MINORITY MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF EXHIBITED AGGRESSION
A COMPARISON STUDY OF REALITY-BASED
POLICE PROGRAMS AND FICTIONAL CRIME DRAMA

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MINORITY MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF EXHIBITED AGGRESSION

A COMPARISON STUDY OF

REALITY-BASED POLICE PROGRAMS AND FICTIONAL CRIME DRAMA

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

Austin Peay State University

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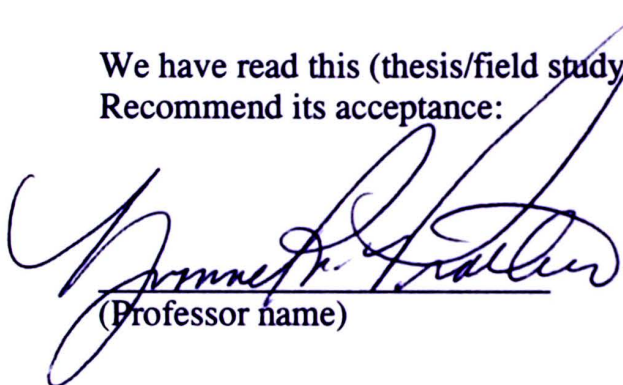August 2008

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I am submitting herewith a (*thesis/field study*) written by Kathleen S. Evans
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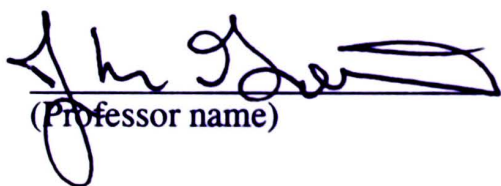
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ABSTRACT

The current research examined minority media portrayals of perceived aggression in "reality-based" police crime dramas compared to fictional crime drama. The hypotheses under study are: that given ethnic minority (specifically African American and Hispanic) characters will be a proportionally larger group of the criminal suspects, criminal suspects will more frequently exhibit aggressive behavior than authority figures. A sample consisting of two frequently viewed programs (COPS and Law and Order), representing approximately 100 hours of programming time (including commercials); coded identifying four types of aggressive behavior: verbal, threat of physical harm, unarmed physical (contact) aggression, armed physical (contact) aggression. This study's findings will provide preliminary data on minority media aggression that may impact viewer perception and lead to more extensive research in this area of media and mass communication. For the purposes of this study ethnic groups examined are Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian and unidentifiable are categorized as unknown.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I know I'm blessed. I would like to thank my loving husband, Harold, for his unwavering faith in my ability to complete this project; his encouragement and support through the ups and downs of this journey kept the project moving forward— he believed in me when there were times I doubted my own ability. I thank my children, Michael, Lena and Gregory for their tolerance and family sacrifice for the benefit of this academic endeavor. To my parents, the late James McDowell Jr. and the late Georgiana Houser, my only regret is to not have you with me to enjoy this accomplishment. Continuing this academic pursuit and living my life without the love and presence of my parents caused me to examine the reasons for accomplishing this academic milestone. And, to my stepmother, Christine McDowell, who by example taught me compassion and the importance of caring for others and most importantly taught me to how to make the most of a little.

I would like to thank Dr. Frank Parcells, Dr. Mike Gotcher and Dr. Yvonne Prather for agreeing to serve on my committee; I am grateful for your support and the time you devoted to this project. In retrospect, I have a greater appreciation for the experience, not knowing then that the traditional classroom experience would soon come to pass for many. I now seize the brief moments in my mind, still recalling the jokes and laughter of Dr. Mike Gotcher, the probing questions of Dr. Reece Elliott, the challenging article reviews by Dr. Margaret Duffy or the legal issues challenging the mind by Dr. von Palko. There are so many to whom I owe gratitude for their persistent encouragement. Dr. Parcells, I cannot thank enough for taking extraordinary time in working with me to bring this project to fruition; after each office visit your voice, your kind words of advice and encouragement always left me renewed and invigorated, able to continue to the next

steps. Dr. Gotcher, you were among the first who positively influenced my graduate experience, your numerous article reviews not only stimulated a higher level of thought but also resulted in a collegial relationship with other classmates, many of whom always were in the library at the same time week after week. Dr. Prather, I appreciate the unique academic disciplinary perspective you bring to the project, and your words of encouragement and sometimes just a glimpse from you kept my attention on the necessity to complete task at hand.

My appreciation goes to the faculty and staff at Austin Peay for your patience and encouragement, to the faculty for the knowledge you have shared and to the staff for your kind words of encouragement along the way. And, to the students by whom I am inspired each day and who I see arrive on our campus and have the privilege of sharing in the learning experience and seeing them grow into promising young adults—my hope is to be more influential in their academic endeavors by this accomplishment and be more of a campus resource to them by this advancement. By completion of this project, it is the hope that others will continue the work of social research in this fertile area of mass communication.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Television has become in integral part of the American household, is ingrained in the fabric of American culture and for many a window to the global community in which we live (Gerbner and Gross, April 1976; Gerbner and Gross, Spring 1976). Many households have at least one television, many with multiple units in various rooms in a home and frequently housed in the designated areas in the workplace (Bushman and Anderson, 2001). As we continue to progress to a society where interpersonal diversity is a way of life, ranging from professional interactions to various levels of intimacy, disparity in cultural, environmental, or socioeconomic elements continue to contribute to racial stereotypes. Education and awareness by way of social research contributes to such progress and further develop increasingly effective communication by examining potential barriers. These barriers sustain racial stereotypes and impede our ability to engage others of different ethnic backgrounds and embrace diversity and inclusion in practice and precept. Specifically, this study seeks to examine some of the media portrayals that may perpetuate racial stereotypes. It examines minority media portrayals of exhibited aggression in reality-based television dramas.

Cultivation Theory—Television's Influence of our "Worldview"

Among the earliest mass communication research was Gerbner's work (1967-68) in developing the Cultivation Theory. This established the most extensive research on the effects of television viewing and provided a comprehensive compilation of information from which to draw a theoretical reference for this study. Through this early research, the development of the "Violence Index" expanded to the series labeled the "Violence Profile" then further developed into "Cultural Indicators." Gerbner's theory

argues that with television viewing becoming a central cultural aspect of American society, the exposure of messages conveys a "common worldview" taught by television and cultivation. This contributes significantly to the development of common roles and values (Severin & Tankard, 1992, p. 249). Gerbner specifically asserts that television is "the central cultural arm of American society" and is emphasized from the initial to the final stages of life (Gerbner and Gross, 1976, pp. 175-176). Gerbner's research emphasizes the effects not only of television that stimulates violent behavior, but also the far-reaching effects as replaced religion influencing a social order. Here it "exhibits the 'power of authority.'" Gerbner extends this beyond "immediate change in behavior." He focuses on how it "cultivates certain views of life" (Gerbner and Gross, April 1976, p. 41). Gerbner further explains how messages influence viewers from infancy to the final stages of life and that this influence does not require literacy (Gerbner and Gross, April 1976, p. 42).

Gerbner's "Mainstreaming" Violence Profile No. 11 explains the relationship between the concepts mainstreaming and resonance, defining the "mainstream" as that of the common outlooks television cultivates, shared views of heavy viewers in specific deomographic groups as compared to that of light views (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980, pp. 10, 15). He defines "resonance" that occurs when television cultivated views are reinforced by real life experience. This results in a more pronounced pattern of cultivation (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980, p. 15).

Perception of Minorities Related to Violent Crime

Gerbner's Cultivation Theory provides ample reference from which to draw on the effects of television viewing. The framework of this study is modeled after that of Mary Beth Oliver whose research has examined the portrayals of crime, race and aggression in

"reality-based" police shows (Oliver, 1994, p. 179). She asserts that media portrayals typically overrepresent violent crime and underrepresent nonviolent or property crime (Oliver, 1994, p. 180). She then asserts that criminal cases are more frequently resolved by a means of violence (Oliver, 1994, p. 180). Past analysis of "fictional" crime programs report a higher proportion of criminal suspects who are white than news reports that tend to portray a larger proportion of racial minorities. One of the typical portrayals of African Americans involves that of criminal suspects in "reality-based" police shows. Some have suggested that portrayals of crime-related topics in news and police programs may perpetuate negative perceptions of symbolic racism while promoting a positive image of law enforcement (Oliver, 1994, p. 181). More recent research (Fujioka, 2005) has closely examined media imagery and relationship to perceived public perception, particularly its effect on affirmative action. Fujioka's (2005) results indicate that the media has an undeniable impact on our racial environment that affects public opinion. He concludes that there are negative images of African Americans and an increased support of affirmative action (Fujioka, 2005, p. 460). This implication suggests that the effects of television have the potential to influence how we view public policy, and there is a potential for this to create more division between racial and ethnic groups. It is important to engage in research that focuses on these programs because, as past research indicates, what we see in the media, becomes our reality (Gerbner and Gross, April 1976, p. 89). Gerbner's Cultivation Theory indicates that television is the first cultural influence that we encounter, and is a common thread among various groups throughout our lifetime.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Self-Identity and Racial Attitudes in Children and Adolescents

Research related to race relations has captured the attention of social researchers

(Clark & Clark, 1939, Gerbner & Gross, 1976, Branch & Newcombe, 1986, Innis &

Feagin., 1995), most notably the research on the attitudes of African American children

extending back as far as the late 1930s (Branch & Newcombe, 1986, p. 713). These early

studies indicated a strong Caucasian preference (in Clark's doll study) among African

American children. Subsequent studies have resulted in similar findings, but the missing

link in these earlier studies is in examining how and why the preference exists, how it is

influenced and whether or not this attitude remains unchanged with age. There may be a

relationship of children's attitudes that extends into adulthood. This maybe indicative of

the saliency of stereotypical attitudes and the study further explains that with their

cognitive development, they better understand messages from parents and other family

members. Further, children gravitate away from the influence of parents and home and

toward their peer group (Branch & Newcombe, 1986, p. 719). One of the implications of

the Hraba and Grant (1970) study, using a doll-choice technique, is that the children who

preferred the African American doll were almost proportionally the same as African

American children who preferred the Caucasian doll in the earlier study administered by

Clark (1939). Branch & Newcombe's research (1986) also indicates that other factors

influence the change in orientation: children's social awareness affects racial attitudes,

and the civil rights involvement of parents influence children's attitudes and behavior

(Branch & Newcombe, 1986, p. 713).

More recent research examines the role of the media in the development of self-socialization among adolescent youth (Arnett, 1995). Arnett's (p. 521) discussion identifies five uses of the media in the socialization process of adolescent youth: entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping and youth culture identification (pp. 519, 521). One of the important implications of this study is that it further supports Branch & Newcombe. Its emphasis indicates adolescents' use the media as a means of socialization and development of learned behavior in interpersonal relationships independent of those with parents and other adults at home (Arnett, p. 521). While sex and gender, romantic experience and male-female relationships are significant in the development of identity formation, there is evidence that television is also an influential factor in occupational aspiration. Television news and print media can influence the development of political views (Arnett, p. 523). Further research examines the development of racial socialization and identity (Stevenson, 1995). Stevenson defines racial socialization as the process of communicating messages to children to bolster their sense of identity given the possibility and reality that their life experiences may include racially hostile encounters (Stevenson, p. 51). He emphasizes that it is important that measure the individual's self-perception while we need to better understand the African American adolescent identity considering other environmental factors. These include activities, experiences and interactions with others outside the home in relation to African American adolescent youth as a distinct group (Stevenson, p. 52).

Individual Racial Attitudes and Media Portrayal of the African American Family

Branch's (1986) study examining racial attitude development of children, demonstrated that as children mature and become socialized within their "world view" their racial attitudes change as well. This same study suggests that movement away from

the primary influence of parents and home and gravitation toward peer groups also has an effect on racial attitude. Further the "neutral or out-group orientation" may be influenced by broadcast media. Merritt and Stroman (1993) examined how the African American family has been portrayed on television and the social implications of those portrayals in the social learning process. Merritt and Stroman emphasize it is within the family that individual personality and self-identity are formed. The family, then, is central to this process in which television households have peaked the interest of social researchers (Merritt and Stroman, p. 492). Previous research (Ford, 1997; Innis and Feagin, 1995) indicates that African American families were depicted in lower socioeconomic conditions. In female-dominated households, and male characters were shown in impotent roles. African Americans observed in situation comedies infrequently interacted with Caucasian characters, but frequently with children in households lacking a father figure (Merritt and Stroman, p. 493). Merritt's and Stroman's study examined the content of randomly selected episodes of three prime-time situation comedies involving African American families: the Cosby Show, 227 and Charlie & Company (Merritt and Stroman, p. 493). They adopted modifications of the definitions used by Seggar (1975), Hinton, Seggar, Northcott and Fones (1974) and DeFleur (1964) as determinants. Definitions used included: role significance, dress (apparel), occupational status, competence (level of intelligence) and wealth. Interactive behavior was coded as well (Merritt and Stroman, p. 494). Merritt and Stroman (1993) indicate that African American families were portrayed in a more positive light suggesting that positive portrayals of African American families provide role models that promote positive attitudes and behavior. They indicate that since children learn individual attitudes and

behaviors from the media, they may also learn roles, attitudes and behavior from those depicted on television (Merritt and Stroman, p. 498).

Media Portrayal of the Role of the [African American] Family

There has also been increasing interest in the socialization process beyond the scope of individual attitudes and self-identification. This may be attributed to the fact that the family is a key factor in the socialization of individuals; the family plays a major role in identity formation and the formation of values and norms that vary from culture to culture.

Research on social psychology and interpersonal communication has led to numerous studies (Finkerhouse & Shaw, 1990; Potter & Smith, 2000; Dixon & Linz, 2000; Dixon, Weaver, Jensen & Hurley, 2005; Gilliam, Valintino & Beckmann, 2002; Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Fujioka, 2005) examining how the media portrays minority ethnic groups and the effect the media has on attitudes and perceptions. The views are varied on the appropriate portrayal of minorities in television. While represented on prime time television in the 1970's and 1980's, African Americans were more often depicted in "sitcoms" (e.g., *Good Times, That's My Momma, Sanford and Son*) in menial roles, "fun-loving…and poor" (Ford, 1997, pp 266-267).

One of the prominent television shows under scrutiny is *The Cosby Show*. For the most part, *The Cosby Show* was a major accomplishment in portraying African Americans positively. Though this positive portrayal lessened stereotypical views of African Americans among Caucasians, it also set up a positive role model for African American youth (Fuller, 1992, p. 138). There has been some degree of criticism along with its acclaim. Although it provided an attempt to dispel racial stereotypes, it was still criticized for not realistically depicting an African American, middle-class family.

Some of the aspects described its portrayal of the African American family as a distortion, being shown in an exaggerated fashion (Innis and Feagin, 1995, p. 694). The responses in the research study (Innis and Feagin, 1995) indicate that overall, there were positive comments in response to the interview on *The Cosby Show*. The respondents are added that the show lacked "realism" in terms of the experiences of an African American family and its failure to portray the challenges experienced by African American others families. This may create a sense of false hope for many (Innis and Feagin, 1995, p. 698).

How the media portray various groups is of particular importance in the socialization process because of the influence on social reality. Young people become a larger segment of the viewing audience as the family structure continues to change. Media portrayals become increasingly important because the vast numbers of viewers rely heavily on what we see and hear on television.

Much of the research material (Ford, 1997; Fujioka, 2005; Innis and Feagin, 1995; Merrit and Stroman, 1993; Oliver, 1994; Stevenson, 1995) used for this study involves African American media portrayals. As our population becomes increasingly more diverse, with Hispanic Americans and at 42.7 million and 39.7 million respectively, Asian Americans at 14.4 million, 2.5 million Native Americans and 1.25 million Arab Americans (Drewniany & Jewler, 2008), it is as important to examine these groups it is as important to examine these groups. A recent study by Oliver (1994) examined the types of crimes by gender as well as by ethnic representation.

This research examines the portrayals of distinct groups that are represented in reality-based police programs and police crime dramas. It also reviews the ethnic representation of each of the distinct groups and the levels of aggressive behavior exhibited in these television programs. The primary objective of this study is to examine

the level of aggressive behavior of minority suspects and authority figures in reality-

based police crime shows compared to those portrayed on police crime dramas. For the

purposes of this study aggressive behavior is defined as verbal, threat of physical harm,

unarmed physical aggression, armed physical aggression. Minority suspects identified are

those individuals of African American, Hispanic or Asian ethnicity (suspects are

normally clearly identified). Authority figures are law enforcement officers and others

actively involved the apprehension and arrest of suspects. In the course of repeated

viewing of the increasingly popular "reality-based" police shows over recent years, the

viewers have been conditioned to believe that the perpetrators engage in more aggressive

(violent) behavior than that of the authority figures. Viewer perception is a crucial

element of media influence, determining what is actually being depicted in these crime

dramas is also important.

Specifically, this study test the following hypotheses:

H1:   Caucasian characters will be a proportionally larger group of the authority figures
        than criminal suspects.

H2:   African American and Hispanic characters will be a proportionally larger group of
        the criminal suspects than other groups identified.

H3:   Criminal suspects will more frequently engage in aggressive behavior than
        authority figures.

Method

The sample consists of two programs recorded for analysis in this study: COPS and Law and Order. Fifty programs of each were recorded representing 100 hours of programming time (including commercials) over a two week period. The programs identified were selected primarily because of the longevity of their television broadcasting. Both programs are aired on multiple major network and cable channels; COPS is aired on Fox, CW, TruTV and G4, and Law and Order is aired on NBC, CW, TNT, USA and Bravo. The frequency of the program broadcast scheduled satisfied the criteria for the aforementioned sample and timeframe.

The unit of analysis was the program character depicted as either a police officer (or other law enforcement official) or a criminal suspect. Those officers directly engaged with the suspects were coded, and any individuals who are not law enforcement officials but involved with assisting in the apprehension of the suspect (i.e. decoys, informants) were coded as an authority figure. However, individuals affiliated with the criminal suspects, but not being questioned or under suspicion, were not coded.

The race (Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, other) and character role (law enforcement officer or criminal suspect) were also coded. Each character portrayed was identified by racial ethnicity. As indicated in the Census 2000 and the American Community Survey (ACS): People who identify with the terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" are those who classify themselves in one of the specific Hispanic or Latino categories listed on the Census 2000 or ACS questionnaire – "Mexican," "Puerto Rican," or "Cuban." It also includes people who indicate that they are "other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino." These terms are synonymous. Origin can be considered as the heritage,

nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. People who identify their origin as "Spanish," "Hispanic," or "Latino" may be of any race. Hispanics are asked to indicate their origin in the question on Hispanic origin, not in the question on race, because in the federal statistical system ethnic origin is considered to be a separate concept from race. (http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/racefactcb.html)

The ethnic category of "Other/Unknown" was designated for those characters without race or ethnicity definable. The total number (n) for each and percentage (%) of total depicted in each category was documented. See Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Table 1.1: Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Police Program

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	185	37	914	76
African American	124	25	109	9
Hispanic	174	35	117	10
Asian	2	0.4	3	0.3
Unknown	16	3	55	5
	501	29.5	1198	70.5

Table 1.2: Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Fictional Crime Drama

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	76	61	1,345	44
African American	25	20	375	12
Hispanic	10	8	61	2
Asian	3	2	4	0.1
Unknown	10	8	1,273	42
	124	4	3,058	96

The design for this study was 2 (Criminal Suspect vs. Authority Figure) x 2 (Aggressive Behavior Enacted vs. Aggressive Behavior Received) of individuals characterized and behaviors depicted. This study involved the examination of several character and behavioral attributes: character role depicted, type of aggressive behavior portrayed by each character role, character type (aggressor or victim), and comparison racial ethnicity of characters depicted. See Tables 1.1 thru 6.2.

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Table 2.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Reality-Based Program

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Displayed (total)	171	31.6	369	68.3
Verbal Aggression	69	40	48	13
Threat of Physical Aggression	3	2	2	0.5
Unarmed Physical Aggression	93	54	230	62
Armed Physical Aggression	6	4	89	24

Table 2.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Fictional Crime Drama

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Enacted (total)	109	38	176	62
Verbal Aggression	56	51	34	19
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	7	10	6
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	35	94	53
Armed Physical Aggression	7	6	38	22

Table 3.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
(total)	79	41	85	44	20	10.4	1	0.5	8	4
Verbal Aggression	39	49	25	29	5	25	0	0	2	25
Threat of Physical Aggression	2	3	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	48	58	68	14	70	1	100	6	75
Armed Physical Aggression	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)	80	66	24	20	6	5	1	0.8	10	8
Verbal Aggression	49	61	9	38	1	17	1	100	2	20
Threat of Physical Aggression	4	5	3	13	0	0	0	0	1	10
Unarmed Physical Aggression	24	30	7	29	5	38	0	0	5	50
Armed Physical Aggression	3	4	5	21	0	0	0	0	2	20

Table 4.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Displayed by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors	296	78.1	33	8.7	30	8.7	0	0	17	4.5
Verbal Aggression	46	16	5	15	2	6	0	0	1	6
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	192	65	23	70	21	68	0	0	12	71
Armed Physical Aggression	50	17	5	15	7	21	0	0	4	23

Table 4.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)	170	83	20	10	5	2	0	0	9	4
Verbal Aggression	39	23	3	15	0	0	0	0	1	11
Threat of Physical Aggression	5	3	3	15	1	20	0	0	1	11
Unarmed Physical Aggression	99	58	9	45	4	80	0	0	3	33
Armed Physical Aggression	27	16	5	25	0	0	0	0	4	44

Table 5.1: **Criminal Suspects** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based

Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	85	37.1	99	43.2	34	14.8	0	0	11	4.8
Verbal Aggression	23	27	23	4	12	0	0	2	18	
Threat of Physical Aggression	1	1	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	49	58	58	59	18	53	0	0	7	64
Armed Physical Aggression	12	14	18	18	10	29	0	0	2	18

Table 5.2: **Criminal Suspects** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime

Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected	95	79.2	16	13.3	2	1.6	2	1.6	5	4
Verbal Aggression	32	34	7	44	0	0	0	0	2	40
Threat of Physical Aggression	6	6	2	13	0	0	0	0	1	20
Unarmed Physical Aggression	52	55	5	31	1	50	1	50	2	40
Armed Physical Aggression	5	5	2	13	1	50	1	50	0	0

Table 6.1: **Authority Figures** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	109	78.4	16	11.5	11	7.9	1	0.7	2	1.4
Verbal Aggression	41	38	3	19	4	36	0	0	0	0
Threat of Physical Aggression	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	67	61	12	75	7	64	1	100	2	100
Armed Physical Aggression	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6.2: **Authority Figures** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected	60	98.4	1	1.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal Aggression	39	65	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threat of Physical Aggression	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	17	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armed Physical Aggression	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Four types of aggressive behavior were coded: verbal, threat of physical harm, unarmed physical aggression, and armed physical aggression. Aggression is best described and categorized in the study by Mary Beth Oliver (1994), her content analysis outlined used coding schemes developed in Greenberg's analyses (1980).

Verbal aggression is defined as messages containing "criticism, insults, cursing, or a negative affective reaction." (Greenberg, 1980, p. 108). Threats of physical aggression were defined as overt verbal and nonverbal "warnings of intentions" to cause physical harm to a person. (Greenberg, 1980, p. 108). Unarmed physical aggression involves contact with any body part but that does not involve weapons or other objects (e.g., biting, kicking, shoving, pushing, etc.). Armed physical aggression was defined as "an act of physical aggression used by one person against another with the assistance of a weapon or object. (Greenberg, 1980, p. 108).

Data on character behavior portrayed was identified by incident as viewed in the sample. The first category was for aggressive behavior enacted (aggressive actions exhibited by each character) and then by aggressive behavior received (aggressive treatment subjected to each character). Character behavior documented was that of aggressive behavior enacted and aggressive behavior received—the total number (n) of incidents for each category and the percentage (%) of the total that each category represents. See Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Table 2.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Reality-Based Program

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Displayed (total)	171	31.6	369	68.3
Verbal Aggression	69	40	48	13
Threat of Physical Aggression	3	2	2	0.5
Unarmed Physical Aggression	93	54	230	62
Armed Physical Aggression	6	4	89	24

Table 2.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Fictional Crime Drama

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Enacted (total)	109	38	176	62
Verbal Aggression	56	51	34	19
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	7	10	6
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	35	94	53
Armed Physical Aggression	7	6	38	22

Characters depicted as criminal suspects enacting aggressive behaviors were

identified according to racial ethnicity (White, African American, Hispanic, Asian,

Other) by the number (n) and the percentage (%) of the total of each ethnic group

represented according to the specific type of behavior depicted (verbal aggression, threat

of physical aggression, unarmed physical aggression, armed physical aggression). See

Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 3.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in

Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed (total)	79	41	85	44	20	10.4	1	0.5	8	4
Verbal Aggression	39	49	25	29	5	25	0	0	2	25
Threat of Physical Aggression	2	3	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	48	58	68	14	70	1	100	6	75
Armed Physical Aggression	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)	80	66	24	20	6	5	1	0.8	10	8
Verbal Aggression	49	61	9	38	1	17	1	100	2	20
Threat of Physical Aggression	4	5	3	13	0	0	0	0	1	10
Unarmed Physical Aggression	24	30	7	29	5	38	0	0	5	50
Armed Physical Aggression	3	4	5	21	0	0	0	0	2	20

Characters depicted as authority figures (law enforcement officers) enacting aggressive behaviors were identified by racial ethnicity using the number (n) and the percentage (%) of the total of each ethnic group represented via specific type of behavior depicted (verbal aggression, threat of physical aggression, unarmed physical aggression, armed physical aggression). See Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Displayed by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors	296	78.1	33	8.7	30	8.7	0	0	17	4.5
Verbal Aggression	46	16	5	15	2	6	0	0	1	6
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	192	65	23	70	21	68	0	0	12	71
Armed Physical Aggression	50	17	5	15	7	21	0	0	4	23

Table 4.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)	170	83	20	10	5	2	0	0	9	4
Verbal Aggression	39	23	3	15	0	0	0	0	1	11
Threat of Physical Aggression	5	3	3	15	1	20	0	0	1	11
Unarmed Physical Aggression	99	58	9	45	4	80	0	0	3	33
Armed Physical Aggression	27	16	5	25	0	0	0	0	4	44

Characters depicted as criminal suspects who were subjected to (or the victim of) aggressive behaviors were identified according to racial ethnicity (White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Other) by the number (n) and the percentage (%) of the total of each ethnic group represented and by specific type of behavior to which the character has been subjected (verbal aggression, threat of physical aggression, unarmed physical aggression, armed physical aggression). See Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1: **Criminal Suspects** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	85	37.1	99	43.2	34	14.8	0	0	11	4.8
Verbal Aggression	23	27	23	4	12	0	0	2	18	
Threat of Physical Aggression	1	1	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	49	58	58	59	18	53	0	0	7	64
Armed Physical Aggression	12	14	18	18	10	29	0	0	2	18

Table 5.2: **Criminal Suspects** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime

Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected	95	79.2	16	13.3	2	1.6	2	1.6	5	4
Verbal Aggression	32	34	7	44	0	0	0	0	2	40
Threat of Physical Aggression	6	6	2	13	0	0	0	0	1	20
Unarmed Physical Aggression	52	55	5	31	1	50	1	50	2	40
Armed Physical Aggression	5	5	2	13	1	50	1	50	0	0

Characters depicted as authority figures (law enforcement officers) who were

subjected to (or the victim of) aggressive behaviors were identified according to racial

ethnicity by the number (n) and the percentage (%) of the total of each ethnic group

represented via the specific type of behavior to which they were subjected (verbal

aggression, threat of physical aggression, unarmed physical aggression, armed physical

aggression). See Tables 6.1 and 6.2.

Table 6.1: **Authority Figures** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	109	78.4	16	11.5	11	7.9	1	0.7	2	1.4
Verbal Aggression	41	38	3	19	4	36	0	0	0	0
Threat of Physical Aggression	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	67	61	12	75	7	64	1	100	2	100
Armed Physical Aggression	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6.2: **Authority Figures** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected	60	98.4	1	1.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal Aggression	39	65	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threat of Physical Aggression	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	17	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armed Physical Aggression	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

This procedure was conducted twice to compare the data collected: first, to examine recorded segments of COPS representing reality-based televised programming, second, to examine recorded segments of Law and Order representing fictional police crime drama.

Results

Variables are measured in this study. Two variables are primarily defined by (a) roles depicted (criminal suspect and authority figure), (b) types of aggressive behavior displayed, (c) ethnicity of those characterized by types of aggression displayed and (d) the ethnicity of those subjected to aggressive behaviors.

The comparative measures of the presence of authority figures by ethnicity in the recorded episodes of COPS and recorded episodes of Law & Order, Criminal Intent were compiled. The results revealed a greater authority presence in the fictional crime drama, with the total authority figures having a total of 3,058 (96%) compared to that of the reality-based police program with the authority figures representing a total of 1,198 (70.5%). Criminal suspects were proportionally higher in COPS with the criminal suspects counted at 501 (29.5%) when compared to that of Law and Order having 124 (4%). See Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

Table 1.1: Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Police Program

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	185	37	914	76
African American	124	25	109	9
Hispanic	174	35	117	10
Asian	2	0.4	3	0.3
Unknown	16	3	55	5
	501	29.5	1198	70.5

Table 1.2: Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Fictional Crime Drama

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	76	61	1345	44
African American	25	20	375	12
Hispanic	10	8	61	2
Asian	3	2	4	0.1
Unknown	10	8	1273	42
	124	4	3058	96

The comparative measures of all characters viewed by ethnicity in the recorded episodes of the reality-based police television show COPS, and recorded episodes of a police crime drama Law & Order, Criminal Intent, were compiled. The results indicate an overall greater authority presence in fictional crime drama for all ethnic groups identified as well as those in the unknown category. The African American and Hispanic characters viewed in COPS were exceptions with a higher number of criminal suspects compared to that of authority figures. See Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Police Program

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	185	37	914	76
African American	124	25	109	9
Hispanic	174	35	117	10
Asian	2	0.4	3	0.3
Unknown	16	3	55	5
	501	29.5	1198	70.5

In Law and Order, Caucasians characterized represented 95% (1,345) of authority figures and 5% (76) of criminal suspects compared to those viewed in COPS with 83% (914) authority figures and 17% (185) criminal suspects. In the fictional crime drama the African Americans characterized represented 94% (375) of authority figures and 6% (25) criminal suspects. This was compared to those who were viewed in the reality-based police programs with 47% (109) authority figures and 53% (124) criminal suspects. In Law and Order, Hispanics represented 86% (71) of authority figures and 14% (10) criminal suspects compared to those viewed in COPS with 40% (117) of Hispanics being authority figures and 60% (174) criminal suspects.

In fictional crime drama among Asians represented 57% (4) of authority figures and 43% (3) criminal suspects compared to those viewed in the reality-based police programs with 60% (3) authority figures and 40% (2) criminal suspects. In fictional crime drama among characters of unknown ethnicity they represented 99.2% (1273) of authority figures and 0.8% (10) criminal suspects compared to those viewed in reality-based police programs with 77.5% (55) authority figures and 22.5% (16) criminal suspects. See Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Fictional Crime Drama

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	76	61	1345	44
African American	25	20	375	12
Hispanic	10	8	61	2
Asian	3	2	4	0.1
Unknown	10	8	1273	42
	124	4	3058	96

The comparative measures of aggressive behavior displayed by criminal suspects and authority figures indicate more frequent displays of aggression in COPS shows. The total acts of aggression displayed in reality-based police programs (540) outnumber that enacted in fictional crime drama (285). See Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Table 2.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by Character Portrayed in Reality-Based Police Program

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Displayed (total)	171	31.6	369	68.3
Verbal Aggression	69	40	48	13
Threat of Physical Aggression	3	2	2	0.5
Unarmed Physical Aggression	93	54	230	62
Armed Physical Aggression	6	4	89	24

Table 2.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Fictional Crime Drama

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Enacted (total)	109	38	176	62
Verbal Aggression	56	51	34	19
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	7	10	6
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	35	94	53
Armed Physical Aggression	7	6	38	22

Of the types of aggression displayed in COPS shows unarmed physical aggression was most frequently displayed by 93 incidents with criminal suspects which were 54% of the total aggressive acts viewed. There were 230 incidents displayed by authority figures representing 62% of total aggressive acts by authority figures. Verbal aggression accounted for 69 incidents by criminal suspects which was 40% of total aggressive acts displayed by criminal suspects. Forty-eight incidents displayed by authority figures represented 13% of total aggressive acts by authority figures. There were 6 incidents of armed physical aggression displayed by criminal suspects representing 4% of aggressive acts by criminal suspects viewed compared to 89 incidents of armed physical aggressive acts by authority figures representing 24% of total aggressive acts by authority figures. Three incidents of threat of physical aggression by criminal suspects represented 2% of aggressive acts by criminal suspects, and 2 incidents of threat of physical aggression by authority figures representing 0.5% of total aggressive acts by authority figures. See Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by Character Portrayed in Reality-Based Police Program

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Displayed (total)	171	31.6	369	68.3
Verbal Aggression	69	40	48	13
Threat of Physical Aggression	3	2	2	0.5
Unarmed Physical Aggression	93	54	230	62
Armed Physical Aggression	6	4	89	24

The comparative measures of aggressive behavior enacted by criminal suspects and authority figures indicate in total more frequent displays of unarmed physical aggression. The frequency in types of aggression displayed differs for criminal suspects to authority figures in fictional crime drama. There were 285 acts of aggression displayed in fictional crime drama segments viewed. Verbal aggression is the most frequently enacted type viewed among criminal suspects in fictional crime drama with 56 acts of verbal aggression enacted representing 51% of total acts of aggression by criminal suspects. Next was unarmed physical aggression with 38 incidents viewed by criminal suspects representing 35%, and then 8 (7%) acts of threats of physical aggression. Finally, 7 incidents of armed aggression (6%) viewed by criminal suspects in fictional crime drama. Unarmed physical aggression was most frequently enacted by authority figures in Law and Order with 94 incidents viewed representing 53% of total acts viewed by authority figures. Next was armed physical aggression representing 22%, verbal aggression with 34 incidents representing 19% and lastly 10 incidents of threats of

physical aggression by authority figures with 6% of the total acts of aggression by authority figures in Law and Order.

The most frequent type of aggression displayed and enacted is that of unarmed physical aggression. Of the total acts of unarmed physical aggression displayed and enacted, the greater frequency viewed was in reality-based police programs with 323 acts of unarmed physical aggression. The higher number of unarmed physical aggression viewed were by authority figures having 230 incidents representing 71% of all unarmed physical acts of aggression and 93 incidents representing 29% by criminal suspects. See Table 2. Law and Order displayed a total of 132 acts of unarmed physical aggression with the higher number of unarmed physical aggression being enacted by authority figures having 94 incidents representing 71% and 38 incidents by criminal suspects representing 29%. See Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Fictional Crime Drama

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Enacted (total)	109	38	176	62
Verbal Aggression	56	51	34	19
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	7	10	6
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	35	94	53
Armed Physical Aggression	7	6	38	22

Of the types of aggression displayed in Law and Order, unarmed physical aggression was most frequently enacted with 132 incidents of aggressive behavior representing 46% of total aggressive acts enacted by all characters viewed. The total aggressive acts enacted had 38 incidents displayed by criminal suspects which accounted

for 35% of the total aggressive acts by criminal suspects viewed and 94 incidents displayed by authority figures. Fifty-three percent of total aggressive acts by authority figures were followed by verbal aggression in 56 incidents by criminal suspects who were 51% of total aggressive acts enacted by criminal suspects and 34 incidents enacted by authority figures representing 19% of total aggressive acts by authority figures. Next were 7 incidents of armed physical aggression displayed by criminal suspects representing 6% of aggressive acts by criminal suspects viewed compared to 38 incidents of armed physical aggressive acts by authority figures representing 22% of total aggressive acts by authority figures and 8 incidents of threat of physical aggression by criminal suspects representing 7% of aggressive acts by criminal suspects. Finally, there were 10 incidents of threat of physical aggression by authority figures representing 6% of total aggressive acts by authority figures were least frequently displayed by those characterized as authority figures. See Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Fictional Crime Drama

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Enacted (total)	109	38	176	62
Verbal Aggression	56	51	34	19
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	7	10	6
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	35	94	53
Armed Physical Aggression	7	6	38	22

Combined aggression was displayed in Law and Order episodes were compiled for comparison. Of the total aggressive acts enacted, 171 incidents were displayed by criminal suspects which were 31.6% of the total aggressive acts by criminal suspects

viewed. Three hundred sixty-nine incidents displayed by authority figures represented 68.3% of total aggressive acts by authority figures. Of the types of aggression displayed in COPS, unarmed physical aggression was most frequently enacted with 323 incidents of aggressive behavior representing 60% of total aggressive acts by all characters viewed. Following unarmed physical aggression was verbal aggression viewed with 117 incidents combined representing 22% of aggressive acts viewed, and then 69 incidents by criminal suspects 40% of total aggressive acts enacted by criminal suspects and 48 incidents enacted by authority figures representing 13% of total aggressive acts by authority figures. Finally, 95 incidents of armed physical aggression or 17.6% were viewed of all incidents of aggression viewed in reality-based police programs.

There were 6 incidents of armed aggression displayed by criminal suspects representing 4% of aggressive acts by criminal suspects viewed compared to 89 incidents of armed physical aggressive acts by authority figures representing 24% of total aggressive acts by authority figures. Three incidents of threat of physical aggression by criminal suspects representing 2% of aggressive acts by criminal suspects viewed and 2 incidents of threat of physical aggression by authority figures representing 0.5% of total aggressive acts by authority figures were least frequently displayed by those characterized as authority figures. See Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Reality-Based Program

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Displayed (total)	171	31.6	369	68.3
Verbal Aggression	69	40	48	13
Threat of Physical Aggression	3	2	2	0.5
Unarmed Physical Aggression	93	54	230	62
Armed Physical Aggression	6	4	89	24

Results were mixed when categorized by race/ethnicity among criminal suspects. Among the criminal suspects, racial ethnic characters displayed more incidents of aggression in reality-based police programs with 79 incidents of aggression by Caucasian criminal suspects compared to 114 incidents by criminal suspects of other ethnic groups. African American criminal suspects displayed 85 incidents representing 44% of all acts of aggression. Criminal suspects of racial ethnic groups viewed in Law and Order displayed less incidents of aggression with 41 incidents combined representing 34% when compared to Caucasian criminal suspects with 80 incidents viewed representing 66% of aggressive incidents displayed by criminal suspects. See Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 3.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
(total)	79	41	85	44	20	10.4	1	0.5	8	4
Verbal Aggression	39	49	25	29	5	25	0	0	2	25
Threat of Physical Aggression	2	3	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	48	58	68	14	70	1	100	6	75
Armed Physical Aggression	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)	80	66	24	20	6	5	1	0.8	10	8
Verbal Aggression	49	61	9	38	1	17	1	100	2	20
Threat of Physical Aggression	4	5	3	13	0	0	0	0	1	10
Unarmed Physical Aggression	24	30	7	29	5	38	0	0	5	50
Armed Physical Aggression	3	4	5	21	0	0	0	0	2	20

The results among authority figures by race/ethnicity viewed indicate a higher number of incidents of aggression by Caucasian authority figures in COPS episodes. Here the total acts of aggression by Caucasian authority figures viewed were 296 incidents representing 79% of total incidents viewed compared to 35 incidents by all authority figures of racial/ethnic groups combined representing 9.5%. Seventeen incidents of aggression were viewed by authority figures of other/unknown ethnicity

representing 4.5% of aggressive incidents viewed by authority figures in reality-based police programs.

The results of incidents of aggression by Caucasian authority figures in Law and Order episodes indicated 170 incidents of aggression represented 83.3% compared to 25 incidents by authority figures of racial ethnic groups viewed representing 12.3% and 9 incidents by other/unknown groups viewed representing 4.4%. Incidents of aggression by African American authority figures were the highest among racial ethnic groups viewed with 20 incidents of aggression representing 9.8% of combined incidents of aggression by authority figures. See Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Displayed by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors	296	78.1	33	8.7	30	8.7	0	0	17	4.5
Verbal Aggression	46	16	5	15	2	6	0	0	1	6
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	192	65	23	70	21	68	0	0	12	71
Armed Physical Aggression	50	17	5	15	7	21	0	0	4	23

Table 4.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)	170	83	20	10	5	2	0	0	9	4
Verbal Aggression	39	23	3	15	0	0	0	0	1	11
Threat of Physical Aggression	5	3	3	15	1	20	0	0	1	11
Unarmed Physical Aggression	99	58	9	45	4	80	0	0	3	33
Armed Physical Aggression										

The results among criminal suspects subjected to aggressive behaviors revealed that criminal suspects viewed in reality-based police programs are more frequently subjected to aggressive behavior (229 incidents) compared to 120 incidents in fictional crime drama where criminal suspects are the subjects of aggressive behavior. Results were mixed among criminal suspects by race/ethnicity subjected to aggressive behaviors. The criminal suspects subjected to aggressive behaviors in COPS program, African American criminal suspects were more frequently subjected to aggressive behaviors with 99 incidents viewed representing 43.2%. Criminal suspects subjected to aggressive behaviors in Law and Order programs had 95 incidents of Caucasian criminal suspects representing 79.2% with criminal suspects subjected to aggressive behavior. See Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1: Criminal Suspects within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	85	37.1	99	43.2	34	14.8	0	0	11	4.8
Verbal Aggression	23	27	23	4	12	0	0	2	18	
Threat of Physical Aggression	1	1	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	49	58	58	59	18	53	0	0	7	64
Armed Physical Aggression	12	14	18	18	10	29	0	0	2	18

Table 5.2: Criminal Suspects within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected	95	79.2	16	13.3	2	1.6	2	1.6	5	4
Verbal Aggression	32	34	7	44	0	0	0	0	2	40
Threat of Physical Aggression	6	6	2	13	0	0	0	0	1	20
Unarmed Physical Aggression	52	55	5	31	1	50	1	50	2	40
Armed Physical Aggression	5	5	2	13	1	50	1	50	0	0

Authority figures subjected to aggressive behaviors indicate that they were viewed in reality-based police programs as more frequently the subject of aggressive behavior with 139 incidents compared to 61 incidents in fictional crime drama. Caucasian authority figures were more frequently the subject of aggressive behaviors for both COPS and Law and Order programs. See Tables 6.1 and 6.2.

Table 6.1: **Authority Figures** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	109	78.4	16	11.5	11	7.9	1	0.7	2	1.4
Verbal Aggression	41	38	3	19	4	36	0	0	0	0
Threat of Physical Aggression	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	67	61	12	75	7	64	1	100	2	100
Armed Physical Aggression	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6.2: **Authority Figures** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected	60	98.4	1	1.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal Aggression	39	65	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threat of Physical Aggression	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	17	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armed Physical Aggression	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine aggression interacted between authority figures and criminal suspects in reality-based police programs (COPS) compared to that of fictional crime drama (Law and Order Criminal Intent) noting the assumption that authority figures of Caucasian ethnicity would proportionally outnumber authority figures of ethnic minorities. Criminal suspects, particularly those of ethnic minorities, would more frequently exhibit aggressive behavior than would Caucasian criminal suspects. The comparative content analysis of reality-based programs and the police crime drama examined yield mixed findings.

The first hypothesis under investigation was that Caucasian characters will be a proportionally larger group of the authority figures than criminal suspects. This hypothesis was validated by data collected indicating a significantly higher presence of Caucasian authority figures in both COPS and Law and Order programs viewed. This outcome further validates the findings identifying racial representation in the 1994 study by Beth Oliver where the outcome that showed underrepresentation of African Americans and overrepresentation of Caucasians as police officers.

The second hypothesis was that African American and Hispanic characters will be a proportionally larger group of the criminal suspects than other groups identified. The research resulted in a null hypothesis with the data not supporting the premise. The results indicated that Caucasian criminal suspects were a proportionally larger group among criminal suspects in both reality-based police and fictional crime drama programs. This outcome not only results in a null hypothesis but also supports the research by Oliver (1994). Her research indicated that "...police shows and some have suggested that portrayals of crime-related topics in news and police programs may perpetuate negative

perceptions of symbolic racism while promoting a positive image of law enforcement" (Oliver, 1994, p. 181). However, it should also be noted that character representation in the Reality-Based Police Program, among criminal suspects of African American and Hispanic characters as a combined group is in fact larger than Caucasian characters and in which case supports hypothesis two. Oliver further posits that "African American and Hispanic criminal suspects are significantly more likely than Caucasian criminal suspects to suffer from unarmed physical aggression from police officers." (Oliver, 1994, p. 179) However, the results of the current study indicate a higher number of incidents where authority figures are subjected to acts of aggression, and this may be attributed to the larger presence of authority figures overall for both programs examined.

The third hypothesis was that criminal suspects will more frequently engage in aggressive behavior than authority figures. Research resulted in a null hypothesis in this study. Results indicate that authority figures exhibited aggression more frequently in both COPS and Law and Order programs.

Limitations of this study include the researcher's inability to identify an instrument to measure accuracy of race/ethnicity identity of characters by a television viewer. Another category that should be taken into consideration was how to best identify service animals involved, with K-9 officers as well as animals seized in criminal investigations. The language barrier in a few segments of COPS made it difficult to determine whether or not the content of the conversation should be construed a verbal aggression. Still another limitation was difficulty in accurately identifying ethnicity of individuals who were neither African American, Hispanic nor Asian ethnicity. Some individuals depicted in both reality-based police programs and fictional crime drama programs who spoke with a European or Middle-Eastern accent. It was not possible to

identify ethnicity and this information was not explicitly stated in the videotaped segments.

Flight (and any attempts to flee) by criminal suspects and resistance to arrest were counted as incidents of unarmed physical aggression. There is some uncertainty whether or not flight or resistance to arrest without initial physical contact should be categorized as such and for future research be otherwise counted and measured. The rationale for categorizing the flight by criminal suspects as unarmed physical aggression was that the act of resistance elicits certain forced physical contact by the authority figure.

Another study limitation is that each singular act of aggression is not associated with an individual character by ethnicity because there are frequently multiple and concurrent acts of aggression by a single character. These acts of verbal aggression take place during the physical apprehension of a criminal suspect which was more frequently the case in reality-based police programs but were also observed in police crime drama segments. The Law and Order segments viewed had an inordinate number of other/unknown characters viewed because of the number of characters depicted in "cameo" roles during crime scene investigations. These characters viewed were often limited to a shadow of a figure in uniform at a crime scene investigation or at police headquarters.

In the Law and Order programs these characters are counted among authority figures although they are not necessary actively engaged with criminal suspects. In reality-based police programs officers were actively engaged with criminal suspects while a crime or apprehension was in progress. The aforementioned distinctions may be attributed to the programs are different in their approach to criminal activity; COPS focuses on criminal apprehension, while Law and Order focuses on criminal

investigation. The proportionally higher number of authority figures in both the COPS and Law and Order programs does not consider that a single aggressive act (or indication thereof) could elicit aggressive action by a number of authority figures in an effort to uphold public safety and reduce risk of injury.

Still another limitation of this study is that the measure of acts of aggression is limited to what is able to be viewed. There were segments viewed among the reality-based programs recorded where criminal suspects had sustained visible physical injuries outside of the view of the evaluator. These incidents where the criminal suspect was likely the subject of aggressive behavior were not collected due to the unviewable circumstances.

The premise hypothesized in the current research supports the empirical research cited previously (Dixon and Linz, 2000; Dixon, Weaver, Jenson and Hurley, 2005; Ford, 1997; Fujioka, 2005; Gerbner and Gross, 1976) that suggests there is an inherent distrust among television viewers. These viewers are led to "perceive the world as more dangerous than it really is (Gerbner and Gross, April 1976)."

The results from this study indicate a shift in programming as compared to that done by Oliver (1994) because more programs were viewed in the subsequent Violence Profile No. 11 by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1980). This referred to concepts of mainstreaming and resonance, dealing with "outlooks television tends to cultivate" and "salience of these views that lead to amplified cultivation patterns." (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli, Summer 1980, p. 15) This shift in the violent behavior enacted in television programming will require further examination in future research. The current data indicates significantly higher numbers of incidents of aggression among authority figures than criminal suspects in both COPS and Law and

Order programs. It should also be noted that the Violence Profile No. 11 only took into account the overt expression of physical force and does not measure threats, verbal or other gestures, where the current study measures both verbal and physical acts of aggression.

Since the results do not clearly validate the assumptions postulated in two of the three hypotheses stated, this indicates a need for further research to examine what may be attributed to these assumptions. There remains the possibility other attitudes are influenced by television viewing using a cause and effect approach and an examination into the prevalence and salience of these and related views among individuals with similar television viewing patterns.

There is a need for a longitudinal study to compare the level of aggression displayed in television programming to determine the amount of change over time. This research could also measure the effect it has on television viewers over time by demographics such as age, gender and ethnicity. It is further suggested that the sample be broadened to include more than one comparison between the reality-based program and police crime drama, that there be at least two reality-based programs and two police crime dramas in the sample for more extensive comparative analyses. All of these factors point to a strong need for further research on the effects of media violence on television viewers' attitudes and perceptions.

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APPENDICES

Tables 1.1 thru 6.2 with compiled data collected:

Table 1.1: Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Police Program

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	185	37	914	76
African American	124	25	109	9
Hispanic	174	35	117	10
Asian	2	0.4	3	0.3
Unknown	16	3	55	5
	501	29.5	1198	70.5

Table 1.2: Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Fictional Crime Drama

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian	76	61	1,345	44
African American	25	20	375	12
Hispanic	10	8	61	2
Asian	3	2	4	0.1
Unknown	10	8	1,273	42
	124	4	3,058	96

Table 2.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Reality-Based Program

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Displayed (total)	171	31.6	369	68.3
Verbal Aggression	69	40	48	13
Threat of Physical Aggression	3	2	2	0.5
Unarmed Physical Aggression	93	54	230	62
Armed Physical Aggression	6	4	89	24

Table 2.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Fictional Crime Drama

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Enacted (total)	109	38	176	62
Verbal Aggression	56	51	34	19
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	7	10	6
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	35	94	53
Armed Physical Aggression	7	6	38	22

Table 3.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
(total)	79	41	85	44	20	10.4	1	0.5	8	4
Verbal Aggression	39	49	25	29	5	25	0	0	2	25
Threat of Physical Aggression	2	3	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	38	48	58	68	14	70	1	100	6	75
Armed Physical Aggression	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)	80	66	24	20	6	5	1	0.8	10	8
Verbal Aggression	49	61	9	38	1	17	1	100	2	20
Threat of Physical Aggression	4	5	3	13	0	0	0	0	1	10
Unarmed Physical Aggression	24	30	7	29	5	38	0	0	5	50
Armed Physical Aggression	3	4	5	21	0	0	0	0	2	20

Table 4.1: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Displayed by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors	296	78.1	33	8.7	30	8.7	0	0	17	4.5
Verbal Aggression	46	16	5	15	2	6	0	0	1	6
Threat of Physical Aggression	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	192	65	23	70	21	68	0	0	12	71
Armed Physical Aggression	50	17	5	15	7	21	0	0	4	23

Table 4.2: Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)	170	83	20	10	5	2	0	0	9	4
Verbal Aggression	39	23	3	15	0	0	0	0	1	11
Threat of Physical Aggression	5	3	3	15	1	20	0	0	1	11
Unarmed Physical Aggression	99	58	9	45	4	80	0	0	3	33
Armed Physical Aggression	27	16	5	25	0	0	0	0	4	44

Table 5.1: **Criminal Suspects** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based

Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	85	37.1	99	43.2	34	14.8	0	0	11	4.8
Verbal Aggression	23	27	23	4	12	0	0	2	18	
Threat of Physical Aggression	1	1	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	49	58	58	59	18	53	0	0	7	64
Armed Physical Aggression	12	14	18	18	10	29	0	0	2	18

Table 5.2: **Criminal Suspects** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime
Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected	95	79.2	16	13.3	2	1.6	2	1.6	5	4
Verbal Aggression	32	34	7	44	0	0	0	0	2	40
Threat of Physical Aggression	6	6	2	13	0	0	0	0	1	20
Unarmed Physical Aggression	52	55	5	31	1	50	1	50	2	40
Armed Physical Aggression	5	5	2	13	1	50	1	50	0	0

Table 6.1: **Authority Figures** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based

Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	109	78.4	16	11.5	11	7.9	1	0.7	2	1.4
Verbal Aggression	41	38	3	19	4	36	0	0	0	0
Threat of Physical Aggression	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	67	61	12	75	7	64	1	100	2	100
Armed Physical Aggression	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6.2: **Authority Figures** within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime

Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected	60	98.4	1	1.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Verbal Aggression	39	65	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threat of Physical Aggression	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unarmed Physical Aggression	17	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armed Physical Aggression	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Blank Tables Used as Score Sheets for Raw Data Collection:

Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Police Program

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian				
African American				
Hispanic				
Asian				
Unknown				

Character Portrayal by Race/Ethnicity in Fictional Crime Drama

Race/Ethnicity	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	N	%	N	%
Caucasian				
African American				
Hispanic				
Asian				
Unknown				

Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Reality-Based Program

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Displayed (total)				
Verbal Aggression				
Threat of Physical Aggression				
Unarmed Physical Aggression				
Armed Physical Aggression				

Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed by **Character Portrayed** in Fictional Crime Drama

	Criminal Suspect		Authority Figure	
	n	%	n	%
Aggressive Behavior Enacted (total)				
Verbal Aggression				
Threat of Physical Aggression				
Unarmed Physical Aggression				
Armed Physical Aggression				

Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

Aggressive Behaviors Displayed	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
(total)										
Verbal Aggression										
Threat of Physical Aggression										
Unarmed Physical Aggression										
Armed Physical Aggression										

Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Criminal Suspects** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)										
Verbal Aggression										
Threat of Physical Aggression										
Unarmed Physical Aggression										
Armed Physical Aggression										

Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Displayed by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors										
Verbal Aggression										
Threat of Physical Aggression										
Unarmed Physical Aggression										
Armed Physical Aggression										

Types of Aggressive Behavior Portrayed Enacted by **Authority Figures** by Race/Ethnicity in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Enacted (total)										
Verbal Aggression										
Threat of Physical Aggression										
Unarmed Physical Aggression										
Armed Physical Aggression										

Criminal Suspects within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed										
Verbal Aggression										
Threat of Physical Aggression										
Unarmed Physical Aggression										
Armed Physical Aggression										

Criminal Suspects within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected										
Verbal Aggression										
Threat of Physical Aggression										
Unarmed Physical Aggression										
Armed Physical Aggression										

Authority Figures within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Reality-Based Program

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Displayed										
Verbal Aggression										
Threat of Physical Aggression										
Unarmed Physical Aggression										
Armed Physical Aggression										

Authority Figures within Racial Groups Subjected to Aggressive Behaviors in Police Crime Drama

	White		African American		Hispanic		Asian		Other	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Aggressive Behaviors Subjected										
Verbal Aggression										
Threat of Physical Aggression										
Unarmed Physical Aggression										
Armed Physical Aggression										