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PERCEPTIONS OF ACTUAL CRIME AND PERCEIVED REALITY IN REALITY BASED TELEVISION PROGRAMS

presented by

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degree in Telecommunication Masters

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# PERCEPTIONS OF ACTUAL CRIME AND PERCEIVED REALITY IN REALITY BASED TELEVISION PROGRAMS

by

Rick Busselle

A Thesis

Submitted to Michigan State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Telecommunication

# ABSTRACT

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## PERCEPTIONS OF ACTUAL CRIME AND PERCEIVED REALITY IN REALITY BASED TELEVISION PROGRAMS

by

## **Rick Busselle**

This study investigated the relationship between perceived reality in television content and concern about actual crime. Perceived reality of television was correlated with fear of crime and with estimated probability of victimization by crime.

Subjects were students (n = 111) from Michigan State University. Fear of crime, estimated probability of victimization, and perceived reality of general television content was measured. Subjects were then divided into two groups and shown segments from one of two reality-based television crime programs. After viewing, subjects' perceived reality of the reality-based program, and characters and scenes within the program was measured.

Results found limited support for a positive relationship between perceived reality of television in general and fear of crime and a positive correlation between perceived reality of program segments and one dimension of estimated probability of victimization. Subjects correctly identified scenes, whether actual or re-created, more often than characters, whether actual participants or actors/actresses.

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#### CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

"Unlike speech, writing, drawing, painting, and even photography, [television] lets mass audiences perceive, as a quasi-eyewitness, events that happened in other times, or in other places, or that never really happened at all" (Funkhouser & Shaw, 1990).

It has been suggested that television influences viewers' perceptions of society. The initial cultivation hypothesis suggested that heavy television viewers perceive society differently than light viewers (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). However, a number of studies have suggested that other variables, such as place of residence (Doob & Macdonald, 1979), demographic variables (Wober, 1978), program content (Gunter & Wakshlag, 1988; Hawkins & Pingree, 1981; Potter & Chang, 1990; Weaver & Wakshlag, 1986), and viewers' perceived reality of television programs (Atkin, 1983; Greenberg & Reeves, 1976; Hawkins, 1977; Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988; Potter, 1986) interact with television's influence on viewers' perceptions of society. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the level of reality viewers perceive in a program depends upon characteristics of the viewer, not necessarily characteristics of the program (Atkin, 1983; Potter, 1986).

The purpose of this study is two fold. The first is to investigate viewers' perceived reality related specifically to a relatively new form of television programming referred to as "reality based television." The second, and more encompassing, purpose of the study is to investigate relationships between perceived reality of television programming and the perceptions viewers hold about society, specifically related to crime and violence.

This thesis is heavily influenced by studies that have investigated perceived reality over the past 20 years. However, there are two distinct points that separate it from most others. First, unlike much past research into perceived reality, participants in this study were not told whether the program they viewed was real or fantasy. They judged for themselves the level of reality in a stimulus program segment. Second, the stimulus that subjects viewed was a form of television program that contains some characteristics of both television news

and entertainment programming and was, therefore, expected to elicit different responses regarding perceived reality from different viewers. It is appropriate at this point to more thoroughly define reality based television.

## **Reality Based Television**

Reality based programs debuted on American television during the 1987/1988 viewing season in the form of weekly series such as <u>America's Most Wanted</u>, <u>Unsolved Mysteries</u>, and <u>Rescue: 911</u>. Reality based programs portray real events in a way that is similar to news and documentary programs both in format and content. However, unlike news and documentary programs, reality based programs use actors/actresses and re-created scenes along with actual victims, witnesses, perpetrators and news footage in portraying these "true" stories.

In order to analyze reality based programs for the purposes of this study, several terms must be defined. "Actual news footage" refers to visual images which are captured on film or videotape, at the scene of an event while that event is taking place, or in a closely proximate time period. In actual news footage, scenes are not pre-planned. It is the job of the videographer to document on videotape the events as they occur. Alternately, "recreated scenes" are produced after the event has taken place. During re-creation, it is necessary that someone, usually a director, is present to guide the re-enactment of events as they are believed or speculated to have happened when the crime or incident occurred. Also, in actual news footage, it is by definition impossible for actors/actresses to participate in the event. However, in re-created scenes victims, witnesses and/or perpetrators are often portrayed by actors and actresses. It is the use of actors/actresses, and a dependence upon re-creation that sets reality based programs apart from traditional news/documentary programs. The differences between traditional news/documentary programs and reality-based programs will be further explained in the following section.

### Description Of Reality Based Format

Reality based programs appear to be a hybrid of two television program formats: news/documentary and entertainment/drama. This section is not intended to be a detailed analysis of either news or entertainment programming, although such an undertaking may be warranted in future research into reality based programs. Instead this section proposes only to point out the ways in which reality based programs borrow from both news/documentary and entertainment/drama formats and to demonstrate the composite nature of the genre.

Subject Matter. The subject matter of many reality based programs is very similar to that of news programs. Stories presented are reportedly true. In the August 1, 1990, episode of <u>Unsolved Mysteries</u>, the unsolved murder of off-duty Police Officer Lester Garnier was portrayed. In 1988, Garnier was found shot to death in his civilian car in a San Francisco suburb. According to the program, as told by the narrator to the audience, the story is true. It is likely that the story was reported on the evening news in San Francisco the day after the murder took place. In fact, many of the stories portrayed on reality based programs are likely to have been reported on the local news in the markets in which they occurred. The news footage shot by local television news crews at crime scenes is sometimes used within reality based programs.

Narration and Voice-Over. Narration and voice-over techniques are used in reality based programs in much the same way as in news programs. In both cases stories are introduced by a narrator who talks directly to the camera, and in turn directly to the viewer. Both <u>Unsolved Mysteries</u> and <u>America's Most Wanted</u>, are hosted by men who speak to the camera as they introduce and narrate program segments; much like a newscaster speaks directly to his or her audience.

After the narrator introduces the story on camera, he/she continues to tell the story using a "voice-over" technique. "Voice-over" is a television production technique wherein

the viewers hear the narrator's voice but see videotape or film of the crime, crime scene, or other related subject matter.

In the <u>Unsolved Mysteries</u> episode mentioned above, the narrator told the viewers how Lester Garnier's body was discovered. As the narrator explained that a groundskeeper discovered the car, which had been parked in the lot overnight, the viewers were shown a man who looks like a groundskeeper approaching a parked car in a parking lot. The narrator then told the viewers that there appeared to be a person sleeping in the car. As the narrator was explaining this, the viewers were shown a person sleeping in the driver's seat. Then the viewers heard the narrator say that the groundskeeper discovered that the man was not sleeping, but was dead. At this point the viewers were shown a close-up of the driver with blood running down the side of his face. This voice-over format is a traditional television production technique used in television news.

Participants and Actors. Within reality based programs, people with various connections to the story are interviewed. These people are genuine witnesses, victims or other people directly involved in the original event, such as police investigators or relatives of victims. Again, the August 1, 1990 episode of <u>Unsolved Mysteries</u> will serve as an example. In this example, Lester Garnier's mother and sister were interviewed as well as the investigating police officer and several of Lester's co-workers. These people would likely have been interviewed in traditional news stories. However, unlike traditional news programs, reality based programs also incorporate actors/actresses who have no immediate relationship to the events being portrayed. They are paid to portray people involved in the original event. In the Garnier example, the parts of Lester, two prostitutes whom he had arrested, and two female suspects seen near the car, are all played by actors and actresses. In some cases it is easy to logically discriminate between the actors/actresses and the actual event participants. Lester is dead, and the two suspects have never been found. Obviously, the people representing Lester and the two suspects were actors. However it is more difficult to determine that the prostitutes were actresses. They could have been the

real prostitutes Lester had arrested in the past re-enacting an actual encounter. In the program they were re-enacting a scene with an actor who was playing Lester. It is doubtful, but possible, that real prostitutes would allow themselves to be identified as such. It should be noted that unlike people who participated in the original event, actors behave not according to memory of the event, but according to a script and the direction of the program's creators.

Real and Re-created Video. Actual video, which was recorded at the scene of the event while the event was taking place or afterwards, is used in some reality based programs. This is typical of news programs. However, reality based programs also contain scenes that were re-created after the event. In those scenes actors/actresses or sometimes actual participants re-enact the event as it is reported to have happened by witnesses, in police reports, or according to speculation on the parts of the program's creators.

As stated earlier, actors and actresses played the parts of Lester Garnier and probably of the two prostitutes in a scene evidently created to demonstrate Garnier's work on vice assignments.

In another episode of <u>America's Most Wanted</u>, five actors are used to recreate a scene in which three women are abducted and shot by two gunmen. As the re-created scene was shown, viewers heard the crime described by the one woman who survived. This type of re-enactment or dramatization is extremely atypical of traditional news programs. In fact, the use of re-enacted video scenes is prohibited by several networks (Broadcasting, July 31, 1989) and news organizations (RTNDA code of ethics).

It is important to point out that some of the actions portrayed in some of the re-created scenes are necessarily speculative. This is the case because all of the participants in the event are dead or missing.

The telling of stories based on actual incidents with a mixture of real and re-created video scenes and of actual event participants and paid actors is unlike other television

formats. It is the mixing of reality and re-creation that sets reality based programs apart from both news/documentary and drama/entertainment programs.

#### **Research Into Reality Based Programs**

Few studies have been conducted investigating reality based programs on viewers' ability to discriminate real from re-created content. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) conducted a focus group study in which viewers watched the reality based program, <u>Yesterday. Today. and Tomorrow</u>. It contained both actual and re-created footage. The results of the informal focus group study indicated that viewers understood which portions of the program were recreated and which were not. However, viewers were confused about the reality of specific people, actors versus actual victims, and details within the recreated scenes (Holz, 1990).

The news divisions of both NBC and the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) have established policy prohibiting the use of re-creation in their newscasts (Broadcasting, July 31, 1989).

A recent study regarding the effects of the British program <u>Crimestoppers</u> found no significant relationship between viewing this reality based program and concerns over "being more careful about going out at night" or "being burgled" (Wober & Gunter, 1990). However, it is not clear that the British reality based program contains the same level of violence as reality based programs in the U.S.

#### **Research Ouestion**

This study is designed to add to the literature related to reality based programs and at the same time further investigate the relationships between viewers' perceived reality of television programming and their perceptions of the world around them.

This leads to the following research question:

RQ: Is there a positive relationship between perceived reality of television programs, specifically reality based programs, and concerns about crime and violence in society?

#### **Review of Literature**

#### **Cultivation**

George Gerbner and his colleagues have suggested that exposure to television provides viewers with a powerful representation of society. Through symbols television teaches viewers about the world; who is in it, what they do, and how they function in society. Television also performs a socialization role which stabilizes society and promotes the status quo (Gerbner and Gross, 1976; Signorielli, Gross, & Morgan, 1982).

While this televised view of the world represents many diverse aspects of society, it is inaccurate in many representations of social order and social information. For example, television has been shown to misrepresent the number of women in the work force (Seggar, 1975), the number of Hispanics in society (Greenberg, 1980), and the percent of the population employed in law enforcement related occupations (Dominick, 1973).

Gerbner and his colleagues suggest that television works to "cultivate" a "social reality" for viewers. The picture of the world that television offers viewers may or may not be accurate and the social reality created by television may not be the same for heavy viewers and light viewers alike (Gerbner and Gross, 1976).

Cultivation hypothesis states that if television viewers are offered two representations of reality, one citing actual statistics such as police crime statistics, and the other reflecting statistics of crime as represented on television, heavier viewers will be more likely than light viewers to identify the "TV reality" as more accurate (Comstock, 1982; Hawkins & Pingree, 1982).

It appears that the greatest discrepancies between heavier and lighter television viewers are in the area of perceived crime and violence in society (Hawkins & Pingree, 1982). An eight year study indicated that characters on television were one to two hundred times more likely to be involved in an act of violence than people in the real world (Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978). In studies asking viewers to identify their chances of being involved in violence, heavier television viewers chose a figure

representing the "television reality" rather than one representing real world statistics significantly more often than lighter viewers (Gerbner et al., 1978; Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

### Cultivation Concepts

Questionnaire items used to judge viewers' perceptions have been referred to as "Cultural Indicators" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Studies have shown that heavier viewers (generally meaning those who watch more than four hours of TV per day) will identify "television reality" more often than the actual reality regarding a number of such indicators. For example, heavier viewers are more likely than lighter viewers (those who watch less than two hours per day) to overestimate the prevalence of violence in society, view the world as a "mean place," overestimate their chances of being involved in violence, be more tolerant of violence (Gerbner, Eleey, Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1977), report higher levels of distrust in others (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Signorielli et al., 1982) and be more fearful of victimization (Sparks & Ogles, 1990). Studies have also indicated that heavier viewers are more likely than lighter viewers to take active measures to protect themselves, such as owning a gun or watch dog (Gerbner et al., 1978).

Two more general aspects of social reality were identified; "perceived danger" and "mistrust and alienation" (Gerbner et al., 1978). These concepts were also referred to as "fearfulness" and "pessimism" (Comstock, 1982). "Fearfulness" or perceived danger is one's fear of crime and one's estimate of his or her own chances of falling victim to a violent crime. "Pessimism" or mistrust is one's feeling that life is getting worse instead of better, and that most people can not be trusted. These constructs have also been referred to as "mean world" measures (Hawkins & Pingree, 1980).

Two concepts were put forth to explain different results of cultivation effects on different subgroups. They are "Mainstreaming" and "Resonance" (Signorielli, Gross & Morgan, 1982). Mainstreaming is the influence of television viewing that works to promote similar social beliefs among different subgroups who might otherwise hold

different views of the world. For example, mainstreaming effects would lead heavier television viewers who live in rural areas with less crime to have similar beliefs about crime as similarly heavy viewers living in high-crime urban areas. This would be the case despite the fact that residents of rural areas would have had little exposure to "actual" urban crime. Resonance is said to occur when viewers see televised messages that are similar to, and reinforce, non-televised sources and experiences from within their own environment. For example, viewers living in high crime areas may see crimes on television which are similar to those they have been exposed to in real life. For these viewers violent television content may interact with environmental factors to create or reinforce a view of the world as a mean and violent place.

# Criticism

Cultivation hypothesis has not stood without criticism. Reanalysis of existing studies as well as replications controlling for a variety of variables have either not supported cultivation or offered evidence indicating that cultivation effects may occur, but not based solely on general viewing levels and may not affect all viewers equally. The following sections outline some of the studies which have attempted to negate or modify the initial hypothesis as presented by Gerbner and his colleagues.

<u>Replication</u>. Hirsch (1980) reanalyzed the data from one cultivation study (Gerbner et al., 1978) and identified two tails of the distribution for amount of television viewing and several cultivation measures. The reanalysis separated non-viewers from light viewers and heavy viewers from extremely heavy viewers. Hirsch (1980) found that non-viewers were more fearful of violence and tolerant of aggression than light viewers and that extremely heavy viewers were less fearful and less tolerant than heavy viewers.

Hughes (1980) reanalyzed the same data (Gerbner et al., 1978). His research controlled for age, sex, and education simultaneously. He showed that the influence of television viewing time decreased to insignificant levels on several important cultivation variables, such as fear of walking alone at night. The same study found that lighter

viewers had significantly higher tolerance for violence in which males and policemen strike other male citizens than heavier viewers.

Both studies (Hirsh, 1980; Hughes, 1980) have been cited as arguments refuting cultivation hypothesis. However, Hawkins and Pingree (1982) suggested that both studies are cause for further research and "not the simple negation of the original simple hypothesis" (p. 236).

Controlling for Environment. Doob and Macdonald (1979) found a significant correlation between the overall level of television viewing and fear of victimization by violent crime among Toronto residents. However, after controlling for respondents' place of residence, the results of the study changed. There was a significant positive correlation between viewing level and fearfulness only in high crime areas of the city. No similar correlations were found in low crime city areas or in either high or low crime suburban areas. Based on this study, the authors suggested that television viewing is not directly related to fear of violence. Instead, both fear and viewing habits may be predicted by other demographic factors such as place of residence. This study also did not support Gerbner's mainstreaming hypothesis discussed earlier.

The Doob and Macdonald (1979) study controlled only for place of residence. It has been criticized for not controlling for other demographic factors such as age, sex, and race (Hawkins & Pingree, 1982).

<u>Controlling for Content Type</u>. Hawkins and Pingree (1981) found that different program content types were not uniformly related to social reality measures among Australian children. The authors found strong, significant relationships between higher perceived violence in society and heavy viewing of crime-adventure programs, game shows, and cartoons. Significant but weaker relationships were also found between perceived violence and viewing of situation comedies and children's programs. No significant relationships were found related to viewing of six other program types including news programs.

The Hawkins and Pingree study (1981) found a significant relationship between viewing the world as a mean place and crime-adventure viewing, but no other program types were related to mean world measures. The authors suggest that television news may have greater cultivation effects than were indicated by the research. A greater effect may exist because news programming may be perceived as a more accurate representation of real life. But because most news programs contain less violence - more specifically, they contain fewer violent acts - than many action/adventure or crime-drama programs, the cultivation effect is more difficult to identify and measure.

Weaver and Wakshlag (1986) and Gunter and Wakshlag (1988) found a significant correlation between feelings of personal vulnerability among viewers and higher levels of crime related viewing. Neither study found similar correlations among viewers who watch large amounts of television that is not crime related.

Potter and Chang (1990) suggested that the cultivation hypothesis is based on the assumption that the "world presented on television is uniform across programs and over time." However, they indicate that at the same time cultivation research demonstrates differences in amount and types of violence across the programming day and from network to network (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan, & Jackson-Beeck, 1979). Potter also pointed to other evidence indicating that antisocial behavior varies in amount and type across program genre (Greenberg, 1980; Potter & Ware, 1987).

Potter and Chang (1990) analyzed several different methods of operationalizing the concept of "viewing amount." They found that total viewing was less predictive of cultivation measures than program type as a proportion of total viewing. Furthermore, crime programs, action-adventure programs, and soap operas were more closely related to fearfulness measures than news/documentary program or viewing of situation comedies. These studies suggest that heavy viewing in general may be less powerful in cultivating social perceptions than content specific viewing.

Controlling for Demographic Variables. Wober (1978) tested cultivation hypothesis on British viewers using a "security scale." The scale was created from two questions regarding trust in others and the likelihood of being robbed. The study controlled for age, sex, and socioeconomic status. Wober found no significant differences between light and heavy television viewers overall or in any subgroups.

While the British study does not support the cultivation hypothesis, it has been argued that the two questions comprising the "security scale" were less sensitive than other more thorough instruments (Comstock, 1982). It has also been suggested that British television contains less violence than United States programming making the cultivation effect less severe and less measurable (Hawkins & Pingree, 1982).

<u>Causal Ordering</u>. It has been suggested that television viewing may not cause anxiety or fearfulness of victimization. Instead, it has been argued that people who are more fearful and anxious tend to watch more television, specifically crime and action-adventure programs (Zillmann, 1980).

In a field experiment, Bryant, Carveth, and Brown (1981) attempted to support either Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis or Zillmann's counter argument that fearfulness causes viewing habits.

The researchers administered pre-tests and post-tests of manifest anxiety to college students who were on different, experimental television diets. Overall, they found that subjects who watched a diet of programs with "unjust" conclusions (the perpetrator is not punished for the crime) increased in post-test measures of anxiety regardless of their pretest anxiety level. Viewers on both the heavy unjust diet and heavy "justified" diet (the perpetrator is punished) reported an increase in the likelihood of personal victimization and fearfulness. Also, subjects who viewed a heavy unjust diet were less likely to say they felt that if they were victimized, their attacker would be caught or punished. These results supported the cultivation hypothesis and did not produce any significant findings supporting Zillmann's Hypothesis. Another experiment was designed to challenge the causal relationship between viewing violence and fear of victimization suggested by cultivation hypothesis. Wakshlag, Vial, and Tamborini (1983) found that subjects who watched a film designed to create apprehension about fear of victimization showed significantly less desire to watch violent films than subjects who watched a non-violent control film. This suggested that fear of crime may lead to avoidance of violent programing. This study also does not support Zillmann's hypothesis that fearful viewers watch more crime programming.

Validity of Cultivation Measures. The validity of cultivation measures themselves have been questioned. Sparks and Ogles (1990) found differences between questions which measured estimated probability of victimization and those which measured fearfulness of violence. The authors argue that probability and fear are conceptually different constructs. The study found a significant positive correlation between amount of viewing and the fear of victimization, but found no significant relationship between viewing and estimated probability of victimization.

Tyler (1984) found similar differences between two frames of reference; judgements about crime on a societal level and fear of crime on a personal level. These studies suggested that the two different measures may not be related. However, a similar study (Gunter & Wakshlag, 1988) conducted in Britain failed to find differences in perception of societal fear and personal fear.

A number of studies (Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Gunter & Wakshlag, 1988; Hawkins & Pingree, 1981; Sparks & Ogles, 1990; Tyler, 1984; Weaver & Wakshlag, 1986) have demonstrated that other variables must be included into any explanation of the relationship between television viewing and perceptions of society. None has indicated that television viewing has no effect on this relationship.

Traditional cultivation questions have been criticized for being non-specific. Sparks and Ogles' (1990) research indicated that fear of crime and estimated probability of victimization are two conceptually different, but not necessarily unrelated, variables.

Therefore, this study treats them independently. The independent cultivation variable designed to measure individuals' general concern about crime will be measured as both "fear of victimization by crime" and "estimated probability of victimization."

The next question to be addressed in this report is directed toward the relationship of perceived reality of television programs as an intervening variable between viewing and societal perceptions.

# Perceived Reality

Many studies have been conducted presuming that people are more likely to act upon, imitate, or be affected by mediated messages they believe to be real than as a response to messages they believe to be fantasy or fiction (Atkin, 1983; Greenberg & Reeves, 1976; Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988). Hawkins (1977) suggested that programming that is perceived to be real may have greater impact than programming perceived as fictional because to the viewer it may be more "involving and relevant." Atkin (1983) pointed out that "reality or fantasy is not a property of the stimulated message, but is a perception on the part of the receiver" (p. 615).

Two separate aspects of perceived reality, "Perceived Actuality" and "Perceived Similarity," were identified (Atkin, 1983). These two concepts were also refereed to as "Magic Window" and "Social Expectation" measures (Hawkins & Pingree, 1980; Hawkins, 1977). Magic Window or Perceived Actuality refers to the extent to which viewers believe that what they see on television actually did or could exist in the real world. Perceived Similarity or Social Expectations refers to the extent to which viewers believe the situation they watch is similar to aspects of their own life.

Potter (1986) defined three dimensions of perceived reality; "Magic Window" referring to "the degree to which a viewer believes television content is an unaltered, accurate representation of real life," "Instruction" referring to "viewers' beliefs about television as an instructional aid which augments and expands their direct experiences," and "Identity"

referring to "the similarity the viewer perceives between television characters and situations and the people and situations they experience in the real world" (pp. 162-163).

Greenberg and Reeves (1976) found a positive correlation between perceived reality and specificity of content area. Here, children reported specific television characters, like McGarrett of the program <u>Hawaii 5-0</u>, to be significantly more real than more abstract content areas, such as policemen in general.

Television has been demonstrated to be more or less real for some viewers depending on the level of analysis. We can not be sure that because of program is realistic for a viewer so are the characters and scenes within that program. Therefore, perceived reality of television is measured on three different levels; perceived reality of television in general, perceived reality of a stimulus program, and perceived reality of specific characters and scenes within the stimulus program.

Hypothesis 1 will test the relationship between estimated probability of victimization and perceived reality of television on the three levels identified.

- H1a: Subjects who estimate higher probability of victimization by crime will perceive television, in general, as more realistic than subjects who estimate lower probability of victimization.
- H1b: Subjects who estimate higher probability of victimization by crime will perceive a reality-based program segment as more realistic than subjects who estimate lower probability of victimization.
- H1c: Subjects who estimate higher probability of victimization by crime will judge characters and scenes in a reality-based program segment as real more often than subjects who estimate lower probability of victimization.

Hypothesis 2 will test the relationship between fear of crime and the same three levels of perceived reality of television.

- H2a: Subjects who are more fearful of crime will perceive television, in general, as more realistic than subjects who less fearful of crime.
- H2b: Subjects who are more fearful of crime will perceive the stimulus program segment as more realistic than subjects who are less fearful of crime.
- H2c: Subjects who are more fearful of crime will judge characters and scenes in the stimulus program segment as real more often than subjects who are less fearful of crime.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships predicted by hypotheses 1 and 2.





Amount of television viewing, proportion of total viewing that is news related, and demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and environment in which subjects grew up will be controlled. Operational definitions of all measures are discussed in Chapter Two.

Below is a review of literature which investigates viewers' perceived reality as an intervening variable between viewing violence and aggressive behavior.

### Perceived Reality and Aggressive Behavior

A number of studies have addressed perceived reality of filmed or televised violence as it affects aggressive behavior. Perceived reality has been shown to increase interpersonal aggression among children and adolescents (Atkin, 1983; Feshback, 1972) and college students (Berkowitz & Alioto, 1973; Geen, 1975; Geen, 1973; Thomas & Tell, 1974).

In some of the experiments about to be discussed subjects were angered by confederates prior to viewing mediated violence. In others they were not. Several different measures, such as aggression toward others, willingness to aggress toward others, and hypothetical willingness to aggress were used as indicators of aggression.

## Perceived Reality and Aggression

<u>Adults</u>. In a study using both angered and non-angered male college students, Thomas and Tell (1970) found that subjects who were told that a film of a campus fight was real shocked a confederate learner with significantly more intensity than subjects who were told the fight was staged.

In the Thomas and Tell (1970) study as well as a similar study by Geen (1975), the condition in which viewers were angered and believed the violence was real lead to more aggressive responses than any of the other variable combinations.

Berkowitz and Alioto (1973) conducted an experiment in which all of the male college subjects were angered by electric shock from a confederate for giving poor answers to a bogus question. Over five trials, subjects who saw a film containing what they believed to be a real war scene gave confederates shocks of greater duration and intensity for incorrect answers than subjects in three groups receiving other explanations which did not address reality. Of the two measures, shock intensity and shock duration, there was a bigger between group difference for duration than for intensity. The authors suggested that intensity was a more accurate measure of aggression, while duration may have been affected by the subjects' general arousal, instead of aggression.

Geen (1975) found that both angered and non-angered subjects who viewed what they believed to be a real fight delivered shocks of greater intensity to confederates than those who were told the fight scene was part of a class project. The angered/real violence groups showed the highest levels of aggression while the non-angered/fiction group showed the least. The interaction between the two variables, anger and perceiving the film as real, correlated with the highest shock intensities.

## Perceived Reality and Aggression

<u>Children</u>. Feshback (1972) conducted two experiments with 9 to 11 year old children. In the first experiment, subjects were divided into four groups. The groups were shown either real Vietnam War footage, real campus riot footage, fantasy war footage, or fantasy campus riot footage. Older children who saw the actual Vietnam film responded more aggressively when shocking a confederate for wrong answers than those who saw the fantasy war scene. For all ages the differences were significant only at the p < .10 level. The fantasy campus riot group showed more aggression than the group that saw real campus riot footage, but not to a significant level. The author suggested that the fantasy riot film may have appeared too real for the subjects to perceive as fictional without being instructed so.

Feshback then conducted another similar experiment correcting the design flaws in his first experiment. This time the same footage of a campus riot was used. One group was told the film was real and was shot by a news crew, while the other group was told it was fictional and was shot at a Hollywood studio. The subjects who saw the "real" riot scene showed almost twice as much aggression toward a confederate than the fantasy group subjects (p<.001). The control group which saw no film showed less aggression than the real group but less than the fantasy group leading the researcher to suggest that the fantasy scene had an aggression inhibiting effect.

In another experiment, using only angered subjects, Meyer (1972) showed male college students either a segment of CBS News footage depicting the actual stabbing death of a North Vietnamese soldier, or a fictional knife fight from the film "From Here to Eternity." This study was designed to examine the effect of justified and unjustified violence in real and fictional depictions of aggression. The study found the subjects who viewed real filmed violence with no explanation regarding justification showed significantly more aggression than subjects who viewed fictional filmed violence with no explanation. However, because two different scenes were used, it is impossible to tell whether subjects reacted differently because of the perceived reality of the viewing experience or because of some other difference between the scenes.

In different hypothetical situations, Atkin (1983) measured children's aggression through a questionnaire designed to determine readiness to aggress against others. Children watched a simulated newscast containing a fight scene described as either a real part of a news story, or as part of a new movie about to be released. Atkin found significantly higher hypothetical aggressive responses in the reality group than in the fantasy group. Both were significantly higher than the control group for which the fight scene was replaced by a commercial.

#### 2 Defining Reality and Fiction

Potter (1986) has suggested that in most studies in which both real and fictional scenes were used the subjects were told whether what they were watching was real or fantasy; in only a few studies viewers were not told. He suggested that when viewers were not manipulated through an introduction, differences between experimental groups were less likely to be found; however, when viewers were told, differences tended to be significant.

He concluded that "perceived reality is more likely associated with individual differences rather than the message itself. When [viewers] are *not* instructed as to how to process the media content (i.e., real or fantasy), some viewers may 'see' much more reality in the message than others" (p. 160, emphasis added). This would lead to differences of perception within experimental groups being minimized through the instructions of the researchers.

To examine this hypothesis Potter tested subjects with a series of perceived reality questions. Then, controlling for age, gender, race, and perceived reality, he asked subjects a series of questions designed to measure the relationship between amount of television viewing and fear of victimization and fearfulness. Results of multiple regression analysis indicated that all four of the controlled variables were stronger predictors of "mean world" measures than amount of television viewing. According to Potter (1986), "perceived reality measures had a much higher relationship to the estimates [of violence in society] than did the television viewing measures or the demographic measures" (p.166).

# <u>Conclusion</u>

This study is specifically concerned with television programs that use re-created scenes while telling stories that are reportedly true. It is also a direct response to suggestions by Potter (1986) and Atkin (1983) that different people may perceive the same scenes differently with respect to the scenes' real or fictional nature. Finally, this study is designed to further investigate the relationship between viewers' perceived reality of televised crime and their perceptions of crime in society. In nearly all of the studies cited, television viewing was hypothesized to cause change in viewers' perceptions of social reality. Therefore, this study begins with the assumption that some variation of that model is correct.

It has been demonstrated that different people hold different perceptions related to violence in society. Traditional cultivation research suggests that these differences are a result of the varying amounts of time people spend watching television. Other research has

indicated that the relationship between perceptions of society and television viewing is more complex. Specifically, the level of reality viewers perceive in the programs they watch plays an important role in determining how and to what extent they will be affected by the television they view.

#### **CHAPTER TWO**

#### Methodology

This study had three goals; (1) to measure the amount of reality viewers perceived in two reality-based program segments, (2) to measure subjects' beliefs or perceptions about crime in society, and (3) to investigate relationships between subjects' perceptions of crime in society and the amount of reality they perceived in the stimulus program. In order to achieve these goals it was important that the subjects were allowed to interpret for themselves how realistic the program segments were. They were not manipulated regarding the programs' level of reality.

Undergraduate students (n = 111) from four telecommunication classes were exposed to one of two crime related, reality based program segments. Before viewing, subjects completed a questionnaire designed to gather information related to viewing behavior, demographic data, perceptions regarding crime, and perceived reality of television in general. After viewing, subjects completed another questionnaire designed to measure perceived reality in the stimulus program segment and of the specific characters and scenes within the program segment.

Predetermined groups of questions, outlined later in this chapter, were factor analyzed in order to create multiple item indicators of variables. Then, relationships between the independent and the dependent variables were analyzed.

This study is a non-experimental design. Two groups are used for replication purposes. The program segments were not expected to elicit changes in the subjects. They served only as common stimuli to which all subjects responded.

#### Stimulus Program Segments

Two program segments were used as stimuli. They were chosen from approximately 30 possible segments, from three different programs which were on the air during the 1990/91 television season. One segment, segment A, was from the program, <u>America's</u>

Most Wanted, the other segment, segment B, was from the program, <u>Rescue: 911</u>. No segment was selected from the third program. The segments chosen were examples of the type of reality based television programs described earlier.

There were some differences in the two segments. In segment A, all the characters were played by actors in the re-creation of a murder. However, one of the actual participants was interviewed on camera, but not as part of the re-creation. In segment B, the actual participants re-created the crime. The only actor played the part of the perpetrator for obvious reasons.

In the beginning of <u>Rescue: 911</u>, segment B, a verbal and visual disclaimer appeared. It stated that the stories presented were actual emergencies and that whenever possible actual witness have helped re-create scenes. No such disclaimer appeared in segment A, the <u>America's Most Wanted</u> segment. In an effort to present both programs in the way that they appeared each week on television, the introductions to both programs were left as viewers would normally have seen them. Therefore, the first segment had no disclaimer while the second segment did. Also, the <u>Rescue: 911</u> segment was approximately 12 minutes long while the <u>America's Most Wanted Segment</u> was approximately 8 minutes long. Both programs are described below.

These differences were not expected to have any effect on the results of the study. However, there were some differences in subjects reactions to the specific scenes and characters of the two segments. The differences in results will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Segment A, the first stimulus program segment, was selected from the reality based program <u>America's Most Wanted</u>. This program's stated purpose is to tell viewers about crimes and wanted criminals in the hopes that viewers will call a toll free phone number with information that will lead to the arrest of the wanted criminals who are profiled in the program.

The particular segment used in this study depicted a crime in which Steve Wilson, the estranged husband of Callie Thornburgh, abducted and executed his father-in-law, Bill Thornburgh, for interfering with Wilson's marriage to Callie. All the scenes in the program were re-created. Steve Wilson was portrayed by an actor throughout the segment, as was the now deceased Bill Thornburgh. Callie Thornburgh was portrayed by an actress in the re-created scenes. However, the real Callie Thornburgh was interviewed on camera several times during the segment. The real Ms. Thornburgh and the actress who portrayed her in the re-created scenes look very much alike. The subjects who watched this segment saw both the real Callie Thornburgh and an actress playing the part of Ms. Thornburgh. They never saw either the real Steve Wilson or the real Bill Thornburgh for the obvious reasons that the former is missing and wanted and the latter is dead.

Several scenes were re-created in the segment. In the first re-created scene, Steve Wilson asked Callie Thornburgh to marry him. In the second, the couple had an argument while driving in Wilson's pick-up truck. In the third, Wilson came to the Thornburgh ranch after Callie had left him. He broke the windows and headlights out of one of the Thornburgh's cars with a crow-bar. In this scene, an actress playing Callie Thornburgh physically stopped her father from shooting Steve Wilson with a rifle from the porch as Wilson beat the car. In the fourth scene, the viewers watched Wilson abduct Bill Thornburgh at gun point, drive him to a desert location, and shoot him in the back of the head. The entire segment lasted approximately 8 minutes and was viewed by 53 subjects.

Segment B was taken from the program <u>Rescue: 911</u>. Here, the story of the apprehension and shooting of a wanted criminal by a police officer was depicted. The criminal, who remained unnamed in the program, was first seen peeping in the windows of an apartment complex on the campus of Florida State University by a female resident, Debra Yokum. Yokum called the police. First, Officer Claire Noble went to the apartment complex. When she saw the criminal, he turned and pointed a handgun at her. However, the gun did not fire. The criminal then yelled, "It's a toy gun...It's just a toy." Then he
ran away. At the same time, Officer Chuck Sexton arrived at the complex from a different direction. The criminal ran away from Noble and met Sexton. Again, the criminal pointed the gun, this time at Officer Sexton. Again, It did not fire. The criminal put his hands in the air and began to tell Sexton that the gun is a toy. As Sexton began to put handcuffs on the criminal, the criminal grabbed Sexton's gun. The two men struggled. Eventually, Sexton pulled another gun from a holster near his ankle and shot the criminal in the stomach. At this point, Nobel arrived and the criminal was subdued.

This entire scene was re-recreated for the program. The real Officers Noble and Sexton were portrayed by themselves in the re-created scenes. The criminal was portrayed by an actor. According to the script, the real criminal was wanted for four counts of murder and is now on death row in Alabama. During the segment, viewers watched the chase and apprehension scene along with scenes from the police headquarters. These scenes were re-created by the actual police dispatchers. Also, viewers saw Debra Yokum call the police and describe to the dispatchers what she could see from her window. The researcher was unable to determine if the part of Debra Yokum was played by an actress or re-created by the real Ms. Yokum.

Before and after the re-created scene, Officers Noble and Sexton, and two of the dispatchers were interviewed on camera about the incident and their related feelings. The segment lasted approximately 12 minutes and was viewed by 58 subjects.

The above descriptions are based on many repeated viewing sessions of the two segments by the researcher.

It is important to point out that in both cases there was no mention of re-creation or actuality in the scenes. Re-creation was mentioned in the introduction of segment B, as mentioned earlier. In the one program which contained a disclaimer, the disclaimer was separated from the program by the program's open and a commercial break. During the rest of that program, and all of the second program, the narration and the scenes were

presented without reference to re-creation. It was left to the viewer to decide whether what they watched was real or re-created.

### **Variables**

The independent variables measured two concepts of viewer's perceptions of society related to crime; fear of crime and estimated probability of victimization by crime. Each of these two concepts, fear and estimated probability of victimization, were measured on several dimensions which are discussed below. The dependent variables measured viewers' perceived reality on three levels; television in general, the stimulus program segment particularly, and the characters and scenes within the stimulus segment. Questions measuring viewing habits, place of residence while growing up, gender, and academic class were included in the questionnaires so that those variables could be controlled.

Dependent Variables. Perceived reality of television in general, was measured on two dimensions, with three questions each. This variable was designed to measure viewers' perceived reality of all of the television they view, not specifically the stimulus program segment. Because of this, subjects answered these items before viewing the stimulus program. The two dimensions were "Magic Window" and "Instruction" as defined by Potter (1986). Subjects responded to a 10-point scale (where 1 = strongly agree and 10 = strongly disagree). The "Magic Window" items were:

"The people who play characters in TV shows are just like their characters when they are not being seen on TV."

"The people who act on TV shows about families probably act the same way in real life as they do on the TV shows."

"The people who are funny as characters on comedy shows are probably very funny in real life too."

The "Instruction" items were:

"I can learn a lot about people from watching TV."

"I get useful ideas about how I should act around my friend and family by watching characters on TV shows."

(Instruction items cont.) "I feel I can learn a lot about solving life's problems by watching characters on TV solve their problems."

Perceived reality of the stimulus program, was measured using four 10-point scale items. The items were pretested with high school (n=48) and college students (n=54). Eight items were pretested among both groups. The items were factor analyzed orthogonally using varimax rotation (see Table 1).

pleasantunpleasant	.096	.963*	.015
realunreal	.831*	.151	.224
badgood	631	334	044
realisticmake believe	.827*	.126	.165
real lifefantasy	.893*	.042	.162
factfiction	.779*	131	.234
believablenot believable	.800*	.126	.218
newsentertainment	.285	.020	.953*

 Table 1 Initial Items Used in Pretest of Perceived Reality of Program Variable

\* Signifies .500 or higher loading on any one factor

Items 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 clustered into one factor accounting for 64 percent of the total variance (eigenvalue = 4.4). From that group of five items, four were used. Item 4, from the original list above, was dropped because it was redundant with item 2 (r = .732). Another Item, "Credible...Not Credible," was also tested. However, it was dropped because some of the pretest subjects in the high school class could not define the term "credible." It was possible that some college students had the same difficulty but did not ask questions. The four items used to measure perceived reality of the stimulus program segment were: real...unreal, like real life...fantasy, believable...not believable, and fact...fiction.

Three other individual were included measuring other attitudes related to subjects' perceived reality of the stimulus segments.

Those scales were:

"like a news program...like an entertainment program." "like a crime/drama program...like The Six O'clock News." "most of the people in the program were actors...most were real people."

These items were used individually, not combined. The same 10-point response scale was used.

Perceived reality of specific characters and scenes in the stimulus program segment, was measured by asking subjects to indicate whether a character was "the real person involved in the crime," "an actor playing that person," or whether they "could not tell," or "could not remember that part of the program." Similar items were used to measure perceived reality of specific scenes. These questions varied according to which program subjects viewed. Possible responses were variations on the following sample responses; "the actual scene," " the scene was re-created for the program," "could not tell," and "don't remember that scene" (see Appendix 1 for the complete questionnaire).

Independent Variables. The independent variables were to measure viewers' perceptions related to crime and violence in society. The operational definitions that were identified were "fear of victimization by crime" and "estimated probability of victimization." Several dimensions of those two concepts were identified and measured as described below.

Estimated probability of victimization, was measured on three dimensions as identified by Weaver and Wakshlag (1986). 10-point scale items asked subjects to estimate "How likely" it is that each of ten situations would occur (1 = extremely likely, 10 = not at all likely). The ten hypothetical situations measured three dimensions of estimated probability of victimization; personal, situational, or environmental (Weaver & Wakshlag, 1986).

There were three "personal victimization" items:

"How likely is it that you personally will be a victim of some type of crime in 1991?" (Data were collected in late February and early March of 1991.)

"How likely is it that some harm will come to you some day because of someone's violent behavior?"

("Personal Victimization" items cont.) "How likely do you think it is that one of your close friends will have their apartment, dorm room, or house broken into during the next year?"

There were five "situational victimization" items:

"How dangerous do you think it is for a <u>female</u> driver to pick up a male hitch-hiker, who is a stranger?" (not at all dangerous ...extremely dangerous).

"How dangerous do you think it is for a <u>male</u> driver to pick up a male hitchhiker, who is a stranger?" (not at all dangerous...extremely dangerous).

"If you were to walk alone near where you live every night for a month, how likely is it that you would fall victim to violent crime?"

"You have lived in the same small town for many years and know most of the people and places in it. If you came home one night and found your front door unlocked, how likely is it that you would be assaulted?"

"You live in the city, in a ground floor apartment. It's a pleasant night so your windows are opened. If you heard voices outside your window, how likely is it that you would be assaulted?"

There were two "environmental victimization" items:

"How serious a problem are violent crimes where you live now?" (extremely serious...not serious at all).

"How often do you decide not to walk alone at night because of the chances of becoming the victim of violent crime?" (walk alone at night whenever I like...never walk alone at night).

Fearfulness of crime, was measured through seven 10-point scale items similar to

those used by Sparks and Ogles (1990). They asked subjects to indicate "how afraid they

are of" ten situations or crimes.

The items were: "How afraid are you of...

being threatened with a knife;

being assaulted while walking alone at night;

having your house, apartment, or dorm room broken into;

being murdered;

being held up or robbed by someone with a gun;

being beaten by a stranger;

having strangers follow you from a bar or restaurant at night?

Viewing habits were measured through questions asking 1) how many hours of television were watched last week, 2) what percentage of the television programs they watched were news programs, 3) how many times per week they watch the local news, 4) how many times per week they watch the national news, and 5) how many times in the past month they have seen three different reality based television programs; <u>Unsolved</u> <u>Mysteries, America's Most Wanted</u>, and <u>Rescue: 911</u>.

Place of residence, was measured by asking subjects to check whether they grew up in a 1) city, 2) suburb, or 3) rural area. Subjects were also asked to provide their gender and academic class. See Appendix A for exact wording of all questions on both instruments.

# Subjects

Subjects were college students (46 female and 65 male) in four undergraduate telecommunication classes at a mid-Michigan university. Because subjects were telecommunication students, it is possible that they had greater knowledge television production techniques and/or television programming issues than most other segments of the population. If this difference did exist, it would serve to attenuate, not increase, the correlations produced in the hypothesis tests.

Students were distributed among the following classes:

Freshmen	4	3.6%
Sophomore	30	26.8%
Junior	40	35.7%
Senior	29	25.9%
Graduate Student	8	7.2%

Students were asked to participate in the study as part of a voluntary class activity. In two of the classes, students received one extra credit point for participation. However, all students were told they did not have to participate and that their leaving the study at any time would not influence their class grade.

After a group of participants had been established, they were randomly assigned to one of the two viewing groups. One group was shown the <u>America's Most Wanted</u> segment. The other group was shown the <u>Rescue: 911</u> segment.

## Procedure

Subjects were divided into two groups by asking the person in every other seat to move to another room. This was done so friends who sit next to each other in class would be in different groups and so subjects would be chosen somewhat equally from the back and the front rows of the class.

Each group saw one of the stimulus program segments. The procedure in each room

was identical.

Each room contained a television monitor and a VHS videotape player.

The researcher or an assistant read the following brief explanation and a set of instructions

to the group:

"This is a study about television. You will complete a survey which asks general questions about television and other aspects of society. Then, you will be divided into two groups. One group will remain here. The other will go to another room. You will watch a segment from a television program which is on each week during prime time. After viewing you will complete another questionnaire. Then you will all return to this room and I will answer any questions you have about the study." I cannot explain anymore until the study is completed."

"Regarding your participation in the study,

 You do not have to participate. You may go outside and wait until the study is over if you like. You may also walk out at anytime during the study. However, once you leave you must remain outside until the study is completed. Whether you participate will in no way influence your grade in this class. I believe the study will be an interesting learning experience for you and I encourage you to participate.
 You will not be asked to identify yourself on any of the study's materials. Your anonymity is guaranteed. You will be asked to put your mother's maiden name and the day on which you were born on the two questionnaires. The reason we use mother's maiden name and day of birth is so that we can match the two questionnaires without identifying you. If you don't want to use your mother's maiden name for some reason, that's ok. Just use the same name on both questionnaires. Any questionnaires without matches will be thrown out. Thank You for participating."

(Split groups)

Survey Instructions:

"Here is the questionnaire. Please read the instructions and answer every question. Notice there are questions on both sides of each page."

"In order to match the questionnaires, it is important that you use the same name and day of birth on both questionnaires. Don't forget to fill in that information. If you don't we cannot use your questionnaires."

"Please do not discuss your answers with others in this class until the study is completed. Thank You." The first questionnaire was distributed. It contained all items measuring both independent variables, estimated probability of victimization and fear of victimization, and one dependent variable, perceived reality of television in general. Subjects were given as much time as needed to complete the questionnaire. No group took more than 15 minutes. The first questionnaire was then collected by the researcher or an assistant. After all of the questionnaires were collected, subjects watched one of the two stimulus segments. The segment ended, the second questionnaire was distributed, completed by the students, and collected. It contained items measuring the remaining two dependent variables, perceived reality of the stimulus program segment and perceived reality of the characters and scenes within the stimulus program segment. Again, no group took more than 15 minutes to complete the second questionnaire.

Then, the groups were brought together, the purpose of the study was explained more fully, and students were allowed to ask questions of the researcher. At this time students were also asked not to discuss the study with others outside of the class for at least two weeks. The total procedure took between 30 and 40 minutes.

The following variables were measured with the two, pre-exposure and post-exposure, instruments:

Independent Variables Fear of Victimization; Two Dimensions (Pre-exposure) Fear of Personal Harm Fear of Property Loss

Estimated Probability of Victimization by Crime; Three Dimensions (Pre-exposure) Personal Estimates Environmental Estimates Situational Estimates

Dependent Variables Perceived Reality of General Television Content; Two Dimensions (Pre-exposure) Magic Window Instruction

Perceived Reality of Reality-based Program Segment (Post-exposure)

Perceived Reality of Characters and Scenes within the Reality-based Program Segment (Post-Exposure)

It should be emphasized that the perceived reality of general television content variable was measured before exposure to the stimulus program.

### Factor Analysis of Multiple Item Variables

The five variables used to test the study's hypotheses were multiple item indicators; combinations of several items. The following section is a description of the process that was used to factor analyze the items and then weight and combine them into the five multiple item variables; 1) perceived reality of general television content, 2) perceived reality of the stimulus program segments, 3) perceived reality of characters and scenes within the stimulus segments, 4) fear of victimization, and 5) estimated probability of victimization.

Perceived Reality of General Television Content. Potter (1986) indicated that perceived reality of television is multi-dimensional. Six items were used two measure two dimensions of perceived reality in television content. Potter referred to the two dimensions as "Magic Window" and "Instruction." In order to measure these to dimensions, respondents indicated their level of agreement on a 10-point scale (recoded, 10 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree) to the following statements:

#### Magic Window Items

- 1. The people who play characters in TV shows are just like their characters when they are not being seen on TV.
- 2. The people who act on TV shows about families probably act the same way in real life as they do on the TV shows.
- 3. The people who are funny as characters on comedy shows are probably very funny in real life too.

#### Instructional Items

- 4. I can learn a lot about people from watching TV.
- 5. I get useful ideas about how I should act around my friends and family by watching characters on TV shows.
- 6. I feel I can learn a lot about solving life's problems by watching characters on TV solve their problems.

Principle axis component factor analysis with a two factor solution and varimax rotation clustered the items as predicted with items 1, 2, and 3 on the "Magic Window" factor or dimension and items 4, 5, and 6 on the "Instruction" factor or dimension (see Table 2).

The factor loading of item 3 was noticeably smaller than that of the other five items. When a three factor solution was computed, item 3 loaded alone on the third factor. Therefore, it appeared that item 3 was not accurately measuring either dimension. It was dropped. Items 1 and 2 were combined and weighted by factor loadings to create the "Magic Window" dimension of perceived reality of general television content (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev.= 2.46). Items 4, 5, and 6 were combined and weighted by factor loadings to create the "Instruction" dimension (Mean = 9.41, Std. Dev.= 4.52).

Table 2	Factor	Loadings (	of Items	Measuring	Two	Dimensions	of Perceived	Reality of
General	Televis	ion Conte	nt.	-				-

Item 1	.197	.864*
Item 2	.132	.747*
Item 3	.071	.327
Item 4	.655*	.130
Item 5	.838*	.170
Item 6	.816*	.178

\* Signifies .500 or higher loading on any one factor

Perceived Reality of the Stimulus Program Segment. Seven items measured viewers'

"perceived reality of the reality-based segment." They appeared as 10-point scale items.

The items were:

1. Was the program you just watched real or unreal?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Real Unreal

2. Was the program you just watched a fantasy or more like real life?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Like Real Life Fantasy 3. Was the program you just watched believable or not believable?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Believable Not Believable

4. Was the program you just watched more like a news program or more like an entertainment program?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Entertai	nm	ent							N	ews	
progra	m								pn	ogram	l

5. Was the program you just watched more fictional or more factual?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Factual Fictional

6. Was the program you just saw more like a crime/drama program or the six O'clock news?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Crime/Dr	am	a							Th	e Six (	O'clock	
program									Ne	ews		

7. Would you say most of the people in the program you just saw were real people or actors?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Actors Real People

The scores were recoded so that higher scores represented more perceived reality.

The seven items were factor analyzed using principle axis factor and varimax rotation (see Table 3). A two factor solution loaded items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 on the first factor. However, the factor loadings of items 4 and 7 less than .50. Items 4 and 7 were dropped. The second factor included item 6. The factor loadings supported the four item index identified in the pretest discussed earlier. Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 were factor analyzed separately (see Table 4). The four items were then combined and weighted to form the multiple item variable "Perceived reality of stimulus program segment" (mean = 26.11, Std. Dev. = 6.07).

Item 1	700*	104	
Item I	.700	.104	
Item 2	.913*	.228	
Item 3	.808*	.106	
Item 4	.401	.368	
Item 5	.834*	030	
Item 6	.013	.700*	
Item 7	.333	.073	

 Table 3 Factor Loadings of All Items Used To identify Perceived Reality of The Stimulus

 Programs

\* Signifies .500 or higher loading on any one factor

 Table 4 Factor Loadings of Items Used to Measure Perceived Reality of Stimulus

 Programs

Item 1	.715
Item 2	.916
Item 3	.828
Item 5	.809

# Perceived Reality of Characters and Scenes Within the Stimulus Program Segment.

There were two different sets of questions regarding the perceived reality of specific

characters and scenes within the two stimulus programs. Subjects answered the questions

appropriate to the segment they viewed. The items for the respective programs along with

the frequency distributions are as follows:

Segment A.

- 1. In the program you just watched, a man identified as Steve Wilson shot another man identified as Bill Thornburgh, Callie Thornburgh's father. Was the man you saw being shot the real Bill Thornburgh or an actor playing Bill Thornburgh? (Check only one)
  - A. 2
    B. 4% I saw the real Bill Thornburgh get shot.
    B. 49\*
    93% An actor playing Bill Thornburgh was shot.
    C. 1
    2% I don't know if the man who was shot was Bill Thornburgh or an actor.
  - D. 1 2% I don't remember that part of the program.

2. In the program you just watched, a woman identified as Callie Thornburgh stopped her father from shooting Steve Wilson as Wilson broke the windows and lights out of their car. Was that woman the real Callie Thornburgh or an actress playing Callie Thornburgh?

(Check only one)

- A. 9 17% The real Callie Thornburgh.
- B. 35 \* 66% An actress playing Callie Thornburgh.
- C. 9 17% I don't know if the woman was the real Callie Thornburgh or an actress.
- D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.
- 3. In the program you just saw, a man and a woman had a somewhat violent argument in a pickup truck. Was that argument real or was it created for the program? (Check only one)
  - A. 6 11% It was a real argument.
  - B. 40 \* 75% The argument was created for the program.
  - C. 7 13% I don't know if it was real or created.
  - D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.
- 4. In the program you just watched, a man identified as Steve Wilson was introduced to another man identified as Bill Thornburgh by a waitress in a diner. Was that waitress the woman who really introduced the two men, or was she an actress playing a waitress?

(Check only one)

- A. 4 8% The waitress who really introduced them.
- B. 36 \* 68% An actor playing the waitress.
- C. 11 21% I don't know if she was the real waitress who introduced them or an actress.
- D. 1 2% I don't remember that part of the program.

(1 missing)

- 5. In the program you just saw, an angry man broke the windows and headlights out to a car, while another man pointed a rifle at him, but didn't shoot. Was that situation real or was it created for the program? (Check only one)
  - A.16 30% The situation was real.
  - B. 31 \* 59% The situation was created for the program.
  - C. 5 9% I don't know if the situation was real or created for the program.
  - D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.
  - (1 missing)
- 6. In the program you just watched, you saw Steve Wilson shoot Bill Thornburgh. Was that scene real, or was it re-created for the program? (Check only one)
  - A. 2 4% The scene was real.
  - B. 49 \* 93% The scene was re-created for the program.
  - C. 1 2% I don't know if the scene was real or re-created for the program.
  - D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.

(1 missing)

# Segment B.

- 1. In the program you just watched, a male police officer wrestled with and eventually shot a suspect. Was that police officer you saw really Officer Chuck Sexton or was he an actor playing Chuck Sexton? (Check only one)
  - A. 24 \* 41% He was the real Officer Chuck Sexton.
  - B. 16 27% He was an actor playing Officer Chuck Sexton.
  - C. 18 31% I don't know if he was an actor or the real Chuck Sexton.
  - D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.
  - (1 missing)
- 2. In the program you just watched, a female police officer came to the scene of the shooting shortly after the suspect was shot. Was she Officer Claire Noble or was she an actress playing Officer Claire Nobel? (Check only one)
  - A. 14 24% She was an actress playing Officer Claire Noble.
  - B. 29 \* 49% She was the real Officer Claire Noble.
  - C. 15 25% I don't know if she was the real Officer Claire Noble or an actress.
  - D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.
  - (1 missing)
- 3. In the program you just watched, a witness saw the suspect and Officer Chuck Sexton struggling outside her window and called the police. Was the woman you saw the real witness, named Debra Yokum or was the woman you saw an actress playing the part of the witness?
  - (Check only one)
  - A. 18 31% She was an actress playing the part of the witness.
  - B. 12 20% She was the real witness, Debra Yokum.
  - C. 28 48% I don't know if she was the real witness or an actress.
  - D. 0 0%I don't remember that part of the program.
  - (1 missing)
- 4. In the program you just watched, a man identified as Officer Chuck Sexton talked about how he felt after finding out that the suspect he had shot was a wanted criminal instead of a deranged person. Was that man the real Officer Chuck Sexton or was he an actor playing the part of Officer Chuck Sexton? (Check only one)
  - A. 48 \* 81% He was the real Officer Chuck Sexton.
  - B. 2 4% He was an actor playing Officer Chuck Sexton.
  - C. 8 14% I don't know if he was an actor or the real Chuck Sexton.
  - D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.

(1 missing)

5. In the program you just watched, you saw a struggle between a police officer and a suspect. It ended when the suspect was shot. Was that scene a real fight between the two men or was it a fake scene, recreated for the program? (Check only one)

A. 0 0% The actual struggle between the two men.
B. 58 \* 98% A scene that was re-created for the program.
C. 0 0% I don't know if it was the real struggle or a re-created scene.
D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.
(1 missing)

6. In the program you just watched, a man who had been shot was shown lying on the ground with police officers around him. Was that scene real, or was it created for the program? (Check only one)

A. 0 0% The scene was real.
B. 58 \* 98% The scene was created for the program.
C. 0 0% I don't know if the scene was real or created for the program.
D. 0 0% I don't remember that part of the program.
(1 missing)

\* Indicates the correct answer.

For the purposes of measuring subjects' perceived reality of specific characters and scenes within the reality-based program segment, the number of answers indicating that the viewer perceived having seen the real person or the actual scene, not an actor or a re-creation, were summed to form an index ranging from 0 to 6. This index variable is referred to as "perceived reality of characters and scenes." This variable was computed separately for

Group A (Mean = 1.25, Std. Dev. = 3.77) and Group B (Mean = 1.95, std. Dev. = 1.28).

Estimated Probability of Victimization by Crime. Ten items were used to measure subjects' estimates of their likelihood of falling victim to crime. Using very similar questions, Weaver and Wakshlag (1986) found three dimensions of the construct; estimated probability of victimization. The dimensions identified were based on personal, situational, and environmental factors. The items were:

1. How likely is it that you personally will be a victim of some type of crime in 1991?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely Not at all likely likely 2. How likely is it that some harm will come to you some day because of someone's violent behavior?

	l	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Extremely likely	, Y										Not at all likely

3. How serious a problem are violent crimes where you live now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely Not serious at all

4. How likely do you think it is that one of your close friends will have their apartment, dorm room, or house broken into during the next year?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely Not likely likely at all

5. How often do you decide not to walk alone at night because of the chances of becoming the victim of a violent crime?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Walk a	lon	C							Ne	v <b>cr</b> wa	ılk
when	eve	T							alc	one at n	ight
I lik	e										-

6. How dangerous do you think it is for a female driver to pick up a male hitchhiker, who is a stranger?

]		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extreme	ly								Nc	t Dangerous
Dangero	us								at a	all

7. How dangerous do you think it is for a <u>male</u> driver to pick up a male hitch-hiker, who is a stranger?

 1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9
 10

 Extremely
 Not Dangerous
 Not Dangerous
 at all

8. If you were to walk alone near where you live every night for a month, how likely is it that you would fall victim to violent crime?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Not likely likely at all 9. You have lived in the same small town for many years and know most of the people and places in it. If you came home one night and found your front door unlocked, how likely is it that you would be assaulted?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely Not likely at all

10. You live in the city, in a ground floor apartment. It's a pleasant night so your windows are opened. If you heard voices outside your window, how likely is it that you would be assaulted?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Extremely	,										Not likely
likely											at all

The ten items were recoded so that higher scores reflected higher estimated probability of victimization. Principle axis factor analysis with varimax rotation and a three factor solution did not support the three dimensions predicted by Weaver and Wakshlag's (1986) research (see Table 5). Further, item 5 loaded less than .50 on all three factors. It was believed that this item asked respondents to estimate their frequency of a behavior, not a probability, and was therefore not measuring the same construct. The items was removed and the remaining 9 items were re-analyzed (see Table 6).

Table 5	Factor L	oadings of (	Original Items	Measuring	Estimated	Probability of	f
Victimiz	ation	-					

	Personal	Environmental	<b>Situational</b>
Item 1	.807*	.052	.024
Item 2	.822*	.145	.143
Item 3	.311	.627*	.103
Item 4	.654*	.325	.084
Item 5	077	.358	.304
Item 6	.090	.052	.910*
Item 7	.018	.028	.623*
Item 8	.181	.743*	.185
Item 9	.047	.680*	.007
Item 10	.144	.500*	.059

	Personal	Environmental	<b>Situational</b>
Item 1	.822*	.068	.023
Item 2	.812*	.173	.148
Item 3	.281	.656*	090
Item 4	.622*	.368	063
Item 6	.085	.058	.795*
Item 7	005	.040	.742*
Item 8	.193	.661*	.158
Item 9	004	.735*	.008
Item 10	.122	.511*	.069

Table 6 Factor Loadings of Items Measuring Estimated Probability of Victimization

The three items reflecting estimates of the probability of personal victimization loaded on one factor as predicted. However, the items which were to measure estimates based on environmental and situational factors did not separate as predicted. Items 3, 8, 9, and 10 appeared to measure respondents' estimated probability of victimization based on the environment in which they live. Items 6 and 7 appear to measure a more specific dimension; the situational danger of picking up a hitch-hiker.

From the results of these factor analyses three variables were created. "Personal" estimates were measured by combining and weighting items 1, 2, and 4 (Mean = 12.34, Std. Dev. = 5.06). "Environmental" estimates were measured by combining and weighting items 3, 8, 9, and 10 (Mean = 11.04, St. Dev. = 4.83). "Situational" estimates were measured by combining and weighting items 6 and 7 (Mean = 12.70, St. Dev. = 2.33). It should be noted that these dimensions were given the same names used by Weaver and Wakshlag (1986) but were not created from the same item groupings. <u>Fear of Victimization by Crime</u>. Subjects' fear of being victimized by crime was measured through seven items used by Sparks and Ogles (1990). Subjects were asked to indicate on a 10-point scale how afraid they are of seven different situations. The Items were:

How afraid are you of:

- 1. Being threatened with a knife:
- 2. Being assaulted while walking alone at night:
- 3. Having your house, apartment, or dorm room broken into:
- 4. Being murdered:
- 5. Being held up or robbed by someone with a gun:
- 6. Being beaten by a stranger:
- 7. Having strangers follow you from a bar or restaurant at night:

Response scale for all seven fear of victimization items was:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not afraid								I	Extren	nely
at all								8	fraid	•

Results were coded so that higher scores reflected more fear.

Principle axis factor analysis of the seven items with varimax rotation revealed two

factors (see Table 7).

 Table 7 Factor Loadings for Original Items Measuring Fear of Victimization

Item 1	.732*	.319
Item 2	.701*	.301
Item 3	.330	.432*
Item 4	.769*	.276
Item 5	.235	.963*
Item 6	.786*	.322
Item 7	.366	.517

\* Signifies .500 or higher loading on any one factor (in this case item 3 was not excluded)

Because the factor loading for item 7 was somewhat weak and because the item did not specifically ask about fear of a crime, but fear of the potential of a crime, it was thought that it may be measuring a different construct. The items was dropped and the remaining six items were re-analyzed revealing a three factor solution (see Table 8).

	Personal Fear	Fear of Property Loss	
Item 1	.746*	.369	.062
Item 2	.722*	.231	.081
Item 3	.186	.684*	.173
Item 4	.732*	.288	.212
Item 5	.375	.640*	.002
Item 6	.691*	.332	.493

 Table 8 Factor Loadings of Items Measuring Two Dimensions of Fear of Victimization

\* Signifies .500 or higher loading on any one factor

Here, items 1, 2, 4, and 6 clearly loaded on the first factor while items 3 and 5 loaded on the second. It was believed that the items in the first factor measured respondent's fear of being harmed by another person, while items 3 and 5 were written so that respondents were presented with the proposition of having something of value taken from them. The threat of being harmed seems secondary in these two items. Therefore, items 1, 2, 4, and 6 were combined and weighted to create a variable called "Fear of harm" (Mean = 14.61, St. Dev. = 7.30). Items 3 and 5 were combined and weighted to create a variable called "Fear of property loss" (Mean = 6.53, St. Dev. = 3.15).

## CHAPTER THREE

#### Results

#### Subjects' Regular Viewing Habits

Among Group A subjects, the mean viewing amount for all types of programming was 2.36 hours per day; 14 reported watching <u>America's Most Wanted</u> once a month; 44 reported having not watched the program within the previous four weeks; 17 subjects reported having seen <u>Rescue: 911</u> once within the previous four weeks; four said they had seen it two or three times within the previous four weeks; 37 had not seen the program within the previous month.

Among Group B subjects, the mean viewing amount for all types of programming was 2.53 hours per day; 11 had seen <u>America's Most Wanted</u> within the previous four weeks; three had seen it more than once; 37 had not seen it at all within the same period, with two non-responses; seven subject reported having seen <u>Rescue: 911</u> once within the previous four weeks; one subject reported having seen it twice; 43 reported having not seen the program within the previous month, with two non-responses.

## Descriptive Results

Three variables, fear of crime, estimated probability of victimization and perceived reality of general television content were measured in the pre-exposure questionnaire. When calculating correlations between any two of these three variables, it was not necessary to look at Group A and Group B separately. Combining the two groups also offered a larger number of subjects and thus lowered the correlation required for statistical significance. This was the case when Hypotheses 1a and 2a were tested. The means and standard deviation scores for estimated probability of victimization, fear of victimization, and perceived reality of television in general for all 111 subjects are reported in Table 9.

In testing Hypotheses 1b, 2b, 1c, and 2c Group A and Group B were analyzed separately. This required re-analysis of each of the five multiple item variables to include

only subjects from one group or the other. Means and standard deviation scores for each of the five variables, separated by group, are reported in Table 10. Because all five of the multiple item variables were not made up of the same number of items, all variable scores are divided by the number of items contained in the variable. Thus, each score is adjusted to a 1 to 10 scale.

		Groups A and B Combined		
	Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Estimate Dephability	Personal	4.11	1.69	
of Victimization	Environmental	2.76	1.21	
	Situational	6.35	1.17	
Fear of Victimization	Personal Harm	3.65	1.87	
	Property Loss	3.27	1.58	
Perceived Reality of General TV Content	Magic Window	1.89	1.28	
	Instruction	3.14	1.51	

 Table 9 Means and Standard Deviation Scores for Pretest Multiple Item Indicators

		Gr	Group A		up B
	Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Patients Datability	Personal	3.80	1.69	4.40	1.65
of Victimization	Environmental	2.48	1.19	3.02	1.17
	Situational	6.32	1.32	6.38	1.02
Fear of	Personal Harm	3.28	1.83	4.00	1.76
Vicumization	Property Loss	2.95	1.53	3.56	1.57
Perceived Reality of	Magic Window	1.93	1.46	1.85	.100
General I y Content	Instruction	2.94	1.41	3.31	1.58
Perceived Reality of Stimulus Program	One Dimension	6.12	1.67	6.90	1.27
Perceived Reality of Characters & Scenes	One Dimension	1.25	3.78	1.95	1.28

# Table 10 Means and Standard Deviation Scores for Multiple Item Indicators by Group

# Correlations Between Dimensions of Variables

There was a positive correlation between the personal and environmental dimensions of estimated probability of victimization. However, neither dimension correlated with the situational dimension of the same variable. (see Table 10).

The two dimensions of fear of victimization, personal harm and property loss, correlated positively (r = .565, p < .01). The magic window dimension of perceived reality of general television content correlated with the instruction dimension of the same variable (r = .321, p < .01).

#### Correlations Between Independent Variables

Not surprisingly, there were statistically significant correlations between fear of victimization and estimated probability of being victimized, however not in every case (see Table 11).

		Personal	Environ.	Sit.	Harm	Prop-Loss
Estimate Prob. of Victimization	Personal	1.0				
	Environmental	.358**	1.0			
	Situational	.093	.096	1.0		
Fear of Victimization	Personal Harm	.065	.476**	.196*	1.0	
	Property Loss	.184*	.391**	082	.564	** 1.0
* = Significant at p < .05, ** = Significant at p < .01.						

Table 11	Correlations Between	Independent	Variables
	•••••••		

#### **Results of Hypothesis Tests**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between perceptions of crime in the real world and perceived reality in general television content and reality-based, crime related, television programs. The following section contains the results of correlational analysis which test the study's hypotheses. All correlations reported in this study were computed as Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation using SPSS for Macintosh, and one tailed tests of statistical significance. All means and standard deviations reported in this section are divided by the number of items making up the multiple item indicator. This standardizes all results to appear as positions on a 10-point scale. The results of the two groups, Group A (n = 53) and Group B (n = 58), are reported separately except in the cases of Hypotheses 1a and 2a which were tested exclusively with Pre-exposure variables.

## Hypothesis 1a

Subjects who estimate higher probability of victimization by crime will perceive television, in general, as more realistic than subjects who estimate lower probability of victimization.

Subjects' estimates of their probability of being victimized by crime were measured on

three dimensions; estimates related to personal, environmental, and situational factors as

described in Chapter Two. Perceived reality of television in general was measured on two

dimensions; magic window and instruction, also described above (see Table 12).

 Table 12 Correlations Between Perceived Reality of General TV Content and Estimated

 Probability of Victimization

		Perceived Reality of General TV Content			
		Magic Window	Instruction		
Estimated Probability of Victimization	Personal	.005	008		
	Environmental	.133	.010		
	Situational	418**	085		
<b>**</b> = Significant at p < .01.					

Because both variables, estimated probability of victimization and perceived reality of general television content, were measured before exposure to the stimulus program, there was no reason to look at the two groups separately. The only significant correlation was between the situational dimension of estimated probability of victimization and the magic window dimension of perceived reality of general television content. However, the correlation was negative, not in the direction predicted by the hypothesis. Therefore, the data do not support Hypothesis 1a.

### Hypothesis 1b

Subjects who estimate higher probability of victimization by crime will perceive a reality-based program segment as more realistic than subjects who estimate lower probability of victimization.

Perceived reality of the the stimulus program segment was measured on one dimension. Estimated probability of victimization was measured on three dimensions; personal, environmental, and situational. Here the results are reported separately for Groups A and Group B.

The situational dimension of estimated probability of victimization correlated positively, as predicted, with perceived reality of the stimulus program segment in Group A (r = .537, p < .01) and Group B (r = .237, p < .01). However, there was no support for Hypothesis 1b within the personal or environmental dimensions. Further, there was a significant negative correlation between the environmental dimension of estimated probability of victimization and perceived reality of the stimulus program (see Table 14). Table 14 Correlations Between Perceived Reality of Stimulus Program Segments and Estimated Probability of Victimization

		Perceived Reality of Stimulus Segments		
Estimated Probability of Victimization	Personal	Group A .170	Group B 095	
	Environmental	254*	070	
	Situational	.537**	.267**	

\* = Significant at p < .05, \*\* = Significant at p < .01.

### Hypothesis 1c

Subjects who estimate higher probability of victimization by crime will judge characters and scenes in a reality-based program segment as real more often than subjects who estimate lower probability of victimization.

Perceived reality of specific characters and scenes within the stimulus programs was

measured through a series of six items as described in Chapter Two. The data partially

support the hypothesis. There is are positive correlations between the environmental

dimension of estimated probability of victimization and perceived reality of the characters

and scenes in Group A (r = .251, p < .05). There is also a positive correlation between the situational dimension and perceived reality of the characters and scenes in Group B (r = 240, p < .05). However, there was no support for Hypothesis 1c on the personal dimension in either group (see Table 16).

 Table 16 Correlations Between Perceived Reality of Specific Characters and Scenes and

 Estimated Probability of Victimization

		Perceived Reality of Specific Characters and Scenes			
Estimated	Personal	<b>Group A</b> 080	Group B .009		
Victimization	Environmental	.251*	144		
	Situational	.115	.240*		
<b>*</b> = Signific	ant at p < .05				

## Hypothesis 2a

Subjects who are more fearful of crime will perceive television, in general, as more realistic than subjects who less fearful of crime.

Fear of victimization was measured on two dimensions; fear of personal harm and fear

of property loss (see Table 13).

Table 13	<b>Correlations Between</b>	Perceived Reality	of Television in	n General	and Fear of
Victimiza	tion	-			

		Perceived Reality of General TV Content (Groups A & B)		
		Magic Window	Instruction	
Fear of Victimization	Personal	.018	.226**	
	Property Loss	.171*	.128	
* = Significant at p < .05, ** = Significant at p < .01.				

There were two statistically significant positive correlations related to hypothesis 2a. The property loss dimension of fear of victimization (fear of property loss) correlated as

hypothesized with the magic window dimension of perceived reality of general television content (r = .171, p < .05). The instruction dimension of perceived reality of general television content correlated as predicted with personal dimension of fear of victimization (r = .226, p < .01). Hypothesis 2a is partially supported by the data.

## Hypothesis 2b

Subjects who are more fearful of crime will perceive the stimulus program segment as more realistic than subjects who are less fearful of crime.

Here, the data did not support the Hypothesis 2b in either group. There was one statistically significant correlation; that between the property loss dimension of fear of victimization and perceived reality of stimulus program B. However, this was a negative correlation and not in the direction predicted by the Hypothesis 2b (see Table 15).

 Table 15 Correlations Between Perceived Reality of Stimulus Program Segments and Fear

 of Victimization

		Perceived Reality of Stimulus Segments		
Fear of Victimization	Personal	Group A 021	Group B 102	
	Property Loss	037	347**	
<b>**</b> = Significar	nt at p < .01.			

## Hypothesis 2c

H2c Subjects who are more fearful of crime will judge characters and scenes in the stimulus program segment as real more often than subjects who are less fearful of crime.

There were no statistically significant correlations between either dimension of fear of victimization and perceived reality of characters and scenes in either Group. The data do

not support Hypothesis 2c (see Table 17).

	Perceived Reality of Specific Characters and Scenes			
Fear of	Personal	Group A .081	Group B .220	
Vicumization	Property Loss	.044	173	

Table 17 Correlations Between Perceived Reality of Specific Characters and Scenes and Fear of Victimization

## **Conclusion**

Two of the six individual hypothesis were partially supported. There was limited evidence suggesting a relationship between fear of victimization by crime and perceived reality of general television content. There was also evidence of a relationship between the situational dimension of estimated probability of victimization and perceived reality of the both stimulus, reality based programs. There were no relationships between perceived reality of general television programming and estimated probability of victimization, between fear of crime and perceived reality of the stimulus programs, nor between perceived reality of the characters and scenes of either program segment and either independent variable, fear of crime and estimated probability of victimization.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

#### Discussion

In this chapter, study results are discussed regarding three areas of concern; viewers' perceptions of reality based programs, the relationship between viewers' perceived reality of television and their concern about crime in society, and implications related to perceived reality as an intervening variable between TV exposure and cultivation effects.

There have been few studies investigating reality based television programs. This study suggests viewers are able to distinguish re-created scenes from actual scenes shot at crime events. However, it also suggests there is some confusion among viewers in distinguishing actual event participants from actors and actresses when scenes are re-created. Further, reality based programs were identified as less "realistic" than news programs but more realistic than entertainment programs. This indicates that reality based programs are not viewed in the same way as other types of television programming. Viewers' perceptions of the stimulus programs are discussed later in this chapter.

The predicted relationship between concerns about crime in society and perceived reality of the reality based programs was supported in only one very specific dimension in this study. However, a relationship was demonstrated between perceived reality of general television content and fear. This suggests viewers may respond differently to reality based programs than to other types of programs. There may be no relationship between concerns about crime and perceived reality of reality based programs. It is also possible that, regarding perceived reality, viewers feel differently about programs they have just watched than they do about all of the television they watch over time. This implies research into one genre cannot be generalized to other types of television programming and that answers to questions regarding specific programs may not be generalizable to beliefs about television programming in general.

The positive correlation between fear of crime and perceived reality of general television content and lack of correlation between estimated probability of victimization and perceived reality of general television content suggests fear is a different construct from estimates of danger and that cultivation research should be cautious in combining measures of these different constructs into one dimension.

#### Hypothesis Tests

Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) suggested that there is a relationship between what people watch on television and how they view the world in which they live; specifically, heavy television viewing leads to greater beliefs that the real world is like that which is watched on the television. Perceived reality research indicates that the more people perceive what they see on television as real, the more likely they are to be affected by it. Potter (1986) joined these two concepts, cultivation hypothesis and perceived reality, suggesting that perceived reality is an intervening variable between television viewing and cultivation effects; if people perceive what they watch on television as real, they will be more likely to perceive the real world as like the TV world.

This study set out to identify a relationship between being more concerned about crime, a variable measured in cultivation research, and perceived reality of television programming. It was hypothesized that people who are more concerned about crime would perceive more reality in television in general and in reality based programs specifically. If this were so, it would support Potter's suggestion that perceived reality intervenes between television viewing and cultivation effects at least regarding reality based crime programming. Demonstration of this relationship would not determine causal direction. That is, from this study it was not possible to determine whether perceiving crime programming as more realistic leads to more concern about crime or, inversely, being more concerned about crime leads to greater perceived reality in crime programming. However, it could determine if a correlation between the two exists.

Two constructs related to concern about real crime and three levels of perceived reality were measured. Concern about crime was measured as 1) fear of victimization, which consisted of two dimensions; fear of being robbed or burglarized and fear of personal harm and 2) estimated probability of being victimized by crime which consisted of three dimensions; estimates of the likelihood of personally being harmed, likelihood of being victimized based on given situations and likelihood based on the environment in which one lives or travels.

Perceived reality of general television content was measured on two dimensions as identified by Potter (1986); 1) The magic window dimension, referring to the extent to which people believe what they see on television is a mirror or window of real life and 2) the instruction dimension, referring to the extent to which people believe they can learn from what they watch on television. Perceived reality of the reality based programs shown was measured on one dimension. Perceived reality of the characters and scenes was measured by the number of characters and scenes identified by the subjects as actual scenes or participants, not re-created scenes or actors.

The results suggested that those who are more fearful of crime perceive more reality in the general television they watch. However, this relationship did not exist regarding the perceived reality of either of the stimulus programs. Further, the results do not support a similar relationship between feeling that one will fall victim to crime and perceiving television as more realistic. The results also suggest that there is a relationship between viewers' estimated danger in picking up hitch-hikers and their perceived reality of the stimulus programs used. But, again, there was no strong evidence to support any more general relationship between perceived reality of the stimulus program or television in general and any other dimensions of estimated probability of victimization. Below is a brief review of the results of each for the hypotheses.

<u>Hypothesis 1a</u>. There is nothing in the results to suggest that people who perceive general television content as more realistic feel they are more likely to fall victim to crime.

However, the statistically significant negative correlation (r = -.418, p < .01) between the situational dimension of estimated probability of victimization and the magic window dimension of perceived reality of general television content was unexpected and difficult to explain. This finding suggests that, for example, people who believe television is very much like the real world perceive less danger in picking up hitch-hikers than those who perceive television as not like real life. After double checking the instrument and the SPSS command statements there are no errors in coding or recoding.

One explanation for this negative result may be that the measure of situational estimates of probability of victimization consisted of only two items, both dealing with the danger of picking up hitch-hikers; a very specific situation. It is possible that respondents do not judge the dangers of picking up strangers while driving in the same way they judge other potentially dangerous situations. A second explanation may be that the subjects in this study simply do not believe people on television behave the same way while on TV as they do in real life.

A third explanation may be that the negative correlation is a function of the distribution of the scores. The scores of the two variables, situational estimates of probability of victimization and the magic window dimension of perceived reality of general television content, were skewed in opposite directions and showed less variance than may be desired for correlational analysis (see Table 18).

 Table 18 Descriptive Statistics of Magic Window and Situational Estimates of Probability

 of Victimization Variables

Situational Estimates of	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	
Magic Window/ Perceived Reality of General TV Content	3.77	2.35	1.83	

Because both variables consist of two questions, the scores are reported with a possible range from 0 to 20. The two variables similarly range from 1 to 15. However, for the magic window variable, 80% of the scores are below 5 on the 1 to 20 scale. But, for the situational estimated probability variable, 50% of the scores fall above 13. It is suggested that the small variance would attenuate, not increase, the correlation score and the opposite directed skewness may have produced a negative correlation.

Hypothesis 1b. There was support for a positive relationship between perceived reality of both reality-based program segments A and B and situational estimates of probability of victimization. This is in contrast to the negative correlation between the same variable, situational estimates of probability of victimization, and perceived reality of general television content (see Table 19 for all three correlations).

Table 1	9 Situational	Estimates (	of Probability	of Victimizatio	on Correlated	with Perceived
Reality	of General T	V Content	and of the Stir	nulus Program	Segments	

	Perceive	Perceived Reality of:		
<b>. .</b> .	General TV	Stimulus A	Stimulus B .267*	
Situational Estimates of Probability of Victimization	(Magic Window) 418**	.537**		
* significant a	ut p < .05, <b>**</b> significant a	at p < .01		

It appears that subjects perceived reality regarding television in general differently than they did the reality of the specific programs they had just seen. It is also possible that having just viewed the stimulus program affected the level of reality they reported. Possibly television seems more real to viewers when it is fresh in their minds. If subjects had answered the general television perception items after, instead of before, viewing the stimulus program, there may have been more consistent results across general content items and the items related specifically to the stimulus, reality-based programs.

<u>Hypothesis 1c</u>. There was support, in Group A, for a relationship between the environmental dimension of estimated probability of victimization and perceiving the characters and scenes within the program as more realistic. There was also support in Group B only for a relationship between the situational dimension of estimated probability of victimization and perceiving the characters and scenes of segment B as more realistic. Here, because of the lack of consistency between the two groups, any support for the hypothesis must be considered very tentative.

<u>Hypothesis 2a</u>. There was evidence suggesting that viewers who perceive general television content as more realistic are more fearful of crime than those who perceive television content as less realistic. Here, fear of losing ones' property by being robbed or burglarized correlated with the magic window dimension of perceived reality of general television content. Also, fear of personal harm correlated positively with the instruction dimension. In the case of the property loss/instruction correlation (see Table 13) the correlation (r = .128) would be statistically significant if the sample size were increased. These findings offer some support for a relationship between fear of crime and perceived reality of general television content suggested by the literature.

<u>Hypothesis 2b</u>. There was no support in either group for this hypothesis. The results indicate no relationship between fear of being victimized by crime and perceiving either reality-based program segment as more realistic. There was a negative correlation between fear of property loss and perceived reality of stimulus program segment B. It is possible that subjects simply did not fear the loss of property which may explain the lack of correlation between the two variables. However, it does not explain the negative correlation.

<u>Hypothesis 2c</u>. There was no support for the hypothesis predicting a relationship between fear of victimization and perceived reality of the characters and scenes within either program segment.

It should be noted that while subjects reported different perceptions regarding the reality of specific characters from both programs, nearly all of the subjects in both groups were correct in assessing whether the scenes were real or re-created. This lack of variance in the

answers to the items measuring perceived reality of scenes may have attenuated correlations testing Hypotheses 1c and 2c.

<u>Support for Hypotheses</u>. There was limited support for two of the six hypotheses. The results suggest that those who are more fearful of crime are more likely to perceive television programming in general as more realistic. This, however, is not the case regarding the reality based programs the subjects viewed or the characters and scenes within those programs.

The results also suggest that viewers who think it is more dangerous to pick up hitchhikers also feel they are more likely to fall victim to crime. However, the items related to hitch-hiking represent only one of three dimensions of estimated likelihood of victimization. There was little support within the other two dimensions.

## **Conclusion**

Positive correlations between fear of victimization and perceived reality of general television content lend limited support to a suggested relationship between peoples' impressions of the reality of all of the television they view and their fears about crime. This supports Potter's (1986) suggestion that perceived reality does intervene between television viewing and the specific cultivation effects related to fear of crime. Further, there appears to be a relationship between perceived reality of the reality based programs viewed and the danger perceived in picking up hitch-hikers. However, aside from these rather specific findings, there does not appear to be more general evidence that perceived reality intervenes between viewing and cultivation effects.

The results also support the research by Sparks and Ogles (1990) which suggests fear of victimization and estimated probability of victimization are separate constructs and further that perceived reality, on a general level, is related to fear and not estimates of likelihood of victimization. It is possible that the fear construct is emotionally based and can be influenced by general television programming, but people's estimates of danger are based on more factual information and cognitive processes and are therefore less likely to
be influenced by television viewing. From this, it appears perceived reality may be an intervening variable only when the cultivation effects are emotive, as in the case of fear, but possibly not when the effects are more cognitive such as with estimates of danger from crime.

The uses and gratification literature may provide some explanation for the inconclusive results of this study. Some viewers may become more fearful of crime after watching programs which present criminal events. Their purpose for viewing may be to confirm or support beliefs that crime is prevalent and the world is dangerous. However, other viewers may seek comfort in the fact that law enforcement officials are working to take dangerous criminals off of the streets. Further, some viewers may seek entertainment from reality based programs, while others are seeking a surveillance function. Here, the same program may elicit very different reactions from different viewers depending their viewing motives. Perceived Reality of Reality-Based Program Segments and Their Characters and Scenes

One goal of this study was to investigate the level of reality viewers perceive in realitybased programs and how well they can discriminate between what is real and what is recreated. The following section presents those results.

The mean response for perceived reality of stimulus program segment A was 6.1 on a 1 to 10 scale, with 10 being most realistic. The mean for segment B was 6.9. The difference in means was significant(t = 2.78, df = 109) indicating that there were some differences in the viewers' perceptions of the reality of the two separate programs. This also indicates that viewers perceived both of the reality based programs as more realistic than drama programs and less realistic than news programs; the programs were not fact but not fiction for them.

Two additional items measured subjects perceived reality of the specific program they were shown relative to entertainment programming and news programming (see Table 20).

entertainment pro	gra	<b>m</b> ?									
Enterta program	1 inn m	2 nent	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Ne pro	ews ogram
	G	hou	DΑ					(	Gro	up B	•
Mean		4.3	5						4	.6	
Std. D	ev.	2.3	38						2.	.54	
Was the program O'clock news?	yo	u ju	st sa	w n	nore	lik	eac	rim	e/dr	ama	program or the six
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Crime/Drama											The Six O'clock
program											News
	G	hou	DА						Gı	roup	В
Mean		2	6						-	2 0	ງ

Std. Dev. 2.02

 Table 20 Additional Items Used To Measure Perceived Reality of Stimulus Programs

Was the program you just watched more like a news program or more like an

The differences between groups were not significant for either the "Entertainment...News Program" item (t = .65, df = 109) or the "Crime/Drama...Six O'clock News" item (t = 1.07, df = 109).

1.97

Two programs were used in order to replicate the findings. The results of the perceived reality of the stimulus program items show that while the means were statistically different (6.9 versus 6.1), subjects placed both programs at similar points on the perceived reality scale. This indicates that subjects perceived the programs as being of similar levels of realism.

There was a difference in the use of actors versus actual participants in the two segments. It is clear that a majority of the subjects were able to correctly identify the people they saw in segment B as real and those in segment A as actors. This difference in the reality of the characters in the two programs, which was recognized by a majority of the viewers in each group, indicates that the two segments were not replications of each other. It also indicates that a majority of the viewers in each group were able to differentiate between the actor and the actual participants in the crimes being portrayed.

It is interesting to look at the numbers of subjects who answered questions regarding characters and scenes incorrectly or did not know whether what they saw was real. Among the subjects in Group A who saw the segment from <u>America's Most Wanted</u>, there were only two subjects who incorrectly thought they saw the actual murder victim or the actual murder scene; 18 subjects either answered incorrectly or said they did not know whether they had seen the actual daughter of the victim; 35 correctly identified the woman as an actress; 13 subjects incorrectly identified the argument they saw in the program as real or said they could not tell if it was real; 40 correctly identified the argument scene as a recreation; 16 subjects incorrectly identified a violent scene in which Steve Wilson broke the windows and lights out of his estranged father-in-law's car as real; five said they did not know if it was real; and 31 correctly identified the scene as a re-creation.

In Group B, nearly all of the subjects correctly identified the crime scene as re-created. However, there was less certainty regarding whether the people were actual participants or actors and actresses; 16 incorrectly identified Officer Chuck Sexton as an actor when they saw him in a re-creation of the crime; 18 subjects said they did not know; 24 correctly identified him as the actual policeman involved in the crime; only two incorrectly identified him as an actor when they saw him later in the segment in an interview in which he reflected on the incident; eight said they did not know if he was the real police officer or an actor.

Fourteen subjects incorrectly identified Officer Claire Nobel as an actress; 15 more said they did not know; and 29 correctly identified her as the actual police officer involved in the crime.

These results have two implications; 1) a substantial minority of viewers from this sample were unable to tell if the persons they saw on the screen were the actual participants in the event being portrayed or actors or actresses and 2) viewers who saw the segment

containing real event participants perceived the program as significantly more realistic than those who saw the program containing actors.

When this study was conceived there were only three reality-based programs on the air. Since that time, several more have been introduced. As more programs have developed, it has become clear that there are several variations on the reality based theme. The programs used here present stories based on real events which are re-created using actual participants and actors/actresses. These programs represent only one type of reality based program among several now in existence.

It appears that reality based programs can be separated on at least three dimensions; 1) Characters: Programs can depend entirely upon actors to re-create the event being portrayed or they can ask the people who were originally involved in events to re-enact what happened. 2) Scenes: In some programs there is no re-creation. All of the events are videotaped by camera crews as the events take place. This requires either a news crew at the scene or a camera crew riding with the police officers or rescue workers to videotape the action as it happens. 3) Perspective: Some programs present stories from the perspective of the victim; presenting the drama of his or her ordeal. In other programs, stories are told from the perspective of the villain. Here, the criminal and his or her wrongdoings are emphasized and help in capturing this person may be solicited by the narrator. In still other programs, the heroic activities of the police or rescue workers are the main theme of the program. Certainly these different perspectives may offer very different messages to viewers.

These different dimensions of reality based programs are important to this and future studies. For example, it is possible that viewers react differently to programs based on how different dimensions are emphasized. A program that presents the heroics of law enforcers may soothe, not increase, fears about crime in society. A program that emphasizes the brutality of a wanted fugitive may generate more fear in viewers.

#### Limitations

This study was conducted using a somewhat homogeneous sample of 111 undergraduate students taking telecommunication classes at Michigan State University. The students who attend this university are probably more typical of 18 to 24 year olds than students who might attend smaller private universities. However, they are representative only of college students and, as discussed earlier, may have been more astute regarding television issues than other students. Because of the homogeneity of the sample, there may have been less variance among the item responses desired. It is possible that this decreased the likelihood of obtaining statistically significant results. Greater variance in fear of victimization and estimated probability of victimization and greater variance in perceiving realism in television and the stimulus program may have provided opportunity for greater covariance between the respective variables. Further research in this area should include subjects with greater heterogeneity in age, education, and socioeconomic background.

Few subjects reported being frequent viewers of the three most popular reality-based programs of the 1990/91 viewing season. More regular viewers of these types of programs may have different perceptions of them.

#### **Future Research**

An important element in this study was allowing subjects to assess for themselves the reality of the program segment they viewed. This was partially accomplished by choosing program segments that were suspected, and later demonstrated, to fall between news and entertainment with respect to the reality of the portrayals. However, the program segments used may not have been ambiguous enough to allow viewers to assign a wide range of reality scores to the programs. It is possible the program was too obvious in the presentation of characters and scenes with respect to their realism. Viewers may have relied on program cues to assess reality rather than their own predispositions regarding television. In the future, similar studies may use more ambiguous program segments,

where cues about reality are less clear, in order to obtain greater variety in perceived reality scores.

It was important in this study that subjects' concerns about crime be assessed before they viewed the stimulus program segment. If concern had been measured after exposure to the stimulus program, viewers' concerns may have been a direct result of the exposure. In future research, concern about crime might be measured after exposure in order to tap reaction to reality based programs, especially as compared to fictional crime shows.

Clearly, subjects in this study responded differently to questions designed to measure the amount of reality they perceived in general television content than they did questions regarding the specific reality-based segment they watched. This indicates that research into this area must be more cognizant of the differences between questions about specific programs and those which ask viewers about the reality of television in general. As television and its audiences become more and more segmented, these differences will likely become more crucial.

The responses to the perceived reality variables correlated differently with the various dimensions of fear of victimization and estimated probability of victimization. These results support suggestions that people's fear of crime is indeed a multi-dimensional construct, just as their estimations of the probability of victimization are different depending on the the type of victimization at issue. Future research should be concerned with which types of fears and dimensions of probability are being addressed.

Finally, from this homogeneous sample, it seems that most viewers are aware of whether the scenes they are watching in reality-based television programs are real or recreated. And a majority, albeit fewer, of the viewers are accurate in their assessment of the reality, actual participant versus actor, of characters they watch in reality based programs. Further research might investigate not only viewers' perceived reality of the specific programs, scenes and characters they watch on a cognitive level, but also their perceptions of the messages in the programs on a more affective or emotional level.

**APPENDICES** 

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PRE-EXPOSURE QUESTIONNAIRE: APPENDIX A

# **A SURVEY ABOUT TELEVISION**



The following questions ask about television viewing. Your answers are confidential and will not affect your grade in any way. Please answer honestly.

Thank you

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please circle the one answer that best describes your television viewing habits.

1. On the average how many hours of TV would you say you watch each day? (Circle only one number)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 or more

2. Of the TV programs you watch each week, what percent are news programs? (Circle only one)

O% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

3. Each week, how many times do you watch a <u>local</u> news program? (Circle only one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more

- 4. Each week, how many times do you watch a <u>national</u> news program? (Circle only one)
  - 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more

5. In the last 4 weeks, how many episodes have you watched of the following programs: (Circle one number for each program.)

(1)	America's Most Wanted:	1	2	3	4	
(2)	Unsolved Mysteries:	1	2	3	4	
(3)	Rescue: 911:	1	2	3	4	

**Instructions:** Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling only one of the numbers on the scale under each question below.

1. The people who play characters in TV shows are just like their characters when they are not being seen on TV.

1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly										Strongly
agree	)									disagree

2. The people who act on TV shows about families probably act the same way in real life as they do on the TV shows.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly									Strongly
agree									disagree

3. The people who are funny as characters on comedy shows are probably very funny in real life too.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly									Strongly
agree									disagree

4. I can learn a lot about people from watching TV.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly									Strongly
agree									disagree

5. I get useful ideas about how I should act around my friends and family by watching characters on TV shows.

1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly										Strongly
agree	•									disagree

6. I feel I can learn a lot about solving life's problems by watching characters on TV solve their problems.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly									Strongly
agree									disagree

**Instructions:** Here is how you can answer many of the questions in this survey. Many questions have a scale under them that goes from 1 to 10.

## Example:

Was the program you just watched exciting or dull?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

If you thought the program was <u>extremely</u> exciting, then you should circle the 1, like this.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

If you thought the program was <u>extremely</u> dull, then you should circle the 10, like this.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

If you thought the program was exciting, but not extremely exciting, then please circle a number between 2 and 5, for example 4.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

If you thought the program was dull, but not extremely dull, then please circle a number between 6 and 9, for example, 8.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

The questions that go from 1 to 10 will have different adjectives with some question; exciting and dull are used only in this example, but the scale works the same way for all questions. Survey

1. How likely is it that you personally will be a victim of some type of crime in 1991?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely Not at all likely likely

2. How likely is it that some harm will come to you someday because of someone's violent behavior?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely									Not at all
likely									likely

3. How serious a problem are violent crimes where you live now?

•	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely	/									Not serious
serious	5									at all

4. How likely do you think it is that one of your close friends will have their apartment, dorm room, or house broken into during the next year?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely									Not likely
likely									at all

5. How often do you decide not to walk alone at night because of the chances of becoming the victim of a violent crime?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Walk alone									Never walk
whenever									alone at night
I like									

6. How dangerous do you think it is for a <u>female</u> driver to pick up a male hitch-hiker, who is a stranger?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremel	y									Not Dangerous
Dangerou	IS									at all

7. How dangerous do you think it is for a <u>male</u> driver to pick up a male hitch-hiker, who is a stranger?

12345678910ExtremelyNot DangerousNot DangerousDangerousat all

8. If you were to walk alone near where you live every night for a month, how likely is it that you would fall victim to violent crime?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very									Not likely
likely									at all

9. You have lived in the same small town for many years and know most of the people and places in it. If you came home one night and found your front door unlocked, how likely is it that you would be assaulted?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely									Not likely
likely									at all

10. You live in the city, in a ground floor apartment. It's a pleasant night so your windows are opened. If you heard voices outside your window, how likely is it that you would be assaulted?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely									Not likely
likely									at all

11. Which of the following statements would you say is most accurate?

(check only one)

- A \_\_\_\_ Crime is the most serious social problem facing America today.
- B \_\_\_\_ Crime is one of the more serious social problems facing America today.
- C \_\_\_ Crime is a social problem, but not as serious as many other social problems facing America today.
- D \_\_\_ Crime is not really a serious social problem.

12. How afraid are you of:

Being threatened with a knife:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not afraid Extremely at all afraid Being assaulted while walking alone at night: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Not afraid Extremely at all afraid Having your house, apartment, or dorm room broken into: 1 2 3 5 6 7 8 9 4 10 Extremely Not afraid afraid at all Being murdered: 3 5 6 7 8 9 1 2 4 10 Not afraid Extremely at all afraid Being held up or robbed by someone with a gun: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely Not afraid afraid at all Being beaten by a stranger: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely Not afraid at all afraid Having strangers follow you from a bar or restaurant at night: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely Not afraid afraid at all

13. Did you grow up in:

- A. \_\_\_\_ a city
- B. \_\_\_ a suburb
- C. \_\_\_ a rural area
- 14. Are you a:
  - A. \_\_ Freshman
  - B. Sophomore
  - C. \_\_\_\_ Junior
  - D. \_\_\_\_ Senior
  - E. \_\_ Graduate Student
- 15. Your gender is:
  - A. \_\_ Female
  - B. \_\_ Male

**Instructions:** Please write your Mother's maiden name and the day of the month you were born below. For example, if your Mother's parents' last name was **Williams** and you were born on January **2**, 1970, you would write:

Mother's Maiden Name Day of Birth This allows us to identify your surveys without identifying you.

16. Please write your Mother's maiden name and the day you were born below.

Mother's Maiden Name Day of Birth

POST EXPOSURE QUESTIONNAIRE: APPENDIX B

# A SURVEY ABOUT TELEVISION

Survey 2a



Please write your Mother's maiden name on the lines below just as you did before.

Mother's maiden Name Day

Day of Birth

**Instructions:** Here is how you can answer many of the questions in this survey. Many questions have a scale under them that goes from 1 to 10.

## Example:

Was the program you just watched exciting or dull?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

If you thought the program was <u>extremely</u> exciting, then you should circle the 1, like this.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

If you thought the program was <u>extremely</u> dull, then you should circle the 10, like this.

> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

If you thought the program was exciting, but not extremely exciting, then please circle a number between 2 and 5, for example 4.

> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

If you thought the program was dull, but not extremely dull, then please circle a number between 6 and 9, for example, 8.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Exciting Dull

The questions that go from 1 to 10 will have different adjectives with each question; exciting and dull are used only in this example, but the scale works the same way for all questions.

Survey - Please circle only one answer. 1. Was the program you just watched real or unreal? 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 1 2 Real Unreal 2. Was the program you just watched a fantasy or more like real life? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Like Real Life Fantasy 3. Was the program you just watched believable or not believable? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Believable** Not Believable 4. Was the program you just watched more like a news program or more like an entertainment program? 2 3 4 5 6 7 9 10 1 8 News Entertainment 5. Was the program you just watched more fictional or more factual? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Fictional Factual 6. Was the program you just saw more like a crime/drama program or the six O'clock news? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 The Six O'clock Crime/Drama News program 7. Would you say most of the people in the program you just saw were real people or actors? 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1 10

Actors

Real People

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**Instructions**: These are multiple choice questions. You should choose the answer that you think best describes what you remember about the program.

## Example:

In the program you just saw two men had an argument. Did they have the argument indoors or outdoors?

- A. \_\_\_ The argument happened indoors.
- B. \_\_\_\_ The argument happened outdoors.
- C. \_\_\_\_ I don't know if it was indoors or outdoors.
- D. \_\_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.

If you thought the argument happened indoors you should put a check mark by A.

- A. \_\_\_ The argument happened indoors.
- B. \_\_\_\_ The argument happened outdoors.
- C. \_\_\_\_ I don't know if it was indoors or outdoors.
- D. \_\_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.

If you thought the argument happened outdoors you should put a check mark by B.

- A. \_\_\_ The argument happened indoors.
- B. \_\_\_\_ The argument happened outdoors.
- C. \_\_\_\_ I don't know if it was indoors or outdoors.
- D. \_\_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.

If you remember the argument but didn't notice whether the men were indoors or outdoors during the argument, you should check C.

- A. \_\_\_ The argument happened indoors.
- B. \_\_\_ The argument happened outdoors.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if it was indoors or outdoors.
- D. \_\_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.

If you don't remember there being an argument in the program you should check D.

- A. \_\_\_ The argument happened indoors.
- B. \_\_\_\_ The argument happened outdoors.
- C. \_\_\_\_ I don't know if it was indoors or outdoors.
- D. \_\_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.

### SEPARATE POST EXPOSURE QUESTIONS FOR TWO PROGRAM SEGMENTS: APPENDIX C

1. In the program you just watched, a male police officer wrestled with and eventually shot a suspect. Was that police officer you saw really Officer Chuck Sexton or was he an actor playing Chuck Sexton?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_\_ He was the real Officer Chuck Sexton.
- B. \_\_\_ He was an actor playing Officer Chuck Sexton.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if he was an actor or the real Chuck Sexton.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- In the program you just watched, a female police officer came to the scene of the shooting shortly after the suspect was shot.
   Was she Officer Claire Noble or was she an actress playing Officer Claire Nobel?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_ She was an actress playing Officer Claire Noble.
- B. \_\_\_ She was the real Officer Claire Noble.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if she was the real Officer Claire Noble or an actress.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- 3. In the program you just watched, a witness saw the suspect and Officer Chuck Sexton struggling outside her window and called the police. Was the woman you saw the real witness, named Debra Yokum or was the woman you saw an actress playing the part of the witness?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_ She was an actress playing the part of the witness.
- B. \_\_\_ She was the real witness, Debra Yokum.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if she was the real witness or an actress.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.

4. In the program you just watched, a man identified as Officer Chuck Sexton talked about how he felt after finding out that the suspect he had shot was a wanted criminal instead of a deranged person. Was that man the real Officer Chuck Sexton or was he an actor playing the part of Officer Chuck Sexton?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_\_ He was the real Officer Chuck Sexton.
- B. \_\_\_\_ He was an actor playing Officer Chuck Sexton.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if he was an actor or the real Chuck Sexton.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- 5. In the program you just watched, you saw a struggle between a police officer and a suspect. It ended when the suspect was shot. Was that scene a real fight between the two men or was it a fake scene, recreated for the program?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_ The actual struggle between the two men.
- B. \_\_\_\_ A scene that was re-created for the program.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if it was the real struggle or a re-created scene.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- 6. In the program you just watched, a man who had been shot was shown lying on the ground with police officers around him. Was that scene real, or was it created for the program?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_ The scene was real.
- B. \_\_\_ The scene was created for the program.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if the scene was real or created for the program.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- 7. Did you find the program you just watched disturbing in any way? Please indicate how disturbing you found it on the scale below.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Disturbing Not Disturbing 1. In the program you just watched, a man identified as Steve Wilson shot another man identified as Bill Thornburgh, Callie Thornburgh's father. Was the man you saw being shot the real Bill Thornburgh or an actor playing Bill Thornburgh?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_\_ I saw the real Bill Thornburgh get shot.
- B. \_\_\_ An actor playing Bill Thornburgh was shot.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if the man who was shot was Bill Thornburgh or an actor.
- D. \_\_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- 2. In the program you just watched, a woman identified as Callie Thornburgh stopped her father from shooting Steve Wilson as Wilson broke the windows and lights out of their car. Was that woman the real Callie Thornburgh or an actress playing Callie Thornburgh?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_ The real Callie Thornburgh.
- B. \_\_\_ An actress playing Callie Thornburgh.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if the woman was the real Callie Thornburgh or an actress.
- D. \_\_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- 3. In the program you just saw, a man and a woman had a somewhat violent argument in a pickup truck. Was that argument real or was it created for the program?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_\_ It was a real argument.
- B. \_\_\_ The argument was created for the program.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if it was real or created.
- D. \_\_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.

4. In the program you just watched, a man identified as Steve Wilson was introduced to another man identified as Bill Thornburgh by a waitress in a diner. Was that waitress the woman who really introduced the two men, or was she an actress playing a waitress?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_ The waitress who really introduced them.
- B. \_\_\_ An actor playing the waitress.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if she was the real waitress who introduced them or an actress.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- 5. In the program you just saw, an angry man broke the windows and headlights out to a car, while another man pointed a rifle at him, but didn't shoot. Was that situation real or was it created for the program?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_ The situation was real.
- B. \_\_\_ The situation was created for the program.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if the situation was real or created for the program.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- 6. In the program you just watched, you saw Steve Wilson shoot Bill Thornburgh. Was that scene real, or was it re-created for the program?

(Check only one)

- A. \_\_\_ The scene was real.
- B. \_\_\_ The scene was re-created for the program.
- C. \_\_\_ I don't know if the scene was real or re-created for the program.
- D. \_\_\_ I don't remember that part of the program.
- Did you find the program you just watched disturbing in any way? Please indicate how disturbing you found it. (Circle only one number)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Disturbing Not Disturbing LIST OF REFERENCES

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