

• Criminologists and other social scientists often face the quandary of how they can apply knowledge gleaned from research and legislate personal behavior. In the case of television programming, the legislation does not apply to individuals, but to corporations. While these companies certainly enjoy copious freedoms in both their creative and earning powers, they ultimately must do so under the government's umbrella.

The legislation of business practice presents a challenge to social science researchers and public policy practitioners. One way to encourage cooperation from the business world would be to link our research to their companies' bottom lines. Shining a more positive light on various ethnic groups, being racially inclusive, and offering more fair treatment to women and members of the LGBTQ community can be seen as a means to increase potential consumer bases. In the past decade, for example, the Hispanic population in the United States has increased from 12% to 18%, a six percent increase that could lead to an upturn in Hispanic "buying power."

It is important for all populations to be accurately represented, especially if there are changes in victimization rates and arrest rates among varying social groups, year after year. United States Senators Cory Booker and Robert Menendez, who serve a diverse population in New Jersey, should introduce legislation to the FCC, which would address these gaps in television portrayal. While acknowledging the difficulties of this kind of legislation in a free market, we can look to criminological theories to provide foundation for this approach to legislation.

As criminologists, we know that the middle-class measuring rod (Cohen) is often not attainable by all members of society, thereby increasing frustration and often leading to crime. Perhaps a more inclusive approach to the portrayal of television role models could provide goals and the means to those goals--the results of which could serve as both crime reduction methods and increased adherence to middle-class success in society. This success could lead to an increase in

buying power, thus providing a victory for both society and business concerns.

We urge Senator Booker and Menendez to follow through with our recommendations and welcome any inquiries about our research. While businesses tend to serve their bottom line, our hope is that our representatives in the United States Senate will serve the greater good.

## Conclusion

Television presents a powerful form of social construction in our American society. Social construction refers to how we form and shape our realities. Understanding the social construction of reality process and the concepts of social construction help to understand the impact of the media on crime and justice.

All the events you did not witness but believe occurred, all the facts about the world you did not personally collect but believe to be true, all the things you believe to exist but have not seen make up your "symbolic reality." Three sources of knowledge help to form our symbolic reality-- other people, institutions, and the media. This confirms that media carries great weight in our self-perception as people, as members of ethnic groups, as members of the female gender, etc.

Clearly the roles of women have progressed greatly since the days of early television— both on-screen and off-screen. Has the perception, however, accurately progressed to reflect women's roles as "players" in the criminal justice system? Women's incarceration rates have increased, yet their involvement in violent crime has not; women are now police officers, detectives, prosecutors, and judges, but on television, those in the lead roles are primarily male. While many studies have shown progress throughout the years, new information should be gathered to assess if we have come far enough.