

Suspect apprehension: perry mason vs. law and order svu essay

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



Television crime and courtroom dramas have advanced in many aspects from the 1960's through present day; visually and verbally. According to The Fifties Web, " Top ratings in the 1960's," Raymond Burr's Perry Mason was one of the top ranked crime dramas in 1961 and 62. In today's era Law and Order SVU is among the favorites. Law and Order SVU and Perry Mason are both hour long crime dramas that investigate crimes in one segment of the program and shed light on the courtroom drama in the remaining part of the show. The major difference in each is how the suspects are apprehended. Perry Mason exercises high dialogue and Law and Order SVU is more visual and action packed.

As noted in " Excessive Style," " American mass-market television underwent an uneven shift in the conceptual and ideological paradigms that governed its look and presentational demeanor in the 1980s. " " By the 1990's television in the later years, became more ideological than just a form of escapism. " (Caldwell, p. 651) The way in which criminals are apprehended in these crime dramas depicts a closer relation to the evolution of real life. From the video tape of Rodney King to the fall of the Rampart Division, police officers over time have advanced more toward violence and major manipulation, i.

e. corruption. [Thesis] The evolution of change within the structure of crime-courtroom dramas with the comparison of Perry Mason in the 60's and Law and Order SVU in the present day can be a result of the real life changes in society. Perry Mason is a crime drama with high dialogue, less violence and

minor manipulation, while Law and Order entangles a web of violence and police coercion that sometimes crosses the line to apprehend their suspects.

Point] The Perry Mason 1961 episode of “ The Case of the Red Head,” Mason works diligently to prove the innocence of his client Helene Chaney (Gloria Henry) through interviews and unorthodox procedures within the boundaries of the law, with very little action or violence, which was common in that era.

[Evidence] This episode introduces a woman, Chaney, who seeks the counsel of Perry Mason when she finds a gun in her room that does not belong to her. Afraid of where the gun may have come from, Chaney calls Mason and he instructs her to bring the gun to his office. While driving to his office Chaney is being followed by someone who she believes is attempting to run her off of the road. Chaney fires the gun at the other car and continues to Perry Mason’s office where she faints after entering. That same driver (the one she fired at) turns up dead on the side of the road and Chaney, conveying that she did not hit the driver when she fired, became the prime suspect.

Mason solicits the assistance of his investigator, Paul Drake (William Hopper) and secretary Della Street (Barbara Halle) to investigate all aspects of the case. Mason questions several people in an effort to find answers. His investigation uncovers the fact that there are two identical guns involved in the case. Mason went to the scene of the crime and fired the gun into a tree and collected the bullet from that same tree to prove it was not bullets from the murder weapon. He also marked the gun in his possession in order to identify it in comparison to the other gun. He uses the bullet and marked gun to trick the real killer into a confession. [Analysis] This episode gives a clear

example of how words and minor manipulation is used in this era of police drama.

There was no violence or major visual activity outside of people communicating with one another. For example; Paul Drake uncovered by investigating records that there were two identical guns in this case. Mason, by interviewing suspects, discovered that Mervyn Aldritch, a character played by Ralph Clayton, possessed the other gun.

He was able to mark one of the guns and trick Aldritch into switching the guns. Mason went one step further by firing the gun at the crime scene in an effort to expose the difference in bullets; a prime example of the minor manipulation involved in this era of crime dramas. Mason was able to uncover the truth by exposing the killer's perjury through questioning. Mason, stating his scenario of the crime in court, rapped the case up so tight with his manipulation of the gun that the witness felt as if he was exposed, therefore, he confessed to the crime on the witness stand. [Reminder] So as you can see the procedure surrounding the apprehension of suspects in crime dramas of the 1960s were less about violence and more about cases solved through strong questioning and evidence gathering techniques.

Point] As with Perry Mason 1961, Law and Order SVU also interviews witnesses, and manipulates situations to solve crimes, however, in Law and Order SVU the manipulation sometimes crosses the legal limit of the law and the physical apprehension of suspects often leads to violence. [Evidence] In the Law and Order SVU episode, " Debt," Detective Stabler (Christopher

Meloni) promises a witness (Ming-Na) that if she testifies against the suspects that killed her sister, he (Stabler) would protect her family and find her niece who was also kidnapped by the same suspect. The kidnap and murder suspect was arrested and held on conspiracy charges but his arraignment was coming up the next day and the detectives were afraid that the he (kidnap suspect) would be released on bail and able to have the niece killed before SVU could find her. Desperate to keep his promise to the aunt (Ming-Na), in an effort to prevent the suspect from getting to a phone and having one of his colleagues kill the girl, Stabler deliberately has the suspected kidnapper sent to the wrong jail, pretending that it is was an administration error, in an effort to buy time to find the kidnapped niece. The detectives find the girl just in time; however, a man is threatening to kill her by holding a gun to her head. Detective Stabler shoots and kills the man holding the niece hostage while other detectives are attempting to negotiate with him. [Analysis] This episode of Law and Order is a clear example of how far the detectives will go to apprehend a suspect.

Stabler jeopardized his job by sending a suspect that was due in court, to prison, then lying to the authorities by claiming it was an administrative error. Stabler went one step further crossing those boundaries by killing the man that held the kidnap victim at gun point, while the other detectives on the scene were trying to negotiate with him in an effort to preserve all lives, which is standard procedure. [Reminder] Clearly this episode is prime example of how exploitation is used and the legal limits that the detectives will cross in this series resulting in the violent apprehension of a suspect.

Conclusion] Clearly both shows use similar procedure in investigating crimes and then in a court of law prosecuting the alleged criminals, however in the latter years crime-courtroom dramas seem to be dominated by violent apprehensions. The style of these dramas changed from the 60s to present day due to the cultural changes that evolved in real life. The reporting of violence on the news became more frequent in the millennium than back in the 60's.

Violence was erupting in the 60's; however, it was based mainly on human rights issues. Police abuse was visual; however, it was hidden behind the realms of maintaining order with regards to civil rights demonstrations. So during the 60's when Perry Mason was one of the top rated shows the respectability of authority was still in tack. There were no visual procedure breaches only moral ones.

The action was morally unacceptable to the demonstrators; however, lawfully the police officers committed no crimes. In the latter years police began to loose respectability of citizens and police procedures were stricken. The case of Rodney King in the early 90s was a major turning point in how the public viewed police officers.

In the Rodney King case, four police officers severely beat King in an attempt to arrest him and the incident was videotaped and disbursed in the media. The officers were tried and acquitted causing high tension among citizens and sparking the need for accountability by police officers. This ground breaking need to tighten up police procedure became even more evident

when the Los Angeles Rampart division was exposed for police brutality and criminal activity. The actions of this division sparked a mass prison release of convicted persons that were falsely accused and set up due to police corruption.

The fear and admiration of police authority slowly diminished. Both series, Perry Mason and Law and Order SVU are popular within their respective eras. They apprehend suspects according to the existing lives of the audiences.

In Perry Mason the respect of police authority aid in the apprehension of suspects through mainly dialogue and minor manipulation while in the case of Law and Order SVU suspected criminals are more likely to use violence against police officers to avoid apprehension due to the lack of respect that has evolved with regard to policeman over the years in real life.