (Rev. ed.; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 554-578; Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, "The Unique Perspective of Television and Its Effects: A Pilot Study," American Sociological Review, XVIII, 1 (1953), 3-12; Walter M. Gerson, "Mass Media Socialization Behavior: Negro White Differences," Social Forces, XLV, 1 (1966), 40-50; DeFleur, Theories of Mass Communication, pp. 141-158.

indicated the socialization potentialities of television and have isolated variables in this process. Although research opinions vary, there appears at least to be consensus that the media function to modify behavior, opinions, and beliefs. In the absence of more definitive research on the subject, this opinion has been assumed to provide a credible basis for further generalizations regarding television's effect on the viewing audience.

Although Klapper's approach adhered to the principle of selectivity, he pointed out that "repetition, particularly repetition with variation, has been consistently found to increase the efficacy of persuasion."[71] Coupling this statement with the aforementioned modifying tendency of mass communications, a review of research directed at television's portrayal of crime, criminals, and law enforcement officers reveals a continued dominance of these themes for over 20 years.

Head,[72] in 1954, determined that professional criminals were heavily emphasized in children's television programing. Furthermore, criminal characters were overly

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[71]Klapper, op. cit., p. 131.

[72]Sydney Head, "Content Analysis of Television Drama Programs," Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television, IX (1954), 175-194, cited in Charles K. Atkin, John P. Murray and Oquz B. Nayman (eds.), Television and Social Behavior: An Annotated Bibliography of Research Focusing on Television's Impact on Children (Maryland: National Institute of Mental Health, 1971), p. 7.

represented as belonging to the upper and middle classes, and homicide was 22 times more prevalent on television than in real life. In 1958, Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince[73] found that British television depicted themes or values that undermined the concept of law and weakened support for law enforcement officers.

In 1964, the National Association for Better Radio and Television issued a report on the level of crime aired on television in the city of Los Angeles.[74] Research findings from this study indicated that the number of crime programs had increased 90 percent over those aired in 1952. Finally, in 1969, Baker and Ball[75] indicated that the violence and criminal activity presented on television was disproportionate to that of society and conflicted with societal norms and values.

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[73]Hilde Himmelweit, A. N. Oppenheim, and Pamela Vince, Television and the Child: An Empirical Study of the Effects of Television on the Young (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), cited in Charles K. Atkin, John P. Murray and Oquz B. Nayman (eds.), Television and Social Behavior: An Annotated Bibliography of Research Focusing on Television's Impact on Children (Maryland: National Institute of Mental Health, 1971), p. 7.

[74]National Association for Better Ratio and Television, Crime on Television: A Survey Report (Los Angeles: National Association for Better Radio and Television, 1964), cited in Charles K. Atkin, John P. Murray and Oquz B. Nayman (eds.), Television and Social Behavior: An Annotated Bibliography of Research Focusing on Television's Impact on Children (Maryland: National Institute of Mental Health, 1971), p. 7.

[75]Baker and Ball, Violence and the Media, pp. 363-369.

Although the preceding review of research on television programing of crime, criminals, and law enforcement agents related more to the content of this programing than to its effects, the following generalizations are advanced in an effort to summarize our present knowledge of the effect of television programing in general, and television programing of law enforcement in particular, on the American viewing public.

1. Television, like all media instruments, serves to modify attitudes, beliefs, and opinions.

2. Repetition, particularly repetition with variation, has been found to increase the power of this modification.

3. For over 20 years the American public has been subjected to television programing that has been inundated with crime, criminals, and law enforcement officers depicted in an unreal and distorted fashion.

4. In addition, the American people, over the past 20 years, have had little opportunity to avail themselves of information relating to the "realities" of modern law enforcement.

5. Therefore, in the absence of definitive longitudinal research, it is highly probable that the general public's understanding or perception of the law enforcement occupation is largely a product of television's depiction of that role.

Using the preceding statements as underlying assumptions regarding the effects of television on the viewing audience, as well as the information contained in previous sections, the following hypotheses are advanced in an effort to assess the law enforcement image presented by television.

HYPOTHESES

Television, as a medium in the mass communications industry, operates within the parameters of certain philosophical, sociological, and psychological constraints that delineate its operation. These parameters, discussed in preceding sections of this chapter, provide the necessary foundation from which hypotheses relating to the law enforcement television image may be advanced. Although the preceding section contained an effort to assess the socialization potentialities of television, the focus of each of the following hypotheses is directed at the police image currently being displayed on television.

Following each stated hypothesis, a subhypothesis is advanced. Each subhypothesis attempts to define and operationalize the import of the major hypothesis.

Hypothesis I: The television industry, in attempting to cultivate a viewing audience and profit financially from its endeavor, has chosen to ignore its social responsibility for program content relating to the activities of the law enforcement agent.

It is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis Ia: Television depicts police officers in a strict law enforcement context without accurately portraying a service or order maintenance orientation.

Hypothesis Ib: Television depicts law enforcement officers as highly authoritarian, cruel, and demeaning toward the public.

Hypothesis Ic: Television portrays police officers as perpetually in a violent context.

Hypothesis Id: Television fails to portray police officers in significant social relationships that are removed from their occupational role.

Hypothesis II: The television industry's depiction of crime, criminals, and victims is disproportionate and distorted when compared with the reality of the situation.

It is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis IIa: Television displays a level of criminal activity disproportionate to the level of crime in society.

Hypothesis IIb: Television portrays criminals as belonging to the upper and middle classes, to the exclusion of lower class criminality.

Hypothesis IIc: Television displays an inaccurate and distorted relationship between victims and criminals for those crimes being committed.

Hypothesis IId: Television portrays victims in a distorted manner.

Using the preceding hypothetical statements as a basis for investigating television's presentation of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers, a detailed observation schedule was constructed. In the next chapter the

method used in collecting data, the variables to be observed, the operational definitions, and the analytical procedures of evaluation are explained.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The research design employed in this study involved a content analysis of television programing relating to the law enforcement occupation. Its purpose was to ascertain the "police image" currently being characterized in television crime drama programing. A structured observation schedule was constructed to facilitate data collection, and observations were recorded for each program analyzed. An examination of this television "police image" will contribute to a further understanding of perceptions of the law enforcement occupational role.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population for this study consisted of television programing that specifically characterizes the law enforcement officer in a modern context. The population was further limited to only those programs that are presumably being televised nationally for an adult audience. This definition of the target population anticipated that:

1. Local or regional variations are inevitable; therefore, television programing was limited to those

programs broadcasted on the three national networks (ABC, NBC, CBS).

2. The predominant audience for such programing would consist primarily of adults;[1] therefore, the population was restricted to those programs televised between the hours of 7:30 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Although content and audience differ during the weekend, this time limitation was imposed for the entire week.

3. Certain programs, although dealing in a broad sense with law enforcement characteristics, were considered to align more closely with private police or pseudo-police functions. For this reason, programs devoted to the activities of private detectives were excluded from the population.

4. Occasional programs concentrate on the law enforcement officer in a historical context, e.g. the town marshal or western sheriff. It was assumed that this perspective would contribute little to the modern law enforcement image; consequently, historical law enforcement programs were excluded from the target population.

A selected sample of 48 hours of television programing was drawn after meeting the aforementioned criteria

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[1]Although it is apparent that children contribute to the viewing audience, it was assumed that adults are the prime targets for this type of programing.

of the target population. An attempt was made to draw a sample that would afford equal representation to each program involved. However, certain programs did not receive "equal time," because of length (one-half hour versus one hour) and network pre-empting. The data-collection period was extended to gather further observations of those programs that were continually pre-empted during the initial period. Table 1 represents the 12 television programs that met all the criteria, the number of hours each was observed, the network that produces the program, and the percentage of the sample each program represents.

Table 1. Selected Sample of Television Programs Relating to the Law Enforcement Occupation[a]

Program Title	Network	# of Programs Viewed	# of Hours	% of Sample
The FBI	ABC	3	3	6
NBC Mystery Movie	NBC	3	5	6
The Rookies	ABC	5	5	10
Adam-12	NBC	3	1-1/2	6
Hawaii Five-O	CBS	5	5	10
Police Story	NBC	4	4	8
Chase	NBC	4	4	8
Kojak	CBS	4	4	8
Chopper I	ABC	5	2-1/2	10
Ironside	NBC	5	5	10
The Streets of San Francisco	ABC	5	5	10
Toma	ABC	4	4	8
Total	3	50	48	100%

[a]The sample was collected over a five and one-half week period, beginning March 17, 1974, and ending April 24, 1974.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study were gathered through the use of a structured observation schedule that delineated the variables to be observed. The observational schedule was adapted from one used by Melvin L. DeFleur in an article entitled "Occupational Roles as Portrayed on Television," which appeared in Public Opinion Quarterly in 1964.[2] The schedule used in this study extended that used by DeFleur, and is specifically operable in a content analysis relating to law enforcement activities. Although DeFleur's design was extended, the basic premises remain intact. A further discussion of the operational definitions used in this study follows this section.

Because of the rather unique phenomena television presents--i.e. the ability to present visual as well as audible data, the ability to project various images simultaneously, and the ability to change images, themes and scenes instantaneously--the researchers were equipped with tape recorders to code data that were displayed too rapidly for coding the schedule. During commercial breaks and immediately following the presentation, the researchers were instructed to reconstruct what they had observed using both

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[2]Melvin L. DeFleur, "Occupational Roles as Portrayed on Television," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXVIII, 1 (1964), 57-74.

the tape recorders and the observation schedules. This procedure enabled the researchers to capture the essence of the presentation and effectively code the variables specified. Fifty percent of the sample was subjected to validation by three independent research assistants. Each assistant was trained by the writer and was continually monitored to ensure coding accuracy. The consensual observations of all four observers substantially validated the data for analysis. An additional research assistant was employed to time sequences of programing relating to the amount of law enforcement time spent engaged in various activities, such as criminal work, service work, and personal life.

Finally, the initial data relating to program length, network, time of viewing, and summary of program content were collected through the use of television programing schedules. This information was conveyed to the research assistants in an effort to acquaint them with the content of the program prior to viewing.

The structured observation schedule contained 12 variables for observation. Each variable and the criteria for coding are discussed at length in the following section, entitled Operational Definitions. Figures 9 and 10 represent the structured observation schedule and the initial data collection schedule used in this study.

FORM I--Data Collection of Demographic Information

Date of Viewing:_____ Hour of Viewing:_____

Program Title:_____

Network:_____ Length of Program:_____

THEME:

Major Theme:_____

_____

_____

_____

SETTING DATA:

City of Occurrence:_____

Brief description from T.V. listing as to program content:

_____

_____

_____

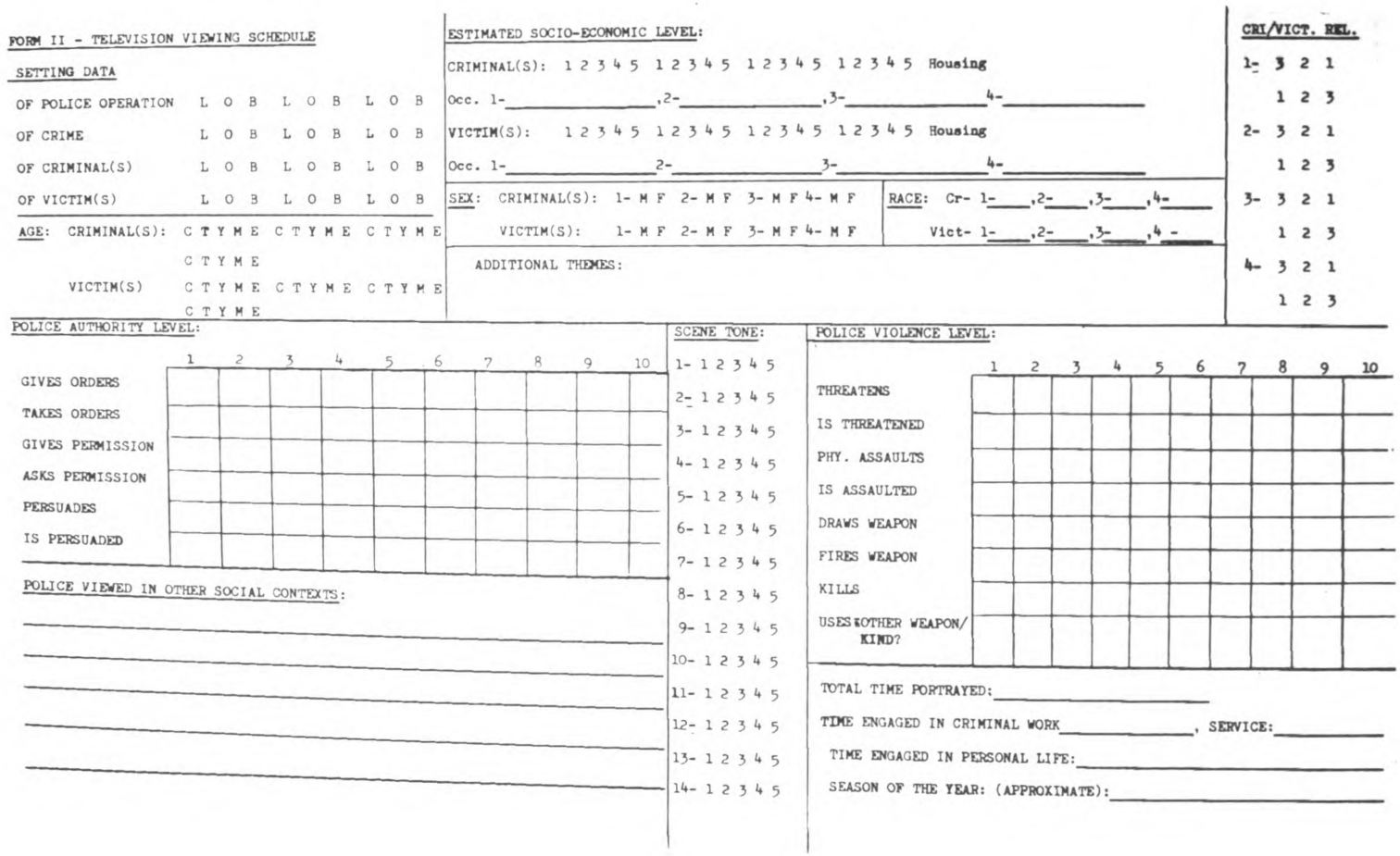
_____

_____

_____

_____

Figure 9. Data Collection Schedule of Demographic Information



FORM II - TELEVISION VIEWING SCHEDULE

SETTING DATA

OF POLICE OPERATION L O B L O B L O B

OF CRIME L O B L O B L O B

OF CRIMINAL(S) L O B L O B L O B

OF VICTIM(S) L O B L O B L O B

AGE: CRIMINAL(S): C T Y M E C T Y M E C T Y M E C T Y M E

VICTIM(S) C T Y M E C T Y M E C T Y M E C T Y M E

ESTIMATED SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL:

CRIMINAL(S): 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 Housing

Occ. 1-_____,2-_____,3-_____4-_____

VICTIM(S): 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 Housing

Occ. 1-_____2-_____3-_____4-_____

SEX: CRIMINAL(S): 1- M F 2- M F 3- M F 4- M F

VICTIM(S): 1- M F 2- M F 3- M F 4- M F

RACE: Cr- 1-____,2-____,3-____,4-____

Vict- 1-____,2-____,3-____,4-____

ADDITIONAL THEMES:

CRI/VICT. REL.

1- 3 2 1

1 2 3

2- 3 2 1

1 2 3

3- 3 2 1

1 2 3

4- 3 2 1

1 2 3

POLICE AUTHORITY LEVEL:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GIVES ORDERS										
TAKES ORDERS										
GIVES PERMISSION										
ASKS PERMISSION										
PERSUADES										
IS PERSUADED										

SCENE TONE:

1- 1 2 3 4 5

2- 1 2 3 4 5

3- 1 2 3 4 5

4- 1 2 3 4 5

5- 1 2 3 4 5

6- 1 2 3 4 5

7- 1 2 3 4 5

8- 1 2 3 4 5

9- 1 2 3 4 5

10- 1 2 3 4 5

11- 1 2 3 4 5

12- 1 2 3 4 5

13- 1 2 3 4 5

14- 1 2 3 4 5

POLICE VIOLENCE LEVEL:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
THREATENS										
IS THREATENED										
PHY. ASSAULTS										
IS ASSAULTED										
DRAWS WEAPON										
FIRES WEAPON										
KILLS										
USES OTHER WEAPON/ KIND?										

POLICE VIEWED IN OTHER SOCIAL CONTEXTS:

TOTAL TIME PORTRAYED:_____

TIME ENGAGED IN CRIMINAL WORK_____, SERVICE:_____

TIME ENGAGED IN PERSONAL LIFE:_____

SEASON OF THE YEAR: (APPROXIMATE):_____

Figure 10. Television Observation Schedule

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The data in this study were collected for 12 variables. The purpose of this section of the study is to acquaint the reader with the coding criteria for each of these 12 variables. Each variable is explained in terms of the criteria selected to operationalize that variable for coding purposes.

The following variables were contained in the observation schedule:

1. Setting
2. Age
3. Estimated socio-economic level
4. Sex
5. Race
6. Criminal/victim relationship
7. Additional themes
8. Police authority level
9. Scene tone
10. Police violence level
11. Police viewed in other social contexts
12. Time

Setting

The physical surroundings or background settings within which the televised characters live and work may

imply certain life or occupational styles associated with those occupations. The background settings for four categories--the police operation, the crime, the criminal, and the victim--were classified according to the degree of luxury implied, including furnishings, spaciousness, decorations, and repair. Each setting was classified into three broad categories: luxurious--that which includes lavish furniture, paintings, carpeting, decor, etc.; ordinary--that which would appear to be plain, in good repair, but with little or no ornamentation; and below average--that which appears to be in need of repair, disorganized, crowded, etc. Thus a spacious, modern, elaborately furnished police station would illustrate Category I; a clean, simple, ordinarily furnished police station would illustrate Category II; and a disorganized, crowded, unkempt police department would illustrate Category III. Similarly, a penthouse apartment, a modern highrise, and an inner-city ghetto apartment would illustrate all three categories.

Admittedly, there is a certain ambiguity in this classification scheme. Cultural connotations of luxurious, ordinary, and below average may vary. However, it was felt that because each category had been defined in such a manner as to preclude coding in another category, the distinction among categories was sufficient to warrant the collection of this information.

Age

Age data were collected for two groups, criminals and victims. Because of the ability of television to distort to some extent the age of characters, through the use of makeup, clothing, and lighting, age was defined in the following manner to avoid confusion:

Child --between the ages of 1 through 12

Teenager --between the ages of 13 through 20

Young Adult--between the ages of 21 through 39

Middle Aged--between the ages of 40 through 59

Elderly --over 60

Estimated Socio-Economic Level

An estimation of the socio-economic level was coded for the two categories, criminals and victims. The observation schedule employed two scales for determining this variable. The first, a Likert-type scale, was constructed to code housing as an indicator of socio-economic level. This scale develops a continuum from a large mansion or estate at one end through a poverty, ghetto residence at the other. The following criteria were selected to delineate each rank on the scale:

1--Mansion, large estate, etc.

2--Large, well-situated house, i.e. doctor, lawyer, professional

3--Middle-class home

4--Lower-class home, but orderly and in good repair

5--Lower-class home in need of repair, disorganized, and unkempt

Again, it may be argued that the criteria for coding may reflect a certain ambiguity resulting from cultural definition; however, as was the case in the collection of setting data, the distinction among criteria was felt to be sufficient in the determination of this variable.

In many instances, television does not indicate the housing of the characters. Thus an additional scale was employed that categorized individuals by occupation. Occupations of victims and criminals, both legitimate and illegitimate, were recorded for each category. When occupation was not specified in the program, the scale for housing was coded; when housing was not specified, occupation was recorded. This procedure enabled the researchers to identify, on at least one scale, the socio-economic level of each character portrayed.

Sex and Race

The sex and race of each criminal and victim character were recorded on the observation schedule. This information was recorded in an effort to determine the effectiveness of television in accurately portraying the race and sex of criminals as well as of victims.

Criminal/Victim Relationship

Previous research on crime portrayed on television has indicated that homicide is, perhaps, the most frequently viewed crime. The variable Criminal/Victim Relationship was selected for observation to determine whether television assigned any relationship between the criminal and his victim. Given the possibility that criminal/victim relationship may result in primary as well as secondary social relationships, the criteria for coding the variable reflected this concern. Therefore, criminal/victim relationship was coded on two axes--first, the nature of the relationship and, second, the intensity of the relationship. The following matrix (Figure 11) represents the measurement of this variable on both axes.

Intensity of the Relationship	Nature of the Relationship: 1	2	3
1			
2			
3			

Figure 11. Matrix of Criminal/Victim Relationship

The nature of the relationship was measured in the following manner: Category I was coded if the criminal and the victim had a family relationship, i.e. father/son,

husband/wife, brother/brother, etc. Category II represents those relationships that are derived from either working together or being acquaintances; employer/employee, employee/employer, bowling partners, dating or courting partners, and neighbors are a few possibilities. Category III represents those situations in which the criminal and the victim are strangers to one another. The second axis, intensity of the relationship, was coded from one to three, with one representing no or slight intensity, two representing moderate intensity, and three representing an intense relationship.

This procedure enabled the researchers to contend with familia relationships of slight intensity (e.g. distant cousins) and courting relationships of an intense nature, although not appropriately labeled familia. This procedure had the additional advantage of preserving primary and secondary social relationships without using detailed and laborious coding practices.

Additional Themes

Before viewing each program, television programing schedules were consulted. The major theme of the program was recorded from these periodicals. The meaning of theme, as used in this study, is not to be confused with its literary meaning. Theme was defined as the reason why police action or intervention was necessary; a robbery, an

attempted murder, or routine police patrol are examples of themes. Television crime drama is often replete with multiple crimes requiring police intervention. Unfortunately, television viewing schedules often do not reflect multiple crime situations. Therefore, each time a crime not specified in the programing schedules was committed, it was recorded under Additional Themes. For instance, if the police were investigating a robbery and a murder occurred, which they began to investigate, the researcher would note this in the appropriate category--Additional Themes.

Police Authority Level

Six indicators were established as criteria for determining the level of police authority for each program observed. Authority was measured from two perspectives, dominant acts and submissive acts. A numerical count was made for each major police character when that character (1) gave an order, (2) received an order, (3) gave permission, (4) asked permission, (5) persuaded someone to do something, and (6) was persuaded to do something. This procedure enabled the researchers to code effectively the dominant as well as the submissive acts each major police character exhibited. A relative power index is discussed in Chapter IV, which contains the analysis of these data.

Scene Tone

Scene tone refers to the posture in which the major police character(s) is cast when dealing with other people. A Likert-type scale was used to code this variable. Included were only those scenes in which a dialogue between the main police character(s) and others lasted for an appreciable length of time. Quick flashes and one-line comments were not considered scenes.

The scale employed in coding was constructed using the following criteria: (1) police officer is considerate, polite, respectful, (2) patronizing, condescending, (3)neutral, (4) sarcastic, and (5) abrasive, demeaning, and belligerent.

Police Violence Level

Eight indicators were established as criteria for measuring the level of police violence portrayed in the programs observed. Violence was seen as stemming from two sources--that violence perpetrated by the police (whether legitimate or illegitimate) and that perpetrated against the police. A numerical count was made for all police characters when those characters (1) threatened someone, (2) were threatened, (3) physically assaulted someone, (4) were physically assaulted, (5) drew a weapon (handgun), (6) fired a weapon (handgun or other), (7) killed someone, or (8) used a weapon other than a handgun. If a police

officer was killed during the program, he was recorded as a victim rather than being recorded in this section. The analysis of these data appears in the section about violence and the police.

Police Viewed in Other Social Contexts

Recent trends in television programing relating to law enforcement activities have occasionally removed the police officer from his occupational context and placed him in another. This trend would appear to be an attempt by the television industry to "humanize" the police. It was, therefore, deemed appropriate to record any portrayals of this nature. Examples of these other social contexts are when a police officer gives personal advice to a friend, is engaged in a family situation, or participates in civic affairs, to mention a few possibilities. The researchers simply recorded these various contexts, keeping in mind that each must be viewed in terms of the police socially interacting outside of their official role.

Time

Six indicators were selected as criteria for the measurement of time. Because of the capsulizing effect of television, e.g. the condensing of hours, days, and weeks into one- and two-hour time periods, an attempt was made to estimate the total amount of time portrayed, i.e. eight

hours, one day, or one week. Additionally, time was defined in terms of actual program length. As a result, time was categorized by: (1) total program length (less commercial breaks), (2) the amount of time the police were engaged in "criminal work," (3) the amount of time the police were engaged in "service work," and (4) the amount of time the police were engaged in their personal affairs. "Criminal work" means the investigation of a crime or the apprehension of a criminal, and "service work" means routine patrol and order maintenance activities. The approximate season of the year was also coded in an effort to determine variations by season.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of the variables pertaining to the socio-economic level, age, race, sex, setting, and criminal-victim relationship for criminal and victim characters consisted in tabulating the recorded observations of each of these variables. Additionally, the recorded observations pertaining to police authority, scene tone, and violence were cross-tabulated by program and network to determine variations among networks and individual programs. The analysis was facilitated by the use of analytical programing developed by Norman H. Nie, et al., Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences.[3] The statistics obtained through this analysis were compared with existing research and survey materials contained in the professional literature.

LIMITATIONS IN DESIGN

The limitations in the design of this study as identified by the writer were:

1. In-depth research pertaining to the issues identified in this research is nonexistent.

2. The data collection tools employed in this research, although developed from previously validated research, received only minimal pretesting prior to their implementation. A discussion of the coding criteria for each variable was presented in preceding sections of this chapter.

3. The research employed the use of nonprobability sampling, which approximated one-sixth of the population.

4. In the absence of sufficient longitudinal research, the study is limited to a discussion and evaluation of the current image of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers projected on television.

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[3]Norman H. Nie, Dale H. Bent, and C. Hadlai Hull, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), pp. 109-111, 115-126.

Chapter IV presents the analysis of the data obtained and a comparison of these data with the research and survey materials contained in the professional literature.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS

Forty-eight hours of television programing relating to the law enforcement occupation were observed during the research period. Each program was evaluated in accordance with the variables identified in Chapter III. The variables were grouped into four broad categories to facilitate analysis of the data obtained. These four categories will be analyzed separately in terms of frequency of occurrence and variance from the norms established in the professional literature. An attempt will be made to delineate any discrepancy that may exist between television's portrayal of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers, and the available information contained in the professional literature.

THE NATURE OF TELEVISION CRIME

The concept of crime is indeed a somewhat nebulous term. Its precise definition depends largely on the society's existing cultural definitions.

> As Wilkins has pointed out, each culture possesses its own continuum or normal distribution of ethical acts. Very saintly and very sinful acts are rare, and most behavior, in a statistical sense, is close to the mean. At the sinful end of the scale,

> however, there is an arbitrary line--the law--that defines criminal and noncriminal behavior.[1]

Once this arbitrary line between what is criminal behavior and what is noncriminal behavior is defined, those who transgress the criminal law may be held accountable for doing so. Admittedly, this definition is simplistic, but it establishes a basis from which televised criminal behavior may be observed and evaluated.

In this country crime has continued to gain support as a national issue for many years. Public finances continue to pour into research on the causes and cures of criminal behavior. Although research in this area is voluminous, no singular resolution of the issue has been made, and the public's fear of crime continues to grow.

The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, commenting on the public's attitudes toward crime, concluded that "the public fears most the crimes that occur the least--crimes of violence," and that this fear of violent crime is exaggerated.[2] The Commission additionally stated that "the mass media and

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[1]Leslie T. Wilkins, "Offense Patterns," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (New York: The Free Press, 1968), p. 477, cited by Keith D. Harries, The Geography of Crime and Justice (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 2.

[2]The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, Task Force Report: Crime and Its Impact--An Assessment (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 88.

Table 2. The Nature and Frequency of Television Crime

Crime	N[a]	%[a]
Murder	56	30.6
Assault & battery	40	21.9
Attempted murder	28	15.3
Extortion	9	4.8
Larceny	8	4.4
Kidnapping	7	3.8
Narcotics trafficing	7	3.8
Burglary	6	3.3
Armed robbery	5	2.7
Auto theft	3	1.6
Unarmed robbery	2	1.0
Motor vehicle violation	2	1.0
Hijacking	2	1.0
Illicit gambling	1	.6
Prostitution	1	.6
Malicious destruction of property	1	.6
Hit & run (motor vehicle)	1	.6
Drunk	1	.6
Arson	1	.6
Loan sharking	1	.6
Indecent exposure	1	.6
Total	183	100%

[a]Unless otherwise specified, N refers to the number of observations and % refers to the percentage of the total observations.

over zealous or opportunistic crime fighters may play a role in raising fears of crime by associating the idea of 'crime' with a few sensational and terrifying criminal acts."[3] The nature and frequency of criminal behavior observed in this research substantially support the preceding statement. Table 2 presents the nature and frequency of occurrence of crime, as portrayed on television during the research period. The most violent types of assaultive criminal behavior permeated the sample, and relatively minor criminal activity was practically nonexistent.

By collapsing Table 2 into two broad categories--namely crime against people and crimes against property--the magnitude of televised violent crime readily becomes apparent. Table 3 represents the frequency of occurrence and percentage of total for the two respective categories.

Table 3. Crimes Against People/Crimes Against Property

Category	N	%
Crimes against people	150	82
Crimes against property	33	18
Total	183	100[a]

[a]Unless otherwise specified percentage totals have been rounded.

[3]Ibid., p. 89.

The effects of television's skewed presentation of violent criminality may be debatable in terms of individual or collective behavior modification; however, the disparity between television's portrayal of crime and the reality of the situation is unmistakable. The Uniform Crime Reports,[4] compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, provide a basis from which to evaluate this disparity.

In 1972 approximately 85 percent of all reported crime in the United States was classified as property crime, and only 15 percent fell into the category of violent crime.[5] Furthermore, of the 15 percent classified as violent crime, murder and nonnegligent manslaughter represented only 2 percent of the violent crime category and three-tenths of 1 percent of the Total Crime Index.[6] By contrast, the crime of murder in the research sample approximated 37 and 31 percent of the two respective categories. Similar situations existed when crimes against property were compared with the Total Crime Index contained in the FBI Report. Burglary, for instance, comprised 40 percent of the Total Crime Index and 46 percent of all property crime in 1972.[7] As projected by television, however, burglary comprised only 3.2 percent

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[4]Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports for the United States: 1972 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973).

[5]Ibid., p. 61. [6]Ibid. [7]Ibid.

of the total televised crime and 16 percent of the crimes against property category.

There appears to be an inverse relationship between televised crime and the statistics compiled by the F.B.I. regarding both the nature and frequency of certain criminal acts and the cumulative crime indexes. This inverse relationship may be explained by those within the television industry as a function of the dramatic style of script writing. Proponents of this position contend that televised drama, in any subject area, should be accorded the artistic license that is given the play, the short story, or the novel. Furthermore, with the exception of certain universally held values, e.g. good being triumphant over evil, drama as an art form is not expected to reflect national statistics on the level or intensity of crime.

This argument, however, is diminished when considering the uniqueness of the television medium. Turning on the television set can hardly be likened to purchasing a novel or observing a play. Unlike many art forms, television is ubiquitous. Furthermore, the assimilation of television into American culture and its potential for information dissemination require that this industry be cognizant of its audience impact and, accordingly, of its responsibility for program content.

In addition to this divergence from reality relative to the nature and frequency of crime, television may

create community misunderstanding regarding those crimes cleared or solved by the police. Television creates the image that the police are able to solve every crime that is brought to their attention. The F.B.I. reported that in 1972 approximately 72 percent of the violent crimes committed in the United States were cleared by arrest, with murder being cleared 82 percent of the time. Property crimes, however, were cleared at a rate of approximately 22 percent.[8] Television crimes, by contrast, are cleared 100 percent of the time, with no differentiation between categories. Although it may be argued by the media that the resolution of all televised criminal behavior supports a moral responsibility to project the image that "crime doesn't pay," the consequences of this presentation may reduce community awareness regarding its role in crime prevention. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, recognizing the need to inform the public regarding the nature and frequency of crime, stated:

> There is a clear public responsibility to keep citizens fully informed of the facts about crime so that they will have facts to go on when they decide what the risks are and what kinds and amounts of precautionary measures they should take.[9]

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[8]Ibid., p. 32.

[9]The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 52. (The Commission is herafter referred to as PCLEAJ.)

Television clearly is not meeting its social responsibility to inform the public about crime in America and its prevention. Unless this responsibility is recognized, the public's fear of becoming a victim of a violent crime may continue to be reinforced, and efforts to prevent property crime may be ignored by a fearful and apathetic public.

TELEVISION AND ITS CRIMINALS

To assess the reality orientation of televised criminal behavior, each criminal character portrayed was evaluated by age, sex, race, socio-economic level, and legitimacy of occupation in accordance with the criteria established in Chapter III. The results of the data collected again suggest an extreme divergence from reality, which becomes particularly relevant when viewed in the context of the type of crime committed.

In the preceding section it was established that television overwhelmingly portrayed crime as being violent and assaultive, with 82 percent of all crime being against the person. When the characteristics of televised criminal offenders are compared with available research on offender characteristics, a striking incongruity becomes apparent.

Offender Age

Since all of the crimes committed on television were cleared by arrests, the statistics compiled by the

F.B.I. become particularly applicable as a comparative base. In 1972, over 35 percent of the people arrested for all crimes in this country were under the age of 20.[10] Under the classification of violent crimes, over 34 percent of the arrested people were under 20 years of age.[11] Television, on the other hand, represented only 3 percent of its total criminal population (N=180) in the under 20 years of age category. Similar disparities existed when comparisons were made for the age classification 40 to 60 years of age. Television portrayed criminal characters as being between 40 and 60 years of age in 43 percent of the observations, as opposed to the F.B.I. statistics of 18.6 percent.[12]

Sex

The distribution of criminal characters by sex appears to be congruent with available offender data. Television portrayed male offenders in 92 percent of the observations, and female offenders comprised 8 percent of the population (N=180). These proportions are consistent with the data contained in the F.B.I. report, particularly in the context of the crime committed.

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[10] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, pp. 126-127.

[11] Ibid. [12] Ibid.

Race

The data suggest that television's distribution of criminal offenders by race is inconsistent with the available research findings in this area. Table 4 presents the offender distribution by race for the research sample. It would appear that the television industry has deliberately chosen to ignore the issues involved when a question of offender race has arisen. This is evidenced by a distortion in racial distribution of criminal offenders. When considering this distortion, it is again important to be cognizant of the types of offenses committed.

Table 4. Racial Distribution of Televised Offenders

Race	N	%
White	165	92.0
Black	10	5.5
Hawaiian	3	1.5
Spanish	1	.5
Oriental	1	.5
Total	180	100

In 1972, for example, there were 1,847,566 (27.5 percent) arrests of blacks for all offenses; however, when considering violent crimes blacks were arrested in 53.7 percent of the cases.[13] With regard to specific offenses,

[13]Ibid., p. 131.

such as criminal homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault, the percentage of black arrests was found to be consistently higher.[14] This is not a recent phenomenon, as evidenced in research conducted by Marvin E. Wolfgang of the criminal homicide rate in Philadelphia between 1948 and 1952.[15] The study established that although blacks accounted for only 18 percent of the population of that city, they represented 75 percent of the criminal offenders.[16]

Differences in black versus white arrest rates have been explained as functions of various socio-economic, cultural, and political factors. The issues of selective law enforcement, political and social disenfranchisement of minority groups, family instability, and environmental inequality are among a few possible explanations of this situation. Each has merit in a consideration of the societal inequities faced by minority groups in the United States. It is not the intention of this research to assign responsibility for the socio-political plight of minority groups in this country, although research and remedy in this area are urgently needed. The data obtained do suggest, however,

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Marvin E. Wolfgang, Patterns in Criminal Homicide (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), cited by Don. C. Gibbons, Society, Crime, and Criminal Careers (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 349-353.

[16] Ibid.

that by avoiding this issue television perpetuates a public misunderstanding of race and criminality, which may be crucial to a resolution of the problems confronting the minority population.

Socio-Economic Level

The socio-economic level of television's criminal offenders requires close scrutiny, for it is in this area that a question regarding television social responsibility may be raised. The research data suggest that television may be portraying the image that "crime does pay." Schafer and Knudten,[17] assessing the impact of mass media on juvenile delinquency, concluded that the media may function to (1) make crime appear attractive, (2) encourage the belief that "crime does pay," and (3) lend prestige or sympathy to the criminal.[18] The data obtained in the present research substantially support those positions.

The socio-economic level of each criminal character was recorded using two scales--housing and occupation. Once data were recorded, the scales were collapsed into three broad categories--upper-range socio-economic level, middle-range socio-economic level, and lower-range

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[17]Stephen Schafer and Richard Knudten, Juvenile Delinquency; An Introduction (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 238-243.

[18]Ibid.

socio-economic level. Table 5 illustrates the frequency distribution of television offenders by the three categories.

Table 5. Television Offenders by Socio-Economic Level

Socio-Economic Level	N	%
Upper	65	36
Middle	39	22
Lower	41	23
Not discernible	35	19
Total	180	100

More than one-third of all criminal characters were portrayed as belonging to the upper socio-economic level, whereas fewer than one-fourth of the characters were assigned to the lower level. Again, it is emphasized that these figures must be analyzed in terms of the offenses committed. "Rates of homicide and assault are considerably higher among lower class groups than any other in the American population,"[19] and violence may be seen as having subcultural approval in lower class groups. If this is the case, the research data suggest that television's portrayal of crime and criminals may be reinforcing lower class subcultural definitions of what is normative behavior. This may have

[19]Wolfgang, op. cit., p. 349.

particular relevance in light of research that indicates lower socio-economic families tend to watch more television than do middle or higher socio-economic families, and that the violence and aggression depicted on television are more apt to be believed by lower socio-economic groups.[20]

Legitimacy of Occupation

The television sample was further evaluated in terms of the legitimacy of the occupation assigned to the criminal character. In 75 percent of the observations, the criminal character was assigned an illegitimate occupation--professional murderer, drug pusher, organized criminal; fewer than 25 percent of all criminals portrayed had legitimate occupations. By correlating socio-economic level with legitimacy of occupation for criminal characters, the data reveal that 78 percent of the upper socio-economic level criminals achieved their status through illegitimate means. Table 6 depicts a comparison between the socio-economic level of the criminal characters and whether those individuals were assigned legitimate or illegitimate occupations.

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[20]Jennie J. McIntyre and James J. Teeyan, Jr., "Television and Deviant Behavior," Television and Social Behavior, Reports and Papers, Vol. III, A Report to the Surgeon General's Scientific Committee on Television and Social Behavior, ed. George A. Comstock, Eli A. Rubenstein and John P. Murray (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 383-435.

Table 6. Comparison Between Socio-Economic Level and Legitimacy of Occupation for Criminal Characters

Socio-Economic Level	Legitimate Occupation			Illegitimate Occupation			Row	Row
	N	% Colmn	% Row	N	% Colmn	% Row	N	%
Upper	14	37	22	51	37	78	65	100
Middle	11	30	28	28	20	72	39	100
Lower	4	11	10	37	26	90	41	100
Not discernible	9	22	26	26	17	74	35	100
Total	38	100	--	142	100	--	180	100

Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin,[21] in developing the concept of differential opportunity structures, determined that for every proscribed legitimate means of goal achievement there was an implied illegitimate means. Furthermore, because of lower class subcultural opportunity structures, illegitimate means of goal achievement may be culturally transmitted. The television sample tends to reinforce that concept, in that illegitimate means for "success" appear to be pervasive. Although the manifest image presented by this programing appears to rectify the situation by punishing the criminal for his transgressions,

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[21]Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, "Illegitimate Means and Delinquent Subcultures," The Sociology of Crime and Delinquency, ed. Marvin E. Wolfgang, Leonard Savitz and Norman Johnston (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962), pp. 255-258.

in the final analysis the latent image lends credence to the image that "crime does pay" and that this is a viable avenue toward "success."

TELEVISED VICTIMIZATION

In studying the characteristics of televised victimization, the concerns of this research are twofold: to delineate the demographic characteristics of the victim characters observed in the sample observations, and to explain any sociological relationship that may exist between the criminal and his victim. The first objective employs the criteria used in determining the victim's personal characteristics--age, sex, race, and socio-economic level. The victim/criminal relationship is measured using the criteria delineated in Chapter III.

Victim Age

The age of the victim characters portrayed in the sample was found to be consistent with available research data. Forty-nine percent of all victims were portrayed as being between the ages of 20 and 40 (N=168). Only 6 percent of the victims were portrayed as being under 20 years of age. These figures appear to be consistent with victimization age distributions in studies conducted by Wolfgang in Philadelphia, Schafer in Florida, and the Uniform Crime

Reports, concerning murder victims in the United States during 1972.[22]

Sex

Distribution of victim characteristics by sex was found to be congruent with the existing data in this area. Male victims were presented in 77 percent of the observations (N=168), and females in the remaining 23 percent. Surveys indicate that "the rates of victimization for Index Offenses against men are almost three times as great as those for women."[23] The data generated in this research suggest a compatibility with national trends.

Race

Within the category of victim race, there was substantial variance between the sample observations and the available survey data. Table 7 presents the distribution of victims by race for the sample observations.

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[22]Marvin E. Wolfgang, "Victim-Precipitated Criminal Homicide," The Sociology of Crime and Delinquency, ed. Marvin E. Wolfgang, Leonard Savitz and Norman Johnston (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962), pp. 388-396; Stephen Schafer, The Victim and His Criminal (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 69-70; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, p. 118.

[23]PCLEAJ, The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society, p. 39.

Table 7. Racial Distribution for Victim Characters

Race	N	%
White	142	85
Black	13	8
Hawaiian	6	4
Spanish	4	2
Oriental	3	1
Total	168	100

The data suggest that television has again avoided the issue of race relative to victimization, as was the case regarding offenders. "National figures on rates of victimization show sharp differences between whites and nonwhites. . . . Nonwhites are victimized disproportionately by all Index crimes except larceny $50 and over."[24] In Wolfgang's Philadelphia study, blacks were victimized at a rate nearly three times the white rate.[25] The national rate of black victimization is considerably higher than the white rate, as reported by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice.[26] By contrast, the television sample projected a white victimization

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[24]Ibid.

[25]Wolfgang, "Victim-Precipitated Criminal Homicide," p. 390.

[26]PCLEAJ, The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society, p. 39.

rate nearly ten times the black rate. The projection of predominantly white criminals victimizing predominantly white victims is incongruent with national and local surveys, and totally ignores the problems faced by minority groups, particularly blacks, in this country.

Socio-Economic Level

The socio-economic level of each victim character was recorded in the same manner as it was for criminal characters. Once data were recorded, the scales were collapsed into three levels--upper, middle, and lower range socio-economic levels. Table 8 illustrates the distribution of victim characters by the three socio-economic levels.

Table 8. Distribution of Victim Characters by Socio-Economic Level

Socio-Economic Level	N	%
Upper	52	31
Middle	68	41
Lower	33	20
Not discernible	15	8
Total	168	100

Victimization, as portrayed in the sample, was predominantly concentrated in the middle (41 percent) and upper (31 percent) socio-economic levels, with only 20 percent of the sample classified at the lower level. Research surveys

relative to victimization rates among socio-economic levels indicate that television's distribution in this area is somewhat spurious, particularly in the context of the offense committed. National surveys indicate that "the highest rates of victimization occur in the lower income groups" and that "victimization from forcible rape, robbery and burglary is clearly concentrated in the lowest income group and decreases steadily at higher income levels."[27] "The victims of assaultive violence in the cities generally have the same characteristics as the offenders: victimization rates are generally highest for males, youth, poor persons and blacks."[28]

The most frequently victimized occupational category, which comprised 20 percent of the sample, was the police occupation. Police victimization is discussed in the section dealing with violence and the police. However, by removing from the sample the socio-economic data that pertain to the police occupation, the category of highest victimization becomes the upper socio-economic level (39 percent; N=134). This predominance of upper socio-economic

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[27] Ibid., p. 38.

[28] U.S. National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, "National Violence Commission Report," Crime and Justice, Vol. I, ed. Leon Radzinowicz and Marvin E. Wolfgang (New York: Basic Books, 1971), p. 259.

level victimization is incongruent with reality, and distorts the image of victimization in this country.

Victim/Criminal Relationship

"Only one aspect of the criminal-victim relationship has been recognized throughout history; that is the harm, injury, or other damage caused by the criminal to his victim."[29] Recently, however, research has been conducted to determine the role of a victim in the context of crime.

It is within this area that the data obtained in this research suggest television reinforces the public fear of victimization, particularly for violent crimes. This is evidenced by the fact that the television sample portrayed no relationship between the victim and the criminal in 69.2 percent of the observations (N=183). In the category Crimes Against Persons, 64.6 percent of the observations portrayed the victim and criminal as strangers (N=150), and for the crime of murder the victim and criminal were strangers in 57.1 percent of the observations (N=56).

The presentation of victims and criminals as strangers, particularly in violent crime contexts, conflicts with surveys conducted on this subject. Wolfgang's study of criminal homicide in Philadelphia indicated that,

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[29]Schafer, The Victim and His Criminal, p. 7.

in more than 50 percent of the cases, the victim and the criminal were engaged in an intense relationship.[30] "This study clearly demonstrated that it is not the marauding stranger who poses the greatest threat as a murderer. Only 12.2 percent of the murders were committed by strangers."[31]

These findings were similar to the findings contained in the Uniform Crime Reports for 1965. Homicides were found to be within the family in 31 percent of the cases, and the victim knew his criminal in 79 percent of the cases.[32]

Unfortunately, statistics for victim-criminal relationship have not been compiled for all crime categories. However, surveys conducted by the District of Columbia Crime Commission noted intense relationships between victims and criminals for many of the violent crimes. The Commission found, for instance, that in almost two-thirds of the rape cases surveyed the victim was at least acquainted with the offender, and in 81 percent of the aggravated assaults surveyed the criminal was known to the victim.[33]

Television's presentation of offenders victimizing strangers can only reinforce existing public fears of violent

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[30]Wolfgang, Patterns in Criminal Homicide, pp. 390-391.

[31]PCLEAJ, The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society, p. 39.

[32]Ibid. [33]Ibid., p. 40.

crime. Unless the public fear of this type of victimization is reduced, we may see a further disintegration of individual trust, which has been evidenced in many cities throughout the country. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, commenting on this situation, stated:

> This fear of strangers has greatly impoverished the lives of many Americans, especially those who live in high-crime neighborhoods in large cities. People stay behind the locked doors of their homes rather than risk walking in the streets at night. Poor people spend money on taxis because they are afraid to walk or use public transportation. Sociable people are afraid to talk to those they do not know. In short, society is to an increasing extent suffering from what economists call "opportunity costs" as the result of fear of crime.[34]

Television does nothing to reduce this fear; rather, it may be seen as a catalyst in the escalation of such fear. In terms of a social responsibility philosophy for television content, the data suggest the television industry has digressed from any form of social responsibility.

THE POLICE FUNCTION

Because of television's rather distorted presentation of crime, criminals, and victims, referred to in preceding sections of this chapter, the functions the police serve have been rather narrowly defined. The data suggest the police have been restricted to functioning in a law

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[34] Ibid., p. 52.

enforcement context, with little or no attention to the service or order maintenance functions they perform. Table 9 presents a distribution of the major themes or justifications for police involvement observed during the sample period.

Table 9. Justification for Police Involvement

Kind	N	%
Investigation of a crime	20	40
Police working undercover	7	14
Police action due to personal involvement with criminal or victim	6	12
Police action to locate a missing person	5	10
Routine police patrol	5	10
Murder or attempted murder of a police officer	3	6
Police investigation of a police officer	3	6
Police providing protection	1	2
Total	50	100

In only 10 percent of the observations were the police portrayed in a routine patrol situation. The predominant justification for police involvement was the investigation of a crime that had been committed. Additionally, in only 2 percent of the observations were the police assigned as service or order maintenance agents. The impression created by this type of justification for

police action may lead the community, prospective police applicants, and in-service police officers to believe the police function solely in a law enforcement orientation. Research in the area does not support that impression. In fact, the available literature supports an opposite conclusion. Research indicates that much of a police officer's duty time is spent in administrative and social service activities, and that only a small portion of his time is devoted to law enforcement activities. "Less than one-third of an urban patrolman's time is involved with dealing with personal or property crimes and over half--about two-thirds--of his time is spent in administrative or social service tasks."[35] By contrast, the average amount of time television devoted to service duties approximated only one-fifth of the time given to law enforcement.

These figures may have significance in a determination of police applicants' perceptions about the role of police officers. While the data contained in this study provide no basis for determining individual perceptions of the law enforcement role, research conducted by Watson and Sterling indicated that 71 percent of the police officers surveyed on the East Coast and 60 percent in the Midwest

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[35]John A. Webster, The Realities of Police Work (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 99-100.

and West had incorrect perceptions of the police role prior to entering the field.[36] The researchers concluded, "It is most obvious that most of our respondents found that the job was not what they thought it was going to be."[37] The realization that "police work" is not strictly law enforcement oriented is not necessarily perceived when the applicant enters the police training academy. In fact, many training academies tend to reinforce the applicant's initial perceptions of the police role. Trojanowicz and Dixon noted this reinforcement process, and concluded that:

> The police recruit believes, and then is reinforced through training, that he will be mainly a crime fighter--emphasizing the law enforcement function. In reality [however] only one-fifth of his time is spent in "crook catching."[38]

This reinforcement process is finally terminated when the individual officer reaches the streets in what Niederhoffer called "reality shock,"[39] a process in which the perceptions of the past are confronted with the realities of the occupation. The individual's resolution of

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[36]Nelson A. Watson and James W. Sterling, Police and Their Opinions (Washington, D.C.: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1969), p. 74.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Robert C. Trojanowicz and Samuel L. Dixon, Criminal Justice and the Community (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 353.

[39]Arthur Niederhoffer, Behind the Shield (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969), pp. 51-54.

this "reality shock," in many instances, determines the type of police officer he will become. He may either tenaciously cling to the "crime fighter" image or modify this behavior to comply with the occupational realities of his role.

Television, then, as evidenced by the data obtained, may operate in two functions that influence the behavior of police applicants and in-service police officers. First, television may distort the perceptions of police applicants about the role of a police officer. Second, if the rookie patrolman cannot resolve the "reality shock" with which he is confronted, television may serve to reinforce the belief that police officers are solely "crook catchers." Although the data obtained in this study neither support nor reject the preceding statements, it is clearly indicated that the police role portrayed on television represents no semblance of reality and does not afford the public an opportunity to appreciate the diverse functions the police perform.

POLICE AUTHORITY

Police authority has been openly debated for many years without reaching decisive results. There are those who would mandate that the police exercise authority (invoking arrest) any time the criminal law is

violated.[40] Others, on the other hand, assert that police authority would be greatly enhanced through the use of delegated discretionary powers.[41] Each of these positions has a certain applicability, depending on the crime committed. Television, however, through the portrayal of predominantly violent and assaultive criminality, removes the possibility of police discretion and clearly mandates the exercise of authority.

The term authority, for the purpose of this research, refers to the ability of the police to command thought, opinion, or behavior through the use of verbal and nonverbal communications with others. To operationalize this concept six indicators of authority were selected. Three of them may be seen as dominant acts--giving orders, giving permission, and persuading. The remaining three indicators may be seen as submissive acts--taking orders, asking permission, and being persuaded. A numerical count of each indicator was recorded for each program observed, and an Authority Index was developed to compare the levels of authority among the programs observed. The mathematical

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[40]James Q. Wilson, Varieties of Police Behavior (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 172-199.

[41]Jerome H. Skolnick, Justice Without Trial (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), pp. 71-73.

formula for the determination of authority was:[42]

$$\frac{\text{\# Dominant Acts - \# Submissive Acts}}{\text{\# of Scenes Observed}} \times 100 = \text{Authority Index}$$

To determine the Authority Index for each program observed, the total number of submissive acts recorded was subtracted from the total number of dominant acts recorded. This figure was then divided by the number of scenes observed that depicted the police. The resulting quotient was then multiplied by 100 to achieve a whole number.

The tables in this section merely present a comparison of the programs observed. The primary reason for a comparison of this nature is the absence of comparative data in the professional literature. Although research has indicated that the police are no more authoritarian than their counterparts in the "working class,"[43] there exists no standardized indicator of what levels of authority should be ascribed to the police. In the absence of this comparative base, each program observed is compared with the average level of authority displayed in the sample.

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[42]This formula was first illustrated in: Melvin L. DeFleur, "Occupational Roles as Portrayed on Television," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXVIII, 1 (1964), 57-74.

[43]John H. McNamara, "Uncertainties in Police Work: The Relevance of Police Recruits' Background and Training," The Police: Six Sociological Essays, ed. David J. Bordua (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), p. 194.

Table 10 presents the computed Authority Index for each program observed. Additionally, each program was rank ordered, beginning with those programs that exhibited the highest levels of authority and ending with those that exhibited the lowest. Although, in a statistical sense, no programs significantly deviated from the mean, certain programs tended to fall well above and below the mean. Therefore, programs were classified as being either More Authoritarian or Less Authoritarian. The programs Kojak and Hawaii Five-O were observed to exhibit the highest level of authority and were classified as More Authoritarian. On the opposite end of this scale, the programs Toma, Chopper I, and The Rookies exhibited the least amount of authority and were classified as Less Authoritarian. The remaining seven programs were classified as neither more authoritarian nor less authoritarian, but rather as exhibiting what can be considered a "normal" level of authority.

POLICE SOCIAL INTERACTION

The police for many years have been criticized for their failure to communicate effectively with the communities they serve. In an effort to improve their abilities to communicate effectively with the community, as well as to improve their image, many police departments have embraced the concept of police-community relations. Varied approaches within the broad category of police-community

Table 10. Police Authority Index

Program	Authority Index	Rank Order
Kojak	288	1
Hawaii Five-O	167	2
Chase	146	3
Adam-12	144	4
Ironside	122	5
The F.B.I.	110	6
NBC Mystery Movie	106	7
The Streets of San Francisco	88	8
Police Story	76	9
The Rookies	62	10
Chopper I	40	11
Toma	40	12
Average for all programs	115.75	

relations have been undertaken. They include human relations training, sensitivity training, team policing, community input in decision making, and a host of programs directed at involving the police with the community. It is not the intention of this research to assess the effectiveness of these programs in attaining an acceptable level of police-citizen social interaction. It is important to note, however, that the police have consciously taken it upon themselves to improve their relations with the community. Most authorities on the subject agree that the police should make a conscious effort to interact with the public

in a polite, courteous manner and to elicit support from the public in preventing crime and maintaining order.

Admittedly, at certain times and in certain places the police have been unable to accomplish this task. However, it is important to observe how television perceives this interaction and how it is portrayed to the viewing public.

A Social Interaction Index was constructed to record the tone of police-citizen interaction, in an effort to determine how the televised police characters interacted with their public. Using a Likert-type scale, described in Chapter III, the scene tone was recorded for each police-citizen interaction. Once this information was recorded, a Social Interaction Index was computed for each program observed. The formula employed in determining the Police Social Interaction Index was:

$$\frac{\text{Sum of the Coded Scenes}}{\text{Total Number of Scenes Observed}} \times 100 = \text{Police Social Interaction Index}$$

The sum of each coded scene was first divided by the total number of scenes observed. The quotient was then multiplied by 100 to achieve a whole number. Each program was then rank ordered, beginning with those programs exhibiting the lowest index, which indicates a positive direction of social interaction, to the highest index, which indicates a negative direction of social interaction. As was

the case with police authority, a statistical level of significance, in terms of deviation from the mean, was unachievable. However, when considering the variance of index scores, certain programs can be characterized as exhibiting a positive or negative level of interaction.

Table 11 presents a rank ordering for the programs observed. It is interesting that with the exception of one program, Kojak, each program observed portrayed the police as either neutral or in a positive direction in their social interactions with the public.

Table 11. Rank by Police Social Interaction Index[a]

Program	Index	Rank Order
Adam-12	183	1
The F.B.I.	207	2
Hawaii Five-O	210	3
The Rookies	218	4
Chopper I	231	5
NBC Mystery Movie	244	6
Ironside	255	7
The Streets of San Francisco	267	8
Toma	271	9
Chase	285	10
Police Story	302	11
Kojak	391	12
Average for all programs	255	

[a]The Likert-type scale classified positive as between 1 and 2, neutral as between 2 and 3, and negative as between 4 and 5.

An interpretation of the data suggests that in the area of police-citizen interaction the television sample consistently succeeded in portraying police officers as interacting socially with the public in a professional manner. This is not to be construed to mean that in each program the police acted in a polite and courteous way, for to achieve this tone the program was required to have an index of 100. However, the sample does reveal that television's characterization of the police officer, in terms of police-public interaction, presents a favorable image.

THE POLICE AND VIOLENCE

Violence is deeply entrenched in American culture. To appreciate the significance of violence in our society, a review of American history reveals over 200 years of individual and collective violence.

In recent years, violence has been examined from many perspectives, including violence and the police. The concerns of the present research in the area of violence are threefold: to examine the level of violence portrayed on police-oriented television programs, to determine the level of violence perpetrated by the police, and to examine the level of violence perpetrated against the police.

In an effort to accomplish these objectives, certain assumptions were made in order to operationalize the term violence. First, violence has been broadly defined

as the use of force (verbal and physical) against another individual. Second, no distinction was made between legitimate (legally sanctioned) and illegitimate (criminally punished) violence. For instance, if the police were exchanging gunfire with the criminal character, the acts of both the police and the criminal were recorded as violent. Once these assumptions were made, seven indicators of violence were established, as noted in Chapter III. Table 12 presents the frequency of occurrence for the selected indicators.

Table 12. Frequency of Occurrence for All Violent Acts

Kind of Violence	N	%
Threats made by the police	47	9
Threats made against the police	35	7
Physical assaults by the police	61	12
Physical assaults against the police	139	27
Police officer draws weapon	130	25
Police officer fires weapon	90	17
Police officer kills	16	3
Total	518	100

Of the 518 violent acts observed, 344 (66 percent) were committed by the police and 174 (34 percent) were committed against the police. An interpretation of the data suggests that the televised sample assigns a higher level

of violence to the police characters than to the criminal characters.

In an effort to determine whether any variations existed among individual programs, a Violence Index was constructed for each program observed. The Violence Index for each program was computed in the following manner: First, a numerical count for each indicator was recorded during the observations. Second, the frequency of occurrence for each indicator was multiplied by a weighted factor.[44] The combined total for all indicators, multiplied by weighted factors, was divided by the number of scenes observed that depicted the police. The resulting quotient was then multiplied by 100 to achieve a whole number. The mathematical formula for the determimation of the Violence Index was:

$$\frac{\text{\# of Acts in Each Category x Weighted Factor}}{\text{\# of Scenes Observed}} \times 100 = \text{Violence Index}$$

Once a Violence Index was computed for each program observed, the programs were rank ordered, beginning with those programs that exhibited the highest index scores and

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[44]Weighted factors were assigned in the following manner: All threats multiplied by 1, all assaults multiplied by 2, police drawing weapon multiplied by 3, police firing weapon multiplied by 4, and police officer kills multiplied by 5. The assumption was made that in the context of this classification scheme, threats constituted a lesser degree of violence, and killings constituted the highest degree of violence.

ending with those exhibiting the lowest. Table 13 contains a comparison of Violence Indexes for each program observed. In the absence of statistically significant deviations from the mean, programs were classified either as More Violent, Less Violent, or as displaying a "normal" level of violence. In this manner the programs Chase, The Rookies, and Police Story were classified as More Violent compared with Chopper I, Kojak, Ironside, and The F.B.I., which were classified as Less Violent. The remaining five programs, Toma, NBC Mystery Movie, The Streets of San Francisco, Adam-12, and Hawaii Five-O, were classified as displaying a "normal" level of violence as defined by the sample. When considering the question of normality, the reader should be aware that "normal" is defined in this research as being close to the arithmetic mean. The average number of violent acts depicted in the sample was approximately 25, a figure that many people might consider exceedingly high. In the absence of comparative data, however, this average has, for convenience, been labeled "normal."

VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY THE POLICE

In considering televised violence in police-oriented programing, the violence perpetrated by the police was recorded for each program observed. The same formula for calculating the Violence Index was employed in a determination

Table 13. Violence Index for Sample Programs

Program	Index	Rank Order
Chase	515	1
The Rookies	423	2
Police Story	324	3
Toma	291	4
NBC Mystery Movie	265	5
The Streets of San Francisco	257	6
Adam-12	256	7
Hawaii Five-O	220	8
Chopper I	181	9
Kojak	167	10
Ironside	94	11
The F.B.I.	61	12
Average for all programs	254.5	

of police violence. Table 14 shows the Police Violence Index for each program observed and a rank ordering of each program by the degree of violence exhibited.

As was noted earlier, police violence comprised two-thirds of all violence portrayed. This violence was depicted predominantly for legitimate ends, i.e. to effect an arrest, to restrain, and in self-defense. Although Westley, when investigating the basis for the use of police force, determined that in many instances the police used

force against those individuals who showed disrespect for the police themselves,[45] the research data suggest that force was used, to a large extent, only as a last resort. There was, however, a tendency for the televised law enforcement characters to rely on the use of a weapon in the resolution of conflict. The drawing of a weapon occurred in 25 percent of the violent acts observed, and the use of weapons in conflict resolution was pervasive.

Table 14. Sample Programs by Police Violence Index

Program	Police Violence Index	Rank Order
Chase	436	1
Police Story	284	2
The Rookies	271	3
Adam-12	211	4
Toma	195	5
Hawaii Five-O	193	6
The Streets of San Francisco	188	7
NBC Mystery Movie	181	8
Kojak	129	9
Chopper I	106	10
Ironside	83	11
The F.B.I.	43	12
Average for all programs	198	

[45] William A. Westley, Violence and the Police (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1970), p. 122.

VIOLENCE AGAINST THE POLICE

The police as an occupational group occupy a rather unique position in society relative to the possibility of encountering violent behavior or danger. Skolnick considered the element of danger to be an integral part of the patrolman's "working personality."[46] "The element of danger seems to make the policeman especially attentive to signs indicating a potential for violence and law breaking."[47] Because of this rather unique occupational perception of danger, the research data were collected in such a manner as to determine the level of violence perpetrated against the police for each program observed.

Using the index formula and violence indicators specified in the preceding two sections, a Police Danger Index was constructed for each program observed. Table 15 depicts the Police Danger Index for each program observed and a rank ordering, beginning with those programs found to have the highest levels of danger.

In the absence of statistical significance, programs were classified as either More Dangerous or Less Dangerous. The programs The Rookies, Toma, and NBC Mystery Movie were classified as being More Dangerous compared with the sample

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[46] Skolnick, Justice Without Trial, pp. 45-48.

[47] Ibid., p. 44.

average, and the programs Adam-12, Police Story, Kojak, Hawaii Five-O, The F.B.I., and Ironside were classified as less dangerous. The remaining three programs, Chopper I, The Streets of San Francisco, and Chase, were classified as exhibiting an average level of danger.

Table 15. Police Danger Index

Program	Police Danger Index	Rank Order
The Rookies	152	1
Toma	95	2
NBC Mystery Movie	84	3
Chopper I	75	4
The Streets of San Francisco	68	5
Chase	54	6
Adam-12	44	7
Police Story	39	8
Kojak	38	9
Hawaii Five-O	28	10
The F.B.I.	18	11
Ironside	11	12
Average for all programs	62	

When considering the question of danger, it is important to note the types of danger with which the police in the sample were confronted. Thirty-four police officers in the television sample were victimized; the predominant crime committed against these police officers was assault

and battery (65 percent; N=34). Additionally, eight police officers (23 percent) were killed in the performance of their duties. As noted earlier, the police as an occupation group were the most heavily victimized occupation observed (23 percent). The data suggest, however, that the assaults perpetrated against the police on television are inconsistent with available research on police assaults. Although it is readily apparent that police officers are assaulted frequently when executing a lawful arrest, the most frequent type of assaultive behavior is encountered by the police when they intercede in domestic disturbances.[48] The sample observations were devoid of these types of police activities and, as a consequence, the portrayal of violence directed against the police was restricted to police activity of an enforcement nature.

A further interpretation of the data suggests that television may serve to reinforce existing fears of danger among police officers. James W. Sterling, assessing changing role concepts among police officers, concluded that the rookie patrolman is occupationally socialized to perceive danger in certain patrol assignments or in certain areas

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[48]Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, p. 169.

of the city.[49] In assessing police perceptions of danger, Skolnick stated:

> The policeman, because his work requires him to be occupied continually with potential violence, develops a perceptual shorthand to identify certain kinds of people as symbolic assailants, that is, as persons who use gestures, language, and attire that the policeman has come to recognize as a prelude to violence.[50]

The television sample exhibited violence directed at the police in two contexts that may be applicable in a consideration of the preceding statements. First, in over 80 percent of the situations faced by the police the potential for violence had been established. Second, the police were characterized as being a prime target for assaults and murders. Although the assessment of television's impact on the viewing audience is beyond the scope of this research, the concepts of selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention, established in Chapter III, may be used as arguments in support of this position. If the police are overly perceptive when considering danger, television may serve to reinforce these perceptions and to heighten existing fears.

The tables presented in this section compared each program observed, according to the three levels of violence.

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[49]James W. Sterling, Changes in Role Concepts of Police Officers (Gaithersburg, Maryland: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1972), pp. 245-265.

[50]Skolnick, op. cit., p. 45.

The primary reason for this type of comparison is the absence of a comparative basis in the professional literature. Whether the police should resort to any form of violence (legitimate or illegitimate) is not within the scope of this research. It is sufficient to note, however, that the police have traditionally been faced with the task of intervening in violent situations and predictably will continue to do so.

AUTHORITY AND VIOLENCE

Police authority and violence, to this point, have been considered separately, primarily to identify those programs considered to be more or less authoritarian or violent. However, as Skolnick pointed out, "the policeman's role contains two principal variables, danger and authority,"[51] which reinforce one another in the development of the police officer's "working personality."[52] Using this reinforcement process as a model, the research anticipated a positive relationship between high levels of authority and high levels of violence. The data, however, reveal an opposite conclusion. Figure 12 shows a comparison between the Police Authority Index and the Violence Index for each program observed. The majority of programs observed depicted an inverse relationship between authority and

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[51] Ibid., p. 44.

[52] Ibid., pp. 42-70.

Figure 12. Police Authority Index by Police Violence Index[a]

[a]Graph lines cross as indicated by shading.

violence, in that when authority was relatively high, violence was relatively low. The reverse of this situation was also found to be consistent within the sample. Those programs that exhibited a relatively low Authority Index were found to exhibit a relatively high Violence Index.

The data suggest that the inverse relationship between authority and violence may be a function of two variables related to the television industry. First, because of the limited amount of time appropriated to each program by the networks (one-half hour or one hour), intricate themes or relationships have been sacrificed for the sake of expediency. To present a combination of intricate relationships would simply necessitate more time to develop them thoroughly. The programs observed either portrayed authority or violence, with little consideration of interrelationships that may exist. Second, television, like any industry, produces a product for a certain market. The data suggest that the industry is not attempting to cultivate a market of discerning consumers. With a few exceptions, the themes observed were interchangeable among programs. The effects of this type of nondescript programing led one researcher to comment: "The T.V. world is nearly the opposite of the real world. . . . T.V. producers,

rather than risk offending anyone, would rather tell it like it isn't."[53]

POLICE AUTHORITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

An examination of Police Authority Indexes and Police Social Interaction Indexes reveals some rather dubious results. It was anticipated that as the level of police authority increased there would be a corresponding decrease in police social interaction. The assumption underlying this position was that as one became more authoritarian in his relationship with others, the tenor of social interaction would decline.[54] The sample data do not support this assumption. Figure 13 presents a comparison between the Police Authority Index and the Police Social Interaction Index for each program observed.

The data suggest that no relationship exists between authority and social interaction. The Social Interaction Indexes for each program observed remained relatively

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[53]"Prime Time Crime," Human Behavior, III, 4 (1974), 45.

[54]For a discussion of public tolerance of authority relative to the police see: Westley, Violence and the Police, pp. 49-108; Trojanowicz and Dixon, Criminal Justice and the Community, pp. 58-79; Skolnick, Justice Without Trial, pp. 54-58; and James Q. Wilson, "Police Morale, Reform, and Citizen Respect: The Chicago Case," The Police: Six Sociological Essays, ed. David J. Bordua (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), pp. 137-162.

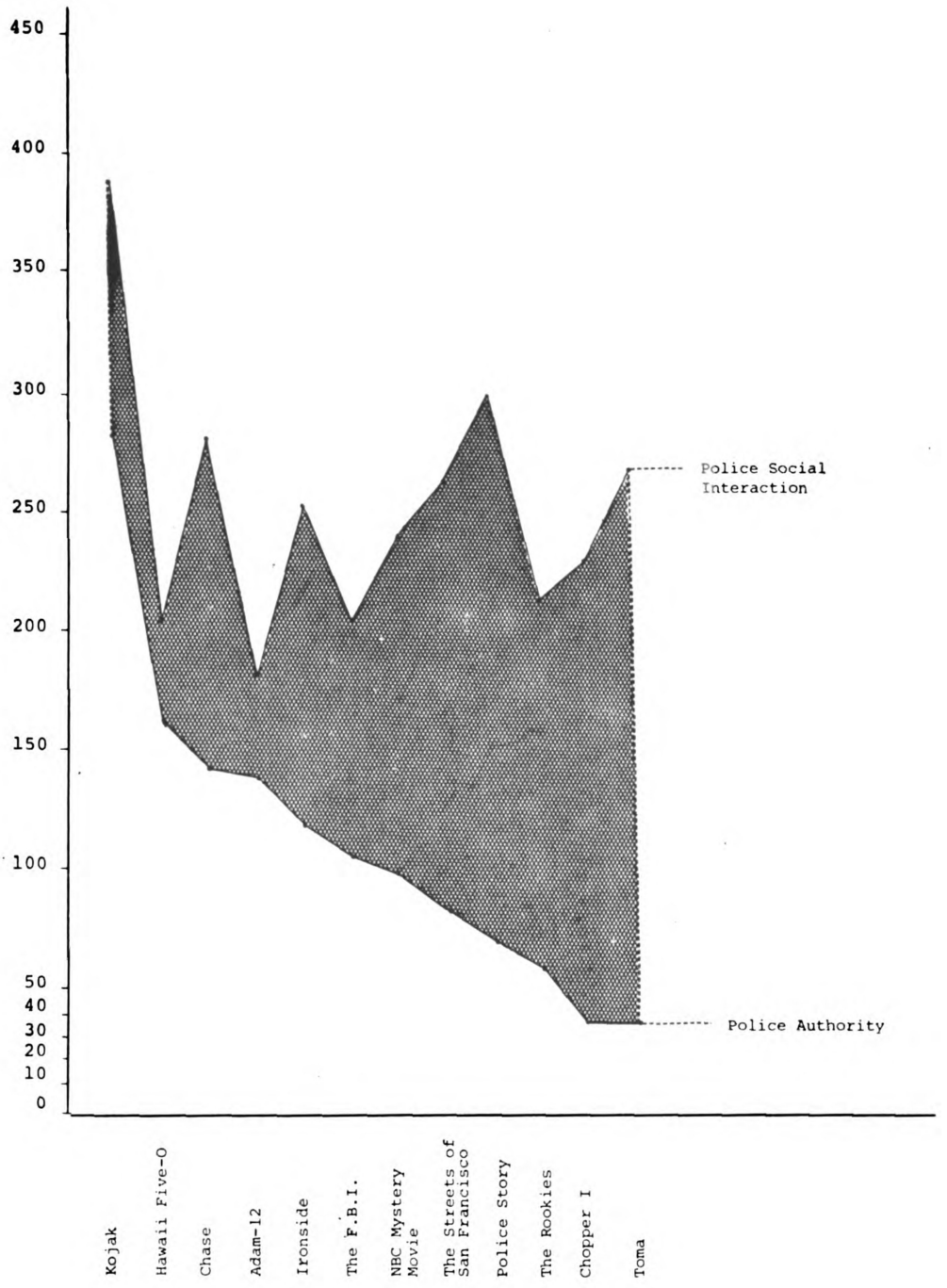

Figure 13. Police Authority by Police Social Interaction

constant throughout the sample, while the degree of authority displayed varied considerably. Thus, programs exhibiting relatively low levels of authority were assigned approximately identical Social Interaction Indexes as programs that exhibited relatively higher levels of authority. An explanation of this phenomenon may be undertaken in the following manner. First, televised police characters were portrayed as having legitimate authority for their conduct. This authority was presented as being both moral (good versus evil) and legal (police enforcing a legal code). The resulting portrayal of authority, as evidenced by this sample, indicates that the police exercised a packaged form of socially accepted authority. The absence of a challenge to this authority appears to be closely related to the themes presented.

The police were seldom portrayed in the role of enforcing controversial or questionable issues relating to specific crimes, such as homosexuality, prostitution, racial disorders, or the use of marijuana. Additionally, the underlying motive for criminal behavior was consistently found to be greed, or an effort on the part of the criminal to cover up other crimes, rather than social, political, or economic deprivation. The resulting authority, therefore, could be legitimized toward a perceived societal end (ridding society of greedy criminals), rather than the enforcement of a "middle class" status quo.

POLICE VIEWED IN OTHER SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Television's portrayal of police officers engaged in significant social relationships apart from their occupational role was observed to be minimal in the sample observations. Of the 48 hours of television programing observed, the police were presented on 13 occasions as engaged in social contexts that were not directly related to their occupations. The majority of these occasions, however, were of such a brief nature that to consider them as portraying the police as socially interacting apart from their occupational roles would be a misinterpretation of the data. The more pervasive attitude was that the police are always engaged in their occupational roles, with little or no attention to social contexts that are removed from the role of police officer.

NETWORK VARIATIONS

When considering the televised images of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers, it is important to assess any variations that might exist among networks, for in the final analysis it is the network's practices and policies that will ultimately affect the type of programing presented. Network or program variations regarding the classifications--crime, criminals, and victims--were by-and-large nonexistent. The predominant characterization,

for all network presentations, was white, male, middle to upper socio-economic level criminals assaulting or killing, for no apparent reason, white, male, middle to upper socio-economic level victims.

Variations were noted, however, in a comparison of the Violence, Authority, and Social Interaction Indexes by network. Table 16 presents a comparison of all the network programs observed relative to the Violence, Authority, and Social Interaction Indexes recorded.

The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) contained the greatest amount of high violence police programing, while the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) exhibited a normal or lower than normal Violence Index. However, when considering authority, CBS ranked highest in authority and received the only negative Social Interaction Index. With the exception of The Rookies, which exhibited a high level of violence, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) consistently exhibited low authority, neutral or positive social interaction, and normal or low violence. Table 17 presents a rank ordering of networks for each index, beginning with those indexes that are considered less violent, less authoritarian, and socially interacting in a positive direction and ending with those indexes that are more violent, more authoritarian, and socially interacting in a negative direction. The data reveal that ABC is positioned in a more favorable light than either CBS or NBC.

Table 16. Comparison Among Networks for Violence, Authority, and Social Interaction Indexes

Program by Network	Violence	Authority	Social Interaction
ABC			
The F.B.I.	Low[a]	Normal	Positive[b]
The Rookies	High	Low	Positive
Chopper I	Low	Low	Positive
The Streets of San Francisco	Normal	Normal	Neutral
Toma	Normal	Low	Neutral
% of Total 42			
NBC			
NBC Mystery Movie	Normal	Normal	Positive
Adam-12	Normal	Normal	Positive
Police Story	High	Normal	Neutral
Chase	High	Normal	Neutral
Ironside	Low	Normal	Neutral
% of Total 42			
CBS			
Hawaii Five-O	Normal	High	Positive
Kojak	Low	High	Negative
% of Total 16			
Total 100	--	--	--

[a]The terms low and high were substituted for the terms more or less, concerning program positions on the Violence and Authority Indexes.

[b]Social Interaction was classified as being either positive, neutral, or negative.

Table 17. Rank Order of Networks by Violence, Authority, and Social Interaction Indexes

Network	Violence	Authority	Social Interaction
ABC	2	1	1
NBC	3	2	2
CBS	1	3	3

SUPPORT OF MAJOR HYPOTHESES

A detailed observation of the variables identified in Chapter III was predicated on the structuring of two major hypotheses, which were further operationalized in the form of eight subhypotheses. The acceptance or rejection of the major hypotheses, therefore, was attributed to the acceptance or rejection of each subhypothesis. In the discussion that follows, each major hypothesis is reiterated, followed by the supporting data for each subhypothesis.

> Hypothesis I: The television industry, in attempting to cultivate a viewing audience and profit financially from its endeavor, has chosen to ignore its social responsibility for program content relating to the activities of the law enforcement agent by (A) depicting police officers in a strict law enforcement context without accurately portraying a service or order maintenance orientation, (B) depicting law enforcement officers as highly authoritarian, cruel, and demeaning toward the public, (C) portraying police officers as perpetually in a violent context, and (D) failing to portray police officers in significant social relationships which are removed from their occupational role.

A. The television programing observed during the research period consistently portrayed the police characters in a strict law enforcement context as evidenced by the findings that: (1) the predominant justification for police involvement centered around the investigation of assaultive criminal behavior, (2) the amount of time devoted to service activities approximated only one-fifth of the time devoted to law enforcement activities, and (3) police officers engaged primarily in service functions constituted only 12 percent of the sample observations.

B. While the data suggest that television portrays police officers in authoritarian contexts, the absence of an identifiable comparative basis precluded the support of this subhypothesis. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter IV (police social interaction), the television sample predominantly characterized the police officer as positively interacting with the public. These findings required a rejection of this subhypothesis.

C. In the absence of a comparative base, the levels of violence for each program observed were categorized as being either high, normal, or low. It is important to note that "normal" was defined as approximately the arithmetic mean. The findings suggest that, as a result of consistently portraying the police in a law enforcement context, violence permeated the programing observed, in that: (1) 66 percent of all violent acts were committed by

the police, (2) the police employed the use of deadly force, i.e. the drawing and firing of a weapon, as a primary resolution to conflict, and (3) the police as an occupational group were portrayed as being the primary target for victimization.

D. Television's portrayal of police officers engaged in significant social relationships removed from their occupational role was observed to be minimal in the sample observations. On only 13 occasions were the police depicted in a social relationship removed from their occupational role. On these occasions, however, the treatment of this subject was of such a brief nature that to construe this as an earnest attempt by television to portray the police in a social context apart from their occupation would be a misinterpretation of the data. The manifest image presented by the sample characterizes the police officer in a strict occupational context.

The concern in developing this hypothesis was not that the police would be portrayed in a police context in the programing observed, but rather that the police would only be portrayed in their occupational role. Programing depicting the medical or legal profession, of course, presents its characters as doctors or lawyers, but at the same time this programing portrays these characters as engaged in relationships that remove them from their occupational roles. The police image, as evidenced by the data,

consistently portrays the police officer as being apart from rather than part of the community he serves.

> Hypothesis II: The television industry's depiction of crime, criminals, and victims is disproportionate and distorted when compared with the reality of the situation, in that: (A) television displays a level of criminal activity disproportionate to the level of crime in society, (B) television portrays criminals as belonging to the upper and middle classes, to the exclusion of lower class criminality, (C) television displays an inaccurate and distorted relationship between victims and criminals for those crimes being committed, and (C) television portrays victims in a distorted manner.

A. The data reveal that the sample programing consistently portrayed more crimes against the person than crimes against property. Furthermore, the crimes of murder, assault and battery, and attempted murder constituted over 67 percent of the offenses committed, whereas the available professional survey data indicated that violent crime approximated only 15 percent of all reported crime. An inverse relationship between televised crime and national reported crime was noted in the data.

B. Televised criminal characters were primarily assigned to the middle or upper class in the sample observations. Over one-third of all criminal characters were portrayed as belonging to the upper class, and fewer than one-fourth of the characters were assigned to the lower class. Additional disparities were noted in the area of offender age and race. For instance, the television sample portrayed 43 percent of the criminal characters as being

between 40 and 60 years of age, and 92 percent of all criminals portrayed were white. These characterizations were found to be incongrunet with research findings conducted at both the local and national levels.

C. The predominant victim-criminal relationship portrayed in the sample projected the image of criminals victimizing strangers. These figures were found to be particularly disproportionate, when considering the nature of the crime committed. According to previous research, the victim-criminal relationship in crimes against the person are consistently of an intense nature. Television, on the other hand, predominantly portrayed no relationship between the victim and the criminal.

D. Television's portrayal of victims, as evidenced in the sample observations, was found to distort victim characteristics in the same manner that was noted in the characterization of criminals. This was particularly evidenced in the consideration of the victim's race and socioeconomic level. The victims were overwhelmingly portrayed as belonging to the upper or middle class, with only 20 percent of the victims comprising the lower class. In addition, victims were predominantly white. These characteristics were found to be incongruent with victimization surveys conducted at the local and national levels.

The data analyzed in this chapter support, either statistically or inferentially, the major hypotheses in this

research. Furthermore, the data suggest possible implications of television's distorted presentation of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers.

In the next chapter conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research are presented. Conclusions were drawn from the supportive data contained in this chapter; implications have been postulated in an effort to assess the impact of television regarding issues relating to the criminal justice system in general, and the police in particular.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine television's characterization of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers and to compare this image with information contained in the professional literature in an effort to delineate any disparities that may exist. The data analyzed in Chapter IV reveal many marked departures from reality in reference to the categories of crime, criminals, and victims. The major findings in this area may be summarized as follows:

1. An inverse relationship was observed in the sample between television's portrayal of crime and the national statistics compiled by the F.B.I., with television portraying violent and assaultive crime in 82 percent of the observations and the F.B.I. reporting 15 percent of all crime as violent.

2. Televised offender characteristics were found to be incongruent with research conducted at the national and local levels. Television portrayed criminals predominantly between 40 and 60 years of age, white, and from the middle and upper socio-economic levels. The available survey

literature, by contrast, classified violent criminals as predominantly under the age of 25, black, and overwhelmingly from the lower socio-economic level.

3. Televised victim characteristics were found to be inconsistent with national as well as local victimization research. Television portrayed victim characters as predominantly white and from the middle and upper socio-economic levels. Existing research data, on the other hand, indicate that victims of violent crimes are predominantly black and from the lower socio-economic level.

4. The televised victim-criminal relationship, particularly for the crimes committed, was found to be incompatible with previous victimization research. The pervasive television characterization of this relationship was that the offender was unknown to the victim prior to the commission of the crime, a relationship that is inconsistent with previously documented research.

In addition to the disparities that were noted in the areas of crime, criminals, and victims, the study sought to analyze television's characterization of the police officer. The variables identified to examine this characterization were Violence, Authority, Social Interaction, and Role. The major findings may be summarized as follows:

1. The police role portrayed on television was consistently found to be restricted to law enforcement, with little reference to service or order maintenance orientations.

2. Levels of police authority fluctuated throughout the programing observed; Kojak and Hawaii Five-O exhibited the highest levels of authority and Toma, Chopper I, and The Rookies exhibited the lowest levels of authority (Table 10, p. 104).

3. The levels of violence were found to vary throughout the programing observed; Chase, The Rookies, and Police Story exhibited the highest levels of violence, and Chopper I, Kojak, Ironside, and The F.B.I. exhibited the lowest levels of violence.

4. An inverse relationship was found to exist between television's presentation of violence and authority (Figure 12, p. 118). When programing exhibited high levels of violence, authority levels tended to be low. The reverse of this situation was also found to be consistent in the programing observed. The inability of television script writers to develop intricate themes or relationships, primarily as a result of the limited amount of time devoted to each program, was postulated as an explanation for this relationship.

5. Television depicted no relationship between authority and social interaction in the sample observations. Again, this may be a result of time problems inherent in television script writing.

6. The sample programing consistently portrayed the police as interacting socially with the public in a

positive direction; one exception was Kojak, which portrayed the police as demeaning and sarcastic toward the public.

7. Television portrayed the police as the most heavily victimized occupational group in the programing observed.

Variations were also noted among networks (Table 17, p. 126). The network variations are summarized below:

1. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) was found to present the greatest number of high violence police programs, followed by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), in that order.

2. CBS was found to present consistently high levels of authority in its police programing, whereas ABC and NBC presented "normal" or low authority levels.

3. CBS was found to present the only program that depicted the police as demeaning and sarcastic toward the public.

The variations among networks and the distorted presentation of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers, as evidenced in this research, suggest possible implications of this programing regarding its effect on the viewing public. The following section presents implications that may be advanced in light of the stated findings.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Throughout this study, statements regarding the possible consequences of television's distorted presentation of crime, criminals, victims, and police officers have been advanced. The major findings revealed by the data suggest several areas in which the import of distorted television programing might have serious implications for the criminal justice system in general and the police in particular.

The Police and Crime Prevention

Although in recent years community participation in efforts to prevent crime has increased, public understanding of crime and its prevention is minimal.

> The typical citizen response to the crime problem is a demand for greater action by the police, courts, correctional institutions and other governmental agencies. The citizen asks too infrequently what he can do himself. And when the public does decide to act, its activities are often short-lived, sporadic outbursts in response to a particularly heinous crime or one that occurred too close to home.[1]

Television's portrayal of crime may reinforce existing public fears of victimization and, as a consequence, increase pressure on the police to "clean up the streets." This type of public reaction may be predicated, to some

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[1]National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Community Crime Prevention (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 8.

extent, upon the following observed images regarding crime and the ability of the police to deal with it.

1. Crime, as documented in the sample, is portrayed as being vicious, assaultive, and indiscriminate in its choice of victims. This presentation can only serve to heighten public fears of becoming a victim, particularly a victim of a violent crime.

2. The police, in an organizational context, are portrayed as being unable to prevent criminal activity. Television consistently projected the police in a reacting context, as opposed to a preventing context.

3. The underlying causes of crime, as portrayed on television, are beyond the scope of societal reduction, resulting in the image that society can do little to reduce the causes of crime.

The resulting composite image of this programing may reduce the individual's understanding regarding his role in crime prevention, the police role in crime prevention, society's role in crime prevention, and the interrelated responsibilities of each in the reduction and prevention of crime.

Reinforcing Criminal Behavior

An additional area of concern to the criminal justice system and in particular the police was the tendency of the observed programing to reinforce lower class subcultural

definitions regarding the use of violence and the use of illegitimate means of goal achievement. The findings revealed by the data in Chapter IV suggest that certain latent images are being presented, which indicate that:

1. Crime does pay, as evidenced by a substantial proportion of the criminal characters being portrayed as belonging to the upper socio-economic level (over one-third), and

2. the predominance of illegitimate means portrayed as viable avenues toward "success," as evidenced by a predominant characterization of "successful" professional criminals.

These images have particular relevance in light of research that has indicated "the poor and the less educated watch more [violent programs] than those with white collar status and those who have gone on to college."[2] Additionally, research has found a "particularly high rate of violence viewing among male adults who were high school dropouts,"[3] a group that was pointed out to have higher levels of reported violent behavior. This type of latent

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[2]Jack Lyle, "Television in Daily Life: Patterns of Use Overview," Television and Social Behavior: Reports and Papers, A report to the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, Vol. III, ed. George A. Comstock, Eli A. Rubenstein and John P. Murray (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 11.

[3]Ibid.

image may be reinforcing lower class subcultural definitions about what is normative behavior in the upper and middle classes and, consequently, may be serving as a lower class behavior model.

The Selection and Retention of Police Officers

The findings indicate that by portraying police officers in a strict law enforcement context television may be creating problems relative to the selection and retention of qualified police personnel. This implication is predicated on the following statements, which have been advanced in various sections of this report:

1. There is limited public understanding of the police role, primarily resulting from a minimal amount of communication between the police and the public. This assumption is verified by a recommendation by the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, which recognized this problem and recommended that "every police agency immediately should establish programs to inform the public of the agency's defined role."[4]

2. In many instances, the public's perception of the police role is a product of television's presentation of that role.

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[4]National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Police (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 38.

3. The data suggest that the television police role is preoccupied with the sensational image of "crook catcher" and "crime fighter," thus portraying the police in a strict law enforcement context.

4. Repetition of this image over prolonged periods of time may "condition" the police applicant to view the police role in a strict law enforcement context, and initial police training tends to reinforce these distorted perceptions.

5. After receiving police training, police officers may continue to perceive their role as primarily law enforcement oriented. This assumption is substantially verified by research indicating that a majority of police officers felt it necessary to reconsider their perceptions of "police work" once they had been engaged in that role.

6. Television may serve as a reinforcing agent to police officers who refuse to reject their past perceptions when confronted with the "realities" of that role, thus contributing to role dissonance.

7. Television may reinforce existing police fears of being confronted with violence. The over-dramatization of the violent aspects of the law enforcement occupation can only exacerbate existing police perceptions of the threat of violence.

The cumulative implications of television's distorted presentation of criminals, victims, and police

officers, and its disproportionate levels of crime raise questions regarding television's ability to meet its social responsibility. In the following section the major conclusion that may be drawn from the preceding implications is discussed.

CONCLUSION

The major conclusion that may be drawn from the preceding findings and implications relates directly to the question of television's social responsibility, which was referred to in Chapter II of this report. It would appear that the television industry has been faced with a choice regarding the type of police programing it will present. The industry may either choose to meet its social responsibility by presenting programing that accurately reflects the nature and causes of crime, its treatment, and the police role in controlling crime, or the industry may choose to sensationalize, overdramatize, and distort the levels of crime, the characteristics of offenders and victims, the relationship between offender and victim, the role of the police, and the characteristics of police officers. The major findings of this study indicate that the television industry has abrogated its social responsibility in favor of sensationalism by:

1. displaying disproportionate levels of violent crime;

2. consistently portraying criminals from the middle and upper classes, to the exclusion of lower class criminality;
3. portraying victims as predominantly from the middle and upper classes;
4. creating the image of marauding criminals victimizing strangers;
5. restricting the police role to the sensational role of "crime fighter"; and
6. displaying high levels of violence, particularly violence perpetrated by the police.

These conclusions have been drawn from the documentation of the disparities that were found to exist between television's treatment of these subjects and the writings contained in the professional literature, but many questions remain unresolved. The primary resolution of these questions requires research that assesses the impact of these televised images on the public and the police. The following section presents recommendations for future research to resolve the question of television and its effects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings discussed in this chapter raise research questions that must be investigated to assess adequately the impact of television viewing upon issues related to the police. Although the documentation of this

disparity was established throughout this study, the following questions were beyond its scope and are offered as recommended areas for future research.

1. To what extent is the public's fear of crime reinforced through vicarious contact with television?
2. To what extent do television programs portraying law enforcement officers affect public understanding of the law enforcement role?
3. Is community awareness regarding crime prevention affected by television programs relating to the police? Is awareness increased? Decreased?
4. Does television serve to reinforce lower class subcultural definitions of violence? The use of illegitimate means for goal achievement?
5. Does televised criminal behavior serve as a model for criminal careers? In what groups and with what characteristics?
6. To what extent does television programing regarding the law enforcement role affect prospective police applicants?
7. Does television's characterization of the police officer contribute to role dissonance among in-service police officers?
8. Can television be considered a reinforcing agent regarding police perceptions of violence?

9. Does television's characterization of police officers reduce community respect for the police? Is the low status accorded the police a reflection of this loss of respect?
10. To what extent do network policies affect the content of television's police programing?

A resolution of the preceding questions will contribute greatly to understanding the television phenomenon and, as a consequence, may increase insight into the problems inherent in community crime control, police selection, and the administration of police organizations. As a noted researcher on the effects of mass media pointed out, "In this day of scientific measurement and social bookkeeping more data is kept on pig-iron production, annual rainfall, and flying-saucer sightings than on the very nature of what is being presented to masses via the media."[5] Longitudinal research, therefore, must be initiated to assess the cumulative effects of television viewing upon the beliefs and attitudes of the society at large. This is particularly crucial for an agency such as the police, who without community support and understanding can only function marginally in the prevention of crime and the protection of the citizenry.

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[5]John P. J. Dussich, "Violence and the Media," Criminology, VIII, 1 (1970), 81.

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