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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15620879

Como citar este artigo
(ABNT NBR 6023/2018):

VIANA, Guilherme Manoel de Lima.
Through the Lens of TV: The Construction
of the Legal Narrative in Police Series.
Revista Insigne de Humanidades, Natal,
v. 2, n. 1, p. 150-167, jan./abr. 2025.

Recebido em: 30/01/2025
Aprovado em: 10/02/2025

Through the Lens of TV: The Construction of the Legal Narrative in Police Series

Bajo las lentes de la tv: la construcción de la narrativa jurídica en series policiales

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ABSTRACT:

The article explores the impact of television productions on the legal system. Initially, it addresses the portrayal of the legal system in police series, emphasizing how such programs shape public perception of the legal system. The construction of narratives about crime and justice is analyzed, highlighting how these series influence popular understanding of legal issues. The method employed relies on a comprehensive literature review, examining relevant studies and theories to comprehend the phenomenon at hand. The results emphasize the tendency of police series to simplify complex legal procedures, often distorting legal reality. Additionally, the formation of stereotypes in legal characters is observed, contributing to a simplified and often distorted view of the legal system. The impact on public opinion and social perception constitutes the third aspect of the study. It identifies how constant exposure to these television representations shapes the public's view of legal institutions, potentially influencing social attitudes and beliefs. In conclusion, the article underscores the importance of a critical analysis of police series, recognizing their role in shaping public opinion and advocating for the need for a more accurate representation of the legal system in these productions.

Keywords:

Police Series; Legal System; Media Representation; Public Perception; Criminal Law.

RESUMEN:

El artículo explora el impacto de las producciones televisivas sobre el sistema jurídico. En primer lugar, aborda la representación del sistema jurídico en series policiales, destacando cómo estos programas moldean la percepción pública sobre el sistema legal. Se analiza la construcción de narrativas sobre el crimen y la justicia, evidenciando cómo estas series influyen en la comprensión popular de cuestiones jurídicas. El método utilizado se basa en una revisión bibliográfica amplia, examinando estudios y teorías relevantes para comprender el fenómeno en cuestión. Los resultados destacan la tendencia de las series policiales a simplificar procedimientos legales complejos, distorsionando con frecuencia la realidad jurídica. Además, se observa la formación de estereotipos en personajes jurídicos, lo que contribuye a una visión simplificada y, en ocasiones, distorsionada del sistema legal. El impacto en la opinión pública y en la percepción social constituye la tercera vertiente del estudio. Se identifica cómo la exposición constante a estas representaciones televisivas moldea la visión del público sobre las instituciones jurídicas, pudiendo influir en actitudes y creencias sociales. En conclusión, el artículo resalta la importancia de un análisis crítico de las series policiales, reconociendo su papel en la formación de la opinión pública y defendiendo la necesidad de una representación más precisa del sistema jurídico en estas producciones.

Palabras clave:

Series policiales; Sistema jurídico; Representación mediática; Percepción pública; Derecho penal.

1 INTRODUCTION

The present research aims to analyze the influence of police series on public perception of the legal system, investigating how such television productions shape collective views on issues related to criminal law.

The main objective of this study is to examine the representation of the legal system in police series and understand how the construction of narratives about crime and justice in these productions impacts public opinion and social perceptions of legal institutions.

The relevance of this topic lies in the growing influence of television media on the formation of social opinions and beliefs. The representation of the legal system in these series not only reflects but also shapes public perceptions, exerting influence on legal attitudes and decisions.

This research is significant not only for academics and researchers in the legal field but also for communication professionals and, more broadly, for society. A deeper understanding of this dynamic contributes to a critical analysis of the media's influence on the collective imagination.

In the section "Representation of the Legal System in Police Series," the ways in which these productions portray legal institutions will be explored. The subsequent section, "Construction of Narratives about Crime and Justice," will address how these series craft stories related to legal issues. Finally, the section "Effect on Public Opinion and Social Perception" will investigate the impact of these representations on society, considering their influence on public opinion and the social perception of the legal system.

2 REPRESENTATION OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM IN POLICE SERIES

The Legal System represents the organized set of norms, principles, and institutions aimed at regulating human interactions within a society. Its complexity arises from the need to address a wide range of relationships and situations, providing an environment where people can coexist harmoniously and fairly. This system lays the foundation for the construction of a social order that promotes peaceful coexistence and the protection of individual and collective rights.

In the legal framework, the term "crime" plays a crucial role, representing the violation of norms established by the legal system. André Franco Montoro explains:

Fundamentally, the material object of law is man living in society. It is the social activity of man or, as Cossio states, it is the "human conduct in intersubjective interference." Man lives in society, which necessarily implies family, economic, political, and professional relationships, among others. These relationships constitute the subject matter of Law. [...] Law always refers to human actions. [...] However, law deals with this subject matter under a special aspect: justice. It is fundamentally important to law that, in social relationships, an order

is observed: that each person is ensured what is due to them, that is, that justice is achieved. We can say that the formal object of law is justice. (Montoro, 2000, p. 96, our translation)

The Legal System is composed of various interconnected areas, such as Constitutional Law, Civil Law, Criminal Law, Administrative Law, among others. Each of these areas aims to regulate specific aspects of social relations, contributing to the maintenance of order and the promotion of justice.

The foundation of the Legal System often lies in the Constitution, which establishes the fundamental principles that govern society. Additionally, laws, decrees, and regulations are created to detail and complement constitutional provisions, providing a more comprehensive legal framework.

Hans Kelsen, a renowned jurist and legal philosopher, grounded his approach to the supremacy of the Constitution through a structural and hierarchical analysis of legal norms. According to his Pure Theory of Law, the fundamental norm, often identified with the Constitution, plays a central role in the organization of the legal system. (Kelsen, 1999)

Kelsen argues that the supremacy of the Constitution is not merely a matter of moral superiority but rather an intrinsic characteristic of the normative structure of the legal system. This hierarchical structure of norms, inspired by the foundations of the Corpus Juris Civilis, establishes a tiered order in which lower norms derive their validity from the higher norm. (Kelsen, 1999)

The dichotomy between Public and Private Law, as used by Kelsen, plays a crucial role in the Pure Theory of Law. This distinction categorizes norms into two distinct domains, each with its own characteristics and principles. The supremacy of the Constitution is particularly evident in the realm of Public Law, where the fundamental norm serves as the primary source of validity for the norms that regulate the relationship between the State and its citizens. (Kelsen, 1999)

In the context of legal statics and dynamics, Kelsen explores the logical order of norms and the process of their creation. Legal statics refers to the analysis of the existing hierarchical structure, while legal dynamics addresses the origin and development of norms over time. The fundamental norm, during the process of legal normogenesis, plays an essential role in conferring validity to lower norms, thereby establishing the coherence and continuity of the legal system. (Kelsen, 1999)

Thus, according to Kelsen's view, the supremacy of the Constitution not only reflects a position of moral prominence but is fundamental to the order and stability of the legal system, ensuring the validity and effectiveness of the norms that comprise the normative structure of a society. (Kelsen, 1999)

Crime, in turn, constitutes an affront to the norms established by the Legal System. It can be defined as any conduct prohibited by law, accompanied by the imposition of a sanction or penalty when violated. Crimes are classified according to their severity, ranging from minor infractions to more serious offenses. In this sense, Francisco de Assis Toledo highlights:

Substantially, crime is a human act that harms or exposes to danger legal goods (legal-criminal) that are protected. However, this definition is insufficient for criminal dogmatics, which requires a more analytical one, capable of revealing the essential aspects or structural elements of the concept of crime. Among the various analytical definitions proposed by important criminal scholars, the one that considers the three fundamental elements of the criminal act seems most acceptable to us, namely: typical action (typicity), unlawful or anti-legal (illegality), and culpable (culpability). Crime, in this conception that we adopt, is, therefore, a typical, unlawful, and culpable action. (Toledo, 2012, p. 80, our translation)

Criminal laws describe conduct deemed criminal, establishing penalties proportional to the severity of the offense. Penalties can range from warnings and fines to imprisonment, depending on the nature and gravity of the crime. According to Guilherme de Souza Nucci:

It is the sanction imposed by the State, through criminal action, on the offender as retribution for the crime committed and as a prevention of future offenses. The preventive nature of the penalty unfolds in two aspects (general and special), which are subdivided (positive and negative):

- a) General negative: signifying the intimidating power it represents to the entire society, the recipient of the criminal norm;
- b) General positive: demonstrating and reaffirming the existence and efficiency of criminal law;
- c) Special negative: signifying the intimidation of the offender so that they do not act in the same way again, imprisoning them when necessary;
- d) Special positive: the proposal for the rehabilitation of the convicted person, so that they may return to social life once the sentence is completed or when, through benefits, their freedom is granted earlier.

According to the current Brazilian normative system, the penalty retains all the characteristics outlined in the broad sense (punishment + intimidation and reaffirmation of criminal law + rehabilitation): Article 59 of the Penal Code states that the judge must set the penalty in a way that is necessary and sufficient for the reproach and prevention of the crime. (Nucci, 2011, p. 587, our translation)

Institutions such as courts, public prosecutors, public defenders, and law enforcement agencies play a crucial role in the implementation of the Legal System. The legal

process involves investigation, judgment, and the execution of judicial decisions. The impartiality, transparency, and efficiency of these institutions are essential to ensure public trust in the justice system.

A TV series, in the context of entertainment, is an audiovisual narrative composed of episodes that unfold over a season. Each episode contributes to the development of the overall plot, and the characters face different situations and challenges over time. Series can cover various genres, such as drama, comedy, science fiction, among others, offering a variety of stories and experiences to viewers. They can be broadcast on television channels, streaming services, or other media platforms. Guilherme Henrique de Oliveira Nogueira defines what a series is:

We define a series as the fictional format best suited to television programming: it is designed to be broadcast regularly and to establish a time structure that meets the audience's expectations. The construction of a televisual time adapted to this pragmatic requirement is, therefore, a determining condition for any series. More precisely, the narrative form with which a series fulfills its role of returning every week, at the same time in the TV channel's programming schedule, characterizes it as an episodic fictional product (Nogueira, 2020, p. 46, our translation).

A police series is a television genre that delves into the intricate dynamics of the criminal world and the application of the law. These narratives are centered around police investigations, crimes, and often provide a detailed view of the hard work of law enforcement officers, detectives, and legal professionals. Luiza Lusvarghi explains:

Historically, contemporary television fiction genres derive from cinema, radio, and literature (novels, theater, and comics), which are more closely tied to entertainment. Crime series became consolidated with the advent of videotape and followed the cultural trends and developments of each international market. In Latin America, foreign films and series, particularly Spanish and American, have had a significant impact on the works in the crime genre as both an audiovisual language and format (Lusvarghi, 2018, p. 21, our translation).

The core of these series typically lies in the resolution of crimes, where characters face complex challenges, unravel intriguing mysteries, and seek justice. Elements of suspense and tension are skillfully incorporated, capturing the viewer's attention as the plots unfold. In this regard, Luiza Lusvarghi exemplifies:

Serial killers are not a regional exclusivity, as one can easily deduce by watching *Criminal Minds* or analyzing the news from central capitalist countries more carefully. Terrorists, cannibalistic criminals, such as the American Ted Bundy, are not exactly born from misery and lack of resources. The modes of social organization certainly influence these distorted values, but it is increasingly acceptable that certain tendencies are pathological and are innate to individuals (Lusvarghi, 2018, p. 47, our translation)

Police series often explore not only the technical aspects of investigations but also the ethical and moral dilemmas faced by the characters. This adds layers of depth, making the viewer's experience more engaging and offering reflections on ethical issues in the application of the law. Mara Regina de Oliveira explains:

It is undeniable the power that television holds in our society today. Everything that is broadcast contributes to the creation of identities, the formulation of ideas and thoughts, teaching what is moral and what is amoral, and the best way to act. As Kellner (2001) states, television is at the heart of the culture conveyed by the media. And at the heart of television are television series, which, if they were once considered part of a degrading genre, are now objects of admiration for thousands of people worldwide (Oliveira, 2015, p. 4, our translation).

Notable examples of this genre include 'CSI,' which stands out for its emphasis on forensic science, 'Law & Order,' known for addressing both investigations and legal procedures, and 'Mindhunter,' which explores the psychology behind crime-solving. These police series continue to captivate audiences by offering a fictional yet impactful perspective on the complex and often challenging world of crime and justice.

Police series play an intriguing role in representing the legal system, offering a broad and sometimes distorted view of courts, lawyers, and legal processes. By analyzing these representations, we can discern a complex interaction between realistic and dramatized elements.

Courts are often portrayed as intense stages where the truth is revealed, providing an engaging experience for viewers. The dynamics of hearings and confrontations between parties reflect exciting aspects of justice, often challenging the audience to reflect on ethical and moral issues.

Lawyers are key characters, often presented as clever protagonists, adept in their strategies and rhetorical skills. The portrayal of these legal professionals highlights the complexity of legal battles, offering a fascinating glimpse into the backstage of legal disputes.

However, it is crucial to distinguish between realistic and dramatized elements in the legal approach of these series. Realistic elements may include accurate legal procedures, ethical reflections, and dilemmas faced by legal professionals. On the other hand, dramatizations aim to captivate the audience, often exaggerating the complexity of cases, creating surprising twists, or presenting stereotypical legal characters.

This duality in the representation of the legal system contributes to the attraction of police series, offering an engaging experience that blends legal reality with dramatic suspense. The audience is challenged to appreciate not only the plot itself but also to understand the complexities and nuances of the legal system, even if through a fictional and sometimes highly stylized lens.

3 CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVES ABOUT CRIME AND JUSTICE

The construction of a narrative refers to the process of developing and organizing elements that make up a story, whether in the form of text, film, series, or any other medium of narrative communication. This involves the creation of characters, plots, settings, conflicts, and resolutions in a way that engages the audience and communicates a specific message.

A successful narrative construction is capable of creating a cohesive and engaging structure, maintaining the audience's attention, and effectively conveying the author's intentions. Elements such as character development, plot twists, and conflict resolution play crucial roles in this process, contributing to the overall experience of the narrative's receiver. In light of this, Salo de Carvalho explains:

A perceptible current phenomenon, across various media of information and entertainment (television, newspapers, music, literature, cinema, theater, visual arts, fashion, sports), in the underground urban world and the virtual realm, is the proliferation of images of crime and violence. The level of exposure and the spaces that open up for the reception of these images – new publication venues and numerous dissemination tools, especially through cyberspace – contaminate contemporary culture with criminal issues. Furthermore, the speed at which representations of violence circulate makes the experience of crime and deviance independent of any spatio-temporal barriers (Carvalho, 2022, p. 84/85, our translation).

The construction of narratives about crime and justice plays a significant role in how society perceives these complex themes. By exploring narratives involving crimes and police investigations, audiovisual productions shape not only the way viewers understand the criminal universe but also influence public perception of law enforcement. Luiza Lusvarghi clarifies:

The idea of evil as intrinsic to social organization is very strong in Latin American criminal narratives, weakened by coups and military dictatorships throughout history. The term neopolicial, originating from literature, would also refer to a contemporary rereading of the genre, even in cinema. Part of this neopolicial production is associated with the more recent boom of regional police and black literature, which took place during the 1970s and 1980s [...]"(Lusvarghi, 2018, p. 20, our translation).

By delving into these intricate narratives, the complex nature of criminal cases is revealed, uncovering meticulous investigations, surprising twists, and the relentless pursuit of truth. In the productions, the challenges faced by law enforcement professionals are carefully highlighted, while characters are crafted to challenge and transcend traditional stereotypes.

In this engaging panorama, the plot unfolds beyond surface-level, offering a rich and immersive view of the nuances of police work. These narratives not only emphasize the technical and procedural aspects of investigations but also dive into the moral and ethical dilemmas that permeate the complex world of justice. By humanizing each character, the story becomes an exploratory journey, revealing not only what is evident but also exploring the depths of the human condition in the face of the tensions within the legal system. Natalia dos Santos Machado explains:

The detective genre has a particular feature common to all its subgenres: it focuses on unraveling the crime until the end of the story, which creates a certain tension in the viewer and establishes a connection with the plot, so that they can discover the outcome, whether good or bad (Machado, 2020, p. 41, our translation).

However, it is crucial to evaluate how these narratives can shape the public's view of crime and justice. On one hand, well-executed productions can foster a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by legal systems and highlight the importance of ensuring fairness in the application of the law.

On the other hand, excessive dramatization, the romanticization of certain practices, or the simplification of complex issues can distort the perception of reality. This can contribute to the formation of harmful stereotypes, influence prejudices, and ultimately impact public trust in legal institutions. In this way, Guilherme Henrique de Oliveira Nogueira clarifies:

Although cinema can be used as a means to stimulate critical thinking, given its ability to provoke feelings and reflections in people, it is certain that the seventh art can also be used to stimulate the opposite reaction, that is, to distance critical thinking, controlling individuals' thoughts and maintaining prejudices (Nogueira, 2020, p. 30, our translation).

Criminal series have played a significant role in addressing complex themes of contemporary society, highlighting the interconnection between social marginalization and the rise of crime. These narratives often delve into the deeper layers of reality, exploring the underlying causes that lead individuals to choose the path of crime.

Marginalization, understood as the social and economic exclusion of certain groups, is frequently portrayed as a predominant factor in criminal series. Main characters, often coming from marginalized communities, are placed in adverse circumstances from the beginning. The lack of opportunities, poor education, and unfavorable socio-economic conditions are depicted as catalysts for entering the world of crime.

In this regard, Guilherme de Souza Nucci argues that the processes of segregation create moral distances, turning the city into a mosaic of small worlds that touch but do not interpenetrate. This allows an individual to quickly and easily move from one moral environment to another, encouraging the fascinating yet dangerous experience of living simultaneously in several different, adjacent worlds, which are otherwise largely separated (Nucci, 2021, p. 107).

These productions often question society's responsibility in creating environments conducive to criminal activities. The lack of effective public policies, structural inequality, and discrimination are presented as elements that perpetuate marginalization and, consequently, fuel the cycle of crime.

Moreover, the series also explore the legal system's response to marginalization, highlighting present flaws and injustices. The representation of entire communities being treated with suspicion, excessive police violence, and the lack of access to a fair judicial system are recurring themes, raising important issues about equity and social justice. In this regard, Salo de Carvalho clarifies:

Beyond this inferiorization of the stigmatized subject – which will be very useful for authoritarian punitive systems to justify the excessive use of force for social neutralization or even the physical elimination of the "abnormal" – the construction of an identity generates, in the social body, certain positive expectations regarding the behavior of the person carrying the stigma: the expectation that the person

considered abnormal will perform abnormal behaviors, that is, that the criminal will commit crimes; that the insane will perform insane acts; that the addict will remain in the addiction; that the poor student will fail; that the liar will produce falsifications and distortions of the truth; that the deceiver will mislead others (Carvalho, 2022, p. 484, our translation).

However, it is important to note that criminal series do not always provide a realistic and comprehensive view of the complexity of these issues. Often, there is a risk of stigmatization and excessive simplification of the relationship between marginalization and criminality. Reality is multifaceted, with different factors contributing to the complex phenomenon of crime.

Therefore, a critical analysis of crime and justice narratives is essential to understand how these representations can shape public opinion. By recognizing the nuances and exploring various perspectives, it is possible to promote a more balanced and informed understanding of these sensitive topics, contributing to a richer dialogue about justice and the application of the law in society.

4 EFFECT ON PUBLIC OPINION AND SOCIAL PERCEPTION

The influence exerted by crime series on public opinion and social perception of the criminal justice system is a fascinating and intricate phenomenon. Upon investigating this interaction, it becomes clear how these narratives play a crucial role in shaping society's view of law enforcement and justice mechanisms. In this regard, Natalia dos Santos Machado elucidates:

Over the years, the way justice has been represented in audiovisual fiction has gradually shifted in response to changes occurring in society. Thus, audiovisual media, with its characteristic plausibility, presents justice in a more human and less radical manner in serialized fiction. Therefore, the representation of crime varies according to the narrative approach that is intended to be conveyed (Machado, 2020, p. 38, our translation).

These productions often present a dramatized and stylized version of the justice system, where quick and exciting resolutions are favored. As explained by Natalia dos Santos Machado, these representations reflect a humanization of criminal characters, resulting in the audience's empathy. By using techniques like closer camera shots, different framing, more plausible scripts, and characters with flaws that are closer to reality, the shows create a connection with the audience and allow them to identify with the plot, understanding that what is in the law is not always the best decision to make. After all, every story has two sides, and no individual is purely good or bad; each one has traits in their character that relate to their life story, shaped by their experiences (Machado, 2020, p. 92).

The quote insightfully highlights the strategy adopted by TV productions in presenting a dramatized and stylized version of the justice system. By utilizing elements such as closer camera shots, unique framing, more plausible scripts, and characters with flaws closer to reality, TV shows can provoke a deeper connection with the audience.

The humanization of criminal characters, as pointed out by Machado, is a direct result of these production choices. By depicting individuals with nuances, complexities, and flaws, the series transcend the stereotypical view of a one-dimensional criminal. This approach allows the audience to see beyond the surface of the crime, understanding the motivations and circumstances that led the characters to act in a certain way.

The empathy generated by the audience, as highlighted by Machado, arises from the shows' ability to present characters that are closer to reality and whose stories are shaped by diverse experiences. By recognizing the complexity of human character and the influence of life experiences, the audience becomes more likely to question the decisions made by the justice system portrayed in the series.

This approach may inadvertently generate unrealistic expectations about the efficiency and simplicity of legal processes in the audience's mind. However, at the same time, by emphasizing the ethical complexities and the numerous challenges faced by justice professionals, the series have the potential to provide a more profound and realistic understanding of how the legal system functions.

This duality in representation contributes to a broader and more nuanced view, allowing the audience to appreciate both the dramatization and the inherent complexity of the pursuit of justice. Eurídice Janaína Ferreira de Carvalho, Marinês Maria dos Santos, and Lídia Maria Marinho da Pureza Ramires explain:

We have seen increasingly more works with critical, realistic, humane, and political tones, demonstrating shifts in patterns and behaviors that were once inadmissible. These are soap operas with clever and intelligent villains who win the audience over with sarcasm and humor. Movies that feature antiheroes in more humanized versions, closer to the social reality of the audience, thus gaining their sympathy and even their compassion (Carvalho; Santos; Ramires, 2018, p. 3, our translation).

The impact of these representations on public opinion is remarkable. They can influence community attitudes toward crime, shaping perceptions of who the "villains" and "heroes" are in society.

The portrayal of clever and intelligent villains who win over the audience through sarcasm and humor in soap operas reflects the complexity of representing antagonist characters. Instead of depicting one-dimensional stereotypes, contemporary works aim to explore the psychological and motivational layers of villains, creating richer and more captivating characters.

The mention of antiheroes in movies, presented in a more humanized manner and closer to the social reality of the audience, highlights an approach that challenges traditional conventions. These characters, often morally ambiguous, manage to gain the audience's sympathy and compassion, contributing to a more engaging and reflective experience.

This evolution in artistic representations reflects the search for more authentic and relevant narratives, addressing social, political, and human issues in a deeper way. The audience's sympathy for complex and situational characters indicates a shift in collective sensibility, showing a growing appreciation for nuance and critical reflection in the stories told through audiovisual media.

This narrative construction can, in turn, affect public policies, as the demands and expectations of the public are shaped by these media representations. According to Melina Meimaridis and Rodrigo Quinan by presenting the police officer as a hero and positioning the citizen as a potential adversary, institutional police series ideologically align with conservative principles.

These productions represent both the moral and legal dimensions of police institutions' actions. The narrative is framed around a confrontation between adversaries: on one side, the police officers, and on the other, criminals who are defined a priori as evil (Meimaridis; Quinan, 2022, p. 119).

It is crucial, therefore, to reflect on how this influence can impact society in terms of expectations about the justice system. Understanding the interaction between fiction and reality in police series is essential for a more informed and balanced approach to issues related to crime, ensuring that public opinion is shaped with a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by the criminal justice system.

Police series play a crucial role in shaping public opinion about the criminal justice system. Take, for example, the series *Breaking Bad*, which not only explores the protagonist's transformation into an antihero but also questions the fine line between justice and morality. The plot challenges conventional perceptions of right and wrong, influencing the audience's view of the complexity of criminal motivations. Danielle Brasileira explains the main character of the series

The protagonist of *Breaking Bad* is a man troubled by the malaise of modernity, as we have seen. He suffers from the lack of symbolic mediation of the father—or the father's imaginary, as Lacan would describe—and channels his impulses and human intensities through crime and violence, which, in a way, provide him with a sense of power and fulfillment. This sense of belonging leads him outside the social

order but also guarantees him dignity and recognition as a social subject. While Walt lacks the mediation of the father figure—lost around the 1930s, according to Freud—he is the postmodern father who still relentlessly seeks to be that mediator and the hero who will save his family by giving them happiness, wealth, and well-being (Brasiliense, 2015, p. 46).

Another example is *The Wire*, which delves into the nuances of legal and criminal institutions in Baltimore. The series offers a realistic portrayal of the challenges faced by police officers, exploring the structural limitations that often hinder the effectiveness of the justice system. This approach can impact public opinion, fostering a more critical understanding of the underlying systemic issues.

On the other hand, series like *Law & Order* have the potential to simplify legal complexities in favor of the narrative, influencing public perception about the swift resolution of cases. In this sense, Carla Regina R. O. Murad explains the format of the series:

The common goal of the original series and its spin-offs is to portray the world of crime through the perspectives of two types of professionals: investigators and prosecutors. In the first thirty minutes, the focus is on the investigations.

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) The investigators and police officers take the stage with the goal of apprehending suspects to try to build a case. There are scenes of investigations at crime scenes, forensic experts examining fingerprints, and medical examiners preparing reports on the deaths, with a predominant presence of police officers and detectives. In the second part of the episode, the focus shifts to the American judicial system and the work of assistant prosecutors who, in close collaboration with the investigative police, assist the district attorney in prosecuting the accused (Murad, 2015, p. 179/180).

This representation can, at times, distort reality, creating unrealistic expectations about the speed and simplicity of judicial procedures.

Ultimately, these examples illustrate how police series can vary in their approach and impact on public opinion, highlighting the importance of a critical analysis to understand how these narratives shape society's view of the criminal justice system.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, the analysis of police series reveals a substantial and multifaceted influence on the public's perception of the legal system. Through the portrayal of law enforcement, courtrooms, and the justice process, these series shape the collective understanding of how the system operates. By examining the structure, content, and narrative techniques used in these productions, we uncover the extent to which they contribute to the construction of stereotypes and oversimplifications regarding crime, justice, and law enforcement.

The pervasive presence of these productions in popular culture allows them to not only reflect societal views but also actively mold them. Police series are often viewed by audiences as a primary source of information about the criminal justice system, and as such, they hold significant power in influencing the general public's perceptions of legal processes. These productions frequently highlight quick resolutions, heroic detectives, and morally clear distinctions between good and evil, which oversimplify the complexities of real-life law enforcement and legal practices. The portrayal of "good guys" and "bad guys" in these series often creates a binary perspective that does not capture the nuances of real-world justice.

While it is undeniable that police series play a pivotal role in shaping societal views of justice and crime, it is crucial to recognize that their influence does not always translate into an accurate or fair representation of the legal system. The dramatic simplifications that are often present in these narratives can distort public understanding, leading to unrealistic expectations of the speed and simplicity with which justice is served. These fictionalized portrayals often omit the deeper, more intricate aspects of the justice process, such as the challenges faced by law enforcement, the complexities of legal procedures, and the ethical dilemmas encountered in criminal cases. As a result, audiences may develop skewed perceptions of how law enforcement operates and the realities of the judicial system.

Furthermore, the entertainment value of these series frequently takes precedence over factual accuracy, and as a result, viewers may internalize narratives that do not reflect the true nature of crime or the complexities of legal processes. While these representations are created to captivate and engage, they may inadvertently shape public attitudes toward crime, criminal justice, and law enforcement in ways that are not grounded in reality. This gap between fiction and fact is problematic, as it can fuel misconceptions and biases that influence societal attitudes and even public policy.

Given the powerful role of the media in shaping social narratives, it is essential to foster a critical understanding of the police series we consume. Viewers must be encouraged to recognize the difference between entertainment and reality, understanding that while these productions can provide valuable insights into the world of law enforcement, they should not be taken as accurate representations of the legal system. Society can benefit from a more informed and balanced approach to these series, one that appreciates both their entertainment value and the limitations of their portrayal of justice.

In this context, promoting media literacy becomes crucial. Educating the public on how to critically engage with these representations can help mitigate their potential to distort public understanding. By fostering a more nuanced appreciation of police series, we can ensure that viewers are more aware of the ways in which these narratives shape their perceptions of the criminal justice system. This understanding is vital not only for fostering informed public discourse but also for building a more realistic, informed, and empathetic view of law enforcement, justice, and crime in contemporary society.

Encouraging viewers to question the narratives presented in these series, to recognize the dramatic license involved, and to seek out more accurate information about the criminal justice system will contribute to a more educated and thoughtful public. This critical engagement will ultimately lead to a more complex understanding of the issues surrounding crime, punishment, and justice, and will foster a society that is better equipped to navigate these challenging and multifaceted issues.

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