Television and Perceptions of Reality

Fall 1980

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TELEVISION AND PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY

BY

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B.A., Stetson University, 1967

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts: Communication in the Graduate Studies Program of the College of Social Sciences at the University of Central Florida; Orlando, Florida

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I. INTRODUCTION

Television viewing is ubiquitous. According to a recent Roper Organization Report, in response to the question "On an average day, about how much time, if any, do you personally spend watching TV?", the median amount indicated by those surveyed was three hours and eight minutes per day— an all-time high for their studies. The median responses by college educated individuals and those from upper economic levels also peaked, at approximately two and one-half and three hours respectively.¹

Frank Mankiewicz, in reference to what has generally become referred to as the "television generation," provides additional insight.² As espoused by Mankiewicz, the television generation consists of individuals born since 1945, it grows constantly while pre-television generations die off and, by 1980, approximately fifty-eight percent of the total population will be members.

Mankiewicz alludes to statistical sources which indicate that nearly 100 million Americans are regular television viewers. The nightly television audience approximates 60 million, and at midnight over two million children under the age of eleven are still watching.


The average preschool child in this country logs in over fifty-four hours per week—and that extrapolates to nine full years spent viewing television at age sixty-five. Television viewing is what Americans do more than anything else but sleep. The time spent with a newspaper by the average American (regardless of all economic, educational and age-groupings) has been spiraling downward and currently reaches only one-half hour per day. Television stations, according to Mankiewicz, are trusted by more Americans than any other institution.
II. TELEVISION AND PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY-
SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AND RELATED COMMENT

Television has become ingrained into our homes, into our lives, and into our culture itself. The effects of such saturation, depending upon one's source, may take a variety of forms. In Television as a Cultural Force, Peter H. Wood emphasizes the opinion that "...the medium provides an escape and a release into a world of fantasy-fantasy which often gains its power as a heightened and intensified version of reality."\(^3\) Susan Sontag suggests that "...it (television) really changes the way people pay attention and, in effect, damages powers of concentration....People may have a different way of using their minds as a result of watching television. It's almost like a neurological retraining...."\(^4\)

Paul Kurtz, in heated comment, offers his own response to the suggestion that television comedy and drama may alter a viewer's ideas of reality:

...many scriptwriters warp reality by portraying the world from their own personal points of view.....The media have


become sacred because they deal with the realm of the imagination. Watching the tube is replacing analysis. Imagery is replacing language and symbols. People read less and watch more, and its undermining their ability to judge ideas.5

However, Paula Fass, in reference to possible effects of television exposure, leaves the question open:

Daily exposure to television means that the views, the conventions, the sensibilities purveyed on the screen get not only maximum potential exposure but constant repetition, hourly, daily, weekly, yearly. If there was ever a vehicle which would create a public mind, this surely must be it. But does it? ....Public symbols may have private meanings.6

George Gerbner and Larry Gross in a recent critique of television, and in reporting of their various survey results, indicate that television constantly presents a world of clarity and simplicity, a world in which crises are usually resolved, problems are inevitably solved, rewards and punishments follow quickly and logically, and justice always seems to triumph. Unlike the real world, where personalities are complex and motives ambiguous, television's central characters are clearly defined (e.g. dedicated or corrupt, selfless or ambitious) and the plot lines follow the most commonly accepted conditions of morality and justice.7

Utilizing survey methodology, Gerbner and Gross compared the responses of light (two hours or less per day) and heavy (four or more

5Paul Kurtz, "Some People Believe Anything They See' on TV," U.S. News and World Report, May 21, 1979, pp. 52-54.


hours per day) television viewers to questions concerning population, occupation, and social conditions. Upon determining (through content analysis) that the leading characters in American television programs are nearly always American, respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of the world's population living in the United States. Heavy television viewers tended to overestimate. Upon establishing that professional/managerial roles make up approximately twice as large a proportion of the labor force on television as they do in reality, respondents were asked to estimate what percentage of Americans are in professional positions. Heavy viewers again considerably overestimated. Heavy viewers also tended to overestimate the number of males employed in law enforcement. Even when the methodology controlled for such alternative sources of information as education and newspaper reading, heavy television viewers still showed a significant effect. In response to questions concerning social conditions, heavy viewers thought the world to be more dangerous and frightening, were less trustful of people, and had an exaggerated sense of risk and insecurity. Based upon these responses and their research in general, Gerbner and Gross, in conclusion, emphasize that television can certainly confirm or encourage certain views of the world, and that the effect of television should be measured not just in terms of immediate change in behavior, but also by its cultivation of social perceptions. The Report to the Surgeon General on Television and Violence (1972) offers similar opinion:

8 Ibid., p. 45-46.
It is conceivable that prolonged exposure of large populations to television violence may have very little immediate effect on the crime rate, but that such exposure may interact with other influences in the society to produce increased casualness about violence which permits citizens to regard with increased indifference actual suffering in their own or other societies, and to reflect that indifference in major political and economic decisions.\(^9\)

In general terms, Michael Real has coined the phrase "mass-mediated culture" to encompass "culture," in the form of widespread symbols, rhythms, beliefs, and practices, and its transmission from a single source through the media to the mass population. Thus "mass-mediated culture" refers to expressions of culture as they are received from contemporary mass media, and as expostulated by Mr. Real, mass-mediated culture has the power to shape behavior and beliefs, to maintain or modify the arrangement of society, and to play an important part in shaping personal, group, and international life.\(^10\)

The effect of mass culture on individuals corrupts and distorts the entire range of human perceptions, expressions and sensibilities. Manipulation of the imagination restricts perceptions of reality to standardized and trivialized stereotypes at the same time that it reduces the ability to fantasize and to distinguish fantasy from reality.\(^11\)

For Real then, mass media presents frames of reference, a grounding for personal experience, and a "horizon or lens for viewing and interpreting everyday life." And these frames of reference can be


\(^11\)Ibid., pp. 4-20.
established through an extensive examination of general types of programs, a "genre" analysis if you will, employing content analysis as well as specific literary considerations of settings, characterizations and plots. Mr. Real does in fact apply such an approach to the now defunct "Marcus Welby" medical serial, but in a rather emotionalized, biased manner. A similar, more recent approach employed by Frank Mankiewicz and Joel Swerdlow in Remote Control, considers the medical, legal and law enforcement genres. A description of their analyses well establishes the distortions alluded to by Mr. Real.

In reference to the medical genre, the television doctor, as described in Remote Control, tends to be represented as a skilled, confident, seldom incorrect diagnostician. Within one hour, or perhaps ninety minutes, he (or she) will diagnose a patient, effect a complete cure, and successfully treat the patient's emotional life. Interaction between doctor and the hospital staff is minimal, and both the doctor and the hospital seem to have no other patients in their care. Discussions concerning fee payment and insurance are almost nonexistent.

In reality, doctors have mixed reactions to television treatment of their profession. They realize that their patients are more knowledgeable than ever before, but at the same time the patients tend to make somewhat unreasonable demands. There is frequent insistence upon the same treatment received by a television patient; and often, as a matter of course, a quick, painless total cure is expected.

In real life, a doctor can seldom diagnose with absolute certainty—or with speed.... Being sick means feeling sick, usually, and for quite a while.... some illnesses and body malfunctions can be only partly cured and relieved, and some
kill. On many counts, going to a doctor in real life does not measure up to what is seen on the screen in the living room every night.12

Television lawyers, continuing with the Mankiewicz and Swerdlow analysis, present further distortion in that attorneys are presented in only two roles.

One, in the "Perry Mason" tradition, will devote himself to one client at a time, and right a terrible wrong in the process, usually via some climatic confrontation in the courtroom. His client is almost always wrongfully accused of crime, no fee is discussed, and an entire law firm becomes devoted to one particular client at a time. An additional role in which lawyers are cast appears on the police programs. The attorney represents criminals (not defendants, but criminals), and often participates in and counsels illegal schemes and conspiracies. Needless to say, both roles present an exaggerated view against which reality will inevitably suffer. And within the related area of criminal justice and law enforcement may well be found additional distortions.

Real police, as discussed by Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, are not nearly so successful as their television counterparts. Seemingly episode after episode all crimes are solved, capture by the police means that with swift certainty the criminal has been brought to justice, and the bad guy is either captured or is killed. Further, all post-arrest procedures seem to be ignored. All action seems to be reduced into the arrest of the alleged criminal, the inevitable "frisk" and the inevitable "booking." Very little concern is given to the various time-con-

12 Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, Remote Control, pp. 322-323.
suming aspects of post-arrest procedure--arraignment, bail, plea bar-
gaining, pleading, preparation for trial, pretrial testimony, motions, 
jury selection, the trial itself, the verdict, the probations report, 
the sentence, appellate motions and dispositions, and perhaps the ac-
tual serving of a sentence.

The resulting assumption becomes the misconception that the 
criminal is behind bars to stay. Ignored is the possibility that post-
arrest procedures do not work well, that a jury may fail to reach a 
verdict or that it may acquit, or that probation or a minimum sentence 
may result from a guilty verdict. It may well be that current frustra-
tions with the problems of the criminal justice system may be traceable 
to the assumption, as produced by television, that all post-arrest pro-
cedures are successfully and swiftly completed following the arrest at 
the end of the program. In fact, the great majority of people convict-
ed of crimes do not serve sentences, and the overwhelming majority of 
people who commit crimes are not arrested. 13

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow allude to the facts that real policemen 
are almost unanimous about the lack of realism in television police 
work. There exists a great distortion in reference to what police offi-
cers actually do. Police work is tedious and slow; the primary enemies 
are boredom, psychological strain, emotional problems and fear (the 
police suicide rate ranks second only to physicians in this country). 
And perhaps the most potent difference between television police and 
reality, and the one that may contribute most to feelings of irritation

13 Ibid., pp. 323-325.
and failure with respect to law enforcement, is that the television police never fail to solve a case or capture a criminal.

The major conclusion of a 1977 study by Alan F. Arcuri is that the romanticized portrayal of police on the one hand helps their image, but on the other ironically leads the public to expect too much. Mr. Arcuri alludes to a 1974 study by G. J. M. Rochford indicating:

Perhaps because of the influence of movies and television programs, where police investigations are brought to a swift and neat conclusion, citizens expect each and every crime to be successfully concluded. In fact, the pat solution of most crimes is not possible.¹⁴

Recent studies sponsored by the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, as alluded to by Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, indicate that in real life most cases are never solved, and that, in fact, most of the time no one even attempts to solve a crime. "Less than half of the reported felonies could be said to be worked on by an investigator," indicates the report, "and the great majority of cases that are actively investigated receive less than one day's attention." Most investigations receive "no more than supervisory attention." The report continues, "It is not appropriate to view the role of investigators as that of solving crimes." The single most important determinant of whether or not a case will be solved is the information the victim supplies to the immediate responding patrol officer. If information that uniquely identifies the perpetrator is not provided immediately, then in a large majority of cases the criminal will never be

identified. The priority thus goes to cases "in which the investigator's steps are obvious from the facts related to the incident report." In other words, the easiest-to-solve crimes get the most attention—because there is some hope of solving them.  

With respect to specific legal aspects of criminal justice, the distortion and misconception continues. Most television viewers do not want reminders that crime is complicated and that such slow-moving measures as "work-furloughs," for example, can have an appreciable impact on recidivism rates. Thus, in order not to confuse the audience with such concerns, the television solution to crime must be swift and concise—jail. As Mankiewicz and Swerdlow purport:

The largest audience can be delivered to the advertiser not by a challenge to patience and understanding, but by escapism and the opportunity to see collective prejudices and fantasies fulfilled. Television needs (in order to deliver that audience) the visible and the easily explicable, and neither quality characterizes the real causes and possible cures where our present deficiencies in the administration of justice are concerned.  

Home- or work-furloughs, to use the same example, are rarely mentioned in television drama. There are impressive statistics indicating the success of these programs, but such success lacks "action." Thus these activities are largely ignored in television entertainment. The same unfortunate treatment is also accorded parole. In reality, the parole privilege is a mixed blessing, depending upon its utilization by law enforcement officials. On television, parolees are almost

15 Mankiewicz and Swerdlow, Remote Control, pp. 334-338.
16 Ibid., p. 340.
inevitably abused—the pressures and problems faced by parolees are not explained, they unavoidably become "repeaters."

But perhaps the most significant failure in television's treatment of the administration of justice, is in the portrayal of a criminal justice system that exists without plea-bargaining. It has become physically impossible to dispose of more than a fraction of the criminal matters which come before the authorities in a routine way (via jury trial). If it were not for plea-bargaining, the opportunity to enter a plea of "guilty" to lesser offense (as bargained between the prosecution and the defense), then trials would take years. As pointed out in Remote Control, plea-bargaining has in fact become the heart of our criminal justice system—about 90 percent of all criminal indictments are resolved by plea-bargaining. The lack of television's consideration of this pervasive procedure further contributes to the gap between expectation and reality.

In terms of Constitutional rights and responsibilities, television's treatment again promotes misconceptions. Audiences, engrossed in the action-filled drama, or preoccupied with violence, fail to notice blatant compromises of Constitutional rights—illegal searches, confessions obtained by coercion, or failures to provide counsel. At the University of Massachusetts professors Ethan Katch and Stephen Arons video-taped examples of illegal police activity and showed the tape to classes of pre-law students. Most of the students, all members of the "Television Generation," did not understand why the video-tape was worthy of note. Even with clues from the professors, few of the
students could specify what Constitutional rights had been compromised. 17

Mankiewicz and Swerdlow allude to television's presentation of the "Miranda" decision in crime drama as reason for additional criticism. The Miranda "Rule" requires police to tell a suspect before any questioning that he has a right to remain silent, and that he has a right to an attorney. The purpose is obvious: to keep the police from extracting a confession by force or by the threat of force. Television presents Miranda as something that has to be put up with, as demeaning and distracting the police while they seemingly should be busier with more important things. This very basic protection of human rights is presented as a hinderance to law enforcement operation; whereas, all of the available studies show that Miranda has not in any way hampered police work. 18

The television viewer then is subject to a variety of misconceptions and distortions in terms of specific aspects of the criminal justice system and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the medical profession. Additional misrepresentation can also be found in an examination of television's situation comedies. The characters in these "situations" are primarily proletarian or perhaps a generation or two into the middle class. They are emotional, effusive, warm, and conduct their relationships with earthy directness. And what they basically convey to the television audience is that they believe in the traditional values

17 Ibid., p. 347.
18 Ibid., pp. 348-351.
of home, family, and hard work. Social change may provoke occasional confrontations, but it does not break the family connection. The family endures and optimistically muddles through the urban crisis together. And television ladles all of this out at a time when families in the real world are disintegrating; when children are moving out earlier and going further away; when young people are picking apart the traditional fabric of home, family, and the work ethic; when pessimism seems to be more justified than optimism. And the situational comedies, especially when combined with television drama in general, present a misrepresentation of the real world that consistently contains stock characters (75 percent are male, mostly single, middle- and upper-class white Americans in their 20's or 30's) and a narrow range of simplistic plots.19

Also in reference to television's situational comedies, Leckenby and Surlin have examined how race and social class characteristics affect the viewer's perception of television programs which purport to present a "slice-of-life" approach to entertainment programming. In two different cities, Atlanta and Chicago, wide-ranging interviews were conducted and responses analyzed in order to determine whether or not there were any antecedent group characteristics (e.g., race, social class, geographical region, personality characteristics) which affect perceptions of, in this case, two "slice-of-life" situational comedies, "Sanford and Son" and "All in the Family." In terms of perceived

reality of these two programs, it was found that lower-class, white Atlantans were in significantly greater agreement that "Sanford and Son" revealed how people, particularly blacks, really behaved in their daily life. Also, the results of their survey methodology indicated that for "All in the Family," middle-class, black Chicagoans were most accepting of the reality of the characters in the program. Differences in perceived reality of racial attitudes were also determined. 20

Based upon their findings, Leckenby and Surlin develop a "marginal man" hypothesis which historically defines the "marginal man" in our middle-class, white dominated society as the middle-class black and lower class white. They suggest that the "marginal man" viewer, "through a lack of self confidence in his ability to know what actually happens in the middle-class, white dominated society," combined with his desires to fully partake in this society, will be more apt to accept the reality of television programs. This unique perspective would affect their perceptions of society as projected by television, the phenomenon becoming "potentially damaging when these television programs deal with characters which express strong stereotyped attitudes about race relations and marriage relationships." 21

Gary Heald also approaches the possibility of stereotype atti-


21 Ibid., p. 14.
tudes as a result of television exposure. Initially a distinction is made between "primary" and "secondary" information sources. Primary sources (e.g. the mass media) are those that are shared by large societal aggregates and which provide largely undifferentiated messages. In contrast, secondary sources (e.g. family, friends) are more individualized thus allowing diverse, specialized information to be disseminated. Heald's study then addresses the consequences, among grade school children, of hearing about work roles from a shared primary source such as television. As postulated, evidence was found supporting the prediction that young persons receiving a proportionally larger part of their information from primary sources tend to have more stereotypic views of occupational roles in our society. 22

Michael Novak, in rather zealous comment, observes that television, as a teacher of expectations, speeds up the rhythm of attention and any act in competition with television must approach the same acceleration. Television both serves and reinforces a fast-paced, laugh-packed sensibility. Invalid behavior models are formed in that the constraints under which television writers must operate, time and competitive pressures, prevent the realistic development of the complicated motivations, internal conflicts and inner contradictions within human relations. Television functions as an instrument of nationalization, of homogenization, of a certain inaccuracy about the multifaceted texture of life in our society. Because the medium is a world

of high profit, the myths of the upwardly mobile and the tastes of the affluent govern the visual symbols we receive. Television is primarily a world of intellectuals—peopled with college-educated persons, professionals, experts, thinkers, authorities and celebrities. The medium, according to these observations by Novak, contains an inherent class bias that distorts our perceptions of society and the people within it.23

Various distortions and misconceptions may also result from psychological effects of the mass media in general (of which television, due to its ubiquity, may well be the primary influence). Toffler, in his 1970 treatise, Future Shock,24 offers definitive suggestions that still have relevance almost ten years later. We form "vicarious relationships" with both real and fictional people magnified and projected by the mass media, just as we form mental/emotional relationships with friends and neighbors. And just as the "through-put" of real people in our lives is increasing, and the duration of our average relationship with them is decreasing, the same is true of our ties with the vicarious people who populate our minds. Events, moving faster, constantly thrust new personalities into our conscious and unconscious. We form behavior patterns and deduce lessons from these relationships, hence "the accelerated flow-through of vicarious people cannot but contribute to the instability of personality patterns among many real


people who have difficulty in finding a suitable life style." This can be extended as an indication that, because of the transience of image assimilation, the very concepts and codes in terms of which we think, our very views of reality, are turning over at an ever-accelerating pace. Distortion may well become inevitable.

Image-bearing stimuli, as suggested by Toffler, are of two distinct types, "coded" and "uncoded". Uncoded information consists of those messages (received by individuals) which are not man-made, were not designed by anyone to communicate anything, and are not dependent upon social signs and definitions for understanding (e.g., those messages occurring in nature). Coded messages, on the other hand, are any which depend upon social convention for their meaning. The ratio of uncoded messages received by the ordinary person has declined in favor of coded messages, and most of these coded messages emanate from the mass media and have been artfully designed by communication experts. The engineered message is free of unnecessary repetition, is highly purposive, contains maximized informational content, and by its very design becomes, at the whim of the designer, a source of misconception and distortion of "uncoded" reality.

Klapper and Hiebert also offer comment concerning aspects of the mass media which could lead to misrepresentation. "In general, mass communication reinforces the existing attitudes, tastes, predispositions and behavioral tendencies of its audience members."25 In a

free enterprize system, the media tend to avoid offending any significant portion of their vast audience, and tend to espouse attitudes that are already virtually universal. One result is social conformity, weakening of individualism, and decreased tolerance of differences.  

Klapper continues:

Monopoly propaganda...is exercised in the United States...in regard to those social attitudes which govern the audience's daily life and social interaction...the major source of this monopoly propaganda is the entertainment content of mass media; its goal and main effect seems to be the maintenance and reaffirmation of the status quo...the commercial agencies are giants indigenous to a social system which they have no desire to change (noted by informal observers and rigidly scientific investigators, e.g. Lazarsfeld, Morton, Berelson, Salter, Lowenthal, James Farrell).  

In all of these approaches, involving considerations of the medical, legal, and law enforcement genres, the situational comedies, and considerations of general psychological effects of the mass media, "perceptions of reality" (as provided by television) emerges as one of the most prevalent themes. Various studies, involving both children and adults as subjects or respondents, provide additional information concerning use of "perceptions of reality" as a viable consideration.

Felipe Korzenny, in 1975, undertook a study in Mexico City in order to assess the effectiveness of several independent variables in

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predicting the perception of television content as real.28 A further step analyzed the relationship between the perception of television violence as real and aggressive predispositions of young viewers. Two hundred and seventy-three Mexican children in the third and sixth grades were administered questionnaires. Eleven hypotheses were tested with respect to eleven independent variables as predictors of the perception of reality of television. The independent variables were: real life experiences with television content, socioeconomic status, grade in school, age, sex, GPA, the use of television for relaxation, learning and companionship, exposure, and the influence of significant others. A twelfth hypothesis was concerned with the perception of reality of television at three different levels of abstraction: TV in general, content areas of TV, and six specific characters, groups of characters or behaviors on specific television shows. The final hypothesis predicted that as the perception of reality of television increased, aggressive predispositions in young viewers would also increase.

Korzenny found that: 1) The perception of reality of television increased with the use of television for learning and companionship, general TV exposure, and with the influence of significant others; 2) The perception of reality of television decreased as socioeconomic status, grade in school, age, and GPA increased; 3) No consistent relationship was found between the perceptions of television

reality with real life experiences, the use of television for relaxation, or the sex of the viewers; 4) The perception of reality of television violence did not correlate consistently with measures of aggressive predispositions; 5) For those children high in the perception of reality of television violence there was not a consistent relationship between exposure to television violence and aggressive predispositions; and 6) It was found that the best predictors of the perception of TV reality were the influence of significant others (interpersonal sources), grade in school and age, and to a lesser extent GPA and the use of TV for companionship.

A related study, by Hawkins and Pingree in 1977, utilized nursery, first, third and sixth grade respondents, and determined (not surprisingly) that children generally realize as they grow older that most television programs present fiction and not pictures of real events. Of somewhat greater interest, they also found that a decrease with age does not occur, between nursery and sixth grade, concerning children's perception of the similarity of television family characters and events to those of the real world. Also, nursery school children were found to believe television to be less like real life than children in the other three grades.29

Additional studies have also specifically approached perceptions of television reality. Osborn and Endsley linked the perception

of television programs as more real with greater fright and involve-

ment.  

Sari Thomas, in analyzing the results of open-ended interviews
with high-school and college educated women between the ages of eigh-
teen and thirty-five, found that women without a college education were
more likely to consider daytime serials to be accurate reflections of
reality. In general, less educated women identified with, learned from
and based value reinforcement upon the contents of daytime "soap
operas."  

Donohue and Donohue specifically approached perceptions of real-
ity in a 1977 study involving black, white, white "gifted" and emotion-
ally disturbed adolescents. The research initially alludes to previous
studies indicating that perceptions of television reality among adole-
scents were significantly related to aggressive attitudes; that females
to a small extent perceive television to be more realistic than young
males; and that children from lower socioeconomic environments indicate
more belief in the reality of television dramatic content. Prior re-
search was also noted which provided evidence that those of higher in-
telligence exhibited lower perceived reality, and, concerning racial
differences, blacks judged certain authority figures (e.g. lawyers,
fathers) as more real than did whites.

30 D. K. Osborn and R. C. Endsley, "Emotional Reactions of
Young Children to TV Violence," Child Development 42 (March 1971):
321-331.

31 Sari Thomas, "The Relationship Between Daytime Serials and
6383.
Having thus cited previous related studies, Donohue and Donohue operationalized perceptions of reality in television at three levels of abstraction: 1. general television stereotypes (e.g. mothers, fathers, blacks, foreigners, lawyers, teachers, teenagers), 2. general situations (e.g. marriage, dating, employment, families), 3. specific characters (e.g. Bunker, Sanford). Adolescent respondents between the ages of eleven to sixteen were then asked to judge the various concepts listed and to mark on a seven-point scale (ranging from "extremely unreal" to "extremely real") the degree of approximation to real life. Results supported the hypothesis that blacks and emotionally disturbed would judge television to be more real than whites and white "gifted." Blacks perceived an authority/responsibility role dimension (e.g. lawyers, fathers) to be significantly more real than whites (primarily because, as suggested by Donohue and Donohue, blacks have less opportunity to interact with lawyers and are reared in a matriarchal society). The major implication is that the less familiar a person is with a particular stereotypical image or situation, the more likely he or she is to perceive television's portrayal to be an accurate life representation.32

Greenberg and Reeves, in a 1976 study, found (not surprisingly) that the younger child, the less intelligent child, and the avid television viewer placed more credence in television portrayals. The

perceived attitudes of the child's interpersonal contacts were found to be positively related to the individual's own perceived reality scores. If the individual's sources said television characters were unreal, the child's judgement followed suit.33

In recent research, Dan Slater selects television portrayal of law enforcement to consider perceptions of reality.34 As Slater suggests, one institution in our society with which relatively few have had direct contact is law enforcement. As a result most rely upon television as a primary source of indirect information about police, crime, and law enforcement activities. Thus, three groups with differing levels of direct contact with police were sampled: average high school students with little or no direct contact or experience with police, high school students with a high-positive level of contact with police via enrollment in a high school course in law enforcement, and high school students with a high-negative level of contact with police as a result of arrest, conviction, and probation.

A questionnaire was developed and administered to high school students, covering television viewing habits, favorite programs, and the perceived reality of programs. Also included were questions designed to elicit the subject's knowledge of law enforcement, state-


ments designed to indicate the extent to which subjects believed the stereotyped police behaviors seen on television, and questions relating to demographic information. Results indicated that as direct information (contact with law enforcement activities) increased, perceived reality of police programs and stereotypical police behavior decreased. However, the juvenile offender group provided exception in that they exhibited higher levels of perceived reality. It was also found that although subjects in the police classes were less likely to perceive the programs as real, they nevertheless saw the programs as generally more realistic than unrealistic.

Leifer, Graves and Gordon, in a 1975 study, attempted to discover the processes adolescents and adults use to discriminate the applicability of television to their lives. Interviews were conducted in various communities with respondents from a wide variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Responses were elicited from four primary questions (all in reference to entertainment TV): 1) How true-to-life is it? Why? 2) Have you ever found yourself doing or believing something and realized you got it from watching entertainment TV? 3) Have you sometimes gotten ideas from TV which you later found to be false? 4) What do you think is the most true-to-life program you have seen on television? What about it is realistic? Why do you feel it is realistic? Analyses indicated that people, in deciding what is true-to-life or worth knowing on television, rarely relied on their affective responses to program content or on an overall evaluation of the credibility of television programming. Instead, about half the time, they relied on cues contained within a program such as who the
actors are, quality of acting, the type of program, specific programs, sets, costumes, plot line, individual actions, and production techniques. The other half of the time they explicitly compared program content to information sources outside the program such as their own knowledge of programs, television personalities, the television industry, and references to their own experience, conceivable experience, and information given by recognized authorities.  

Thus, as evidenced by research and related thought, television dramatic fare, whether it be medical drama, crime drama or situational comedy, tends to present primarily an unrealistic portrayal of life and society. The industry seems to package the plots, characterizations and content of each genre into a distortion which apparently is designed primarily for the advertisers and/or the audience.

Members of the medical profession are generally presented as errorless healers, the diagnosis is quick and correct, and hospitals are presented as pristine clinics from which the sick and injured usually emerge cured with minimal psychological after-effects. And insurance and bills are never discussed. Of course, it makes little difference unless these distortions have some effect upon television viewers. Do the misconceptions, for example, cause people to expect fast, efficient, errorless diagnosis from their family physicians? Do they come to expect painless treatment and permanent cures? Do they expect their physicians to not only cure physiological illnesses...
The legal profession suffers from television produced misconceptions in that members of the television audience may come to expect attorneys in real life to perform as those on television. As in prime time, attorneys may be expected to become miraculous courtroom performers who, from case to case, not only convince the jury of a client's innocence, but also in a climatic revelation point out the guilty party. Clients may come to expect entire law firms to devote themselves to one cause, to act as investigators, to travel the country searching for clues.

Law enforcement officials, as perceived by the television viewing public, may be expected to spend days and even weeks constantly involved in lengthy investigation leading inevitably to the apprehension of the guilty party. The public may come to feel that when an individual is arrested, the guilty party has been found and will soon be put behind bars. Very little thought is given to the intricate, lengthy processes that follow—both the necessary procedures of the law enforcement officials and the procedures of the criminal justice system in general.

And, in terms of general effects, the television viewing public has become innundated by the mass production of symbols and coded messages, which represent a revolution in information and popular culture. As espoused by George Gerbner:

Never before have so many people...shared so much of a common system of messages and images—and the assumptions about life, society and the world that the system embodies—while having so little to do with creating the system. In sum, the fabric of popular culture that relates the elements of existence of
one another and shapes the common consciousness of what is, what is important, what is right and what is related to what else is now largely a manufactured product.36

Further, according to Dr. Edmund Carpenter, we overlook the reality which television reveals. "Unlike print, television doesn't transmit bits of information. Instead it 'transports' the viewer." It takes the viewer on a trip, participating solely as a dreamer, in no way responsible for events that occur. "All television becomes a dream."

Television is actually a blind medium. We may think of it as visual, recording a world "out there." But it really records a world within. Sight surrenders to insight, and dream replaces outer reality. Television, far from expanding consciousness, repudiates it in favor of the dream....It turns thoughts inward....Those who prefer this inner reality live in a world apart. They find life heartlessly indifferent to the needs of their independent life.37


III. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The pervasiveness of television, and the resulting influence upon the television consumer necessitates additional research. Any influence of such size should to some extent affect the perceptions of those exposed to it. And if perceptions are influenced, a modification in behavior becomes the final logical outcome. Individuals, as a result of varying degrees of television exposure, may develop different perceptions of, for example, law enforcement officials, attorneys, and/or members of the medical profession. As a result of these perceptions, the individual may react differently in interpersonal and intergroup relationships with members of these professions.

Further, an individual may develop various misconceptions concerning the very make-up of society itself. How the individual reacts in society, the general psychological behavior of the individual in a constant variety of social situations, will be partially determined by these misconceptions. Social behavior is, of course, shaped by additional influences—peer groups, parental influences, and/or educational experiences. But members of these groups themselves are subject to the pervasive influence of television. It becomes important then to determine to what extent the perceptions of individuals are influenced by television, and differentiations thereof.
IV. PROBLEM DEFINITION

A general explanation of the problem, leading to the formulation of specific research hypotheses, can best be approached beginning with an explanation of previous research conducted by the author. 38 An attempt was made to determine the extent to which individuals felt specific television fare to be reflections of real life. Two specific research questions were considered: Do individuals of high school age feel that television drama presents an accurate portrayal of society? Do differences exist between male and female perceptions?

Questionnaires (see Appendix A) were administered to 222 male and female high school juniors and seniors. The questionnaires were handed out in class by cooperative teachers, were basically self-explanatory, and requested responses to television drama as opposed to television news, documentary, sports or special presentations. Respondents were advised that the questionnaire had been prepared to collect data concerning television viewing habits, and that its primary purpose was to determine how people feel about television. Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale their agreement or disagreement with various statements. Likert-type items were developed

consisting of questions in three categories: specific programs (based upon A. C. Nielsen Company ratings), program types and television in general. Through subsequent analysis, the most responsive types of questions could be determined. Average daily viewing times were solicited from each respondent in order to determine familiarity with television in general. Sex of respondents was obtained as required. The questionnaire, before presentation to actual respondents, was tested for clarity through various trials.

Of the 222 observed respondents, 116 female and 105 were male. In reference to viewing time, 33 males indicated an average daily viewing time of less than one hour, 42 indicated one to two hour daily averages, and 30 males viewed television for more than two hours per day. 36 females viewed television less than one hour per day, 43 viewed for one to two hours per day, and 37 females viewed for more than two hours per day. A chi-square analysis, comparing male and female viewing times, provided results indicating no significant differences at either p less than .05 or p less than .01 ($x^2=2.87$, df=2). Thus, additional male/female comparisons were made without consideration of differentiations resulting from viewing time.

Frequency counts were made of all question responses (25 items with Likert responses obtained for each item—strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) in order to determine which questions solicited the most applicable responses. Those items in each category of questions (specific programs, program types, general television) which yielded large numbers of omissions (blanks) and
neutral responses were discarded for further analysis. Based on the frequency counts, percentages were obtained in order to determine the combined male/female response for each selected item in each category. The items were then subjected to chi-square analysis comparing male and female strongly agree; agree/strongly disagree; disagree responses. In this manner general perceptions of television reality could be obtained, as well as male and female differentiations. The individual items and their respective analyses were as follows.

"The things that happen on Baretta happen in real police departments," the first item analyzed (from the specific program category), yielded 43% male agreement (combining strongly agree and agree) compared to 41% female agreement, and 57% male disagreement compared to 59% female disagreement (combining strongly disagree and disagree). Chi-square indicated no significant differences at either the .05 or .01 level (x²=.1, df=1). The second item analyzed, also from the specific program category, "Kojak provides a look at how a real police department works," yielded 48% male agreement compared to 38% female agreement, and 52% male disagreement compared to 62% female disagreement. Chi-square indicated no significant differences at either the .05 or .01 level (x²=1.25, df=1).

The next three questions, two from the program type category and one from the general category, were as follows: "Families, as portrayed in television drama, are realistic portrayals of families in our society," "Police departments, as portrayed in television drama, are accurate portrayals of police departments in real life," and
"Television drama in general presents a realistic representation of life in our society." The male agreement responses for each item were respectively 19%, 18% and 21%, compared to female agreement responses of 23%, 22% and 27%. The male disagreement responses of 77%, 78% and 73%. Chi-square again yielded no significant differences between male and female responses at .05 or .01 ($x^2=2.28, .46, .68, df=1$).

The sixth item, "Television provides a large variety of models from which the behavior of people may be judged," yielded 56% male agreement compared to 26% female agreement, and 44% male disagreement compared to 74% female disagreement. Chi-square indicated a difference at the .01 level between male/female responses ($x^2=16.28, df=1$).

The seventh item, "People around you are basically similar to the people on television," yielded 73% male agreement, 74% female agreement, 27% male disagreement, 26% female disagreement. Chi-square indicated no significant difference ($x^2=.16, df=1$).

The last item, "Crime on television is like crime in society," yielded 60% male agreement, 30% female agreement, 40% male disagreement, 70% female disagreement. Chi-square indicated significant differences at .01 level ($x^2=15.52, df=1$).

The following conclusions were drawn from the "percentage" results for each question. Both males and females tended to neither agree or disagree with the Baretta representation of real police departments. They were not sure in either direction concerning their perceptions of reality relative to police activities as presented on television. Males had no significant opinions as to the representa-
tions of police departments on Kojak, whereas females tended to feel that the representations are not accurate portrayals of reality.

Both males and females felt that families are not realistic as presented in television drama. Also, both males and females indicated that police departments in general were not accurately represented on television.

In reference to the general question as to whether television presents a realistic view of life in our society, both males and females tended to disagree; however, both groups tended to feel that people in the real world are like people on television.

In two instances males and females felt differently (as evidenced by chi-square analyses). Males felt that television can provide models for behavior, while females felt that it cannot; and, males felt that crime on television was like crime in society, while females indicated the opposite opinion. Therefore, in terms of the responses to the survey instrument used, high school juniors and seniors tended to feel that television drama did not present an accurate portrayal of society. With the exception of two items, there were no significant differences between males and females.

The study, approaching the question of perceptions of television reality in a somewhat inchoate manner, had its weak points. Basically the specific items in the questionnaire probably did not sufficiently examine accurate perceptions of those to whom the questionnaire was presented. The items were much too general and not adequately subtle to solicit true perceptions concerning to what extent
an individual felt television true-to-life. The content of the ques-
tionnaire, for example, should not have asked specifically if the re-
spondent felt television to present an accurate portrayal of society
or any of its elements (e.g. the police, the family). Also, the study
should have relegated itself to only one facet, law enforcement for
example. And the respondents, if any generalizations were to emerge,
should have represented a sample which offered a wider cross-section
of demographic characteristics. The challenge of subsequent re-
search becomes to develop a refined, subtle survey instrument which
will objectively measure the perceptions of individuals.
V. HYPOTHESES

In response to problems encountered in previous research, this study devotes itself to how television influences an individual's view of society in reference to a specific facet of that society—law enforcement. This facet of society was selected primarily because a comparatively small number of individuals in our society have had direct contact with crime and/or the police. As a result, television, as well as other media to a lesser extent, has become a primary information source about law enforcement.

The extent to which television influences an individual's perceptions of violence in the social environment was also considered worthy of investigation, primarily because of the prevalence of violence presented by the television medium.

The procedure was designed, and the appropriate samples selected to provide data in support (or lack of support) of certain predictions. Based upon previous problems and research, it was predicted that a non-police sample, consisting of respondents representative of the general public, would respond differently from a police sample in terms of familiarity with law enforcement operation. Those items dealing specifically with police operations would provide data to support the prediction that, not unexpectedly, a non-police, general public sample would be less familiar than a police sample with law enforcement operations:
H1 Individuals representative of the general public when compared to representatives of the police will be less familiar with law enforcement operations.

Further, because of the influence of law enforcement misrepresentations as provided by television, it was predicted that those among a general public sample who spend comparatively larger amounts of time viewing television will exhibit greater misconceptions in reference to law enforcement. There would in fact occur differences in comparisons of average television viewing times:

H2 Individuals exhibiting greater levels of television usage, when compared to those who view less television, will have a greater misconception concerning law enforcement and its operation.

A third prediction was made concerning an individual's fear of violence in society. Because of the proliferation of television in society, because of the prevalence of violent themes presented by that medium, and because of related findings in previous research, it was predicted that heavy television viewers develop misconceptions concerning violence and its possible role in their lives. Differences were predicted in terms of television usage:

H3 Individuals exhibiting greater levels of television usage, when compared to those who view less television, will exhibit a tendency to feel a greater threat of violence in society.

Thus three hypotheses were formed which, if appropriately supported by collected data, would indicate that increased television usage may produce misconceptions specifically of law enforcement, and may produce additional misconceptions concerning the prevalence of violence in society.

Two additional variables, sex and educational level of respon-
dents, were determined to be worthy of investigation. Because of the role which has been historically relegated to women in this society, providing females with even less familiarity with law enforcement than men, it was predicted that female respondents who exhibited greater amounts of television usage would be the least familiar with law enforcement operations:

\( H_4 \) Females exhibiting greater levels of television usage, when compared to males exhibiting similar amounts of television usage, will exhibit greater misconceptions of law enforcement.

Educational experience which indirectly, and perhaps directly, produces a greater familiarity with all facets of society was also predicted to be a relevant variable. In comparing individuals who have similar television usage, it was predicted that those attaining higher levels of education would exhibit greater misconceptions of law enforcement, and greater misconceptions concerning the threat of violence in society:

\( H_5 \) Individuals exhibiting greater levels of television usage, and who have similar educational backgrounds, will exhibit greater misconceptions of law enforcement and the threat of violence in society.
VI. PROCEDURE

Pilot Survey and Questionnaire Construction

Data was collected specifically to determine the extent to which adult individuals felt television's portrayal of law enforcement to be an accurate reflection of that profession in real life, and the extent to which individuals felt the threat of violence in society. Differentiations were sought, most importantly, in terms of the respondent's daily viewing times—the average amounts of television watched each day (DTV). Sex and educational levels of the respondents were also included as additional variables. Responses were collected from the public and from the police profession.

A "pilot" survey instrument was first designed and field tested (see Appendix B). Various problems and ambiguities were discovered and subjected to correction. Respondents for the pilot were 59 employees of a Florida-based research agency consisting of a random mix of individuals (i.e. sex, education and social background). Based upon the responses obtained from the pilot, the instrument was found to contain numerous areas that may have caused inconsistent interpretation.

Items number three and four, requesting respondents to rank various crimes as to how often they occur in society, contained a
built-in fallacy—by the very nature of the listing the crimes may have appeared to suggest a ranking. The crimes of "auto theft" and "robbery" were considered by respondents to be basically the same crime, and "aggravated assault" was viewed to be inherent part of "murder" and "rape." Further, the use of the option "other" provided an opportunity for individuals to submit open-ended responses rather than actually rank the crimes. Thus these two items, attempting to obtain an indication of conceptions of law enforcement, because of a large number of ambiguous responses were deleted from the final survey instrument.

In item number five the phrase "some kind of violence" was found to be ambiguous, causing respondents to question what precisely was meant by "violence." Thus the parenthetical phrase, "resulting in bodily harm" was added to the final questionnaire. Further, the scales used in questions six and seven were somewhat confusing due to the type of statistical comparison requested. The scales were changed in order to render a more understandable scale.

Question eight was omitted due to its similarity to number nine, and questions thirteen and fourteen were not included due to misinterpretation (primarily resulting from the use of the words "frequently" and "sometimes"). Question sixteen was also omitted from the final instrument due to its similarity to number seventeen. The scales in questions eighteen through twenty-two were changed to provide a wider range of choices (percentages). Question number fifteen was also changed to accommodate a more meaningful percentage scale.
Finally, questions twenty-four through twenty-six were omitted due to the difficulty in interpreting and categorizing open-ended responses. These three questions were designed to determine if an individual respondent had an above average knowledge of law enforcement (which could possibly contaminate their responses). It was determined that a random "general public" sample selection would adequately accommodate bias caused by such knowledge.

In order to determine if the pilot survey instrument had obtained the desired data, frequency counts were made of the responses to selected items. Specifically in reference to questions number nine and twelve (both of which did not seem to generate any ambiguity among respondents):

**TABLE 1**
**QUESTION NINE, PILOT SURVEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Viewing (DTV)</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Average Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 2**
**QUESTION TWELVE, PILOT SURVEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DTV</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Average Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 1, the responses to item number nine indicate a difference between those who viewed television less than one hour per week, and those who viewed television for one to three hours per week. Individuals who viewed less television felt that police officers fired their weapons a fewer number of times. From Table 2, the responses to item number twelve, concerning law enforcement undercover activities, also indicate a difference in perception (although very slight).

An additional item (see Table 3) concerning police workloads, on the other hand failed to show any differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DTV</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, based upon the pilot survey, the survey instrument seemed to have obtained the desired types of responses. Appropriate revisions to eliminate the ambiguous areas were made in order to prepare the instrument for further sampling. Two samples were selected for further comparisons—law enforcement and general public. The law enforcement sample, consisting of ninety members of the Orlando Police Department, Orlando, Florida, provided individuals who had direct, factual information in reference to law enforcement activities. The general public sample, a total of eighty-one respondents, consisted of
employees (22) of Sims Office Supply, Altamonte Springs, Florida, the University of Central Florida (49), Orlando, Florida, and employees (10) of Levitz Furniture Company, Winter Park, Florida. The individuals in the general public sample, via randomization, represented the average television consumer who, as an average member of society had had little or no direct contact with law enforcement, and hence had a minimal familiarity with police operations.

Results: The Police Sample

The sample taken from the law enforcement agency was analyzed via frequency counts to provide data for comparison to the general public sample. Sex of respondent, educational level of respondent and the individual's DTV were not compiled. Data from the remaining revised items in the questionnaire (see Appendix C) were compiled in order to form an authentic representation of law enforcement activities, and to obtain the police officer's view of the prevalence of violence in society (as defined by specific items in the questionnaire).

Specifically, as compiled from a law enforcement sample of eighty-one respondents, the average officer felt a one in fifty chance of being involved in some kind of violence. The average officer also indicated rape to occur between 1,000 and 5,000 times per year, and murder to occur with the same frequency. The actual tabulations are presented in Table 4:
The remaining items in the questionnaire, as responded to by the police sample, provide a description of law enforcement operation and of specific facets of criminal justice. Appropriate tabulation provided the following data:

TABLE 4
POLICE RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THREE, FOUR AND FIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question No.</th>
<th>Average Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 5
POLICE RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SIX THROUGH SIXTEEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question No.</th>
<th>Average Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data (Table 5) indicate that police officers when on duty fire their weapons almost one and one-half times annually, that police detectives work on more than one case at a time, that police are probably more effective than private detectives in solving crimes, and that most police detectives work undercover.

It was further determined (Table 5) from the sample that, in the opinion of police officers, police detectives spend almost 50 percent of their time doing paperwork, and that almost 25 percent of reported crimes are worked on by an investigator. Also only between 10 percent and 25 percent of individuals who commit crimes are arrested, the guilty party is captured, tried and convicted between 25 percent and 50 percent of the time, and less than 10 percent of those convicted actually serve sentences.

Approximately 50 percent of criminal indictments, according to the opinions presented by the police sample, are resolved through plea-bargaining, and over 50 percent of parolees were to become repeaters.

Results: The General Public Sample. Comparisons with the Police Sample.

The following table reflects average general public responses tabulated for question number three, and comparisons with responses from the police sample. Included are average responses from male and female individuals, and individuals with different educational backgrounds.
TABLE 6
QUESTION THREE RESPONSES COMPARED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DTV</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>GPHS</th>
<th>GC</th>
<th>GPM</th>
<th>GPF</th>
<th>Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In explanation, DTV (as used previously) refers to average daily viewing time, GP refers to average responses from the overall general public sample, GPHS and GPC refer to individuals from the general public with high school and college educational backgrounds respectively, GPM and GPF refer to average responses from male and female individuals from the general public sample, and the previously tabulated overall police response is included for comparison.

As indicated by the data from Table 6, members of the general public may have felt a greater chance of being involved in some kind of violence than did individuals from the police sample. In reference to this item on the questionnaire, the data did not indicate any differences based upon television viewing times.

As illustrated in Tables 7 and 8 the responses from questions number four and five which follow, failed to indicate any differences between the police and general public samples, nor were any differences indicated within the general public sample itself:
### TABLE 7
**QUESTION FOUR RESPONSES COMPARED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DTV</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>GPHS</th>
<th>GC</th>
<th>GPM</th>
<th>GPF</th>
<th>Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 8
**QUESTION FIVE RESPONSES COMPARED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DTV</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>GPHS</th>
<th>GC</th>
<th>GPM</th>
<th>GPF</th>
<th>Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responses from questions six through nine were as indicated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>DTV</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>GPHS</th>
<th>GC</th>
<th>GPM</th>
<th>GPF</th>
<th>Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>One-Three Hours</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The tabulations for question six indicate only two comparative differences. The general public as a whole perceived the law enforcement officer (while on duty) to fire his/her weapon two to five times per year, while the police sample indicated use of weapons only one time per year. The only difference in reference to television usage was between college-educated individuals in the general public sample: those who viewed television one to three hours per day, when compared with those who viewed less television, perceived a greater use of
weapons by the police (more than ten times per year compared to two-five times).

Question seven responses, because of the true-false scale used, indicate no differences within the general public sample or between samples. All response averages fell within the "definitely false/probably false" range.

The responses for question eight, within the general public sample, fell within the "uncertain" to "probably false" range, with no definitive differences between individuals in reference to television viewing habits. Law enforcement officers did, however, feel much more strongly that the police were more effective in solving crimes. The same was true for question nine. No definitive differences were found based upon television viewing habits; whereas, the police indicated that most law enforcement officers do not work undercover. The general public tended to respond within the "uncertain" range.

The responses from the remaining questions, requesting percentage estimations, are tabulated in Table 10:
### TABLE 10
RESPONSES COMPARED, QUESTIONS TEN THROUGH SIXTEEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>DTV</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>GPHS</th>
<th>GC</th>
<th>GPM</th>
<th>GPF</th>
<th>Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 One-Three Hours</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 One-Three Hours</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 One-Three Hours</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 One-Three Hours</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 One-Three Hours</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 One-Three Hours</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Less Than One Hour</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 One-Three Hours</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data for question ten, regarding law enforcement paperwork, indicates that the general public perceives the police to be less involved in paperwork than they actually are. The police indicated that they spend between 25 percent and 50 percent of their time at the desk, whereas the public sample fell within the 10 to 25 percent bracket. The only difference in reference to television viewing habits was among college-educated respondents from the general public. Those viewing more television were found to perceive the police as being more involved with paperwork.

In response to question eleven, the police indicated that the guilty individual was captured, tried and convicted between 25 and 50 percent of the time, whereas the general public average response fell within the 10 to 25 percent range. No appreciable differences were found within the general public in reference to education, sex or television viewing habits.

The next question, asking respondents to estimate what percentage of those who commit crimes are arrested, generated averages which denoted a difference only between the police and individuals in the general public who viewed less television. The police indicated that between 10 and 25 percent of those who commit crimes were arrested, while those in the general public sample viewing less than one hour of television per day felt that less than 10 percent were arrested. No other significant differences were found in reference to this question.

Question thirteen, requesting individuals to estimate what
percentage of convicted criminals actually serve sentences, generated
data which again illustrated a slight difference between the general
public and police samples. The law enforcement sample felt that less
than 10 percent of those convicted actually serve sentences, whereas
the general public tended to feel that between 10 and 25 percent serve
sentences. In reference to television viewing habits, only a very
slight difference was noticed, specifically among males from the pub­
lic sample. Males in this sample who averaged greater amounts of
television viewing time felt that a slightly greater percentage of
those convicted actually served sentences.

The next item, asking respondents to estimate the percentage
of crimes actually worked on by an investigator, produced differences
between female respondents from the general public, and differences
again between the police sample and the public sample. Law enforce­
ment officers indicated that between 25 and 50 percent of crimes were
worked on by an investigator, while the general public average respons­
es fell within the 10 to 25 percent range. Among female respondents
from the general public, those viewing less television felt that less
than 10 percent of crimes were worked on by an investigator. Females
who averaged greater amounts of television usage indicated that a
larger percentage of crimes were worked on by an investigator.

The average responses for question fifteen did not indicate
any differences, based upon television viewing habits, within the gen­
eral public sample. Only a very slight difference was found between
the police and the public sample in that the police response average
fell in the highest percentage (over 75 percent), whereas the averages from the general public were within the next lowest percentage range (between 50 and 75 percent). Thus the police, when compared with the public, felt a larger number of parolees would again commit crimes.

The final item comparing the police and public samples, question sixteen, again failed to find any differences within the general public sample based upon television viewing habits. And again a slight difference was found between the police and the public in that law enforcement officers perceived a larger number of indictments being resolved through plea-bargaining. The difference was small however, with the police response average falling within the 50 to 75 percent range, and the public averages falling within the 25 to 50 percent range.
VII. TESTS OF HYPOTHESES

Data relevant to the first hypothesis is tabulated in Table 11. For each question overall averages from the general public, including both levels of television usage, are compared with the corresponding averages from the police sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>General Public</th>
<th>Police</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 2.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 2.05</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 3.05</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 2.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 2.85</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 2.55</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 1.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 2.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 2.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 3.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 3.45</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The t test and the Mann Whitney U test were selected as the appropriate tests of significance for each hypothesis. For the above comparison the t value, -.25, and the U value, 125, both indicated no
significant differences at the .05 level of probability. Based upon the tests, support could not be found for the first hypothesis. Therefore:

H1 Individuals representative of the general public when compared to representatives of the police will be (were not) less familiar with law enforcement operations.

Data comparisons did however suggest a trend in the common sense direction—that the general public would be less familiar with law enforcement. Except for question twelve, the averages fell at different points on the respective scales for each question.

In consideration of the second hypothesis, the appropriate data is presented below:

**TABLE 12**
GENERAL PUBLIC AVERAGES COMPARING LEVELS OF TELEVISION USAGE (DTV) FOR QUESTIONS SIX THROUGH SIXTEEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Less Than One Hour</th>
<th>One-Three Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The appropriate t and U values, -.59 and 109 respectively, indicated no significant differences at the .05 level. It follows that:

$H_2$ Individuals exhibiting greater levels of television usage, when compared to those who view less television, will (did not) have a greater misconception concerning law enforcement and its operation.

The third hypothesis, concerning perceptions of violence in society, also failed to find support. Data in consideration of this hypothesis is tabulated:

**TABLE 13**
GENERAL PUBLIC AVERAGES COMPARING LEVELS OF TELEVISION USAGE (DTV) FOR QUESTIONS THREE THROUGH FIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Less Than One Hour</th>
<th>One-Three Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The computed t value, -.20, failed to find support at the .05 level. The U value was not computed due to insufficient number of scores in either group. The third hypothesis below was not upheld:

$H_3$ Individuals exhibiting greater levels of television usage, when compared to those who view less television will (did not) exhibit a tendency to feel a greater level of violence in society.

Tabulations in reference to the fourth prediction, involving male and female differences, are presented in the table as follows:
Again the t and U values, -.43 and 117.5, failed to find support for the fourth hypothesis.

**H₄** Females exhibiting greater levels of television usage, when compared to males exhibiting similar amounts of television usage, will (did not) exhibit greater misconceptions of law enforcement.

The response averages relevant to the final prediction, concerning educational differentiations, are presented in Tables 15 and 16. Table 15 presents averages concerning perceptions of violence in society. The averages in Table 16 are from those questions seeking perceptions of law enforcement activities.
The t value, -.79, and the U value, 96, again found no significant difference. The fifth hypothesis also failed to find support.

H₅ Individuals exhibiting greater levels of television usage, and who have similar educational backgrounds, will (did not) exhibit greater misconceptions of law enforcement and the threat of violence in society.
VIII. DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

As indicated by the tests of hypotheses, a basic generalization did emerge. Specifically, the perceptions of adult individuals remain primarily unaffected by levels of television usage. In reference to opinion and research previously delineated, Peter Wood's assertion that television provides a heightened version of reality, and Paul Kurtz's statement that the medium is undermining the ability of individuals to judge ideas, seem to find (at least within this study) little support. Further, Michael Real's view that television, as being one of the primary factors in producing a mass-mediated culture, corrupts and distorts human perceptions and reduces the ability to distinguish fantasy from reality, seems to be based upon personal reaction rather than upon a solid data-base.

Nor did the data resulting from this effort provide support for the suppositions held by Gerbner and Gross. Because no differences were found in comparisons of individuals exhibiting different levels of television usage, agreement could not be established with Gerbner and Gross in reference to their opinion that television can encourage and cultivate views of life and society.

Further, although differences in perception do exist between the general public and professionals actually involved with certain facets of society, in this case the criminal justice system, these differences do not seem to be produced by television. Although the
misrepresentations alluded to by Arcuri, Mankiewicz and Swerdlow do seem to exist in television's portrayal of law enforcement, they do not necessarily produce misconceptions among television's viewers—regardless of level of television usage.

The present study did of course find that individuals in society were less familiar (held certain misconceptions) with law enforcement than members of the profession itself (common sense). However, because differences did not occur in comparisons of levels of television usage, the implications held by Donohue and Slater cannot find support. Specifically, although an individual may not be familiar with a particular stereotypical image or situation, television is not necessarily perceived to be an accurate portrayal. Also, it cannot be held, as espoused by Slater, that individuals rely upon television as a primary source of information about law enforcement activities.

However, the study may have contained various areas of ambiguity and misinterpretation. The failure to find support for hypotheses two through five indicates that problems may have occurred in the construction of the questionnaire, the improvements resulting from the pilot study notwithstanding. The individual questions within the survey may not have accurately solicited responses fully measuring perceptions of violence in society and perceptions of law enforcement activities.

Specifically, a case could be made to the effect that a total of only three questions (numbers three through five) were simply in-
adequate to accurately measure perceptions of societal violence. The responses for questions four and five consistently fell at the top end of the scales, indicating that differentiations did not occur, perhaps because the scales were not properly constructed (higher quantity ranges should have been used).

Questions six through sixteen, although causes of misinterpretation were reduced through refinement after the pilot study, still may well have retained certain ambiguities. Question six, for example, did not specify if practice time was included and, as a result respondents may have been somewhat confused. Question nine remained vague, failing to specify what precisely was meant by "undercover" (e.g. plainclothes, suit, with or without identification). Questions eleven, twelve and fourteen failed to specify the types of criminal activity implied, e.g. overall, felony, misdemeanor, rape, robbery, etc.

Further, the scales used may have failed to properly solicit responses suitable for differentiation. For example, is the difference between "definitely false" and "probably false," or between "definitely true" and "probably true," significant? Also, the use of "uncertain" as a possible response selection provided respondents with the opportunity simply not to offer an opinion at all.

An additional ambiguity in reference to the scales may have occurred in the method of analysis, frequency counts, averaging and chi-square. When response averages were compiled, an observable difference was difficult to determine unless the compared averages fell
at different points on the scale. For example, in reference to those questions requesting respondents to select a percentage range (questions six through sixteen), if the compared averages fell at 2.5 and 3.5 a difference was determined to have occurred. However, when the averages fell for example at 2.8 and 3.1, although they represented two different percentage ranges, it was difficult to conclude that a significant difference actually occurred.

Toffler's and Gerbner's fear of the effects of the cod-ed, manufactured message requires additional study if logical, scientific generalizations are to be made. Television is but one influence upon the adult individual's perceptions of society and its institutions. Television becomes very difficult to isolate from other sources: print media, educational influences, and general information gathered from other individuals in society. Subsequent studies should be designed which isolate television from all other media. Rather than compare the responses of individuals reflecting different levels of television usage, it would be most advantageous to design studies (perhaps cross-cultural) utilizing individuals who have had no exposure to television whatsoever—a most difficult sample to locate within the developed countries. Having located an appropriate sample, comparisons would be made, of course, with individuals who had received general television exposure. If samples are compared from a society in which television is prevalent (such as in the present study), consideration should be given to a better definition of "light" and "heavy" television viewers. Are viewing times between "less than one hour"
and "between one and three hours" the appropriate comparisons?

Careful attention must also be given in future efforts to properly develop more subtle questionnaire items and response scales. Rather than concentrating upon a selected genre (e.g. law enforcement, legal or medical profession) subsequent studies could develop items pertaining to various sociological perceptions. Such considerations could include racial, ethical and general social perceptions, and could develop questionnaire items based upon general television drama content (e.g. situation comedy, made-for-television movies) rather than a specific genre.

Additional development must be given to the formulation of proper response scales. It would be realistic, for example, to utilize simple yes/no items, rather than graduated scales. In this way individuals would be forced to provide a specific reaction rather than responses which do not reflect any definite opinion. Or, of course, more subtle scales could be developed which lend themselves to less ambiguity when tabulated.

It becomes clear that there is a great deal of research to be done in the area of television and perceptions of reality. It would seem logical that a medium so prevalent in this society would have an observable effect upon exposed individuals. However, because of the existence of so many variables and because of the difficulties found in response measurement, quantification and subsequent proof become the challenge of future research.
Appendix A. Questionnaire From Previous Research

This questionnaire has been prepared to collect data concerning television viewing habits, and to determine how people feel about television. The statements refer to television drama, as opposed to television news, documentary, sports or specials. For the first two items, please check the appropriate box. For the remaining statements, check the box that indicates how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements (check only one for each item). Please do not write your name on the questionnaire. All responses will remain anonymous. Thank you for your assistance.

1. Sex:
   - Male
   - Female

2. Average (estimated) daily television viewing time (check one):
   - Less than 1 hour
   - Between 1 and 2 hours
   - More than 2 hours

3. **All in the Family** provides accurate models of human behavior in our society.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

4. **Little House on the Prairie** is an accurate representation of life in "pioneer" America.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

5. **Lou Grant** provides us with a realistic look at the operation behind a metropolitan newspaper.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

6. **Family** presents a realistic portrayal of human behavior in our society.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

7. The events that occur on **Starsky & Hutch** are events that happen in real police departments.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

8. The things that happen in the high school in **Welcome Back Kotter** happen in most high schools.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

9. The police officers on **Hawaii Five-O** are like police officers in real life.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

10. **Barnaby Jones** presents an accurate portrayal of a private detective's life.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

11. The things that happen on **Barrett** happen in real police departments.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

12. **Kojak** provides a look at how a real police department works.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

13. **The Rockford Files** presents an accurate look at a private detective.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

14. **Emergency** presents a realistic look at a fire department and its rescue squad.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree

15. **The Streets of San Francisco** presents an accurate portrayal of a metropolitan police department.
    - Strongly Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neutral
    - Agree
    - Strongly Agree
16. The police department on Policewoman is like a real police department.
   □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

17. Maude provides accurate models of human behavior in our society.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

19. Families, as portrayed in television drama, are realistic portrayals of families in our society.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

20. Police departments, as portrayed in television drama, are accurate portrayals of police departments in real life.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

21. Private detectives, as represented on television, are like private detectives in real life.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

22. High schools, as represented on television, are like high school in general.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

23. Television drama in general presents a realistic representation of life in our society.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

24. Television provides a large variety of models from which the behavior of people may be judged.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

25. People around you are basically similar to the people on television.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

26. Police departments in your city have officers in them like Baretta, Kojak and the officers on The Streets of San Francisco.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree

27. Crime on television is like crime in society.
    □ Strongly Disagree  □ Disagree  □ Neutral  □ Agree  □ Strongly Agree
Appendix B. Pilot Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been prepared by a private, non-profit research group to collect information concerning perceptions of crime and law enforcement. Please respond to each statement or question as directed. All responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please do NOT write your name on the questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.

Check the appropriate box:

1. Please indicate sex:
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

2. Please indicate highest educational level attained:
   - [ ] 8th grade
   - [ ] High school
   - [ ] College graduate

3. Of the below listed crimes in our society, indicate the one which you feel occurs MOST often (select only one):
   - [ ] Murder
   - [ ] Auto theft
   - [ ] Robbery
   - [ ] Rape
   - [ ] Aggravated assault
   - [ ] Other

4. Of the below listed crimes in our society, indicate the one which you feel occurs LEAST often (select only one):
   - [ ] Murder
   - [ ] Auto theft
   - [ ] Robbery
   - [ ] Rape
   - [ ] Aggravated assault
   - [ ] Other

Circle the number on the scale which best describes your reaction to the statement or question:

5. During any given week what chance do you have of being involved in some kind of violence?
   - [ ] One in 10
   - [ ] One in 50
   - [ ] One in 100
   - [ ] One in 1,000
   - [ ] One in 10,000

6. How often does rape occur in the United States?
   - [ ] Every 15 minutes
   - [ ] Every 30 minutes
   - [ ] Every hour
   - [ ] Every 24 hours

7. How often does murder occur in the United States?
   - [ ] Every 15 minutes
   - [ ] Every 30 minutes
   - [ ] Every hour
   - [ ] Every 24 hours

8. While on duty (making an arrest, investigating a crime or in pursuit of criminals), about how many times each year does a police officer pull his/her gun from his/her holster?
   - [ ] One time
   - [ ] 2 to 5 times
   - [ ] 5 to 10 times
   - [ ] More than 10 times

9. On the average, how many times annually does a police officer, while on duty, actually fire his/her gun?
   - [ ] One time
   - [ ] 2 to 5 times
   - [ ] 5 to 10 times
   - [ ] More than 10 times

10. Police detectives work on one case at a time.
   - [ ] Definitely false
   - [ ] Probably false
   - [ ] Uncertain
   - [ ] Probably true
   - [ ] Definitely true

11. Police are more effective than private detectives in solving crimes.
   - [ ] Definitely false
   - [ ] Probably false
   - [ ] Uncertain
   - [ ] Probably true
   - [ ] Definitely true

12. Most police detectives work undercover.
   - [ ] Definitely false
   - [ ] Probably false
   - [ ] Uncertain
   - [ ] Probably true
   - [ ] Definitely true

13. Police are frequently involved in high-speed car chases.
   - [ ] Definitely false
   - [ ] Probably false
   - [ ] Uncertain
   - [ ] Probably true
   - [ ] Definitely true

14. Police sometimes must break the law in order to catch criminals.
   - [ ] Definitely false
   - [ ] Probably false
   - [ ] Uncertain
   - [ ] Probably true
   - [ ] Definitely true

15. Police detectives spend very little time involved with paperwork.
   - [ ] Definitely false
   - [ ] Probably false
   - [ ] Uncertain
   - [ ] Probably true
   - [ ] Definitely true
16. In general, what percentage of crimes are solved?

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17. What percentage of the time is the guilty party captured, tried and convicted?

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18. What percentage of people who commit crimes are arrested?

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19. What percentage of people who are convicted of crimes actually serve sentences?

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20. What percentage of reported crimes are worked on by an investigator?

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21. What percentage of parolees are "repeaters" (commit crimes again)?

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22. What percentage of criminal indictments are resolved through plea-bargaining (entering a plea of guilty to a lesser charge)?

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Check the appropriate box:

23. On the average, how much time do you spend each day watching television?
- Less than one hour
- One to three hours
- More than three hours

Answer in the space provided:

24. Have you ever taken any classes in law enforcement or related areas? If so, explain briefly:

25. Have you had any official contact with members of the law enforcement profession? If so, explain briefly:

26. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your knowledge of the law enforcement profession:
Appendix C. Final Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been prepared by a graduate student at the University of Central Florida to collect information concerning perceptions of crime and law enforcement. Please respond to each statement or question as directed. All responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please do NOT write your name on the questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.

Check the appropriate box:

1. Please indicate sex:
   - □ Male
   - □ Female

2. Please indicate highest educational level attained:
   - □ 8th grade
   - □ High school
   - □ College graduate

Circle the number on the scale which best describes your reaction to the statement or question.

3. During any given week, what chance do you have of being involved in some kind of violence (resulting in bodily harm)?
   - 1 in 10
   - 1 in 50
   - 1 in 100
   - 1 in 1,000
   - 1 in 10,000

4. How often does rape occur in the United States?
   - Less than 50 times per year
   - 50-100 times per year
   - 100-1,000 times per year
   - 1,000-5,000 times per year
   - 10,000 or more times per year

5. How often does murder occur in the United States?
   - Less than 50 times per year
   - 50-100 times per year
   - 100-1,000 times per year
   - 1,000-5,000 times per year
   - 10,000 or more times per year

6. On the average, how many times annually does a police officer, while on duty, actually fire his/her gun?
   - One time
   - 2 to 5 times
   - 5 to 10 times
   - More than 10 times

7. Police detectives work on one case at a time.
   - Definitely false
   - Probably false
   - Uncertain
   - Probably true
   - Definitely true

8. Police are more effective than private detectives in solving crimes.
   - Definitely false
   - Probably false
   - Uncertain
   - Probably true
   - Definitely true

9. Most police detectives work undercover.
   - Definitely false
   - Probably false
   - Uncertain
   - Probably true
   - Definitely true

10. What percentage of the time do police detectives spend doing paperwork?
    - Less than 10%
    - 10% to 25%
    - 25% to 50%
    - 50% to 75%
    - Over 75%

11. What percentage of the time is the guilty party captured, tried, and convicted?
    - Less than 10%
    - 10% to 25%
    - 25% to 50%
    - 50% to 75%
    - Over 75%

12. What percentage of people who commit crimes are arrested?
    - Less than 10%
    - 10% to 25%
    - 25% to 50%
    - 50% to 75%
    - Over 75%

13. What percentage of people who are convicted of crimes actually serve sentences?
    - Less than 10%
    - 10% to 25%
    - 25% to 50%
    - 50% to 75%
    - Over 75%

14. What percentage of reported crimes are worked on by an investigator?
    - Less than 10%
    - 10% to 25%
    - 25% to 50%
    - 50% to 75%
    - Over 75%

15. What percentage of parolees are "repeaters" (commit crimes again)?
    - Less than 10%
    - 10% to 25%
    - 25% to 50%
    - 50% to 75%
    - Over 75%

16. What percentage of criminal indictments are resolved through plea-bargaining (entering a plea of guilty to a lesser charge)?
    - Less than 10%
    - 10% to 25%
    - 25% to 50%
    - 50% to 75%
    - Over 75%

17. On the average, how much time do you spend each day watching television?
    - Less than one hour
    - One to three hours
    - More than three hours
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Kurtz, Paul. "'Some People Believe Anything They See' on TV." U.S. News and World Report, May 21, 1979, pp. 52-54.


