Cops vs. Live PD

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**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?

**Methods**

- This study uses 6 hours from each series for observation: “Cops” and “Live PD”.

- 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**

1) **Violence, Representation of Crime, Use of Force**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Arrests</th>
<th>Violent Crime</th>
<th>Property Crime</th>
<th>Use of Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live PD</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Use of Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COPS</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) **Race and Gender Representation**

- “Live PD” 2.21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suspect Race</th>
<th>Green</th>
<th>Hispanic Other/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suspect Race</th>
<th>Green</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) **Police-Citizen Interactions**

- 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.

4) **Departmental Differences**

- 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.

**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.

**Literature Cited**


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