

# Hyperreal Policing on Television: Media Logic, Symbolic Closure, and the Construction of Police Authority in Indonesian Reality Cop Shows

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes how television reality police show construct hyperreal representations of policing through systematic visual, narrative, and relational strategies. Drawing on a comparative quantitative content analysis of 30 purposively selected episodes, 15 from *86* (NET TV) and 15 from *The Police* (Trans7), the study examines twelve analytical dimensions of police representation, including visual symbols, operational environments, police image, narrative structure, police actions, police community interaction, public reaction, and displayed punishment. Inter-coder reliability testing using Krippendorff's Alpha confirms a high level of coding consistency. The findings reveal a consistent and multidimensional pattern in which *86* (NET TV) produces a more intensive, coherent, and symbolically saturated representation of policing across nearly all analytical dimensions, while *The Police* (Trans7), presents a comparatively restrained and fragmented portrayal. Descriptive comparative results show that *86* (NET TV) emphasizes dramatized police actions, heroic narrative structures,

affirmative police community relations, and symbolic closure through the visualization of punishment and public consent. These patterns indicate that policing is represented not as a procedurally complex and uncertain practice, but as a resolute, morally ordered, and visually legible process. Interpreted through the theoretical lenses of hyperreality (Baudrillard), media representation (Hall), and symbolic capital (Bourdieu), the study argues that reality police television functions as a site for the production of hyperreal policing. Rather than reflecting empirical policing practices, these programs construct a mediated model of policing that reduces procedural ambiguity, dramatizes authority, and normalizes institutional legitimacy through repetitive symbolic reinforcement. While such representations enhance visibility and narrative coherence, they also risk producing symbolic transparency that obscures the structural and procedural complexities of law enforcement. By integrating comparative quantitative content analysis with conceptual synthesis, this article contributes to scholarship on spectacle policing and media-police relations by demonstrating how mainstream

television actively participates in the production and normalization of police authority. Methodologically, it advances the use of analytical dimensions and visual synthesis to examine hyperreal institutional representation in mediated contexts.

**Keywords:** Hyperreal policing; police representation; reality cop show; media logic; spectacle policing

## INTRODUCTION

The representation of policing in television media has long occupied a central position in communication studies, criminology, and policing research, as media do not merely reflect institutional practices but actively shape how the public understands authority, social order, and the exercise of state power (Fisman & Cavender, 2017). Television operates as a site of meaning production, structuring social reality through visual selection, narrative organization, and genre conventions (Holland, 2017). What appears on screen, therefore, is always the result of symbolic construction rather than a direct or complete reflection of empirical reality (Hall, 1997; Doyle, 2000). Within this context, police television programs hold a particularly strategic position, as they bring law enforcement practices into direct contact with media logics oriented toward drama, visibility, and audience engagement (Bakkenes, 2023; Calzado & Gómez, 2016). Reality police show occupies a distinctive place within the contemporary media landscape because they claim to present policing “as it really happens”, while simultaneously conforming to the demands of televised entertainment (Lee & McGovern, 2014). Unlike crime news or investigative documentaries, reality policing formats rely on relatively stable narrative patterns: conflicts are clearly framed, actors are positioned in binary terms (police versus offenders), and resolution is delivered swiftly (Marsh & Melville, 2014). A growing body of research suggests that this format tends to reduce the complexity of actual policing, characterized by procedural

requirements, legal reasoning, and administrative negotiation into a series of performative and visually driven action scenes (Cotter & O’connor, 2008; Jones, 2009; Reiner, 2013).

From the perspective of representation theory, this condition underscores that police television is the outcome of an encoding process saturated with symbolic choices. Media institutions do not merely decide which events are shown, but also how those events are framed and endowed with meaning through visual perspective, narrative sequencing, and character emphasis (Hall, 2006). Through this process, preferred meanings of policing are produced such as the police as decisive, effective, and morally grounded and subsequently naturalized through visual and narrative repetition, appearing as commonsense depictions of policing reality (Benoit, 1997; Corner, 2002).

Jean Baudrillard’s concept of simulation and hyperreality offers a critical framework for understanding how such representations operate at a deeper level. In societies increasingly dominated by images, representation no longer functions primarily as a mirror of reality but as a simulation that replaces empirical experience as the main point of reference (Baudrillard, 1994). Within this framework, reality police show generates versions of policing that appear more coherent, orderly, and symbolically meaningful than everyday policing practices, which are in fact marked by ambiguity, contingency, and uncertainty (Hartwell, 2015; Morris, 2021). The police figure presented on screen thus becomes hyperreal, an idealized model of policing that operates as a simulacrum rather than as a reflection of institutional practice (Azwar, 2014; Larson, 2023).

The production of such hyperreality takes place within a media field governed by its own internal logic. Drawing on Bourdieu’s field theory, media can be understood as a site of symbolic production structured by competition for attention, ratings, and visual appeal, where only certain practices and

images are rendered visible (Bourdieu, 2013). Within this field, representations of policing are closely tied to the accumulation of symbolic capital, forms of legitimacy and moral authority constructed through images of professionalism, decisiveness, and operational success (Bourdieu, 1998). Previous studies demonstrate that police television programs systematically generate such symbolic capital through visual aesthetics and heroic narratives, rather than through procedural explanation or critical reflection on law enforcement practices (Altheide, 2004; Reiner, 2013).

Research on spectacle policing and copaganda further reinforces this argument by showing that popular media frequently present policing as spectacle, emphasizing action, control, and moral resolution while marginalizing structural constraints, ethical dilemmas, and the potential for abuse of power (Altheide, 2004; Bakkenes, 2023; Fernandez, 2024; Reiner, 2013). Such representations not only simplify the realities of policing but also contribute to the normalization of police power as legitimate and unproblematic within the public imagination (Barak, 1988; Donovan & Klahm, 2015; Rackstraw, 2023).

Empirical studies have likewise shown that exposure to reality police shows is associated with the formation of positive police images, driven largely by visual appeal and narrative dramatization rather than by substantive understanding of legal procedures or institutional limits (Andriana Hasby, 2017; Ardoyo, 2018; Astuti & Benedicta, 2023). These findings suggest that police representation operates primarily through symbolic and aesthetic mechanisms, allowing television imagery to substitute the complexity of policing practice with simplified and readily consumable images (Hu et al., 2018).

Against this backdrop, this article proceeds from the assumption that understanding the construction of hyperreal policing requires an approach that combines empirical breadth with analytical depth. Accordingly, the study draws on quantitative content

analysis of a large corpus of reality police show episodes to identify dominant patterns of representation, which are then examined in greater detail through qualitative analysis of selected episodes. This strategy enables a systematic investigation of how media logic shapes hyperreal policing through visual selection, heroic narrative construction, paramilitary aesthetics, and the dominance of particular spaces as sites of policing action (Bakkenes, 2023; Cotter & O'connor, 2008; Reiner, 2013).

Within this framework, the article addresses three central research questions: (1) how does television media logic shape the construction of hyperreal policing in reality police shows? (2) what visual and narrative patterns are most prominently employed in representing policing? and (3) how do these representations function in producing and normalizing police symbolic power? By answering these questions, the article offers empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of police representation, spectacle policing, and copaganda, positioning mainstream television as a central arena in the production of the symbolic realities of policing.

## **MATERIALS & METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a comparative quantitative content analysis, complemented by interpretive qualitative reading, to examine how television media logic shapes representations and the production of hyperreal policing in reality police shows. Content analysis was selected because it enables the systematic identification of recurring and comparable representational patterns, particularly within structured audiovisual texts such as television programs (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2012). Within research on policing and media, this approach has been widely applied to examine narrative tendencies, visual conventions, and ideological orientations that shape meanings of policing (Doyle, 2000; Reiner, 2000).

The quantitative component is used to map measurable differences and dominant representational tendencies across programs, while the qualitative interpretive reading serves to elucidate the symbolic meanings embedded in those patterns, especially in relation to heroic narratives, visual aesthetics, and the construction of hyperreal policing. This combined strategy allows statistical comparison to be analytically connected to broader processes of meaning production rather than treated as an end in itself (Baudrillard, 1994; 2006).

### **Corpus and Episode Selection**

The content analysis was conducted on a balanced corpus of episodes, consisting of 15 episodes from *86* (NET TV) and 15 episodes from *The Police* (Trans7). The use of an equal number of episodes was intended to enable a more controlled and equitable comparison between programs, ensuring that observed differences could be interpreted as representational characteristics rather than artifacts of sample imbalance.

Episodes were selected using a purposive sampling strategy guided by considerations of informational adequacy for capturing meaningful patterns of police representation. Selection criteria included: the relevance of the policing context depicted, variation in types of offenses or crimes, diversity of operational environments (e.g., urban public spaces, residential areas, or semi-enclosed settings), and the intensity of police–community interaction.

This approach is consistent with Krippendorff's (2004) emphasis that unit selection in content analysis should be guided by meaning adequacy rather than by statistical generalization alone. The objective was not representativeness in a probabilistic sense, but analytical depth sufficient to identify stable and recurring representational structures.

### **Analytical Instrument and Coding Dimensions**

The analytical instrument was constructed around a set of police representation dimensions derived from theoretical frameworks on media representation, spectacle policing, and hyperreality. Each dimension was operationalized through a series of indicators assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1–5), allowing for descriptive statistical analysis and cross-program comparison.

The analytical framework operationalizes police representation through a set of interrelated dimensions that capture visual, narrative, and relational aspects of televised policing. These dimensions encompass the use of visual symbols associated with police authority, the operational environments in which policing practices are situated, and the construction of police image through characterization and framing. They also include the structuring of program narratives, the depiction of police actions, and the presentation of rank hierarchy and organizational units or divisions as markers of institutional order and legitimacy. Beyond institutional representation, the framework attends to how police functions are articulated, how police–community interactions are visualized, and how different types of crime or offenses are framed within the narrative. Finally, it incorporates audience-oriented dimensions by examining public reaction and the display of punishment as narrative closures that signal moral resolution and social order. Together, these dimensions enable a comprehensive mapping of police representation across visual, narrative, and relational aspects that contribute to the construction of hyperreal policing in television texts (Altheide, 2004; Reiner, 2013).

### **Coding Procedure and Inter-Coder Reliability**

The coding process was conducted by two coders: Coder 1 (the author) and Coder 2, an independent coder who was not involved in

the development of the study's conceptual framework. The inclusion of an independent coder was intended to ensure evaluative neutrality and to minimize interpretive bias, in line with established standards in quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2012).

Prior to the main analysis, inter-coder reliability was assessed to ensure consistency and objectivity in the coding process. Reliability was calculated using Krippendorff's Alpha, which is appropriate for ordinal data such as five-point Likert scales. The resulting coefficient ( $\alpha = 0.936$ ) exceeds commonly recommended thresholds, indicating a very high level of agreement between coders and confirming the robustness of the coding instrument (Krippendorff, 2004).

### Data Analysis Strategy

Following the confirmation of inter-coder reliability, data analysis proceeded in two stages. First, coding results were summarized using descriptive statistics, including mean values, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores, and mean differences ( $\Delta$  Mean) between *The Police* (Trans7) and *86* (NET TV) for each analytical dimension. This stage enabled a systematic and transparent identification of representational differences across programs.

Second, these statistical patterns served as the empirical foundation for thematic and interpretive analysis in the Results and Discussion sections. Differences across dimensions were examined to elucidate how variations in scores correspond to divergent narrative structures, visual aesthetics, and configurations of hyperreal policing in each program. This strategy bridges quantitative mapping with qualitative interpretation, allowing numerical differences to be situated within a coherent conceptual and theoretical framework rather than treated as isolated measurements (Baudrillard, 2006; Collins, 2005).

### Methodological Rigor

The combination of balanced episode selection, a theoretically grounded analytical instrument, and high inter-coder reliability provides a strong empirical basis for interpreting representational differences as systemic characteristics of the programs, rather than as incidental or episodic variation. As such, the methodological design enables this study to account convincingly for how television media logic operates in the repeated and structured production of hyperreal representations of policing (Baudrillard, 2006).

### RESULT

This section presents the findings of a comparative quantitative content analysis of 30 episodes of television reality police shows, consisting of 15 episodes of *The Police* (Trans7) and 15 episodes of *86* (NET TV). The episodes were purposively selected from broadcasts spanning the period 2019–2024 to capture representational patterns across different production phases and socio-institutional contexts. The corpus was obtained directly from the respective production teams through formal research data requests, ensuring the completeness and authenticity of the audiovisual material analyzed. The analysis applies twelve analytical dimensions of police representation to systematically compare how each program constructs visual authority, narrative structure, police actions, institutional order, and social relations. The results are summarized in Table 1, which reports descriptive statistics—including mean scores, standard deviations, and mean differences—across all dimensions. Together, these data provide an empirical basis for identifying not only the magnitude of representational differences between *The Police* and *86*, but also the broader configuration through which televised policing is rendered more restrained or, conversely, more intensive, coherent, and symbolically saturated.

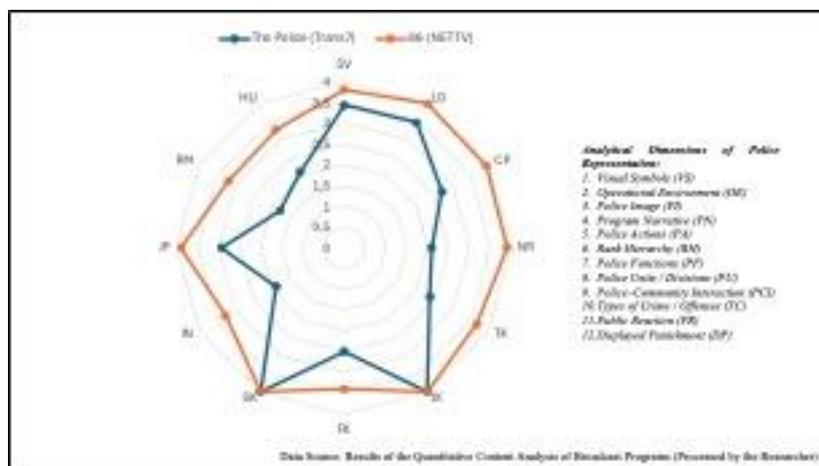
**Table 1. Comparative Descriptive Statistics across Analytical Dimensions of Police Representation**

Analytical Dimensions	The Police (Trans7) Mean	SD	86 (NET TV) Mean	SD	Δ Mean
Visual Symbols (VS)	3.43	0.50	3.80	0.41	+0.37
Operational Environment (OE)	3.47	0.64	4.00	0.00	+0.53
Police Image (PI)	2.70	0.62	3.93	0.26	+1.23
Program Narrative (PN)	2.10	0.78	3.90	0.39	+1.80
Police Actions (PA)	2.37	0.83	3.67	0.49	+1.30
Rank Hierarchy (RH)	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	0.00
Police Functions (PF)	2.50	0.85	3.40	0.51	+0.90
Police Units / Divisions (PU)	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	0.00
Police–Community Interaction (PCI)	1.87	0.52	3.27	0.59	+1.40
Types of Crime / Offenses (TC)	2.93	1.05	3.90	0.28	+0.97
Public Reaction (PR)	1.77	0.59	3.20	0.56	+1.43
Displayed Punishment (DP)	2.10	0.83	3.27	0.70	+1.17

Source: processed by the author.

The analysis examines systematic differences in police representation across twelve analytically defined dimensions that capture visual, narrative, institutional, and relational aspects of mediated policing.

Results are presented through descriptive statistics, cross-dimensional pattern interpretation, and visual synthesis using a radar chart.



**Figure 1. Analytical Dimensions of Police Representation in Reality Television**  
Source: processed by the author

This radar chart visualizes the comparative configuration of police representation across twelve analytical dimensions in *The Police* (Trans7) and *86* (NET TV). The figure illustrates that *86* (NET TV) consistently attains higher mean scores across most dimensions particularly program narrative, police image, police actions, police–

community interaction, public reaction, and displayed punishment indicating a more intensive, coherent, and symbolically saturated construction of policing. In contrast, *The Police* (Trans7) exhibits a narrower and less uniform profile, suggesting a more restrained and fragmented representational pattern.

Dimensions related to formal institutional structure (rank hierarchy and police units/divisions) display convergence across both programs, highlighting standardization at the organizational level, while narrative, relational, and symbolic dimensions account for the primary representational divergence.

### **1. Overall Comparative Configuration of Police Representation**

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 reveal a consistent and patterned divergence between *86* (NET TV) and *The Police* (Trans7) across nearly all analytical dimensions. With the exception of dimensions related to formal institutional display, namely rank hierarchy and police units/divisions, *86* (NET TV) records higher mean scores in every category. The predominance of positive mean differences ( $\Delta$  Mean) indicates that the representation of policing in *86* (NET TV) is not only more intensive but also more uniformly distributed across dimensions.

In contrast, *The Police* (Trans7) exhibit lower mean scores and greater variability between dimensions. Rather than forming a cohesive representational profile, the program displays uneven emphases, with certain aspects of policing foregrounded while others remain marginal or weakly articulated. This overall configuration suggests that the differences between the two programs are structural rather than incidental, reflecting distinct editorial logics and representational strategies at the program level.

### **2. Visual and Spatial Intensification of Policing**

Differences between the programs are immediately apparent in the visual and spatial dimensions of policing. On Visual Symbols, *86* (NET TV) achieves a higher mean score (3.80) than *The Police* (Trans7) (3.43), indicating a more consistent deployment of visual markers associated with police authority, such as uniforms, insignia, vehicles, and operational equipment. These symbols are not merely

present but are frequently foregrounded through camera angles, framing, and repetition across episodes.

A similar pattern appears in the Operational Environment dimension, where *86* (NET TV) reaches the maximum mean score (4.00), compared to 3.47 for *The Police* (Trans7). This result suggests that *86* (NET TV) more systematically situates police activity in open, urban, and publicly recognizable spaces. Policing is rendered visible as an active presence within the social landscape, reinforcing a sense of territorial coverage and institutional reach. By contrast, *The Police* (Trans7) more often depict operational settings in a less emphasized or less visually legible manner, reducing the salience of spatial dominance.

### **3. Narrative Structuring and the Centrality of Police Action**

The sharpest contrasts emerge in the narrative-oriented dimensions of Program Narrative, Police Image, and Police Actions. *86* (NET TV) records markedly higher mean scores across all three dimensions, with especially large differences in Program Narrative ( $\Delta$  Mean = +1.80). This finding indicates that *86* (NET TV) consistently organizes its episodes around coherent narrative arcs in which police action functions as the central organizing principle. Police actions in *86* (NET TV) are embedded within clear sequences of problem identification, intervention, and resolution. This narrative structuring reinforces a stable and affirmative image of policing, reflected in the higher mean score for Police Image (3.93 vs. 2.70). The cumulative effect is a portrayal of police officers as decisive, competent, and morally oriented actors whose actions drive narrative closure.

In contrast, *The Police* (Trans7) display weaker narrative cohesion. Police actions are more frequently presented as episodic or fragmented events, with less emphasis on resolution or symbolic completion. As a result, the image of policing that emerges is

less consolidated, and the program narrative lacks a strong directional focus.

#### **4. Functional Emphasis and Institutional Normalization**

On the dimension of Police Functions, *86* (NET TV) again outperforms *The Police* (Trans7) (3.40 vs. 2.50), suggesting that it more explicitly articulates what police officers are doing and why their actions matter. Functions related to enforcement and control are particularly visible, whereas preventive, administrative, or deliberative functions remain less prominent in both programs.

At the same time, the dimensions of Rank Hierarchy and Police Units/Divisions reveal complete convergence between the two programs (Mean = 4.00; SD = 0.00). This uniformity indicates that formal institutional structures are presented in a standardized manner, functioning as taken-for-granted elements of the televisual representation. Rather than being sites of narrative or visual differentiation, these institutional markers serve to normalize the presence of the police as a stable and authoritative organization.

#### **5. Relational Visibility and Social Affirmation**

Significant divergence is again evident in the relational dimensions of Police–Community Interaction and Public Reaction. *86* (NET TV) records substantially higher mean scores on both dimensions (Police–Community Interaction: 3.27 vs. 1.87; Public Reaction: 3.20 vs. 1.77). These results indicate that *86* (NET TV) more frequently visualizes encounters between police officers and civilians, as well as social responses to police interventions.

Importantly, these interactions are not presented as neutral exchanges but are often framed in affirming terms. Public reactions, such as expressions of compliance, gratitude, or approval are incorporated into the narrative flow, reinforcing the legitimacy of police action. In *The Police* (Trans7), by contrast, such interactions are

less visible and less narratively integrated, resulting in a more impersonal depiction of police–community relations.

#### **6. Crime Typology and Narrative Closure through Punishment**

Differences also extend to the dimensions of Types of Crime/Offenses and Displayed Punishment. *86* (NET TV) shows higher mean scores in both categories (Types of Crime: 3.90 vs. 2.93; Displayed Punishment: 3.27 vs. 2.10), indicating a greater emphasis on both the diversity of offenses and their legal consequences.

In *86* (NET TV), punishment frequently functions as narrative closure. The visualization of legal consequences provides a sense of completion and moral resolution, reinforcing the effectiveness of police intervention. In *The Police* (Trans7), punishment is less consistently displayed, and episodes more often conclude without explicit depiction of outcomes, leaving narratives comparatively open-ended.

#### **7. Cross-Dimensional Patterning and Visual Synthesis**

The comparative patterns identified through descriptive statistics are further clarified by the radar chart presented in Figure 3. The chart illustrates that *86* (NET TV) forms a broad, relatively symmetrical profile across analytical dimensions, indicating a coherent and multidimensional representational strategy. *The Police* (Trans7), in contrast, displays a narrower and more irregular shape, reflecting uneven emphasis across dimensions.

The greatest visual gaps appear in dimensions associated with narrative coherence, police image, social interaction, and public reaction, while institutional dimensions remain closely aligned. This visual synthesis reinforces the interpretation that representational differences between the two programs are systematic and multidimensional rather than isolated to specific content elements.

Overall, the results demonstrate that *86* (NET TV) constructs a representation of

policing that is more visually assertive, narratively cohesive, and relationally affirmative than that of *The Police* (Trans7). Across analytical dimensions, policing in *86* (NET TV) is rendered as an ordered, action-driven, and socially validated process, whereas *The Police* (Trans7), presents a more restrained and fragmented portrayal. These findings establish a detailed empirical basis for examining how television media logic shapes the configuration of police representation. By mapping patterns across visual, narrative, institutional, and relational dimensions, the Results section provides a comprehensive foundation for the conceptual analysis of hyperreal policing and spectacle developed in the Discussion section.

## DISCUSSION

This section interprets the comparative quantitative content analysis by situating the empirical patterns within established scholarship on media representation, hyperreality, and the symbolic production of police authority in television. Drawing on the configuration of analytical dimensions presented in Table 1 and the synthesis visualized in the radar chart, the discussion demonstrates that the differences between *86* (NET TV) and *The Police* (Trans7) are not merely stylistic or editorial variations. Rather, they reflect divergent intensities in the operation of media logic that systematically shape policing as a coherent, performative, and narratively “resolved” institution, often exceeding the complexity of empirical policing practice (Baudrillard, 1994; Hall, 1997).

### 1. Hyperreal Policing as a Stable Representational Formation

The radar chart reveals that *86* (NET TV) occupies a broader and more rounded representational space across most analytical dimensions, particularly Program Narrative, Police Image, Police Actions, Police, Community Interaction, and Public Reaction. This pattern indicates the presence of a stable representational formation, one

that does not function as a fragmented depiction of reality, but as a consistent package of meanings reproduced across episodes. Such stability corresponds closely with Baudrillard’s notion of hyperreality, in which representation becomes a self-referential system of signs, evaluated by internal coherence rather than empirical correspondence, and gradually replaces lived experience as the primary reference point for institutional imagery (Baudrillard, 2006; Collins, 2005).

From Hall’s perspective on representation, this stability is the outcome of sustained encoding practices. Television does not mirror policing; it actively produces preferred meanings by selecting events, arranging narrative sequences, and foregrounding particular actors and outcomes. In *86* (NET TV), preferred meanings of policing as decisive, effective, and morally legitimate are reinforced simultaneously across visual, narrative, action-oriented, and relational dimensions, resulting in a representational density that is difficult to contest within the text itself (Hartwell, 2015; Morris, 2021).

### 2. Complexity Reduction as the Core Mechanism of Policing Simulation

The largest mean difference observed in the Program Narrative dimension underscores that hyperreality is primarily produced through the reduction of legal and procedural complexity into linear narrative structures. Policing is rendered as a sequence in which conflict emerges, police intervene, and order is restored. This reduction is not incidental but structurally embedded in television’s demand for narrative legibility, temporal efficiency, and emotional clarity. Procedural ambiguity, administrative delay, and legal uncertainty, central features of empirical policing are therefore marginalized because they disrupt narrative momentum (Altheide, 2004; Corner, 2002; Cotter & O’connor, 2008). Studies of reality-based policing formats have long noted that “watchable reality” is constructed through selective sequencing

rather than comprehensive depiction. What is shown is not the entirety of policing, but the portion most compatible with televisual storytelling. The lower scores of *The Police* (Trans7) on Program Narrative and Police Actions suggest a weaker application of this reduction mechanism, producing representations that appear less resolute and less symbolically complete than those of 86 (NET TV) (Cotter & O’connor, 2008; Jones, 2009; Rowe et al., 2023).

### **3. Visual Dramatization and the Aesthetics of Authority**

The consistently higher scores of 86 (NET TV) on Visual Symbols and Operational Environment demonstrate that hyperreality is also produced through visual dramatization. Uniforms, vehicles, equipment, and spatial dominance are foregrounded to render authority immediately visible and intuitively legible. In the logic of spectacle policing, policing becomes something to be seen before it is understood, privileging visual affirmation of power over procedural explanation (Altheide, 2004; Reiner, 2013).

The near-maximum score for Operational Environment further suggests that policing in 86 (NET TV) is persistently staged in dynamic public spaces, reinforcing an image of constant readiness and omnipresence. Space thus operates not merely as background, but as a narrative device that communicates state presence and control. Through repeated spatial framing, policing is normalized as an ever-active force capable of addressing social disorder in real time (Corner, 2002; Doyle, 2000).

### **4. Narrative Moral Authority and the Construction of the “Always-Right” Police**

The convergence of high scores in Police Image and Program Narrative indicates that 86 (NET TV) positions police not only as functional actors, but as narrative moral authorities. Within Hall’s framework, this reflects the production of a dominant reading position: audiences are guided to

accept police decisions as reasonable and justified because the narrative context consistently frames disorder as requiring intervention and positions policing as the agent of restoration (Doyle, 2000; Hall, 2006).

At this stage, hyperreality operates not simply by intensifying drama, but by moralizing it. Coercive actions appear rational and necessary because the narrative has already established threat, urgency, and legitimacy. In the literature on copaganda, this mechanism is central to symbolic legitimation: repeated portrayals of heroic, competent policing naturalize authority by embedding it within emotionally satisfying stories of resolution (Bakkenes, 2023; Fernandez, 2024; Reiner, 2013).

### **5. Total Efficiency Simulation and the Illusion of Frictionless Policing**

High scores in Police Actions combined with Displayed Punishment reveal what can be described as a simulation of total efficiency. Policing appears as a process largely free of friction, coordination problems, jurisdictional disputes, evidentiary challenges, and legal delays rarely become central narrative elements. Hyperreality prioritizes the impression of institutional capability over representational accuracy, producing an image of policing as a reliable problem-solving machine (Baudrillard, 2006; Couldry, 2012).

Empirically, policing is often contingent, prolonged, and procedurally constrained. Television, however, tends to close narratives at moments of maximum satisfaction, where intervention appears decisive and outcomes appear certain. The comparatively lower scores of *The Police* (Trans7) on Police Actions and Displayed Punishment help explain why its representations feel less conclusive and generate weaker symbolic certainty for audiences (Altheide, 2004; Cotter & O’connor, 2008; Rowe et al., 2023).

### **6. Symbolic Closure and the Production of Visible Legal Certainty**

The higher values observed for Public Reaction and Displayed Punishment in *86* (NET TV) indicate the systematic production of symbolic closure. Episodes frequently conclude with visual confirmation that police action has been socially accepted and legally finalized. Closure, in this sense, is not merely an aesthetic preference but a mechanism of legitimation: actions are not only performed but publicly affirmed within the narrative (Altheide, 2004; Corner, 2002).

Such closure fosters the impression that legal order is restored swiftly and decisively. While this satisfies narrative expectations, it risks misrepresenting the extended and contested nature of legal processes. In spectacle policing, closure functions to stabilize meaning and suppress uncertainty, reinforcing trust through repetition rather than procedural transparency (Bakkenes, 2023; Reiner, 2013).

### **7. Police–Community Relations as Represented Consensus**

Large mean differences in Police–Community Interaction and Public Reaction further demonstrate that *86* (NET TV) constructs policing within a framework of social consensus. Civilians are frequently depicted as cooperative, compliant, or affirming of police actions. This representational consensus bridges police action and public legitimacy: audiences witness not only enforcement but social endorsement of enforcement (Hall, 1997; Doyle, 2000).

From Bourdieu's perspective, such depicted recognition contributes to the accumulation of symbolic capital. Media operate as a field of symbolic production in which repeated representations of approval become normalized expectations of how the public should relate to police authority. Recognition shown on screen thus functions as a proxy for legitimacy in the broader social imagination (Bourdieu, 2013).

### **8. Institutional Standardization and the Illusion of Organizational Completeness**

The identical scores for Rank Hierarchy and Police Units/Divisions across both programs reveal a different dynamic: institutional standardization. Formal structures are presented as stable, orderly, and uncontested backdrops. This standardization reinforces an image of organizational completeness and certainty, even as other representational dimensions vary sharply (Doyle, 2000; Collins, 2005).

Analytically, this suggests that differentiation in television policing does not occur at the level of institutional existence, but at the level of institutional activation. Television does not question the institution; it mobilizes it symbolically, embedding standardized structures within narratives of action and resolution (Altheide, 2004; Reiner, 2013).

### **9. Media Logic as the Integrative Mechanism**

When Table 1 is read configurationally, media logic emerges as the integrative mechanism linking all analytical dimensions. It governs visual selection, narrative construction, action prioritization, image formation, social recognition, and narrative closure, ensuring that policing remains consumable as spectacle. Hyperreality thus appears not as an accidental distortion, but as a predictable outcome of television formats that privilege speed, drama, and legibility (Altheide, 2004; Corner, 2002).

From this perspective, the difference between *86* (NET TV) and *The Police* (Trans7) is best understood as a difference in the intensity with which media logic is activated. *86* (NET TV) deploys these mechanisms more consistently and systematically, producing a denser representational configuration, whereas *The Police* (Trans7) operate them more moderately, resulting in a less saturated hyperreal form (Cotter & O'connor, 2008; Jones, 2009).

## 10. Legitimacy, Visibility, and the Risk of Symbolic Transparency

The dissertation diagram highlights two interrelated consequences: enhanced institutional legitimacy and the risk of symbolic transparency. The empirical configuration supports both. First, legitimacy emerges through representational consistency: repeated portrayals of effective, socially endorsed policing generate trust that may operate independently of direct public experience (Bourdieu, 1993; Hall, 1997).

Second, heightened visibility can produce symbolic transparency. Audiences feel they “see” policing, yet what is seen is a curated and dramatized version. In hyperreal terms, visibility becomes an experience of simulation rather than procedural understanding. Evaluation shifts from legal accountability to moral and aesthetic judgment shaped by narrative design (Baudrillard, 1994; Reiner, 2000).

Integrating Table 1, the radar chart, and the conceptual framework, this study demonstrates that hyperreal policing operates as a multidimensional representational configuration. Complexity reduction (Program Narrative, Police Actions), visual dramatization (Visual Symbols, Operational Environment), symbolic closure (Displayed Punishment, Public Reaction), and relational consensus (Police–Community Interaction) are combined against a backdrop of standardized institutional imagery (Rank Hierarchy, Police Units).

Through this configuration, televised policing appears more certain, heroic, and complete than empirical policing practice. The contribution of this article lies not merely in asserting that media shape police images, but in demonstrating how such images are systematically produced across measurable dimensions. In doing so, the study strengthens scholarship on spectacle policing and copaganda by providing comparative quantitative evidence of representational consistency, while also foregrounding the implications for public

understanding of legality, procedure, and institutional accountability (Bakkenes, 2023; Fernandez, 2024; Reiner, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

This article set out to explain how television media logic shapes the construction of hyperreal policing through visual, narrative, and relational representations in reality police shows. By integrating comparative quantitative content analysis across twelve analytical dimensions with conceptual synthesis grounded in theories of hyperreality, media representation, and symbolic production, the study demonstrates that televised policing does not merely depict institutional practice. Rather, it actively produces a coherent and narratively stabilized model of policing that functions as a symbolic reference for public imagination (Baudrillard, 1994; Hall, 1997; Bourdieu, 1998).

## Main Conclusions

First, the findings establish that hyperreal policing operates as a multidimensional representational configuration, not as an isolated effect of dramatization or aesthetic excess. Hyperreality emerges through the systematic combination of procedural complexity reduction, visual dramatization, resolute narrative sequencing, and symbolic closure. Together, these mechanisms construct policing as an institution that appears efficient, morally justified, and socially accepted. This reinforces the argument that television representations of policing function as relatively autonomous systems of signs that may supersede empirical practice as the primary source of public imagery (Baudrillard, 1994; Fisman & Cavender, 2017).

Second, the comparison between *86* (NET TV) and *The Police* (Trans7) demonstrates that representational differences are structural rather than incidental. *86* (NET TV) consistently activates media logic more intensively across nearly all analytical dimensions, producing a portrayal of

policing that is more narratively coherent, heroically framed, and relationally affirmative. In contrast, *The Police* (Trans7) operate these mechanisms more moderately, resulting in a less saturated hyperreal configuration. These differences reflect divergent strategies of meaning production rather than short-term editorial variation (Altheide, 2004; Cotter & O'connor, 2008). Third, the study shows that institutional legitimacy in televised policing is generated primarily through representational consistency rather than procedural transparency. Repeated depictions of public consent, symbolic resolution, and visible authority cultivate confidence in institutional effectiveness, even when such representations obscure the complexity and contingency of legal processes. As a result, legitimacy becomes a representational achievement that may diverge from the realities of legal accountability (Hall, 1997; Reiner, 2000).

### **Theoretical Implications**

Theoretically, this article makes three key contributions. First, it advances the concept of hyperreal policing by demonstrating that hyperreality is not confined to surface imagery or aesthetic style, but is structured across measurable representational dimensions. Hyperreality is thus reconceptualized as an operationalizable configuration rather than a purely abstract condition (Baudrillard, 2006).

Second, the study strengthens scholarship on police representation and spectacle policing by providing comparative empirical evidence of how media logic operates simultaneously across visual, narrative, and relational domains. This reinforces the position that media function as active agents in the symbolic legitimation of law enforcement institutions (Altheide, 2004; Bakkenes, 2023; Reiner, 2013).

Third, drawing on Bourdieu, the findings illustrate how reality police show function as arenas for the accumulation of symbolic capital, where displayed public recognition, rather than legal procedure itself becomes a

key source of institutional legitimacy. Media serve as the principal mediators that convert police action into widely consumable symbolic value (Bourdieu, 2013).

### **Methodological Implications**

Methodologically, this study demonstrates the value of comparative quantitative content analysis based on purposively selected episodes when combined with a strong theoretical framework. The use of analytical dimensions allows for systematic mapping of representational patterns while preserving interpretive depth beyond numerical comparison (Krippendorff, 2004). Moreover, the integration of visual synthesis tools such as radar charts proves effective in revealing structural configurations of representation that may remain obscured in purely textual analysis. This approach offers a replicable model for future studies examining the mediated representation of state institutions.

### **Practical and Policy Implications**

Practically, the findings carry important implications for both policing institutions and media governance. For police organizations, participation in reality television shapes not only short-term image management but also public expectations regarding how policing ought to function. Hyperreal portrayals risk generating normative benchmarks that empirical practice may be unable to meet, potentially producing dissonance between representation and lived experience (Reiner, 2013).

For regulators and media policymakers, the study highlights the danger of symbolic transparency. Increased visibility does not necessarily lead to deeper public understanding of legal procedures or accountability mechanisms. Without robust ethical frameworks and oversight, reality policing formats may simplify legal complexity and shift public evaluation from procedural standards toward aesthetic and

moral judgments shaped by narrative design (Altheide, 2004; Corner, 2002).

### Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. It focuses on mainstream television and does not address representations of policing on digital platforms or social media, which operate under different logics of distribution and audience participation. Additionally, the descriptive-comparative design does not test causal relationships between media representations and public attitudes.

Future research could extend this framework through cross-platform comparisons, audience reception analysis, or longitudinal studies examining how sustained exposure to hyperreal policing influences public understanding of legality, procedure, and institutional accountability.

### Concluding Remark

Overall, this article demonstrates that reality police television constitutes an integral component of contemporary meaning production about policing. By conceptualizing these programs as sites of hyperreality production, the study offers a sharper understanding of how policing is not only seen, but imagined through media. Its primary contribution lies in connecting systematically measured empirical patterns with rigorous theoretical reflection, thereby enriching debates on media, representation, and institutional power.

### Declaration by Authors

The authors made meaningful and sustained contributions throughout all stages of this research. Responsibilities included the development of the study design, the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and the construction of the analytical and conceptual framework. The manuscript was prepared through collaborative writing and iterative critical revision. All authors reviewed the final manuscript and approved its submission for publication.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical clearance for this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia (Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional—BRIN), the institution authorized to oversee research ethics prior to data collection. All participants involved in the survey, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs) received clear information regarding the aims of the study, the scope of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. To protect participants' privacy, all data were anonymized during analysis and reporting.

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