

IDENTIFYING LARGE REPLICABLE FILM POPULATIONS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE FILM RESEARCH: A UNIFIED FILM POPULATION IDENTIFICATION METHODOLOGY

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***ABSTRACT:** Historically, a dominant proportion of academic studies of social science issues in theatrically released films have focused on issues surrounding crime and the criminal justice system. Additionally, a dominant proportion has utilized non-probability sampling methods in identifying the films to be analyzed. Arguably one of the primary reasons film studies of social science issues have used non-probability samples may be that no one has established definitive operational definitions of populations of films, let alone develop datasets from which researchers can draw. In this article a new methodology for establishing film populations for both qualitative and quantitative research—the Unified Film Population Identification Methodology—is both described and demonstrated. This methodology was created and is presented here in hopes of expand the types of film studies utilized in the examination of social science issues to those communication theories that require the examination of large blocks of media. Further, it is anticipated that this methodology will help unify film studies of social science issues in the future and, as a result, increase the reliability, validity, and replicability of the said studies.*

***Keywords:** UFPIM, Film, Core Cop, Methodology, probability.*

Mass media research conducted in the academic realm has generally been theoretical in nature, utilizing public data, with research agendas emanating from the academic researchers themselves. Academic studies cover a gambit of areas including, but not limited to, antisocial and prosocial effects of specific media content, uses and gratifications, agenda setting by the media, and the cultivation of perceptions of social reality (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Outnumbering all other research topics by at least four to one is the antisocial effect of viewing television and motion pictures (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003; Comstock, Chaffee, & Katzman, 1978). Arguably, the large proportion of research addressing antisocial effects of viewing television and motion pictures is due to these studies relying heavily on traditional positivistic research mechanisms such as surveys, probability sampling techniques, and subsequent quantitative analysis. Other research areas have seemingly been prone to strictly qualitative observation techniques and non-probability sampling techniques, if any sampling technique is used at all. This could be due, as will be demonstrated later, to the type of analyses that have been employed. In this article, a new methodology for identifying distinct film populations is both described and demonstrated. This methodology was created and is presented here in hopes of unifying film studies of social science issues in the future and, as a result, increasing the reliability, validity, and replicability of both qualitative and quantitative studies of film. The methodology presented here will be referred to as the Unified Film Population Identification Methodology or UFPIM.

The Curse of the Convenience Sample

While it may seem rudimentary, it is important to reflect on some of the most basic of

fundamentals that apply to both qualitative and quantitative studies. The backbone of research is the research design. It is the research design that provides the researcher with the specific parameters that will help to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. Further, procedures must be established in order to identify the subjects or units of analysis that are being examined; it is this process that is at the heart of this paper. Many times the population that a researcher wishes to examine far exceeds his or her capacity to study. This can be due to difficulties in isolating the population, the sheer number of subjects in the population and/or the monetary and time expenditure required to examine the entire population. Given the inability to examine every member of a “population,” the researcher must resort to a sample of the population and attempt to make generalizations about the entire population. The researcher’s ability to generalize back to an entire population rests first in the ability to operationalize who or what makes up the population. Secondly, the researcher’s ability to identify the population once it has been operationalized, often if it is a population from which a researcher wishes to make some sort of statistical inference, is done with the help of pre-established recording systems like databases or organizational files. Once the population is operationalized and identified, the type of sampling method to be utilized is determined.

“The most important distinction that needs to be made about samples is whether they are based on a probability or a non-probability sampling method” (Schutt, 2005, p. 135). If a sampling technique provides how likely it is that any subject from a population will be selected during a sampling procedure and rests on a randomized selection procedure, that sampling technique is considered a probability sampling method. Because said samples are drawn in a random nature, these samples are considered to have no systematic biases associated with them (Schutt, 2005). Given this attribute, probability sampling techniques such as simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling, and cluster sampling are considered more desirable than non-probability samples when the goal is to generalize to a larger population (Schutt, 2005).

Any technique that cannot provide a likelihood of selection for each subject is considered a non-probability sampling method. While such techniques are generally associated with qualitative research, they may also be utilized in quantitative research. However, since non-probability sampling methods such as availability sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling do not use random selection procedures; they generally will not produce representative samples and are therefore not considered desirable for quantitative studies. This article is rooted in the premise that traditionally there has been a need to utilize non-probability sampling techniques in theatrically released film studies concerning social science issues because of an inability to identify distinct film populations from which a probability sample can be collected.

Peer-reviewed Film Studies Sampling Techniques

An examination of 94 film studies published in peer reviewed journals between 1996 and 2006, which examined social science issues in theatrically released films, revealed that topically 46% (n = 43) of the studies addressed issues surrounding “crime and the criminal justice system” (see Table 1), 30% (n = 28) addressed “race, gender and sexuality” issues (see Table 2), and the remaining 24% (n = 23) examine a hodgepodge of social science issues (see Table 3).

Only 1% (n = 1) of the 94 studies used some sort of probability sampling technique. The remaining 99% (n = 93) of the studies utilized non-probability sampling methods such as availability samples or convenience samples. Researchers who have conducted these studies using non-probability sampling techniques could pose the argument that they never intended to seek a

Table 1
Crime and the Criminal Justice System

<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>General Issue(s) Analyzed and/or Discussed</i>	<i>Probability Sampling Technique</i>	<i>Nonprobability Sampling Technique</i>
<i>Courts, Law and Justice</i>				
1996	Beret	The Changing Images of Justice in American Film		X
2000	Asimow	Fourth Amendment		X
2000	Beck	Wrongful Convictions, the Law, and Societies Role		X
2000	Kamir	Film, Law and Society		X
2000	Sarat	Presence of Tropes of Fatherhood in Popular Cultural Iconography about Law		X
2001	Bohnke	Myth and Law		X
2001	Drexler	Portrayals of Justice and Administration of Law During the Nazi Period		X
2001	Greenfield	Portrayal of Cinematic Lawyers		X
2001	Kuzina	The Social Issue Courtroom Drama		X
2001	Lenzner	Theory of Self-knowledge, Christianity, and Natural Law		X
2001	Manchura & Ulbrich	Why American Legal Procedures Dominate Courtroom Drama Films Globally		X
2001	Rafter	Historical Criminal Trial Films		X
2001	Silby	Filmic Patterns in Trial Films		X
2001	Thain	The Altered Perspective on Law and Lawyer Portrayals between 1962 and 1991		X
2005	Copertari	Simulation and Justice		X
2005a	Kamir	An Introduction to the Interdisciplinary Field of Law-and-film		X
2005b	Kamir	Hero-lawyers, Honor-based Values, and Gender Politics		X
2005	Lenz	Law, Rights, Justice and Courts		X
2006	Doron	Gerontology and Law		X
2006	Kamir	Honor and Dignity and their relationship to social order and legal systems in the contemporary Western world		X
2007	Pearson	Justice, Law and Love		X
<i>Prison(s) and Punishment</i>				
1997	Molloy	Capital Punishment and Justice		X
1998	Young	Prisoners of War Portrayals		X
1999	Sarat	Capital Punishment		X
2001	Bennett	Portrayal of Prisons		X
2001	Clowers	Myths about Maximum-security Life		X
2001	O'Sullivan	Representations of Prison in 1990s Films		X
2003	O'Sullivan	Portrayal of Capital Punishment Issue in 1990s Films		X
2003	Eigenberg	Images of Prison Rape in Prison Films		X
2004	Lichtenberg, Lune, McManimon	Political and Social Realities of Punishment and Rehabilitation		X
2005	Gutterman	Portrayal of Correctional Institutions and Offenses Against the Person		X
2005	Wilson & O'Sullivan	Penal Reform Function of the Prison Film		X

Contd...

<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>General Issue(s) Analyzed and/or Discussed</i>	<i>Probability Sampling Technique</i>	<i>Nonprobability Sampling Technique</i>
2006	Bennett	Media, Crime and Punishment		X
2006	Mason	Semiotics and Prison Violence		X
<i>Police</i>				
1996	Sparks	Masculinity and Heroism		X
1998	Cavender & Jurik	Male Police Officers, Gender, Work and Justice		X
2000	Schehr	Ideology, Violence, Spectatorship, Wisdom, Class and Power		X
2002	Reese	Whistle-blowing		X
2003	Grant	Police Corruption as a Norm		X
2004	Berrettini	Conceptions of Identity, Society, and Legality		X
<i>Crime and Criminality</i>				
1997	Poyntz	Drugs and Drug Control		X
1998	Allen, Livingstone & Reiner	Images of Crime in British Postwar Cinema		X
2000	Bufkin & Eschholz	Sex & Rape		X

Table 2
Race, Gender & Sexuality Issues

<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>General Issue(s) Analyzed and/or Discussed</i>	<i>Probability Sampling Technique</i>	<i>Nonprobability Sampling Technique</i>
<i>Race</i>				
1998	Robinson	Black Liberation and Blackploitation		X
1998	Chan	Black male identity		X
2001	Denzin	How the Hispanic, Barrio-Gang-Prison-Gangster Film cycle serves to support criticisms of Hispanics and their Presence in American Culture		X
2000	Flory	Epistemology of Race		X
2002	Abraham	Black Sexuality		X
2003	Covey	African American Portrayals		X
2003	Keeling	Valorization of Black Lesbian Butch-Femme Sociality		X
2003	Sullivan & Bohrer	Racial Conflict, Revolution, Racial Justice and Participatory Democracy		X
<i>Gender & Sexuality Issues</i>				
1996	Henke, Umble, & Smith	Construction of Female Self in Disney Films		X
1996	Hoerrner	Gender Role Depictions in Disney Films		X
1996	Sandell	Masculinity & Male Intimacy		X
1998	Hollinger	Female Spectators of Popular Lesbian Films		X
1998	Valdivia	Single Motherhood		X
1999	Derne	Portrayals of Sexual Violence		X
1999	Steinke	Women Scientist Role Models in Film		X

Contd...

<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>General Issue(s) Analyzed and/or Discussed</i>	<i>Probability Sampling Technique</i>	<i>Nonprobability Sampling Technique</i>
2000	Escamilla, Cradock & Kawachi	The Portrayal of Smoking by 10 Leading Hollywood Actresses	X	X
2000	Hobby	Patriarchal Myths about Gender and Power		X
2001	Dundes	Gender Stereotypes and Role Discontinuity		X
2001	Snyder	Personality Disorder Traits Associated with Female Portrayals in Film Noir Femme Fatale Films		X
2002	Goss	The Ideology of the Patriarchal Family		X
2002	Wooden	Construction of Anorexic Women		X
2003	Flicker	Portrayal of Female Scientists		X
2003	Malin	White Masculinity and Masculinities of the 1990s		X
2004	Ince	Patriarchal Family		X
2005	Stacey	Masculinity		X
2005	Steinke	Cultural Representations of Gender and Science: Portrayals of Female Scientists and Engineers in Popular Films		X
2005	Jenkins	Heterosexualization of Lesbians in Teen Films		X
2006	Clarke	Heroes and Masculinity		X

Table 3
Other Issues

<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>General Issue(s) Analyzed and/or Discussed</i>	<i>Probability Sampling Technique</i>	<i>Nonprobability Sampling Technique</i>
1998	Beard	Depictions of the future in 1980s films		X
1998	Hiersteiner	Social Workers		X
1999	Dessommes	Ku Klux Klan		X
2000	Yokata	Violence in G-Rated Animated Films		X
2001	Gabbard	Psychotherapy		X
2001	Gibson	Death		X
2001	Shipley & Cavender	Violence, Graphic Violence and Death		X
2002	Brown et. all	Levels of American Film Violence		X
2002	Grant	Learning, Teaching, Diversity, and Working in Urban Educational Communities		X
2002	Shreve	Mindset of Nazism		X
2002	Sarat	Remembrance and Vengeance		X
2003	Cape	Addiction and Stigma		X
2003	Lacy	War and Moral Anxiety		X
2003	Wahl et. al.	Mental Illness Depictions		X
2004	Benefiel	Nuclear Family		X
2004	Brown	Tension between the western myth and the metropolitan myth		X
2004	Huiskamp	War on Terror Policies		X
2004	Richardson	Biblical parallels of the 2001 film Spider-Man		X
2004	Winkler	Utopian ideal and redemption		X
2005	Bhugra	Mental Illness		X
2005	Doucet	International Relations		X
2005	Ehrlich	Free Press Myth		X
2006	Paden	Human Nature and Society		X

representative sample but rather sought to conduct in-depth qualitative analyses on a few films in order to obtain a higher level of validity in their observation. Conversely, it could be argued pessimistically, no matter how misguided the pessimism may be, that the primary reason these studies have used convenience samples is laziness on the part of the researchers themselves, who have only picked their favorite films or popular films with no concern for how well the film represented the film populations they are presumed to come from. While acknowledging that some may regard such studies pessimistically, this article accepts, instead, that many of the in-depth analyses of select films have served to add to the scholarly literature; without them this article would not be possible. That having been acknowledged, this researcher argues that it is time for larger populations or blocks of films to be analyzed by both qualitative and quantitative researchers concerning various social science issues in order to attain a better understanding of trends. One of the primary reasons film studies of social science issues have seen so few large systematic analyses of specific populations of films may be that no one has established definitive operational definitions of populations of films, let alone developed datasets from which researchers can identify populations or draw samples. In short, before one can begin to explore methods of identifying film populations, one must first understand that any discussion of film populations revolves around the concept of film genres and the complexities associated with them.

Film Genre Population Identification

Hayward (1996) points out that films are capable of fluctuating between film genre categories. This can be attributed to the fact that films are derived from other forms of entertainment such as vaudeville, music halls, theaters and novels. This makes a generic category of film difficult to establish (Wilson, 2006). “They rework, extend and transform the norms that codify them” (Hayward, 1996, p. 161). Therefore, it is virtually impossible to identify specific boundaries that films in specific genres will always meet. However, as Hayward (1996) notes, authors such as Neal (1990) and Williams (1990) provide additional terms for clarification. For example, Neal (1990) provides that the term *genre* would stand for the generic parameters or norms, while the term ‘genre text’ represents what is actually produced by film. Williams (1990), on the other hand, speaks of ‘principle genres’ and ‘sub-genres’. Williams’s (1990) description of principal genres equates to what could be considered macro-level genres. These genres include narrative films, avant-garde films, and documentaries. His conceptualization of a sub-genre, however, is what most would normally call genres: Drama, Mystery, Crime, just to name a few. The subject of the study from which the methodology to be presented here was born, core cop films, can be considered a sub-genre of cop films and they a sub-genre of crime films. But as streamlined as this lineage may seem and, as will be made apparent later, the core cop film genre fluctuates between other traditional genre categories.

The Internet Movie Data Base

In the above discussion of population identification, it was noted that if a researcher is trying to make some sort of inference concerning a specific population, the population must some how be identified. It was also noted that most often the said populations are derived from pre-established recording systems like databases or organizational records. To date there are no known databases of cop films accessible to the general public, let alone core cop films (Wilson, 2006). In fact, prior to 1996 it may have seemed a daunting task to try and isolate any specific film genre population given the absence of databases and the aforementioned fluctuations. Further, a sub-genre/splinter genre would have seemed impossible to capture accurately. However, since 1996 anyone with a

computer and Internet access has had a resource at his or her fingertips that could revolutionize film analysis of social science issues in the future. Since 1996 the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) has provided users with a plethora of variables with which films can be searched. Therefore, the primary source for developing the population for the study from which the methodology to be presented here emerged was the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). Although it was noted in the evaluation of peer-reviewed studies that some studies had established or attempted to establish film populations or non-probability samples from organizational websites such as the Motion Picture Association and TV Guide, the IMDb is one of, if not the largest public accessible databases of movie information available today and is readily available to anyone with Internet access.

While the IMDb catalogs an extensive amount of details about individual films, it only groups films by traditional genre categories such as “crime” and does not identify films that are considered sub-genres or splinter genres of the traditional genre like the cop film genre. Therefore, in order to identify sub-genre or splinter genre populations, the IMDb Power Search (IMDbPS) function, which allows its users to search for movies through a variety of variables and variable combinations, must be used.

The IMDbPS breaks relevant variables into five specific groupings. The description to follow is a shortened version of a previous description found in (Wilson, 2006). Under grouping one, the user is provided the options of selecting specific movie titles or words within movie titles, specific cast or crew members, and/or specific keywords in the movie plot summaries. The categories in grouping two include “country of origin” (what country produced the movie), “movie genre,” “location” (what country and regions within the country the movie was filmed), “production company,” “miscellaneous companies,” “color” (whether or not the movie is in color or black and white), “distributor” (what company distributed the movie), “language,” “year” (the year or series of years in which movies were released), “keywords,” “special effects company,” “rating certificate,” “sound mix,” and “now showing in” (what country the movie is showing in). The IMDbPS user has the option of using one or all of these variable options while seeking to narrow or expand their search.

Group three categories allow the user to choose from a list of topics the “movies must have” or “must not have.” The topics of choice for either of these could include Alternate Versions; Awards; Business Info; Crazy Credits; DVD; Goofs; Hyperlinks; Laserdisc; Literature; Neesgroup Reviews; Official Sites; On US TV this week; On UK TV this week; Photos; Plot Summaries; Posters, Quotes; Reviews; Sales; Sound Clips; Sound Tracks; Technical Data; Trailers; Trivia; Users Comments; and Video Clips. In group three one can also choose to include or exclude specific information in their search criteria such as Best Director Oscar Winners; Best Picture Oscar Winners; IMDb’s 100 worst-ranking movies; National Film Registry; IMDb’s top-ranking 250 movies; and the All time US top grossing movies. One is also given the ability to either include or exclude specific types of films based on medium of delivery or method of release, such as TV movies, Direct to video, and TV series.

Group four categories are designed to help the users in determining how they want the results to be displayed. Included in the group four categories are the options of “displaying first 100 highest rated movies matching all other criteria,” “hiding AKA titles,” and “sorting results based on the users vote ratings” or how the user has voted on the movies in the past. Group four also provides the option of choosing which movies should be displayed or not displayed based on specific criteria such as IMDb vote ratings by users. This can be done in a number of combinations based on the user demographics of age and gender. An additional option is to include one’s ratings or to exclude them from this search. Furthermore, under group four the user can rank the movies

by their “IMDb ratings” from low to high or high to low. Lastly, under group four one is afforded the option of having the movie hyperlinks go directly to the main details, combined details, full cast and crew, company credits, DVD, sales, quotes, and goofs.

Group five categories are intended for regular users of the data base and/or those who are just looking to see a particular type of movie. Here one can “create a vote ballot for the titles found;” “import found titles into IMDb My Movies;” and/or “jump to a random title matching all of the above criteria.”

Steps in the Unified Film Population Methodology

The UFPIM consists of three phases. In phase one the researcher must develop an operationalized definition, based in relevant literature, of the film genre he or she wishes to isolate. Phase two involves the identification of a base film list. This list contains films identified through the IMDb using, at a minimum, the IMDbPS option of “key words in the movie plot summaries” found in group one and “movie genre,” “year” (the year or series of years in which films were released), and “key words” found in group two. Further, the category of “must have” and selecting the option of “Plot Summaries” must be used. This provides an established set of base parameters that any future researchers wishing to replicate the study can follow, but does not discourage the utilization of other IMDbPS criteria if a researcher deems it appropriate. It should be noted that while this presentation of the UFPIM utilizes the IMDbPS to identify a population, it is not intended to exclude the utilization of any other film databases currently in existence or that may be developed in the future as long as they retain the same minimum search criteria identified above.

While the above search will prove quite comprehensive, many of the films identified will not meet the operationalized definition for the film population. Therefore, in phase three the desired film population will be further isolated through a two-stage process. In order to maintain consistency in the evaluation of each film’s plot summary in stage two, in stage one the researcher must utilize an operationalized definition of the desired film population to develop a coding sheet. This sheet must be designed in a fashion that will help exclude films that do not belong in the desired film population.

In stage two of phase three, the researcher must review plot summaries for each film from at least two sources, the IMDb being one of them, completing separate coding sheets for each plot summary. This is done to help insure that the films contained in the final population meet the desired parameters. An example might be if a plot summary simply refers to the lead character as a cop. While to the general public the term *cop* may seem clear, to someone who is versed in the literature and who seeks to isolate films depicting municipal (city) police officer portrayals, it is apparent that this term encompasses not only municipal (city) police officers but can also include county, state, and federal police officers. Therefore, it is necessary to compare at least two plot summaries from two different sources in order to insure accuracy of film population identification as is demonstrated in the following application of the Unified Film Population Identification Methodology.

Identifying the Core Cop Film Genre Population: A UFPIM Demonstration

Phase I

Up until the 1970s one saw law enforcement like figures portrayed as lone characters, a lone sheriff or detective, in Westerns and noirs. Police officers were presented as foolish patrolmen (keystone

cops), tough federal agents, or cool private investigators (Rafter, 2000). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s one saw the Western and noir era lose its appeal opening the door for the cop film era to arise.

Although, in the 1960s the “general” public viewed extensive news coverage of police actions that tarnished the reputation of the police; rising street crime and urban disorder of the time period made the market rich for a new law enforcement officer who lives in and protects the people of the modern city (Rafter, 2000). Consequently, in 1970 public opinion began moving toward the law-and-order perspective (Rafter, 2000). Then in 1971, the film *Dirty Harry*, a movie featuring vigilante justice, was released. The film was driven by the underlying belief that liberal laws had tied the cops’ hands, thus keeping them from catching criminals (Rafter, 2000).

In both *Dirty Harry* and later in *Magnum Force* (1973), Don Siegel and Clint Eastwood successfully shifted the gunslinger to an urban police setting (Rafter, 2000). Rafter (2000) notes that:

an essay on the Western hero, film writer Robert Warshow speaks of the gunslinger’s melancholy, seriousness, and “moral clarity,” of his “personal nobility,” modesty, and reluctance to impose himself. These traits are equally characteristic of Eastwood’s cop hero, with his sense of limitation and constrained diffidence. Warshow’s Westerner “appears to be unemployed,” a “man of leisure”; although Harry Callahan works for a living, his scorn for superior officers and his civilian clothes indicate that he, too, is a freelancer. Much as the Westerner’s horse signifies physical freedom, Callahan’s car signifies his freedom to roam the city, which turns out to offer as many spectacles as the wide-open spaces. With little more than a change of outfit, then, the Westerner migrated to the cop film, enabling viewers to switch genre allegiances without bidding farewell to the gunslinger’s essential character (p. 75-76).

Rafter goes on to point out that the cop film genre was not so much a new genre as it was a new strategy for analyzing the nature of heroism and the hero’s relationship to society.

Like the Westerner, Harry Callahan patrols a border between barbarity and society, abandon and self-control, what John Cawelti in another context calls the ‘frontier’ between savagery and civilization. That frontier is both geographical and psychological, a line that must be drawn within the city and within the hero himself (Rafter, 2000, p. 76).

In the 1980s and 1990s the cop film genre started to splinter off into to sub-genres of the traditional cop film genre. These splinter or sub-genres include the “rogue cop films,” “corrupt cop films,” “buddy cop films,” and “cop comedy films,” among others; arguably moving further and further away from the initial characteristics of the cop film. However, this researcher argues that despite the splintering of the cop film genre, many of the core characteristics that originally defined the cop film have endured and it is those films that make up the core cop film genre. Therefore, the first three decades of the core cop film genre is operationalized as theatrically released films between 1971 and 2001 that take place in the United States where one or more actors play the hero who is an active urban police officer of traditional ranks, either acting alone or with a partner in a street cop/detective role, in the past or present, that appear to be reality based (Wilson, 2006). Given this operationalization films that depict police officers who are outside their jurisdictional boundaries (i.e. *Beverly Hills Cop*), in specialized units that do not traditionally fall into the day to day crime fighting units in police department organizational structures (i.e. internal affairs, forensic units) or scenarios that do not appear to be reality based (i.e. supernatural phenomenon, alien encounters, and/or futuristic depictions) are excluded from the genre.

Phase II

At the time of this research IMDb provided 19 genres into which films could be categorized

(action, adventure, animation, comedy, crime, documentary, drama, family, fantasy, film-noir, horror, music, musical, mystery, romance, sci-fi, thriller, war, and western). Eight of these genres were chosen to search for films fitting the core cop genre operationalized definition. The remaining eleven genres were excluded from the search for various reasons, but primarily because of their departure from reality based depictions.

The “animation” genre is defined by IMDb as follows: “over 75% of the title’s running time should have scenes that are wholly, or part-animated” (Internet Movie Database, 2005). This genre was excluded due to either the complete absence of real human beings or the interaction of real humans with animated characters which could not be found in a real world situation as is called for by the core cop film operationalization. The same reasoning was applied to the “fantasy” genre, which is defined as containing “numerous consecutive scenes of characters portrayed to effect a magical and/or mystical narrative throughout the title” (Internet Movie Database, 2005). The “horror” genre was excluded because it is defined as “containing numerous consecutive scenes of characters affecting a terrifying and/or repugnant narrative throughout the title” (Internet Movie Database, 2005). The “sci-fi” genre was also excluded because by its definition, “numerous scenes, and/or the entire background for the setting of the narrative, should be based on speculative scientific discoveries or developments, environmental changes, space travel, or life on other planets” (Internet Movie Database, 2005), and it therefore is not representative of real world scenarios. The “film-noir” genre is defined as being “shot in black and white, American, and set in contemporary times (relative to shooting date). We take the view that this genre began with *Underworld* (1927) and ended with *Touch of Evil* (1958)” (Internet Movie Database, 2005). Therefore, given the mere time parameters of 1927 to 1958, this genre does not contain films that fit the theatrical release time parameters for this study. Similarly, the “western” genre is defined as containing “numerous scenes and/or a narrative that portrays frontier life in the American West during 1600s-1900s” (Internet Movie Database, 2005) and therefore also does not fit the theatrical release time parameters for this study. The “war” genre was excluded because by definition films in this category are to contain numerous scenes and/or narrative that pertain to a real war. Therefore, the persistent use of the war metaphor by criminal justice agencies aside, and given that no real wars have taken place within modern urban settings, this genre was also excluded.

The “comedy” genre was excluded from the search for two reasons. One of the primary reasons is that the IMDb requires in its definition of what constitutes a comedy that a film contain characters participating in humorous or comedic experiences. “The comedy can be exclusive for the viewer, at the expense of the characters in the title, or be shared with them. There are various types of comedy: spoof, parody, satire, black-comedy” (Internet Movie Database, 2005). Although, many core cop films may display humor to varying degrees, most will not fit into this definition. Secondly, as Rafter (2000) points out, cop comedies such as the *Police Academy Series* and the *Naked Gun Series*, which would most likely be found in the comedy genre, most often parody other cop films and do not present themselves as reality based.

The “documentary” genre is defined as containing “numerous consecutive scenes of real personages and not characters portrayed by actors” (Internet Movie Database, 2005). Therefore, this genre was excluded because it is actually represented by real people and not a portrayal of real people by actors. The “musical” genre is defined as containing “several scenes of characters bursting into song aimed at the viewer... while the rest of the time, usually but not exclusively, portraying a narrative that alludes to another genre” (Internet Movie Database, 2005); therefore this genre would not produce films that would fit the parameters of the core cop

film genre. Similarly, the “music” genre was excluded from the search because it contains significant music-related elements while not actually being a musical (i.e. a concert or a story about a band).

It was therefore determined that of the film genres available on the IMDb only the “crime,” “drama,” “action,” “adventure,” “mystery,” “family,” “romance,” and “thriller” genres were to be searched. The determination to search only these genres was based on the fact that of the available genres it is believed that the aforementioned genres are the most likely to produce core cop films that present themselves as realistic depictions of urban policing in the present or the past. If a film was chosen from the said genres and upon viewing it was determined that the film did not depict policing in a realistic manner or if it was portrayed as taking place in the future, then the film was removed from the study. A more extensive discussion is given to the inclusion and exclusion of films later in this article. However, four searches were conducted on each of the aforementioned genres for a total of 28 individual searches using the IMDb Power Search. The key categories used from the IMDb Power Search Groups included “plot summary words,” “country of origin,” “genre,” “location,” “language,” “year,” “must have,” “TV movies,” “direct to video,” and “TV series.”

The “plot summary words” that were searched for individually under each genre were “cop,” “police,” “detective,” and “law enforcement.” These words were chosen due to their inherent association with the *cop* film genre. The term *cop* was obviously used because it is the name of the genre in question. The terms *police* and *detective* were used due to the fact that much of the literature describing films about law enforcement or police occurring prior to 1971 describe the films as policing or detective films (Surette, 1998). Although core cop films were all released after 1971, the terms *police* and *detective* were still searched in case these descriptive terms may have bled over from the pre-cop film genres. The term “law enforcement” was chosen because of its usage in both the literature and other realms as a term of professionalism, something that was strongly associated with the time period in which the cop film genre began (Rafter, 2000).

The “USA” was used for both “country of region” and “location.” The “genres” that the plot summary words were individually searched under, as was mentioned above, included the “crime,” “drama,” “action,” “adventure,” “mystery,” “family,” “romance,” and “thriller” genres. The “language” chosen was English. The “years” requested were all films, meeting the specified criteria, released from 1971 through 2001. It was determined that the “must have” selection would be plot summaries due to the critical role plot summaries would play in further determining if a film fits into the core cop film genre. Lastly, it was determined that in order to focus on strictly theatrical releases, “TV movies,” “direct to video,” and “TV series” were to all be excluded from the study.

Phase III

Stage I

In order to maintain consistency in what this researcher looked for in stage two, a coding sheet was developed based on the core cop film genre operationalized definition of a theatrically released film between 1971 and 2001 that takes place in the United States where one or more actors play the hero who is an active urban police officer of traditional ranks, either acting alone or with a partner in a street cop/detective role, in the past or present, that appear to be reality based. The coding sheet asked five questions consistent with the parameters set by the operational definition of what is to be considered a core cop film. Each question allowed the option of a yes or no answer. An answer of yes to any one of the five questions would result in the film’s being excluded from being

considered a core cop film. The questions are as follows:

1. Does anything indicate that the film does not take place in an urban setting in the United States?
2. Does anything indicate that the primary character is not an active urban police officer?
3. Does anything indicate that the primary character is not portrayed as the hero?
4. Does anything indicate that the officer is acting outside the traditional street cop/detective roles or jurisdictional boundaries?
5. Does anything indicate that the film takes place in the future?

Stage II

Stage two consisted of this researcher's reviewing the plot summaries found on the IMDb for each film and the editorial reviews (plot summaries) of each film on Amazon.com to determine their appropriateness for this study. The redundancy of the reviews was intentionally implemented to insure that this researcher received as accurate a depiction of each film as was possible before viewing the films. As stated above, each question had the option of a yes or no answer. An answer of yes to any one of the five questions resulted in the film's being excluded from being considered a core cop film. If one plot summary had resulted in a definite inclusion vote and the other plot summary produced a definitive exclusion vote, then the film would have been included in the study and subsequently scrutinized upon viewing. However, such an incident did not occur. Any film that was not excluded in the plot summary reviews prior to viewing could be removed if, once it was viewed, this researcher determined the film actually did not meet the operationalized definition of what constitutes a core cop film.

UFPIM Results

At the end of Phase II a base film list of over 500 films was produced. In Stage II of Phase III over 1000 plot summaries from both the IMDb and Amazon were evaluated using the core cop film identification coding sheet resulting in a final population of 104 films. Fifteen of the films occurred in the 1970s, 39 in the 1980s, 41 in the 1990s, and 9 films between 2000 and 2001. During the examination process several of the films were subsequently excluded for a variety of reasons. Eight films could not be located and were determined to be out of production. The three films, *Electra Glide in Blue* (1973), *The Indian Runner* (1991), and *Partners in Crime* (2000) were excluded because the films involved police officers who were not city police. Additionally, two films were excluded because they did not fit into one of the required genre categories. Upon viewing it was determined that the film *The Black Marble* (1980) was a comedy and the film *God Told Me To* (1976) fell more appropriately into the horror film genre. The film *The Onion Field*, although dealing with the shooting of police officers, primarily focused on the justice system rather than law enforcement. Lastly, the films *Wild Things* (1998) and *Cement* (1998) both were excluded because the police were not portrayed as heroes in any way. Therefore, because eight films could not be located and an additional eight films were excluded for various reasons, the final population for the first thirty years of the core cop film genre totaled 88 films. (See Appendix A).

Conclusion

This article began by demonstrating that historically a large portion of peer-reviewed articles examining social science issues in theatrically released films have not used or even attempted to use probability sampling techniques in their analyses of films. Further, it was noted that this was

most likely due to the difficulty in identifying and isolating large blocks of specific film populations. The UFPIIM provides a methodology through which future studies of films can break from the limitations surrounding the study of film and its contents. While the UFPIIM may seem arduous in comparison to studies conducted in the past, the fruits of its utilization will be incomparable. No longer will qualitative and quantitative researchers be limited to analysis of a few films; rather, they will be able to not only readily identify but set replicable parameters for specific film populations. Moreover, they will be able to conduct their analysis on either the entire population or on definitive probability samples drawn from the population.

Arguably few researchers can truthfully say that their populations of study are all-encompassing. It is quite possible that not every theatrically released film between 1971 and 2001 that meets the operational definition of the core cop film genre was captured in the above demonstration of the UFPIIM. However, it is this researcher's contention that populations identified utilizing the UFPIIM will provide film researchers with far richer analyses of film depictions and trends than has been seen in the past. It is hoped that the methodology presented here will help unify film studies of social science issues in the future, thereby improving the reliability, validity, and the replicability of future studies. Lastly, it is hoped that this methodology will help expand the types of film studies utilized in the examination of social science issues to those communication theories that require the examination of large blocks of media.

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APPENDIX-A

Table A 1
Core Cop Films and Year of Release

Dirty Harry (1971)	Under Cover (1987)	No Place to Hide (1993)
The French Connection (1971)	Above the Law (1988)	Rising Sun (1993)
The Organization (1971)	Colors (1988)	Striking Distance (1993)
Busting (1973)	COP (1988)	When the Bough Breaks (1993)
Magnum Force (1973)	Tequila Sunrise (1988)	Lady in Waiting (1994)
Serpico (1973)	The Dead Pool (1988)	Speed (1994)
The Seven Ups (1973)	The Presidio (1988)	Copy Cat (1995)
The Stone Killer (1973)	Keaton's Cop (1988)	Bodily Harm (1995)
McQ (1974)	Red Heat (1988)	Die Hard with a Vengeance (1995)
Taking of Pelham One Two Three (1974)	Collision Course (1989)	Heat (1995)
Hustle (1975)	Dead Bang (1989)	Seven (1995)
The Enforcer (1976)	Lethal Weapon 2 (1989)	The Glimmer Man (1996)
Cruising (1980)	Next of Kin (1989)	Cop Land (1997)
The First Deadly Sin (1980)	Renegades (1989)	LA Confidential (1997)
Fort Apache The Bronx (1981)	Sea of Love (1989)	Murder at 1600 (1997)
Prince of the City (1981)	Tango and Cash (1989)	Lethal Weapon 4 (1998)
Sharkeys Machine (1981)	The Kill Reflex (1989)	Rush Hour (1998)
True Confessions (1981)	Another 48 Hours (1990)	Snake Eyes (1998)
48 Hours (1982)	Downtown (1990)	In Too Deep (1999)
10 to Midnight (1983)	Cold Fire (1990)	Oxygen (1999)
Sudden Impact (1983)	The Rain Killer (1990)	Resurrection (1999)
Tight Rope (1984)	The Rookie (1990)	The Bone Collector (1999)
Year of the Dragon (1985)	Out for Justice (1991)	The Corruptor (1999)
No Mercy (1986)	Basic Instinct (1992)	Shaft (2000)
Cobra (1986)	Jennifer 8 (1992)	15 Minutes (2001)
Dead Aim (1987)	Lethal Weapon 3 (1992)	Angel Eyes (2001)
Fatal Beauty (1987)	One False Move (1992)	Exit Wounds (2001)
Lethal Weapon (1987)	Stranger Among Us (1992)	The Fast and the Furious (2001)
Terror Squad (1987)	Excessive Force (1993)	Training Day (2001)
The Big Easy (1987)		
