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Cops vs. Live PD

Samuel Moor
samuel_moor@my.uri.edu

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Live PD vs Cops
Sam Moor

Background

Only 1 in 5 people have an interaction with police per year. Millions watch "Live PD" and "Cops" every night.

•Police in the U.S.
• Law enforcement (LE) in the U.S. over the last 1-2 decades has switched from a no-nonsense, order maintenance approach to a community policing approach (Dunham & Alpert, 2010).

•Police-Citizen Interactions
• An officer's goals during most encounters include: getting the suspect to comply, finding out information, and building trust within the community (Tyler, 2004).

• Police can positively influence citizen interpretations of police actions by striving to create a climate of positivity during all interactions (Braga et al. 2014).

•Police and the Media
• Cultivation theory argues that television can shape people's perceptions of what is reality (Gerbner, et al. 2002).

Research Questions

1) How does the content in "Live PD" and "Cops" differ?

2) What are the differences in police-citizen interactions? What do these differences result in?

"Live PD" 2.04

"Cops" Season 20.13

Methods

•This study uses 6 hours from each series for observation: "Cops" and "Live PD".
• Live PD (2017-2018) - Live streams LE encounters.
• Cops (2007-2008) – Previously recorded LE encounters.

•The study examines episodes from the 2nd season of "Live PD", and the 20th season of "Cops."

•This study uses Glaser and Strauss' (2009) grounded theory approach to analyzing qualitative data and further uses an inductive framework to examine the data so that more natural conclusions are reached.
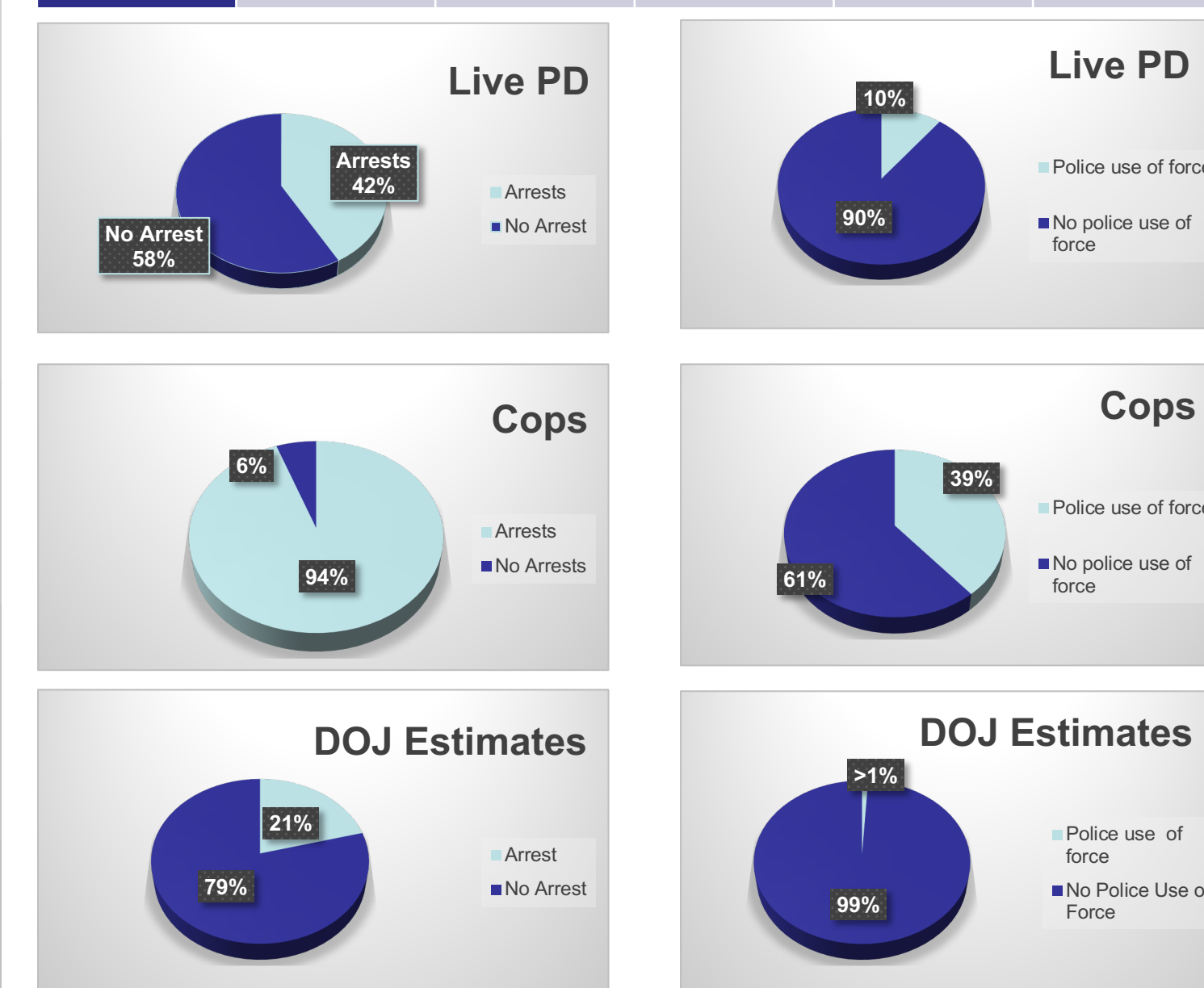
Data / Findings

"Cops" Season 20.6

"Live PD" 2.21

1) Violence, Representation of Crime, Use of Force

	Crime	Arrests	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Use of Force
Live PD n=48	30	20	8	7	5
COPS n=36	33	34	9	8	14

2) Race and Gender Representation

	Suspect Race		Suspect Gender		Officer Race		Officer Gender	
Live PD n=48	Black	12	Male	34	Black	6	Male	39
	Hispanic	6	Female	7	Hispanic	11	Female	9
	White	24	Other/NA	7	White	29		
	Other/NA	6						
COPS n=36	White	14	Male	29	Black	0	Male	34
	Black	9	Female	1	Hispanic	3	Female	2
	Hispanic	10	Other/NA	6	White	28		
	Other/NA	3			Other	5		
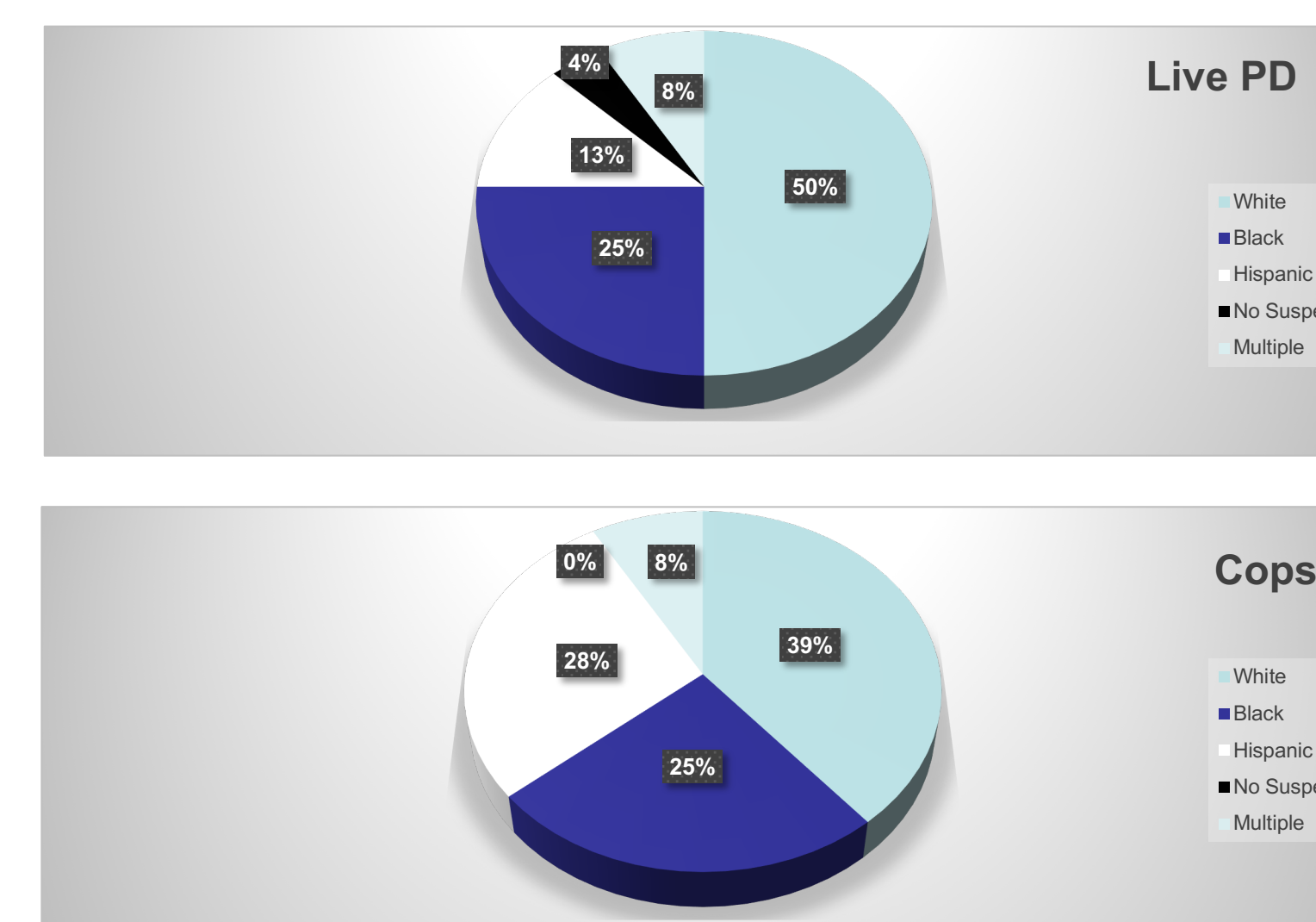
3) Police-Citizen Interactions

	Encounter Type		Escalation		Officer Tone		Formal Manner		View of Suspect	
Live PD n=48	Pos.	25	Yes	12	Intense	19	Yes	29	Pos.	17
	Neg.	16	No	27	Calm	29	No	17	Neg.	12
	Neutral	7					Other	2	Neutral	19
COPS n=36	Pos.	4	Yes	20	Intense	20	Yes	32	Pos.	5
	Neg.	24	No	7	Calm	7	No	1	Neg.	11
	Neutral	8					Other	3	Neutral	20
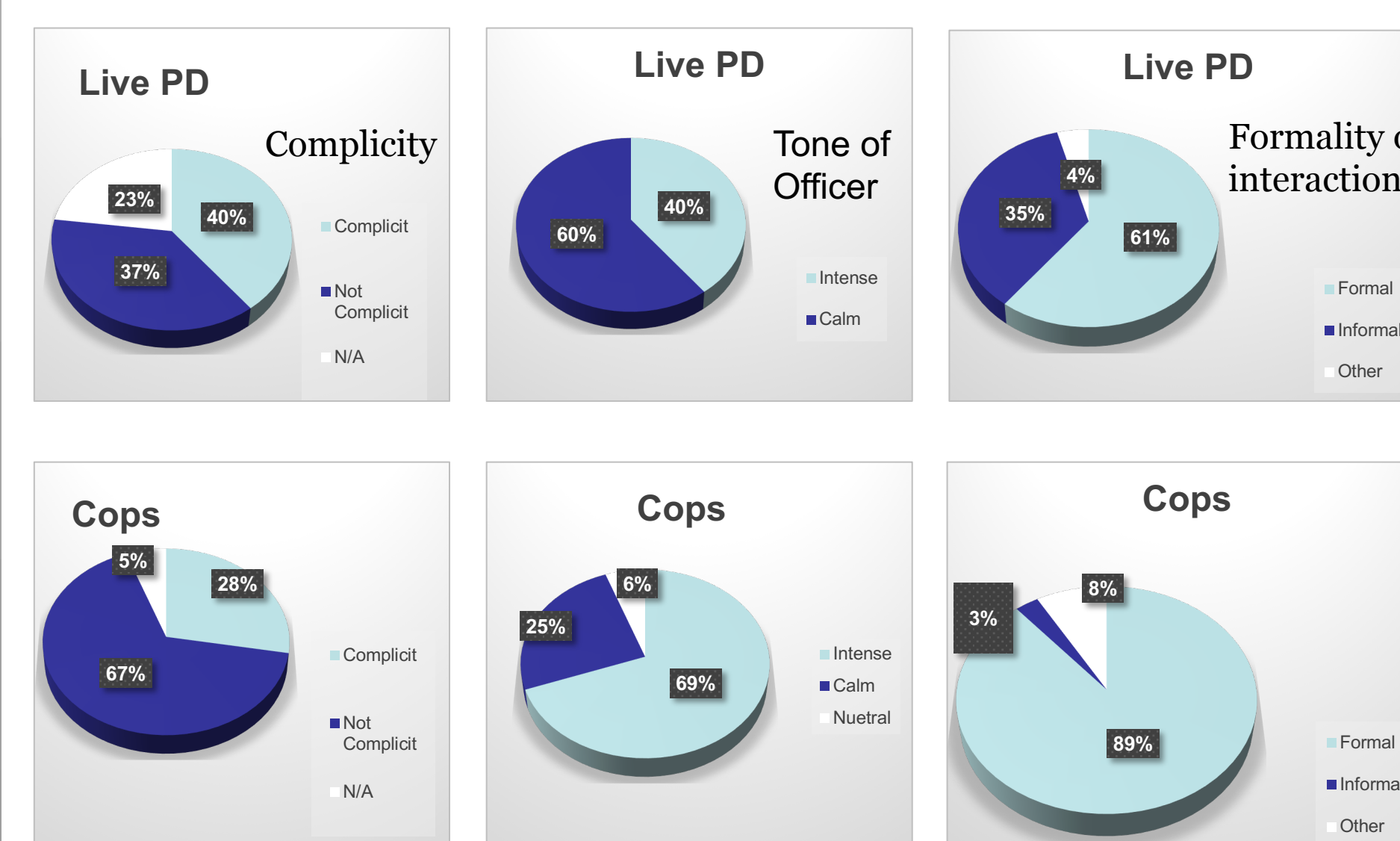
4) Departmental Differences

	Encounter Type		Escalation		Formal		Citizen Opinion	
Spokane Valley, WA n=6	Pos.	3	Yes	4	Yes	4	Pos.	1
	Neg.	3	No	2	No	2	NA	4
Pinal County, AZ n=5	Pos.	4	Yes	1	Yes	3	Pos.	5
	Neg.	1	No	4	No	1	Neg.	1
					Other	1	NA	5
El Paso, TX n=11	Pos.	7	Yes	1	Yes	4	Pos.	3
	Neg.	1	No	6	No	7	Neg.	1
	NA	3	Other	1			NA	1
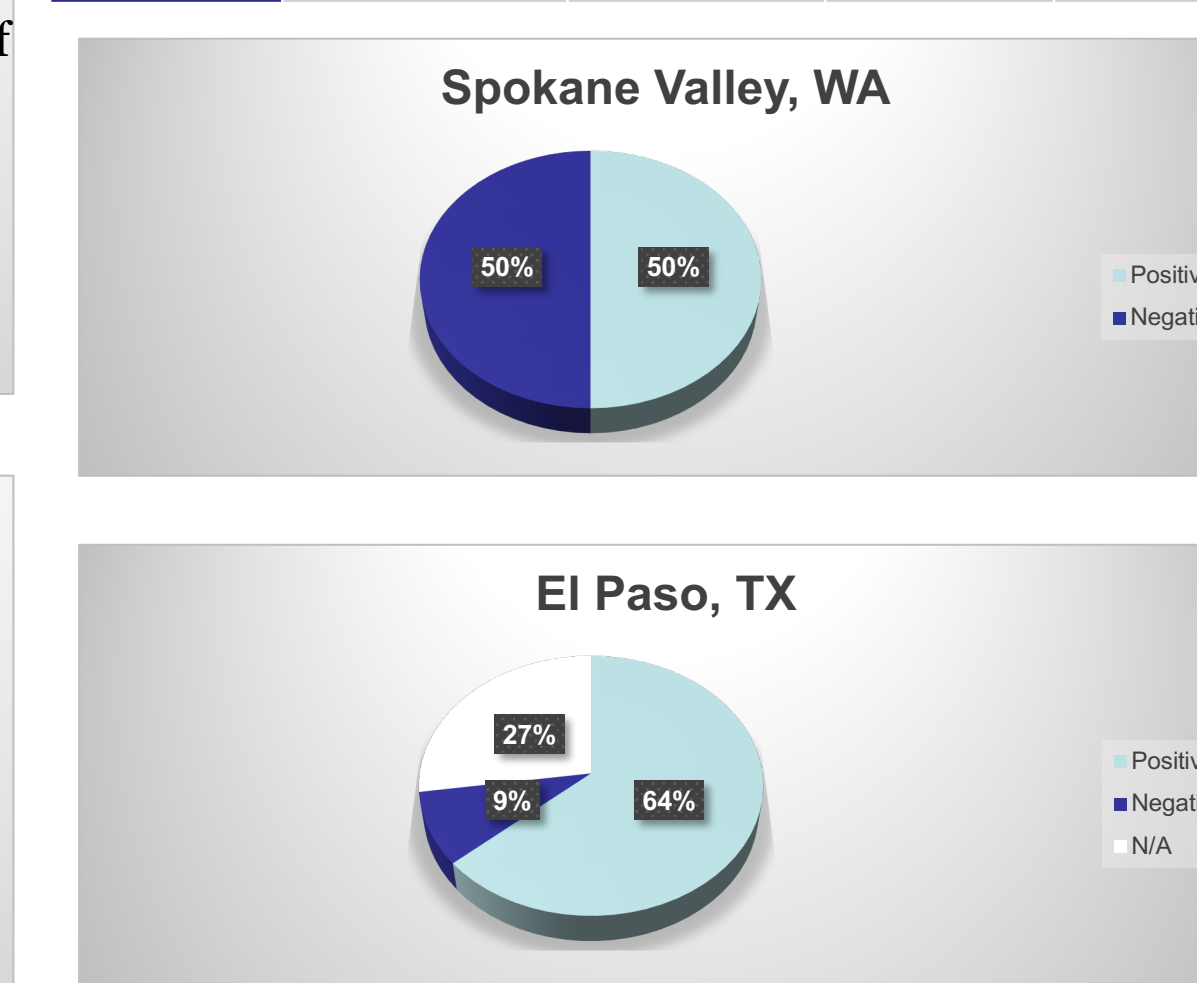
Discussion

• "Live PD" serves as a more accurate depiction of crime and policing which in turn, may have a more positive effect on public perception of police officers.

• Racial minorities over represented as suspects in both shows. This is in line with previous studies looking at "Cops."

• Community policing principles are much more common in "Live PD" than "Cops".

• Community policing has a direct correlation with suspect compliance and suspects framing the encounters more positively.

  • Officers who pursue community policing appear as mediators rather law enforcers.

• Required training in the three departments in finding 4 aren't made public .

• One department from the show not featured in these encounters (Richland County, SC) is known for its informal, personal style of policing

  • They require "Guardian vs. Warrior" training for 40 hours per officer per year. (far above national average).

• This new principle of "Guardian vs Warrior" mindset training derived from the Department of Justice, post-Ferguson report

  • This may explain the key differences in pursuing these community policing principles across departments/shows.

Literature Cited

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