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# Learning About Crime: Conceptions of Crime and Law Enforcement as They Relate to Use of Television and Other Information Sources

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# Learning About Crime: Conceptions of Crime and Law Enforcement as They Relate to Use of Television and Other Information Sources

## **Abstract**

From the introduction:

The possibility that television might influence our view of the world--that is, may teach values, expectations, and even norms of behavior-- has inspired a variety of attempts to identify and measure the consequences of exposure. TV's programming emphasis in recent years on the dramatization of crime control (a subject already salient in the real world) makes crime and law enforcement an especially important area in which to look for potential effects of television. At the same time, the fact that other relevant information sources may be capable of generating the same biases and misconceptions, renders inconclusive any simple statistical link between particular responses and exposure to television.

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LEARNING ABOUT CRIME: CONCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AS  
THEY RELATE TO USE OF TELEVISION AND OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES

Susan Schwartz McDonald


A DISSERTATION

in

Communications

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy.

1977

  
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Supervisor of Dissertation

  
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Graduate Group Chairman

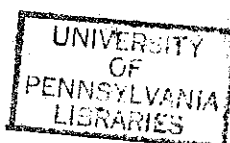
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The possibility that television might influence our view of the world--that is, may teach values, expectations, and even norms of behavior--has inspired a variety of attempts to identify and measure the consequences of exposure. TV's programming emphasis in recent years on the dramatization of crime control (a subject already salient in the real world) makes crime and law enforcement an especially important area in which to look for potential effects of television. At the same time, the fact that other relevant information sources may be capable of generating the same biases and misconceptions, renders inconclusive any simple statistical link between particular responses and exposure to television.

The object of this study was to explore, through intensive interviews with a quota sample of 40 white adults, the way in which TV and other information sources (including direct experience), might shape respondents' impressions of crime and law enforcement. The study treats TV not as the only potential fictional source of influence, but as the prime exemplar of such sources. It was hoped that a closer examination of the ways people account for or explain their ideas and perceptions, coupled with an in-depth look at how respondents regard TV--its authenticity and its influence--would help illuminate links between variables like media use, personal experience, and conceptions of crime.

An attempt to examine the nature of TV influence naturally presupposes some understanding of the way the fictional world portrayed on TV actually deviates from "reality." Content analysis undertaken by

Gerbner and others suggests that the world of television drama is one in which heroes are young, unmarried men of action living by wits and virility, where women are archtypal victims, intellectuals are weak and ineffectual, and nearly everyone is comfortably middleclass. It is an environment of violence and victimization, where virtually all crimes are solved; where the entrepreneurial private eye is often more dogged and efficient than the police; and where circumvention of the law is appropriate, often essential, to the pursuit of justice. In effect, social reality as portrayed on TV is modified to accommodate dramatic conventions relevant to the medium and to reflect (and maintain) certain prevailing cultural and institutional values.

While a great deal of effort has been expended in studying the correlates of viewing behavior and the effects of exposure to violent or arousing content, the long-term incremental effects of television viewing--how exposure influences people's worldview--have only recently received attention. Studies of mass media use have examined the motivations and consequences of TV viewing, but they tend to emphasize use of non-fiction content over fictional or dramatic programs. Moreover, in their focus on consequences, they have typically concerned themselves with uses and gratifications, but have paid less attention to the particular content of cultural transmissions and their potential impact on viewer conceptions.

Since 1973, Gerbner and Gross have been engaged in a research effort designed to determine what they have termed "cultivation effects" of TV consumption--that is, long-term socializing influences of the

medium--by relating TV exposure to viewers' expression of certain social conceptions (pertaining to crime, law enforcement, social probabilities and expectations). To-date, findings suggest that both high viewing and lower education levels are associated with a tendency to select "TV-biased" responses to certain items. Though both predictors are independently significant, they still leave much of the response variance unexplained. Other, sometimes correlated, variables such as news exposure and personal experience, as well as various psychological factors, undoubtedly help to shape people's views of society. Indeed, since some may exert influences parallel to television, effects which appear to re-reflect TV enculturation may, in fact, reflect exposure to other sources.

This study begins with the premise that TV viewing and education must be considered along with alternative information sources in any assessment of cultivation effects, and that respondents may themselves contribute directly to such an investigation by describing how they seek and secure information about crime and law enforcement, the grounds on which they believe they have based their ideas and beliefs concerning crime and law enforcement, and what they think is television's influence on their views and the views of others. To this end, intensive interviews were conducted with a sample of 40 white adults (20 couples) and their responses subjected to systematic, qualitative analysis.

## CHAPTER II      LITERATURE SEARCH AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

The theme of mass communications research in its early years was concern about the potentially powerful persuasive or manipulative impact of mass media on American society. Although attempts to identify the consequences of media use, particularly TV exposure, remain the focus of mass communications research to this day, more recent studies have been guided by the recognition that audiences are far less vulnerable to indoctrination--or, for that matter, simple attitude change--than most researchers had initially supposed, and that a variety of intervening factors influence audience response (e.g., Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1948; Merton, 1949).

Using largely correlational techniques, researchers examined the possible associations between viewing and socio-economic factors, cognitive skills, traits, attitudes, leisure time allocation, and interpersonal relationships. "Effects" research has given special emphasis in recent years to the short-term impact of violent content, finding that, on the whole, violence seems to instigate increased aggressive behavior (in children) immediately following exposure. Some functional analysis of TV use has also been attempted, but little attention has been paid to the specific socialization or enculturation effects of prolonged exposure, largely because of methodological impediments.

### Section 1. Socio-economic and Other Correlates of Television Viewing

As a group, studies which examine the concomitants of TV view-

ing and content preferences are designed with the ultimate aim of determining (to paraphrase Lasswell's famous query): "Who watches how much, under what circumstances, and with what consequences?" In practice, consequences of viewing are extremely difficult to identify, and even major precursors of viewing are not easily isolated.

Audience studies typically focus on groups of individuals classified into various psychological or socio-economic categories and then examine their media preferences and behavior; or conversely, having classified viewers in a sample population according to amount of time spent viewing TV, they may attempt to identify other personal or social characteristics which appear to differentiate between various amounts of viewing. In either case, consequences of media use (as opposed to concomitants of various exposure levels) are not readily discerned through correlational techniques.

Moreover, attempts to relate specified viewing levels to socio-economic variables have yielded some predictable differences, but the magnitude of these differences has not always been as large as expected. For example, college-educated respondents interviewed in a survey conducted by Gary Steiner (1962) seemed, by their accounts, to watch nearly as much television as everyone else; they simply felt worse about it. Indeed, Steiner found that even cultural and ethnic groups who appeared to differ sharply in their over-all evaluations of television (for example, program quality) differed considerably less in viewing behavior than in outlook. Steiner therefore concluded that not only is the relationship between viewing levels and socio-economic status a fairly

weak one, but also, that there is a marked discrepancy between attitudes toward television and reported viewing behavior.

Some researchers have suggested that personality variables may provide better explanations for the small, otherwise inexplicable differences in amount of television exposure, but there has been more speculation than hard research on the personality characteristics of heavy viewers, and most of the work done to-date is contradictory or doubtful (due, in large part, to the methodological problems associated with use of personality measures) (e.g., Glick and Levy, 1962; Weibe, 1969).

As yet, personality traits cannot be said to account for much, if any, variance in TV viewing, and even major socio-economic variables do not predict reported viewing time as well as might have been expected. On the other hand, factors like education may actually have more of an impact on how viewers handle the information they receive via television (and hence, their susceptibility to influence) than on how much time they actually devote to the medium.

## Section 2. The Uses of Television

There is a substantial literature dealing with the social and psychological functions of media use and use of specific types of media content (e.g., information-seeking or prestige, etc.) but the subject of empirical functional analysis has generally been non-fiction content (such as news) rather than fiction and drama (e.g., Berelson, 1949; Lasswell, 1949; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Robinson, 1971). Further-

more, such studies have not attempted to identify specific social "lessons" which may be derived from or associated with exposure to certain types of media content.

Early attempts to determine the uses and gratifications of exposure to mass media fiction date back to the era of radio. In one such study, Herzog (1944) identified emotional release and "school-of-life" instruction as two of the most important functions radio serials served for a group of women in Iowa. (Listeners claimed, for example, that the program in question helped them to "deal better with the problems of everyday life").

Warner and Henry (1948) reported several years later that the radio serial, "Big Sister" gave respondents an increased "sense of security" by providing "moral beliefs, values, and techniques for solving emotional and interpersonal problems." They also suggested that the major social function of the drama was to "strengthen and stabilize the basic social structure of our society, the family." (p. 64)

Consideration has been given to psychological functions served by TV drama--for example, relaxation, vicarious interaction, and escape--but much of what has been written on this subject is essentially speculative. In recent surveys, where questions asking why viewers watch television were included, the reasons most frequently cited were entertainment and relaxation. Only 34% of one major sample, for example, reported that they usually watch television "to learn something," whereas 81% usually watch "to see a specific program" they enjoy, and another 41% watch because "it's a pleasant way to spend the evening" (Bower,

1970).

Robinson's more rigorous attempt to identify the functions, rather than simply the motives, of TV viewing (1972) takes account of the instructional potential of television, but like most other studies, emphasizes the dissemination of information over the learning-about-life or socialization function.

The shift in respondent emphasis from the school-of-life functions which early radio listeners stressed, to sheer recreation, may be an artifact of methodological differences, or it may reflect the tremendous media inundation of the past several decades, and an accompanying public cynicism about television content. It is, in any case, important to remember that self-reported reasons for viewing television do not necessarily represent viewing functions or consequences in any formal sense, and that, indeed, avowed emphasis on entertainment value over learning functions certainly does not preclude subtle socializing effects. Respondents may watch TV drama for the express purpose of being entertained, and at the same time, tacitly internalize TV norms, probabilities and procedures. To the extent that this is true, subtle enculturation may occur, even where the viewer finds the material perceptibly exaggerated, but an illusion of "realism" can conceivably strengthen TV's potential capacity to instruct and socialize. Thus, viewer appraisals of what seems "real" about television (and why or how) are much to the point in any study of viewing consequences.

Viewer assessments of TV realism have, nevertheless, received little attention in prior studies. Children's tendency to regard or report

TV as real appeared to be inversely correlated with age and intelligence and directly correlated with viewing in a study by Greenberg and Reeves (1975), but there is currently no comparable data available for adults. Closer questioning of viewers about their assessments of TV realism and the medium's perceived instructional (school-of-life) value may well yield differences which predict or reflect variations in the way viewers make use of what they see on television: in effect, how, and how much, they learn from the medium.

### Section 3. Content and 'Cultivation'

It was noted earlier that the realization that mass media do not generally precipitate dramatic, overt changes in attitudes or behavior prompted a shift away from measurement of simple attitude change toward an emphasis on the social and psychological variables which predict and mediate viewing experience. In fact, Halloran was prompted to argue in 1970 that our heavy emphasis on intervening factors and our disregard for the content of the medium itself was perhaps a swing too far in the opposite direction. TV, he observes, may "provide models for identification, confer status on people and behavior, spell out norms, define new situations, and indicate levels of acceptability, tolerance and approval." He concluded that "influence must not be equated with attitude change." (p. 19)

Schramm has similarly cautioned students of effects research to bear in mind that the mass media, while tending to reinforce the status quo (or changes precipitated by other social forces) rather than to

originate or impel change, are still "our primary link" with much of the environment and must thus exert an important impact on social behavior (1971).

Gerbner and Gross emphasize that television in particular is an encompassing, pervasive technology, uniquely capable of standardizing and disseminating images because it is (ostensibly) free, does not require literacy, and has captivated a viewing audience of unprecedented size. They note, moreover, that its

...time, space and motion--even its accidents'--follow laws of dramatic convention and social utility. Its people are not born but are created to depict social types, causes, powers and fates. The economics of the assembly line and the requirement of wide acceptability assure general adherence to common notions of justice and fair play, clear-cut characterizations, tested plot lines, and proven formulas for resolving all issues.

Representation in the fictional world symbolizes social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation. (p. 182)

Gerbner's systematic analysis of TV violence and other key themes of television fiction over a period of years documents consistent distortions of "reality" in TV content, including an over-representation of violence and victimization rates (particularly of women by men); an over-portrayal of police and private investigators; unrealistic emphasis on personal risk; the inevitability of just and happy resolution and an under-representation of employed women, foreigners, and married heroes.

A TV content analysis by Joseph Dominick (1971), which focused ex-

clusively on crime, identified many of the same patterns of violence, and found that more than half of all TV shows aired during the measurement period portrayed at least one crime. Data assembled by both Gerbner and Dominick pose a profile of the typical TV villain as a white, middle-class entrepreneurial criminal, often personally unknown to his victims and perpetrating most of his criminal acts indoors. He is usually apprehended and brought to justice, but only as a result of complex police or private detection. More recent systematic examination of TV crime programs finds that on TV, police regularly violate suspects' constitutional rights in such a flagrant fashion as would, in real life, jeopardize both the criminal convictions at stake and the jobs of the policemen involved (Arons and Katsch, 1977).

That general portrait is, in all its features, a poor likeness of current social realities, but it is part of a "system" of messages which Gerbner and Gross believe shape many of our perceptions, values, and expectations through prolonged exposure to TV, and which can sometimes become more "real" and instructive than real life itself.

Content analytic data are therefore the point of departure for their ongoing effort to identify and measure ways in which TV drama and news "cultivate"--that is to say, foster and develop--common conceptions of life and society. These TV-inspired notions and conceptions have been described by Gerbner and Gross as "cultivation effects."

Respondents in a national survey were presented with a series of forced-choice questions pertaining to occupational status, sex roles, crime perpetration and victimization, and social probabilities/expecta-

tions. One of the two answers supplied with each question reflects the characteristic distortion of TV, while the alternative answer errs in the direction of "real world" or census probabilities. Correct answers were not provide to most questions for methodological reasons (the rationale behind forced-choice testing is measurement of the direction of bias) but in many instances, no absolutely or verifiably correct answer was available in any case.

Cross-tabulations of responses to each item by demographic variables and TV exposure classifications indicate a significantly greater over-all tendency for heavy viewers to select responses which reflect the norms and biases of the television portrayals. Another factor which appears to bear an equally strong (inverse) relationship to incidence of TV responses is education, and while education is associated with lower viewing levels in each sample, on most items, viewing-related differences remain when education is held constant, and vice versa, indicating the presence of two relatively independent effects.

It is important to note that TV news is itself associated with "TV effects," which is not surprising when we consider that, like TV drama, TV news tends to over-represent violence and related themes. It may therefore be inferred that "TV-like" biases can be cultivated or reinforced by sources other than TV drama. (Conversely, other sources, including personal experience, may serve as correctives to TV cultivation effects).

This line of reasoning suggests the value of framing the research question in complementary studies to focus more closely on the influ-

ence process itself (through qualitative techniques, for example) and to attempt some examination of how people may learn norms and conventions portrayed on TV, not simply from television, but also from other sources. It would thus be appropriate to question respondents about their appraisals of television itself, including their assessments of its realism and plausibility, and the role they believe it plays in instructing and influencing them. Both lines of questioning may help to chart or delineate the TV cultivation process, whose presence or consequences are suggested by the findings in Gerbner and Gross' research.

#### Section 4. Public Perceptions of Crime and Law Enforcement

A convenient place to begin searching for evidence of cultivation effects is in the public's conceptions of crime and law enforcement, because of the contemporary significance of crime as a social problem, and also, because of its preeminence as a television theme. There is, besides, a relative abundance of "real world" statistical data on crime against which we can measure TV content trends.

Criminology has tended, in the past, to concern itself with statistics on crime as it occurs, rather than with what the general public perceive to be crime incidence and personal risk. This orientation is now changing, however, with the realization that there is a sizeable discrepancy between what occurs and what lay people believe occurs. Henshel and Silverman (1975) argue that:

Criminal statistics as currently employed

thus obscure and deemphasize what a growing number of studies have shown to be of fundamental importance: the 'social reality' of crime, that is, the manifold disparity of perception with the objective reality of crime, and the influence of their perceptions on what the several actors in the drama of crime really do. (p. 2)

Henshel and Silverman point out that while relatively little correct information about crime and criminal justice is available to lay persons, an "overwhelming" amount of misinformation is transmitted to them via the mass media, both through crime news, which deals largely with bizarre and sensational events, and through crime fiction. Consequently, there is a disproportionate concern about violence, say the authors, when, in fact, non-violent crime is far more costly and widespread; there is a fear of strangers which is largely unjustified (the vast majority of homicides are perpetrated by an acquaintance or relative of the victims); and there is an underestimation of the relative seriousness of suicide as a social problem, when it is, in fact, twice as prevalent as homicide.

Various studies have documented the extent to which lay persons are misinformed about many aspects of crime and criminal justice, including penalties for crimes, certainty of apprehension, and provisions of existing laws (e.g., Assembly Committee on Criminal Procedure, California Legislature, 1968; Jenson, 1969). It is also clear, from national opinion polls, that crime has become a more salient issue during the past ten years (McIntyre, 1967). Gallup Poll data from 1965 through 1974, for example, indicate that women are significantly more fearful

of walking alone now than they were a decade earlier, and other compilations of survey data reveal a widespread belief among men as well as women that crime has been on the rise (Adams and Smith, 1975; McIntyre, 1967).

Some attempts to locate predictors of concern or increased concern about crime suggest that college education is associated with slightly less anxiety, and that victimization experience seems to have little or no impact on worry and expectation of future victimization (Fowler and Mangione, 1974). Indeed, the difference between sexes is greater than between victims and non-victims, such that men who have been victims are less concerned than women who have not (Ennis, 1967). Data assembled from several studies suggest that, if anything, vicarious experience may be more influential than direct, although by vicarious is meant the experiences of real individuals rather than events in crime drama. Reported crime-related attitudes, anxieties, and perceptions do not appear to have been analyzed in conjunction with media use data.

One problem associated with studies of this sort stems from the possibilities for semantic confusion when people articulate "anxieties" and "concerns." Indeed, research by Furstenberg (1971) demonstrated that fear of crime (Anxiety about risk of personal victimization) was totally unrelated to concern about crime (emphasis on crime as an abstract social problem) and that fear was highest among people most objectively threatened, whereas greater concern was associated with residents of more secure (higher socio-economic) neighborhoods. Furstenberg observes that "to a very great extent, people take their cues from

their neighborhoods of how afraid to be. Within the neighborhood, the level of fear is fairly homogeneous." (p. 607) He also cites a 1969 Harris Poll which suggests that first-hand knowledge of neighborhood events contributes to anxiety, and points out that fear of crime is highest among people who know recent victims. Furstenberg concludes that inasmuch as fearful behavior is itself an occurrence observed by neighbors and factored into their assessment of personal vulnerability to crime, crime anxieties tend to spiral within a community.

#### Section 5. The Research Problem

The only major attempt to-date to study the cultivation effects of television is an ongoing project by Gerbner and Gross which is measuring the degree of association between amount of viewing and viewer propensity to select responses framed so as to reflect TV biases and distortions. That study does not, however, consider directly the contributing role of personal experience and conversation, nor examine the way respondents seem to (or believe they) arrive at their answers. Thus, it leaves open the question of how competing media and information sources may duplicate or modify perceptions acquired via television.

Another issue which is largely untouched by the current research is the way viewers assess TV realism: that is, their beliefs about how well television reflects life and whether (or how much) it influences them and others. Self-reported perceptions of that sort, while not necessarily accurate or reflective of the extent of cultivation, would

nevertheless identify those aspects of television which seem most real or unreal to viewers, thus suggesting areas in which TV may be particularly successful in creating the illusion of verisimilitude.

Broadening the research in this fashion to deal with certain issues which are not addressed in the Gerbner-Gross undertaking but are germane to the issue of cultivation, seems to necessitate an alternative, or at least supplementary methodology. Cross-tabular analysis gives a grasp of over-all patterns but it was thought in formulating this study that intensive questioning, followed up by qualitative analysis, could provide a more microscopic view of how viewers make use of various competing, sometimes conflicting, information sources, and of factors which militate against--or facilitate--TV enculturation. Moreover, since not all of TV content is amenable to incorporation in forced-choice question format, it was anticipated that direct, open-ended questioning could be used to elicit respondents' views on those other aspects of crime and law enforcement.

Gerbner and Gross' Cultural Indicators project deals with several subject areas--sex roles and life-chances, for example, as well as crime--but the current salience of crime, both as a theme of TV drama and an issue of public concern, makes crime and law enforcement a particularly promising area in which to examine possible cultivation effects.

The study presented in this dissertation was, for that reason, narrowed in focus to crime-related content, but broadened in several other respects to consider: 1) how viewers develop particular concep-

tions of crime and law enforcement procedures via TV and other sources (including experience); and 2) viewers' assessment of both TV realism and TV's potential impact on themselves and others. Since any study of how people learn (or resist) certain lessons from television inevitably raises questions about how people integrate those lessons with information drawn from other sources, the object of this research project was to develop a more detailed view of the way media exposure, personal experience, and use of other information sources may generate specific impressions of crime and law enforcement.

This study is based on a systematic, qualitative analysis of a quota sample of 40 adults. The analysis focuses closely on the links between television use and individual viewer conceptions of crime and law enforcement, and explores in some depth the influence of other media and information sources on respondents' attitudes and impressions.

### Section 1. The Sample

The sample, recruited by the researcher through personal contact, consisted of 40 white adults, married Philadelphians: 20 high school graduates and 20 college graduates (who, in some cases, had attended graduate/professional school as well). Each of these education groupings were further composed of 10 husband-wife pairs. Age was built into the sample in such a way that 20 respondents (half of each education and sex group) were under 32, while another 20 were over 45. All respondents were originally unknown to the researcher. (Table III-1)

The rationale for building age into the sample was to control for possible differences between respondents who were born in the "TV era" (and had therefore been exposed to the medium since early childhood) and those who had been introduced to TV only as adults, after primary socialization had taken place.

Husband-wife pairs were conceived of as a way of making recruiting more efficient and obtaining richer data about the home viewing situation. While corroborative (or conflicting) data were useful on some occasions in the analysis, other husband-wife differences were

TABLE III-1

## LIST OF RESPONDENTS

WIVESHUSBANDS

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES: UNDER 32

Marcie D.	Legal Secretary	Ernie D.	Salesmen
Karen C.	Secretary	John C.	Truckdriver
Sandy K.	Receptionist	Brad K.	Navy boiler mechanic
Maria B.	Housewife	Lou B.	Garment cutter
Pat N.	Housewife	Don N.	Fireman

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES: OVER 45

Rose G.	Housewife	George G.	Machinist
Jean M.	Part-time salesclerk	Ed M.	Port claims adjustor
Fran L.	Clerk	Frank L.	Salesman
Claire F.	Bookkeeper	Jerry F.	Store manager
Kathleen B.	Nurse	Joe B.	Insurance agent

## COLLEGE GRADUATES: UNDER 32

Sharon S.	Occupational therapist	Irv S.	Architect
Jane A.	Psychologist	Bill A.	Physician
Jean V.	Former schoolteacher	Phil V.	Stockbroker
Marg L.	Social Worker	Dan L.	Physician
Barbara S.	Teacher	Mark S.	Computer analyst

## COLLEGE GRADUATES: OVER 45

Nancy O.	Housewife	Sid O.	Sales representative
Celia J.	Real estate manager	Alex J.	Accountant
Isabel W.	Housewife	Manny W.	Store owner
Betty C.	Housewife	Fred C.	Sales representative
Lenore	Commercial artist	Jack M.	Ad Director

not very informative. TV viewing was left free to vary, but the distribution which emerged was sufficiently broad to permit some comparisons across viewing level within education groupings, despite a close association between higher education and lower viewing.

A wide range of occupational categories are present in the group, but because of the subject of the interview, lawyers and police were excluded on the assumption that they might be professionally knowledgeable about at least some of the content, and would naturally have access to specialized information not available to other respondents. All respondents live in Philadelphia so that theoretically, all have had equal access to the same news media and the same crime coverage. They are identified throughout the dissertation by pseudonymous first names and last initial so as to provide some continuity and integration in the analysis.

## Section 2. The Data Collection Instrument

The interview schedule (Appendix C) consisted of questions dealing with four basic areas: 1) general media use; 2) perceptions, beliefs, and anxieties concerning crime and law enforcement; 3) sources of crime-related information, including relevant personal experience and discussion; and 4) viewer assessments of television's realism, uses, and consequences. A four-interview pre-test was conducted and the preliminary instrument was then edited to eliminate wording ambiguities and vague or (apparently) ineffective questions identified in that phase.

Some imprecisions in media exposure measures are inevitable when a study must rely on self-reported behavior, but attempts were made to correct for distortion whenever possible through careful construction of questions. For example, since people may be reluctant to admit that they do not read a daily newspaper, the demand character of that item was reduced by asking respondents instead whether they "usually have time to read the paper thoroughly, or sometimes only have time to skim?" Judging by the high proportion of respondents in both education categories who acknowledged light or irregular reading of a daily paper, it may be assumed that the question was at least partially successful in eliciting candid responses.

General viewing levels were based on respondents' own estimates of the number of hours they spent watching television in a week, but a less reactive measure of crime show viewing levels was introduced to avoid sensitizing participants to the significance of crime shows as a viewing category. Specifically, respondents were given a partial list of programs which included every crime program then broadcast, and asked to check off all the programs which they "usually watched." Only the crime shows were later tallied. (An all-inclusive TV calendar was used in the pre-test phase to measure total viewing level as well, but the procedure was found to be lengthy, and was discarded in the actual survey as an impractical allocation of time).

In addition to open-ended questions concerning media use, direct experience with crime, sources of crime-related information (including

whether the topic was frequently discussed by the respondent), and perceptions of police and other law enforcement personnel, there were a series of forced-choice items dealing specifically with crime and law enforcement. Ten of the 13 were borrowed from Gerbner and Gross, who have used the forced-choice technique in their on-going Cultural Indicators Project to compel respondents to select answers reflecting either the world of television or the "real world" (i.e., statistical probabilities). The forced-choice method is, in general, a useful technique for identifying the direction of people's conceptions (and misconceptions) by requiring that they evince some bias in selecting their responses (Hammond, 1948).

To explore respondents' perceptions of TV as a source of information about the world in general and about crime/law enforcement in particular, respondents were also presented with a series of statements concerning television and TV crime and asked to express agreement or disagreement. Those items were followed up with direct questioning about the perceived authenticity, instructional value, etc. of TV and about how realistic respondents find television drama and crime shows in particular.

All attitudes or opinion questions were followed up with probes about why each respondents felt as she/he did, and from where the impressions had been drawn. While it was not assumed that respondents would necessarily be able to identify the source of their beliefs, it was anticipated that explanations elicited by regular probes would still provide interesting and illuminating data about how respondents think

they learn about crime and what role they accord television drama, news, and experience in accounting for their convictions. The discursive quality of the interview also permitted the recording of interesting comments and anecdotal material which sometimes qualified the character of the initial responses in important ways. It was hoped that some of these follow-up remarks would make it possible to "test" the veracity or accuracy of respondents statements about the source of their ideas.

Respondents were introduced to the interview with the explanation that it would deal with their feelings on crime and related matters. The 40 sessions, which ranged in duration from 75 to 90 minutes, were taped and later transcribed for analysis. Most were conducted during a six-month period between Winter, 1974 and Summer, 1975.

### Section 3. Mode of Analysis

In a research design such as this, a non-probability sample of 40 tends to preclude statistical analysis, but all responses which could be coded were tallied and cross-tabulated by major variables (demographics and viewing levels, news exposure, etc.) as well as by some secondary variables like crime anxiety, to provide a summary description of the sample, and a take-off point for more intensive qualitative analysis.

The complement to those descriptive tables, and the core of the research analysis, is a qualitative interpretation of responses to probes and open-ended questions. Attempts were made to interpret the meaning and character of the responses and to draw (non-statistical) inferences about the origin of key ideas as well. The sources and evidence cited

by respondents in support of their beliefs, the inconsistencies in their ideas and attributions, and the qualifying anecdotal material were all considered relevant to that end. Illustrative quotes are inserted throughout the thesis as appropriate, to indicate on what basis conclusions have been drawn.

Finally, responses to cultivation measures were tallied for each respondent to develop a cumulative "cultivation score" reflecting the proportion of TV responses he or she selected. This cultivation score--computed by dividing the number of "TV answers" by the total number of cultivation questions--sometimes provided a useful way of characterizing respondents in terms of overall "TV bias."

CHAPTER IV      SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS: DEMOGRAPHICS,  
MEDIA USE, AND CRIME CONCERN

Section 1. Media Use Profile

This section describes respondents' media behavior in relation to demographic variables. It must be stressed, however, that the data contained in the section are regarded as purely descriptive: the use of cross-tabular analysis is not meant to suggest or encourage inferences unjustified by so small and unrepresentative a sample.

Three weekly viewing levels were distinguished, corresponding fairly closely to those delineated in studies by Gerbner and Gross. The levels obtained here--Light: 0-6 hours per week, Medium: 8-19, and Heavy: 20+--are slightly lower because they exclude the time spent viewing TV news. Actual viewing levels range from zero to as high as 50 hours per week, with a sample mean of 12.6 hours per week. There were 14 light, 16 medium, and 10 heavy viewers.

Like general television exposure, weekly TV crime show viewing was constructed as a three-level variable: No viewing (0), Medium (2-5 hours), and Heavy (6 or more hours). Eleven respondents fell into the non-viewing category; 15 were medium viewers of crime shows, and another 13 were heavy. Maximum television crime show exposure was approximately 17 hours per week, and the mean, 4.5.

As Table IV-1 indicates, high school graduates were far less apt to be light viewers (10%) than were college graduates (60%).

TABLE IV-1  
DEMOGRAPHICS BY MEDIA USE

	<u>Education</u>		<u>Age</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>TV Viewing</u>		
	H.S. (20)	College (20)	Under (20)	32 Over (20)	M (20)	F (20)	Light (14)	Med. (16)	Heavy (10)
<u>TV Viewing:</u>									
Light	10%	60%	40%	30%	30%	40%	-	-	-
Medium	60	20	35	45	50	30	-	-	-
Heavy	30	20	25	25	20	30	-	-	-
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%			
<u>Crime Show Viewing:</u>									
None	10	50	35	25	50	30	86	-	-
Medium	35	40	35	40	35	40	14	50	50
Heavy	55	10	30	35	15	30	-	50	50
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<u># Crime Show Among Favorites:</u>									
None	25	55	50	30	30	30	71	25	20
More than 1	75	45	50	70	70	70	29	75	80
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

That is to say, some 14% of the light viewers were college graduates only, whereas 75% and 60% respectively of the medium and heavy viewers had attended only high school. Education was similarly related to TV crime show viewing, so that, in effect, when we speak of heavy viewers in this study, we are speaking primarily--though not exclusively--of high school graduates who had not gone onto college. Neither age nor sex seemed to be related to exposure levels.

As a further measure of crime show "involvement" or preference, respondents were asked to identify their three favorite television programs and were then given a number, from zero to three, corresponding to the number of crime shows mentioned. The 24 members of the sample with a score of at least one were more apt to be high school graduates only and medium or heavy viewers (Table IV-1). Age (over 45) was also associated with greater crime show enthusiasm.

News exposure was a difficult variable to code because the consumption of news has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions: certain sources are simply not as thorough or intensive as others. Assessments of "news exposure" therefore had to reflect some subjective judgments about the "quality" or depth and cosmopolitan-ness of preferred sources, in addition to reported regularity and thoroughness of use.

For respondent classification purposes, a distinction was made between more (potentially) intensive and cosmopolitan news sources--like The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Evening Bulletin, national newsweeklies, all-news radio, early evening news, etc.--and the more parochial headline coverage provided by the late evening news and Philadelphia's

major tabloid, The Daily News. The late evening news on television is distinguished from the early evening news because while it includes some national headline coverage, it deals largely with local events--particularly crime-related--and is shorter by one-half than even the early evening local coverage on most stations. Similarly, The Daily News has limited national and international news coverage. All-news radio was classified as a more intensive source based on the nature of the coverage it provides, and while people have the option of tuning in only briefly for "headlines," those who report listening regularly convey the impression that they listen for extended periods.

Respondents who professed only light (superficial or irregular) use of all their indicated news sources, regardless of the breadth or intensity of these sources, were considered to be "light" news-consumers. So were respondents who used only one intensive news source, supplemented by no other sources, on a regular basis. "Heavy" news-consumers were those who used at least two sources (including a minimum of one intensive source) regularly. Inevitably, the nature of self-reporting, and the wide, ineffable variations in media use "styles," lend some imprecision to this categorization, but the informal, conversational structure of the interview provided more useful supporting detail than might have been drawn from a questionnaire.

Of the 40 respondents in the sample, one-half (21) could be classified as "light" news-consumers. There was no apparent relationship between age or sex and news exposure in this group, but more of the high school graduates than the college graduates reported light expo-

sure, and as might have been expected, heavy news exposure was associated more often with light TV exposure than with medium or heavy (Table IV-2).

The majority (25) reported that their regular paper was either The Philadelphia Inquirer or The Evening Bulletin; two said they read only The Daily News, and the remainder of the sample reported reading any two or three in combination.

Of course, allegiance to a particular newspaper by no means guarantees regular or thorough exposure to that paper. More than one-half (23) acknowledged either skimming or irregular reading of their paper of choice. College education was associated with thoroughness and regularity of newspaper exposure, as well as with regular use of a news radio station or a newsweekly.

One-quarter of the sample reported watching no TV news program regularly, either because of schedule conflicts or disinterest. Half the sample watch at least the national news in the early evening (in most cases, some local and/or late as well), and a quarter watch early local news (minus the national) and/or the late evening news (Table IV-2). The rationale for distinguishing late/local news from national is the rather wide content discrepancy between them, and by extension, the potential differences in cultivation that might be associated with each. Late evening news, while ostensibly national as well as local in orientation, provides mostly local news coverage with a heavy emphasis on crime and catastrophe. While most national news viewers also watch

TABLE IV-2

## DEMOGRAPHICS AND TV VIEWING BY NEWS EXPOSURE

	<u>Education</u>		<u>Age</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>TV Viewing</u>		
	H.S. (20)	College (20)	Under 32 (20)	Over 45 (20)	M (20)	F (20)	Light (14)	Med. (16)	Heavy (10)
<u>Overall News Exposure:</u>									
Light	65%	40%	50%	55%	50%	55%	36%	62%	60%
Heavy	35	60	50	45	50	45	64	38	40
<u>TV News:</u>									
None	30	20	25	25	20	30	43	19	10
Nat'l	50	50	50	50	60	40	29	56	70
Local &/or Late	20	30	25	25	20	30	29	25	20
<u>Newspaper Use:</u>									
Irregular/Skim	65	50	55	60	60	55	50	62	60
Thorough	35	50	45	40	40	45	50	37	40

some local news (either early in the evening or at 11 o'clock), their exposure to the national TV news, with its relative de-emphasis on crime, may offer some corrective or balance to local news coverage. Separate coding made it possible to look for such differences, although some of the advantage gained from greater precision in classification might have been lost through further reduction in cell size.

It is interesting that while heavy TV viewing was accompanied by lower over-all news exposure, it was more frequently associated with exposure to television news than was light viewing (Table IV-3), a pattern which suggests that in this sample, at least, use of television for entertainment purposes may predispose a viewer to rely on TV for news information as well. Neither age nor sex seemed to be associated with TV news exposure.

## Section 2. Concern and Anxiety About Crime

In this section, crime-related experiences and fears are discussed in relation to one another and to demographic and media use variables. Although not all of these questions were followed by probes in the interview, qualitative data have been introduced where available and relevant.

Respondents were given a list of six "problems" (inflation, crime, poverty, education, race relations, and energy shortage) and asked to rank them in order of their importance--first, nationally, and then locally. The sample attached considerable importance to crime as a local and national problem, assigning it a median rank of 1.7 nationally

and 1.8 locally. Since the interview was formally represented to individuals as dealing with their "attitudes and ideas about crime," it is conceivable that awareness of the subject matter influenced the rankings. On the other hand, the two lists were embedded among a series of items dealing specifically with media use and occurring before crime was ever broached in the interview, so it is more likely that these orderings reflect a genuine perception of crime as one of the nation's most critical problems. Reactive or demand effects should at least have been reduced by placement of the question.

Originally, this item was designed as a measure not only of general concern about crime among the respondents, but also, of differences between the various demographic and viewer sub-groups in the weight they attached to crime as a problem. Unfortunately, however, the relative strength and uniformity of respondents' assessment of the crime problem rendered sub-group differences too small to be meaningful.

Each participant was also asked whether or not there was a "crime problem" in his or her neighborhood. The object of this question was not to gauge the "real" extent of that problem, since responses were expected to mirror personal anxieties, differences in lifestyle or individual experience, and willingness to acknowledge such a problem as much, if not more, than they would reflect external "reality." Rather, the aim was to determine how respondents view and characterize their own surroundings with respect to crime. The result was that only slightly more than half--23 people--identified a neighborhood crime problem where they live, although there may have been a reluctance among some of those who did not to categorize their own neighborhood in a way that

might seem to reflect poorly on themselves or their socio-economic status.

Perception of a neighborhood crime problem seemed to be inversely associated with age: ten of the 20 younger respondents but only six of those over 45 described their communities as having no particularly problem (Table IV-3).

Also interesting is that only six of the high school-educated respondents compared with 10 of the college graduates in the sample reported a local crime problem. Justified or not, this difference in perception could conceivably reflect the fact that all of the less-educated respondents live in fairly homogeneous ethnic communities where people may "feel" more secure (and also define neighborhood more narrowly, perhaps) whereas most of the better-educated respondents live in the downtown or adjoining neighborhoods currently under redevelopment. Consonant with the fact that high school graduates in the sample report a neighborhood problem less frequently than do college graduates is the fact that respondents who watch medium and heavy amounts of crime shows also indicate a neighborhood problem less often than those who watch no such programs.

In addition, while news exposure per se seemed unrelated to the perception of a neighborhood problem (Table IV-4), least apt to report such a problem were respondents who watch local and/or late TV news on a regular basis. Again, given the impossibility of assessing the "accuracy of respondents' neighborhood classifications, there is no way to interpret these findings with any confidence. It can be noted only that

TABLE IV-3

## DEMOGRAPHICS BY CRIME WORRY AND DISCUSSION

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	<u>Education</u>		<u>Age</u>		<u>Sex</u>	
	H.S.	College	Under 32	Over 45	M	F
Worry About Crime	55	65	65	55	45	75
Perceive Neighborhood Problems	30	50	50	30	35	45
Discuss Crime (Frequently or Fairly Frequently)	50	70	65	55	60	60

---

TABLE IV-4

## MEDIA USE BY CRIME WORRY AND DISCUSSION

% YES

	<u>TV Crime Exp.</u>			<u>Overall News Exp.</u>		<u>TV News Exp.</u>		
	None (12)	Med. (15)	Heavy (13)	Light (21)	Heavy (19)	None (10)	Nat'l or (20)	Local &/ Late (10)
Worry About Crime	75	53	54	48	74	50	55	80
Perceive Neigh- borhood Probs.	67	33	23	33	47	50	45	20
Discuss Crime (Freq. or Fair- ly Freq.)	83	40	62	48	74	50	65	60

in this sample, those who are most apt to report a crime problem in their neighborhood are better-educated and also lower viewers. That, in and of itself, cannot be taken as an indication that exposure to TV and TV crime shows is irrelevant to respondents' assessments of crime levels in their own environment.

More than half the respondents in each age and education category expressed some anxiety about the occurrence or recurrence of personal or family victimization (25 had been victims of at least one crime, either burglary or robbery), but more of the "worriers" were female than male. This finding is congruent with data from other surveys, in which women have expressed greater anxiety about victimization than men.

Neither TV exposure nor TV crime show exposure was associated with a tendency to report worrying. Prior victimization was also not linked with avowed worry about crime (Table IV-5), a finding consonant with survey data about crime anxiety. News exposure, on the other hand, seemed to be associated with propensity to report worry: three-fourths of the heavy news consumers acknowledged worrying compared with only half of the light. This may, to some extent, reflect greater anxiety or concern about college-educated respondents (who are also heavier news-consumers) but the fact that the margin of difference between light and heavy news-viewers is larger than the difference between high school and college graduates suggests that more than education may be involved. The real nature or meaningfulness of that relationship remains undetermined, however.

Perception of a neighborhood crime problem seemed to increase the likelihood that a respondent would express concern about victimization, or vice versa, although denial of a community problem by no means pre-

TABLE IV-5

VICTIMIZATION, PERCEIVED NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEM, WORRY, BY RELATED VARIABLES

	<u>Victimization Experience</u>		<u>Worry About Crime</u>		<u>Neighborhood Problem</u>	
	None (15)	1 or More (25)	Yes (24)	No (16)	Yes (16)	No (23)
Worry About Crime	60%	60%	X	X	81%	48%
Perceive Neighborhood Problems	33	44	54	19	X	X
Discuss Crime (Freq. or Fairly Freq.)	66	56	58	62	75	48

cluded the admission of anxiety, inasmuch as 11 out of the 24 respondents from "non-problem" neighborhoods also said they worry about the possibility of victimization. Once again, it is hard to gauge the direction of the relationship, since anxiety undoubtedly colors as well as reflects, perceptions of neighborhood security.

Anxieties about victimization tend to focus on personal injury, and among the young mothers, on harm to their children. The agenda-setting impact of both news and TV fiction in at least certain anxiety "themes" is suggested by the fact that rape was mentioned by several women, usually with reference to then-current news campaigns and/or dramatic programs televised during the data collection period. Injustices associated with the prosecution of rape and the abusive handling of victims received a considerable amount of media attention during those months. Several of the high school graduates, in particular, praised two "telemovies" they had seen which had apparently brought rape issues and scenarios very much to mind. They all seemed to regard the shows as dramatic documentaries--fictional but entirely authentic accounts of things that could or did really happen to women--when, in fact, the shows were actually no more discernibly authentic than ordinary crime series episodes.

Whether or not they professed anxiety about the possibility of becoming crime victims, the vast majority of respondents acknowledged that they had in some way changed their behavior in recent years in response to the perceived elevation in crime incidence. Changes including avoiding particular locations--especially at night or when unaccompanied--precautionary locks, defensive walking, and so on.

Twenty-four respondents, more of them college-educated than not, (and more of them non-viewers or light viewers of TV crime shows than not) reported frequent or fairly frequent discussion of crime with associates or family members. Not only do the college graduates discuss crime more frequently; they also differ, to some extent, in the nature of their discussions. That is, less-educated respondents are more apt to restrict their discussions to an inventory of recent victims or a recapitulation of news items, whereas the better-educated respondents talk frequently in abstract terms on subjects like capital punishment and criminal recidivism.

While three-quarters of those who think they have a neighborhood problem discuss crime frequently or fairly frequently, compared to only one-half of those who do not, worry per se was not associated with discussion of crime (Table IV-6). This may reflect, at least in part, the fact that although discussion of crime with neighbors and co-workers is an important source of information about frequency and circumstances of criminal victimization (there is evidence in the transcripts to that effect), several individuals seemed reluctant to acknowledge crime as a topic of conversation for fear of seeming illiberal, excessively anxious about personal safety, and so forth. A few respondents hastened to assure the interviewer that the subject was not (in the words of one young woman) "a preoccupation." Another respondent answered by explaining that "it's nothing that preys on our mind that we feel we have to discuss and keep psyched up about."

This sort of discomfort or defensiveness was most evident among

the college graduates in the sample, who, as a group, are--paradoxically--more apt to report regular discussion of crime than other respondents. Sensitivity was such that it apparently produced sharp and otherwise inexplicable discrepancies in the accounts offered by several husband-wife pairs. One young woman, who described discussions on the subject as "infrequent" and said, almost testily, that she and her husband talked about crime "no more, no less than any other couple," was flatly contradicted by her husband, who said that, "between us, we talk alot about crime." He also volunteered that his wife seemed worried about victimization:

Barb's very, I think--or I get the impression--she's pretty concerned about crime and about us being robbed here or her being attacked. That we talk about quite frequently. In fact, we were talking the other night about what my reaction would be if she were raped, mostly initiated by the way the police handle rape.

The following contradictory exchanges involved Mr. and Mrs. W., middle-aged college graduates who are both medium to heavy viewers of television and TV crime shows:

Esther W.

Q: Do you ever talk to your husband about crime as well?

A: We discuss it all the time.

Q: What sorts of things do you discuss?

A: We discuss how the neighborhoods have changed, the grafitti, the vandalism, and the people who've been held up, beaten... (Emphasis added)

Manny W.

Q: Do you ever talk to other people about crime?

A: Not really. I don't like to discuss these things. If it comes up, I don't try to pursue it.

Q: How about your wife? Do you ever talk about it with her?

A: Rarely. (Emphasis added)

Mrs. W. is a garrulous individual who appears to rely on friends and customers for information about crime, whereas Mr. W., who was once the victim of armed robbery, seemed faintly uncomfortable with the topic throughout the interview. His distaste for crime as a topic of conversation does not extend to TV crime shows, however. He watches a moderate amount of TV crime--more, in fact, than does his wife.

Discussion of crime, according to respondents, is usually in relation to some specific incident (a known victim, for example, or a highly publicized crime) and less frequently a matter of general or abstract conversation. As illustrated by the following two exchanges, discussion of local crime appears to be an important form of community surveillance and self-protection for some, particularly respondents who live in an "urban village" environment and are fairly concerned about crime. Note that Pat N., the first respondent quoted, is a young high school graduate from a working class neighborhood, and she knows every person who lives between her house and her church. The second, Lenore M., is a middle-aged college graduate who lives on a small, close-knit street in Center City.

Pat N.

Q: Do you ever talk to people about crime?

A: I think it's the main topic. Well, we have a grocery store and I don't know if you're familiar with grocery stores. But every news that's happened in the neighborhood, you'll find in the grocery store?

Lenore M.

Q: So you discuss crime with one another?

A: We do this for each other. We tell each other what is happening kind of thing. We've just been warned about wallet-snatching downtown.

This sort of community surveillance is mentioned by respondents in all socio-economic categories, although the younger respondents, because they may be transient and less closely affiliated with their communities, probably have less opportunity to exchange information in this fashion.

In sum, it should be noted that in this sample, there is a close inverse association between TV exposure and education, and a direct link between education and general news exposure. The college graduates in the sample are also more apt to read a newspaper thoroughly on a regular basis.

As for crime concern and anxiety, while most respondents seem to regard crime as a major problem in the abstract, and have, in addition, contemplated to adjust their lifestyle in various ways in response to a perceived rise in crime, those in the sample reporting a neighborhood crime problem are more apt to be college graduates. Self-acknowledged "worriers" about crime are more often women, college graduates, and heavy

news-consumers. Those who report discussing crime frequently or fairly frequently are also more apt to be college graduates and heavy news users, but prior victimization, as in national surveys, is apparently unrelated in this sample to concern or anxiety about crime.

## CHAPTER V PERCEPTIONS AND SOURCE ATTRIBUTIONS PERTAINING TO CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

### Section 1. Types of Source Attributions

It should be emphasized, once again, that respondents' own source attributions and response justifications were not taken as necessarily accurate accounts of how they have acquired specific views or perceptions, and indeed, were approached with cautious skepticism. It is argued, nonetheless, that "accurate" or not, such data are interesting in their own right as a reflection of what respondents themselves assume or believe to be the sources of many of their social perceptions. Their answers presumably reflect also the degree of "legitimacy" accorded by people to various information sources. One would not, for example, normally expect people to substantiate their views on "real life" with references to fiction--not, at least, when they might easily cite a source more directly grounded in the real world (for example, personal experience or news).

With that in mind, it is interesting to consider under what circumstances, and by whom, television or other fiction is referred to, on grounds that allusions to television fiction as an information source may reflect: 1) a relative dearth of alternative (non-fiction) sources, and/or 2) the particularly strong influence, or at least salience, of television with respect to the topic in question. A case may also be made that such allusions are potentially informative about the way information drawn from TV is weighed and handled by respondents when they know themselves to be reliant on that medium for specific information.

Respondents were asked explicitly how they thought they learned about crime and policemen ("How do you think you learn most about crime?" and "What do you think is your best source of information about what policemen are really like?"), but probes following specific cultivation items also provided a fertile basis for delineating major information sources. Note that the term, "best," in the second question has qualitative and quantitative dimensions--a duality which respondents frequently pointed out themselves. This inherent ambiguity, detected initially in the pre-test phase, was thought to be a potentially useful questioning device, insofar as it prompted respondents to initiate some distinction between information sources they use often and those which they feel might be more accurate but to which they have limited access.

The formal sources most frequently mentioned by all respondents were: 1) news; 2) hearsay (conversation); 3) experience; and 4) fiction--primarily television and secondarily, movies. It should be emphasized that all respondents had occasion to cite each of these at various points throughout the interview, although there were some discernible variations in the frequency with which certain categories were invoked by certain respondents. These variations did not lend themselves to sophisticated respondents-typologies as such, however, since all respondents did make use of all source attributions. Major differences were associated primarily with references to TV, which came more frequently, on the whole, from the high school graduates in the sample. It should be noted that all sources, including fiction, were cited in the service of both "real world" and "television" responses.

The information sources most frequently identified by both the high school and college graduates as sources of general crime information and of many specific notions as well, were newspapers and television news, or simply, news. Some respondents--usually the better-educated--made a further distinction between news and trend information, pointing out that the latter gave them a better over-all grasp of crime incidence. The high school graduates in the sample did not often make this distinction, although one, Ernie D., volunteered that articles on specific crimes were less informative than non-fiction books or the occasional trend article.

A: I wouldn't judge the crime rate by reading the sensationalism in the papers. Someone was killed and someone was robbed.

Q: You don't feel they're a reliable indicator?

A: Well, they have to put that sort of thing in--that's what sells papers. But I think it's the stuff on the 34th page that says, 'There were 400 murders in Detroit this year.' I think that's the kind of thing that tells me more.

An information source closely allied in respondents' minds with formal news accounts, and residing somewhere in the realm between news and experience, is word-of-mouth information, often explicitly referred to by respondents as "hearsay" (the choice of word is interesting and, indeed, may have been influenced by the topic). The following comment made by Betty C. (a college graduate) was fairly typical:

Q: How do you feel you learn most about crime?

A: Through the newspapers and the television news.

Q: Any other way?

A: From hearsay--you know, other people

The category, hearsay, seems to cover oral accounts of victimization (from friends and associates) and news accounts acquired second-hand, as well as more specific information about processes in the criminal justice system, sometimes relayed to respondents by people to whom they impute some degree of expertise.

A young respondent, Don N., attributed some of his ideas to discussions with acquaintances on the police force ("Like this year and last year, I worked more--closer with the cops than anything"), and on other issues, Don cited "the flow of talk" between police and firemen. Sometimes, however, attributions to knowledgeable informants are more vague, as in: "I've heard that before they fire a gun they have to fill out five forms."

Some respondents seem to rely a little more than others on hearsay in substantiating their answers, and often what distinguishes these people is the intensity or cohesiveness of their community life, and their own reported tendency to survey and monitor the environment through observation as well as conversation. Indeed, there is frequently something of an intersection between word-of-mouth sources and "experience" (typically, observation of police cars or the aftermath of local crimes, etc.); this overlap is especially detectable in the comments of individuals who make frequent reference to what they have seen and heard locally.

One couple who draw heavily on the "neighborhood" for indicators of what is happening everywhere are Pat N. and her husband, Don (quoted above). Pointing out that she knows "everyone" in the immediate neighborhood, Pat says she learns about crime by observing the community, and

"the more serious stuff from newspapers." Her husband says he learned about crime "by growing up and hanging on the corner" where "...you get the general idea by hearing other guys talking about crime." Note that Don, who spends most of his days and evenings watching television, also frequently cites TV drama as a source of his views, implicitly affirming that real life and television can be compatible sources in the minds of many respondents.

A third major source of information about crime--and particularly police--was personal contact and experience. Indeed, respondents in all viewing and demographic categories were apt to describe contact or conversation with police as the qualitatively "best" source of information about them, even though, in some instances, a respondent might have had little such contact. The news and occasional trend articles were also mentioned in conjunction with learning about police, but typically, respondents seemed to feel crime news was either not oriented toward job description and character revelation, or simply not impartial enough to portray police fairly.

The way in which respondents frequently distinguished how they learned (best) about crime and about police is typified by the following remark, excerpted from comments by Brad K., a young high school graduate.

Q: How do you feel you learn most about crime?

A: From the newspapers.

Q: What do you think is your best source about what policemen are really like?

A: Police themselves.

Similarly, Sharon S., a young professional, believes prolonged contact would be the ideal way to learn about police, although she personally has had limited exposure to them:

Q: (Question)

A: Following a policeman through his daily routine.

Q: I mean in reality--what has been your best source?

A: I don't know if it's my best source, but my main source is probably the newspapers.

Q: Why do you distinguish between main and best?

A: Because I don't believe that newspapers give unbiased accounts. I think they're all colored by the administration of the paper.

The tendency to mention personal contact and observation more often in connection with police than with crime per se is in no way surprising, since respondents have, potentially, more opportunity to observe and talk to police than to observe or experience crime. They also read relatively little about police character, etc. in news reports of crimes, and must therefore rely more on contact for information about police. Moreover, respondents are frequently talking about sources in ideal terms, and direct experience with crime is, needless to say, an undesirable, if vivid, way to learn, whereas contact with neighborhood police need not be unpleasant. Experience, however, is frequently cited to substantiate specific responses pertaining to crime incidence and circumstance, with, predictably, some tendency to over-generalize on the basis of single incidents.

Fictional sources, primarily television, were mentioned largely--

but not entirely--by the high school graduates. References to television were not, on the whole, so prevalent as references to news and hearsay, but some respondents seemed to feel and they readily acknowledge what they have acquired a general grasp of crime from seeing it portrayed on television. One such respondent was Karen C., a young secretary and medium viewer who frequently alluded to television during the interview. Karen, one of the few to mention television as a general source of information on crime, articulated a distinction which seems to be implicit in later remarks by other respondents: namely, that TV is illustrative of types of crimes that occur, although it does not usually portray actual crimes.

Q: How do you feel you learn most about crime?

A: Television. You mean the real true crime?

Q: Well, about the nature of crime.

A: Well, I guess television and the newspapers.

Q: When you say television, do you mean the news?

A: I mean the shows to learn about the different crimes that people, you know, not real people. I would say the newspaper for crimes that are real, that have actually happened.

Lou B., a high school graduate and ardent TV crime show fan, indicates by his extensive reference to fiction in the following comments that when he speaks of "knowing" about crime, he is probably thinking less in terms of abstract information than of a sort of vicarious knowledge of crime as it might occur: the scenarios rather than the statistics.

Q: How do you feel you learn most about crime?

A: Well, let me ask you this question. How do you feel I know anything about crime?

Q: No, no, you're doing fine.

A: I don't know. I guess it's something I just picked up through the years. I guess television does help a little too. Basically it gives you the basic things about it. Stuff like that.

Q: Any other sources?

A: A little bit I picked up in the paper too. I'd say crime magazines my father used to have a long time ago. True Crime or whatever that was. Detective Crime.

The college graduates in the sample sometimes relied on television to substantiate specific answers but seldom mentioned television as a general source of information on crime. One exception, Betty C., claims to rely primarily on news and hearsay for information about crime, but mentioned television, by contrast, as a source of information about police, leaving the implication that she actively perceives it as a substitute for direct experience with respect to police character, personality, and so on.

Q: What do you feel is your best source of information about what police are really like?

A: I really haven't any source of information about what police are really like. There again,\* it would be the television. I've come in contact with very few.

Those in the sample who had completed college were generally more overtly cynical or critical about TV as a source of information, and, as might be expected, did not generally perceive TV as a legitimate way to

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\*In reference to an earlier question where lack of personal experience caused her to rely on television for guidance.

learn about crime. Nancy O., a middle-aged college graduate who watches a lot of television and whose cultivation score is highest for her demographic sub-group (college-educated older females) admitted that TV programs instructed her about crime and police but noted apologetically that her response was "stupid."

Q: Why do you think television is a 'stupid' answer?

A: Because I think television is biased to incite people, to foment the idea that police are good or one thing or the other. I don't think it's all true. I only watch it because it titillates me. But I don't believe it. I don't believe it all.

Movies, and occasionally detective/mystery books, were also mentioned throughout the interviews, and given that the college graduates seemed more apt to mention those--or, at least, to mention them more freely and unapologetically than they did television--it might be inferred that movies are perceived as a more credible and legitimate source of information than the TV crime show genre.

One movie which seemed to have had a particularly strong impact on many respondents was Serpico, and in fact, at least two high school graduates reported that they had become disillusioned with police as a consequence of seeing the film. Both are women who know policemen personally and who reported some conflict between impressions they drew from the movie and their image of friends on the force. Karen C. (mentioned earlier as one who refers frequently to TV) was anxious to disassociate her friends from any negative implications.

Q: So you feel your best source of information about what they're really like is your friends or...?

A: No, it's hard to explain how I feel. The force as a whole, I really think there's a lot wrong with them. That movie really did strike me as 'this is what it's really like.' Well, it was supposed to be a true story, and then after that, I read the book and it was a true story. And like, I can really believe it could be that way. But, like, what I've seen in the movie and what I think of the force doesn't reflect on my friends. (Emphasis added)

There is a final category of response justifications which respondents could not themselves define or articulate, but which might be called "diffuse cultural learning," and refers to those sorts of explanations which appear to draw on reasoning, personal values, or broad assumptions about human nature and society (i.e., that's-the-way-things-are, etc.). While no one invoked this category specifically in identifying sources of crime information, the influence of such reasoning or conditioning may be detected throughout the interviews, and is certainly not restricted to any group or sub-group. Specific examples will appear in the next section, where responses to various cultivation items are analyzed in greater detail.

## Section 2. Perceptions and Views of Crime and Law Enforcement

This section analyzes respondents' answers to forced-choice cultivation items and several open-ended questions pertaining to crime and law enforcement procedures. The questions are grouped with respect to the types of justifications and sources associated with the responses, so as to point up patterns in the way respondents substantiated their answers, as well as regularities in the responses themselves.

It should be stressed that each question elicited substantiations and source attributions of all types. Nevertheless, some questions seemed to give rise to certain source attributions more frequently than did others, and it was possible to distinguish those questions from questions which called more diverse source attributions into play. In the first sub-section, below, questions which seemed to summon up primarily or exclusively reference to news are analyzed. Following that is a sub-section containing questions which gave rise to experiential and normative attributions as well as news references. In the final sub-section are grouped questions whose responses and substantiations seemed more deeply rooted in fiction, particularly television.

### A. Source Attributions: Primarily News

The category of questions discussed here seemed to draw most heavily on news exposure, although hearsay, experience, and cultural conditioning were also summoned to support what respondents believe they know largely via newspapers and TV news. These questions dealt primarily with crime in the aggregate, usually requiring respondents to select statistics pertaining to incidence and frequency in crime categories. On questions of this type, news would appear to have been the most plausible

and/or obvious source for respondents to cite.

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Which of the following crimes has increased the most in the past few years? Murder (TV) or robbery (FBI statistics)\*?

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This question is notable for both the small proportion of TV answers (10 in 40) and the consistent nature of the response justifications (for table, see Appendix A). The general justification for selecting either of the two responses was news, and respondents were seldom, if ever, more explicit. Quite a few of the college graduates recalled reading "somewhere" a statistic about murder relative to robbery. Whether they actually did, however, or are simply more sophisticated and inventive in their rationalizations is, of course, impossible to determine, but as a general rule, the better-educated respondents were more likely, by their own reports, to encounter and take note of trend information in news and newsweeklies than were the high school graduates in the sample, who seemed to depend more heavily on their own spontaneous tallies and cumulative impressions.

There was some tendency to respond to probes (e.g., "How do you know this?") by offering possible explanations for the trend rather than by supporting or bolstering the answer with evidence or specific source attributions--a pattern which sometimes recurred with other questions, but not to the same degree. Respondents in all viewing and demographic categories were of the opinion that recession had caused an increase in robbery, and that murder was--by and large--an occasional outcome of robbery but not normally an end in it-

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\*Response sources (e.g., "TV" or "FBI statistics") were, of course, omitted when questions were read to respondents.

self. Since most homicides actually occur in the context of personal and emotional situations rather than as a by-product of robbery, we might possibly infer that this assumption is grounded at least partly in normative conditioning and/or television fiction, rather than simply, "the news."

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What percent of all crimes are violent crimes, like murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault? Do you think it's closer to 15% (FBI statistics) or 25% (TV)?

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The eighteen respondents who selected the inflated television response to this question were over-represented in the heavy viewing group and also among the high school graduates. This finding could conceivably reflect the influence of TV exposure, but given that cultivation items by and large pose statistical choices in subject areas where respondents can be expected to have only vague and impressionistic information, it is especially important to remain sensitive to the sort of socio-economic differences in the use and perception of numbers which may affect choice of answers.

Most of the respondents, regardless of education or viewing level, believe that all varieties of crime are on the rise, a perception which, in and of itself, may have prompted some to select the higher percentage. This does not mean to imply that respondents consciously treated the two figures as rate percentages rather than as proportions of the total, but only that a sense of increasing violence may have encouraged some, particularly those who seldom deal with statistics, to express their conviction by automatically selecting the larger of the two figures.

News or newspapers were cited with equal frequency to support both

the census and television responses, and no mention at all was made of television or other fictional sources in connection with the question. Better-educated respondents were apt to explain that they had read a statistic indicating that violent crime was really a small proportion of the total. Those giving TV responses also alluded frequently to the news, but they tended to buttress their answers with cumulative perceptions of heavy violence based on reading or hearing "so much" about violence in the news.

Respondents in the lower education category who chose the smaller figure (primarily men) represent no consistent viewing or experiential pattern but seem to be better-informed, on the whole, and careful news readers who are also apt to cite conversations with other people as a source of information on crime.

Occasionally, a respondent would acknowledge the (violent) slant of news reporting and explain that he or she nevertheless had no choice but to rely on news accounts. This sort of conflict also emerged on subsequent questions. The problem was acute for the high school graduates who seemed frequently to sense that the news media over-report certain events at the expense of others but were confounded by lack of alternative sources. Consider, for example, the following comments by Fran L., a middle-aged clerk with an enthusiasm for crime shows and a strong faith in their authenticity:

Q: Why do you say that (25%)?

A: I really have nothing to base it on. I have no idea. All right, I guess it's because you read more about the violent crime. The lesser crime you don't hear about, so they're not in

your mind.

Q: You said you read more about them, Do you think that's because they publish them more or because there really are more?

A: Well, I still think there are a lot.

Q: Just not as much as you'd think based on reading--is that what you mean?

A: Yeah.

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How do you think the number of homicides compares with the number of suicides in this country? Which do you think there are more of? (Homicides--TV--or suicides--"real life").

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On this question, the TV answers (totalling 23) were proportionately higher among high school graduates but not among heavy TV viewers per se. While this deviation from the overall pattern may be an artifact of sample size, and hence, uninformative, it should be noted that the finding is, at least, plausible, since TV is not the only medium to underreport or underportray suicides, and therefore, sources other than TV could just easily be "responsible" for so-called TV answers. Indeed, the news media offer virtually no sustained corrective information on this subject and may be even more misleading than television drama with respect to suicide incidence. Unless performed in public or by celebrities, suicides are infrequently reported, and traditional socio-religious onus usually muffles publicity further still. Thus, even a prodigious newspaper reader who seldom watches television would be tempted to conclude that homicides outnumber suicides--unless, that is, he had specific information to the contrary, which some respondents do.

Indeed, most of the respondents who picked the "real world" answer

could actively recall reading, either in professional literature or in a mass medium, that the national suicide rate exceeds the homicide rate. Occasionally, however, a respondent would offer unsupported speculation to the effect that the pressures of modern life were causing suicide to escalate more rapidly than homicide. One high school graduate and heavy viewer observed (uniquely) that suicides probably outnumber homicides because of all the "new forms of protest" that involve acts like self-immolation.

Although respondents may well have been influenced by a personal and cultural revulsion against suicide, they were more apt to make reference to the conspicuous absence of suicide coverage from virtually all news media. Some, like businessman, Sidney O., took the news at face-value:

It seems to me that for every suicide I  
read about, I read of many more homicides.

Others indicated an awareness that suicide was not so well-publicized as murder, but still fell back (reluctantly, in most cases) on what they had read or heard, for lack of information to the contrary. The following comment by a young secretary, Karen C., exemplifies that line of reasoning:

Well, you don't read that much about people  
that kill themselves. You hear more about  
the ones that are killed. I know there are  
alot of suicides, but I guess it's not as  
interesting to the people,

Fireman, Don N., who spends virtually his entire day and evening watching television, but seems to draw heavily on neighborhood experi-

ence as well, puzzled over the alternatives at greater length before settling on the same response:

A: I would say homicides but I think it's suicides. I'm just basing on how many killings there were in Philadelphia last year, and I think it was forty-something or fifty-something gang killings, and it's more publicized about the gang killings than the suicides. They don't come out with a figure and say, 'Last year we had X amount of suicides,' you know? But you read every week in the paper about a homicide here, a homicide there. So by reading the paper, I would have to say homicides.

Q: You said you thought...

A: I would think they might be pretty close together, but as I say, they don't publicize the suicides. So to come out with a figure and say how many, I wouldn't know. I haven't read anywhere where they say.

Q: But you think suicides might be underplayed?

A: Right.

Several of the respondents who chose "homicide" reasoned that suicide was, statistically, a less likely event than murder, because any given suicide could be perpetrated by only one person, whereas murder could potentially be committed by an indefinite number of people. Respondents offering this "pseudo-statistical" line of reasoning included a graduate student in psychology and a high school-educated naval technician. Their explanation may represent an attempt to objectify subjective, normative perceptions; and indeed, certain other comments to the effect that it takes a lot of strength, determination and so on, to commit suicide (e.g., "I'd be scared to kill myself") evinced a

more explicit cultural revulsion against suicide. Thus, while most respondents seemed to point directly to lack of specific information on the subject, it is likely that in the absence of such data, they drew also on certain cultural values and assumptions.

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Taking all murder victims, what percent of them do you think are not white? Do you think the figure is closer to 25% (TV) or 55% (FBI statistics)?

What percent of all convicted criminals do you think are white? Do you think it's closer to 70% (FBI statistics) or 85% (TV)?

What percent of all known victims of crime are white? Do you think it's closer to 40% (FBI statistics) or 70% (TV)?

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This series of three questions pertaining to race and crime/victimization were designed to determine whether respondents' perceptions more closely matched the television representation, in which criminals and victims are predominantly white, or the "real world" crime statistics, according to which crime and victimization are proportionately higher among non-white minorities. Despite the fact that blacks have been sharply under-represented as victims and criminals on television, there nevertheless was a general belief among members of the sample that a disproportionately large percentage of criminals are black, and that their victims are largely black as well. TV responses to the first question--most frequently selected by heavier viewers of TV--totalled only 12; TV responses to the second question--all from medium or heavy viewers--numbered four. Virtually all responses were substantiated with references to news and hearsay. (See tables, Appendix A)

Respondents generally cited newspaper accounts of crime and gang

warfare as revealing a preponderance of violence in black and hispanic areas. (One respondent observed that her maid is "deadly afraid to go out"). This recognition, even despite television's traditionally white cast of villains and victims, suggests that real world experience, news accounts, and general stereotypes are so powerful as to counter any effect that television might have in this domain. It is also possible that respondents are tacitly aware that TV, as traditionally scripted and cast, is designed to represent only the white world, and cannot be taken as a measure of black crime and victimization levels.

A few respondents--particularly young, college-educated women--added an ideological qualification to their responses to the second question, arguing that the inequities of the criminal justice system rather than the crime rate per se accounted for a disproportionately high crime rate among blacks. That line of reasoning is exemplified by an excerpt from the interview with Sharon S., a young occupational therapist who said she thought that:

...black people have a harder time  
getting off for any kind of crime and  
are assumed guilty sooner.

Note that respondents such as Sharon may not have felt uncomfortable, or more to the point, illiberal, discussing high black crime rates in the first question, when the focus was on victimization. However, when the subject of the question was, instead, perpetration, some sensitivity about imputing criminal behavior to minorities was apparently

tapped. Older respondents, by and large, demonstrated no such sensitivity; they claimed, on the basis of news accounts, that crime was widespread among minorities, and even the lower figure frequently struck them as too high to represent white crime.

As for the third question in this series, as many as 16 respondents chose the TV answers. This was apparently because, while believing that non-whites commit proportionately more crimes than whites, and that their victims are usually non-white as well, respondents were, in some cases, reluctant to believe that whites could account for only half or less of all victims if blacks constituted less than a fifth of the total population. In general, it appeared here that the answers ultimately selected were some resultant of relatively uniform perceptions about crime among blacks, factored in with each respondents imprecise ("fuzzy") estimate of the population distribution. Initial uncertainties in that regard may have become more pronounced as various percentage alternatives were offered with each succeeding question.

B. Source Attributions: Experience, Hearsay and Normative Conditioning

In answering the previous questions, all of which deal largely with crime incidence in the aggregate, respondents relied most heavily on news and supporting hearsay ("what you hear") to substantiate their answers, regardless of whether they chose the TV or "real world" percentage. Responses to the questions grouped in this section, while also grounded heavily in news exposure, seem to approach also the experiential realm, drawing more heavily than earlier questions on normative conditioning and observation and experience. It may be argued that this is

because these questions deal more directly with personal risk and thus, involve calculations into which personal assessments and experiences may reasonably be factored.

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Do you think more fatal violence occurs between strangers (TV) or between relatives and acquaintances (FBI statistics)?

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While it is difficult to assess what rôle television may play in countering or qualifying "real world" information about the relationship between victims and aggressors, it seems plausible to infer that respondents are influenced at least partly by their normative assumptions about the circumstances surrounding violence, as implied by some of the responses to this question.

Twenty-five respondents chose the census response and once again, the proportion of TV responses was higher among the heavier viewers, although not among the high school graduates in the sample. The college-educated respondents who selected the real world answer said generally that they had read statistics pertaining to this issue (in three cases, the source was professional literature) whereas the high school graduates choosing the census answer seemed, for the most part, to draw their own inferences from news accounts of gang-slayings and husband-wife crimes of passion, etc. Two were aware of specific statistics to that effect.

Even some of the respondents who settled on the television response acknowledged that family conflict accounted for much of the violence they hear or read about in the news. They simply weren't prepared to believe family violence levels comparable to more impersonal or anonymous

homicide levels, presumably because middle class experience and socialization tend to support the notion that violence is largely incommensurate with personal or intimate relationships.

Mr. G., a middle-aged machinist who watches TV crime shows extensively and believes TV crime is authentic, explained his television response by posing the following situation:

Well, you're liable to be walking in the street and the first thing you know, you might want to hold a conversation with someone and then they want to hold you up. You don't have that kind of trouble with relatives or your friends.

That sort of normative influence cross-cut education levels is illustrated by a comment made by Isabel W. who reasoned similarly: "If you're a relative or a friend, you would have some love, so why would you do a thing like that?" (Isabel W. and the other two older female college graduates who chose "strangers," are at least medium viewers of television crime shows. Two, including Isabel, later reported some degree of faith in the accuracy of programs they watch, while expressing skepticism about TV in general.)

The perception of fatal violence as primarily a random, impersonal occurrence may produce, or at least be associated with, greater anxiety about crime. By contrast, the notion of violence as a consequence of intimacy and proximity is perhaps less threatening since most people feel they can safely exclude the people they are associated with from any such consideration.

It is interesting, then, that two of the male college graduates who (like their wives) chose the television response to this question, seemed

to feel especially anxious about crime. Isabel W's husband, watches a medium amount of TV crime content but he is a past victim of armed robbery for whom the subject of real world crime is so plainly distasteful that he denied talking about it with his wife. (She mentioned that they discuss it "all the time.") Fred C. is a low television viewer but his concern--or rather, his rage--about crime seems to verge on pre-occupation. Both men deny that television is authentic or believable.

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About what percent of all Americans last year were the victims of violent crimes? Is it closer to 4% (FBI) or 8% (TV)?

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Here, as with most questions, respondents consistently mentioned news to substantiate responses, but the fact that individual odds rather than comparative categorical statistics were implied by this question enabled some respondents to draw more heavily on their own experience with violence, or lack thereof, in responding.

Respondents who took the trouble to convert percentages into absolute figures (in effect, examine them more closely) were apt to pick the smaller figure in most cases. This was true regardless of education level, but predictably, the better-educated evinced a greater facility with numbers--or, at least, a greater willingness to translate from percentages to absolute figures. College-educated respondents who chose the census figure affirmed their belief that 8% was "too high," and in a few cases, pointed out that press coverage inflates people's estimates of violent crime. This observation was, to some extent, a function of their grasp of media considerations and policies, but also

reflected a view of probabilities based on personal experience and the experiences of those they know. An example of this sort of assessment is the following comment by Dan L., a young physician:

I've no basis other than I don't know anyone who was the victim of violent crime. In terms of my own experience, it would make me think the lower percentage.

The high school graduates seemed frequently to prefer the larger percentage because they "hear about so much crime" in conversation and via news and newspapers, but it should be noted that to people who are unfamiliar with percentages (or with crime statistics in particular), 8% does not seem improbably large, as it does to some of the more sophisticated respondents.

Among the less-educated group, census answers came from both light and heavy viewers of television, and were apparently based on the realization that 8% is "an awful lot," as one person put it. It may be inferred that the perception of 8% as "an awful lot" is based at least partly on standards derived from individual experiences and from knowledge about the experiences of others in respondents' families and communities. John B., for example, a high school graduate (whose knowledge of current events seems broader than many others in his education grouping) makes that reasoning explicit:

Well, I don't think that just from my own acquaintances--I don't know that many who've been involved in violent crime, and 8% would be one out of 11 or 12.

It goes without saying, of course, that experience is idiosyncratic

and does not necessarily teach everyone the same "lesson." Thus, Pat N., a young woman who refers consistently to what she observes in the community, was prompted by her experience (and, in particular, by a relatively minor incident in which she had recently been involved) to over-estimate the incidence of violent crime:

Q: Why do you say that?

A: I sound like a broken record, but it's on the rise. I guess I'm going back to my own neighborhood again. Based on what I see in the neighborhood, and in the news, there's always something about that.

Notably, two men based a TV response on figures which appeared in an area newspaper\* but were incorrectly computed, and, in effect, exaggerated the likelihood of victimization (homicide) in a person's lifetime. Frank L. made explicit reference to it in justifying an 8% response:

Q: Why do you feel that way?

A: Well, I just read a statistic that-- showing the cities over your lifetime, the chances of being involved in a crime were so high I couldn't believe it. Like in Philadelphia, which is pretty low on the crime list, it was about 35 to one that you might be murdered or something. It was astonishing. I can't believe the figures were even right.

Frank L's incredulity about this high percentage is presumably derived from his own personal assessments of the likelihood of (violent) victimization. He is skeptical about these odds, possibly, because they

are "threatening" and anxiety-producing to contemplate, but also, by implication, because they fly in the face of his own experience and that of other people he knows. (No one in the sample, for example, had been acquainted with a murder victim).

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In any given week, about how many people out of 100 are involved in some sort of violence, as either victims or criminals? Do you think it's closer to one in 100 (FBI statistics) or ten in 100 (TV)?

In any given week, what do you think are your chances of being involved in some sort of violence? Do you think it's closer to one in 100 or ten in 100?

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While 26 chose the smaller figure in answer to the first question (with the difference between heavy and light viewers especially pronounced), respondents almost invariably described their own probability of involvement in violence as 1% regardless of their answer to the previous item (Appendix A). The three who did not--all heavy viewers--gave both themselves and the country at large a 10% probability; no respondent thought his or her personal chances of violent involvement exceeded the national norm.

In answering the generalized question, respondents were inclined to make a distinction between the urban crime rate, which some thought might reach 10 in 100, and the rural crime rate, which, it was concluded, depressed the national rate to about one in 100.

Respondents made general reference to the news, but as with the previous question, sometimes qualified the volume of crime reports in the news with their own personal observations or perceptions of threat in the environment. Thus, Claire F., an older high school graduate (with

relatively strong faith in the authenticity of television) chose only 1%, explaining that "if you make a percentage of what you read and what you hear on the news of all the people around, it would still only be about 1%." The feeling that 10% was too high to be realistic was expressed by several other heavy (and ostensibly credulous) viewers.

Generally, references to one's personal sphere of acquaintances and experiences were invoked only to support a lower figure (i.e., depress the news tallies), but Pat N., an apprehensive high school graduate who draws heavily on neighborhood experience, made reference again to her neighborhood to justify an inflated answer:

Q: (Question)

A: Probably 10 in 100. I don't just say within our neighborhood, I'll say the city. Every time from 9 o'clock on, and a whole lot on Friday and Saturday nights, you hear the police sirens going and it's gotten so that my son, he knows what they are. So I think it's closer to about 10 in 100.

Pat, having lately experienced some minor difficulty with a neighborhood teenager, was one of the three respondents who rated her personal probabilities of violent involvement as 10 in 100. In most instances, though, however high respondents may have thought other people's chances of involvement were, they tended to see themselves as better protected, by virtue of neighborhood, personal habits, life-style, or specific precautions. Fran L., for example, a middle-aged woman who draws heavily on TV, stressed the regularity of her personal routine as protection against crime:

I come home and wherever we go, we drive.  
 We go to dinner, we're with friends. In  
 one word, routine.

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Are most cases involving violent crime decided by a jury (TV) or a judge only (Philadelphia court statistics)?

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As a preface to this question, it should be noted that "trial by jury" is a familiar civic slogan closely associated with our system of government, and because respondents know it to be a constitutional right, they seem to feel it is somehow better, or more "just" than judicial determination by a single individual. It was this normative line of reasoning which apparently influenced many respondents, although TV responses to this question--a total of 30--were proportionately higher among medium and heavy viewers, and lower among college graduates (Appendix A).

Also relevant is the fact that while TV crime drama has been moving away in recent seasons from its earlier focus on courtroom litigation toward the detection phases of crime control, the news media are featuring the techniques and problems of jury selection in more detail than before. Criminal trials almost inevitably receive more extended coverage than judicial decisions, if for no other reason than that full-scale trials are invariably longer. By implication, then, respondents who believe that most criminal defendants face a jury trial may be showing the influence of news exposure and cultural bias rather than--or as well as--years of exposure to Perry Mason-type advocacy.

Respondents were sometimes aware that a defendant could exercise a right one way or the other in this regard, but there was confusion as to the actual procedures, with some under the impression that defendants

can choose only then they plea-bargain. (In plea-bargaining, the issue is actually moot, since the defendant pleads guilty to a charge). A few respondents--all of them college graduates--said they knew from discussions with lawyers or from reading, that most cases are resolved by a judge. Others have simply inferred from reports of case overload and news accounts of plea-bargaining that the system cannot accommodate many jury trials.

The influence of cultural bias could sometimes be detected, however, as when respondents couched their answers in prescriptive or normative terms. Lenore M., a middle-aged college graduate said she would "like to think it's by a jury," and similarly, her husband Jack, could offer no reason other than his ideological conviction that trial-by-jury is inherently fairer than judicial decision-making.

A: I don't quite approve of one man having that much to say about something.

Q: So it's wishful thinking?

A: To a certain extent, but I think it should be. That is the way I think is right and unless I know any better, that is what I have to say.

While several respondents explained they picked "jury" because of reading so much in the papers about jury selection, others, particularly high school graduates, substantiated their answer with assumptions about what a criminal or a defense attorney might select, reasoning, for example, that a jury might be "more sympathetic" and hence preferable from the defendant's standpoint. Ernie D., a young salesman, concluded that both sides would probably prefer a jury, apparently drawing

on a reservoir of personal assumptions and cultural norms in making his assessment:

A: Well, the nature of the crime--the seriousness of the crime would tend--if you're convinced, you're gonna go away for a long time, so I think you want the maximum benefit and I think you have more of a chance with a jury than you do with just a single judge.

Q: You think people choose it?

A: Well, I think that on both sides, to make sure that this guy did and to put him away for good, they would prosecute using a jury.

Television, which may have influenced many of the respondents (.e.g., by reinforcing the notion of trial by jury through dramatization) was mentioned explicitly by only one respondent--Betty C., a middle-aged college graduate who mentioned television with relative frequency:

A: I don't know but I always assumed there was a jury for these things. I don't think a judge will decide a thing like that.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: Well, from things I've seen and read about.

Q: Things you've seen--what do you mean?

A: I mean TV shows where they have crime and punishment. It seems to me they're always trial by jury. Or most of the time. Very seldom by a judge, especially a violent crime.

Q: And things you've read?

A: Well, reading things in the newspaper, you

know, about juries.

Note that relevant experience (jury duty) was not necessarily a source of consensus on the question. While one of the two respondents who had served on a jury, Nancy O., said she knew, based on her experience, that the answer was "judge," the other, also a college graduate, concluded that juries made most of the decisions.

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What percent of all males who are employed work in law enforcement and crime detection? Is the figure closer to 1% (census) or 5% (TV)?

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This question is somewhat exceptional in that only personal experience/observation (and vague "feelings") were mentioned to substantiate the answers. News, as such, would not have been particularly helpful to respondents in dealing with this question, and they were therefore obliged to make some rough computation on the basis of their own daily observations and any other information they might have acquired on the composition of the labor force.

Predictably, respondents were hard-pressed to offer justifications for their answers (26 chose 1%) beyond what "seemed" right to them. To most respondents, 5% simply sounded "like too much," although a few made more explicit substantiating references to personal experience. Dan L., a young physician, explained:

I guess it's very rare for me to come across anyone who does that kind of work, and at times in my job, I've seen sort of a cross-section of people.

On the other hand, some respondents who over-estimated the proportion of police in the labor force seemed to base their responses on the high visibility of police in their own environment, alluding once

again, to personal experience. In fact, one reason for the higher number of TV responses in the high school-educated group may be that more of them are acquainted with or related to policemen and tend to over-generalize from their own small universe about the entire population. (Another equally plausible explanation for the difference is a weaker grasp of statistics. To individuals not accustomed to making statistical judgments, 1% may seem like an absolutely small figure, no matter how large the base).

C. Source Attributions: Fiction and Other Sources

As already emphasized, references to news were, quite predictably, an attributional leitmotif throughout the interviews. Nonetheless, there were a number of questions which, on the whole, elicited relatively fewer references to news, and at the same time, seemed to draw more heavily than other questions on fiction--particularly television, which provides a great deal of vicarious experience with crime. These questions can be categorized roughly as dealing more explicitly with police activities and procedures--aspects of "crime" about which news accounts may be less directly informative and less evocative than either direct or vicarious information.

Indeed, these fictional references, more typical of--but not exclusive to--the high school graduates, were frequently juxtaposed with "real life" attributions in such a way as to suggest that respondents invoked television to support (or elaborate on) "tableaux" which are seldom derived from first-hand experience. TV is, quite understandably, perceived to be a source of scenarios (processes, interactions, etc.) rather

than statistics, and in that sense, is easily and plausibly factored in with direct experience. Note again, however, that news and hearsay continue to be relevant.

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What kind of things do you think policemen spend most of their time doing?

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Since little of the clerical work policemen do is generally visible to the public (and, indeed, even TV portrayals of police focus largely on detection and apprehension of criminals) it was hypothesized that few respondents would recognize or allude to the fact that much, if not most, of police worktime is actually devoted to clerical duties. As expected, only a handful of respondents specifically mentioned paperwork; the prevailing impression is that police spend most of their time cruising the streets to spot or deter crime. This image is apparently derived primarily from real life observation-- respondents see police frequently and thus assume they know, on that basis, what police do-- although inferences about the function of those activities require additional assumptions which are possibly stimulated or inspired by television-viewing.

While there were some differences in the character of responses made by the high school and college graduates in the sample, neither the heavy viewers nor the high school graduates were more apt than other respondents to talk about crime detection. Where paperwork and bureaucratic procedure were cited as major police responsibilities, personal experience or, ironically, TV programs and movies, were mentioned as sources of that view. Exemplifying the potential corrective influence of experience is the comment made by Jean V., a young college graduate:

Q: (Question)

A: Petty things--paperwork, tickets, you know. They are involved with big things but I don't think it's the main.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: Well, just from my own experience. When my wallet was lifted and I had to go look at mugshots, it was just bureaucratic procedure because I had no idea what the girl looked like.

Note that Jean's readiness to generalize--correctly, in this case--on the basis of relatively limited experience may reflect a fairly common tendency to over-generalize from personal experience, even--perhaps especially--when the experience is a one-time event. Alternatively, Jean may have acquired this impression from a variety of sources and simply accounted for her general impression with one vivid, specific instance.

Jean's husband, Phil (a medium viewer with an exceptionally low cultivation score) also mentioned paperwork, apparently on the basis of experience, and possibly, reasoning or inference:

I think their job is probably, you know, pretty much like most jobs that require you to keep records. It's..there's as much detail and paperwork involved in a policeman's job as in any other type of desk job, even though theirs is certainly not a desk job.

As a point of interest, the older women in the higher education group tended to couch their answers in supportive or evaluative terms, describing not just what police do but how well they do it. In most instances, the verdict was favorable, for example:

A: You mean relative to their job?

Q: Uhuh.

A: I would just say investigating, patrolling, trying to do right. I like the police.

Q: I don't mean whether they're honest. I mean, what sorts of jobs?

A: Patrolling, protecting.

By contrast, the high school graduates--particularly, it seemed, the women--were more apt than the college graduates in the sample to complain about police accessibility. This reversal of sorts is surprising, since such individuals might have been expected to extend more sympathy or support for police than people with a higher education, who are, as a rule, culturally estranged from law enforcement personnel.

At least one respondent alluded to the discrepancy between real policemen and the television prototypes. Karen C. is a medium viewer whose answers frequently seem to reflect the explicit influence of television.

A: I don't know, Like I know a couple of guys that are cops and they don't seem to be as exciting as, well, the kind you see on TV. Well, maybe once a week, they have something exciting to do other than maybe write up reports or help a girl with a flat tire or whatever, you know. I guess too it depends on where your district is, whether there's a high crime rate there. But I think they would spend most of their time patrolling the streets and that kind of stuff. Not really involved in any big crimes.

Q: So you think the policemen on television have alot of exciting things to do?

A: Yeah, but they're only on once a week. They don't show you what they do the rest of the week. (Emphasis added)

It should be noted that police clerical work, though largely invisible to citizens in real life, is an aspect of the job receiving more incidental or background attention than previously on many current crime programs. (In Kojak and Policewoman, for example, complaints about paperwork are a conversational leitmotif, and filling out reports is frequently a bracket for the beginning or end of episodes.) It need hardly be added that most people have no "inside view" of the stationhouse other than what they see routinely on television.

It is thus not surprising that two of the three high school graduates (and heavier viewers) who mentioned paperwork cited television as a source of that perception. Fran L., a heavy viewer with a strong TV orientation (her involvement and faith in television are both high) pointed out that "at the end of every show, he says, 'Write out a report.'"

Sharon S., a young college graduate, imputed her view that police do a lot of clerical work to the movie Serpico and others in that genre

Q: (Question)

A: Paperwork.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: Just a gut-feeling. Maybe I've seen too many Serpico movies.

Q: Is that what Serpico spent his time doing?

A: Complaining about doing.

Serpico is a movie which apparently had more credibility than most crime movies (for college graduates and others) because it is known to be based on a "true story." In addition, though, any departure from the stereotypic police portrayal--the emphasis on paperwork in an action-oriented genre, for example--may be taken implicitly as "realistic" regardless of whether it is, in fact, accurate or is simply a novel but equally unrealistic variation on an old theme. That this contrast-effect can serve, potentially, to make new or novel elements plausible is suggested by the fact that most fictional references made in the context of this question are cited to support the idea that police have much paperwork, and not to support the view that they spend their time investigating and deterring crime--activities TV has traditionally portrayed. In any case, respondents need hardly mention television to reinforce the idea that police spend most of their time patrolling, etc., since respondents "see" police doing that themselves.

The next two questions relate to certain specific aspects of police behavior which are concerned with situations even more remote from the average person's direct experience, but which are occasionally reported or alluded to in news stories. As such, they elicit references to both news and television--the two most far-ranging sources of vicarious experience--and also prompt some mention of hearsay. The third question in this sequence is something about which news and experience provide few, if any, clues, thus forcing respondents to rely heavily, though still skeptically, on their TV experiences. Note that unlike the forced-choice cultivation items, these three questions were not formulated with

real world probabilities in mind, but are designed simply to elicit attitudes and accompanying source attributions.

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Do you think policemen ever search people's property for evidence without a warrant?

Do you think police ever plant evidence?

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Do you think private detectives ever search people's property for evidence without permission?

---

While these questions were developed less with specific TV or "real world" answers in mind, than with an interest in the information sources and justifications used to support responses, it should be noted that constitutional violations occur frequently in police and detective programs and that those who watch crime shows regularly have probably been exposed on numerous occasions to illegal searches by police. Such things do occur in real life, of course--presumably, less often--and are occasionally reported in the news.

It is not, therefore, surprising that nearly everyone in the sample (35) said they believed that policemen search property for evidence without a warrant, although the consensus probably also reflects, to some extent, the presence of the word, "ever," in the question: even respondents who do not think illegal search and seizure is a regular practice are reluctant to exclude all possibility of such an occurrence. Specific justification for believing police ever search illegally--beyond the probabilities implied by human nature--seemed to be based on what people had heard from friends (particularly in college), news stories, TV programs, and a general mistrust of police which was, predictably, strongest among the young and the better-educated but which

had also penetrated other demographic categories (see Appendix A).

Better-educated respondents were apt to express an ideological view that the kinds of people who join the police force are impatient and insensitive to civil rights. One young physician, Bill A., ascribed his belief that such things happened--though infrequently--to a "sort of basic paranoia and suspicion of the police which, in addition to newspapers and TV, comes with the movies and novels." This respondent reported no regular viewing of any TV crime shows and little, if any, regular viewing of other programs, but unlike most respondents in his category, cited television unself-consciously (it seemed) in justifying subsequent responses.

Mark S., another young professional with a more sympathetic view of police conduct (he thinks such things might happen "in the heat of apprehending somebody") described an imagined scenario where the police cajole rather than bludgeon their way into an illegal search. (Similar scenes were depicted by less well-educated and heavier viewing respondents as occurring regularly on television.) While reporting that he frequently reads about cases "where people have gotten off because correct procedures weren't followed," Mark S. nevertheless suggests that his impression came from novels or TV, "where it happens all the time." A reportedly sporadic viewer, Mark does watch two particular crime shows whenever he can and is both enthusiastic and thoughtful about this particular genre.

A combination of human nature and bureaucratic foul-up was also mentioned by every type of respondent, but most often by the high school

graduates in the sample, who seemed to attach less onus to illegal search and tended to impute such conduct to exigency or urgency rather than corruption or venality. Yet even the less-educated respondents occasionally evinced mistrust of police. Their sources seem to be TV news accounts of corrupt policemen, drug-related encounters (either word-of-mouth or--rarely--experience), and fictional portrayals. Consider the following exchange with Karen C.:

Q: (Question).

A: Yeah.

Q: How do you know?

A: I just think they do--I don't trust them.

Q: Why is that?

A: I saw a movie once about a policemen and since that day I don't like them all that much. It was Serpico. I really don't trust them now. And I have friends who are policemen!

Karen's husband, John C., a heavy viewer of TV crime shows, referred specifically to television to support his response. His explanation is an interesting amalgam of real world and television allusions, and it reflects his conviction that TV programs are adapted over time to conform to changing (legal and social) realities:

Q: (Question)

A: Well, you always see it on TV. In television programs.

Q: Any particular shows you remember it done on?

A: Offhand, I could probably say 'em but I might be wrong. I'd hate to name a show and be wrong...I think they're more careful now in the last couple of years on TV. See, before, at least what I remember, they would always break in and then worry about it later. Until the courts recently came out with that.

Q: You've noticed that they are more cautious now about doing that?

A: I have noticed it, yeah. They always have a search warrant with them. Like I was watching Police Story, and they went somewhere--I forgot where--and the guy goes, 'Do you have a search warrant?' And he takes the form right out of his pocket. (Emphasis added)

Claire F., an older, high-viewing high school graduate, was uncertain about whether police ever search illegally because she found it difficult to ascribe illegal behavior to her neighbor, who is a policeman (Karen C. also has wrestled with this dilemma). Claire pointed out, however, that her knowledge that a warrant is required and her general impressions of police conduct, come not from her neighbor but from "television programs, where they come in and he says, 'Do you have a warrant?' and they say, 'No,' or, 'We'll get one,' or 'Let us in now or we'll come back with a warrant.'"

Comments like these attest not only to the instructional impact of television drama, but also, to the social legitimacy of television as an information source, at least for many of the high school graduates. To the extent that others allude to dramatic episodes in justifying their responses, they are more likely to mention crime movies, which, for them, may have greater authenticity, or, at least, legitimacy, than ordinary

television programs.

Thirty of the respondents claim to believe that police plant evidence, although once again, the presence of the word, "ever" probably elevated the level of agreement. Respondents do not, in any case, believe it is done as a matter of course. Although education is apparently unrelated to responses, lighter viewing is associated with a greater tendency to suppose that police do (occasionally) plant evidence. (see Appendix A).

As with the previous question, respondents justified their answers with references to human nature and a general mistrust of police, news accounts, hearsay (particularly concerning drug-related incidents), the supposition--possibly grounded in television--that planting evidence is sometimes necessary to catch an elusive criminal, and occasional explicit references to fiction.

Some respondents--frequently, but not necessarily, the heavy viewers--couched their convictions in the form of a scenario in which the police plant evidence in order to frame a known pusher of drugs. For example, Don N., a fireman who watches television virtually all day in the firehouse and then continues to watch at home, claims to have inferred the following sort of situation from "the flow of talk" between policemen and firemen:

Well, let's say a cop's been a cop for 20 years, and suppose he knows a suspect and the suspect threw away whatever he had but he's seen the suspect previous to this have it on his

belongings. Maybe he would put something like, say, marijuana or pills or something on him.

Jerry F., a heavy viewer with only a high school education, draws directly from television to substantiate his answer:

Q: Do you think policemen ever plant evidence?

A: They might. They're human beings. They could be inculcated (sic) in a crime like anybody else. It's possible they would do it.

Q: Under what circumstances?

A: To protect themselves.

Q: How do you know this?

Q: I saw it on television programs. To protect himself he planted a gun or something.

Q: Do you remember the show?

A: I think it was Kojak, I think it was. (Emphasis added)

Jerry's wife Claire is also a heavy viewer of TV crime shows but despite her other substantiating references to television, she claims not to "go by TV shows at all" on this question, and says she does not believe police plant evidence "even though it happens there (on television) all the time." The very fact that Claire herself raised the discrepancy between her personal view and what she sees portrayed on television is reflective of her general faith in TV (evinced elsewhere) as a source of information about crime. On the other hand, she apparently has no hesitation about disputing the TV presentation if it is at odds with strong personal convictions.

Despite the presence of the word "private" in the question, "Do you think private detectives ever search people's property for evidence without permission?", a few respondents initially interpreted the question as referring to police detectives. The misapprehension was easily caught and corrected, but the frequency with which it occurred is perhaps an indication of the extent to which private detectives, ubiquitous though they may be in crime fiction of all sorts, are peculiarly absent or remote from most people's perceptions of real crime and law enforcement procedure. Respondents in all demographic and viewing groups readily acknowledge that their only "contact" with (and conceptions of) private investigators come from TV and other dramatic fiction. Private detectives are, as one respondent put it, a "fictional type of area" for viewers and non-viewers alike. In fact, despite repeated encouragement, six respondents refused to hazard any guess at all on the subject. Inasmuch as half were either medium or heavy viewers of TV and TV crime shows, it appears that even viewers regularly exposed to private investigators on television are not necessarily sure that those portrayals reflect reality.

The prevailing opinion was that private detectives do, at least sometimes, search people's property for evidence without permission (see Appendix A). Belief that they never make illegal searches was reported only by medium and heavy viewers of crime programs, a finding not easily reconciled with the fact that unauthorized searches and break-ins by private investigators are portrayed routinely on television.

but consonant with the finding that heavier viewers are less apt to believe that police ever plant evidence.

To the extent that respondents venture guesses about private detectives, the composite picture that emerges from these interviews seems to draw directly on television in certain respects, and in others, reflects TV indirectly in the sense that respondents striving to make a "realistic" assessment may invert or reverse the TV stereotype. For example, rather than assuming that detectives are gallant heroes, as portrayed on television, many respondents seem to regard private detectives as clever but slightly shifty individuals with ample opportunity to behave in unscrupulous fashion because they are less closely supervised than police. Verging more closely, perhaps, on the TV stereotype, is the viewpoint that since detectives have limited access to the information they require, they must therefore make forced or unauthorized searches to solve cases.

On rare occasions, personal experience could be factored into the assessment. Passing acquaintance, for example was cited by a married pair of middle aged college graduates with an enthusiasm for crime fiction of all sorts, but their common experience was apparently not a source of total consensus. Mr. O. said he knew such things were done but that he would not give details. His wife, who claimed also to have known some private investigators, said flatly, "they wouldn't do that. The only ones who do it are on television."

Although respondents generally expressed doubt about the authenticity of TV detectives, a few assume television portrays them more or

less accurately. George G. a middle-aged heavy viewer who is unskeptical about television, reveals a fairly ingenuous acceptance of detectives as depicted on TV:

Q: How about private detectives? Do you think they ever search property without permission?

A: I think that's what they try to do, that's what they get hired for. They can't go out and get a warrant, but they're hired to do the job without a warrant.

Q: How do you know that?

A: I don't know that but I think, just by watching television. There's a lot of these here private eyes that go on their own and try to find evidence on their own without a warrant. That's what they show on TV. You've probably seen it yourself. (Emphasis added)

Low viewing and better-educated respondents seldom resorted explicitly to TV portrayals to justify their perceptions of private detectives, but that does not, of course, preclude the possibility, or even the probability, of some such influence--particularly since for most people, crime fiction is the most readily available source of information on private detectives. Moreover, it is hard to have lived for any length of time in this culture without some exposure to the fictional gumshoe stereotype: a gallantly unscrupulous entrepreneur, smarter and, in some sense, more "profession" or competent than the police, despite limited resources.

Marge L., a young social worker who distains and actively avoids television (seeming, generally, to have resisted its influence) alludes

to this directly:

A: In their case, I guess I see them as somewhat better-educated but even less likely to be careful about those things.

Q: You said you felt they might be more educated. What do you base that feeling on?

A: I really don't know. I haven't watched them but I think I've sort of picked up some of the culture of the private eye shows on TV. I haven't read much--I don't know. I have no real basis. I can't defend it.

Another young college graduate who watches one or two favorite detective shows when he can and who has no apparent qualms about referring to television, said he believed that private detectives would have to search without permission in order to earn a living. Marge L's husband, Dan, a physician who reports viewing no crime shows at all, suggested his feeling the private detectives probably do make illegal searches came from The Conversation, a movie which, like Serpico, was mentioned without apparent self-consciousness by professionals who were otherwise unlikely to allude to fictional sources.

While television is mentioned explicitly by some respondents in conjunction with this question, despite--or perhaps because--there is little real world information available about private detectives, many respondents hesitate to generalize or even hazard guesses about them based on television portrayals alone. It is almost as if the invisibility of private investigators in real life sensitizes respondents to the possibility that they may be figments of television. Respondents apparently feel they can begin to assess TV portrayals of policemen (see Chapter VI)

because they have access to real life standards of comparison. With private detectives, however, they have no such standards: nothing to contradict what they see on TV, perhaps, but nothing to reinforce it, either.

Thus, paradoxically, TV may be especially influential in areas where viewers have some, but not extensive, comparison and confirmation data, precisely because viewers then consider themselves competent to test those TV portrayals, even though, in fact, they may not be.

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What do you think is the thing which leads to conviction on a murder charge most often? Scientific evidence (TV) or testimony of a witness (Philadelphia Court statistics)?

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This question drew an unusually large proportion of census responses from respondents, with the result that there was no clear link between either TV viewing or education and the belief that scientific evidence rather than testimony was determinative in most murder trials. Indeed, TV was sometimes used to substantiate "real world" responses (See Appendix A).

Here, as in some previous questions, fictional sources were supplemented by a "reasoning out" process, drawing on cultural conditioning, "common sense," and so forth. The real world answer, "testimony," was bolstered by essentially two lines of reasoning. One group of respondents argued that juries are naive ("not too bright"), easily swayed by courtroom theatrics, etc., and hence, more vulnerable to the emotional appeals of testimony. A second, smaller group argued that scientific evidence was inherently limited in nature and value, and that testimony

was really the only kind of direct, confirmatory evidence ever available. (The latter view more closely approximates "reality").

Lack of personal experience and real life familiarity with courtroom procedure led some respondents--college as well as high school graduates--to draw on vicarious courtroom experience in fiction. Nancy O., for example, alluded to Ironside (by which, presumably, she meant Perry Mason--both star actor, Raymond Burr) to substantiate her view that testimony was more important:

A: What leads me to believe that?  
Well, on old Ironsides (laughs)  
it's always the testimony that  
brings out the true facts.

Q: Do they often show trials on Ironsides?

A: Oh, yes.

Mrs. O's husband also chose the census response, but was one of the few to identify news as the source of his answer:

In the cases I read about, some police-  
man or civilian has witnessed the crime.

Bill A., a young, light-viewing physician, chose testimony because of the vague impression I've developed of all the trial shows, Watergate hearings, movies, all of which involve testimony." One of his contemporaries, Mark S., an enthusiastic mystery fan, also cited novels and TV as a basis for his answer.

Don N., a young fireman who watches television virtually all day and most evenings, cites television and (as in several previous questions) his semi-professional contact with police as basis for choosing testimony:

A: Well, if you have an eyewitness to the crime, I would say that would be stronger. If someone came in and shot a person in front of fifty people--say, I committed a crime and I dropped my wallet in the place where the crime was committed, well, I can always say that I lost my wallet whereas if someone seen me in that place, I think it would stand up more, the eyewitness, than just having my wallet with my name on it there. Now with the fingerprint--that would hold a stronger conviction than the eyewitness. The only thing about the eyewitness is that you have to prove if the witness is lying or not; and whereas the fingerprints, they speak for themselves, you know? But even if you have these scientific evidence, you still have to prove the person was there. An eyewitness is an open and shut case.

Q: Why do you feel that way? How do you know this?

A: I think maybe from looking at TV and things like this year and last year, I worked more, closer with cops than anything.

Q: What kinds of shows have led you to this conclusion?

A: I guess Police Story or Columbo goes the opposite way--he never has an eyewitness. He goes on evidence. (Emphasis added)

TV responses offered by college-educated women in the sample seemed to be based on a normative disapproval of witness testimony (e.g., "How do you know if the person claiming his innocence is valid or if the other person is saying it is?") and/or belief that witnesses can be discredited, whereas scientific evidence is (presumably) irrefutable. These respondents appear to have reasoned out their answers, largely on the basis of normative or ethical grounds, and they seldom, if ever, cit-

ed specific sources.

Responses offered by high school graduates were comparable in character to those of the college graduates. Respondents reasoned either that testimony was more persuasive, or conversely, that testimony was untrustworthy. One young secretary seemed to have drawn her view that technical evidence is decisive, from television (although she claims, elsewhere in the interview, that TV portrayals are "too general" to be authentic):

Q: Why do you say that (scientific evidence)?

A: Because the technology is so advanced now. They can tell the time of death to a pinpoint. What type of weapon and the angle of the blow and this type of thing. The criminology labs are fantastic.

Q: How do you know about the technology of crime labs?

A: Cause I wanted to join the police force and my husband won't let me.

Q: Have you read a lot about this or..

A: That, and too, they play a lot of it up on TV. (Emphasis added)

Fran L., an older clerk who likes crime and action programs also stressed crime technology, explaining:

You have to go by the television programs I watch. I watch Cannon, Streets of San Francisco, Mannix, Hawaii Five-0. So I have a lot of experience with detective work. We figure them out. We notice if the fellow's right-handed or left-handed. It's fun. (Emphasis added)

Although implicated by his wife in this amateur sleuthing, Frank

L. voluntarily distinguished TV procedures from real life crime detection, apparently on the basis of news and direct experience:

Well, I follow the murder trials and if there's nobody who sees the act, he's gonna get away with it...On TV, they solve them by the technical way. In real life, I think they solve it by witnesses. I don't think the average policemen knows how to. I know that when we were burglarized, they made no effort whatsoever to find out who the criminals were. It was only used as a statistic. They report it and turn it in to the police department, where it becomes a statistic. No fingerprinting.

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Do you think lawyers are permitted to lead a witness in court?

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Impressions of courtroom procedure derived from years of TV exposure are probably too diffuse to identify, but any discrepancy between TV portrayals and real courtroom situations would seem to be a useful starting point for research questions. One of the most apparent discrepancies has to do with rules governing leading questions: when they can and cannot be asked.

This question was devised on the basis of an assumption that most respondents had never witnessed court proceedings and would, therefore, have little access to information about trial procedures beyond fictional dramatizations they may have seen or read. As it turned out, only six had ever been in court. The rest would presumably be forced to rely on news summaries or extrapolations from fiction.

Attorneys raise frequent objection to leading questions in fictional portrayals of trial sequences (Perry Mason is deservedly famous for that) but dramatizations seldom make explicit the grounds for sustaining

or overruling these objections, thereby leaving an implication that leading questions are generally not permissible. There is, in addition, the implication that leading questions are an unethical and potentially potent legal device. In reality, however, lawyers may legitimately ask leading questions much of the time, more with the effect of speeding up the trial than shaping or distorting the outcome.

An attorney is permitted to address "leading questions" to any witness whom he has not called to the stand. Thus, leading questions may always be asked on cross-examination (interrogation of the opposing witness) but generally not on direct examination (interrogation of one's own witness) unless the court formally designates the witness as hostile or uncooperative. Final decisions on the appropriateness of examination procedure are, in all cases, a matter of judicial discretion, but it is important to note that leading questions are generally permitted under precisely those circumstances where a lay person might think a witness most needed "protection" against such devices--namely, when a witness is uncooperative or "unfriendly." This is because the restrictions are designed to prevent a sympathetic witness from submitting passively to an attorney's direction on the stand--not to protect an opposing witness from legal sophistry or trick questioning.

It seems safe to say that because of our long exposure to movies and programs like Perry Mason, with their vivid, plausible facsimile of trial, most of us feel that we have somehow seen a trial in process even if we have never been inside a courtroom. (Anecdotal evidence to that effect comes even from law students who, when witnessing trials for the first

time, often observe how like television it all is).

The respondents themselves provide further indication of television's capacity to shape popular perceptions of the courtroom. At least 32 believe lawyers are theoretically not supposed to lead a witness, and virtually all of them state that conclusion with relative certainty. On the other hand, all are sure, too, that lawyers "try to get away with it" whenever possible. Only two felt unable to give an answer, and the remaining six thought the practice acceptable. Those six seemed to have in common neither courtroom experience, education, nor viewing habits.

Indeed, even for respondents who had been in court, real life experience, such as it was, may have been contradicted or superceded by vicarious media experience, inasmuch as four of the five came away from their courtroom experience with the impression that leading questions were not permissible. (That is hardly surprising since it is not necessarily easier to extrapolate the rules of courtroom procedure in real life than it is from watching trials on television).

Respondents who took the minority view claimed to have drawn their inference largely from news, whereas respondents who said they believed leading questions were inappropriate or unethical repeatedly cited television to justify their answer. Even college graduates who seldom invoked TV to support any of their other responses, mentioned it in this context without hesitation. Note, for example, Jane A's comments:

A: Well, I know they're not supposed to.

Q: How do you know that?

A: Oh, I think from TV shows where the other attorney will say, 'Judge, he's leading the witness, objection,'--that sort of thing. So I gather it's something you're not supposed to do in court. I guess it happens a lot though.

Irv S., another young, light-viewing professional, cited TV drama as proof that it was inappropriate to lead the witness.

Q: Do you think lawyers are permitted to lead a witness in court?

A: Theoretically they're not, but I suspect they get away with an awful lot.

Q: What do you base your feeling on that theoretically they're not supposed to do it and that in fact they do get away with it?

A: That there's probably a lot of very poor lawyers and poor judges and that probably lots of courtrooms are run in a very shoddy way.

Q: What makes you think that lawyers are not supposed to lead witnesses?

A: Television. (He mimes): 'I object, your Honor, Counsel is leading the witness.'

Q: Seriously.

A: I'm dead serious. I've never been in a courtroom in my life.

One of the few respondents who supposed that lawyers could lead witnesses (although he had no grasp of the relevant procedural restrictions) cited both fiction and news sources in explaining his answer. Bill A. is a light viewer whose wife Jane, quoted above, used television to support her belief that lawyers are not supposed to lead

witnesses. Bill, however, feels that leading questions are a legitimate interrogation procedure:

Q: (Question)

A: Yes.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: I think as long as they are germane to the crime being tried, he is allowed to lead the witness to get any information he may want to get out.

Q: Have you ever been in court?

A: No.

Q: What makes you think lawyers can lead witnesses?

A: TV dramatizations. Oh, and Watergate.

Q: You think they asked leading questions?

A: Again, I'm getting it second-hand, but I followed it pretty closely and I got the impression from various transcripts that they did.

A few respondents alluded to news to substantiate arguments that leading questions were not permitted. Jean V., for example, made reference to rape cases she had read where women were made to seem promiscuous by defense attorneys, a consequence, she assumed, of leading questions. In one case, however, a respondent citing non-specific newspaper sources described these sources in a fashion which actually seemed more evocative of television than of news. Manny W. is a middle-aged college graduate and a medium viewer:

A: He may not be permitted but I think he does.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: When you read these cases in court, they describe the different ways of handling the person on the stand. They say, 'You put words in their mouth.' And I would call that leading the witness.

One of the few respondents to cite a publicized trial as evidence that lawyers do lead witnesses was Pat N., the young heavy viewer who refers regularly to neighborhood experience, and from time to time, to specific news accounts. Pat alluded here to a local rape and arson trial in which a defense lawyer successfully discredited an elderly witness's direct identification. Note, once again, the implicit assumption that a leading question is necessarily tricky and manipulative, or conversely, that to have manipulated a witness, a lawyer must have asked leading questions.

Better-educated respondents were apparently less reticent about mentioning television in this context than in others--although they were not so free with their allusions to TV as were the less-educated in the sample. Perhaps since they are often referring to a program which they have long ceased to watch (Perry Mason), there is less onus attached to the admission. Moreover, it did not occur to many of the respondents, college graduates included, that the TV representation might be inauthentic. This is conceivably because the TV portrayals tend to be relatively detailed, and they mimic an aspect of the law whose arcane technicality seems to set tighter limits on dramatic contrivance.

## CHAPTER VI RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENTS OF TV REALISM AND OF VIEWING CONSEQUENCES

### Section 1. The Meaning and Implications of Realism

It should, by this time, be evident that respondents sometimes resort to television to substantiate their ideas about crime and law enforcement, particularly when they are asked to respond to questions concerning those procedural aspects of criminal justice to which they typically have no opportunity for exposure. The implication is that respondents assume TV to be at least partially realistic and/or that regardless of their theoretical view of television, they will, at times, be forced to use it to fill gaps in their knowledge of the "real world" and to supplement other, more formally "credible" sources.

An interest in what people regard as realistic in fiction generally--and TV in particular--naturally raises questions about both the meaning of realism and its implications. In other words, what sort of theoretical consequences might be expected to follow from people's exposure to fictive material which they regard as realistic?

Realism may be defined as that quality in a work of art which promotes an impression of correspondence with the real world. It is a culturally relative concept, of course, and members of a society are socialized to apply certain common standards in assessing the realism or verisimilitude of an artwork. Nevertheless, there are individual differences in the way members of an audience judge realism. What one finds credible and compelling, another may reject as artificial and implausi-

ble--not necessarily because events portrayed are seen as impossible but sometimes because the creation and stylistic arrangement of elements are such as to make the fictive quality of the material intrusive, encouraging disbelief and non-involvement rather than fostering conviction and empathy. "Realism" connotes less a characteristic of an artwork itself than a relationship between a work of art and a member of an audience.

A further difficulty in defining realism with any precision is the fact that the concept of correspondence, which is central to realism, can be applied to various dimensions of an artwork: the physical appearance of the characters and the technological nature of the medium itself (e.g., cartoons versus films), the plausibility or accuracy of the storyline, the intensity of the emotional response it elicits, and so forth. The kinds of emotional responses provoked by a cartoon can be powerful and moving, even though the genre itself is less literally representational than many others. Such symbolic evocation can inspire powerful emotional responses--and correspondence--without being mistaken for realism in any physical sense. Conversely, representations which are real (e.g., a newsreel) or realistic need not trigger a profound emotional response in an audience simply by virtue of their verisimilitude. This distinction is important to maintain, since it would be wrong to suppose that realism per se is always either a necessary or sufficient condition for "influencing" (moving or instructing) an audience.

It is also important to bear in mind the distinction between that which is real and that which is realistic. There is no requirement that a "realistic" artwork be rigorously faithful to reality. Realism im-

plies an evocation of life rather than a literal reproduction. Indeed, that which is literally true-to-life may fail to evoke a strong sense of correspondence in spectators because individuals do not test art in the same way they "test" reality. Thus, veridical conventions (like "cinema-verite") which attempt to mimic life closely, can actually distance an audience from a work of fiction by diminishing or disrupting the continuity of major dramatic elements. Frequently, what makes for an effective transposition from reality to realism is not so much what is included in an artwork as what is left out.

Audience assessments of realism in any fictive medium or genre are constrained by the fact that the very features which cause people to perceive material as lifelike may tend to escape notice or comment. Christian Metz has observed in a discussion of film verimilitude (1967) that those conventions which tend to foster a sense of realism are, paradoxically, least apparent to the observer. Their very efficacy depends--and may, in some sense, be measured by--their invisibility.

Previous research on viewer interpretation of filmed material indicates that two different interpretative strategies--"attribution" and "inference"--may be distinguished, and that each implies a different set of assumptions about the fundamental nature of the communication (film) being viewed (Worth and Gross, 1974). Attribution, the less sophisticated of the two responses, imputes meaning to the stimulus without recognizing or acknowledging the intention of an "auteur" to create meaning by selecting and arranging elements. It assumes, in effect, that something existed and was then recorded, or at least, that

"thing which could happen to anybody" (to borrow one respondent's assessment of certain TV program plots) without necessarily using it as a guide for their own personal behavior.

Conversely, people may tacitly internalize values and expectations, even from fiction which they regard as, on the whole, unrealistic--possibly because they may take for granted the verisimilitude of certain elements and events portrayed even while dismissing the gestalt as unrealistic, or perhaps because material classified as superficially unrealistic may still be capable of evoking an emotional response strong enough to modify their values and expectations in real life contexts.

In this regard, it is important to note the distinction made by Gerbner and Gross (1976) between the foreground of a work of fiction--that is to say, plot specifics, characters, and so forth, all of which viewers will normally understand are "inventions"--and the background--which is to say, contextual features, such as setting and procedure, which may be taken tacitly as representative of "the real thing." Thus, viewers who recognize that, say, Kojak is a made-up character may nevertheless take for granted that the way he behaves and the sort of procedures followed on the program represent a realistic portrayal of policework.

This chapter examines respondents' views of TV realism and their reported beliefs about the effects TV may have on viewers. The analysis is based on responses given to a series of questions, most of them agree-disagree statements. Although both the subject of the questions and

the subsequent probes encouraged respondents to qualify and equivocate, rough binary coding of responses was also undertaken to provide some gauge of group and sub-group reactions (see Appendix B). Generally speaking, the high school graduates and the heavy viewers in the sample see television as more reliable and more instructive about life than do the college-educated respondents and the lighter viewers. Note that reactions to television crime shows are singled out for separate analysis.

## Section 2. How Respondents Judge Realism on Television

A fundamental question implicit in all this is: what do respondents mean when they describe fiction (in particular, TV fiction) as "realistic?" Their remarks indicate, first of all, that the better-educated respondents are more critical of TV, and more exacting in their requirements, although apt to impute realism to things they feel are of a higher quality. The comments also suggest that when someone describes fiction as "realistic," he does not necessarily mean to imply a belief that such a thing could happen personally to him, or could happen to anybody else with any frequency. Many respondents will accept dramatizations of the atypical or the remote as realistic so long as they seem plausible: that is, could be conceived of as happening to someone somewhere. Standards of plausibility naturally reflect personal values, experience, education, and so on, although with respondents who believe generally that TV is unreal, the categorical judgment or assump-

tion may be so pervasive as to inhibit the suspension of disbelief in almost any TV viewing situation, regardless of the particular program.

Analysis of respondents' comments about why they find television in general (and certain shows in particular) realistic or not made it possible to identify four basic elements relevant to those judgments. The first might be identified loosely as setting: The physical and socio-economic features which locate and describe the situation and lifestyle of the characters.

The second feature is problems--in effect, plots--portrayed: Do they represent "real" or plausible problems in the sense that they could happen to someone?

The third element is problem resolution: How are the problems dealt with; how inevitable and convenient are the solutions; and in what sort of time frame are they resolved? (This aspect is in some sense structural, although content considerations are still implicit).

Finally, the fourth general element respondents consider is characterization: Do the characters act and interact in recognizable ways? Note that standards of "recognizability" need not be drawn from real life experience, but may derive from a variety of sources, including fiction.

These are focal points for respondents' assessment of TV realism rather than criteria per se. The criteria used to test the plausibility of problems, characters and so on, are ultimately personal, sometimes idiosyncratic standards of lifelikeness which respondents presumably draw from their own experiences, from their knowledge and assumptions

about the world, and also, from their assumptions about the way the media deal with reality.

These four elements do not constitute a formal hierarchy in any sense, although the first and second seem to be more salient to less-educated respondents, whereas the college-educated respondents were inclined to examine the dynamic, structural aspects of fiction--namely, character interaction and problem resolution. What is probably the more significant difference between high school and college graduates in their assessments of TV realism, however, is that high school graduates are less stringent in the way they "test" TV for authenticity, whereas college graduates bring to bear a greater sophistication about the world and a greater a prior skepticism about the way television represents it.

### Section 3. Respondent Assessments of Television Realism

Respondents were asked directly how realistic they felt more TV shows are, and later, how realistic they felt most TV crime shows are. They were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements: "Watching TV drama\* is a good way to learn about life," and "Television shows you the real life problems of different kinds of people." Much data on respondents' views of TV realism were culled from answers to these questions.

Respondents' assessments of television realism represented a continuum of reactions from extreme cynicism to credulity, with few re-

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\*Because the term "drama" was found in the pre-test of be ambiguous, it was qualified in the interview with the following explanation: "By which I mean TV series, like comedies and soap operas--anything other than variety shows or non-fiction, etc."

spondents so skeptical as to see no authenticity in TV portrayals, and few so credulous as to find TV utterly convincing. Most respondents find TV a "mix," by which they mean that certain shows are more realistic than others, and that most shows contain elements of contrivance and realism (some, for example, are seen as presenting real and valid themes in a contrived or hyperbolized fashion).

High school graduates (and heavy viewers) in the sample were, however, more apt to see television as instructive about life than are college graduates (and light viewers). Implicit in all these assessments is respondents' general assumption that they are competent to distinguish the authentic from the unreal on TV without much risk of error.

At one extreme was George C., a heavy and especially naive viewer who assumed:

Most of the shows are realistic because if they weren't, they wouldn't be able to produce them on TV.

Mr. G's remarks frequently reflect that sort of attributional perspective. At the other extreme was Lenore M., a middle-aged college graduate who suggested, paradoxically, that the old-style slapstick was more realistic than contemporary situation comedies simply because it did not aim or pretend to be real. Lenore is acutely aware, in watching television, of the manipulative presence of an "auteur" who is attempting not simply to entertain, but to, in some sense, delude her. While this respondent does not disapprove of realism as such (she appreciates shows which are, in her words, "well-done") she is evidently hostile to television and like some other college graduates, anxious to resist manipulation by that medium. What she sees as most egregious about television

is not its obvious fakery but its potential to deceive her with more subtle distortions.

Q: What are some of the ways you feel they (most TV shows) depart from reality?

A: From shows that I've seen five or ten minutes of or know about--I guess there are Archie Bunkers in the world. I don't think that's really the way it is. I think that's a very sad social commentary--not realistic at all. Or a Mary Tyler Moore show, which I've seen five or ten minutes of. I'm sure there are very sweet females in the world but not quite like that. Or jobs that are quite like that. I think realism might go back farther to some of the old Lucille Ball Shows. Those are probably more realistic than some of the things that are thrown at us. I've caught five minutes of Maude just dodging in and out when I go into my sister's home occasionally. I say, 'Is it over?' and I sit down for five minutes and I request permission to turn the set off because I don't really wish to see any more. I think it's as far off as the movies in the thirties.

Q: Why do you feel Lucille Ball might be more realistic?

A: Well, as crazy as it was, there was no pretense of relevance. I think there's an awful lot of pretense today. (Emphasis added)

Note that Lenore makes pointed reference to the infrequency and involuntary character of her exposure to television ("five minutes"). She feels confident that these shows are not realistic--although they try to be--but has only, by her telling, caught five or ten minutes of each

one, and only under duress.

Perhaps the only respondent who was as negative about television as Lenore was Marge L., also a college graduate but in the younger age group. While acknowledging that she believes TV "starts with situations that people perceive as real," she reported that she felt most of those core situations were hyperbolized beyond any redeeming authenticity. For Lenore, explicit artifice was somehow more "real" (because less deceptive) whereas for Marge, who watches only educational network programs and occasional specials, dramatic quality is almost synonymous with realism, as suggested by the following comment:

(TV) doesn't remain real. With the exception of some very well-produced, well-things like The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman--which was, I think, outstanding and I think it was lauded as being outstanding because it's so rare. But anything else that would try to depict the life of a black would be non-authentic.

Probes following up the general question about TV realism asked respondents to comment on the lifelikeness (or lack thereof) in shows they especially liked, and remarks suggest that respondents frequently like shows which they regard as totally unrealistic. One, a college graduate, said that the more far-fetched the situation, the more she enjoys it, and others suggested that greater realism might actually be a drawback because they want television to entertain them rather than to mimic the world faithfully. One of these was a college graduate whose forced error responses and follow-up comments seem to reflect a heavy emphasis on news and experience. Said Phil V.:

...Everyday life or everyday drama if you want to call it that, doesn't work out the way you see it on TV. At least I don't think so...It's not what TV's for. You want a documentary program, you're doing something special--fine. I'd rather not see our entertainment go the same way our lives are gonna be.

Q: So you feel it shouldn't be real?

A: No. TV is escapism. TV is meant to be entertainment. It's meant to be informative too but you don't have to have your everyday programs that you--well, like what you sit back with for an hour to be the same kind of thing you've just walked in from the streets, (Emphasis added)

While this viewpoint was by no means universal--that is to say, many respondents do place a premium on authenticity--there was no apparent pressure to rationalize or justify the enjoyment of fanciful, unreal programs, beyond pointing out that TV is, as Phil observed, "meant to be entertainment."

#### A. Setting

It has already been mentioned that one element of TV drama which respondents assessed (for plausibility) was the setting of the program, meaning, broadly, location, socio-economic characteristics, etc. Setting was given explicit voluntary mention only occasionally, however, and almost invariably by high school graduates who specifically pointed out the difference between their own lifestyle and the sort portrayed on television. One, Joe B., is an insurance salesman who watches little television.

- A: Well, I don't think they're realistic at all.
- Q: In what way do you think they're not realistic?
- A: Well, they're the same as movies generally. They're not true-to-life. They're meant to entertain.
- Q: Can you think of any specific examples of how they're not realistic?
- A: You would get the idea that most people live in lavish apartments and luxury-type penthouses and that sort of thing. Most people live like we do--at least the way I do. I don't know how you live. All of us are struggling to make ends meet every week. It isn't one round of cocktail parties after another, (Emphasis added)

Similarly, Rose G. (wife of the man who supposes TV "has to" be realistic) was derisive, even hostile, in describing soap opera characters who, for all their trials, seem perennially well-groomed and affluent. It is, indeed, the first thing which comes to her mind when she is asked about TV realism:

- A: They're nice and rich. You know what? They're never dirty. Do you know what I mean? They can scrub a floor and they're never dirty. And they don't have no servants and their house is always clean, supper's always ready.
- Q: Who are you talking about?
- A: The Edge of Night. Their supper's always ready. She's always dressed to kill and I look like a ragpicker.
- Q: I gather you don't think that's realistic?
- A: No, I don't, (Emphasis added)

Note that the baseline for comparison or evaluation in both cases is respondents' own lifestyle: Mr. B. is "struggling to make ends meet" and Mrs. G. says she looks unkempt at home. Yet most respondents seem to accept the discrepancy between the lifestyle portrayed on television and the way they themselves live because it is expected that TV will avoid "the mundane" as one respondent put it. The fact, for example, that virtually all network crime programs except Kojak are set in California is something respondents take (to judge by their lack of comment) as a matter of course.

One might hypothesize that whereas the college graduates in the sample may not necessarily find the "upscale" TV lifestyles jarring or discrepant, the high school graduates in the group often do not feel competent to evaluate their authenticity, and so accept the TV image as representative of someone's lifestyle. For example, Fran L., a heavy-viewing high school graduate with what appears to be a strong TV orientation (i.e., a heavy, credulous viewer) assumes that the program, Hawaii Five-0, "shows how they live in Hawaii."

While one college graduate commented indirectly on television's affluent settings, his remarks were, predictably, on a more abstract and theoretical plane. Irv S., a young professional who watches little television, suggested that TV is written and programmed to represent a "consumer view of society," with the implication that TV fiction fosters or supports an image of opulence. He was unable to be more explicit or concrete, however.

I'm not sure there are sponsors sitting

back and telling the television writers you have to make your characters consume but I think there's a general philosophy in the industry that supports that.

## B. Problems

While setting was a focus for relatively little comment or criticism, the range of problems dramatized on television was discussed in great detail. Respondents were asked specifically whether they thought TV taught people about "real life" problems, but they usually initiated discussion of that point themselves (prior to hearing the question) when asked whether television is "a good way to learn about life." Typically, respondents believe that even while television may be exaggerated, contrived, etc., it often presents real problems that people might face, and at least in that respect, is realistic. Indeed, some respondents believe many of the problems dramatized on television to be derived from real life incidents. Said Claire F., a high school graduate who watches a great deal of television and uses it as a frequent reference:

They usually pick their stories from things that have happened somewhere around.

Kathleen B., another middle-aged high school graduate whose husband, Joe, objected to opulent TV settings, also finds TV problems convincing. She watches relatively little television (and avoids crime shows altogether because "they seem so real" to her). Kathleen explained:

Well, I think a lot of these things are

true-to-life. I can see a lot of them happening... Oh, I don't know--problems with money and things like that. They could happen to anyone. (Emphasis added)

The situation comedies, although too saccharine for some, too impossibly crisis-ridden for others, struck certain people--high school-educated women in particular--as realistic in the sense that they deal with problems that do occur. For that reason, Marcie D., a heavy-viewing secretary whose involvement with TV prompts her to discuss shows routinely at work, describes Rhoda as "today's life." Marcie is also especially impressed with Kung Fu because it "sets the best example of all the TV shows" and is "based on truth and honesty," but she feels that situation comedies are more "true-to-reality."

Q: What about them makes them seem real to you?

A: Because I can fit myself into the situations.  
(Emphasis added)

While Marcie is presumably able to identify with the sorts of dilemmas dramatized in sit-coms because they seem to her consonant with "today's life," Karen C., another young secretary (and also, by various indications, receptive to TV imagery and influence) thinks television is unlike her own life, but not necessarily unrealistic on those grounds. She expects a discrepancy; the fact that she, like Kathleen (quoted above) can imagine TV problems afflicting other people is, for her, an adequate test of their "reality."

Q: How realistic do you feel most TV shows are?

A: Some of them are. Like I said, they're

not realistic to my life 'cause I don't do that much. I can believe some of the things could happen.

Q: What sorts of things are you thinking of?

A: Like some of the crime shows, I can believe, you know, that some of the crimes could happen that way. Some of them are a little outrageous, like McCloud. I know I can't picture a guy riding down New York City on a horse. You know, in the middle of Manhattan. All in the Family is true to a lot of people's life. I don't really believe there's one family like that. And like MASH, I do think that's probably the way it was then. That could convince me. I would really believe that.

Q: So a lot of shows, you feel, are fairly realistic?

A: They are. Like, they could happen.  
(Emphasis added)

Note that while Karen mentioned mostly shows that "would convince" her, she cites one less credible example of a program she disbelieves because of an "outrageous" (i.e. obtrusively implausible) feature. She cannot conceive of a man riding horseback in Manhattan, and indeed, needs no specialized or "inside view" of crime to assess and reject such a portrayal as unlikely. Therefore, she doubts the authenticity of McCloud, although she accepts certain other crime shows because the distortions and exaggerations are typically less visible, and pertain to the more technical aspects of crime (which Karen can less readily evaluate).

Similarly, she is not jarred by anything in, say, MASH, presumably because she has no prior conception of the Korean War which might com-

pete with the televised version--or perhaps because the show seems to her so compelling that it dislodges or supercedes any relevant preconceptions she might have. In that sense, it "convinces" her.

Karen's husband John also looks toward TV comedy for illustrations of people and their problems.

A: Like the show Good Times. They show some of the problems of the black people. All in the Family shows you some of the problems of being like Archie, or middle class, and the problems he comes up against. Although he's too stupid to see it, the rich people are sitting on top--that's the people he should really be against. Most of his energy's spent fighting the black people who are, most of them, in the same income bracket he's in.

Broader representation of various ethnic groups and their "characteristic" problems is taken by many other viewers as indicating heightened realism. Ernie, for example, is a fairly sophisticated, medium viewer of television whose wife Marcie can "fit" herself into situation comedy dilemmas. Ernie believes that television is now more "relevant" than it used to be.

Q: So you think they're showing a wider variety of people?

A: Yeah. The good guy's not always white and the bad guy's not always black.

Q: Do you mean racially or character-wise?

A: Racially and symbolism. The ethnic groups are demanding that you don't show them all one way all the time.

Ernie's wife Marcie thinks Good Times is an especially instructive show for essentially the same reason:

A: That to me is black people in reality--  
how they live, the problems they have.  
 I think it has awakened the public to  
 the real problems they have.

Q: So you think it's a realistic show?

A: I would think so.

Q: How do you know that?

A: I don't know. But it takes place in  
 a Chicago slum--how hard it is for the  
 father, a black man without an educa-  
 tion, to get a job, raise children.  
 (Emphasis added)

Marcie's faith in Good Times, while perhaps extreme, is hardly atypical. It suggests that TV need only introduce a new (and plausible) element into its repertoire--in some way counter, alter, broaden, or, in effect, play off, prior content--to create the illusion for many viewers that the new material is authentic. Many respondents, for example, see the unorthodox mannerisms of Kojak as more believable than the conventional police image. Such calculated shifts in content or style, because they qualify or contradict previous stereotypic portrayals, may be given credit for greater accuracy than they deserve, following reasoning that the TV producers are finally delivering "the real thing."

One category of program discussed with considerable cynicism by high school graduates was soap operas. Respondents perceive these shows as highly exaggerated and melodramatic, in great part because, (as Karen C. complained) they show improbable concentrations of problems in small

communities:

Q: Are there any programs you can think of that would never happen?

A: Well, every one of the soap operas.

Q: I notice you watch General Hospital.

A: Yeah, like them. I must say, I definitely wouldn't believe that one small group of people could have so many problems and so many marriages.

Q: Obviously, it isn't realism that draws you to the radio every day.\*

A: No, it's not. I've been watching it since I was a freshman in high school. I don't know what draws me to it. All my girlfriends--we always watch it. It gets to the point where it's almost a comedy. (Emphasis added)

Note that Karen, like many respondents, dismisses soap operas as entirely unrealistic, stressing instead social motivation as her reason for continuing to follow them. Her comments and those of others suggest that soap operas are something to discuss with peers, a social nexus or interest in common and a format which many viewers apparently "love to hate." Indeed, soap operas--despite their obvious popularity--bear the brunt of much criticism regarding the number and intensity of problems which afflict a small interrelated community of actors. Betty C., for example dismissed soap operas as "crazy" and "ridiculous," and while she also finds nighttime shows exaggerated, she "somehow" does not "mind them as much."

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\*Karen listens to WABC radio at work when she can.

Respondents' acute sensitivity to soap opera hyperbole is interesting, given their relative tolerance for the exaggeration on a variety of evening programs. It might be argued that the ongoing, unfolding nature of soaps and the interconnectedness of so many tragedy-stricken characters, make soap operas seem more hyperbolic than single, non-serialized episodes which have neither "colonies" of victims nor prolonged problem development and resolution. In particular, respondents' whose perceptions of TV reflect a more attributional interpretation (for example, confusion of the real time frame in which the show takes place with the dramatic time frame outlined in the plot) may find the attenuated pace of soaps more incredible, ironically, than the telescoped plot development of nighttime programs. Consider, for instance, the following remark by Don N., a young fireman:

These different soap operas, a lady might  
be on there for 18 months and be pregnant.  
Am I supposed to believe that pregnancy  
lasts for 18 months?

Better-educated respondents in the sample--for whom TV exaggeration tends to outweigh or distort any instructional value it might potentially have--are more inclined to cite special programs and documentaries as examples of TV's capacity to illustrate real life problems. They complain that television caricatures people and their situations, often alluding, in the criticisms, to those same programs hailed by less-educated respondents as instructive or illustrative of real problems. Typical is the comment made by a young teacher, Barb S., who explained:

TV shows deal with problems that are real  
but then go one step past real--or one step

short of,

Marge L., who looks only to educational TV and specials for realism, and who implicitly identifies what she perceives as dramatic quality with realism, said:

I think it starts out with situations that people perceive as real. I think that the treatment they receive is, as I said, simplified or distorted so it doesn't remain real.

Several respondents also pointed out that the sort of problems portrayed most frequently on television were extraordinary, and thus, not statistically representative of what happens in the world or society at large. One of those was a high school graduate, Brad K., but more typically, high school graduates tended to be fairly accepting of the discrepancies they perceived between what normally happens to them and what happens to TV characters. Whereas many of the high school graduates may simply be reluctant to use their own personal experience as a measure or gauge of cultural probabilities and a basis for actively criticizing TV themes, Brad K. believes that The Waltons is particularly realistic because the problems portrayed are non-violent and non-criminal in character:

They have their own problems. It's not just major problems where everybody's getting shot. Sometimes they get a little far-fetched--real bad illnesses or something, and they come back or they have an illness that they shouldn't be able to walk from and all of a sudden they start walking. But most of the time, it's kinda realistic.

In a similar vein, Irv S., a young architect, observed:

In an average evening, you can probably watch 15 people get killed on television. Easily. And that just doesn't happen in a normal environment. I guess if you went nationwide, there are probably 15 homicides in an evening. But they're not all happening in one place.

Celia J., an over-all light viewer and middle-aged college graduate, said she finds Mary Tyler Moore and Rhoda more realistic than most shows simply because she doesn't "feel there's that much crime around..

I think the other is more representative of life. More low key. More natural.

Her husband, Alex, suggested that some of the problems presented in situation comedies were real--not necessarily realistic--in the sense that they allude to, derive from, and often enlarge upon, problems that do exist. He cites, as an example, All in the Family:

Q: You like All in the Family--do you think that's more realistic than some of the others?

A: I don't think All in the Family is realistic. It handles problems, it handles real problems in a very funny way. You might say it's more realistic than most of the others because the issues are real.

Q: But not necessarily the characters or situations?

A: Not necessarily the characters, not necessarily the situations. But the way he goes around to the income tax examination and he finds a black auditor and he wants to give him a free ride to Harlem. It brings in a real problem, although the character is not necessarily realistic. I think he's too much,

Two college graduates who were more convinced of the instructional value of television than most others are both middle-aged women who seemed to be relatively credulous about many of the things portrayed on TV, despite making an almost ritual disclaimer at the outset. Isabel W., while denying belief in TV's general authenticity, finds shows like The Jeffersons and All in the Family instructive about ethnic lifestyles and attitudes. Similarly, Betty C. suggested that Sanford and Son had been instructive to her about the problems of certain types of people:

Well, I've never been in contact with any colored junkmen. I don't know anything about the kinds of lives they're leading.

It would probably be fair to say that Mrs. C. still does not know anything about colored "junkmen" but she has the impression that such situation comedies have actually expanded her cultural horizons. Like Marcie D. (discussed earlier), she has been misled by the material's relative novelty into assuming that it must be fairly authentic--or better, at least, than no contact at all with the type of people portrayed.

### C. Problem Resolution

While it was common for respondents to view TV problems as, in some sense "real," it was also common for them to point out that the solutions to problems are frequently not true-to-life, particularly in the sense that TV problems are invariably solved. This recognition was not limited to the college graduates, although they seemed more alert to the structural and thematic contrivance necessary to bring TV dramas

to a satisfying and convenient ending.

One high school graduate who did volunteer references to problem-resolution on TV was John C., a young truck driver who alluded with relative frequency to television throughout the interview. He describes television as "fifty-fifty--half of it's fake and alot of it's what life is really about."

Q: Can you think of particular shows you think are more fake or less fake than others?

A: I guess your shows like Hawaii Five-0 and shows like that. Some of the way they find out about crimes is too convenient. I'm almost positive in my own mind that in real life it ain't that easy to solve these crimes. Or else we wouldn't have as many crimes.

College graduates in the sample seemed more apt than those who attended only high school to criticize the serendipitous and invariably happy endings which characterize TV drama. Phil V. catalogued the sort of misconceptions a person might acquire from television as follows:

All cops know Kung Fu and can knock out 15 guys at one time. If you drive your car down the middle of the street at 97 miles an hour, more than likely all the lights'll be in your favor and you'll swerve and won't hit anybody. You can hit somebody over the head with a lead pipe and he gets up off the ground later with a minor concussion. If you have money problems, don't worry about it--somewhere along the line, especially if you're Doris Day, some great-uncle will die and leave you with a couple of million. All you've got to do is keep your nose to the grindstone and life will really come up and reward you in the end.

Alex J. made a similar comment, noting also that characterization is always simplified on TV so that viewers can easily identify whom they want to "win":

Well, number one, you will see in TV dramas that the good guy always wins and the baddies are defeated. Well, that's not true, it's far from true. This is a very important shortcoming. You're not entertained if you don't see what you want to see. So you want to see that people who are sympathetic to you will succeed against ones who aren't and the characters are created so that you can easily make up your mind. The ones you like will be the winners and the ones you don't like will lose.

Another feature of problem resolution that was discussed, although somewhat less frequently, was the "unreal" pace of the problem resolution on TV. Said Jane A., a young psychologist:

The other problem with TV that makes them unrealistic is that they all have resolutions within definite periods of time. And life just isn't like that.

However sensitive high school graduates may have been to the contrivances needed to resolve shows in 30 minutes or an hour, this feature of TV drama was not something they were as apt to criticize or comment about in this context, particularly not in reference to programs other than crime shows. Indeed, it has already been suggested that the protracted development of soap operas, while in some sense more closely analogous to the ongoing time frame of real world problems, seems more "ridiculous" to some viewers, partly because the protraction itself serves to underscore and hyperbolize the problems portrayed. A "real" time span enacted almost

literally on television can easily seem never-ending; paradoxically, a telescoped episode presented and resolved in the space of say, an hour, may seem more appropriate--more "real"--to viewers schooled in that convention than the serial.

#### D. Characterization and Character Interaction

Another criteria applied frequently by respondents is the realism (or plausibility) of the characterization and the way in which characters interact (speak and relate) with one another. Respondents were particularly apt to broach this aspect of TV dramatization in connection with the statement: "If a person watches a lot of TV drama, he might get a mistaken idea of the way things really are." The theme of these comments was, in effect, that people on TV don't usually behave the way "real" people would, a judgment drawn directly, in most cases, from respondents' own perceptions of the way they themselves behave, and their assumptions and experiences pertaining to certain professional categories (e.g., physicians).

Most of the respondents in the sample were critical of TV characterizations, but predictably, college graduates tended to be less tolerant of character excess, even though they did occasionally acknowledge identifying with particular characters. They were also more apt to talk critically about the dynamic interactive aspects of TV characterization--for example, the way TV characters relate to one another--than were the high school graduates in the sample.

Jane A., a young college graduate, claims to identify personally with Rhoda because of an ethnic parallelism, but she suggests that the character is misleading to viewers in the sense that she is not typical in dress or lifestyle of America's national population, nor even entirely representative of the group she is supposed to belong to:

The problem is, you'd never find a person who--just as you'd never find a person who's the average, you'd never find a person who's this extreme stereotype.

Her husband, Bill, (who is a physician) couched most of his criticism of television in terms of misleading professional stereotypes,

Q: What sorts of mistaken ideas might they get.

A: In anticipating the responses in real life to be the sort as you see on TV. In anticipating all doctors to be like Marcus Welby, all lawyers to be like Perry Mason, all policemen to be like Barney Miller. Various stereotypes on which TV dramas are based.

Jane herself made a similar comment about medical stereotypes, even though she finds medical shows to be "somewhat realistic" in the sense that they deal with real medical problems:

I think some of the medical shows tend to be somewhat realistic, although I think they're very unrealistic in their portrayal of the doctor. They portray doctors as an overly committed bunch of guys and they're not all that committed. They're people first.

Ordinary (non-professional) interactions and interpersonal relationships on television frequently strike respondents--particularly

college graduates--as inconsonant with what they have experienced personally. Jean V., a young schoolteacher, noted the bravura with which TV characters seem to cope with traumatic situations.

- Q: See if you can be more specific than that. For example, if a person came from Mars or something and they saw television and they thought that it was a representation of life in America, what sort of mistaken impressions might they come away with?
- A: If they saw soap operas, they might think we all walk around everyday looking nice and having tremendous personal crises that are solved over cups of coffee that no one ever washes the dishes from. People never really get hysterical on TV--like your husband's just been murdered and you're standing there calmly identifying the body. I think it's just the over-dramatization that leads me to believe that it's just not true-to life.
- Q: You said over-dramatization and then you just talked about calmly identifying bodies. Do you mean that people are either too emotional or they're too cool sometimes?
- A: They're not being for real. They're not expressing the emotions that one expresses when it really happens. The palpitations, breaking out in a cold sweat, throwing up. These things happen and they're never there. (Emphasis added)

Similarly, Sharon S. commented on the "unreal" way families interact on television:

I just finished my internship (occupational therapy) so when I see some of these

counselors trying to counsel the people and I see the way they react, it irks me. The way husbands and wives talk to each other are not realistic. The way they talk to their children.

Q: How would you characterize the way husbands and wives on television talk? And the way they talk to their children as compared to real life?

A: How would I characterize it?

Q: What gets you as not being real about it?

A: ...They don't have general discussions. It's always involved in a crisis..You don't solve your whole life problems in ten minutes. It's several hours, several days, and a constant little talking.

On the other hand, being able to, in some sense, match the characters on television with people in one's own experience can contribute to a sense of realism. Phil V. does not find television realistic, on the whole--particularly the way in which problems are always neatly and happily resolved--but he does find All in the Family authentic because he recognizes some of the characters.

A: It's real. I can picture myself, especially in my home environment when I was growing up, you know, in something like that.

Q: Which character?

A: Well, no, I mean every character. There's always somebody in the back of mind that I could probably tag and say, 'Gee, that's like old wierd Harold or the crazy who used to live up the street and his wife'--things like that.

Q: So the people seem familiar to you?

A: Yeah. They're certainly more real, more down-to-earth, than alot of other situation comedies like Rhoda or Mary Tyler Moore. (Emphasis added).

Phile claims to be able to identify these characters in his own experience (even while borrowing a Bill Cosby allusion--"old wierd Harold"--to convey the recognition) but what is probably more salient to Phil than any direct correspondence or resemblance between specific characters and real people he has known, is the general quirkiness of certain TV characters. Realism in characterization is implicitly defined by Phil as a down-to-earth quality: characters who speak their minds without mincing words or euphemizing, who seem to have rough, idiosyncratic edges, and are not always "good" or admirable.

The way characters speak--accent, style, content--can indeed be an important element of their believability, particularly for the high school-educated respondents in the sample, who are apt to find rougher, less cultivated speech more sympathetic and familiar. Lou B. accepts Kojak as authentic because he "speaks nice" (i.e., tough) and John C. finds MASH believable because he can identify with the sarcastic dialogue:

The way these guys are sarcastic with the one guy, Major Burns, I can see myself doing that with people at work, you know. People who I think are foolish or something. I can see myself cutting them up in subtle ways.

The intimation here is that John not only finds the interaction between characters on MASH convincing, but that, indeed, he also attempts to imitate it. He is somewhat more critical of the characterizations on

certain crime shows, where the relationship between criminals and policemen are sometimes personalized:

Plus, it seems like you watch Hawaii Five-0, and the criminals know who McGarrett is, whereas I don't think the criminals all know these detectives that are chasing after them.

More typically, though, the high school graduates in the sample were apt to focus on discrepancies and improbabilities rooted in physical characteristics: for example, that Cannon is too fat to run as fast as he does, or that Mannix gets beaten up too many times to survive.

It is interesting to consider that on a few occasions when respondents made reference to a discrepancy between the behavior of characters on television and people's behavior in real life, there was some indication that the discrepancy was not taken as evidence of TV's implausibility or unrealism, but rather, was accepted as something of a model or ideal. Maria B., for example, a high school graduate with considerable faith in the realism of television, suggested that TV can perhaps inspire people to cope better with their own problems.

Q: Did that ever happen to you?

A: I could say that but I couldn't offhand say anything to back it up. All right, when you watch a soap opera, someone loses their husband, a million things, and then you think, 'Oh, my God, how lucky I am!' It makes you count your blessings. Or, 'If I were her, I could never have reacted that way.'

Further analysis dealing with characterization, and other aspects of respondents' assessments of television realism are reported in the

following section on respondents' perceptions of TV crime shows.

#### Section 4. Respondent Assessments of TV Crime Show Realism

##### A. Setting

There was almost no comment about the physical location or setting of crime shows; respondents apparently expect, for example, that such shows will all be located in California, although their ability to recognize streets scenes can contribute to a sense of "realism" or credibility. For example, Isabel W. gave high marks to Streets of San Francisco for the "natural" style of its performers and procedures ("the manner in which they go about doing it") and also, for the familiarity of background scenes:

Of course, we've been in San Francisco  
and we know some of the streets.

A few high school-educated respondents did make reference to the socio-economic context, noting that the crimes portrayed on television were often associated with social classes removed from their own. They did not necessarily find them unrealistic on those grounds, however.

Joseph B., a high school graduate who watches little TV, observes:

A: They tend to show crimes of affluence  
among a clientele of affluence.

Q: What do you mean by crimes of affluence?

A: Well, murder, for instance. Murder for inheriting wealth and this type of thing. I think most of us are never presented with these situations.

Karen C., who generally finds crime shows believable, suggested that the crimes could happen, even though not among people she knows

personally:

Like Columbo, it could happen, but in an upper class of people. I don't think anyone in my class of people would know, would be that--I think it's highly intelligent and highly rich people. But yeah, I do think some of them could happen. (Emphasis added)

By suggesting that TV often pictures crimes of affluence, Karen C. and Joe B. are pointing up what may actually make such programs seem credible to lower middle class and lower class viewers: that is, the fact that TV frequently dramatizes crimes committed by individuals whose lifestyle differs markedly from working class experience. Karen is sure that her peers and associates would not be sophisticated or motivated enough to commit such crimes but, having little or no familiarity with upperclass lifestyles, she has no reason to suspect that those crimes are seldom committed at all, even by the more affluent and better-educated members of society. Indeed, it might be argued that much of what she knows of such people, she has learned from watching shows like Columbo.

#### B. The Crimes

Despite occasional explicit reference to the affluent nature of many TV crimes, there is a widespread assumption among the less educated respondents that many or most TV crime show episodes are based on actual crimes, or at least that they reflect the nature and incidence of real crime fairly accurately. Thus, Pat N. described crime shows as "going down deep" and her husband Don indicated a belief that TV writers consult books or records for their materials.

Well, maybe the writer, when they're writing the shows, maybe they look in different books or something like that, where crimes have been committed, or read different papers. I think the crime shows are more or less laid on things that happened in real life.

Maria B., another young and heavy TV crime shows viewer, asserted that despite some exaggeration or detail, crime shows depict things that really happen, and implies that people should not shrink on from it on television since the shows represent reality:

A: I think a lot of shows, people say, 'Oh, my God, that's terrible.' But those are things that happen everyday and people may see it on television, it seems like it's so horrible.

Q: When you say things that are horrible, what do you mean?

A: Just different crimes that are committed: rape, mugging, violence. If they see it on television, oh, they don't want to watch it. But this is what actually goes on. (Emphasis added)

Indeed, George G., who is one of the more credulous viewers in the sample, professed a belief that "all crime shows are realistic," arguing that TV shows portrayed not only what happens, but how it happens:

I think they show the actual killings and all, of a person being murdered. If they weren't, they wouldn't show 'em on TV. People wouldn't believe it.

His response is strongly suggestive of attributional reasoning: he assumes, as do some other respondents quoted within, that people would be able to detect any discrepancy or inauthenticity on television, and that the portrayals, while not actual events, must therefore mimic reality

faithfully in order to be believed.

The college graduates made fewer direct references to the authenticity of the crime themselves, often focusing instead on the idealized characterization of police, or the unconvincing, calculating character of the criminals, and the nature of the detection processes--features which prompted much skepticism. This should not be taken to suggest that college graduates (and lighter viewers) necessarily accept the nature of the crimes committed in TV shows as realistic or representative; rather, there are indications throughout the interviews that some respondents find the tenor of these shows unrealistically violent, calculating, or glamorous, but take for granted that such crimes are the natural stuff of crime shows, and consequently, are apt to discuss those elements which they assume are freer to vary (like detection procedures).

Irv S., for example, suggests that much more violent crime occurs on television in an average night than occurs throughout the nation, and similarly, Manny W., an older heavy viewer who claims to put little stock in television, remarks:

I think the shows they have, most of them are too violent. There are violent crimes committed but not as many as they show on television.

There are, on the other hand, some better-educated respondents who feel that the crimes shown on television bear a substantial resemblance to that which occurs in real life. Mark S., an enthusiastic (and relatively analytic) fan of the crime genre suggests that TV crime shows are realistic in the sense that such crimes do happen (he does not say how

often) and Jack M., who watches virtually no crime programs, argues that to attract viewers, they must have "some reality" or relevance about them--at least in contrast to old-fashioned mysteries.

Betty G., who tends to believe that the programs she watches are realistic (but that others are not) suggests that The Streets of San Francisco, a favorite of hers, is one of the more convincing programs.

Q: Do you have any idea whether the plots are realistic?

A: You mean on that particular show?

Q: Yes.

A: They seem to be. They seem to be things that could happen to anybody I don't think they're particularly exaggerated.

Q: What sorts of crimes do they have on there?

A: All kinds. Rapes, robberies, murders. The run of the mill. (Emphasis added)

Her contemporary, Nancy O., watches crime shows with enthusiasm, though claiming to see little authenticity in them. Nonetheless, she does suppose that:

...a lot of them are taken from actual facts. I mean--what do you call them--records.

While these individuals do not have any particular viewing level in common--some are light viewers, others are not--most share some preference or fondness for this type of program and most indicate a general cynicism about crime shows, a cynicism whose limits may be indicated by these comments.

C. Problem Resolution: Detection

The less-educated respondents are apt to see as realistic not only the crimes themselves, but also, the detection techniques portrayed. Said Claire F., a heavy viewer with apparent confidence in much of what she sees on television:

They're realistic in the fact of how they go about getting them, solving them. It's just the space of time that they go about doing it. That's the only way they're not realistic.

Claire, in fact, cannot imagine how else a person might learn about crime detection, if not from television.

A detective one will or a private detective one will (show how crimes are solved). Yeah. They try to get the how it happened, why it happened, and where it happened. I'd say if you didn't have it to see and read, you'd never know how it was done. Yeah.  
(Emphasis added)

John C. was somewhat more skeptical, suggesting that it was probably harder to solve crimes in real life:

Some of the way they find out about crimes is too convenient. I'm almost positive in my own mind that in real life it ain't that easy to solve these crimes. Or else we wouldn't have this many crimes.

In reference to Hawaii Five-0 (which he finds unrealistic in the sense that police and criminals have personalized relationships), he observed:

I used to like it but I said to my father a couple of weeks ago, 'I'm getting tired of it because he always wins.' I want him to lose once in a while.

Still, John sees much of television detection as true-to-life, and cited some of the things he had learned from television in that regard:

Alot of it is what really does happen.  
They have their stoolies and all, and  
the M.O.--modus operandi-or something--  
where, like, a certain crime's been  
committed.

Q: Is that something you learned from  
these shows? The modus operandi?

A: Yeah. (Emphasis added).

The college graduates in the sample often feel that crime shows are realistic in the sense that crimes do occur in real life, but just as they are more apt to see television as over-dramatizing and exaggerating the real problems it portrayed, many suppose that the treatment of crime and crime detection on television is somewhat short of authentic. They seem to have some feeling that television portrays at least a skeletal view of crime detection, which is then fleshed out with accident, contrivance, and melodrama. Whereas some respondents find situation comedies more realistic in the sense that they deal with more pedestrian (non-violent) concerns, others seem to take the opposite view: that TV crime shows must deal with real problems in a technical or quasi-technical way, and are therefore closer to reality;.

Said Nancy O., an enthusiastic, though not unskeptical, crime show viewer:

I have an idea they must follow a certain formula. I think some of them are real, true-to-life. Police Story, The Rookies-- I think they're true-to-life. In fact, I think these are taken from actual cases.

Fred C. does not watch much television, nor does he term it realistic, but he observed that "what I read in the papers seems to match what I see in the crime shows on TV." Using a slightly different standard--the crime and mystery movies of the thirties and forties--Jack M., another light viewer and college graduate argues that today's crime shows are more "convincing."

They're not--well, the old crime, the old Raymond Chandler type of thing, the Falcon--they were such a glamorized version of crime. And I think they were a very imaginery type world. But today most of the shows have to have a basis of reality about them. The sit-comedy shows I think have no basis in reality. But I do think most of the crime and investigation things do have some reality about them. At least in the way they're performed.

Occasionally, respondents alluded to real life experience to substantiate their view that television is inauthentic in this regard. Marge L., a principled non-viewer of television, conceded that "there's a kernel of truth in it," but argued that the exaggeration serves to obscure the reality. Citing as an example her own experience with the police after her wallet was stolen, she commented:

I mean, I know the detective that's working on my wallet's a lazy bum. He keeps forgetting who I am between telephone calls.

Similarly, Frank L., a high school graduate and heavy crime show viewer who also seems fairly knowledgeable about "real world" events, correctly dismissed TV crime shows as unrealistically scientific and technical, based largely on his own experience as a victim of household

burglary.

Q: You don't think the methods they use are realistic?

A: No. They use these sophisticated criminal methods on TV and they're not used.

Q: Why aren't they used?

A: I think they're too expensive, too costly, and there aren't that many educated people in the criminal laboratories. I'm sure down at the Roundhouse (Philadelphia Police Headquarters) if they have a dozen, that's a lot. I think they're more educated than they were. I once met an FBI man and I thought he was a very intelligent person. I was surprised.

While occasionally respondents could use personal experience or observation as a standard of comparison against which to evaluate TV police procedures, a few, by contrast, mentioned certain preferred TV shows as a standard of authenticity with which they assessed (and debunked) other less convincing shows. Lou B., for example, a high school graduate with considerable faith in television, argued that on Kojak, the detection is more tactical and logical--hence, authentic--than on other shows, where crime investigation seems to him "hit and miss,"

..Kojak seems to go about it the right way, the way he puts it together and finds out who does it. Some shows you could watch and you could see a lot of mistakes in it.

Q: You mean the way he solves the crime?

A: Yeah, he puts the clues together in the right way.

Q: You mean he solves crimes in the right way?

A: Yeah, he puts the clues together in the right way. Like other shows, they just seem hit and miss. It don't seem the right way to do it. (Emphasis added)

Lou cited Ironside as an example of a show which does not seem to do things "the right way," noting that "he can't find anything wrong with (Kojak or Streets of San Francisco) that would make me turn it off," but that he saw Ironside only once, and was so irked that he never turned it on again. Note that it was physical anomalies (which are, on the whole more salient to high school than to college graduates) which he found particularly bothersome:

Some shows I just don't like. Say I'm prejudiced. The shows that turn me off I just don't watch. Sometimes I watch them once, like Ironsides. And I can't see a cop sitting in a wheelchair and catch a guy. I watched one show and I never watched it again because he's sitting on the waterfront in a wheelchair. Sitting on a big waterfront, right? And the crook's running down the waterfront. And he could have thrown a little juke either way, going around him. But no, he runs right into him. He could of even jumped over him. This guy's in a chair, you know?

It was not only high school graduates who occasionally seemed to derive standards for evaluating TV crime shows from television itself. Indeed, the fact that respondents may reflect certain TV dramatizations as too pat and contrived does not necessarily mean that they have a real grasp of how crimes are actually solved, and sometimes, what they imagine to be "reality" is simply another television version which they have taken as authentic. Bill A., a young, low-viewing physician, uses as his standard of comparison an image of crime detection which seems equal-

ly derivative of fiction in the sense that, like Lou B's conception (above), it assumes the importance of logical deduction over fortuity.

A: I have this sense--again, I don't have enough recent familiarity--but I have this sense that crime shows show crimes that can be solved on the basis of hunches and pure luck and pure chance as opposed to any logical sequence. Occasionally, you find a person who pursues clues logically and comes up with something, but usually, somewhere along the line, it's just pure luck that something happens. Someone dies or something's found or someone sees something accidentally, I tend to associate that with crime shows.

Q: What do you think it's like in real life?

A: More witnesses or interviews with people or scientific data. More of a file being kept on someone. Fingerprinting. (Emphasis added).

Similarly, Mark S., a young professional who enjoys crime programs and pays fairly close attention to them, objects to some TV portrayals on the ground that solutions are sometimes the product of improbable luck or extraordinary hunches which, against all odds, pay off in some critical way. Mark has had no exposure to criminal investigations other than through fiction, but he does have some conception of what the procedures "should" be like, and his evaluations of the investigative process portrayed on Kojak imply a standard of comparison or judgment which is at least partly derivative of fiction.

Take a show like Kojak. Maybe two, three, weeks ago, we watched one of the episodes. The process of following up a lead or questioning a person and getting a piece of information there and going onto someone else--I think this

is shown well. There was one scene in the show--this is where I qualify it--which really bore no relation to anything else, where he was just in a room. It was an apartment of a rich hooker, as it turned out, and Kojak noticed that the pillows on the couch didn't look neat enough. And that turned out to be a very crucial thing and he gave it to someone to investigate. In that one case in point, the investigative process was shown very well but the thing of him seeing the pillow, I don't think things like that happen all that regularly.

It should be noted that Kojak, the crime show most widely regarded in the sample as realistic, incorporates many elements which could fairly be construed as "accurate"--tips, "stool pigeons," etc.--but mixes this sort of street-savvy approach with serendipitous laboratory findings, set-ups, and detection contrivances which are considerably less authentic. The gestalt, apparently, is fairly realistic to most viewers, partly as a result of naturalistic speech and mannerisms (discussed within).

There is no clamor for greater realism in crime show procedures, either by those viewers who think them unrealistic or those who find some authenticity in them. Just as respondents frequently like shows which are obviously fanciful, they are apt to enjoy crime shows which are heavier on suspense than credibility. Mark S. enjoys The Rockford Files "immensely" while finding the detection procedures portrayed there entirely unreal. He does, however, believe detectives must routinely make searches without authorization to earn a living.

Sidney O., a middle-aged mystery fan who watches moderate amounts of TV, claims an active preference for the hyperbole. Regarding Colombo, he says:

I know it was all written out of the mind of someone to make me enjoy it, but to actually see a crime committed and solved all true-to-life, in front of me, I don't think I'd enjoy it.

Interestingly enough, another respondent, Jean V., had earlier complained of TV violence by citing an episode of Policewoman, where reference was made in the script to the odor of a decomposing body. Yet Jean remarked in another context that TV shows are unrealistic because murder victims look better, killers act cooler, and "nothing smells." Jean seems ambivalent about how much authenticity she really wants to see in TV crime portrayals, despite her criticism of the cosmeticized programs. Her implicit self-contradiction reflects the fact that in assessing TV realism, the college graduates in the sample are often caught in a bind between their skepticism of TV on the one hand, and their general disapprobation of TV violence on the other.

#### D. Characterization

As with TV dramatizations generally, characterization was often introduced by respondents as a dimension for assessing the realism of TV crime shows. Respondents were also asked whether they felt "TV gives you a good idea of what police are really like." Possibly because they have more occasion to "test" police portrayals against real life experience, respondents were slightly more skeptical of police

portrayals than of crime and crime detection portrayals. Thus, most, if not all, respondents argued that TV police are idealized beyond their real life virtue, competence, and efficiency.

Remarks by Sharon S. (who watches little television and virtually no crime shows) were fairly typical of the viewpoint expressed by college graduates in the sample:

Q: (Question)

A: That's hard for me to say because I don't watch many police shows.

Q: Are there any you do watch?

A: I guess I've seen Police Surgeon once or twice. I know that San Francisco one has them. No, I don't think it's a realistic picture because I know several policemen from the area and they have a daily routine that's not at all like the police shows where they're always running in the middle of the emergency, either saving the day or preventing a crime--something to that order. And you know, their daily routine can just be walking the beat or bringing in a drunk person or breaking up a family squabble, is what a lot of them are.

Where the college graduates in the sample did think police were portrayed fairly realistically, what they stressed was a moral congruence between TV and real life: the fact that police are portrayed heroically on TV and are also "decent" in real life. Although Isabel W. thinks TV is generally unrealistic, she "guesses" that TV gives a pretty good idea of what police are like in the sense that most are "good." She is also under the impression that real life crimes are usually solved--based, she says, on what she reads, although her views on

neighborhood police are. in fact. rather cynical.

O: How about the way the police conduct themselves--they way they behave. Do you think television is close to real life or not?

A: See, I don't know because I only see the police around here who do nothing. That's the truth. But when they have to solve a crime, they seem to be able to find the criminals. So they must know what they're doing.

Q: What is this feeling based on?

A: Only what I read.

Mrs. W. apparently segregates her cynical image of local police from her assumptions about those parts of the force who are visible to her only on television and who she assumes "are able to find the criminals." It is reasonable to suppose that those assumptions reflect what she sees on television, as well as what she "reads."

The infallibility of many police characters was the subject of some critical comment by several high school graduates in the sample. As already noted, John C. objected to the fact that McGarrett of Hawaii Five-0 "always wins." Similarly, Rose G. complained that they are "always right." Referring specifically to Cannon, she said:

A: Once in a while they ought to be human and make a mistake. But they got their script. It's a story. In real life, there's many a time they bungle up a job.

Q: How do you know that?

A: 'Cause I do it.

The police characterization viewed by many of the high school

graduates in the sample as most convincing was Kojak. Jerry F., who (like his wife) has considerable confidence in TV realism, believes that actors like Telly Savalas are trained in police stationhouses to capture the flavor of police law enforcement routines as well as to learn mannerisms and speech patterns:

Yes, I think they're trained more or less by police stations. They probably stay there for weeks at a time to learn procedures and methods. I don't think they just put an actor in--not even Kojak could walk in and be a policeman without being taught something. They'd laugh the program off the air if they didn't have training. (Emphasis added).

Note the assumption that were police portrayals unreal or untrained, the discrepancy would be so marked and obtrusive that people would "laugh the program off the air." Implicit in this comment is an attributional assumption that what seems real in a dramatization must in some way reflect reality.

Jerry F's comment that "not even Kojak" could play a policeman without some training also reflects the common view that the show is one of the most realistic crime programs on TV, because of the "natural" mannerisms and speech. Indeed, even seemingly incongruous mannerisms (like "sucking on lollypops and being a hard-nosed cop," as one young woman put) may be the essence of credibility for viewers, since the incongruity causes respondents to reason that it must be real (i.e., if it were not, why would they make something like that up?).

Where viewers were skeptical of police portrayals, they occasionally cited something learned on one program to criticize another.

er, so that, once again, television became the origin of criteria by which TV's own realism was judged. Kojak was used as a standard of comparison for some, but other shows were also cited from time to time.

Consider, for example, John C's comment:

Q: Do you feel TV gives you a good idea of what policemen are really like?

A: Nah, cause they usually show only the ones that are catching the criminals. There's a lot of policemen that haven't caught any.

Q: Because they're not capable or because they haven't had the opportunity?

A: Probably both. A patrolman's probably only allowed to do certain--they do show that. That's where I found out--from the show--that he's only allowed to do so much on his own. Like, they got to call in the detective or something to make the big nab.

Q: Which show did you learn this from?

A: Well, I'm thinking of movies right now. What sticks in my mind is the movie, Serpico. But I guess there are other TV shows I've seen it on. I can't think of one offhand. But then they've got that show, The Rookies. It seems like those guys are always getting into stuff. But I don't think they really come into contact with all that these guys go. (Emphasis added)

John's allusion to TV and movies as a basis for criticizing another program raises the interesting question. When faced with contradictory images on television, which do respondents select as their standard? It stands to reason that a program seen as generally authentic (on the basis of acting, producing, etc.) may be assigned more credibility on par-

ticular issues; but it is also likely that, as with situation comedies, programs which actively present a "counter-stereotype" (and yet retain some plausibility) will automatically seem more authoritative. Kojak's mannerisms represent one such convincing deviation from the older tradition, whereas the McCloud city sheriff theme is a variation on old themes which may entertain viewers but fails to convince them.

John is also critical of the characterization of Columbo, the title-character of one of his favorite programs. It too departs from certain conventions and he finds it plausible in some respects, not in others.

A: Even though I like it, I would say he's unrealistic.

Q: Why is that?

A: I don't know. I guess it's just too perfect, the way he--I mean his--the way he acts and then solves the crime. I just don't see how it's possible...I would tend to say the people would catch on right away that he's not really that stupid in real life. You would kinda wonder how they got to be lieutenant or whatever he is.

Note that John focuses in his criticism on only one aspect of the show--the internal illogic of Columbo's improbable pose as a witless, self-effacing plodder who actually unravels highly sophisticated and arcane crimes. While John may object to other aspects of the characterization and formula, his failure to question either the sort of (unreasonably complex) crimes or (affluent) victims, or even the highly obtruse and intellectual detection procedures involved, would seem to reflect an assumption that those features of the show are fairly authentic, when, in fact, they are as unreal and implausible as Columbo's pose.

Occasionally, the television image is so compelling that it becomes more "real," in some sense, than the tarnished real life version. The following illustrative comment comes from an interview with Mr. G., a heavy viewer who believes whole-heartedly in television portrayals, and who sees lives policemen as aberrations of the TV reality:

Q: Do you think television gives you a good idea of what policemen are really like?

A: No, I don't think so. Policemen on TV shows, they're actually doing their job and you don't know what the--each policeman what is on the job. Like not on TV-- he's got his own job. You don't know what kind of work he's doing. He might be in the crime himself or he might be taking graft or getting paid off and all that stuff. But on TV, I think they're realistic. They're doing their job.

One objection to television's police portrayals raised only by high school graduates--possibly because they emphathize more with police--was the failure of programs to show the police in a family context. John K. said he thought The Rookies was realistic because "on this show, the policeman has a homelife too." Adam-12 was cited by another respondent, Rose G., for the same reason, and Pat N., while believing police shows to be largely realistic, nevertheless criticized them for their failure to "show the wives worrying." Pat's husband, Don, is a fireman, and she feels certain police-wives worry the way she does about injuries sustained in the line of duty.

Questions about the realism of television police were followed by a comparable question about the portrayals of private detectives. It should be recalled that earlier in the interview, a question concerning

the practices of private detectives elicited much hesitation from respondents, who observed that this was a "fictional" area for them and that they could not be entirely sure that such individuals existed, at least not in any great number. Here again, nearly all the respondents were quick to point out that they had little or no real life experience with private investigators; some, however, had acquired a fairly negative impression of them and others simply had no idea what they were like. Respondents generally thought that detectives could hardly be as glamorous and efficient as TV portrayed them, but only one respondent, a heavy-viewing, credulous young high school graduate, guessed that they were accurately portrayed. More typical was the following comment by Sharon S.:

Q: OK, how about private detectives? Do you think TV gives you a good idea of what they're really like?

A: No, I don't think so. That's really played up too much. The private detectives on TV are being playboys where they all have income from someplace--I don't know where--and I have a feeling that a private detective's life is really nothing so exciting.

Q: Where did you get that impression?

A: No place in particular. There aren't that many private detectives that go around saying how wonderful their lives are.

Respondents who, like Sharon, have negative impressions of detectives, were hard-pressed to pinpoint their origins. Jane A., a young psychologist who watches no crime shows, said that "from what (she)

remember(s), TV police were not very bright" and that TV private detectives are "portrayed as such hunks--such James Bond types almost, and I'm sure that isn't true...

You get the impression of middle class values as opposed to working class values...I think most private eyes are middle-aged guys who've been retired from the police force because they were getting too flabby in the middle, so they just go into private detective work and they're probably just a bunch of losers. I don't know--I don't have a very high impression of them.

Q: Where do you get this impression?

A: It must be from my parents. This is horrible, but I just can't pin it down. It's got to be from something that happened pretty early in my life because I remember feeling that way when I was pretty young.

Similarly, Mark S., a young college graduate and avid mystery fan, has never met a private detective, but still thinks that the image of private detectives on television is even more fanciful than portrayals of police.

Q: Do you feel TV gives you a good idea of what private detectives are like?

A: I really think that's the most humdrum existence of all probably. If there's anything on TV that's further from the truth, it's those kind of glamorous private detectives...You see the thing on TV where the private detective is in some sense outsmarting the police or helping the police or thwarting the police, and I'd say that's probably non-existent in real life. The police have so much behind them, if they don't know something..If we're talking about a flagrant misrepresentation, I think that's the one.

Another respondent in the same demographic group who watches little television of any kind, has apparently picked up an impression of detectives as men who, in their real lives, consciously imitate TV art, but says he has no idea where this impression comes from:

He would probably be a guy who drives a Cadillac or a Buick Electra. And dresses really flashily and plays a role in an attempt to make his life as exciting as people believe it is from watching television, when, in fact, he spends his life doing pretty mundane things.

Four men had actually met private detectives and while there was some disagreement among them as to the real nature of the profession, (two noted that they were just "businessmen"; another described the one he had met as "incredibly low"), they all noted the disparity between real life detectives, who are, they feel, ordinary people, and television detectives, who are glamorous and free-wheeling. Said Sidney O.:

He does not pull a bottle out of the drawer and take a swig at it and pat his secretary on the fanny.

## Section 5. Respondents' Perceptions of TV Shows as a Moral/Socializ- Influence.

### A. Problem-Solving

The foregoing analyses suggest that many respondents (usually with no more than a high school education) see TV as a good--that is, reliable--way to learn about the problems people face and the way those problems are dealt with in real life. Some others, however, perceive TV as so exaggerated and contrived as to distort human character, behavior, and problems beyond any redeeming instructional value. Lower education (and heavy viewing) are associated in predictable ways with the tendency to see TV fiction as a reliable source of information about the world, although, of course, the sort of cynicism typically expressed by better-educated respondents cannot be thought to constitute full, if any, protection against assimilation of TV values and norms.

Regardless of whether respondents believe that TV drama is credible, they tend not to believe that television helps people to solve their own problems. In fact, less-educated (and older) respondents were most inclined to dismiss TV as a problem-solving device (that is, to agree with the statement, "You don't learn to solve personal problems by watching TV programs,") and in keeping with that findings, it was the heavy viewers who expressed greatest skepticism about TV's value in this context.

It is tempting to conclude that some of the better-educated (and low to moderate) viewers believe television may be used as a problem-solving aid only by "others," whereas respondents who represent

those "others" in fact reject TV as an aid or inspiration for both themselves and everyone else. The tenor of the follow-up responses lends support to that interpretation.

Agreement with the statement seemed to be based on the view that the problems portrayed on television are not representative of viewers' individual problems and/or that problems must be experienced and dealt with directly. The notion that specific solutions cannot be borrowed from TV by anyone was particularly common to high school graduates in the sample. Exemplifying the first view (that TV problems are rarely analogous to personal problems) is Jean V., a young, light-viewing college graduate. Note, however, that she does identify with, and attempt to borrow, some of the dialogue:

A: It's just...the problems are not my problems. Even then they come close, to the way they solve them is not the way it happens around here.

Q: So you haven't found, even when the problems approximate yours, that the solutions are useful?

A: No. You pick up a funny line here or there that you might use (laughing) but not a for-real type of situation.

Similarly, Sharon S., another young college graduate who watches little television, remarked that she does not think problems exist for anyone "intthe intensity they show them," nor does she "usually agree with the way they solve them--not personally."

Those who did think that some people might use television as a guide for solving personal problems, pointed out that

they personally would not do so. Celia J., a middle-aged, low viewer, conceded, after insisting that she could not use television in this fashion, that other viewers might.

A: Like, for instance, Dr. Welby. And if someone would be--I don't watch Dr. Welby, I find it quite boring now. But I could see that if someone had a medical problem, they might be inclined to bring it out to the fore rather than suffer with it. I can see that.

Q: So you think something like that might encourage someone to go to the doctor?

A: Exactly.

It is interesting that what this respondent sees as a real life dilemma that TV may help resolve is a situation she may have actually "learned" from the show in question: that is, a stoic but misguided insistence on "suffering" with medical illness. One leitmotif characterizing Marcus Welby, M.D. is the rescue of characters who, for one reason or an other, are resistant to treatment and prefer a dangerous stoicism or refuse to acknowledge their medical need altogether.

Like Celia J., Bill A. (also a light viewer and a college graduate) suggests that other viewers might use television in this fashion to solve problems, but again, exempts himself.

A: I don't, no.

Q: When I say, 'you,' in this case, I mean one, in general. Do you think it's possible?

A: I think it's possible for someone to see something on TV which he uses to mold his performance or his response to something but I don't think that's generally the

direct.

I suspect that lots of people do. I don't think I do but I think lots of people do. And again, not in the sense that somebody says, when faced with making a decision as to whether or not to have her left breast removed when she gets cancer, I don't think she'll think back to Marcus Welby and say, 'On Marcus Welby, such and such happened.' But I think that subliminally, you've got all this baggage that you're carrying around with you based on what you watch, and probably I do too. Because you've seen it and you're aware of it, you're probably affected by it. I mean, that's curious, because I would say that although I don't watch television, I'm probably very much affected just in the sense that you can be in a room with a television on and we play this sort of game where I write the endings to television programs. Something will be on and I'll write these absurd endings. But I think we all carry that around--this constant--we see far more people reacting to far more situations than we do in real life. Faced with the same thing, we probably relate to their experiences more than to anything else. (Emphasis added)

Irv's sensitivity to the potential for subtle TV influences and his willingness to consider that he and others might be affected deeply by what television portrays is unusual; on the one hand, the less-educated respondents tend not to be so sophisticated about TV's potential effects, and on the other, the better-educated respondents are quick to exclude themselves from the vulnerable viewer category.

Although the less-educated respondents were even more likely than college graduates in the sample to reject TV as a source of problem-solving assistance, it was less often because they dismissed TV solutions as generally unreal or unsound than because they simply had not

seen their own particular problems portrayed, and concluded, therefore, that a good match between TV and personal problems was unlikely. Even Fran L., a heavy viewer who thinks television portrays "different segments of life," believes "it would have to be a terrific coincidence" for a TV problem to match yours so closely that you could derive some benefit from the program." Similarly, Claire F., who had earlier described TV as a good way to learn about life, doubts that "anyone places themselves in the same position as what you see." By all indications, however, both women are convinced of the general authenticity of television portrayals.

By contrast, Maria B., who watches a medium amount of television--much of it crime shows--and who apparently has considerable faith in television, suggests that TV can perhaps inspire people to cope with their own problems, but even Maria sees television less as a specific guide than as-a general morale-booster. It may thus be inferred that, on the whole, TV is perceived as instructional in a general way, but not personally and specifically therapeutic.

#### B. Moral Influence

Several of the agree-disagree statements asked respondents explicitly to consider how effective they believe TV crime shows are as a moral influence, and conversely, to what extent they believe television actually encourages criminal behavior. Education and viewing levels were, once again, associated with some noteworthy differences (Appendix B). Many of the respondents with only a high school education do not object to TV violence but they do believe that TV teaches right from wrong.

The college graduates and lighter viewers in the sample do find TV violence objectionable, and they do not believe television has the effect of teaching moral lessons. Both education groups believe that TV can instigate crime (although in different ways and for different reasons).

In response to the statement, "Crime shows help teach people right from wrong," respondents generally agreed that TV crimes portrayed the triumph of good over crime and evil, and this for many--not all--is tantamount to teaching right from wrong. Some, however--in particular, the college graduates and low viewers in the sample--feel that TV is by nature incapable of performing that sort of socializing function, the formal message notwithstanding, or alternatively, they believe that it may titillate and inspire an impressionable minority of viewers to imitate what they see (Appendix B).

Ernie D., a high school graduate and a medium to heavy viewer whose answers seemless directly reflective of television than those of many other respondents, feels that TV can perform some service in this regard.

A: I think so. I think they try. The situations they're using nowadays--you're more apt to be in that situation. They're not that far-fetched. They run the gamut. They show innocent bystanders, the witness that comes forward and convicts somebody--and I think that's helpful because the show the jury system.

Q: So you think they display the process?

A: I think that's necessary, along with education. It's a form of education, telling people that this is what it's like and this is what you should do in this situation. You know--to extremes, you know--but I think there's an education factor there. (Emphasis added)

Ernie's selection of examples reveals that what he thinks are fairly normative or typical processual aspects of the criminal justice system (as illustrated on television) are in fact more unusual than they are typical. His recognition that TV is instructive indicates greater sensitivity to the potential for television influence, but clearly does not insulate him from that influence, inasmuch as he takes TV's portrayals as faithful representations of ordinary situations ("not that far-fetched").

More typically, high school graduates (and heavier viewers) expressed less recognition than Ernie of the possibilities for socialization via television, and placed greater emphasis on television as a teacher of explicit techniques. Said Frank L.:

The only thing is that the criminal gets caught at the end--that's about all. They do show methods that can be used by a criminal. I'm sure criminal methods are picked up from television shows because I don't think the average person can think up these methods. They're not intelligent enough. (Emphasis added)

Note the implicit assumption that criminal techniques can be extrapolated from TV for use in real life situations, and also, that commission of crimes requires a certain amount of ingenuity which not only can, but must be acquired via fiction because there is no other conceivable source. Frank's wife, Fran, believes as he does that techniques shown on television can be applied in real life. He, however, is highly cynical about detection techniques (as opposed to criminal techniques) shown on television, arguing that those are unauthentic.

Claire, a heavy viewer and a credulous one, thinks TV's potential to teach right from wrong depends on who is watching:

I don't think if they've got a criminal mind they look into it the same way someone else would look into it.

Representing the occasional argument that TV (and other fiction) are by nature, incapable of teaching moral lessons, John C. thinks people "already know what's right and wrong," and that they learn it by "hearing from other people, papers, news on TV, hearing on the radio." To John, TV is "just a source of entertainment, and therefore not a source of social instruction. His wife, Karen, believes similarly that only children are susceptible to TV's moral lessons.

The college-educated respondents, while acknowledging that TV does punish villains, had more frequent reservations about the efficacy of that lesson. Jack M., a middle-aged viewer, argued that TV emphasizes action rather than moral content:

Well, I think their emphasis is more on the existence of the crime than on whether it's right or wrong. They spend 50 minutes of their time dramatizing the crime or the tracking down of the crime. The issue doesn't seem to be so much whether it's right or wrong, but that it exists. It's the excitement of the crime itself, I think, that's played up.

Respondents also argued that TV actually romanticizes crime, and the younger respondents, in particular, disapproved of any violent portrayal, even when marshalled on the side of justice. They were also, on the whole, more sensitive to the potential gratifications which might be gained from viewing criminal behavior. Dan L., a young physi-

cian and principled non-viewer of television, thinks TV promotes the idea of violence as the solution to problems...

in the sense that if somebody watches those crime shows they'll probably get a rough idea of how the law applies to certain things. The information that such and such a thing is illegal. If that's teaching right from wrong--but in the sense that it promotes a sense of morality--absolutely not. Because again, the hero is someone who gets away with violence. There's always some rationale, some explanation for it.

Note that while there were spokesmen in both education groups for the view that TV crime portrayals may do more harm than good, the high school graduates in the sample seem to be suggesting that TV instructs viewers in the "how-to" of crime, whereas the college graduates stress unhealthy psychological instigation. While both are saying similar things, there is an implicit assumption of TV literalism and applicability in the comments made by the high school-educated respondents (evinced also in other responses). College graduates, on the other hand, are talking more of motivation than imitation, and need make no such assumption of realism.

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "TV crime shows teach people how to commit crime," but the strength of people's belief in the link between TV crime and real life crime was suggested even earlier by the tendency of many respondents to anticipate the question in their initial comments. The sample was, if anything, nearly unanimous in their conviction that TV crime shows teach people how to commit crime.

Note that this question is really doubled-edged in the sense of referring both to the actual teaching of crime methods or to inspiration and corruption by negative example. Extrication of the two meanings is frequently difficult, if not impossible. Many respondents seemed to think in terms of both instigation and instruction, although TV was generally seen as corrupting only those who were already susceptible to its more harmful influence. "I would assume," said one young man, "that if they're gonna commit something, they're gonna do it without the TV."

It is surprising, considering the strength and popularity of this view, that most respondents could not recall specific incidents in which television crimes had apparently inspired a real life reenactment. Some had never, to their knowledge, even heard of such an occurrence, but were still convinced that TV could and did serve as a model for those already inclined toward criminality.

One who did allude to a specific procedure was Sandy K., a young secretary (overall heavy viewer, and medium viewer of crime shows) who made reference to a program which illustrated how to get false identification, using copies of birth certificates of people who had died in infancy.\*

Her husband, Brad, cited the same example, apparently confident that "everybody in the country picked that up." Several others mentioned a kidnapping in which the victim was entombed or the imolation of a young woman in Boston. However, high school graduates seemed, on the whole, more impressed or struck by the instructional potential of programs which provide

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\*This technique was used in an episode of The Rockford Files and subsequent articles appeared in newspapers, indicating that the lesson had been well-learned by California viewers.

a great deal of detail, no matter how impractical or inapplicable to real life. One such example came from Fran L., a medium but credulous viewer:

A: I guess I'll agree. They show like a map.

Q: Can you think of any specific shows that do that?

A: All the ones I watch. They show the criminal right from the beginning: how he planned it, and tunneling, and the whole thing. There's a bank right in back of us and wome-times we kid we're gonna dig a tunnel. (Emphasis added)

Even respondents think that not only can would-be criminals pick up techniques from watching television, but--carrying the principle even further--that they can perhaps profit by observing the mistakes that foil television criminals. John B., one of those who suggests this, is a high school graduate and medium viewer. Although his responses seldom seem to reflect TV exposure, he does express some faith in the realism of crime shows, and the applicability of crime techniques.

A: Like Kojak, the criminal is really smart and the show says, 'If I would have made the other move, maybe I would have gotten away with it.' Follow me? So he says, 'Let me go out and try it and I'll be a little more..' It could teach them,

Another reference to Kojak came from Jerry F., a heavy viewer who feels that much of what he sees on television is authentic, and that, in fact, Telly Savalas must have trained in a police station for the starring role. According to him, one episode:

...showed a hired gunman, how he made his own passkey with his own special gun. He

cut a key in seconds, I imagine it could be seen by somebody and they try to get a gun like that. I don't think they should show things like that on TV.

Q: Have you ever heard of a show that has taught someone how to commit a crime?

A: No, but it could.

Karen C. has mixed feelings. She doubts that real life crimes are as carefully plotted as those she sees on TV, yet at the same time, wonders, like John B., whether viewers might profit from the mistakes that mar otherwise perfect crimes on television.

I really don't agree with it, but I must say like I remember saying about Columbo, how good it is. I really wonder like if some of the crimes on there are so well-planned and everything. I wonder whether if people that have any reason to commit that crime would really sit down and try to figure out where, like, the person went wrong and let Columbo pick him out. I often wonder if a person could really sit down and say, 'Gee, if only I didn't do that and I do this, I could commit the perfect crime.' I think the show might, but as far as the other shows, they don't. Like all the others, you know the guy's gonna get caught because I don't think they spend as much time thinking it out as on that show. But I've often wondered if only I don't do that, I bet I could get away with it. (Emphasis added)

Apparently, Karen feels that most shows don't instruct would-be criminals--not because they aren't authentic enough to do so, but because the crimes are not plotted carefully enough to be foolproof. Also interesting is her comment that "you know the guy's gonna get caught" on other shows, when, in fact, the criminal on Columbo is invariably apprehend-

ed. Indeed, that show frequently reverses the detection process, by identifying the criminal at the outset and focusing on the "howdunit" rather than the "whodunit" of the crime. Ironically, because of the extreme pseudo-complexity of the crime and the detection process in Columbo, most of the details are probably less easily extrapolated than the criminal methods dramatized on various other shows (to the extent that applications of any techniques other than the crudest are actually possible). Yet Karen's remarks illustrate the general confusion in viewers minds between what is real and not real on television, and a tendency to mistake byzantine detail and elaboration for authenticity.

The majority of respondents agreed with a statement that "crime shows are too violent," and most of those were college graduates (see Appendix B). Only one college graduate disagreed flatly with the statement.

It is not surprising that the better-educated respondents should be almost unanimous in their objections to television violence. They belong to a demographic group which sees and experiences violence less frequently--and which is socialized by education and class to disdain and disapprove of violent expression in any form, including simulations. The probable demand-character of the question may have further elevated agreement in this demographic group.

The only college-educated respondent to disagree outright with the statement was Betty C., a middle-aged woman who frequently stands apart from other respondents in her group by virtue of her relative faith in TV portrayals. Mrs. C. thinks that:

Movies like The Godfather are, but I don't think the general run of the crime shows are any more violent than they should be. (Emphasis added)

Implicit in the phrase "should be" is perhaps an assumption that television shows are realistically or therapeutically violent: no more violent than they should be to entertain and/or convey the nature of the crime. A similar sort of reasoning is evinced in a comment made by Nancy O., a heavy-viewing, college graduate who enjoys crime shows. Mrs. O. agreed that "some" of the crime shows are too violent, but also commented that she doesn't necessarily recognize the excessive violence in some of the shows she knows are labeled as such:

The funny thing was that I read in a magazine recently that some of the shows I like are considered too violent. Like, Hawaii Five-0 is one, and I don't think that's too violent. That's a pure study in who's guilty and let's go get him. And they don't necessarily kill unless they have to.

Q: Are there any that you did find too violent?

A: I think the violence has been in the war pictures. I don't think crime shows, the ones I watch, are not that violent. Iron-side isn't violent. I mean, it's all a matter of conjecture and being there at the right time and getting the bad guy.

As with Mrs. C's statement, what is especially interesting about Nancy O's response is her comment that "they don't necessarily kill unless they have to," implying acceptance of the imperatives built into the show and a consequent failure to evaluate the action against external standards or norms.

On the whole, however, college graduates in the sample do not have to have watched much TV in recent years to conclude unequivocally that TV is too violent. Consider, for example, Jane A's observations:

A: Oh, I'm sure they are. I've heard remarks about shows like Kung Fu. Actually, it was very interesting. To an adult watching it, it gives the impression that the message is one of peace and brotherhood and b-----t like that...But what kids really tune into is the fact that he's going, 'Ka, ka, ka, ka' all over the place. That's what they love and that's what they get from the show...So shows like that are obviously rather violent. And all the police shows I'm sure tend to be rather violent.

Q: Where have you...have you ever watched Kung Fu?

A: No, I never have. I talked about it with people in classes.

Jane's husband, Bill, claims to have stopped watching crime shows because he found them too violent.

Among those who had attended only high school, violence was often viewed as appropriately realistic, and the women seemed no more squeamish in this regard than the men. While some heavy viewers did find TV crime too violent, they seemed, as a group, somewhat more tolerant of violent dramatizations than those who watch few or no crime programs. John C. justified it as "What goes on in real life," and, in fact, another heavy crime show viewer who thinks TV can be a moral educator, Ernie D., argued that TV crime shows should be more violent than they currently are to discourage crime.

A: I think they've toned them down. They're not like they used to be--killing everybody

off. I don't know. I sometimes get the feeling that they're not violent enough. If they actually showed someone being shot with a sawed-off shotgun or uh, I think people would think twice about aiming it at someone or sawing theirs off or something. I know they can't do it on TV because it's just not to be done, but I think TV is kinda sterile in some ways.

Q: You don't think it really conveys the horror?

A: No, I don't think so.

Not all heavy viewers felt that way, however, Mr. G., a middle-aged man whose capacity to distinguish TV from reality is rather limited, sometimes wonders "how the actors can perform that way and take it" because "some of the shows are really violent."

A few respondents echoed Betty C's observation that movies are more violent than television, and all but one of those who did, found the level of television violence unobjectionable by comparison. There was also some tendency to label specific but unnamed TV shows as especially violent, and to disclaim watching those.

One middle-aged high school graduate (and a light viewer), Mary M., pointed out that the excessive violence in some shows was not especially representative of real life; but explicit statement to that effect was very nearly unique in this demographic group.

Q: Are crime shows too violent?

A: Yeah, I think some of them are. Well, just from the few I watch. Not so much Ironside or Perry Mason, but Mannix--

alot of them are very violent and  
they never really happen, I don't think.

Q: When you say they don't really happen.,

A: I mean the kinds of things that happen on those programs, you seldom hear. I mean I very rarely hear of those things.

Q: You mean the types of crimes?

A: Well, like take Mannix, for instance, Yeah, right, Mannix. The things that happen on his program, I think they--of the programs I watch, I think that's the most violent. And he's always sort of getting beaten up or an accident or a car turns over or he's fallen somewhere.

When Mrs. M. refers to "the kinds of things" portrayed on those porgrams which you "seldom hear," she is objecting to the systematic, near lethal vendettas of the sort which Mannix provokes when on the trail of a criminal. She is not the only viewer to have singled out Mannix for its improbable levels of violence, but she is apparently more sensitive to television violence than many of the other high school graduates, who seem to see society as violent and television crime drama as appropriately reflective of that reality.

In a research effort of this type, where in-depth personal data about respondents have been obtained, selected case studies are capable of conveying a more integrated view of individuals (and couples) with regard to information-gathering habits and attitudes toward television than topic or question-by-question analysis alone can achieve. Moreover, husband-wife comparisons--not easily made in the context of group and sub-group analysis--become more salient and more accessible when the case analysis approach is taken.

This chapter consists of case studies of four married pairs of respondents--a total of four high school graduates and four college graduates. While it was pointed out earlier that respondents' media or source attribution data did not lend themselves to a formal typology as such (inasmuch as most respondents tend to use a variety of sources for various types of information) it was possible to select for case study couples who appear to represent a stronger orientation toward, or preference for, one source over others. The couples included in this chapter were also chosen on the basis of their tendency to articulate sources and views in greater detail, and in some instances, because of interesting contrasts between husband and wife.

#### Section 1. High School Graduates

##### A. Pat and Don N.

Pat and Don are in their twenties, with one child. Don is a fireman, Pat a former secretary who stopped working when her child was born

some two years prior to the interview. They live in a cohesive ethnic area in the upper floor of a house owned by Pat's father. (Don remarked jokingly, after the interview, that having come from another neighborhood marked him as a "foreigner" when he first dated Pat). Pat describes her neighborhood this way:

Well, my father and mother lived here for 53 years and I'm 25 and I've lived in this house. We kinda know everybody in a pretty big area--from here to maybe where we go to church, I know the people by first names, and most of them by their last names.

Pat is a regular newspaper reader (she reads The Daily News thoroughly and skims The Evening Bulletin), a heavy TV news viewer (two to three shows daily) and a reader of several women's monthly magazines.

In the newspaper, she pays most attention to:

...the first five pages, you know, the current news, like the big headlines, and then I like the women's. Mainly I really enjoy Wednesday like the cut-out food sections and stuff like that. And sometimes I read sports.

Pat reports that, excluding news, she watches about 40 hours of television weekly, and she falls into the heavy crime viewing category as well. She observes in surprise:

You know, that sounds really funny--40 hours. You work 40 hours in a week and it seems so much longer than watching 40 hours of television. I never thought of it that way.

Don watches at least as much television as his wife since TV is what fills most of the time at the firehouse when the men are not actively working or out on call. Don then continues watching when he comes home at night. It would therefore be fair to say that during most of Don's

waking hours, he is exposed to the television, if not always actively watching. Don also reports reading all the local papers "pretty thoroughly" with primary interest in city news and sports. Like Pat, he usually catches the early evening news--local and national--in addition to the late evening news each day. Unlike Pat, however, he also listens to all-news radio in the car en route to the stationhouse and home. Both Pat and Don like crime shows.

Don has never personally been the victim of a crime, although he knows others who have. He denies worrying about it, saying, "I take it as it comes." Don does, however, have frequent occasion to talk to friends, colleagues, and family members about crime, conversations usually triggered by a news incident or something relayed by one to another.

Well, you read in the newspaper and you hear this buy got mugged or there's a shooting out there--you know, something like that. Or we talk about the general topic--whatever's in the newspaper. Or if somebody had something where a friend of theirs got mugged.

Don also speaks frequently with his father who lives in a neighborhood in which crime has become a serious concern.

Well, my parents live at 28th and Tasker and they've been having their problems at 30th and Tasker. And my father belongs to the Gray's Ferry Council. And like some of the stories that can be told about things that happen in that neighborhood are really something.

Q: What kinds of things?

A: I think, like right now, they have about 30 cops there 24 hours a day.

Pat is much more concerned than her husband about crime in the neighborhood--a growing problem which they both impute the local (largely black) "project." Pat had been personally involved in an unpleasant confrontation with a neighborhood girl two weeks prior to the interview, and in addition, is aware of recent muggings that have been reported in the neighborhood. Crime is for her and her neighbors, "the main topic" of conversation, and based entirely on what she hears and observes locally, Pat has determined that the problem is largely theft or mugging; there are no burglaries in her community at present, she says with assurance.

Well, we have a grocery store and I don't know if you're familiar with grocery stores but every news that's happened in the neighborhood you find in the grocery store. It could happen in your family and they'll know before you. But there you can get a list of people who've been robbed or beaten up. But one thing, there haven't been any people breaking into other people's houses--we don't have that around here for some reason. I don't know why but I'm not questioning it because at least that's one good thing.

Conversation, supplemented by specific news references, are thus a primary source of information for Pat about crime and police behavior. While suspecting that police might occasionally have to search without a warrant (because "maybe there isn't time") Pat suggests that, in general, she trusts her cousin, who is a policeman, to give her an authentic account of what the police do as a corrective to the deprecation she often hears in conversation.

People say this and that about them and then he'll come home and tell us the real story. And I would believe him.

In addition to talking frequently about crime, Pat is also apparent-

ly a fairly close reader of newspaper crime accounts. When Pat makes reference to something she has read, she is frequently able to substantiate it with more specific details than most respondents--regardless of education level--can muster.

Given Pat's concern about crime and her propensity to discuss it and read regularly about it, it is not surprising to find that she often over-estimates the likelihood of violence. She believes a quarter of all crimes are violent based on:

...reading in the paper, listening to the news, and even in our own neighborhood, listening to people talk.

She also picks the higher of the two figures as representing the proportion of victims of violent crime, saying:

I sound like a broken record, but it's on the rise. I guess I'm going back to my own neighborhood again. Based on what I see in the neighborhood and in the news. There's always something about that.

There is some tendency to elevate estimates of probabilities of violence on the basis of non-violent occurrences, like car break-ins; perhaps on implicit grounds that any type of crime increase signals a rise in lawlessness of all types. Pat believes her chances of violent involvement have recently risen to one in 10 based on risks associated with supermarket shopping, an activity she would once have considered perfectly safe. As an example, she cites shopping mall car break-ins she has heard of from other people.

The man next door, his friend it happened to at the mall. He seen the man and he came running over, but that quickly, the man had the lock out. And it cost the man

\$45 or \$50 to get it fixed. So it's shame.

When Pat has no local word-of-mouth information on an issue, she relies almost exclusively, it appears, on news to assess probabilities. Pat, for example, believes that murder is disproportionately high among blacks, based, she explains, on reading about gang killings in the newspapers ("just by the newspapers--there isn't any of that around here").

Like Pat, Don frequently over-estimates violence and relies heavily on conversation to substantiate his perceptions about crime. On the other hand, much of his word-of-mouth information comes, he says, through conversations with police. Actually, however, certain of the conclusions Don draws from those conversations are interpolations which may come from other sources, possibly television. Don, for example, believes police search without warrants, information he attributes to:

...working hand-in-hand with the police as a fireman. In some cases they don't have time to get a warrant, you know--like if they see a suspect for some reason or other going into a house, if they stopped and got a warrant, by the time they got a warrant out, the person would be gone.

On further questioning, Don explains:

I wouldn't go in and say I know so-and-so, but basically, put it this way: I would figure it's being done.

Similarly, Don says he believes police may plant evidence, suggesting that:

..If a cop's been a cop for 20 years and suppose he knows a suspect and the suspect threw away whatever he had but he's seen the suspect previous to this have it on her belongings...

This, Don imputes to "the flow of talk" between him and policemen.

While Pat is consistent in referring almost exclusively to neighborhood conversation and news as her sources of information, Don makes some explicit references to television on several occasions. He cites working "closer with cops" as a basis for his belief that testimony supercedes scientific evidence, but refers also to television in this context ("from looking at TV"). Similarly, his suggestion that proportionately fewer convicted criminals are white seems substantially rooted in a TV view of crime, wherein white criminals are affluent enough to afford Perry Mason-type lawyers and hence, are seldom convicted.

Most of your non-whites are either lower or middle-lower and can't afford a good lawyer and would have to get maybe a second-grade lawyers, and being that most of the whites that commit crime are either in the upper-lower class and that maybe can afford a better lawyer. Anyway, if you get a slick lawyer like Perry Mason, it can really make a difference. Them guys never lose.  
(Emphasis added)

This viewpoint is reflect again in Don's assumption that individuals indicted for crime get off not because of the legal difficulty of obtaining convictions (implicit in the system) but because "they have a really crackerjack lawyer (to) to represent him."

Paradoxically, Don is more skeptical--at least, in general terms--about television than is Pat, who finds many television programs, particularly crime shows, authentic. Don suggests that only one show, Toma ( a crime program) is authentic, classing it with news and interview shows.

Toma is more or less the only (realistic) TV program besides the news or Meet the Press..

He finds especially implausible the hyperbole and prolonged time frames of soap operas, in which, he complains, "a lady might be on there for 18 months and be pregnant--am I supposed to believe that pregnancy lasts for 18 months?"

Don thinks crime shows "give you a general idea of how they go about solving them, but like, not every crime is solved in real life." Like many other respondents, he suspects that those shows "...are more or less laid out on things that happened in real life."

Don's wife is among the more credulous viewers in the sample. She does not feel that TV helps people to solve personal problems, but she does believe it expands one's view of life and of other people's difficulties:

You kinda understand it more--different people...Like once I watched The Migrant Worker and that's a good thing. You asked about people on television shows and other ways of life. Gosh. I didn't even know what they were. And these people would sleep in these ugly little tenant houses.

Pat believes TV crime shows are especially realistic. She says, "They go down deep." She also admires "strong and independent characters" on television, but thinks "those ladies on these soap operas are made of junk."

The mother in The Waltons, and in The Migrant Workers, the mother really put up with a lot of stuff. You see it around your own home but there it's so nice and picturesque. But I guess maybe you could say I would try to do things a little bit different. I could never kneel down on the floor with fancy pants on and do the floor, like they do on television.

It is tempting to conclude that while Pat finds television thoroughly instructive about aspects of life remote from her own sphere, information about crime--which, for her, is immediate and part of her ken--she derives mainly from local discussions, broadened and supplemented by news. Don takes a more "cosmopolitan" view of crime and thus aims to fill gaps in his community-based knowledge and personal observation with more authoritative information from police (often interpreted by him in TV terms) and suppositions drawn from television viewing. Thus, while both are exposed to comparable amounts of television, TV crime show information may be more important for Don than it is for Pat because his personal standards of knowledgeability differ from hers, such that Don would like to think he knows crime more as a policeman knows it, and for such a view, requires the kind of vicarious information which TV seems "best" at providing.

B. Fran and Frank L.

Fran, a clerk, and Frank L., a salesman, are in their middle-fifties. Fran reads The Inquirer every day--although not always thoroughly--assigning lowest priority to the news section. Frank also reads The Inquirer, "generally throughout." They both watch local and national TV news (early and late evening) and both listen to an all-news radio station each morning for about an hour. Frank describes himself as a "bugger for news."

Frank watches about eight hours of television weekly, which classifies him as a medium viewer, but he is a heavy viewer of TV crime shows.

Fran watches more television than her husband--somewhere between 12 and 14 hours--although she watches fewer crime shows. Both list two crime shows among their three favorites.

Fran and Frank have been victims of burglary but neither are particularly concerned about crime, and neither feel it is a neighborhood problem. While typically, women are slightly more concerned about crime than their husbands, Fran and Frank seem equally confident about their personal safety. Says Fran:

I'm not one that worries about those things. I would go out now and walk around the corner or walk around the Center..I'm that kind of person. My mother's just the opposite...I'm not afraid. It's a built-in personality or something.

While Fran reports seldom discussing crime, Frank discusses it frequently with his "breakfast club," an informal group of four or five men who eat breakfast together on workdays. Unlike most high school graduates, however, Frank describes his discussions about crime as dealing primarily with abstract issues rather than specific crimes heard or read about:

We discuss crime quite a bit...The pros of capital punishment, the lack of punishment for crime, the recessivism (sic) and duplication of crime--the standard things. The repeaters and the inequality of justice being meted out.

Frank says he gets information on these subjects from "hearsay" or "reading and talking to intelligent people."

Fran over-estimates the proportion of police in the male population and, on the basis of news accounts, believes that murder is increasing

faster than robbery, but on the whole, Fran does not over-estimate personal risk of victimization. On questions dealing with law enforcement or judicial procedure, Fran frequently cites television, which she seems to believe is an authentic (if somewhat exaggerated) source of information. She thinks, for example, that scientific evidence is more compelling than testimony, on the basis of "the television programs I watch..

I watch Cannon, Streets of San Francisco, Mannix, Hawaii Five-0, so I have a lot of experience with detective work. (Emphasis added)

Fran believes lawyers may lead witnesses "just from what I've seen in the movies," and in general, she feels she has learned most about crime from reading a few non-fiction books about the law and from television. Implicitly, she places greater emphasis on sources that illustrate procedures and mechanics in a vicarious manner than on actual case-by-case news accounts.

I read a couple of books--one by Adler Rogers St. John, whose father, Earl Rogers was the number one criminal lawyer in the U.S., and another one is this number one lawyer in San Francisco, called A Life in My Hands. I have that upstairs--I read that recently. And I lived with an uncle who was a lawyer. And watching television. Reading mostly.

Frank's responses to cultivation items, while sometimes erring toward the television bias, are almost always substantiated by news accounts, frequently with enough detail to suggest that he has specific articles in mind, even if the answer chosen is not the "real world" figure.

Frank is also "sure" that he has seen numbers to the effect that most fatal violence occurs between friends or relatives, and is confident that suicides exceed homicides on the same basis. Exemplifying Frank's tendency to cite news sources with some specificity is the following comment:

Well, I think our society is too prone to-- we've gotten away from the punishment theory of justice and it's a cliché--everybody says it--they're more prone to protect the rights of the condemned rather than the victim. We've swung too far...I'm guessing. I did read an article and it was exactly on that question...In today's paper I read that only 8% of violent crimes are solved, which is kind of astonishing. Only 8%!

Frank is also aware that a judge or jury trial is a matter of defendant's discretion, and in reasoning out some elaborations on that point, combines an intuitive approach with what he says he has "seen" happen (i.e., read in the paper) many times:

I don't know but I'm pretty sure of this. I think people would ask for a judge if they were higher strata because a judge might be prone to be more lenient.\* I think the jury's more severe on them. I imagine the lower you are in life, the more chance you have with a jury. I think a judge would be swayed by character witnesses...I've seen that happen many a time...I've read of trials where even though a man has committed a violent crime, they bring in character witnesses.

Nowhere in responding to cultivation questions did Frank mention

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\*A criminal lawyer characterized Frank's assumptions as entirely reasonable, although, of course, the attitude and orientation of individual judges will have great impact on the outcome, and thus, the best strategic course of action is always difficult for a defendant and his lawyer to second-guess.

television, although his response to questions pertaining to race and perpetration/victimization may have reflected the population distribution of criminals as portrayed on television:

I think there's a higher percentage of violent crime, probably, among the Negroes relative to their population, but the great arch-criminals are the whites.

Frank's explicit assessments of television are almost uniformly cynical--in sharp contrast to his wife's--and while Fran is confident that she and other adults can distinguish fiction from reality on television, Frank believes TV can foster inaccurate impressions, possibly even influence him.

You might build up wrong impressions. TV is very impressionable (sic)...I guess I see more crime watching TV than I'm really familiar with. I hope it's not influencing me.

Frank is aware, from talking at length to policemen, that scientific methods shown on television (such as fingerprinting) are used infrequently and of little assistance in most real life cases, and described himself as being "disappointed..

when I actually talked to a policeman in real life and then I see a policeman on television and he's great...One of these days they'll have a good program--they'll have a detective where they don't solve the crime and throw the whole nation into I don't know what.

Fran, by contrast, thinks more highly of TV portrayals, and as her tendency to use television as an information source would suggest, she believes that television is a good way to learn about life:

I think you learn a lot. Things you may never have known about... You live in the city and you can learn how people live and react in a rural area.

While acknowledging that TV shows have only an hour in which to solve crimes, and "everything fits like a jigsaw puzzle," Fran feels Kojak, in particular, is realistic with regard to "the language they use, the problems they run into," and believes that some programs aid criminals in the mechanics of crime by showing "like a map."

Echoing several other female high school graduates, Fran stresses the portrayal of police family background in crime shows as providing her with a sense of what police are really like:

It's on Monday night, 9 o'clock. The Rookies. They remind me of the kid next door--that one seems what they're like.

Q: Aside from the fact that it reminds you of the kid next door, what makes it seem real?

A: They seem like real people.

Q: What is it that makes people on TV seem like real people?

A: Well, they show him with his wife, his wife is a nurse, and they show him at home, and one's black and the rest are white. The backgrounds.

Note that it is not so much their performance on the job which she is assessing (as real or not) as the inclusion of personal elements and family roles, all of which convey to her a sense of reality.

Frank alludes to his wife's susceptibility to television by remarking that if she "watches Marcus Welby, she starts worrying that she might have that dread disease," but it is not clear that he is aware of the ex-

tent to which they actually differ in their perceptions of the medium (or of the accuracy of crime programs in particular) even though they reportedly watch television together. Fran, who has a limited concern about, and interest in, crime--perhaps because by circumstance or personality she does not feel threatened--is less attentive to news about crime and criminal justice than she is interested in descriptions of the process in books or on television. Frank is very much interested in the subject (with respect to both incidence and process), reads extensively about it, and discusses it on an abstract level with interested friends. He is also highly cynical about television: aware, explicitly, of many discrepancies between television and real life, yet aware, too, of the possibilities that he may not recognize all of them, and may thus take as real, aspects of the TV portrayal which are inauthentic.

## Section 2. College Graduates

### A. Barbara and Mark S.

Barbara S. is a public school teacher taking graduate courses and her husband, Mark, is a computer analyst. They are in their mid-twenties. Barbara reads The Evening Bulletin every day ("sometimes only skim it") and watches the late evening news on a regular basis. She also reads a newsweekly and listens to a news-radio station daily. Her weekly TV viewing schedule ranges from zero to three hours, which classifies her as a light viewer.

Mark does not read any paper regularly ("lately if I read the Sunday paper, I'm doing well") but listens to the late evening news on television

and a news-radio station every morning. Like Barbara, he also reads a newsweekly. Mark reports watching an estimated ten hours of television weekly, but his schedule has recently become erratic because of work obligations, leaving him little time to watch favorite shows. He is, in particular, an avid mystery and crime show fan, but his wife also watches primarily that type of program. Barbara explains:

Most of my crime-watching is with Mark. Mark likes detective stores, so if he turns on the TV and I have nothing to do, I watch it.

Mark says:

I'm a big mystery fan--those kinds of books I like. I like things that present a mystery to be solved and (The Rockford Files) sort of presents that kind of atmosphere and you have to do some thinking to watch the plot unfold.

Paradoxically, Barbara likes The Rockford Files (Mark's favorite program) because "it's a light sort of thing that you don't bother to think about." It is not clear, though, that she and Mark mean different things, despite the contrary wording, inasmuch as it is, for both, an "escape" pasttime. On the other hand, Mark's comment may signify that he does give closer consideration to the plot and works more actively to anticipate and solve it than does Barbara, who is less prone to discuss shows in detail, and less apt to remark about relevant techniques.

Mark has never been a victim of crime, although Barbara's apartment had been burglarized prior to their marriage. He claims not to worry about crime--"I very rarely think about it"--and Barbara reports

worrying "on occasion" based on what she hears from newspapers, conversation, and campus:

When we moved here two summers ago, there was a big thing about rape on campus.

This "thing" apparently helped to establish rape as a topic of concern in Barbara's mind, and it is still, apparently, a major focus of her anxiety.

Actually, Barbara claims to talk "infrequently" about crime--"no more, no less than any other couple"--yet Mark indicates that he feels Barbara is "pretty concerned about crime" and that they do discuss the subject together. Rape is, he affirms, one of her chief crime-related concerns. For him, crime is something that occasionally comes up but not "one of (his) hot topics."

Barbara's answers to cultivation items and open-ended questions on police procedures appear to reflect hearsay (acquired particularly from college friends), acknowledged prejudices stemming from such accounts, and news. Barbara believes, for example, that police sometimes search for evidence without a warrant, based on

...hearsay kinds of things or from reading  
and from various friends when I was back  
in college.

Barbara is inclined, on a few occasions, to over-estimate the likelihood of violence, citing as evidence:

writings on trends in our society--economics and the effect of the recession. Newspapers and magazines write about the rise in the crime rate and usually it is in reference to criminal assault or something like

that.

Mark's assessments of violent probabilities generally veer toward "real world" figures. In one case, a recent personal experience in which their insurance company refused to sell them a household policy, modified Mark's previous impression that murder was increasing faster than robbery:

If I hadn't had that experience, I might have said murder. And that's only because it's more talked about, it's more written about. More of a sensational type of thing.

In questions dealing with probabilities or with procedure, Mark frequently resorts to intuition (e.g., "it doesn't make sense to plan a premeditated death in volving a total stranger"). With respect to procedure, however, Mark also makes reference--both oblique and direct--to television and fiction generally. He suspects, for example, that when police search without authorization, they do it by insinuating themselves--"saying, like, you're not guilty, you've got nothing to hide, let us look around"--rather than "running in and ripping the place apart." He substantiates the belief that police must occasionally search without a warrant by pointing out that he sometimes reads in the news of such cases; the scenario he alludes to, however, is apparently drawn from fiction.

Well, sure, I've read it in novels. TV is a good example. It happens there all the time. Factually, I'd say no. I mean, I couldn't cite an instance.

Similarly, his belief that testimony is more critical than scientific evidence is drawn

...from things I've read--well, I guess

mainly in novels, and I guess things  
I've seen on TV.

Barbara mentions TV only once--and self-consciously--in discussing witness interrogation. She suggests that her feeling that lawyers are not supposed to lead witnesses must be based on:

...reading or watching TV, which I guess shows how I'm swayed by TV. Or just plain common sense. It could bias testimony.

Mark says similarly that he got his impressions from Perry Mason.

I used to watch Perry Mason and he would always object when someone was leading the witness. Yeah, I guess it's mainly from that.

In his general assessments of television realism, Mark observes that it is "over-real" in the sense that

...in an hour it packs enough experience for one person's lifetime in that short span of time. While I could see the events happening to people at certain times of their lives, I can't see it in an hour.

At the same time, he believes that TV can teach people about the problems of others, citing an example from an episode of Harry-0 (a crime program) in which a deaf woman is unaware that an intruder has entered her house:

You know, you just never see things at that level. It sort of made you think about the problems other people face.

Mark is particularly equivocal about the realism of television crime shows, his favorite category, but while more "tolerant" of television than many college graduates, Mark seems frequently--not always--capable

of distinguishing the real from the unreal on television. He does not, for example, feel that TV can instruct people in the details of committing crime (as does Fran L.):

I can't see anyone studying TV to learn how to be a criminal--let's put it that way. And I think that most crimes are not as carefully planned out as TV represents them to be.

Mark does feel, however, that TV sometimes mimics actual detection, and and that the crimes represented do occur in real life:

While TV does dramatize things, they show people being killed--people get killed. They show people getting robbed--people get robbed. So, in that sense, they're realistic. And people get caught.

Mark makes no reference to the frequency with which such things happen in real life, leaving the implication that the discrepancy between TV and real world probabilities may not be so glaring to him as are other aspects of television programs.

His favorite show, The Rockford Files, he characterizes as unreal but entertaining; the detection process in Kojak strikes him, by contrast, as more authentic. He also cites Adam-12 as showing the more pedestrian aspects of police work, and his phrasing suggests that it was a picture which Mark found instructive:

...What I got from that was the tediousness of being a policeman.

Unlike Mark, Barbara is consistently cynical about TV, arguing that TV crime shows do not portray the detection process accurately:

I think in real life, a regular detective

does a lot more of the boring work and the paperwork and the legwork and the talking to people that isn't on TV shows. Not the sort of action that people watch TV shows for.

Barbara feels that TV private detectives are much more affluent than detectives actually are, and in fact, she questions their reality because, like most other respondents, is familiar with them only via television:

I don't think they're that real. I never heard of anyone ever using a private detective so I tend to think that private detectives do the real horrible things, like spy on someone's wife.

While claiming--like most other respondents--to identify with little that she sees on television, Barbara also claims that she has "a real gut reaction when a rape takes place on TV. I guess most women do." She may well be right on that point, since other respondents stress the salience of rape on television.

There is little evidence to suggest that TV has been as influential an information source on crime for Barbara as it may be for Mark, who has a special enthusiasm for the crime show genre; yet, at the same time, Barbara is, if anything, more apt than Mark to over-estimate the risk and rate of violence, possibly because it is a matter of greater concern to her. For Barbara and for Pat N., hearsay and news are more relevant for assessing the probabilities and events that pertain to their own personal sphere. As for Mark, although TV seems to have influenced some of his perceptions concerning the procedures of crime and law enforcement, it does not appear to have sensitized him to violence, but rather, to have

focused his attention more on television detection, which he routinely tests (sometimes accurately, sometimes not) against certain preconceptions of his own.

B. Lenore and Jack M.

Jack and Lenore are in their late forties and both are advertising professionals, although Lenore works only on a part-time, freelance basis. Lenore reports reading four newspapers each day--The Bulletin, The Inquirer, The New York Times, and Women's Wear Daily--although frequently she skims one or more of them:

I try to read at least one very thoroughly.

She reports that all the sections are of interest to her, saying:

I try to hit a little bit of each.

Lenore also reads a newsweekly but does not regularly watch any TV news or listen to a radio news station.

Jack reads The Bulletin and The Inquirer--neither thoroughly, but always both--and also reads the same newsweekly that Lenore does,

Lenore and Jack watch very little television, although Jack says that in his business he must be "familiar" with it, by which he means aware of programming, ratings and so on. Unlike Lenore, who seems actively hostile to television, Jack is sometimes drawn to the set for relaxation, but frequently, he is disappointed in what he finds:

Every once in a while, I'll think,  
Gee, I'd like to watch television to-  
night, and I'll get the TV guide, but I  
can never find anything...MASH is the  
only thing I go out of my way to watch...

There's some things I enjoy watching and do watch once in a while. I'm very fond of The Waltons. Any time I watch them, I enjoy them immensely, but I just don't have the viewing habit type of thing.

While Jack finds various other shows diverting, The Waltons strike a particularly responsive chord:

I think it has a great deal of warmth to it. I like the way the people react. It's sort of like a dream world but it's a good dream world. It's not real fantasy--it's how you think people should be. Whether it's reality or not doesn't matter. They don't make any false moves on it--nothing's too manufactured, nothing's too phony about it.

Lenore shares Jack's enthusiasm for MASH--"the only mature thing, and fun,"--but does not mention The Waltons and has little tolerance for most other programs, claiming that she will sometimes demand that her relatives turn off a show she finds distasteful during visits to them.

Jack and Lenore live on a small residential street downtown where virtually everyone is acquainted with one another. Both of them--but Lenore more than Jack--observe the neighborhood closely and discuss crime with others, resembling Pat and Don N. in this respect. By contrast, however, they rely little, if at all, on television for any sort of information, including news, and, moreover, they remain less parochial than Pat in extrapolating from local events and projecting to the larger domain.

They are past victims of some burglaries and a pursesnatching, but while Lenore admits to worrying about future possibilities ("those incidents, even though they were minor, were extremely hard on me"), Jack

does not.

I'm very alert and I don't worry about it...It's nothing that preys on our mind that we feel that we have to discuss and keep psyched up.

Lenore, however, reports discussing crime actively and often with neighbors as a way of keeping one another informed and alert:

We hear the new routines, we're bound to let our neighbors know. Friends and neighbors...We do this for each other. We tell each other what is happening kind of thing. We've just been warned that wallet-snatching is up in town. I don't know if it's because Chestnut Street's torn up and people can bump into each other easily but apparently everybody's having their wallet lifted.\* We sort of live defensively here.

Lenore, because she works at home, also has more occasion to observe neighborhood activity than her husband ("I do everyone's credit rating") and has had, she feels, considerable opportunity to observe police because she "walk(s) around town an awful lot." Still, despite her tendency to draw inferences about neighborhood crime patterns and incidence on the basis of discussion with neighbors and personal observation, in making inferences about violence in a larger sphere, Lenore--unlike Pat N.--draws largely on news and reasoning to substantiate her answers, and is not apt to over-estimate violence. In this respect, Jack is much the same. There is no apparent indication that television is factored into Lenore's assessment of crime--she watches little TV and no crime shows--and Jack voluntarily suggests that he no longer picks

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\*Lenore, like Pat, is under the impression that she can determine neighborhood crime patterns accurately by word-of-mouth. This personal conviction was unsubstantiated by police records at the time, however.

up much information on crime from TV, although implying that at one time, he did:

I only learn through the newspapers-- you know, the actual things that happen. I don't learn much from television, which I imagine is one of the--after I passed through Jack Webb and the Dragnet stage quite a few years ago. I don't see any crime shows regularly, so just news reports and such.

Jack expects to learn little about life from television because he recognizes that it is "created to get an audience" but he does acknowledge that he can, at times, learn from television about the problems of others:

Well, that can happen occasionally. You know, somebody that I know nothing about and are not even close to me. I figure I might learn a little.

Situation comedies, Jack reports, have "absolutely nothing to do with reality...

It's a nice world--very amusing, very frothy or whatever you want to call it world. But I don't think you could ever pin down anybody's existence to being anything like these shows.

On the other hand, he does believe that modern TV crime shows, while too pat, are more convincing than old-fashioned sleuth fiction:

They're not--well, the old crime, the old Raymond Chandler type of things and the Falcon--they were such glamorized versions of crime. And I think they were sort of a very imaginery type of world they existed in. But today, most of the (crime) shows have to have a basis of reality about them in order for anybody to even look at them...

Lenore, by contrast, is unremittingly negative about television and TV realism, arguing that the old-fashioned comedies which made no attempt at realism were more real (implicitly, more modest in their ambitions) than shows which aim to be real and relevant. Lenore apparently objects to the possibility of being manipulated or deceived by television, to the extent that she is almost afraid to watch it:

I've caught five minutes of Maude just going in and out when I go into my family's home occasionally. I say, 'Is it almost over?' and I sit down for five minutes and I request permission to turn the set off because I don't really wish to see any more. I think it's as far off as the movies were in the thirties.

Q: Why do you feel Lucille Ball might be more realistic?

A: Well, as crazy as it was, there was no pretense of relevance. I think there's a lot of pretense today.

Lenore would prefer that crime shows take "case histories" and "embellish it a little, without some of this fakery." Her resistance or aversion to television fiction is characteristic of her demographic group but still fairly extreme. Jack's reaction--critical but tolerant--is more modal. Interestingly enough, Lenore remarks that she might identify with rape victims were she to see that dramatized on television, although she reports she has not seen such programs (referring, apparently, to several telemovies on rape which were mentioned by other respondents). The widespread impact and salience of those programs would seem to attest not simply to TV's agenda-setting role with respect

to crime, but also, to the medium's special impact when it fictionalizes issues already raised (and stressed) by non-fictional sources, as rape was during the data collection period.

It would be difficult to find any evidence or indication of television influence in Lenore's responses; she does not even watch TV news, relying almost exclusively on print and hearsay for her information. She is, however, more anxious about crime than Jack, and also less professionally busy, so that her surveillance represents both a personal defense mechanism and a pasttime. On the other hand, because her experience and her view of the larger community are far less parochial than Pat N's, she has a broader and more cosmopolitan fund of information and assumption to bring to bear when making assessments of crime in the aggregate. There is, similarly, nothing in Jack's interview to suggest that his conceptions of crime derive from television, although his prior viewing habits and his greater tolerance of television fiction would suggest that he is, at least, more susceptible to such influences than Lenore, an active TV-avoider.

Major conclusions and research implications are presented in Section 6 of this chapter. Sections 1 through 5 contain more detailed discussions of the findings on which principle conclusions are based.

#### Section 1. Overview

Predictably, education emerged as the single most important variable of this study. It was associated with: 1) lower television viewing; 2) greater access to (and grasp or use of) trend data relevant to crime; 3) fewer "TV responses" to cultivation items (i.e., a more statistically "realistic" assessment of violent crime incidence); and 4) less frequent explicit mention of television to substantiate responses. It was also accompanied by more cynical assessments of television quality and authenticity (see Section 3).

Television viewing and TV crime show viewing were associated with lower education and greater numbers of "TV answers," although nothing may be said about the independent significance of TV exposure based on a small, qualitative study of this type. The fact that college graduates with higher cultivation scores tend to be heavier viewers (sometimes with a special preference for crime shows, but not always) does not necessarily implicate television per se, since it is possible that higher cultivation scores and viewing levels both reflect other variables in those cases. The role of television as a cultivator of certain crime-related conceptions is, however, suggested by respondents' references to TV to substantiate certain of their comments, and also by num-

erous responses which appear to reflect characteristic TV distortions (see Sections 3 and 4).

When this study was conceived, it was thought that TV crime show viewing might be even more closely linked with "cultivation" than general TV viewing. In fact, TV crime show exposure (which is, of course, interdependent with TV viewing generally) was, if anything, slightly less frequently associated with TV responses. This may reflect several possibilities, but it is reasonable to speculate that individual crime show exposure actually varies more from year to year than does general viewing. (The variance would presumably be a function of specific offerings and personal schedules). As a result, crime show viewing at any given time may not be as stable or as good an indicator of personal viewing history--and, by implication, of the strength of a respondent's "viewing habit"--as is general exposure. This consideration is especially relevant, since cultivation is presumed to reflect years of prior exposure rather than simply current behavior. Thus, short of a detailed, retrospective viewing diary (virtually impossible to reconstruct), general viewing level at any given point in time may most closely reflect the strength of a respondent's longterm viewing habit, and hence, susceptibility to any sort of cultivation.

## Section 2. Perceptions of Crime and Law Enforcement, and Possible Sources

Clearly, television is only one potential source, albeit a major one, of the sort of perceptions and biases under examination here, and a primary objective of this study has been to examine the role of television in relation to other possible influences. Respondents' source

attributions were thought relevant to that end, in spite of the fact that they were not regarded as necessarily "accurate." These attributions were taken, instead, as interesting data in their own right, reflective of what respondents themselves assume to be the sources of their conceptions. Still, where fiction, particularly television fiction, is mentioned by respondents as a reference or substantiation, a case may be made for the relative dearth of alternative sources on the topic in question and/or the salience and probable influence of television.

The formal sources mentioned most frequently were (1) news; (2) hearsay (conversation); (3) personal experience; and (4) fiction, primarily television. There was, in addition, a more informal category of response justifications, a category which respondents could not themselves define or articulate, but which might be called (5) diffuse cultural conditioning, encompassing explanations which appear to draw on reasoning, personal values, and broad assumptions about society.

It should be emphasized that news was mentioned more often than other sources overall, and while there were some discernible variations in the frequency with which certain sources were invoked by particular respondents, individual variations did not lend themselves to respondent typologies as such, except to the extent that some respondents (largely high school graduates) were more inclined than others to allude to fiction. All sources, including fiction, were mentioned in the service of both "real world" and "television" responses.

Husbands and wives were frequently exposed to the same TV news stations and newspapers, but differences in schedules and, of course, personal interest or preference, tended to produce some discrepancies in

the depth and character of spouses' news consumption, and their inclination to engage in conversations pertinent to crime. Some general similarities between husbands and wives owe to comparability of education. There are, however, numerous instances (in both the educational subsamples) where spouses not only relied on different sources in justifying responses, but also exhibited different attitudes toward television, even though both may watch certain programs together and occasionally discuss them as they view.

As might reasonably be expected, news is the source through which respondents believe they learn most of what they know about crime. Thus, when apparently unable to pinpoint the source of a particular view, they seemed inclined to impute it, by logic or assumption, to the news. The educational groups are differentiated by their access (and tendency to cite) trend information from magazines and professional journals. High school graduates are obliged more often than college graduates to make their own subjective tallies of events based on news exposure over time, and their responses more often reflect the resulting distortions.

Conversation is also an important source of information about crime incidence, particularly in respondents' own communities. A few women seemed more apt to survey the neighborhood through observation and conversation than were their husbands, a possible reflection of the fact that they spend more time at home. These individuals are not distinguishable by any single education level but they do live in cohesive communities and report that they are worried about crime, a reaction which may be both a cause and a consequence of their intensive surveillance. In general, however, reported discussion of crime and worry were

not associated with one another, possibly, in part, because of some tendency for those concerned about crime to deny discussion, sometimes in direct contradiction to their spouses.

Most respondents have had some experience with crime--as either victims of burglary or petty theft--and if they have not been personally victimized, they are almost invariably well-acquainted with someone who has been. While, on the whole, direct experience with crime and crime detection is still relatively narrow (and is not associated, in and of itself, with concern about crime) respondents mention it when relevant and, not surprisingly, are often prepared to generalize, or over-generalize, on the basis of single occurrences. They also regard direct contact or personal experience as the "best" way to learn about police, even while acknowledging that they do not necessarily have much opportunity for such contact.

Experience is, understandably, seen as a less desirable way to learn about crime itself. Respondents prefer vicarious instruction and tend to identify news as the single most comprehensive source of information--that is, the source from which they think they learn "most" about crime--although television drama is also mentioned in this context. The high school graduates (and heavy viewers) in the sample are more apt to allude to TV fiction as a source of information about crime or police than are college graduates, who, although they too occasionally mention TV, are more overtly cynical about TV portrayals, and seldom, if ever, cite television as a general source of information. On the other hand, crime movies like Serpico or The Conversation, seem to be imputed greater

legitimacy by college graduates, inasmuch as they are mentioned more freely--with less qualification or apology--even by respondents who dismiss TV fiction as largely inauthentic.

As already suggested by the cultivation scores, both high school graduates and heavy viewers in the sample were more apt to over-estimate the risk of violent victimization than were college graduates and lighter viewers, and nearly all cultivation items elicited proportionately more TV responses from the high school graduates and the heavy viewers. It was, however, possible to discern some patterns crosscutting education in the types of justifications and source attributions associated with particular questions.

News was particularly salient to respondents, regardless of education level, but questions dealing primarily with crime in the aggregate--relative rates, proportions of total crime represented by specific crime types, etc.--tended to elicit references to news and hearsay almost exclusively. Respondents are seriously concerned about crime and violence because they "hear so much" through news and conversation. Occasionally, they voice some suspicion that news over-represents certain types of crimes at the expense of others, but in the absence of other information, respondents (particularly, the high school graduates) are obliged to rely on their own informal tallies of news and word-of-mouth accounts.

When respondents were asked questions pertaining more directly to personal, or, at least, individual, risk of victimization--as opposed to categorical crime incidence--they supplemented and bolstered allusions to news with references to personal experience and normative assumptions

about the circumstances under which violence is most likely to occur. Experience and reactions to it are, of course, idiosyncratic; they can precipitate anxieties in some, allay fears in others. However, knowing people who have ever been victims of violence is a major consideration. Moreover, the majority recognize that fatal violence is not really a random, impersonal event, but is generally perpetrated by people who know their victims. Unable to conceive of their own friends and relatives doing violence to them, insulated--they feel--by the regularity of their own routines, and personally acquainted with few--if any--victims of violence, they almost all rate their own chances of violence as no greater than one in 100, even while frequently over-estimating the odds for others.

Respondents have, on the whole, limited news information and experience relevant to judicial procedure, and are apt to rely on television and civic slogans (e.g., "trial-by-jury") to guide them in their responses. Because most respondents, regardless of education level, know trial-by-jury to be a constitutional guarantee, they seem to feel it is somehow better or more just than judicial determination, and therefore, prefer to believe it more common.

Two other questions pertaining to courtroom procedure--an area in which respondents have, by their own admission, little direct experience--seemed to call more heavily on TV and other fictional sources. A majority of respondents answered "correctly" that testimony was most decisive than scientific evidence, attributing their answers, in many cases, to fiction.

The impact of television in this general area was most striking in connection with the question: "Do you think lawyers are permitted to lead a witness in court?" Despite the fact that the rules of judicial procedure permit lawyers to lead witnesses under many circumstances, respondents tend to believe it is unethical and technically improper to do so. More striking than even the relative unanimity on this point was the confidence with which respondents stated their views, even though most have never been in a courtroom. In nearly all cases, comments were substantiated with references to television and other fictional sources. Better-educated respondents were, in fact, less reticent about mentioning TV in this context than in connection with other questions, although still not so free with their allusions to television as were the high school graduates in the sample.

Indeed, despite the widespread skepticism about television's authenticity evinced later by those who had attended college, and even by high school graduates, it does not seem to occur to any of the respondents that TV's portrayal of courtroom drama might be inauthentic. This is conceivably because the television portrayals tend to be relatively detailed, and mimic an aspect of law whose arcane technicality seems to set tighter limits on dramatic contrivance. Respondents tend to confuse procedural precision and complexity of detail with realism in many sorts of dramatizations. Moreover, vicarious courtroom exposure has been so frequent and compelling, that respondents feel "as if" they have been in court and can discuss the legal protocols with confidence.

Similarly, questions dealing more directly and explicitly with police activities and procedures elicited many more references to fiction, even among college graduates, since presumably, these are issues about which news accounts are often less informative and evocative or vivid than are either vicarious or direct experience. TV scenarios are therefore most easily and plausibly factored in with news accounts and direct experience when the respondents are asked to consider circumstances and processes rather than probabilities.

Most respondents, for example, conceive of police activities as consisting largely of patrol and crime deterrence--that which they see police do in real life and on television--rather than clerical work, which is largely invisible to the public, even though it occupies a great proportion of police time. Indeed, respondents (including college graduates) who are aware that police paperwork is a major element of their job, almost always indicate that this view originated with fictional TV programs and movies. (Such programs have recently introduced a modification of the more conventional or traditional stereotypes, in portraying police as encumbered by paperwork).

Questions about private detectives inspire respondents to at least refer to fiction, on grounds that this is, as one respondent put it, "a fictional type of area," but respondents are, in most cases, reluctant to take the TV portrayal seriously because they know nothing in real life to substantiate it. Indeed, the fact that a number of respon-

dents refused, or were at least reluctant, to even hazard a guess about whether private detectives search without permission, suggests that many of them--heavy viewers included--are not sure that the fictional sources accurately reflect reality; despite, or rather because, of a dearth of relevant real world information on private detectives, they hesitate to extrapolate from what they see on television.

It may be inferred, then, that TV is perceived by respondents as more clearly illustrative of policework than of private detection because respondents have some real life standard of comparison to apply regarding police work, and virtually none to apply with respect to detectives. By extension, there is reason to suppose that TV may be most persuasive or instructive in areas where viewers have some comparison and confirmation data available to them, since viewers can then assure themselves that the phenomenon in question has a reality independent of television. The availability of outside information can serve to verify the phenomenon and at the same time, create in the viewer the illusion of relative immunity to TV influence.

Still, while respondents are cautious in commenting about private detectives, the composite picture of private detectives that emerges from their remarks may reflect TV more obliquely--at least in the sense that respondents striving to make a "realistic" assessment are tempted to invert the television stereotype. For example, rather than assuming that detectives are gallant heroes (as generally portrayed on television),

many respondents seem to regard private detectives as clever but slightly shifty individuals with ample opportunity to behave in unscrupulous fashion because they are less closely supervised than police. Only the respondents who had actually met them were inclined to describe them as just ordinary "businessmen."

Where television is apparently least relevant is in connection with questions dealing with race and crime incidence. Despite the fact that television has traditionally cast few non-whites as victims or villains, respondents believe, based on news and hearsay (possibly substantiated by prevailing cultural stereotypes) that blacks are victims and perpetrators of crime in disproportion to their numbers. Thus, TV appears to have limited impact when the countervailing real world information is so salient and abundant as to render the television portrayals virtually irrelevant.

### Section 3. Assessments of TV Realism

Although the high school graduates in the sample are more explicitly trusting of television than better-educated respondents, all respondents are, at times, obliged to substantiate their ideas about crime and law enforcement with references to television, particularly when they are asked to respond to questions concerning those procedural aspects of law enforcement to which they typically have little or no opportunity for exposure. The implication is that respondents assume TV to be at least partly realistic, and/or that regardless of their categorical view of television, they will, at times, be forced to use it to fill gaps in

their knowledge and to supplement other, more formally "credible" sources.

A distinction was made earlier between attributional responses to a communication (interpretations less cognizant of communicational intent) and inferential responses (interpretations which impute intentionality to an auteur). While virtually all the respondents in this study could be presumed to recognize that what they see on television is a re-creation or simulation of events, and not a recorded spate of reality, we may reasonably expect differences in the way respondents assess the authenticity of these re-creations, with some of them taking greater notice of the way in which the material has been selected and arranged to convey a particular image of reality. Such a level of inferential sophistication may restrict the sphere of television influence without, of course, precluding it altogether.

Indeed, while college graduates frequently deny finding television realistic, they sometimes reveal, in the course of debunking TV, ways in which they take television as authentic, either by what they choose not to criticize, or what they hold out as reasonably accurate on TV.

Analysis of respondents' comments about why they find television realistic or not, identified four basic elements relevant to those judgments. The first is setting: the "authenticity" of physical and socio-economic features which locate and describe the situation and lifestyle of the characters. The second is problems or plots: the degree to which respondents can identify them as capable of happening to someone

somewhere. The third is problem resolution: the way in which problems are dealt with and the pace and inevitability with which they are resolved. The fourth is characterization: whether characters act and interact in "recognizable" or, at least, believable ways.

These are focal points for respondents' assessments of TV realism rather than criteria per se. Criteria used to test the plausibility of problems, characters, and so on, are ultimately personal, sometimes idiosyncratic, standards of lifelikeness which respondents presumably draw from their own experience, their knowledge and assumptions about the world, and their assumptions about the way the media deal with reality.

While these four elements do not constitute a hierarchy in any formal sense, the less-educated respondents seem to find the first and second more salient, whereas the college graduates in the sample appear slightly more inclined to examine (or articulate) the dynamic, structural aspects of fiction: namely, character interaction and problem resolution. What is probably the more important difference between the high school and college graduates in the sample with respect to their assessments of TV realism, however, is that those who have attended only high school are less exacting in the way they "test" for realism and plausibility, whereas college graduates bring to bear a greater sophistication about the world and a greater a priori skepticism about the way television usually presents it.

Assessments of television realism ranged from extreme cynicism to considerable credulity: few respondents are so skeptical as to see no

authenticity in TV portrayals, and few are so credulous as to find TV utterly convincing. There is an assumption implicit in these remarks that respondents are competent to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic on TV without much difficulty or risk of error, although, not surprisingly, some of the respondents who are most confident in that respect seem more thoroughly misled by TV.

Typically, respondents believe that even while TV may deal in exaggerated portrayals and extreme situations, it often presents or draws upon real problems and issues, and in that respect, at least, is realistic, even if over-dramatized. Indeed, some respondents believe many TV problems to be based on real incidents, and even if respondents cannot "fit themselves" into the situations portrayed, they deem them real if they can imagine them happening to others. In some cases, those "others" are characters or social types whom respondents know only or primarily via television; thus, broader representation of various ethnic groups or classes and their problems is taken by many viewers (including some college graduates) as indicating heightened realism on television, although the standards by which the portrayals are evaluated as real or not are not necessarily grounded in reality. In that way, new stereotypes may be exchanged for old ones under the guise of increased realism.

Soap operas, on the other hand, bear the brunt of much viewer cynicism, even contempt, including--or especially--from those who watch them regularly. Most objectionable, apparently, is the way in which they portray improbable (according to respondents) concentrations of serious problems in small communities. Contrivance and hyperbole on nighttime

shows do not appear quite so obtrusive, or so irksome, to many viewers, apparently because evening shows do not have the same ongoing format and relatively dense colonies of interconnected victims. It is also possible that soap operas deal with situations and problems which respondents feel more competent to evaluate, and therefore, may be prepared to judge by more exacting standards.

By contrast, crime and crime detection represent a more remote and exotic topic. Thus, respondents find themselves without adequate criteria for testing the reality of those programs, and sometimes fall back on television itself for standards of comparison and authenticity (see next section).

While it is common for respondents to judge many TV problems as, in some sense, real, it is also common for them to point out that the solutions to the problems are often not true-to-life, particularly in the sense that TV problems are invariably solved, and solved happily. This recognition was not limited to the college graduates, but they did seem more alert to the structural and thematic contrivance needed to bring TV dramas to a satisfying and convenient ending.

It is, in fact, possible that the protracted development of soap operas, while in some sense more closely analogous to the time frame of real life problems, seems more "ridiculous" to some viewers than do discrete episodes, partly because the protraction itself serves to underscore and hyperbolize the problems dramatized. A "real" time span enacted almost literally on television can seem unrealistically protracted, while paradoxically, a telescoped episode presented and resolv-

ed in the space of, say, an hour, may seem more appropriate--more "real"--to viewers schooled in that convention.

The college graduates in the sample offer frequent critical comments about characterization and and unreal interactions between characters, whereas the high school-educated respondents seem more apt to consider physical discrepancies they find implausible or obtrusive, such as the fact that people beaten severely on television recover promptly, or that a fat detective like Cannon can move so quickly in pursuit of criminals. In addition, speech mannerisms (accent and style) can be an important element of character credibility to high school-educated respondents, who find rougher, less cultivated speech more sympathetic and familiar. Kojak is widely regarded as realistic on those grounds.

#### Section 4. Respondents' Assessments of TV Crime Show Realism

Among less-educated respondents in the sample, there is a common assumption that many crime show episodes are based on actual crimes, or at least, that they reflect the nature and incidence of real crime fairly accurately. College graduates were more sensitive, on the whole, to the over-representation of violence on television, though apt to focus their explicit criticism more on the detection and characterization portrayed in crime shows.

The high school graduates in the sample sometimes commented that many of the complicated crimes portrayed on television are associated with educated, upper-class people (e.g., as in Columbo) but they did

not necessarily dismiss them as unreal on those grounds, and indeed, may have been pointing up what makes such programs seem credible, since less affluent respondents feel they are without standards to evaluate the accuracy of such portrayals.

The high school graduates were also apt to view TV crime detection techniques as fairly realistic, although there is some recognition that police are not so quick or efficient at solving crimes in real life as they are on television. Here, as elsewhere, college graduates were more cynical, in the abstract, than high school graduates, seeing television as portraying a skeletal view of crime detection fleshed out with accident, contrivance, and melodrama. On the other hand, whereas some respondents regard situation comedies as more realistic than crime shows because they are non-violent, others (including some college graduates) seem, conversely, to regard crime shows as more realistic because they are apparently grounded in some technicality. It appears that much misinformation on TV is absorbed uncritically when it is in a technical guise, because there is some tendency to mistake byzantine detail and complexity for realism in any sort of TV representation--to assume, for example, that trials are really as TV portrays them or that complex criminal plans may be extrapolated from TV and applied to real life.

Since, in most cases, television is a more vivid and extensive source of "experience" with crime than is real life, it is not surprising that respondents sometimes seem to derive standards for evaluating the realism of particular TV shows from other programs they have seen.

Such standards are implicit in certain comments made by college graduates in criticizing detection procedures which they find unreal, and are sometimes mentioned explicitly by high school graduates applying information learned from one program to assess others. It is apparent that even more cynical respondents have assimilated certain notions from television over time, a reflection of years of exposure on one hand, and the relative dearth of corrective information and experience on the other. Respondents who particularly enjoy this type of entertainment and/or want to understand the processes of crime and criminal investigation may be most motivated to use TV for the sort of procedural information which is difficult to extrapolate from news or experience.

Possibly because respondents have more occasion to "test" police portrayals against what they observe in real life, they seem slightly more cynical about TV police than about TV crime portrayals per se, arguing that they are idealized beyond real life competence and efficiency. Kojak is, by contrast, regarded almost universally as realistic because of his ("hard-nosed") mannerisms and rough, New York-accented speech. In fact, seemingly incongruous trademarks like lollypops may enhance believability for viewers, causing them to reason that these must be real since they are too improbable to have been invented.

There is some indication, too, that the introduction of a novel which inverts or contradicts existing stereotypes can be taken as evidence of authenticity. Thus, complaints about paperwork in a genre which tends to emphasize action, or the introduction of black situa-

tion comedy on television, etc., may be taken as evidence of accuracy, based, again, on implicit reasoning that if it were not true, why would television breach convention in this fashion? Under such circumstances, television can actually serve as a corrective to misconceptions it has generated previously, or which have been derived from other sources, including personal experience; television may, on the other hand, simply introduce an up-dated set of stereotypes which are themselves misleading and inaccurate.

#### Section 5. Perceived Effects of Television

Respondents are ambivalent about television's capacity to aid, instruct, or influence them. To the extent that they perceive TV as "realistic" they see it as potentially instructive about the lives other people lead or the problems they face. They are, on the whole, also fairly confident that they can distinguish fact and authenticity from contrivance on TV. Only the college graduates in the sample seem (on occasion) aware that they might be misled by television, an awareness that reflects their inferential response to the manipulative, persuasive character of dramatic material.

Although the majority of respondents see TV as representing real problems, albeit in an exaggerated fashion, they tend, on the other hand, to see TV's representations as general and illustrative rather than therapeutic and specific. Hence, they do not believe that they personally learn to solve problems from watching television, although the college graduates in the sample sometimes suspect that "others" might, whereas high school graduates interviewed do not suppose anyone

at all does.

On the other hand, they are acutely sensitive to what they suppose is television's capacity to inspire or instigate crime "among a certain element," and high school graduates in particular see TV as instructing would-be criminals in highly specific criminal techniques ("like a map," as one respondent put it). The extent to which respondents think that not just themes, but complex techniques, are applicable to and instructive about real life attests to their confidence in much of what they see.

It appears as if respondents, particularly high school graduates, are inclined to regard television as capable of teaching deviant or anti-social behavior to a susceptible minority, largely by virtue of illustrating criminal techniques. The college graduates in the sample are somewhat more sensitive to the potential for more subtle, socializing influence in any sort of fiction, and less apt to stress the possibility of more precise mimicry.

As for television violence, it is acceptable to most high school graduates in the sample, who defend it as either authentic, or less extreme than what they see in movies. By contrast, it is almost uniformly deplored by the college graduates in the group (including those who claim never to watch TV but feel they know it is too violent). The better educated respondents, however, were occasionally caught between their distain for the lack of realism on television and their objection to the portrayal of violence, such that they criticized TV for violence yet complained, for time to time, of its tendency to cosmeticize.

Section 6. Summary of Major Findings and Implications for Future Research

This study was designed to illuminate processes rather than to develop statistically projectable findings, so that care must be taken in making generalizations on the basis of the data collected. Nevertheless, there is reason to conclude that TV fiction is widely regarded by less-educated and heavier viewers as a fairly reliable source of information on many aspects of society, including--or especially--crime and law enforcement. Moreover, despite viewers' common conviction that it is easy to discern TV fact from fiction, it appears that they often confuse them, sometimes drawing not only information and expectations from TV fiction, but even deriving standards by which they test TV portrayals for authenticity.

Evidence to substantiate the role of television is suggested by respondents' references to television to justify certain responses, and also by their assessments of TV realism and related matters. Even the college graduates, who expressed far greater cynicism about television as a group, are not immune to so-called "television effects," judging by their occasional explicit references to television, as well as various comments or explanations which seem implicitly to reflect certain characteristic television biases. They appear, however, to regard movies as a more legitimate information source on crime, and possibly other matters.

The role of education in accounting for biases identifiable with television is also critical. Education is associated with less televi-

sion exposure and more negative feelings about TV quality and authenticity. More specifically, it appears to engender greater skepticism about the medium: college graduates in the sample apply more stringent and inferential criteria, are more generally disdainful of TV. Education also provides added opportunities for acquiring corrective information. Thus, while heavy viewers are, on the whole, more apt to exaggerate violent crime incidence, it would be inappropriate to single out television as the cause of those perceptions, inasmuch as lower education level, which is also associated with exaggerated estimates of violence, tends to limit opportunities for exposure to trend information and other corrective data.

For example, better-educated respondents who indicate some anxiety about crime and who may tend--based on intensive surveillance of their neighborhoods--to over-estimate crime in their communities, may not project those perceptions to a larger sphere, since they have some access to corrective and cosmopolitan information sources. By contrast, high school graduates with similar concerns and neighborhood information-seeking patterns may be obliged to generalize their local assessment for lack of other information. In addition, to the extent that exposure to television is often associated with a reliance on TV for news, some heavy viewers may be less apt to make use of print sources altogether, thus further reducing opportunities for acquiring a more statistically "realistic" perspective.

Thus, it remains extremely difficult to extricate the effects of one information source (or socializing agent) from the effects of others, especially since messages and themes are duplicated across various

media. Indeed, even TV fiction can sometimes serve as a "corrective" influence rather than a source of distortion or misinformation, and conversely, misconceptions attributable to television (on content analytic grounds) may actually owe to other non-fiction sources such as news, which consistently emphasizes the violent and sensational, or even personal experience, which is necessarily limited and may be over-generalized.

Still, television appears--by dint of frequency of exposure and the dearth of real life information on many aspects of crime--to play an important role in generating views of how crime occurs and how it is dealt with. Source attribution patterns in the sample suggest that television may be more important in illustrating processes rather than probabilities (respondents apparently assume they can assess the latter through news and hearsay). It is, of course, conceivable that television contributes to an exaggerated sense of violent probabilities, but it may simply receive less "credit" for such appraisals than news, simply because news is a more salient and more "legitimate" source of real world information.

Because of the quasi-technical character of crime (and law-related) shows, many viewers may take them as being more instructive, in certain respects, or at least less amenable to dramatic contrivance, than various other sorts of programs. Specific areas in which television may be most influential--because it can provide viewers with a sense of process and vicarious experience--have to do with courtroom procedures, police behavior, and criminal and investigative techniques, all of which

are difficult for the lay person to learn about from news or experience alone.

It would seem that viewers may be particularly susceptible to television effects when: 1) they can test and confirm to their satisfaction that a particular phenomenon viewed on television bears some relation to reality and is not simply a figment of TV; and 2) the material in question is complex and apparently technical, thus seeming to leave little room for dramatic manipulation or distortion. Respondents appear more hesitant about drawing conclusions when they have no real life standards of comparison to apply to television themes, although this by no means precludes the possibility of more subtle influences. In addition, programs which appear to deviate from, or quality, traditional stereotypes in some obtrusive but plausible way may be taken as standards against which to evaluate other television programs.

Finally, it seems that TV themes and content patterns may have little or no impact at all when countered by extensive news coverage, observation, and hearsay fostering clearly contradictory impressions--as, for example, on the subject of victimization and criminal rates among whites and ethnic minorities.

The sort of problems which normally constraint attempts to identify various socializing agents and their impact necessarily limit the kinds of conclusions which may be drawn here, and, of course, the size of the sample in this study places further qualifications on the findings. Nonetheless, while a small-scale study of this sort cannot lay

claim to statistically projectable findings, it still suggests the value of using more intensive interviewing techniques as an adjunct to future surveys in this area, since patterns not reflected in cross-tabular data frequently emerge when respondents can be questioned closely about their responses.

This study has focused most closely on television as a source of crime-related information, with some attention to the role of other potentially prominent sources. In future research, more thorough examination of how crime-related information is drawn and integrated from multiple sources might give closer attention to: 1) differences in respondents' neighborhoods as a predictor of community discussion and surveillance; 2) more detailed and systematic differences in news use (precluded in this study by small sample size); and 3) developmental comparisons across younger age categories or within a cohort over time to map relevant changes in conceptions and use of various sources.

This study made only a limited attempt to gather details about respondents' viewing situation--factors which can undoubtedly mediate viewer reception of TV content. Especially in view of indications here that husband-wife pairs often do watch television together and discuss programs as they watch, detailed information on the viewing situation, including (where possible) observational data, would be particularly useful in future studies.

In addition, the frequent portrayal on television of police violation of suspects' constitutional rights might serve as a point of departure for research considering how viewers feel about such protections, and

whether television may be contributing to a view of such guarantees as extraneous or unjustifiable constraints on law enforcement.

Finally, given that public policy should be geared toward reducing (disproportionate) fear of crime as well as reducing crime itself, and given, too, that certain respondents seem particularly oriented toward their local community as a source of crime information, it might be fruitful to focus on a specific block of neighborhood in order to investigate crime-related information-seeking by respondents in a small cohesive area, and its relationship to fear levels in the community.

APPENDICES A - C

TABLE A-1

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CRIMES HAS INCREASED THE MOST IN THE PAST  
FEW YEARS? MURDER (TV) OR ROBBERY (FBI STATISTICS)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
14	38	20	8	27	38	25	18

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
29	21	30	20	30	30	18

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
40	10	10	40	25	25

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
13	32	25	25

TABLE A-2

WHAT PERCENT OF ALL CRIMES ARE VIOLENT CRIMES, LIKE MURDER, RAPE, ROBBERY, AND AGGRAVATED ASSAULT? DO YOU THINK IT'S CLOSER TO 15% (FBI STATISTICS) OR 25% (TV)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
21	50	70	17	47	69	31	54

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
38	53	40	55	30	44	47

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
70	20	55	60	45	45

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
53	40	38	50

TABLE A-3

HOW DO YOU THINK THE NUMBER OF HOMICIDES COMPARES WITH THE NUMBER OF SUICIDES IN THIS COUNTRY? WHICH DO YOU THINK THERE ARE MORE OF?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
57	57	60	58	47	69	69	50

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
62	53	40	45	100	65	47

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
65	50	55	60	60	55

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
73	48	44	67

TABLE A-4

TAKING ALL MURDER VICTIMS, WHAT PERCENT OF THEM DO YOU THINK ARE NOT WHITE? DO YOU THINK IT'S CLOSER TO 25% (TV) OR 55% (FBI STATISTICS)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
14	38	40	8	47	31	19	38

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
33	26	10	30	50	35	26

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	<32	>45
40	20	35	25	20	40

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
40	24	38	25

TABLE A-5

WHAT PERCENT OF ALL CONVICTED CRIMINALS DO YOU THINK ARE WHITE? DO YOU THINK IT'S CLOSER TO: 70% (FBI STATISTICS) OR 85% (TV)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
-	12	20	-	13	15	-	17

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
10	10	-	15	10	13	6

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
10	10	10	10	10	10

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
7	12	7	12

TABLE A-6

WHAT PERCENT OF ALL KNOWN VICTIMS OF CRIME ARE WHITE? DO YOU THINK IT'S CLOSER TO 40% (FBI STATISTICS) OR 70% (TV)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
43	38	40	42	40	38	38	33

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
34	48	30	40	50	35	47

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
35	45	45	35	55	25

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
40	40	38	42

TABLE A-7

DO YOU THINK MORE FATAL VIOLENCE OCCURS BETWEEN STRANGERS (TV)  
OR BETWEEN RELATIVES AND ACQUAINTANCES (FBI STATISTICS)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
14	25	90	17	40	54	25	46

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
62	53	20	40	58	44	29

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
40	35	40	35	30	45

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
47	32	31	42

TABLE A-8

ABOUT WHAT PERCENT OF ALL AMERICANS LAST YEAR WERE THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME? IS IT CLOSER TO 4% (FBI STATISTICS) OR 8% (TV)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
43	56	70	33	60	69	38	67

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
48	63	50	60	50	56	53

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
70	40	55	55	65	45

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
60	52	50	58

TABLE A- 9

IN ANY GIVEN WEEK, ABOUT HOW MANY PEOPLE OUT OF 100 ARE INVOLVED IN SOME SORT OF VIOLENCE, AS EITHER VICTIMS OR CRIMINALS? DO YOU THINK IT'S CLOSER TO ONE IN 100 (FBI STATISTICS) OR 10 IN 100 (TV)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
7	38	70	8	40	54	38	33

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
38	32	10	45	40	35	35

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
40	30	25	45	35	35

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
33	36	25	42

TABLE A- 10

ARE MOST CASES INVOLVING VIOLENT CRIME DECIDED BY A JURY (TV) OR A JUDGE ONLY (PHILADELPHIA COURT STATISTICS)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
64	81	80	58	80	85	62	83

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
81	64	80	65	90	52	41

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	≥ 32	> 45
85	65	70	80	70	80

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
73	76	81	71

TABLE A-11

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE THING WHICH LEADS TO CONVICTION ON A MURDER CHARGE MOST OFTEN: SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE (TV) OR TESTIMONY OF A WITNESS (STATISTICS)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
29	19	40	33	27	33	25	41

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
33	21	30	35	10	30	26

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	< 32	> 45
25	25	15	40	30	25

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
27	28	25	29

TABLE A-12

WHAT PERCENT OF ALL MALES WHO ARE EMPLOYED WORK IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIME DETECTION? IS IT CLOSER TO: 1% (CENSUS) OR 5% (TV)?

(%) TV RESPONSES

BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
36	44	20	45	27	38	44	29

BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late	No/Skim	Thoroughly
33	37	40	30	35	30	41

BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
H.S.	College	Male	Female	<32	>45
50	20	20	50	45	25

BY CRIME EXPOSURE:

<u>Ever Crime Victim</u>		<u>Worry</u>	
No	Yes	No	Yes
47	28	38	33

TABLE A-13

## DO POLICE EVER PLANT EVIDENCE? (% YES)

## BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Exposure</u>			<u>TV Crime Exposure</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
92	69	60	92	60	77	88	66

## BY NEWS EXPOSURE:

<u>General News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News Exposure</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
Light	Heavy	None	Nat'l	Local &/or Late Only	No/Skim	Thoroughly
71	79	90	65	80	70	82

## BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Age</u>		<u>Sex</u>	
High School	College	< 32	> 45	Male	Female
75	75	70	80	65	85

TABLE B-1

## EVALUATION OF TV REALISM % YES OR SOMETIMES

## BY TV EXPOSURE:

<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Favorites</u>	
Light	Med.	Heavy	None	Med.	Heavy	None	One or More
29	56	60	25	53	62	38	54

## BY DEMOGRAPHICS:

<u>Education</u>		<u>Age</u>		<u>Sex</u>	
High School	College	<32	>45	Male	Female
65	35	35	60	45	50

TABLE B-2

## PERCEPTIONS OF TV AS AN EDUCATIONAL/SOCIALIZING INFLUENCE BY DEMOGRAPHICS AND TV EXPOSURE

STATEMENT	<u>TV Exposure</u>			<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
	Light (14)	Med. (16)	Heavy (10)	H.S. (20)	College (20)	Male (20)	Female (20)	Under 32 (20)	Over 45 (20)
<u>TV Drama Helps Learn Life</u>									
Agree	29%	31%	10%	35%	15%	15%	35%	20%	30%
Neutral	-	19	10	20	-	10	10	15	5
Disagree	71	50	80	45	85	75	55	65	65
<u>You Don't Solve Pers. Probs. by Watching TV</u>									
Agree	64	88	100	90	75	80	85	70	95
Neutral	7	6	-	-	10	10	15	10	-
Disagree	29	6	-	10	15	10	-	20	5
<u>TV Helps Us Learn Real Probs.</u>									
Agree	57	69	80	80	55	70	65	65	70
Neutral	7	-	10	5	5	-	10	10	-
Disagree	36	31	10	15	40	30	25	25	30
<u>Person Who Watches Lot of TV Might Get Wrong Idea of Life</u>									
Agree	100	94	70	85	95	90	90	95	85
Neutral	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disagree	-	6	30	15	5	10	10	5	15

TABLE B-3

PERCEPTIONS OF TV AS AN EDUCATIONAL/SOCIALIZING INFLUENCE, BY DEMOGRAPHICS AND NEWS EXPOSURE

STATEMENT	News Exposure		TV News			Read Paper Regularly	
	Light (21)	Heavy (19)	None (10)	Nat'l (20)	Local &/ or Late (10)	No/Skim (23)	Thoroughly (17)
<u>TV Drama Helps Learn Life</u>							
Agree	24	26	20	20	40	22	29
Neutral	57	74	20	55	10	17	-
Disagree	19	-	60	75	55	61	71
<u>You Don't Solve Personal Problems by Watching TV</u>							
Agree	86	79	80	80	90	78	88
Neutral	10	16	-	10	-	4	6
Disagree	5	5	20	10	10	17	6
<u>TV Helps Us Learn Real Probs.</u>							
Agree	81	53	60	70	70	87	41
Neutral	14	42	10	-	10	4	6
Disagree	5	5	30	30	20	9	53
<u>Person Who Watches Lot of TV Might Get Wrong Idea of Life</u>							
Agree	90	90	100	80	100	87	94
Neutral	10	10	-	-	-	13	6
Disagree	-	-	-	20	-	-	-

TABLE B-4

## PERCEPTIONS OF TV CRIME SHOWS AS A MORAL/SOCIALIZING INFLUENCE

STATEMENT:	<u>TV Viewing</u>			<u>TV Crime Show Viewing</u>			<u>Education</u>		<u>Sex</u>		<u>Age</u>	
	Light (14)	Med. (16)	Heavy (10)	None (12)	Med. (15)	Heavy (13)	H. S. (20)	College (20)	M (20)	F (20)	Under 32 (20)	Over 45 (20)
<u>Crime Shows Teach Right from Wrong</u>												
Agree	14%	50%	100%	8%	60%	77%	65%	35%	50%	50%	40%	60%
Neutral	7	6	-	8	7	-	-	10	10	-	10	-
Disagree	71	41	-	75	33	23	30	55	40	45	50	35
<u>Crime Shows Teach How to Commit</u>												
Agree	86	81	100	83	87	92	90	95	75	100	75	100
Neutral	7	-	-	8	-	-	-	5	5	-	5	-
Disagree	7	19	-	8	13	8	10	10	20	-	20	-
<u>Crime Shows Too Violent</u>												
Agree	1100	44	60	100	60	46	40	95	70	65	60	75
Neutral	-	12	20	-	27	-	15	5	25	15	15	5
Disagree	-	44	20	-	13	54	45	-	25	20	25	20
<u>Teach How Solved</u>												
Agree	29	44	80	25	53	62	65	30	40	55	40	55
Neutral	21	6	10	25	7	8	-	25	10	15	15	10
Disagree	50	50	10	50	40	31	35	45	50	30	45	35

TABLE B-5

## PERCEPTIONS OF TV CRIME SHOWS AS A MORAL/SOCIALIZING INFLUENCE, BY NEWS EXPOSURE

STATEMENT:	<u>News Exposure</u>		<u>TV News</u>			<u>Read Paper Regularly</u>	
	Light (21)	Heavy (19)	None (10)	Nat'l (20)	Local &/or Late (10)	No/Skim (23)	Thorough (17)
<u>Crime Shows Teach People Right-Wrong</u>							
Agree	62%	37%	20%	60%	60%	65%	35%
Neutral	5	5	10	5	-	-	12
Disagree	29	58	60	35	40	35	53
<u>Crime Shows Teach How to Commit Crime</u>							
Agree	49	51	80	90	90	83	94
Neutral			10	-	-	-	6
Disagree			10	10	10	17	-
<u>Crime Shows Too Violent</u>							
Agree	67	68	70	65	70	70	65
Neutral	19	-	25	5	10	17	-
Disagree	14	32	10	30	20	13	35
<u>Crime Shows Teach How Solved</u>							
Agree	47	47	50	45	70	44	53
Neutral	10	15	20	10	10	13	12
Disagree	43	37	50	45	20	44	35

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Do you read a daily newspaper? Which one? Do you have time to read it pretty thoroughly, or do you sometimes only have time to skim it? Which sections interest you most in the newspaper?
2. See TV Listings.  
How many hours a week do you generally watch television, not counting the news?
3. Do you listen to a TV news program regularly? (If yes: Do you generally listen to the 6'o'clock news? Which channel? Do you listen to the local/and/or national? Do you listen to the 11 o'clock news?)
4. Do you listen to any radio stations regularly? Which ones? How often? What types of programs are they?
5. See magazine listings.
6. What are your three favorite television programs? What do you like most about #1? #2? #3?
7. Have you ever been the victim of a crime? What were the circumstances? Has anyone you know ever been the victim of a crime? Circumstances?
8. Do you ever worry about the possibility of being the victim of a crime (again)? What types? (Repeat for members of family);
9. Do you find that you have changed your behavior in any way as a result of a concern about crime? Probe.
10. Do you ever talk to other people about crime? Who? What sorts of things do you talk about? Under what circumstances? (Probe).
11. Do you think policemen ever search people's property for evidence without a warrant? How do you know? Probe.
12. Do you think private detectives ever search people's property for evidence without permission? How do you know? Probe.
13. Now I'd like to ask you a few more questions. For each one, I'll supply two possible answers. Neither one is exactly right, but I want your impression of which one is closer to the truth, OK?

(After each, probe: Why do you say that? How do you know? Etc.)

- a. About what percent of all males who have jobs work in law enforcement and crime detection? Is it closer to: 1% or 5%?
- b. Which of the following crimes has increased the most in the last few years: murder or robbery?
- c. What percent of all crimes are violent crimes, like murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault? Do you think it's closer to 15% or 25%?
- d. Do you think more fatal violence occurs between strangers or between relatives and acquaintances?
- e. How does the number of homicides compare with the number of suicides in the U.S.? Which are there more of?
- f. About what percent of all Americans last year were the victims of violent crime? Do you think it's closer to: 4% or 8%?
- g. Are most cases involving violent crime decided by a jury or judge only?
- h. In any given week, about how many people out of 100 are involved in some sort of violent? Do you think it's closer to one in 100 or 10 in 100?
- i. In any given week, what do you think are your chances of being involved in some sort of violence? Do you think it's closer to one in 100 or 10 in 100?
- j. What do you think is the thing which leads to conviction on a murder charge more often: scientific evidence or testimony of a witness?
- k. Taking all murder victims, what percent of them do you think are not white? Do you think it's closer to: 25% or 55%?
- l. What percent of all convicted criminals do you think are white? Do you think it's closer to: 70% or 85%?
- m. What percent of all known victims of crime are white? Do you think it's closer to: 40% or 70%?
14. What kinds of things do you think policemen spend most of their time doing? Probe.
15. Do you think that a lawyer is permitted to lead a witness in court? Probe. Have you ever been in court? What were the circumstances?

16. How do you feel you learn most about crime?
17. What do you think is your best source of information about what police are really like? Private detectives?
18. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Probe after each).
  - a. Watching TV drama (by which I mean television series, etc.) is a good way to learn about life.
  - b. You don't learn to solve personal problems by watching TV drama.
  - c. TV helps you learn something about the real life problems of difference kinds of people.
  - d. If a person watches alot of TV drama, he might get a mistaken idea about the way things really are.
  - e. Crime shows help teach people right from wrong.
  - f. Crime shows teach people how to commit crimes.
  - g. Crime shows are too violent.
  - h. Crime shows teach you how crimes are solved.
19. How realistic do you feel most TV shows are? Probe.
20. How realistic do you feel most crime shows are? Probe.
21. Do you feel TV gives you a good idea of what policemen are really like? Private detectives? Probe.
22. When you see a crime committed on TV, so you ever worry, 'Could this happen to me?' Probe. (Under what circumstances).
23. If you admire a character on television, do you ever try to be like him or her in any way?

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (cont.)

## 1. (Question 2)

Please check the programs listed below that you watch regularly--that is, most or all of the time, during the regular season. Please note: all programs, even those which are aired five days a week, appear only once on the list. If you usually watch a given daily program but not on the day under which it appears below, please check it anyway. For example, if you almost always watch Edge of Night but miss it on Tuesdays (where I have listed it), make sure you check it anyway.

## MONDAY

As The World Turns \_\_\_\_\_  
 Doctors \_\_\_\_\_  
 Untouchables \_\_\_\_\_  
 To Tell the Truth \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mission: Impossible \_\_\_\_\_  
 CBS News-Cronkite \_\_\_\_\_  
 Maude \_\_\_\_\_  
 Rhoda \_\_\_\_\_  
 Rookies \_\_\_\_\_  
 Perry Mason \_\_\_\_\_  
 Football \_\_\_\_\_

## WEDNESDAY

What's My Line? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mike Douglas \_\_\_\_\_  
 General Hospital \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lucas Tanner \_\_\_\_\_  
 Petrocelli \_\_\_\_\_  
 Get Christie Love \_\_\_\_\_  
 Manhunter \_\_\_\_\_

## FRIDAY

Let's Make A Deal \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sanford and Son \_\_\_\_\_  
 Planet of the \_\_\_\_\_  
 Apes \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chico and the Man \_\_\_\_\_  
 Policewoman \_\_\_\_\_  
 Alfred Hitchcock \_\_\_\_\_

## TUESDAY

Edge of Night \_\_\_\_\_  
 Adam-12 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Let's Make A Deal \_\_\_\_\_  
 Police Story \_\_\_\_\_  
 MASH \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hawaii Five-0 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Magazine \_\_\_\_\_  
 Marcus Welby, \_\_\_\_\_  
 M.D. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wide World Mys- \_\_\_\_\_  
 tery \_\_\_\_\_

## THURSDAY

One Life to Live \_\_\_\_\_  
 Waltons \_\_\_\_\_  
 Ironside \_\_\_\_\_  
 Harry O \_\_\_\_\_  
 Streets of San \_\_\_\_\_  
 Francisco \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Saint \_\_\_\_\_

## SATURDAY

Kung Fu \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mary Tyler Moore \_\_\_\_\_  
 All in the Fam- \_\_\_\_\_  
 ily \_\_\_\_\_  
 Nakia \_\_\_\_\_  
 One Step Beyond \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wide World of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sports \_\_\_\_\_

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (cont.)

## 1. (Question 2)

## SUNDAY

Meet the Press	_____
Face the Nation	_____
Untouchables	_____
FBI	_____
Issues and An-	_____
swers	_____
Apple's Way	_____
McMillan and Wife	_____
Kokak	_____
Columbo	_____
Mannix	_____
Police Surgeon	_____
Weekend	_____
Name of the Game	_____

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (cont.)

2. (Question 5)

Please check which of the following magazines you read, if any.

Time	_____
Reader's Digest	_____
Newsweek	_____
Woman's Day	_____
U.S. News & World	_____
Report	_____
Philadelphia Magazine	_____
Ladies Home Journal	_____
Family Circle	_____
Others	_____
	_____
	_____

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