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The Mean World Effects of Reality Television: Perceptions of Antisocial Behaviors Resulting from Exposure to Competition-Based Reality Programming

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

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THE MEAN WORLD EFFECTS OF REALITY TELEVISION:

PERCEPTIONS OF ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIORS RESULTING FROM EXPOSURE

TO COMPETITION-BASED REALITY PROGRAMMING

By

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For my parents, Sam and Mary Barton.

I know it isn't one of Dad's train books, but hopefully
this still finds a home on the coffee table.

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ABSTRACT

Reality-based television programming has become a dominant force in television over the past seven years and a staple of most networks' primetime lineups. This relatively quick change in the television landscape and the sudden increase in viewers' consumption of reality television necessitate an investigation into the impact these shows are having on their viewers.

This dissertation examines the effects of competition-based reality shows (such as *Survivor* and *Big Brother*) on viewers' perceptions of society through the application of cultivation effects research methodology. Previous cultivation research has shown that heavy consumers of television will have a different or altered perception of society as compared to those who watch little television. The current research examined whether or not increased consumption of competition-based reality programming would lead to increased perceptions of antisocial behaviors in everyday life such as lying, manipulation, and ruthlessness (those behaviors commonly depicted on competition-based reality programs).

Study I looked at competition-based reality television shows in general and how they effected perceptions of society. Participants (607) provided data to test six hypotheses. Findings indicated that increased consumption of competition-based reality programming was positively correlated with increased perceptions of lying and manipulation in society. No significant relationships were found between these shows and increased perceptions of ruthlessness or increased perceptions of antisocial behaviors and television consumption in general.

Study II looked more specifically at competition-based reality dating programs and the effects they have on viewers' perceptions of dating and relationships. Participants (557) provided data to test three hypotheses. Ultimately, findings did not show any significant relationships between consumption of competition-based reality dating shows and increased perceptions of lying, manipulation, or ruthlessness in dating, or dating as a competition.

The dissertation ends with a brief discussion of the limitations, an examination of how these findings impact cultivation effects research and reality television production, and recommendations for future research in this area.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has watched television for more than a day in the past five years can tell you that television programming in the twenty-first century has thus far been dominated by reality-based shows. Shows such as CBS's *Survivor*, ABC's *The Bachelor*, NBC's *The Apprentice*, FOX's *American Idol* and even cable shows like MTV's *The Real World* continue to dominate their timeslots on a regular basis. In fact, FOX's *American Idol* is the network's most-watched non-sports show ever (CBS News, 2003) and was the most watched show overall for the entire 2004-2005 television season (Nielsen, 2005). The popularity of these shows is such that networks find themselves scrambling to produce more reality shows to keep up with the demand. The WB, well known for its youth-oriented dramas such as *Dawson's Creek* and *Seventh Heaven*, has noticed a ratings decrease over the last few years. The reason: of the six major networks it is the only one without a hit reality show (Carter, 2004, p. C4). Even channels such as *The Food Network* and *The Weather Channel* have been forced to develop programming that answers to the demand for reality television. What all of this leads to is the need for researchers and research studies (such as the current one) to answer the question: what effect is consumption of all this reality television having on us?

When presented with these facts, the question arises of how reality television has become the dominant genre among network and cable programming. The answer revolves around the fact that reality television provides certain gratifications and benefits for viewers, advertisers, and producers that scripted programs have difficulty fulfilling. Uses and gratification studies have found that one of the primary factors for an audience member's viewing of reality television is that it affords them the opportunity to participate in the show vicariously through *real* contestants that they can relate to (Wei & Tootle, 2002; Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003). Findings in the study by Wei and Tootle revealed, "Items such as *to plot as if I were on the show* and *to pretend*

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that I'm a contestant loaded the highest" (p. 11). This type of viewer participation exists almost exclusively within the reality television genre, although some networks have identified this trend and have tried to create scripted programming in the hopes of achieving the same effect, without much success.

For advertisers, the appeal of reality television is that it is a genre that allows for product-placement to be incorporated into the show without detracting from the believability or quality of the show. CBS's *Survivor* has featured competitions where rewards range from cans of Mountain Dew to a Pontiac Aztec. Employing this type of product placement within scripted programming would be much more difficult for producers to successfully do, as it is often seen as "selling out" on the part of the networks (Marcel, 2003). The flexibility offered by reality programs is unparalleled within any other mainstream ratings competitors.

Network executives have also become fond of reality programming for a number of reasons. First, reality programs cost considerably less than their scripted counterparts. CBS's *Survivor*, with its 24-hour production crew of 200 people and two-dozen cameras, averages out to cost approximately $1,000,000 per hour of television. By comparison, the show following *Survivor*, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, costs an average of $1,625,000 per hour (Caristi, 2001). Comparatively, *Survivor's* former Thursday night competition *Friends* cost NBC more than $6,000,000 for each 30-minute episode, as the principle cast were each paid around one million dollars per episode. These numbers are particularly relevant since *Friends* brought in an average of 22 million viewers for 30 minutes while *Survivor* continues to receive an average of 28 million viewers for the hour it airs (Alcorn, 2004). Given numbers like these, there is little wonder why networks have become interested in reality television.

Additionally, the major networks have found reality programs to be beneficial during the summer months when reruns usually air. Major network shows traditionally break during this time to give cast and crew opportunities to work on other projects, while competing cable networks attempt "to steal away viewers while networks take their summer vacations" (CBS News, 2003). Reality programs offer the networks new programming that does not require time off for the cast (because the contestants change each season) and does not require time for writers to develop scripts or work on storylines. Issues that do face reality programs, such as location scouting and contestant searches, can be overseen by auxiliary staff who may not be directly involved with production.

With all of these observed benefits it is easy to see why reality television has become both a commercial and ratings success. But what effect is this recent saturation of reality programming having on its viewers? One of the most common and recurring allegations levied against reality-based programs is that they emphasize and showcase the worst aspects of people, especially in cases of competition-based reality shows where contestants compete directly against each other for a prize. Gilbert (2005) suggested that reality TV has become nothing more than a "mean-spirited bullfight" (p. B7). Poniewozik (2002) also observed that, "New dating shows are getting wilder and more cutthroat" (p. 56). The presence of conflict and open animosity has become a fundamental aspect of many of these shows. For example, ABC's *Brat Camp* features trouble-making youths who have been involved in stealing, drugs, and violence. Many of the early promotional clips for the show featured young people acting aggressively toward others and engaging in conflict with their supervising counselors. However, the show's first episode debuted with a strong 10.4 million viewers tuning in (Levin, 2005).

But most of the criticism directed at reality-based shows stems from the competition-based shows where contestants contend for a large prize. The progenitor of these shows, *Survivor*, has itself been at the center of these critiques. As Drew (2004) noted, "'Survivor' and copies show that lying, cheating, and scheming can win millions" (p. 2E). But these are elements that audience members expect and even accept as part of the game. A newspaper article following 2005's *Survivor: Palau* (which premiered on February 17, 2005) noted that "some who have played 'Survivor' and many who have watched the game say that such tactics are simply part of the strategy. Every season, deals are made and broken, castaways lie and betray each other, and alliances are formed and forgotten" (Brantley, 2005, p. 1E). But Beckworth (2004) noted that the depiction of these negative characteristics allows viewers to cheer on certain contestants and despise others who demonstrate the negative characteristics. As Beckworth suggested, "Hence, another factor in reality show success: a play on our human tendency to judge, hate and gossip" (p. A10).

Despite a cultural disapproval of the anything-to-win tactics featured on reality-based programs, our compulsion to continue watching has not declined. Some have argued that the cause of this popularity may have its roots in the decline of scripted programming. Fralic (2005) argued that classic TV villains such as J. R. Ewing from *Dallas* and Cesar Romero's Joker on *Batman* are classic television archetypes that have faded from the television landscape, but that

reality TV provides a return for characters audiences love to hate. "That's where you'll find the good old-fashioned villains these days," observed Fralic, "Living, breathing rotten apples" (p. C6). Many of these characters have become pop culture icons such as original *Survivor* winner Richard Hatch, *The Apprentice's* Omarosa, and *Survivor: Pearl Island's* Johnny Fairplay. Of *Survivor: All-Stars* villain Rob Mariano, Fralic observes that, "Boston Rob, with his New England drawl and ubiquitous Red Sox baseball cap, is a master of the baby-faced lie. He cheats, and winks. He smiles and steals your cab. He crossed his heart, and hopes you figuratively die, or at least falter badly" (p. C6).

One of the more noteworthy contentions over the genre was whether or not the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences should create new award categories recognizing achievement in the reality television genre. Rutenberg (2001) said, "Some have argued that reality programs should not be honored at all, lest they sully the television industry" and that at one Academy meeting, "production of reality TV was referred to as "bottom feeding" that exploits the basest human instinct for voyeurism" (p. C1). Despite the controversy, reality-based programming was ultimately designated two awards categories for the annual Emmy awards, although their distribution was restricted to the non-televised portion of the awards, which is largely reserved for nonfiction programming.

It should be noted, however, that some reality-based programs have made a concerted effort to stay away from the negative contestant characteristics that these shows have become infamous for. Shows such as *The Scholar* and *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* routinely feature people who have made a positive impact on others and their participation on these shows is predicated upon that fact. But despite the intent of reality-based programming producers to get away from the traditional stereotypes of ruthless contestants which dominate the genre, the percentage of positive or good-willed reality shows that do well in the ratings is small. As Beckworth (2004) observed, "While some reality shows have made the switch to actually helping people, the majority still do their best to embarrass the contestants and mortify the watchers" (p. A10). To extend this idea, Gilbert (2005) put forward that, "Charity is a good thing, but it doesn't always make good television" (p. B7).

What the above illustrates is that reality-based television programming, which has become a pervasive force across the television spectrum, routinely features stories and scenarios in which contestants are forced to resort to behaviors that would be considered culturally

unacceptable in normal society. These behaviors, combined with the popularity reality-based programming has enjoyed recently, may have a significant effect on shaping how television viewers mold their perceptions of the world around them. To more fully examine this type of phenomenon, Gerbner (1969) developed the Cultural Indicators program as part of his work with cultivation effects to assess the impact exposure to television was having on viewers.

The present study follows the guidelines established by Gerbner in his early work on cultivation (1969) and tests the proposition that increased levels of consumption of competition-based reality programming (which regularly feature contestants exhibiting socially unacceptable behaviors) will positively correlate with increased perceptions of suspicion, untrustingness, and deceitfulness among heavy consumers' views of the world. More specifically, because competition-based reality programs often feature socially unacceptable behaviors such as lying, backstabbing, and generally aggressive behaviors, the current study will focus on the so-called mean world effects originally developed by Gerbner and Gross (1976). The mean world syndrome (as Gerbner & Gross originally called it) states that heavy viewers of television are much more likely to see the world as a mean and scary place as compared to light viewers due to the excessive amounts of violent material they are regularly exposed to. The current study will follow this line of thinking to determine if heavy viewers of reality-based programs are more likely to see people as untrustworthy and manipulative as compared to light viewers. This proposed correlation will be tested through the application of cultivation effects in association with individual program type viewing.

The following chapter establishes a working definition of what types of shows are included in the term "reality television" and follows the origination and evolution of the genre. These basic concepts become important when distinguishing reality programming from closely related genres such as sports, news, and traditional game shows. Distinguishing between reality-based programs and pseudo-reality shows becomes an important issue when attempting to identify the specific effects of reality programming.

Chapter III introduces and critically reviews the theoretical assumptions, methodologies, and empirical findings of cultivation research. It examines previous literature relating to cultivation research, specifically effects determined to have derived from other genres of television programming. These findings will be the justification and support for the proposed hypotheses.

Chapter IV presents the methodology, results, and a brief discussion of Study I, which examines how consumption of competition-based reality programming influences viewers' perceptions of antisocial behaviors. Chapter V presents the same components of Study II, which narrows its focus to specifically determine the degree to which exposure to competition-based dating reality shows influence viewers' perceptions of dating in today's society. Finally, Chapter VI summarizes the overall results of the study, discusses the major findings, and proposes future research based on what was observed.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS REALITY TELEVISION?

"Reality-based entertainment is as old as society itself."
- Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*, p. 65

The above quote is meant to illustrate that although reality-based programming has exploded and continued to grow in recent years, it is by no means a novel concept or without precedent. It can been contended that events held in Rome's Coliseum, including the gladiatorial games (approximately 250 B.C.) and the sacrificing of Christians to the lions (after the destruction of Rome in 64 A.D.) were the first forms of reality-based entertainment specifically developed for a mass audience. Although the nature of the current study is to examine the effects of reality-based entertainment disseminated through television, it is not without merit to acknowledge that this idea has existed prior to any technologically based form of mass media. The purpose in doing so is to highlight the first question that will be posed in this chapter, which is to ask why the study of reality programming is necessary. The answer, as suggested above, is because reality-based entertainment (in one form or another) has always existed as a part of popular culture, and understanding its effects can facilitate a better appreciation for how these elements influence the societies that share them.

With this in mind, there can be little wonder why the field of reality-based television programming is an area of media that needs to be examined. As early as 2000, Dovey observed that reality-based programming was becoming, "a crucial component of the fabric of popular culture" (p. 78). According to research published in a 2001 issue *American Demographics* indicated that one in eleven Americans consider themselves to be "die-hard" reality TV fans (Gardyn, 2001). When this statistic is supplemented by the fact that the US Academy of

Television Arts & Sciences, which can be considered the ultimate authority on television programming within the United States, has created two new awards categories specifically for reality-based programming at the annual Emmy Awards ceremony, it seems clear that both the suppliers and consumers of television programming have agreed that reality-based television is a powerful force in today's electronic media market (Rutenberg, 2001).

But before any discussion can begin about the effects reality-based television is having on society, it is clear that there must first be a more clearly defined listing of the elements that are necessary for inclusion in this genre. One of the primary challenges facing research conducted on reality-based television is that, "no clear industry standard or definition of the genre exists" (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003). What follows are five key elements whose inclusions are vital to qualify any television show as a reality-based program.

Defining Reality-Based Programming

Research studies that examine specific types of programming, such as situation comedies, dramas, and children's programming, have all benefited from an established set of guidelines as to what the criteria are for these types of shows. Much of the trouble that has come from studies examining the effects of reality-based programming is that there have been no established criteria set down that has garnered unanimous consent for what should (and just as importantly, what should not) be included within the reality television genre.

One of the early problems in defining what constitutes reality-based television derives from a number of studies which tend to include shows in reality TV studies simply because they closely resemble other shows that do in fact qualify as reality TV. One possible cause for this trend is that, "much of the academic literature on reality TV has been devoted to a consideration of law enforcement genres like *Cops* and *America's Most Wanted*." (Andrejevic, 2003). The problem with these early studies is that without the benefit of a more carefully defined scope for what constitutes reality-based programming, many of the shows being looked at by communication scholars would not be considered reality television by current standards. Shows such as *America's Most Wanted*, *Real Stories of the Highway Patrol*, and *Top Cops*, to name a few, have been the subjects of several media effects studies that have incorrectly labeled these shows a reality-crime programming (e.g., Oliver & Armstrong, 1995). These shows recreate events that have happened to real law enforcement officials through the use of *scripted dialogue* and *paid actors*, both of which are considered to be at the core of what could be seen as the

antithesis of reality-based programming. If shows depicting recreated real-life events are included into the reality-programming genre, then the extension would ultimately be that made-for-TV movies based on real-life events would be included as well. Defining reality-based programming to exclude these recreated shows ensures that only genuine events, and not actors' or producers' interpretations of them, are used to investigate and analyze the genre and its impact.

Another problem facing the defining of reality-based programming as a genre is the leniency with which criteria are applied. For example, Wei and Tootle (2002) define reality television as "TV shows that simulate real-world, real-life psychologically, mentally or emotionally challenging situations, involving reward-motivated, self-selected contestants from the audience. The contestants act spontaneously, improvise, and showcase their real emotions in meeting the challenges they encounter in real settings" (p. 6). The problem with this definition is that this definition could also be applied to sports programming or traditional game shows such as *Wheel of Fortune* or *Jeopardy*.

Similar to Wei and Tootle's definition, Kilborn (1994) put forth an early definition for reality-based programming that does not fit with the established conventions of the genre. More specifically, Kilborn's definition centers on how reality television is created rather than the content depicted on the screen. He states that there are three criteria which unite to comprehensively define what entails reality programming. These include:

a) recording 'on the wing' and frequently with the help of lightweight video equipment, of events in the lives of individuals and groups

b) the attempt to simulate such real-life events through various forms of dramatized reconstruction

c) the incorporation of this material in suitably edited form into an attractively packaged television programme which can be promoted on the strength of its reality credentials (p. 422)

Each of these points, to some degree, may not be completely necessary in defining reality television programming. The idea that a camera must be lightweight in order to accurately record real-life events (as suggested in Kilborn's first criteria) is an issue of technique, and not content. Several reality-based shows, including perennial favorites such as *Survivor* and *Big Brother* often use cameras attached to cranes, helicopters, and other heavy machinery. Kilborn's second

criteria, that reality-programming should *replicate* real-life, is ambiguous in its meaning. One interpretation of this could be that programming can be considered reality TV if it re-enacts actual events, which would ultimately have to be considered a scripted performance. As the discussion below will illustrate, this certainly would have to be considered one of the elements excluding a television show from being included in the reality TV genre.

Tracing the history and evolution of reality-based programming is also made more difficult without an established definition for the genre. Like much of the fictional programming that would eventually make the jump from radio to television, reality-based programming can trace its roots through radio. The popular radio program *Candid Microphone*, originated by Allen Funt during his time in the military, made its television debut in August 1948 on ABC as *Candid Camera* (Funt, 1952). The premise behind the show was that ordinary people would be set up in ridiculous situations and their reactions would be captured for the television audience. And while *Candid Camera* does not meet the criteria (as defined in this study; see below) for classification as a "reality TV," it certainly established many of the conventions the genres operates under today. For example, Funt's original idea for the radio show was to record regular conversations between people in public to capture the humor in everyday life. When this failed to yield any airable material, Funt decided to design scenarios that random people would become involved in and let them react naturally. This type of producer involvement in capturing reality is the progenitor of modern reality-based programs that place contestants in contrived situations to capture authentic responses.

The component that *Candid Camera* lacked in terms of being included as a full-fledged reality show as we know them today was the inclusion of comprehensive surveillance of the participants. Once a participant had become involved in the situation, and after it was revealed that they were being filmed for *Candid Camera*, the cameras were turned off and the viewers only saw a small portion of how the contrived scenario affected their lives. What happened when the cameras were off? Or when they told their friends and family? One of the key elements involved with contemporary reality-based programming is the availability of "backstage" behaviors and emotions. How do contestants react afterward? These are some of the key questions that contemporary reality-based programs highlight, and which early psuedo-reality shows such as *Candid Camera* did not.

What this illustrates is that there needs to be a clearer picture of what characteristics should be required of a television show to be considered reality TV. A more comprehensive definition would be that a show is considered a reality-based program if it incorporates non-actors in unscripted situations where the contestants are behaving spontaneously, under the additional criteria that there has been some level of producer involvement in the show and that the documentation of their experiences is not limited to particular moments, but is comprehensive in its capturing of events. What follows is a more detailed breakdown of each criterion and a clarification with respect to its inclusion in the definition.

1. Reality-based programming must be unscripted.

The most fundamental criterion for a television show to fall within the reality genre is that is must be unscripted, which is to say that the dialogue spoken by contestants cannot have been prepared in advance. In its place, reality-based programming instead relies on established rules that govern the way the contestants interact with each other and their environment. These rules in essence act as a substitute for scripted material in that they provide the contestants with a framework that dictates how their exchanges will be enacted. The idea behind this is that it offers "an alternative to the predictability of fictional programming" (Andrejevic, 2003).

As mentioned above with the Oliver and Armstrong (1995) study, one of the more common examples of scripted television being passed off as reality-based television is through "reality-crime dramas" where actual events have been recreated through the use of professional actors and scripts. Dovey (2000) refers to *America's Most Wanted* and other shows in this vain as "reconstructed" reality television. Commenting on the subject, Dovey says, "The reconstruction is made with all the techniques of fiction in terms of *mise-en-scene*, cutting, music and so on" (p. 96).

2. Reality-based programming must feature "ordinary" people, not actors.

It is argued that one of the main appeals of reality programming is that it draws its contestants directly from the viewing audience. Dovey (2000) claims that, "Ordinary people and their dramatic experiences are the staple of Reality TV" (p. 86). Syvertsen (2001) offers a solid definition for what is meant by "ordinary" people as, "people who are not media professionals, experts, celebrities, or newsworthy for any other reason – people who are, in principle, interchangeable with one another" (p. 319). As Andrejevic (2003) states, part of the appeal of reality-based programming is "its lottery-like ability to make a star out of 'nobodys'" (p. 4).

Additionally, the "real people" seen on these shows are contestants that the viewing public can relate to and empathize with. After their brief stint on a reality show, most contestants return to their normal jobs they held before being on television, thus reinforcing their status as "ordinary" people. For example, Sandra Diaz-Twine has continued to work as an employee at Fort Lewis in Washington state after winning the million dollar grand prize on *Survivor: Pearl Islands* (Field, 2003).

In fact, most reality program contestants actually make less money by doing the show than they would have had they stayed at their regular jobs. On the first season of Big Brother in 2000, contestants were paid approximately two dollars an hour for their time on the show, not including any prizes they may have won (Andrejevic, 2003). When Big Brother 4 premiered in the summer of 2003, that amount had doubled to more than four dollars an hour (M. Maradie, personal communication, June 8, 2004). Most contestants on these shows, being from middle-class backgrounds, would easily make more than this amount at their normal jobs.

3. Reality-based programming is spontaneous.

The freedom for contestants to act on instinct or to adapt as they see fit to any situation is a key element in what makes reality programming entertaining and unique. In most ways, control of the show is given over to the contestants. Although there still exist rules by which the contestants are bound, working within and around those rules is an attribute possessed by reality programming alone. As stated by *The Real World* and *Road Rules* producer Jon Murray, "We don't have a lot of control during the production process, what we have it the control to make choices during editing" (Andrejevic, 2003, p. 103).

It is the spontaneity and ingenuity of the contestants that make reality-based programs unique from other forms of unscripted programming such as traditional game shows. In an article discussing an outsider's perspective on reality programming, Dr. David Kirby, Professor of English at Florida State University and father of Big Brother 2 winner Will Kirby, puts forward that, "Like life itself, reality-based television is full of surprises; it's just that they come a lot faster" (Kirby, 2001, p. D1).

Ultimately with reality programming, you get what really happens. Since there are no re-takes or re-shoots, only that which is natural and uncontrived will be captured and ultimately aired. When looked at in terms of the benefits of spontaneity compared to traditional scripted programming, Andrejevic makes the case that the free-will of the contestants can prove to be one

of the most powerful tools reality TV has in its arsenal, claiming, "content becomes liberated from the inbred coterie of scriptwriters and directors, to be replaced by the spontaneous rhythms of real conflict and real romance" (Andrejevic, 2003, p. 104).

4. Reality-based programming has some element of producer involvement.

Reality-based programming can be seen as a contrived reality where the producers create the reality in which the contestants live. That may mean establishing rules for how they will get food as on *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, or requiring that they regularly update the audience through confessionals or video diary entries as on *The Real World* or *The Anna Nicole Show*. This is one of the key distinctions that has been made between reality-based programming and documentaries. As Dovey (2000) claims, "The film-maker [of a documentary] must not influence events" (p. 29). Dovey clearly states that interviewing participants, involving directors, producers, or cameramen in the production, or in any way interacting with the subject of a documentary is considered interference and is a serious taboo in documentary filmmaking. These techniques, however, have all been used extensively in reality-based programming.

One of the earliest demonstrations of producer involvement being incorporated into a show featuring real people was Allen Funt's accidental emergent stardom on *Candid Camera*. Funt originally set out to record conversations and interactions among real people, but found when he became an active participant in the conversations he could guide them in the direction he wanted for his show (Funt, 1952). Although *Candid Camera* does not meet all the requirements to be considered a reality-based program for the purposes of the current study (see the following criterion for further explanation) it did establish the idea that reality could still be extracted from situations that were not entirely real themselves. The ultimate goal is for producers to establish the rules or situations under which the reality of the contestants' actions are taking place. From a social-scientific perspective, the role of the producer, "is to set up a social experiment and then not to tinker with it, so as to preserve the integrity of the results" (Andrejevic, 2003, p. 137).

5. Reality-based programs must offer comprehensive surveillance of their subjects.

The primary component that distinguishes reality-based shows from similar forms of entertainment including traditional game shows and programs like *Fear Factor* and *The Crocodile Hunter* is that it provides the viewer with a perspective of how the participants are feeling and behaving outside the confines of a limited event. For example, viewers are not given

the opportunity to see how contestants interact with each other after the final round of *Wheel of Fortune* has been played. In fact, Andrejevic (2003) states that this is exactly what separates reality-based programming from traditional game shows. He puts forth that the difference lies in "the fact that they [reality TV programs] are based not on the documentation of exceptional moments but on the surveillance of the rhythm of day-to-day life" (p. 102).

Shows such as *Survivor* and *Big Brother* do allow viewers to witness the aftermath of specific events, and how they influence and change the contestants' interactions with others. This is accomplished through the use of a small army of production personnel and a myriad of technology. For example, in a given season the producers of *Survivor* will use 35mm cameras, Super 8 cameras, hidden surveillance cameras, digital video technology, arial footage shot from helicopters, night vision cameras, and underwater cameras to capture every moment of the contestants' lives (Andrejevic, 2003).

In many ways, this type of comprehensive surveillance is the main catalyst in advancing changes in behavior on a societal level. The viewers' ability to observe the backstage behaviors of the contestants is causing an erosion between what were formerly private thoughts and feelings and turning them into public knowledge (Meyrowitz, 1986). This concept and its impact on cultivation effects research will be examined in more depth in the following chapter.

Finally, it is because of this last criterion that shows such as MTV's *Jackass* and NBC's *Fear Factor* are not considered reality-based programs under this definition. These shows film exceptional moments and do not offer comprehensive surveillance of the contestants' behaviors and interactions with others. Without comprehensive surveillance, these shows are at their core nothing more than contemporary versions of *America's Funniest Home Videos* and *The Price is Right*, respectively.

Within the confines of the above criteria, two sub-genres of reality television shows have emerged: voyeur-based programs and competition-based programs. While both contain all five criteria listed above, the emphasis within each is on different dramatic aspects of the reality being captured.

The first sub-genre, voyeur-based shows, can most closely be compared to a documentary-style production. These shows are sometimes referred to as "docu-dramas" or "docu-soaps" (Dovey, 2000; Jones, 2003). The major difference between voyeur-based programming and actual documentaries is that the component of producer involvement (see

above), which is generally lacking in documentaries but accentuated in the voyeur-based shows. That is to say, voyeur-based reality shows highlight the fact that the participants are incorporating the production units into their daily routines. For example, the officers being filmed on an episode of *Cops* are encouraged to give a play-by-play of what is happening and unfolding over the course of an encounter with civilians. According to Prince (2001), a documentary is defined as "a type of film dealing with a person, situations, or state of affairs that exists independently of the film" (p. 423). Given this definition, would it be accurate to say that police officers, like the ones on *Cops*, regularly describe what they are doing when cameras are *not* filming them? Of course not, because the subjects of reality-based programs are not independent of the production. Here lies the distinction between documentaries and voyeur-based reality shows. In addition to *Cops*, some examples of this sub-genre include *The Real World*, *The Osbournes*, *An American Family*, and *American Chopper*.

The second sub-genre of reality-based television is competition-based shows. These shows, in most cases, usually resemble traditional game shows, with the distinction being that game shows typically do not offer comprehensive surveillance of the contestants. The competition-based shows focus on how human interaction is affected when contestants are forces to interact with each other while trying to succeed against each other in various events. How will individuals react when losing a challenge or competition to opponents who they must still live in close proximity to? This is the essence of competition-based reality programming. Creator of *Survivor* and *The Apprentice* Mark Burnett has compared this unique aspect of the shows to a form of social Darwinism, and *Survivor* host Jeff Probst has suggested that better insight into how to succeed on these shows can be garnered through study of John Nash's non-cooperative game theory (as described in Kuhn & Nasar, 2002). These approaches to the competitions distinguish them from traditional game shows on their own.

Another perspective from which to observe the differences between competition-based reality programs and traditional game shows is by applying what Meyrowitz (1986) refers to as "front region" and "back region" behavioral examinations (p. 29). Meyrowitz notes that there are social rules for how we are supposed to act in certain situations, and televised game shows are certainly no exceptions. Contestants are expected to be courteous, supportive, and graceful in their successes or defeats. This behavior, which Meyrowitz refers to as front region behavior, is what people would consider to be socially acceptable. What is not shown on game shows is the

back region behavior that takes place after the show, when contestants display strong emotions such as grief over losing or anger towards other contestants who performed better. Competition-based reality programs offer us both front and back region behaviors, as the comprehensive surveillance component of reality-based programming would require. These shows often spotlight contestants' reactions to losing and their emotions towards the others on the show.

Within the context of these two sub-genres of voyeur-based and competition-based reality programs, numerous shows exist that cater to specific and thematic tastes of the audience. As its popularity has increased, reality-based programming has begun targeting specific audiences with specialized themes. Some examples include dating/romance shows (*The Bachelor*), historical re-creation shows (*The 1900 House*), makeover shows (*Trading Spaces*), celebrity-centered shows (*Newlyweds*), military shows (*Boot Camp*), talent shows (*The Last Comic Standing*), lifestyle change shows (*The Biggest Loser*), and challenge oriented shows (*Big Brother*) to name a few. It should be noted that not all of the shows within a specific thematic category are mutually exclusive. Within the military category, *Boot Camp* is a competition-based show where contestants are eliminated based on performance, while *American Fighter Pilot* is a voyeur-based show that follows Air Force pilots in training.

To summarize, reality-based programming can best be defined as (1) non-actors (2) in unscripted situations (3) where the contestants are behaving spontaneously (4) with some level of producer involvement in the show (5) and that the documentation of their experiences is not limited to particular moments, but is comprehensive in its capturing of events. The two sub-genres of reality-based programming that meet these criteria include competition-based shows and voyeur-based shows. And while there is a limit to how reality-based programs can be planned out (either as competition-based or voyeur-based), there is no limit on what can and has been the thematic subject of some sort of reality-based program. With all of this in mind, a brief examination of how these elements have appeared throughout the history of television follows.

Reality Entertainment and the Electronic Mass Media

With a definition for reality-based programming in place, an examination of the origination and evolution of reality programming can begin. But to say that reality-programming is unique to television would be incorrect in an overall understanding of where reality television has come from. It can quite easily be argued that with the development of each new mass medium (including newspapers, magazines, radio, sound recording, films, television, and the

Internet), the initial and primary purpose of each was the diffusion of information (such as news), or material rooted in reality. The use of mass media as a means of entertainment or fiction has usually come after a period of practical use has been explored and familiarity with the medium allows innovators to expand the scope of its use. So to argue that reality-based programming is new to the medium would be incorrect since television has always been utilized for displaying images of news and events happening around the world. What follows are the milestone shows that have served as originators and propagators of reality-based programming as defined above. The shows below have all been recognized for their innovative approaches to capturing real-life events as they unfold as well as their ability to tell compelling stories through character driven narratives.

With shows like *Candid Camera* focusing on a very specific event and failing to offer viewers a comprehensive look at the behind-the-scenes lives of ordinary people, the first television show to give viewers insight into these behaviors by following the subjects throughout their day-to-day lives was the PBS series *An American Family*, which debuted on the network on January 11, 1973 (PBS Online, 2005). The 12-episode series was shot over a 7-month period, and followed the day-to-day lives of Bill and Pat Loud, along with their five children Lance, Kevin, Grant, Delilah, and Michele. While the typical family depicted on television up to this point had been the wholesome, nuclear families of shows such as *Leave it to Beaver* (1957) and *The Brady Bunch* (1969), the Loud family broke many of those stereotypes and painted an image of real family life, complete with troubles and struggles. During the course of the series, viewers were giving an inside look at a family falling apart, including Pat's on-air demand for a divorce from husband Bill, and the coming out of their gay son Lance.

In the May 4, 2002 issue of *TV Guide*, *An American Family* was listed as #32 on the magazines list of the top 50 television shows of all time because of the innovative approach it took in documenting and gaining insight into the lives of the Loud family. Additionally, *TV Guide* and Andrejevic (2003, p. 69) have both acknowledged it as the first reality TV program ever. Following the five criteria listed above, the current research must also recognize *An American Family* as the first reality-based television show. It was the first attempt at creating a show that was a hybrid of documentary filmmaking and soap opera theatrics.

Although *An American Family* was critically acclaimed as an innovative approach to television, the combination of smaller PBS audiences and new television genres emerging

around the same time lead to a shelving of reality-based programming for almost 15 years. And while some shows during that time did follow the path set by *An American Family*, it would not be until 1989 and the emergence of *Cops* that the reality-based programming would reemerge into the spotlight.

   Cops premiered on the Fox network on March 11, 1989, and demonstrated the wide appeal reality-based programming could have, as well as incited a litany of crime dramas that followed. The premise of *Cops* centered on camera crews riding along with police officers in various parts of the country and filming the officers performing a wide range of public services, from helping stranded motorists to shootouts with violent criminals. One of the innovative approaches the show took was that it did not limit viewers to seeing only the intense and action-packed moments that make up a small portion of police officers' daily routine (although it may have emphasized them), but it also showed the routine aspects of the job as well. In this sense, *Cops* adheres to the comprehensive surveillance requirement necessary for reality-based programs. *Cops* also exhibits elements of producer involvement through the officers' talking directly into the camera to the audience and, in some cases, the involvement of the camera crews in various situations.

   While *Cops* is largely credited with the popularity of reality-crime programming in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it should be noted that only some of the shows that followed could technically be defined as reality-based programming. As mentioned above, shows such as *Real Stories of the Highway Patrol* and *Top Cops* use actors and scripted dialogue in order to recreate actual events occurring within the law enforcement community. Despite emerging as a result of the popularity of *Cops* and incorporating a similar style of storytelling, these shows do not meet the criteria for capturing real-life events as they unfold as *Cops* and *LAPD: Life on the Beat* do.

   Shortly after the emergence and proliferation of reality-crime programming, a new form of reality-based programming would emerge that would most closely resemble what *An American Family* had done two decades previously. *The Real World* debuted on MTV in February of 1992, and as the tag line states, it is "the true story of seven strangers, picked to live in a house and have their lives taped, and find out what happens when people stop being polite and start getting real." The show, developed by Mary-Ellis Bunim and Jonathan Murray, began the trend of designing and marketing reality-based programming specifically to a younger audience that may previously been untapped. The show, originally intended to be a soap opera

for teens, was too expensive for MTV to produce. The result was the elimination of writers, scripts, and sets and what resulted is what many consider to be the emergence of mainstream voyeuristic reality programming. As Beckworth (2004) notes, "MTV showed its viewers and network executives that people on their own are much more intriguing than anything a writer could ever hope to script" (p. A10). The popularity of *The Real World* has made it a fan favorite of MTV viewers, which still continues to air new episodes today. In addition, the show has produced spin-offs including *Road Rules*, which debuted in July, 1995 featuring a cast driving cross-country in a Winnebago motor home, and the 'challenge' shows which pit cast members from *The Real World* and *Road Rules* against each other in elimination style competition reality shows for prizes (e.g., *The Gauntlet, The Inferno, Battle of the Sexes*).

Perhaps the most significant example of a reality-based program influencing television programming occurred on May 31, 2000, when *Survivor* debuted on CBS. The series, which stranded 16 contestants on an island to compete against each other while at the same time trying to live together, was developed by producer Mark Burnett. Burnett, who had previously developed an adventure-race show *Eco-Challenge*, was interested to see how a society would be formed among people who were forced to compete against each other while living together.

One of the major impacts *Survivor* had on television programming was that it showed that an unscripted program with no big name actors could perform well during network primetime. The show, which regularly wins its time slot on Thursday nights, costs a fraction of what hour-long dramas or even half-hour sitcoms cost for other networks. This realization lea to an instant and overwhelming deluge of reality-based programs across every network and cable station. With the possibility of a writer's strike occurring in the summer of 2001, networks were more than ready to shore up their schedules by green lighting numerous reality shows which had already proven themselves to be huge audience draws.

Not only have reality programs usurped scripted television's dominance in the ratings, but they have also begun pilfering show ideas from some of the more popular scripted television shows. Table 1 offers a direct comparison between some popular television shows and the subsequent reality programs that followed.

In the end, what all of this illustrates is that reality-based programming has been present and popular throughout the course of television's evolution. And as the next chapter will show, cultivation research has continually found that long-term exposure to repeated messages (like the

depictions of "reality" on reality-based programs) can have significant and observable effects on how viewers perceive the world around them.

Table 1
Reality-Based Programs Inspired by Scripted Programming

<u>Scripted Shows</u>	<u>Reality Shows</u>
"The O.C." (2003) FOX The story of a close-knit group of teens in the wealthy, upper-class neighborhood of Newport Beach, Orange County, California.	**"Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County" (2004) MTV** MTV follows eight teens living in Laguna Beach nearing the end of high school and their interactions with each other
"Gilligan's Island" (1964) CBS Seven men and women are stranded on an uncharted island following a torrential storm.	**"The Real Gilligan's Island" (2004) TBS** Two groups of seven castaways composed of real life skippers, professors, movie stars, etc. compete against each other.
"That 70s Show" (1998) FOX A situation-comedy highlighting what it was like for a group of 17 year olds living in 1976.	**"The 70' House" (2005) MTV** Twelve modern teens are taken to compete in a house where they must live and act like they are in the 1970s.
"CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" (2000) CBS An elite team of police forensic evidence investigation experts work their cases in Las Vegas.	**"The First 48" (2004) A&E** The series follows detectives during the hours immediately following a homicide.
"Six Feet Under" (2001) HBO A drama series that takes a darkly comical look at members of a dysfunctional Pasadena family that runs an independent funeral home.	**"Family Plots" (2004) A&E** An intimate look at the inner-workings of the family-run Poway-Bernardo Mortuary in Poway, California.
"The Sopranos" (1999) HBO A series looking at the life of fictional character Tony Soprano as he deals with his position within the mob as well as handling issues at home.	**"Growing Up Gotti" (2004) A&E** Series following the lives of former mob-boss wife Victoria Gotti and her three sons.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

It has been observed by many researchers that exposure to and consumption of television is one of the most time-consuming activities human beings conduct in their lifetimes. Neuman (1985) noted that by the time a child has completed high school, he or she will have spent more total time watching television than having attended school. In fact, the only activity which takes up more time for children than watching television is sleeping (O'Rourke, 1981). But the totality of television's hold is not limited to childhood. Television consumption has become so pervasive in today's society that research has concluded that "non-viewers are too few and demographically too scattered for serious research purposes" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1982, p. 103). The lack of non-viewers makes media effects research more difficult, as it appears that television's effects have completely permeated American culture and makes identifying television's impact difficult (Gerbner et al., 1978). Thus, cultivation research presents media scholars with one of the best opportunities to understand and extract how and to what degree television has become engrained into our culture. The same can also be said for reality-based programming as well. With so many new reality shows premiering throughout the year and the Nielsen ratings continually showing reality programs as some of the most watched in the country, the application of a cultivation research approach may be one of the best ways to discern the impact these shows are having (Drew, 2004).

The following review of literature is a look at cultivation theory and an examination of its evolution and application as it applies to television entertainment in general, with specific emphasis placed on reality-based programming. In the broadest sense, cultivation is an examination of how watching television programming influences and shapes viewers' attitudes and perceptions about the real world. To date, research has found that heavy viewers (to a larger

degree than light viewers) perceive the world as it is depicted on television, which is that of a more violent and mean place. Cook, Kendzierski, and Thomas (1983) added to this by noting that television viewing on the whole, "makes heavy viewers more sexist, anomic, fearful of crime, and negative in their stereotypes of the elderly" (p. 173). These altered perceptions of reality often have real world implications, which include changes in how some people conduct their normal lives. But in order to understand how these effects can be manifest, we should first examine how cultivation evolved into the area of study that it is today.

Early Cultivation

While Gerbner and his colleagues are given credit for developing and advancing cultivation research as an area of media effects, the idea that television was influencing people through entertainment is almost as old as the medium itself. Smythe (1954) identified three types of programs that dominated broadcasts during television's early years; entertainment programs such as dramas and comedies, informational programs such as the news, and orientation programs that help people live their lives such as religious and educational programming. Smythe noted, however, that these categories were not mutually exclusive. He noted that while it was the intention of orientation programming to shape viewers' minds, "entertainment-type programs surely color attitudes and values while imparting information of a sort" (p. 147). This early idea of cultivation, and others that followed, set the groundwork for the research that Gerbner and his colleagues would eventually pioneer.

Gerbner's work into cultivation began as a result of his early research interests in mass media, psychology, and education. As evidenced in some of his early articles such as "Content Analysis and Critical Research in Mass Communication" (1958) and "Popular Culture and Images of the Family" (1959), Gerbner's interests centered on what was being presented by television and facilitating a means to better comprehend what viewers were seeing.

Gerbner's work in this area, which would emerge as the Cultural Indicators Project, began in 1967 with the investigation of violence on primetime television drama for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. As the project has continued, it has done so with the backing of the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the American Medical Association (Gerbner et al., 1978). The Cultural Indicators Project was designed to serve as an objective and impartial examination of the levels, severity, and prevalence of violence on television (Gerbner,

1973a). As Shanahan and Morgan (1999) stated, "Cultural Indicators research has focused mostly on the implications of growing up and living with television, since it is the country's most widely shared cultural agency and most visible disseminator of cultural symbols." To accomplish this, Gerbner dissected the Cultural Indicators Project into three separate but intertwined areas of research. These three areas include an Institutional Process Analysis, Message System Analysis, and Cultivation Analysis.

The Three Arms of Cultural Indicators

As Gerbner (1973a) stated, the Cultural Indicators Project was born out of the fact that, "studies demonstrated that the mass cultural presentations of many aspects of life and types of action teach lessons that serve institutional purposes" (p. 558). To this end, Gerbner begins his analysis of television with an examination of how messages are created, composed, and disseminated. As Van Poecke (1980) pointed out in his essay on Gerbner's research, the primary questions in the initial phases of television research should include, "What are the relationships between the media institutions and the other social institutions? How and on which level are message decisions made? How is the production of the message systems organized?" (p. 427). These questions are examined in the first arm of the Cultural Indicators Project, known as *institutional process analysis*. This branch of research investigates, "how media relate to other institutions, make decisions, compose message systems, and perform their functions in society" (Gerbner, 1973a, p. 558). Gerbner later expands this description to say that the analysis is, "designed to investigate the formation of policies directing the massive flow of media messages. Because of its direct policy orientation, this research is the most difficult to fund and, therefore, the least developed" (Gerbner, 1986, p. 257).

As Gerbner noted, this phase of the Cultural Indicators Project is the most difficult since it requires more time and resources than the others. Very few Cultural Indicators reports or cultivation studies include institutional process analysis in their research (see Gerbner, 1969 and Gerbner, 1972 for examples where they are included). In fact, many cultivation studies omit mention of institutional process analysis completely when discussing or reviewing the phases of Cultural Indicators research (see Morgan, 1983; Signorielli, Gerbner, & Morgan, 1995 as examples). Morgan addressed this lack of acknowledgement for institutional process analysis:

> In articles where we only mentioned the two steps, we were probably thinking in terms of
> the actual work being done, since we had many projects going on that did both message

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and cultivation analysis, but not Institutional Process Analysis.   Most of the annual

Violence Profiles, for example, had message and cultivation analyses (M. Morgan,

personal communication, February 22, 2005).

When this analysis is conducted, the ultimate aim is to determine the factors that influence the television industry in selecting and producing programming. For example, it has been noted that the prevalence of violence in television programming is related to the universality the material finds in foreign markets. Where television shows heavy on drama and dependent on exposition are not easily understood in foreign markets, violence acts as a universal language that everyone can understand. The media industry, then, incorporates these universal themes into their programming to make the sale of shows overseas more lucrative for the parent companies. The institutional process analysis goes into more depth than this, but this example provides a better understanding of the aim of the analysis and the answers it seeks to provide.

The second arm of the Cultural Indicators Project is the *message system analysis* phase. This phase is more commonly referred to as the content analysis phase, and is a prerequisite for most cultivation research. A study by Pfau, Mullen, and Garrow (1995) claimed, "Content analysis is recommended in order to clearly justify television world answers in cultivation research" (p. 445), which is also supported by Hirsch (1980) and Potter (1993). At this point in the Cultural Indicators Project the researcher examines what is actually making it onto the screen and to what degree. As Gerbner (1973a) stated, this is the phase that examines, "how large bodies of messages can be observed as dynamic systems with symbolic functions that have social consequences" (p. 558). Van Poecke (1980) extended this to note there exists a structure to these bodies of messages that can be observed and analyzed.

More specifically, what is being observed and analyzed in the message system analysis are patterns that clearly articulate facts as presented by television. As Gerbner and his colleagues (1978) stated, "Message System Analysis focuses on the gross, unambiguous, and commonly understood facts of portrayal" (p. 176). These facts will later be used in conjunction with respondents' perceptions of the world to determine the degree to which television, and the information presented, influence people's ideas of reality. This idea is summed up by Diefenbach and West (2001) who made the claim, "The content analysis portion of the research provides indicators of what television might be teaching viewers" (p. 432).

Traditional message system analysis methods are not without their detractors, however. For the annual Violence Profile, Gerbner and colleagues record and analyze one week of primetime and weekend daytime television (typically in the fall) and use that sample as a basis for the yearly projections of violence on television (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). Blank (1977a) argued that as television programming has evolved, content and so-called regularly scheduled programs have evolved and changed as well. He noted that the message system analysis for the Violence Profiles, "rests on a single week's sample at a time in the television industry's history when programs are constantly changing and when there are no longer any typical weeks" (p. 274). Blank added that there exists, "too much change between fall and spring network schedules to permit reliance on a single week's results (p. 276). The Cultural Indicators research team responded by noting that the fall sample they employ has been compared to a one week sample from the spring of the same year as well as being one of six sample weeks drawn from the fall of the same year for purposes of comparison. In each case, the one-week fall sample was "remarkably stable" with the benefit of "high cost-efficiency" (Gerbner et al., 1977a, p. 284).

As mentioned above, the final arm of the Cultural Indicators Project is the Cultivation Analysis phase. In this phase, the data collected during the message system analysis are compared with responses from television viewers regarding their perceptions of the world. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) identified this as, "the investigation of viewer conceptions of social reality associated with the most recurrent features of the world of television" (p. 10).

One of the more common and significant findings that is reached during the cultivation analysis phase is determining who is more likely to have their perceptions of reality influenced by television. Research consistently shows that heavy consumers of television are much more likely to view the world as it is depicted on television as compared to light viewers (Gerbner et al., 1978). As Morgan stated (1986), "The cultivation perspective assumes dynamic, reciprocal relationships between media messages, exposure, and beliefs" (p. 125). These relationships stem from the fact that heavy viewers have greater levels of exposure to the misrepresentative symbolic world that television creates. This phenomenon of the symbolic world (which is discussed in greater detail below) centers on the idea that the stories and events depicted on television are not at all similar to phenomenon in the real world. Thus, heavy viewers who have

more exposure to these unrealistic depictions of society will be more likely to accept them as true representations of the world.

The differences between heavy and light viewers in the cultivation analysis phase are observed through examination of the cultivation differential. The cultivation differential, as defined by Gerbner and his colleagues in their *Violence Profile No. 10* (1979), is the, "percent of heavy viewers minus the percent of light viewers giving the 'television answer'" (p. 415). Gerbner (1986) later expanded on this definition to say that it is, "the margin of difference in conceptions of reality between light and heavy viewers in the same demographic subgroups" (p. 258). So, the cultivation differential provides researchers with an idea of the percentages of heavy and light viewers who see the world as television presents it, and the degree to which certain aspects of the television world are able to permeate into the beliefs of the television audience.

Assumptions of Cultivation Analysis

It has been largely accepted that the cultivation analysis phase of the Cultural Indicators Project is the most studied, and therefore the most well known aspect of the research. In fact, it is quite common to see articles and texts refer to this line of research as *cultivation theory* research and omit or neglect the other phases completely. Because so much time and emphasis is placed on the cultivation phase of the research, a considerable foundation has been set on which this research is built. Gerbner and Gross (1976), cited five underlying assumptions that set the groundwork (also cited in Chang, 1988).

First, the authors make the claim that television is the dominant force in influencing American society and the messages conveyed through television reach large, heterogeneous audiences that previous media were unable to. Second, audience consumption of television is ritualistic, and not based on viewers watching certain programs. More commonly, Gerbner and colleagues claim that viewers watch more by the clock than by the program (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1982). Third, the authors claim that television as a whole influences and cultivates perspectives in viewers, and that individual content and programs are not as important. Fourth, and as a direct correlation with the third assumption, individual tastes and preferences in television content are not an important factor in cultivation research, or at least not as important a factor as viewing patterns associated with time. Fifth, television imparts viewers with knowledge even when they do not want it or realize they are gaining it. The facts presented in the symbolic

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world of television begin to become engrained in the viewers' minds until it becomes "knowledge" the viewers' do not question.

Although these assumptions are still at the core of cultivation research, much has changed in the three decades since they were first produced. What follows is an in depth cataloging, examination, and expansion on these assumptions. Additionally, the assumptions that cultivation research is founded on are successive, to a point where each one serves as a precursor to those that follow.

Assumption 1

The first and most overarching assumption of cultivation research is that it is a cultural theory that examines how television impacts the sharing and learning that takes place within a culture. To this end, cultivation does not hold a linear model of communication at its core, where communication flows *from* a medium *to* the consumers. Theories that base their underpinnings on this type of interaction, such as Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) or the hypodermic needle limited effects theory, focus on a causal relationship between what the media put forth and what the viewers consume, and limit communication to a one-way process. Cultural theories look beyond the point of media impacting consumers to also examine how the consumers then impact media. This reciprocal relationship between the two is at the heart of cultural theories. The relevance of this type of theory to an examination of reality-based programming should be obvious, since the consumers of these shows (i.e. "normal" or "everyday" people) are the ones who will eventually move from watching the shows to being on them.

Cultural theories of communication developed in response to dwindling support for limited effects theories. The era of limited effects theories, which is usually regarded as being from 1945 (post World War II) through the mid-1970s, looked at media effects in terms of individual characteristics and how certain aspects of media would affect certain people. McQuail (1971) noted that consumers who already held beliefs that were congruent with the messages being advanced by the media were more likely to have their positions reinforced rather than altered or changed.

However, as television's diffusion became more widespread and became the dominant medium of the country, viewers' interaction with the media also changed. From this arose cultural theories of communication, which focused on the changes in culture as a result of television, and were less concerned with limited effects that may have been resulting for some

portion of the population. As stated by Baran and Davis (2006), research at this time began focusing on, "how cultures become organized, how people negotiate common meaning and are bound by it, and how media systems interact with the culture to affect the way culture develops" (p. 244).

Cultural theories speculate that media have the potential to influence how people view themselves and have effects on how people interact with each other. Research by Himmelweit (1980) examined the relationship between viewers' perception of television and how those perceptions influenced attitudes and behaviors. Cook, Kendzierski, and Thomas (1983) added that, "Himmelweit postulates a set of elements that determine both how television affects viewers and society and how viewers and society affect television" (p. 163-164). While the elements of Himmelweit's study are not applicable to the current research, the acknowledgement and identification that a reciprocal-effects relationship exists between television and viewers is the key. This idea is extended in cultivation research to include not only how television viewing affects viewers, but how it influences their perceptions of the world and certain aspects of reality as well.

The categorization of cultivation as a cultural theory as compared to other theoretical traditions of communication research is the major assumption employed for this approach to media effects. The subsequent assumptions operate under the premise that people's interaction with television has a direct influence on how their views of society will be shaped. Research has shown that one of the most common interactions people have with television is through *ritual viewing* patterns as compared to *appointment viewing* patterns. These viewing patterns, and the relationship they establish between medium and audience is one of the foundations on which cultivation is built.

Assumption 2

The second assumption inherent in cultivation research is that television viewers watch at certain times, not certain programs. This is considered a ritualistic approach to television consumption, where viewer interaction with television is mediated by convenience and boredom rather than explicit interest. Many cultivation scholars, including Gerbner (1982) and Morgan (1984) note that there is a universal trend for people to hold these viewing patterns. Perse (1986), whose studies center on the cultivation effects of soap opera viewing, has also observed this trend and reported, "Cultivation is based on the assumption that the individual is inactive in

choosing and processing television content" (p. 189). Perse also noted that, in terms of cultivation effects, "distortion of social reality is based on the assumption that television viewers are ritualistic in their approach to television exposure – viewing unselectively" (p. 176). This type of viewing is in direct contrast with selective or purposive television viewing, which Signorielli (1986) defined as, "the deliberate choice of (a) television rather than other media and (b) a particular program on the basis of some individual preference rather than habit, inertia, lack of alternatives, or other reason unrelated to content" (p. 65).

Because television is a temporal medium (based on consuming information at certain times) rather than a physical medium (one that can be readily stored without prior preparations), habitual or ritualistic patterns of viewership emerge around periods of availability. Gerbner and his colleagues (1979) made the claim that, "television audiences (unlike those for other media) view largely non-selectively and by the clock, rather by the program" (p. 406). This idea is echoed in a later publication (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1984) which stated, "Unlike other media, television is used relatively nonselectively and in massive doses" (p. 284). By this, the researchers are arguing that these types of viewing patterns are only present predominantly for television viewers. One would be hard pressed to find magazine readers that only read pages 50 through 60 in any given publication, or only attend movies that start at 8:00 PM. This type of viewing should not be confused with media consumers who attend to specific programs or genres (e.g., people who only watch science fiction or people who only read the sports section), but rather consumers who attend to whatever is available at specific times. This type of media consumption behavior is largely limited to the television consumer.

The argument can be made at this point that programming preference and individual tastes should override convenience scheduling for television consumption. Gerbner and Gross (1976) addressed this side of the issue as well. An early study conducted on televisised violence found that, "the total television viewing audience is fairly stable regardless of what is on. Individual tastes and program preferences are less important in determining viewing patterns than is the time a program is on" (p. 177). In fact, some research has shown that viewers may be more interested in television itself than what is being shown. A study by Rosenstein and Grant (1997) concluded that programming is unimportant when it comes to the affinity many viewers have for television itself. As Pingree and colleagues (2001) stated, Rosenstein and Grant's

article, "suggests that the audience's primary relationship with television may be with the medium itself, rather than with any specific channel or program" (p. 448).

Studies have been conducted which specifically examine these ideas, which Pingree et al. summarize at length. An article by Webster and Wakshlag (1983) stated that audience availability is a large factor in determining which shows people tend to watch. Kubey (1986) found that, "television viewing seems a way to casually fill otherwise unoccupied time" (Pingree et al., 2001, p. 447). These studies indicate that television viewing serves other functions than specifically desired entertainment needs. It also operates as a means to alleviate boredom and fill vacant periods of time.

The implications this has on cultivation research were observed by Perse (1986) when it was noted that ritualized viewing, "has been demonstrated to be less active and goal-directed, marked by an omnivorous consumption of television as a medium" (p. 177). The article goes on to draw from Gerbner and Gross (1976) to claim that, "It is this less discriminant viewing pattern that is hypothesized to lead to cultivation effects" (p. 177). This was supported in a study that looked at the cultivation effects of soap opera viewing which concluded that ritualistic viewers of soap operas would be more likely to exhibit cultivation effects than non-ritualistic viewers (Carveth & Alexander, 1985). As the study stated, "the cultivation effect appears to be strongest when the motives for viewing are *ritualistic* (enjoyment, boredom) rather than *instrumental* (reality exploration, character identification)" (p. 270). In relation to reality television viewing, the sheer number of new reality shows premiering each month (19 new shows debuted in March 2004, for example) demonstrates that ritualistic viewers are more than likely to be regularly exposed to some form of reality TV (Drew, 2004).

Once it can be established that viewers are watching at certain times, and not watching specific types of shows, it can then be assumed that specific programs do not influence cultivation, but instead overall television consumption does.

Assumption 3

It is widely accepted that overall consumption of television mediates the cultivation effect, and distinctions in program type and genre are not important. Because evidence has shown that television viewers are not watching specific shows, but rather watching 'by the clock,' and cultivation effects can still be observed, the overall consumption (and not specific shows) must mediate effects. With this in mind, many cultivation scholars view the issue in

terms of television as a system of messages. Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, and Morgan (1980) made this observation and offered that, "Because we are interested in aggregate systems of messages, we do not focus on single programs, networks, or productions, or on individual viewing habits; we try to reflect what large communities absorb over long periods of time" (p. 38). This suggests that common elements in television which influence perceptions will show up across program types. Gerbner (1986) elaborated on this when he wrote, "The purpose of a system *as a system* is to reveal features, processes, and relationships expressed in the whole, not in its parts" (p. 259).

Examining television content as a whole, as Gerbner suggests, means that certain elements supersede smaller units of television such as certain programs or genres. Shanahan, Morgan, and Stenbjerre (1997) made the following case:

Cultivation sees the totality of television's programs as a coherent (though not invariant) *system* of messages, and asks whether that system might promote stability (or generalizational shifts) rather than change in individuals. Cultivation analysis is thus not concerned with the impact of an particular program, genre, or episode. (p. 309)

By establishing that television is a system of messages, it can be argued that cultivation effects are a result of cumulative television viewing. One study on the subject (Armstrong, Neuendork, & Brentar, 1992) found that social perceptions were, "related to media use primarily in terms of overall volume of television exposure" (p. 156). This assumption, however, is one of the more contested assumptions employed in cultivation research.

An early debate on this issue took place between Coffin and Tuchman (1973a; 1973b) and Eleey, Gerbner, and Tedesco (1973a; 1973b) over whether certain types of individual shows exerted more influence over viewers than television as a whole. Eleey, Gerbner, and Tedesco argued that comic violence, accidents, and natural disasters should all be included in research that examines violence on television and the subsequent impact these images have. Coffin and Tuchman countered by noting that under these guidelines, the show *I Dream of Jeannie* would be counted as a violent show, and that including these types of programs did not help identify and solve the problem of violence on television. The response to this by Eleey, Gerbner, and Tedesco was that they made no claims about the *goodness* of the observations, and that it is up to other people to interpret the data as they see fit. This early argument set the foundation for the

examination of television programming as a system instead of as individual or specific shows that were most likely to have certain effects.

Another early critique on this assumption was levied by Blank (1977a; 1977b) which echoed Coffin and Tuchman's argument. Blank, who worked for CBS, argued that, "It [the Violence Index] includes kind of dramatic incidents which should not be included – comic violence, accidents, natural disasters" (p. 274). Gerbner and his colleagues from the Cultural Indicators Project responded by pointing out that, "CBS recently published, 'They Learn While They Laugh,' a public relations booklet extolling the educational virtues of its children's programming, including cartoons" which "indicates that a comic context is a highly effective form of conveying serious lessons" (p. 281). Gerbner developed this idea further to suggest that this illustrates that comic violence can teach viewers who is more likely to be victims of violence and about violence in general. Gerbner et al. add that, "CBS [Blank] confuses communication *content* with the scientific study of communication *effects*" (p. 281). As with Coffin and Tuchman, Gerbner and his colleagues were again arguing that in studying the effects of violent programming, it is the overall system of television that must be studied, and not individual programs.

A final critique that some researchers have had against this assumption is that the perception of reality is a factor in assessing how much of an impact television has on viewers. Potter's work on perceived reality (Potter, 1986; 1988) suggested that media effects might be contingent upon the perception of reality in programming. With this in mind, comic portrayals of violence may be viewed differently than dramatic violence, and have a different impact. Newcomb (1978) shared this point of view, and suggested that not only do perceptions of reality influence the effects derived from television programs, but the consumers' personal views on violence can also have an impact.

What these arguments and their authors overlook is what it is that cultivation is looking to explain. Shanahan, Morgan, and Stenbjerre (1997) addressed these controversies by stating; "Cultivation does not contradict the idea that specific programs can contribute [to media research]" (p. 310). What cultivation is seeking to explain is a different from traditional media effect research (see Assumption 1 above).

Because there are no major cultivation effects as a result of specific program type or genre, the logical follow-up question would be "why?" The reason, as cultivation researchers

have observed, is because television has been designed and structured to offer limited diversity in programming to the largest possible audience it can attract.

Assumption 4

Television offers a limited range of diversity in programming to the largest possible audience. Because cultivation effects are a result of overall television consumption, it is important to understand what messages are common across the medium that people are regularly exposed to while watching. Understanding these common messages is an idea that was advocated initially by Eleey, Gerbner, and Tedesco (1973a) when they stated that, "Scientific study should begin with the reliable determination of common message elements and not with presumed social, moral or policy effects of unknown or vaguely specified messages" (p. 30). Gerbner (1973a) followed up on this idea and incorporated it to build upon the previous assumption regarding television as a system of messages. Gerbner suggested that, "systems of messages produced by any institutional source, commercial as well as overtly partisan, have some ideological orientation implicit in selection, emphasis, treatment" (p. 559). Not only are these common message elements being produced and inserted universally across television programming, but it is also being targeted to reach a wide audience. Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1978) noted that, "Television is the chief creator of synthetic cultural patterns (entertainment and information) for the most heterogeneous mass publics in history, including large groups that have never before shared in any common public message systems" (p. 176).

The analysis of television messages routinely conducted through the Cultural Indicators Project's message system analysis reveals a homogeneity and standardization of content throughout television programming. This directly impacts the current research because cultivation theory, "postulates relative standardization, homogeneity, and stability as the most pervasive associations with television viewing" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1984, p. 284). As noted with previous assumptions, this characteristic is unique to television as a medium as Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, Morgan, and Jackson-Beeck (1979) supported this claim with the statement that, "commercial television, unlike any other media, presents an organically composed total world of interrelated stories (both drama and news) produced to the same set of market specifications" (p. 180).

The reason for these recurring patterns emerging in television programming is largely because of economic factors which drive the television industry. A quote by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1986) illustrates their agreement with this assessment when they stated, "television provides a relatively restricted set of choices for a virtually unrestricted variety of interests and publics" (p. 19). They added, "Most of its [television's] programs are by commercial necessity designed to be watched by nearly everyone in a relatively nonselective fashion" (p. 19). The idea that commercial necessity and constraints dictate television's content is a theme that has remained constant across the literature provided by the Cultural Indicators team (Gerbner, 1986; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001; Signorielli, 2003).

Beyond commercial limitations, some research has also suggested that political beliefs and orientations of the viewing audience may constrain the material that networks and producers include in programming. Attempting to not alienate or upset one end of an ideological or political spectrum requires that certain material is, by necessity, rejected. As Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1982) stated, "Competition for the largest possible audience at the least cost means striving for the broadest and most conventional appeals, blurring sharp conflicts, blending and balancing competing perspectives, and presenting divergent or deviant images as mostly to be shunned, feared, or suppressed" (p. 105). A year later, Cook, Kendzierski, and Thomas (1983) expanded and broadened this idea:

> Television does not move heavy viewers toward radical values or beliefs. Both the politics and the economics of the industry dictate that television keep to the middle ground, that it avoid confrontation with regulators and organized interest groups, and that it attract sponsors by presenting programming acceptable to a large heterogeneous audience. (p. 179)

This last statement, that deviant or unconventional ideas should be avoided, is the means by which the television industry is able to get viewers from all demographic and social backgrounds to watch the same programming, thus increasing audience share. To put it simply, "Avoiding extremes has long been television's preferred strategy for survival" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1984, p. 285). Traditionally, television programming is specifically designed to reach the largest audience during prime-time television hours, which are typically 8:00 PM to 11:00 PM weeknights. Studies have shown that at least half of the US population

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watches television programming during prime-time. Avoiding alienating a portion of the viewing audience requires universally accepted content.

The question then becomes how these recurring patterns and common themes are incorporated into television as a whole. Gerbner and Gross (1979) made the argument that television production has become as mechanical as traditional assembly-line manufacturing. They stated, "we consider most television plays assembly-line drama rather than works of unique craftsmanship. The patterns that the corporate assembly-line imparts to its products becomes the aggregate and repetitive terms of common exposure and usage" (p. 223). Gerbner (1986) later added that specifically, "the pattern of settings, castings, social typing, actions, and related outcomes that cut across most program types and defines the world of television – a world in which many viewers live so much of their lives that they cannot avoid absorbing or dealing with its recurrent patterns" (p. 261). As Gerbner stated, even viewers who watch a variety of genres on television are exposed to the same common elements, which will ultimately lead to the development of a belief in these patterns.

So how do these recurring patterns influence and mediate cultivation effects? The major factor contributing to society's altered perceptions of reality is that television programming provides people from different backgrounds with a shared conceptual scheme for how the world works regardless of tastes in programming. Gerbner (1986) supported this claim by noting, "The essence of a centralized and licensed ritual like television is that it exposes far-flung and otherwise heterogeneous communities to a common system of story telling" (p. 256). Gerbner has also made the claim that these common themes and patterns "cultivate certain premises about the rules of the game of life," which people abide by in their everyday lives (1972, p. 30). Even differences between divergent regions within the United States are becoming diminished by the symbolic structure presented by television. Morgan (1986) noted that, "greater television viewing is associated with less traditional diversity of some aspects of regional culture" (p. 135).

As an example of these common patterns remaining consistent across both television content and time, the Cultural Indicators Project has specifically examined the amount of violence depicted on television as a central aspect of their study since the project's inception. What they have found are long-term, recurring patterns in how violent content is portrayed on television. In the *Violence Profile No. 11* written by the Cultural Indicators team (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980), they stated that, "The frequency of violence and the

patterns of victimization in the world of dramatic television are remarkably stable from year to year" (p. 12).

Despite evidence to the contrary, however, some researchers have claimed that these recurring patterns are diminishing or can be negated, and hence do not influence cultivation effects. One of the major arguments raised in support of this notion is the increasing dissemination and proliferation of cable and satellite service, which offers greater diversity in available programming. Signorielli (1986) addressed this issue and stated, "there is an assumption that cable channel selection reflects diversity when in fact much of cable viewing may be of other prime-time stations, prime-time reruns, or movies that exhibit characteristics of prime-time TV" (p. 66).

While a content analysis of all cable channels is unrealistic, studies that have examined trends in network and cable programming have shown similar patterns emerging across both. One of the most comprehensive studies, the National Television Violence Study (1998) which collected data from October 1994 through June 1997, conducted a content analysis of 23 network and cable stations and coded nearly 10,000 hours of programming over that period. One of the findings of the study showed that there was very little difference in the amount of violence displayed on television regardless of the time of day or genre of programming (p. 31). Similarly, Van den Bulck (2003) noted that, "others have remarked that it is possible for two viewers watching the same amount of television are not exposed to the same content" (p. 293). This notion has been largely negated, however, as discussed above in Assumption 2. The counter-arguments made by Van den Bulck and others (Signorielli, 1986) is that the ritualistic viewing patterns of the television audience force people to be exposed to different types of content. Although it may be the case that there are viewers who only watch certain types of shows (gardening or cooking shows, for example), these people are not the norm and do not constitute a large portion of the television viewing population.

Within the microcosm of reality-based television, there are certainly common themes and elements that exist as well. Most notably, within competition-based reality shows, is the theme of winning at all costs. All of the most popular shows in this category, including *Survivor*, *The Apprentice*, and *Big Brother* among others, regularly feature contestants going to any lengths necessary in order to ensure victory over others. Lying, manipulation, backstabbing, and psychological warfare are elements that are highlighted and focused upon. As Cook (2003)

noted, "The premise behind many of the shows encourages the practice of what used to be considered vices: greed, backstabbing, lying, and fraud, just to name a few."

With observable recurring patterns and consistent themes present across all television content, and with little diversity and restrictions on images being shown, these patterns form an aggregate perception of the world that is largely different from how things are in the 'real world.' Gerbner claimed that this false perception of reality is television's creation of what he calls the symbolic world.

Assumption 5

Throughout the course of media effects research, there have been many arguments made about the nature of the representativeness of the patterns present on television and how accurately those depictions reflect real life. Even reality-based programs, whose popularity is based on the promotion of witnessing actual events unfolding for regular people, are largely constructed through contrived situations and pre-arranged scenarios. Even early television research noted that the depiction of people, events, and phenomena on television were more closely akin to a system of symbols than a representation of reality. Smythe (1954) made the observation, "program material on television (and in other media) should be thought of as a group of symbols which serve as a medium of exchange between the mass media and the audience" (p. 143). Gerbner and his colleagues extend this claim and argued that these patterns and symbols create their own rules about reality. It begins with the idea that the world shown on television is different from reality and that, "The media manufacture the shared symbolic environment" (Gerbner, 1973b, p. 265). To expand on the idea put forth in Assumption 4, Gerbner (1973a) also claimed, "Dramatic and fictional entertainment especially exhibit ritualistically repetitive social symbolic mechanisms that reveal conventionally cultivated approaches toward people and life" (p. 563). The idea of this symbolic environment is carried on throughout cultivation research literature (Gerbner, 1986; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001).

More specifically, Gerbner (1990) set forth what he calls the "three B's of television" which guide the symbolic world:

1. Television *blurs* the traditional distinctions of people's view of the world
2. Television *blends* people's realities into the cultural mainstream
3. Television *bends* that mainstream reality to its own and sponsors' institutional interests (p. 261)

With the establishment of a symbolic world, which is distinctly different from the real world, the next step in better understanding the cultivation process is to determine the results of exposure to the symbolic world. Eleey, Gerbner, and Tedesco (1973a) argued the same when they noted that cultivation research thus far "views the entire range of evening dramatic television programming as a dynamic symbol system which has important social consequences" (p. 24). Thirty years later, Signorielli (2003) echoed this statement by claiming "Cultivation theory argues that to understand the effects of viewing on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors we must examine television as a collective symbolic environment with an underlying formulaic structure" (p. 37).

Several major content areas of media research where studies have been conducted to examine the impact the symbolic world of television has on viewers. In general, the symbolic world misrepresents demographic groups, traditionally by under-representing minorities and over-representing white males. Carveth and Alexander (1985) noted, "Content analyses of television [as a facet of cultivation research] … have consistently demonstrated that the medium overrepresents certain populations (e.g. white males) while underrepresenting others (e.g., females, minorities, senior citizens) compared to their occurrence in the real world" (p. 260). For children, their exposure to the misrepresentations of television's symbolic world can have an effect on their perceptions of reality during their formative years. Singer, Singer, and Rapaczynski (1984) argued that children use television as a guide or model for social behavior when he states that "Television makes available to the child a kind of 'window on the world,' but it is a very special world whose inhabitants may act in ways that contrast sharply with the behavior of parents, siblings, and friends" (p. 75).

Further examples include studies that have specifically looked at how certain demographic groups are portrayed, and the resulting impact these representations have for viewers. In *Aging with Television*, Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, and Morgan (1980) noticed that older people are severely under-represented in the symbolic world. The result, they found, was that heavy viewers of television were beginning to believe that "old people are a vanishing breed," which is the complete opposite of what real world statistics indicate (p. 46). Tuchman (1978) referred to this phenomenon as "symbolic annihilation," a term which Zemech and Cohen (1986) later employed in their study on gender equality. This idea is also evident in studies that examine how television's symbolic world misrepresents employment in the United States, both

in terms of percentages of the population employed in certain fields as well as the demographic makeup of who is working in those fields (Signorielli, 1983; Signorielli, 1993; Signorielli & Kahlenberg, 2001).

Finally, one of the most common misrepresentations depicted within the symbolic world of television is the prevalence of crime and violence. In their study on the cultivation effects of violent television programming, Sheley and Ashkins (1981) found that, "the public's view of the relative distribution of crimes more closely approximates the image presented by the media than that presented by the police" (p. 502). Hence, television's depiction of reality differs from the real world, and has been shown to influence people's perceptions of the world. This study is only an example of the plethora of violence studies available within the cultivation literature, most notably including Gerbner and colleague's annual violence profiles.

These examples of how the symbolic world differs from the real world illustrate how perceptions can and have been altered by the way television presents images of the world. Researchers agree, however, that these beliefs about reality fostered by the symbolic world of television take time to produce and manifest. As Shanahan, Morgan, and Stenbjerre (1997) noted, "Cultivation researchers are interested in the aggregate patterns of images and representations to which entire communities are exposed – and which they absorb – over long periods of time" (p. 309).

Assumption 6

Cultivation research looks for and predicts long-term effects as a result of exposure to the recurring themes and patterns in television's symbolic world. Because viewers are exposed to the symbolic world of television on a regular basis, these omnipresent themes begin to affect perceptions of reality. The key, however, is that these alterations take place gradually over extended periods of time. Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1978) compared the process of perception change to the evolution of the earth. They stated:

> A persistent difference in the exposure to messages that cultivate perspectives need not
> result in a major shift in personal outlook and behavior to have profound consequences.
> A barely perceptible shift of a few degrees average temperature can lead to an ice age or
> make a desert bloom. (p. 193)

Because this shift is gradual and takes place over an extended period of time, Gerbner and Gross (1979) argued that cultivation (which he refers to as a ritual theory) is one where, "ritual *must be*

learned" (p. 227, italics in original). To expand on this idea, Gerbner and colleagues suggested that there are two primary factors in the long-term effects of cultivation are the consistency of messages throughout life and the small, incremental changes that occur as a result.

First, Gerbner argued that the long-term effects of cultivation begin at infancy, or when television viewing is first adopted. As he stated, "Most infants are exposed to television long before reading" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 176). He argued that this early acceptance of television as young children's teacher, companion, entertainment, and supervision is replacing the learning that had been traditionally done through interpersonal interaction. Gerbner (1986) claimed, "Television cultivates from infancy the very predispositions and preferences that used to be acquired from other "primary" sources" (p. 259). Not only is television a fixture during developmental years, but it also present as people grow and mature, continually offering viewers a steady diet of consistent patterns and themes as presented by the symbolic world. Gerbner (1986) claimed that with television becoming a permanent fixture in so many people's lives, cultivation is, "taking place from at every stage, from cradle to grave" (p. 261). As almost all cultivation literature has indicated, exposure to these messages remains constant over the course of most people's lifetimes, making cultivation a process that happens over many years.

The second factor Gerbner claimed is an influence on cultivation as a long-term process is that, like the ice age mentioned above, cultivation is far less about noticeable or perceptible effects than it is about continuous and gradual ones. Simply put, "The 'size' of an 'effect' is far less critical than the direction of its steady contribution" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980, p. 10). The key here is the steady contribution, or continuity, of the messages being disseminated and consumed. To elaborate, Gerbner (1973a) made the following statement:

> The dynamics of continuities, rather than only of change, need to be considered in the examination of mass-produced message systems and their symbolic functions. Such examination is necessarily longitudinal and comparative in its analysis of the process and consequences of institutionalized public acculturation. (p. 569)

In a study examining college students, Armstrong, Neuendorf, and Brentar (1992) echoed this sentiment:

> Most researchers examining media social reality effects follow a cumulative effects model, which assumes that it is through the long-term accumulation of many pieces of

information or mediated experience that beliefs about social reality are gradually shaped. (p. 155)

With all of this in mind, cultivation research examines how recurring patterns affect the perceptions of the general population over long periods of time. For example, the data collected for the Cultural Indicators Project "do not reflect what any particular individual might see on any given evening but rather what large communities absorb over long periods of time (Signorielli, 1982, p. 587). This is important to note because although some people may watch more violent programming than others, or some people refrain from watching certain types of shows, over the long run of their television-watching lifetimes they will be exposed to certain elements that are more universal. That is why it is the long-term exposure to television that cultivation is based upon.

This long-term attitude change is similar to results of psychological research which has revealed that attitudes can be based on cumulative exposure to stimuli. For example, the information-integration model of social cognition and attitude change is an area of psychological research that closely resembles this underlying assumption of cultivation (Armstrong, Neuendorf, & Brentar, 1992). This model states that attitudes and beliefs towards a specific attitude object are the result of cumulative exposures to messages pertaining to the object (Anderson, 1974; Himmelfarb, 1974; Kaplowitz, Fink, Armstrong, & Bauer, 1986). In terms of the current research, reality-based programs have become a staple of television programming over the past six years, which for the subjects involved in this study (18-24 year olds) constitutes a significant portion of their lives (33 – 25% of their lives, respectively).

Cultivation effects are not only long-term in terms of maturation, but also long-term in the persistence of the effects. Once a belief or attitude has been formed from prolonged exposure to the symbolic world of television, negating the effects is unlikely. As stated above, Gerbner (1986) noted that consumers are exposed to television's messages throughout our entire lives. Once viewers have been cultivated to accept the reality portrayed on television, subsequent television viewing serves to reinforce what the viewer already believes. This constant reinforcement serves to foster stronger beliefs in the messages television presents, even in the face of real world statistics and evidence to the contrary. Armstrong, Neuendorf, and Brentar (1992) refered to this phenomenon as a result of the "cumulative effects model" of

communication, where viewers' sustained perceptions are the result of, "long-term accumulation of many pieces of information or mediated experience" (p. 155).

Once it has been established that the impetus for cultivation is the consistency of messages and the long-term nature of the acculturation, the impact and force television has as a source of social influence becomes clearer. With television the primary source of entertainment and information, it has an unequivocal power to influence the way we see the world. As Shrum and Bischak (2001) stated, "Cultivation theory is based on the premise that both the ubiquity and consistency of television portrayals in American society have made it the primary source of information about the social world" (p. 188). The fact that television is the primary source for information in modern culture is another of the assumptions on which cultivation theory rests.

Assumption 7

Television is the dominant force in terms of cultural influence in today's society. To put it bluntly, as Gerbner and Gross (1976) wrote, "Television is the central cultural arm of American society" (p. 175). Where parents, religion, educators, friends, and authority figures were once the disseminators of information pertaining to the social world around us, television has usurped that position and become the dominant force for almost everyone. As Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1982) stated, "The "television mainstream" may be the true twentieth-century melting pot of the American people" (p. 126). And if television is the dominant force in terms of cultural influence, then it must be recognized that the most popular shows certainly have a significant impact. This is where reality-based programs become an important factor in cultivation research, since Nielsen statistics routinely show that as many as five of the top ten shows in a given week are reality-based programs (Drew, 2004).

As stated above, traditionally most cultures have viewed community leaders and elders (specifically, religious figures, educators, and family members) as the primary sources of information on how the world operated. This information was passed down in the form of stories which explained how and why certain things happened. Today, television is the dominant storyteller for American society. As Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, and Morgan (1980) stated, television is "the wholesale distributor of images and the mainstream of our popular culture" (p. 37). The distribution of these images (i.e. stories) is what Atkin and Arkin (1990) labeled television as our "primary storyteller" and as the, "most important agent of informal socialization" (p. 26). This sentiment resonates with Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli

(1982) and Shanahan, Morgan, and Stenbjerre (1997) who all argued that television is "the most important story-telling system in our culture" (p. 306). Signorielli and Kahlenberg (2001) even argued that television's role as the primary storyteller goes beyond just the United States and can be applied internationally to most other countries as well.

One argument that can be made against this assumption is that it presumes that everyone has access to and is watching television on a regular basis (at least in the United States). This abundance of television viewing has caused some researchers to take a conservative stance on the issue and claim that *most of the people* or *a significant portion of the population* are regular television viewers. Research has shown, however, that the non-viewer demographic is in actually an insignificant portion of the population. As early as three decades ago, studies were designed to specifically examine the prevalence of non-viewers within the population. One such study by Jackson-Beeck (1977) reported that, "the data analyzed here do not support continued reference to nonviewers as if they were a meaningful population subgroup" (pp. 71-72). This suggests that everyone in the country is watching television in some amounts.

With television the dominant force of social influence, and evidence indicating that everyone is watching, television begins to teach people how to act and interact in their everyday lives. Television programming, "demonstrates how society works by dramatizing its norms and social values" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 173). Gerbner and Gross added that, "its [television's] chief function is to spread and stabilize social patterns" (p. 175). These social patterns are the foundation for how we see the world and what we perceive as reality. While examining the impact television has on perceptions of reality, Van Poecke (1980) argued, "The socially constructed reality produces a coherent, homogeneous picture of what exists, what is important, what relates to what, and what is right" (pp. 423-24).

Van Poecke (1980) went as far as to argue that this assumption of cultivation theory mirrors some of the concepts brought up in Marx's writings on social influence. In comparing the two, he stated, "Gerbner seldom uses this concept, but it is clear that we are confronted here with what in Marxist tradition is called an ideology, a praxis which transforms concrete individuals into members, subjects of a certain society" (pp. 424-425). What Van Poecke was suggesting is that television is the ideal vehicle to create and spread an ideology to the masses, much like Marx's theories of uniting the proletariat. In this case, however, the proletariat are not

the lower class workers, but the television consumers who have no power over what they are exposed to.

One of the most common examples of how television influences our perceptions of society is through its depiction and exaggeration of violence. As results from Shrum and Bischak's (2001) study plainly stated, "mass media information influences judgments of societal crime risks" (p. 204). These results have been found in numerous others studies as well, including the annual violence profile presented by the Cultural Indicators Project.

This examples leads directly into another assumption associated with cultivation effects research, which is that the degree to which television exerts influence is mediated by other factors. As Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1978) stated in their *Violence Profile No. 9*, "The 'effect' of a pervasive medium upon the composition and structure of the symbolic environment are subtle, complex, and intermingles with other influences" (p. 193). These other influences include the amount and intensity of direct, first-hand experience people have with a phenomenon (compared to experience via television) as the primary source of information on a topic.

Assumption 8

Television will exert more influence when direct experience with an issue is minimal or absent. When direct experience is absent, viewers will rely on television's depiction of a phenomenon as a source of information (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Because of the absence of contrary information, the symbolic world representations will be accepted as true. Pfau, Mullen, and Garrow (1995) provided a clear overview of this assumption when they stated:

> Cultural Indicators assume television's influence is most pronounced in precisely these
> circumstances where people have limited direct experience, and therefore lack an ability
> to confirm or deny television's symbolic images first hand. (p. 442)

In these cases, television serves as the single source of information viewers have on which they can base their thoughts or opinions on a topic.

More specifically, heavy consumers of television without direct experience with an issue will be even more likely to accept the reality presented on television. Heavy viewers, less likely to be overly active in outside social situations, are more accepting of the presentations shown on television simply based on the sheer volume and lack of known alternatives. Potter and Chang (1990) stated, "People who watch a great deal of television have their time dominated by

television portrayals, and people who watch little television have their perceptions dominated by the real world" (p. 316). Similarly, Hawkins and Pingree (1981) noted that, "effects of communication are strongest when competing sources of information and pre-existing knowledge are lowest" (p. 358). These explanations confirm that heavy consumers of television, who spend more time confined indoors with television, do not have the opportunities to obtain higher order information sources such as first-hand experience. As Weaver and Wakshlag (1986) noted, a hierarchy exists in terms of information sources that we base our perceptions of reality on, with first-hand experience being the most trustworthy, and descending from there. As the authors stated:

> It appears that social perceptions are formed and reinforced on the basis of the highest order experience available (i.e. direct, interpersonal, or mediated). When direct experience is lacking or highly ambiguous, however, the individual is most susceptible to the suggestion of indirectly obtained information, conveyed either interpersonally or through the mass media. (p. 143)

Without these higher-order information sources (direct experience), people have no basis to refute the information presented on television. As Potter (1986) stated, people, "believe that television programming, even if it is fictional in nature, presents useful moral lessons which help them work through problems vicariously and learn how to cope" (p. 162). Potter's work on perceived reality revolved around the central idea that the traditional view of reality as a uni-dimensional factor in media effects research is horribly misrepresentative of how people actually see the world. Potter's critique is that items such as "How real are the situations on Program X?" on cultivation questionnaires simplify a complex issue beyond usefulness. Potter continues this line of reasoning by arguing that one of the components of his multi-dimensional approach to perceived reality, the Instruction dimension, offers viewers a means to "expand their direct experiences," and thus substitute television for first-hand knowledge (Magic Window and Identity being the other dimensions in Potter's schema). As Potter claimed, "The Instruction dimension encompasses viewers' beliefs about television as an instructional aid which augments and expands their direct experiences" (p. 162).

This lack of direct experience, and the use of television experience as a supplicant, has most notably been observed in studies on viewers' perceptions of violence and crime. Almost universally, research has shown that when direct experience with violence is lacking, heavy

viewers are more likely to perceive the world as a violent place based on the images presented on television. As Weaver and Wakshalag (1986) noted, "this finding suggests that greater exposure to exaggerated depictions of crime on television, in the absence of other more direct sources of information, may lead to the assimilation of elevated crime-related perceptions" (pp. 153-154). To further this, the amount of direct experience with violence will also mediate television's influence over perceptions, as Shrum and Bischak (2001) observed. They claimed, "those who have less direct experience with crime should be more affected by television viewing than those who have more direct experience with crime" (p. 190).

Because people are using television experiences as a source of information in making judgments about reality and society, a more recent development in cultivation research has suggested that viewers do not critically or systematically think about the sources leading to their attitudes and beliefs about the world. Instead, exposure to recurring patterns of television over long periods of time have lead viewers to store information for later processing that may be recalled when necessary, but without requiring them to evaluate the source or reliability of the information they are recalling.

Assumption 9

Viewers process television information heuristically, not systematically. Even early research on the effects of television noted that television viewers were unintentionally accumulating information. Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961) noted, "The viewer goes to television for entertainment and stores up certain items of information without seeking them" (p. 75). This assumption has also become one of the more recent additions to the body of cultivation research. Shanahan, Morgan, and Stenbjerre (1997) made one of the early claims that, "we may get some of our most basic assumptions about the environment when we are not actively seeking any such information (p. 306). As an extension, Shrum and Bischak (2001) claimed:

> Cultivation theory is a theory about the effects of indirect experience on the construction of social reality. In its simplest form, cultivation theory suggests that the indirect experience gained from television viewing will come to supplant direct experience as the primary basis for developing social beliefs. (p. 188)

The mental processing employed in the acceptance and use of television information as a source of attitudes and beliefs is known a heuristic processing, which is in direct contrast to the more methodical and deliberate systematic processing. According to Chaiken (1980), heuristic

processing is defined as mental processing where, "recipients exert comparatively little effort in judging message validity: Rather than processing argumentation, recipients may rely on (typically) more accessible information such as the source's identity or other non-content cues in deciding to accept a message's conclusion" (p. 752). In this case, television would act as the persuasive message as a source of identifying social and cultural patterns. Conversely, Chaiken defined systematic processing as when, "recipients exert considerable cognitive effort in performing this task: They actively attempt to comprehend and evaluate the message's arguments as well as to assess their validity in relation to the message's conclusion" (p. 752). In this case, the message's conclusion is, for example, that violence and criminal activity is a very common phenomenon in the world.

With a better understanding of heuristic versus systematic processing, the next step is to examine how mental processing techniques mediate cultivation effects. To begin, we make judgments and base attitudes on information we store and retrieve from memory. In the case of cultivation research, estimations of involvement in violence are drawn from examples we can produce based on memory. Shrum and Bischak (2001) stated that, "Research has shown that people often construct their judgments of probability of occurrence on the basis of the attributes of the information they retrieve from memory (p. 189). Additionally, because television viewers will have more television examples to draw from, they will be more likely to employ them when making claims about reality. This has been observed in numerous studies (Shrum & O'Guinn, 1993; Shrum, 1996) and is clearly stated in Shrum and Bischak (2001):

> In the area of cultivation effects, research has shown that television viewing makes relevant information more accessible for heavy viewers than light viewers and that this accessibility bias at least partially accounts for the positive relation between television viewing and estimates of frequency and probability. (pp. 189-190)

This pattern still holds true despite research that has shown that television viewers are aware that the television reality is different from real life, but their heuristic processing of information still makes them likely to hold perceptions of reality as shown on television. Some studies have found evidence to support that people are aware that there are multiple perspectives of reality presented to them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Zemach & Cohen, 1986). Yet despite this, heavy viewers continue to give answers that are closer to the reality depicted on television.

Pfau, Mullen, and Garrow (1995) offered an explanation for how and why this happens despite contrary evidence and direct experience:

> The perceptions gleaned from direct and mediated experience often meld. In other words, in those circumstances when people encounter consistent television images which are at odds with direct experience, they don't simply reject the former in favor of the later. Instead, they assimilate portions of both images, resulting in a collage effect. (p. 443)

Giddens (1991) refered to this as a "reality inversion," where the images from television are incorporated into the consciousness of the viewer. Thus, when viewers answer questions or make statements about reality based on heuristically processed information, their perceptions are being unknowingly shaped by their lack of critical analysis. Many would agree that viewers have the capacity to systematically process this information and discern the reliability of it, but ultimately do not. As Hawkins and Pingree (1981) noted, "many adults (or most adults some of the time) can but *do not* focus, and thus are more open to television influence on their social reality when they do not focus" (p. 355).

Another explanation for how the heuristic processing of information occurs is through the idea that television has become a background medium, where serious attention is not paid to what is being said and therefore critical examination of the messages does not occur. In her study on soap opera viewing, Perse (1986) observed, "These variables, perceived realism of what is being viewed and *activity during viewing* [emphasis added], have to do with viewers' attitudes toward television and critical weighing of the television message" (p. 177). Chaiken (1980) found similar evidence in persuasion research. Her findings included, "research suggesting that distraction often enhances persuasion by interfering with recipients' abilities to critically evaluate persuasive argumentation" (p. 753). In this case, the persuasion is the unconscious influence that television has on the perceptions of its viewers, and the distraction or interference would be the entertainment contained in the programming. This is exactly what Gerbner (1973b) when he described the "hidden curriculum" of television.

To illustrate this assumption, research on perceptions of crime and violence has provided numerous studies as support. Shrum and Bischak (2001) observed that, "Television viewing is presumed to generate many more examples of crime victimization than direct experience, particularly for heavier viewers. This enhanced accessibility of television examples in turn

inflates the risk of estimates (p. 190). Potter (1986) offered an explanation for how this occurs, even when viewers are aware that television may have no value as an information source:

> On the other end of the Instruction dimension [one of Potter's 3 dimensions of perceived reality] are people who *say* they feel television does not present useful social lessons. These people may feel that television is a medium for escape and cannot instruct them. If this is so, then these people think they are watching television purely for entertainment, and may not actively process the information. However, these people do appear to be learning about the mean and violent world of television. (p. 171)

Variations on the heuristic processing approach have been suggested which limit what types of experiences influence what type of judgments. Tyler's (1980) impersonal impact hypothesis suggests that media will only influence perceptions about society as a whole, while direct experience influences personal level judgments. Shrum and Bischak (2001) claimed that, "the indirect experience from media information tends to affect only societal level judgments, whereas personal level judgments are made primarily on the basis of direct experience" (p. 192). This idea was originally developed by Tyler (1980) and further supported by Tyler and Cook (1984) and Hawkins and Pingree (1982), who found that "television viewing affects judgments for demographic or first-order type estimates (often societal-level judgments)" (Shrum & Bischak, 2001, p. 192).

Expanding Cultivation Research

Despite the strong set of underlying assumption associated with cultivation research, a number of critiques have been brought against it. These critiques have ranged from problems with various aspects of cultivation's methodologies (Coffin & Tuchman, 1973a & 1973b; Blank, 1977a & 1977b; Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Potter, 1988; Potter & Chang, 1990), viewer interpretations of violence (Newcomb, 1978), overall validity (Wober, 1978; Potter 1986) and practicality (Hirsch, 1980; Hughes, 1980). Largely, these critiques center on the claim that reports of cultivation effects within the population are because of correlations that are spurious in nature. These correlations, the critics argue, are the result of demographic characteristics that were uncontrolled during either the data collection or analysis phases.

To address these issues, Gerbner and his colleagues introduced two new components to cultivation research. The first is the idea of "mainstreaming." Mainstreaming explains how differences in cultivation effects may be present for members of homogeneous within the

population. In an early article on the subject, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1984) defined mainstreaming as, "a convergence of conceptions and attitudes held by heavy viewers of different groups who share little besides television" (p. 186). In addition to mainstreaming, "resonance" was developed to explain how certain cultivation effects were being manifest only in certain portions of the population. As an overview, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) defined resonance as, "when what people see on television is most congruent with everyday reality (or even *perceived* reality), the combination may result in a coherent and powerful 'double dose' of the television message and significantly boost cultivation" (p. 15). The following sections examine each of these concepts in detail and illustrate how mainstreaming and resonance have advanced cultivation research by expanding the predictive power of the theory.

Mainstreaming

Early critiques of cultivation research centered on the fact that cultivation effects were stronger within certain groups and were the result of viewers' backgrounds rather than television consumption. For example, people with higher levels of education are less likely to exhibit cultivation effects. This is because of several factors, including better awareness of the unrealistic representations television provides, more time exposed to other media (specifically newspapers), and more time spent at work, which limits the amount of time available for watching television. The argument here is that viewers with higher levels of education will be less likely to watch as much television as people with lower levels of education, therefore, cultivation research traditionally shows that people with higher levels of education are less likely to be influenced by the symbolic world of television. The argument made by opponents of cultivation research claim that the relationship between perceptions and amount of television is a spurious one, and is actually mediated by viewers' education.

To address this issue, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) developed the concept of mainstreaming. Mainstreaming suggests that even within subgroups of the population, as in the case of viewers with higher levels of education, exposure to television can mitigate these factors and influence altered perceptions of reality. This idea is not strictly new to media effects research, as Ogburn and Gilfillan (1933) noted a reduction of regional heterogeneity as a result of exposure to radio broadcasts. This is considered by some (Morgan, 1986) to be an early version of mainstreaming.

In addition to this, Gerbner (1986) sought to clarify how the process of cultivation worked, and mainstreaming illustrates what he is attempting to show. Gerbner's argument was that, "cultivation is not conceived as a unidirectional but rather more like a gravitational process" (p. 261). What he is suggesting is that television does not force a new perspective of reality upon television viewers, but rather it minimizes the differences that already exist between perspectives. It leads to a more common or shared outlook on the world. As Shanahan, Morgan, and Stenbjerre (1997) explained, "Mainstreaming patterns imply that heavy viewers 'gravitate' towards a shared ideological position, narrowing differences otherwise present among the light viewers" (p. 317). So, within the example mentioned above, heavy viewers with higher levels of education are still more likely to see the world as television presents it compared to the light viewers in the same subgroup.

This illustrates Gerbner's idea that despite social or demographic background characteristics, heavy viewers are more likely to share a common view of the world as it is presented on television. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1984) echoed this thought by claiming, "The key to the notion of mainstreaming rests on the fact that relatively lighter viewers in different groups do *not* share common perspectives" (p. 284). Cook, Kendzierski, and Thomas (1983) also assert this claim by noting, "there will be more variability in perceptions of the world among light viewers from a variety of different social groups than among heavy viewers from the same groups" (p. 175). By this, they suggest that mainstreaming effects are evident in heavy viewers, and light viewers are not as likely to exhibit these effects.

This is where some critics find cause to argue the validity of mainstreaming. For example, Hirsch (1981a & 1981b) argued that by removing light viewers from these studies, the data are skewed toward providing exactly what Gerbner expects. One of Hirsch's critiques was that removing the light viewers from mainstreaming effects research only leaves heavy viewers who are statistically more likely to have higher scores based on random error inherent in survey research. He noted that this phenomenon is what statisticians refer to as 'regression to the mean.' Van den Bulck (2003) refuted this claim and states that mainstreaming and regression to the mean, while similar, are two different concepts. He noted that because mainstreaming uses the mean of viewers' responses as the basis for statistical assumptions, "the error terms within the selected groups are nullified" (p. 292). In another response to Hirsch's critique, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1981) refuted this argument by claiming, "cultivation is often a

virtually across-the-board phenomenon. It is quite clear from our article that 'mainstreaming' and 'resonance' *deal with the exceptions*" (p. 61). As Shrum and Bischak (2001) suggested, mainstreaming and resonance are "cultivation moderators" (which deal with exceptions, as Gerbner at al. noted), and that despite the limited applicability, "it is nevertheless possible to specify the general conditions under which researchers should expect to find either mainstreaming or resonance effects" (p. 208). To better understand how resonance is applied to cultivation research, we should now examine this component in more detail.

Resonance

Like mainstreaming, the concept of resonance was first examined by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) as a means to overcome some of the deficiencies that existed in cultivation research. An early discrepancy noted in cultivation research by Doob and Macdonald (1979) noted that people who lived in highly violent areas (where the likelihood for first-hand experience with crime was above average) were reporting higher levels of perceived violence in the world as a result. Doob and Macdonald's study found that when real-life levels of crime were controlled for, no overall cultivation effects were present in the data, although cultivation effects were found to exist in the high-crime areas within the city environment.

To explain how real-world examples of violence factor into cultivation research, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1980) developed the resonance component. Shrum and Bischak (2001) summarized, "Resonance suggests that those people whose life experiences are more congruent with the experiences of the television world will be most affected by the television message" (p. 191). Gerbner and his colleagues claimed that when violent images on television reflect what viewers experience in reality, cultivation is amplified. As Hawkins and Pingree (1981) noted, "some minimum degree of *confirmation* from real-world experience, other sources, or even pre-existing beliefs about social reality may be necessary to validate the television message" (p. 355).

Numerous studies have also yielded results that are consistent with the concept of resonance (Elliott & Slater, 1980; Friedman, Bischoff, Davis, & Person, 1982; O'Keefe, 1984). Sparks, Nelson, and Campbell (1997) suggested that, "the fact that it [fear of victimization] did emerge in the high-crime city area could be interpreted as a finding consistent with resonance" (p. 356). More recently, Shrum and Bischak's (2001) violence resonance study revealed, "television showed a stronger relation to the crime risk estimates of those with more direct

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experience with crime than those with less direct experience with crime, consistent with a resonance effect" (p. 205).

Television's amplification of real-life scenarios is only one area of research incorporated into what Gerbner and colleagues designed as the resonance effect. Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1994) also noted that television's influence will have a greater impact on people who's television counterparts are perpetually portrayed as victims on television. As Shrum and Bischak (2001) noted, there is, "another type of resonance effect in which television has the greater effect on people whose fictional counterparts are frequently victimized on television (e.g., minorities, women)" (p. 209). A heavy viewer of television who is female, therefore, will already be more likely to hold higher estimates for her likelihood of being involved in a crime, but that estimation may be amplified by the fact that a large number of the victims presented on television are also female. In effect, she is receiving a "double dose" of fear from how television portrays violence within society in general, as well as how women are portrayed within these violent situations.

Violence Studies

With the examination of antisocial behaviors on reality-based television programming being a largely unexplored area of research, the closest body of literature on the subject would be studies examining the cultivation effects of violent programming because both areas of study examine how aggressive and socially unacceptable behaviors on television impact viewers' perceptions of society. It seems relevant, therefore to examine briefly how cultivation studies on violence have evolved since the path of the current research may follow in that direction.

As the numerous examples thus far suggest, the examination of violence is one of the primary motivators in the continued propagation and evolution of cultivation research. The beginning of this chapter noted that the Cultural Indicators Project began as a result of government-sponsored funding designed to examine the issue, and while cultivation research has branched out into many other areas of study (religion, politics, racism, education, and gender issues to name a few), research on violent programming is still a major issue.

Cultivation studies exploring the impact of violence on viewers traditionally start with Gerbner's message system analysis (which will be referred to as "content analysis" from this point forward). Studies involving cultivation research have provided numerous content analyses designed to identify the prevalence of violence on television, including the annual Violence

Profile compiled by the Cultural Indicators team as well as many independent research undertakings within the field (Lichter, Lichter, & Rothman, 1994; Wilson, Kunkel, Linz, Potter, Donnerstein, Smith, Blumenthal, & Gray, 1996). What these studies traditionally have found is that the percentage of violent acts committed on television is much higher compared to real-world statistics provided by law enforcement agencies.

The application of Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli's (1978) definition of violence to content analysis studies laid the groundwork for what would eventually become known as Gerbner's Violence Profile and Violence Index. The Violence Profile was designed as a means to, "measure aggregate programming policy and its consequences" (Gerbner, Gross, Eleey, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1977, p. 301). This is evident in their annual Violence Profile which shows trends in violent programming across both networks and time.

Gerbner's Violence Index is a measurement system designed to quantify violent acts on several dimensions. Gerbner and his colleagues (1977) noted that there are three key components that go into formulating the data that comprise the Violence Index: *Prevalence* of violence (percentage of programs containing any violence), *Rate* of violence (which identifies the frequency of violence as the proportion of violent acts per units of time), and *Role* (the depiction of characters as aggressors, victims, or both). The formula for calculating Violence Index scores is available in Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1978, p. 181).

Like Gerbner's approach to content analysis itself, the Violence Index has earned its share of detractors as well. In his article critiquing the Index, Blank (1977a) argued that it is, "an arbitrarily weighted set of chosen measures of aspects of violence on television, whose meaning is totally unclear" (p. 273). Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1977a) responded by comparing their Violence Index to the Neilsen or Arbitron ratings systems, which use various demographic data complied together to form an overall scale of television and radio respectively.

Additionally, Blank echoed the critiques levied by Coffin and Tuchman when he claimed:

> Gerbner includes a number of kinds of dramatic action which clearly ought not to be
> included in a count of violence. Thus, he includes comic violence (e.g., a custard pie in

the face on an "I Love Lucy" program), and injuries caused by accidents or acts of nature (e.g., injuries occurring in earthquakes or hurricanes). (p. 275)

In stating this, Blank suggests that Gerbner and his colleagues are essentially comparing apples and oranges, which in this case are comic violence and dramatic violence. Gerbner, Gross, Eleey, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1977a) responded by suggesting that, "One *must* add apples and oranges if one wants to know about *fruit*" (p. 282), which acts as a metaphor suggesting that in order to understand the overall state of violence on television, a thorough and detailed examination must be made of *all* violent content.

Despite these critiques and others like them, research on violent television content continues to produce results that indicate cultivation effects are taking place. In a more recent study, Diefenbach and West (2001) used extremely conservative definitions of violence (using the U.S. Department of Justice definition) and extremely liberal definitions of primary characters (anyone who spoke dialogue) in an attempt to produce, "the lowest possible crime/violence rates per character" (p. 436). The limited definitions of violence incorporated into this study serve to placate detractors who would continue the contention started by Coffin and Tuchman and Blank. Yet in the face of these restrictions and limitations, the Diefenbach and West (2001) noted that, "a significant relationship was observed between hours of television viewing and higher perceived levels of murder (violent crime)" (p. 441).

As a corollary to the research described above, other evidence supports the idea that violent images on television can also influence how viewers feel about their personal vulnerability to crime. This concept has been briefly touched on thus far, and a more in depth examination of this phenomenon is certainly in order. The idea that television can influence personal perceptions of risk is nothing new, and has been the subject of many studies (Bryant, Carveth, & Brown, 1981; Gunter & Wober, 1983; Hawkins & Pingree, 1982; Tyler, 1980; Weaver & Wakshlag, 1986). For the characters depicted on television as victims of violence, Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1978) have worked out a mathematical equation to determine the risk ratio for different types of characters. The risk ratio, as they defined it, is, "a character's chances for positive or negative outcome once involved with violence" (p. 186). For example, women as a group are much more likely to be the victim of a violent crime as compared to other social and demographic groups, therefore, their risk ratio is higher.

As a result of elevated risk ratios for certain groups, viewers are having their perceptions of social power influenced by violent television programming. Demographic groups that are depicted as highly victimized on television are being taught that they need to be more fearful of crime and that others (predominantly white males) are more powerful (as they are depicted as victims less often and, thus, have lower risk ratios). Gerbner and colleagues report, "The pecking order of both general mayhem and killing is dominated by men – American, white, middle-class, and in the prime of life." They continued that, conversely, "At the bottom of the dramatic pecking order, we find women, lower-class people, and old people" (p. 191). More recently, in a study of violence in prime-time programming aired between 1993-2001, Signorielli (2003) confirmed that, "The cultivation perspective has shown that television violence illustrates and provides lessons about power. Violence shows who's on top and who's on the bottom, who gets hurt and who does the hurting" (p. 42).

As a result of these mediated perceptions of power and skewed fears of victimization, Gerbner claimed that viewers have an exaggerated perspective on the occurrence of crime, which he refers to as the 'mean world syndrome.' Specifically, it has been noted that heavy viewers are much more likely to see the world as a mean and scary place as compared to light viewers (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). In their study, Gerbner and Gross asked a series of questions, including "what proportion of people are employed in law enforcement?," "can most people be trusted?," and "During any given week, what are your chances of being involved in some type of violence?" (pp. 191-192). For each question, the researchers provided two options for respondents to select from; one option that accurately reflected the real world and a second option that represented the elevated levels of danger and mistrust exhibited on television. Across all three questions, heavy viewers were more likely to select the "television answer" which represented a heightened perception of the world as a mean and scary place as compared to those who watch less television.

Signorielli (2003) suggested that not only does increased consumption of television foster the mean world syndrome, but levels of violence on television can as well. As she noted, "the more violence there is and the more important it is for the storyline, the more likely viewers believe that they live in a mean and dangerous world" (p. 42). Singer, Singer, and Rapaczynski (1984) observed that children exposed to violent programming could also develop a mean world perspective. They noted, "television portrayals fraught with violence may lead children to

develop a greater belief in a "mean and scary" world" (p. 76). To confirm this, Singer, Singer, and Rapaczynski observed a set of children for a three year period (1980 through 1982), conducting up to six interviews with the children each year and having the parents keep logs of their children's viewing habits over two week periods. In addition to finding that heavy television exposure can lead to elevated levels of restlessness and aggressive behavior, the authors also noted, "Our findings also include some of the first longitudinal evidence on the family patterns and TV viewing patterns that predict children's beliefs about a hostile world" (p. 87).

One final perspective on the mean world syndrome is provided by Potter (1986) who proposed that people who view television as more accurately depicting reality may have higher estimates of the world as a dangerous place. As he claimed, "people who exhibit stronger beliefs of a mean and violent world are those people who are more likely to say that television is a magic window, that they seek out instruction from television, and that they identify with the characters they follow on television shows" (p. 168).

It is from this area of cultivation research that the current study emanates. In terms of cultivation studies on violence and the current study on antisocial behaviors in reality-based programming, findings should be similar in the context of the mean world syndrome. Just as the violence research referenced above has shown an increase in consumers' estimates of the world as a mean place in terms of danger and violence, the current study should reveal similar increased estimates of the world as a mean place in terms of attitudes towards others and perceptions of others' untrustworthiness.

Cultivation Effects of Reality Television

While studies on violent content are the most common application of cultivation theory to media effects research, it is certainly not the only area of study as previously mentioned. Cultivation theory has also been applied to specific types of programs including soap operas (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes, 1981; Carveth & Alexander, 1985; Olson, 1994; Perse, 1986), news (McLeod, 1995; Perse, 1990; Sheley & Ashkins, 1981), religious programming (Hoover, 1990), and talk shows (Davis & Mares, 1998), to name a few. One area that has not been examined, however, is reality-based television shows. As the number of shows has increased over the last six years and their proliferation across networks and cable stations continues to spread, it is important to investigate the impact they are having on viewers' perceptions of reality.

In a study that employed cultivation theory to examine the effects of soap operas, Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes (1981) noted that, "it can be assumed that heavy exposure to any systematically distorted view of the world will result in similarly distorted viewer perceptions" (p. 108). Certainly reality television provides a distorted view, especially in the cases of competition-based reality programs where contestants are forced to compete and eliminate each other. Even though these situations never arise in real-world situations, viewers hold very few reservations about applying the term "reality TV" to these programs.

The term "reality TV" is itself a signal to viewers about what they can expect to see on these shows. Previous studies have shown that perceived reality of televised content can have a direct influence on the strength of subsequent effects. As Hawkins and Pingree (1981) noted, "The perceived reality of television, for example, has been hypothesized to control involvement with viewing and the relevance of what is viewed, and these are believed to lead to greater effects of viewing" (p. 353). Potter (1986) concurs, "viewers who believe that televised content is real are more likely to be influenced by it than are viewers who believe the content to be fictional or stylized" (p. 159).

With this in mind, most would not see it as a stretch to argue that the genre of television that most resembles reality television in terms of content is soap operas. Both genres feature characters that exhibit deceitful, untrustworthy, and manipulative character traits in an attempt to eliminate others who get in their way (Brantley, 2005; Drew, 2004; Fralic, 2005; Perse, 1986). In addition to this, many of the cultivation studies that explored the effects of soap operas also have some applicability to reality shows. In her study of soap operas, Perse (1986) found that, "perceived realism, or the belief that the content portrayed on soap operas was a reflection of reality, was found to be a significant contributor to cultivation" (p. 187). If perceived levels of reality influenced cultivation effects for soap operas, which contain *fictional* characters in *fictional* situations, how much stronger will the cultivation effect be for a genre that features *real* people in *real* situations?

Once it has been established that perceived realism can influence cultivation effects, one need look no further than the genre's moniker ("reality TV") to identify the first reminder viewers receive about the authenticity of what is shown. Potter (1988) has noted that when viewers are bombarded with clues regarding the reality in a particular show, it can increase the effects. He stated "when reality cues about a mediated message are made very explicit, people

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who see the real material will be more likely to exhibit changes in behavior and attitudes in the direction of the depiction than those who see the fictional material" (p. 34). With so many cues about the "realness" of reality programming, what is it that viewers are learning?

Some early cultivation research found that television in general tended to foster higher levels of mistrust among heavy viewers. Jackson-Beeck and Sobal (1980) and Cook, Kendzierski, and Thomas (1983) all found that heavy viewers, more so than light viewers, exhibited these higher levels. If these studies showed that mistrust was raised for heavy viewers of television in general, what will happen to heavy viewers of reality television programs, which often contain elevated and exaggerated levels of mistrust between contestants? One content analysis of non-fictional television programming (which included reality-based programs as well as other non-fiction programming such as news) observed that there were an average of 32.5 antisocial acts per hour depicted in non-fictional television programming (Potter et al., 1997, p. 79). As the study stated, "Non-fictional television presents a very high rate of antisocial activity" (p. 86). This is particularly relevant to the current study as Potter and his colleagues defined antisocial acts to include verbal aggression ("sending noxious symbolic messages," p. 70) and deceit ("intentional misleading of someone for purposes that are detrimental to an individual, group, or institution," p. 71) both of which will be specifically investigated during the course of the current study. In addition, there is also the need to examine the effects of aggression between contestants, levels of acceptability of traditionally anti-social behaviors (such as lying) on the part of contestants, and involvement in knowingly deceitful acts in order to gain advantage over others. The problem with this, as Smith, Nathanson, and Wilson (2002) found in their study, is that, "Prime-time reality programs presented the most problematic content. First, because these programs involve actual human beings, viewers are more likely to attend to them and consider them relevant" (p. 107). While no content analysis of reality-based programming as defined by the current study has been conducted, the above suggest that there may be ample antisocial and culturally unacceptable behavior present in these types of shows to cultivate a mean world effect. The question then becomes, how much does heavy consumption of reality-based television affect viewers' perceptions of reality?

With all of this in mind, the current research will explore two areas of cultivation effects as they relate to reality-based programming and the mean world syndrome. The first phase of the research will explore the effects of competition-based reality programming in general, focusing

on the negative aspects of human behavior that may be learned from these types of shows. The current study will explore each issue as it applies to heavy consumers of television as a whole as compared to light consumers of television, and then narrow the focus to examine the results for heavy viewers of competition-based reality programming as compared with light consumers of competition-based reality programming. As previous studies on mean world effects have shown (e.g., Potter, 1986; Signorielli, 2003), those exposed to higher amounts of television tend to see the world as a more dangerous place than light viewers. The current study will seek to determine if similar results occur with regard to perceptions of antisocial behavior, where heavy consumers of television (and then more specifically competition-based reality shows) will tend to perceive the world as a meaner place in terms of how individuals behave toward each other.

The second phase of research will explore a sub-genre of competition-based reality shows, specifically that of competition-based dating shows where contestants compete with each other in order to win a date. Previous studies (Eschholz, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2003) have identified relationships between television content and corresponding attitudes of real-world fears with regard to violence. The study conducted in Phase II will reveal if non-violent television content (specifically reality-based dating shows) can have a similar impact on viewers' perceptions. As Mander (1977) observed, television is much better suited to show "hate, fear, jealousy, winning, wanting, and violence" than more positive or socially acceptable behaviors (p. 269). If these elements are present across all television content, including reality dating shows, then it follows that mean world effects would result from various types of content.

Study I Research

As illustrated in Chapter I, competition-based reality programs have become notorious for drawing out the worst characteristics of their contestants, namely negative characteristic such as betrayal, deceitfulness, manipulation, and lying. Following the precedent set by decades of cultivation research, the current study predicts that heavy viewers of reality-based programming will perceive the world as much more saturated with these types of behaviors as compared to light viewers.

With so much of competition-based reality programming focused on contestants' ability to "Outwit. Outplay. Outlast" (to quote *Survivor's* tagline), it has become a necessity of the game for alliances to be formed and broken and for contestants to be wary of what others on the show are up to. With that in mind, the first two hypotheses examined how feelings of mistrust may be

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promoted and fostered among television viewers in general, as well as specifically viewers of competition-based reality programming:

> H_1: Heavy consumption of television programming will be positively correlated with elevated views of society as an untrustworthy place.

> H_2: Heavy consumption of competition-based reality programming will be positively correlated with elevated views of society as an untrustworthy place.

In addition to feelings of mistrust towards each other, contestants on competition-based reality programs are also regularly shown lying and deceiving each other in order to advance their positions in the game. Because most of these shows offer confessional video clips where contestants freely admit the fact that they often lie to others, cultivation research would suggest that this would be something that the viewers would incorporate into their own worldview. With that, the second set of hypotheses are as follows:

> H_3: Heavy consumption of television programming will be positively correlated with elevated perceptions of how often people lie and do not tell the truth.

> H_4: Heavy consumption of competition-based reality programming will be positively correlated with elevated perceptions of how often people lie and do not tell the truth.

Ultimately, employing these types of socially unacceptable acts within the context of competition-based reality shows is done in the hopes of staying in the game and becoming the ultimate victor. Some reality show contestants, including the winner of *Big Brother 2* Will Kirby and *Survivor* winner Richard Hatch, have demonstrated that lying, cheating, and manipulating others has the potential to get you everything you want in this regard. And while these contestants may have been the best at it, almost every contestant on competition-based reality shows will at least attempt some sort of socially unacceptable behavior to advance himself or herself. With so many examples of this sort of cut-throat selfishness and individualism being broadcast weekly, it serves to reason that viewers may be adopting a view of the world where acting this way is common and routine. With that in mind, the fifth and sixth hypotheses are:

H$_5$: Heavy consumption of television programming will be positively correlated with elevating feelings that people will do whatever it takes to get ahead in life and achieve success.

H$_6$: Heavy consumption of competition-based reality programming will be positively correlated with elevating feelings that people will do whatever it takes to get ahead in life and achieve success.

Study II Research

In addition to an overall examination of the cultivation effects of reality-based programming, the current study explored one of the many sub-genres of reality television for cultivation effects. More specifically, the second phase of research examined the cultivations effects that result from heavy consumption of competition-based reality dating shows. A study by Ward and Rivadeneyra (1999) on the contribution of television towards adolescents' sexual attitudes revealed that, "TV's countless verbal and visual references to dating and sexual relationships are, indeed, associated with adolescents' own sexual attitudes and expectations" (p. 243). The second phase of the current study determined if television shows specifically designed to highlight these behaviors will have a significant effect on shaping the attitudes viewers have towards dating and dating practices.

To begin, the term "competition-based reality dating shows" (or "reality dating shows" as they will be referred to from here on) are reality programs that specifically focus on members of one sex attempting to win a date or affections of a member of the opposite sex. The format and design of these shows may vary, but the ultimate goal of the contestants is universal. Whether it is 25 men in tuxedoes vying for one woman on *The Bachelorette* or two women in a hot tub trying to impress a man on *ElimiDate*, their goals are ultimately the same in both situations. Just as the competition-based reality shows mentioned above feature contestants willing to perform socially unacceptable behaviors in order to win, so are contestants on reality dating shows.

With most reality dating shows featuring between four and 25 contestants trying to win a date, these shows are as much about beating out other potential date candidates as they are about actually getting a date. And because only a very small portion of the show depicts the winner

alone with his or her date, the focus of these programs is largely the competition that takes place to get to that point. With that in mind, the seventh hypothesis is:

H_7: The amount of competition-based reality dating shows viewed will be positively correlated with respondents' views of dating as a competition, where one must compete for a potential date.

Throughout the course of the program, contestants on reality dating shows can regularly be seen attempting to sabotage other contestants by openly lying in order to make themselves look good and to make others look bad. Additionally, contestants regularly admit to the camera that they have misrepresented themselves or told lies in order to manipulate the person choosing between the contestants. This blatant admission of deception, as well as the positive outcomes that frequently result for those who behave in this way, leads to the eighth hypothesis of the current study:

H_8: The amount of competition-based reality dating shows viewed will be positively correlated with the perception that people lie, manipulate others, and are generally deceitful in order to win the attention of a perspective date.

Finally, reality dating shows can be seen as having several layers of competitions for the contestants to succeed at. On the surface, there are the losers, who do not get a date, and the winner who does. But beyond that, there is also a competition to impress the person choosing between the candidates. What results is not only a desire to win, but also the desire to look significantly more appealing as a date to the person choosing. Regularly, this can lead to arguments between contestants that can become extremely heated as well as a contest of who is willing to go the furthest in order to secure the date, which can range from time in a hot tub, to kissing, to innuendos of sexual activity. Ultimately, contestants are willing to go to extreme lengths in order to be the one chosen for a date, and these behaviors (whether aggressive, sexual, or something else) can lead viewers to think that when it comes to dating, anything is fair game. This line of reasoning leads directly to the ninth and final hypothesis of the current study:

H_9: The amount of competition-based reality dating shows viewed will be positively correlated with the perception that people will do whatever it takes to get a date with a desired person.

CHAPTER IV

Study I

The previous chapters have made the argument that exposure to reality-based programming can have a significant effect on viewers' attitudes and perceptions about reality. What follow are the methodology, results, and discussion of the first part of this overall examination, which will from this point forward be referred to as Study I. Study I was designed to examine the impact that consumption of competition-based reality programming would have on viewers' perceptions of reality, specifically as they relate to lying, trustworthiness, and people's willingness to do whatever it takes to achieve their goals.

Methodology

Participants

Participants were recruited from undergraduate communication courses at Florida State University using convenience sampling methods. These classes represent a diversity of disciplines across campus since subjects were recruited from large lecture classes for non-majors such as public speaking (SPC 2600) and introductory communication classes (e.g., MMC 2000). Some students received extra credit for completing the study, while others received research participation credit.

A total of 607 participants completed surveys for Study I. Subjects fell largely (97.4%) into the 18-24 year old category (mean = 20.49 years old, with one participant failing to identify his/her age). The use of 18-24 year olds for this study is ideal because this is the precise age demographic at and for whom reality-based programs are targeted and developed (Andrejevic, 2003; Nabi, Beily, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003; Oliver & Armstrong, 1995). As Pingree, Hawkins, Hitchon, Gilligan, Radler, Kahlor, Gorham, Kolbeins, Schmidy, and Kannaovakun (2001) noted, "there may also be survey research situations where college students are a particularly appropriate sample. This is where college students themselves have some characteristic that is

important for the conceptual issues of the research" (p. 461). With so much reality-based programming targeted at younger audiences, the use of the demographic described above will best serve the purposes of the current study.

The majority of participants (69.9%) identified themselves as White, with 9.2% identifying themselves as Black, 12.9% identifying themselves as Hispanic/Latino, 4.0% identifying themselves as Asian, and 3.6% identifying themselves as race other than those listed. One participant failed to identify a race. In terms of gender, females accounted for 62.4% or the participants and males accounted for 37.6%. No participants failed to specify a gender.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from classes in the Department of Communication at Florida State University with enrollments ranging from 8 to 200 students. Students were informed that their participation in the survey was voluntary, but that research participation credit or extra credit toward the class would be allocated to those who participated. Students agreeing to participate in the survey were first asked to read and sign an IRB-approved informed consent form (see Appendix A for IRB approval letter and consent form). After signing the consent form, students were given the survey associated with the current study (see Appendix B). The survey for Study I was administered during the first 6-week semester of Summer 2006 (May 9 through June 16), as well as the first three weeks of the Fall semester 2006 (August 28 through September 15). Surveys were administered to the students either by the researcher or by the lead instructor for the course. In cases where the researcher was present, the instructor introduced the researcher and gave a short explanation of how credit would be assigned for participation. In cases where the researcher was not present, the instructors briefly explained the guidelines for completing the survey and distributed the surveys themselves. As completed surveys were collected, data were entered into an SPSS (version 13.0) file for analysis.

Survey

The objective of the survey for Study I was to measure subjects' attitudes about the world as a mean place and their levels of television consumption. Attitudes about the world as a mean place were divided into sub-categories including untrustworthiness, the prevalence of lying, ruthlessness and competitiveness in society, general cynicism, and general mean world items. Items measuring subjects' consumption of television included overall television consumption,

consumption of reality-based programming, and enjoyment of television genres and specific reality-based programs.

Independent Variables

Television Viewing Habits. In order to determine participants' overall exposure to television and their exposure to reality-based programs specifically, two items were included which asked participants to report on their regular television viewing habits. First, to measure overall television exposure, participants were asked to estimate how many hours of television they watch on an average day (out of 24 hours). Second, to measure consumption of reality television programming participants were asked to estimate how many hours of reality-based programming they watch in an average week.

Measuring reality television consumption per week as compared to per day is done in an effort to eliminate participants from basing their estimates on a single day of the week when there may be a high or low number of reality-based programs available during primetime viewing hours. For example, Monday nights have traditionally contained relatively few reality-based programs on the major networks' primetime line-ups, while Thursday nights have been reserved for popular reality-based programs such as *Survivor*, *The Apprentice*, and *American Idol*.

In order to more specifically measure participants' exposure to reality-based programming, an item was included that asked the participants to indicate how often they watch certain reality-based programs. The shows included in this item were *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *The Apprentice*, *The Amazing Race*, *The Bachelor*, *Beauty and the Geek*, and *Project Runway*. These shows were selected based on a) the broad appeal they hold across demographics, and b) their consistently high ratings (as compared to other competition-based reality programs). Participants were asked to indicate how often they watch by using a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Never Watch It") to 5 ("Always Watch It").

Television Enjoyment. Enjoyment of television was also measured as it related to television genres in general and for specific reality-based programs. For enjoyment of genres of programming, participants were asked to indicate their level of general enjoyment for five television genres (Comedy, Drama, News, Reality Programming, and Sports) on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Do Not Enjoy") to 5 ("Enjoy A Lot"). Similarly, participants were asked to indicate their level of enjoyment for specific reality-based shows (as listed above)

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on a five-point graduated scale from 1 ("Do Not Enjoy") to 5 ("Enjoy A Lot"). The selection of these five genres was based on the fact that they represent a majority of the programs aired during primetime television.

Dependent Variables

     General Mean World. Before an examination of the cultivation effects resulting from exposure to reality-based programming could be conducted, general mean world items were included in order to confirm that overall and established cultivation effects were present within the sample. Five items required participants to estimate the chances out of 100 of themselves or someone else being the victim of a crime or of some other crime-related activity occurring. As previous cultivation studies using these items have shown (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Singer, Singer, & Rapaczynski, 1984), participants who watch more television should respond with higher estimates of how often violence-related situations occur. All five general mean world items were used in the Shrum and Bischak (2001) study, which examined fear of crime.

     Trustworthiness. To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, five items were used to measure participants' attitudes regarding how trustworthy they perceive society to be. These items included "In general, the world is a mean and scary place" (#6), "Most people will keep a promise" (#11), "Most people can be trusted" (#13), "I can always depend on people when they tell me they will do something" (#18), and "People take advantage of others in situations where others are less fortunate" (#22). Three of these items (#11, #13 & #18) were originally developed by Rubin, Perse, and Taylor (1988), while the others were developed by the researcher as a result of themes that emerged from a review of the literature. Participants responded to each statement on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

     Truthfulness. To test Hypotheses 3 and 4, five items were employed to measure participants' attitudes about the prevalence of lying and deception that occurs within society. These items included "Most of my close friends and family have lied to me at some point in time" (#7), "People lie all the time" (#15), "Most people talk badly about others behind their backs" (#19), "You have to be skeptical about things other people tell you" (#23), "People regularly do unethical things in order to succeed in life" (#24), and "Manipulation and backstabbing are common methods people employ to get what they want" (#25). All of these items were developed by the researcher as a result of themes that emerged from a review of the

literature. Participants responded to each statement on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Ruthlessness/Competitiveness. To test Hypotheses 5 and 6, six items were employed to measure the degree to which participants view society as ruthless or competitive. These items included "Most people don't care about hurting other people's feelings" (#8), "Most people are not concerned with the welfare of others" (#10), "Most people don't mind hurting others to get ahead in life" (#12), "You should do whatever it takes to achieve your goals" (#16), and "You should always consider the impact your decisions will have on others" (#20). All of these items were developed by the researcher as a result of themes that emerged from a review of the literature. Participants responded to each statement on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Cynicism. In order to measure general levels of cynicism, items from the Faith in People Scale (Rosenberg, 1957) were used. The five-item scale included the statements, "Most people are inclined to help others" (#9), "Most people can be trusted" (#13), If you don't watch yourself, people will take advantage of you" (#14), "No one is going to care much what happens to you, when you get right down to it" (#17), and "Human nature is fundamentally cooperative" (#21). Participants responded to each statement on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Perceived Reality. Perceived reality of reality-based programming was assessed with the statement "How real or true to life do you think reality based shows are?" (item #27). This items was originally employed by Nabi, Beiely, Morgan, and Stitt (2003) in their study exploring the psychological appeal of reality-based programming. For this measure, participants were asked to indicate their response to the question on a seven-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Not At All Real") to 7 ("Very Real").

Results

In an attempt to establish the validity of the current research in comparison to previous cultivation studies, five items were included in Study I that have been used to measure cultivations effects with other samples in previous research (Shrum & Bischak, 2001). As Table 2 illustrates, basic cultivation effects found in other studies were also found in the current research. All five general mean world items were found to have significant correlations with the overall amount of television watched per day ($p<.05$). When the items were correlated with

consumption of reality TV, three were found to be significant at the .05 level while the remaining two items approached significance. Overall, this indicates that the sample used in the current study is appropriate for expanding on cultivation research because the underlying principles remain consistent.

Table 2
General Mean World Cultivation Test

	Chances of seeing a violent crime in NYC	Chances of an average American being involved in a violent crime	Police officers drawing their guns on a given day	Person jogging after dark will be the victim of a violent crime	Chances of witnessing a violent crime
Hours per day you watch TV	.140**	.151**	.203**	.184**	.096*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.018
N	606	606	605	606	606
Hours per day you watch Reality TV	.075	.122**	.162**	.148**	.070
Sig. (2-tailed)	.064	.003	.000	.000	.087
N	607	607	606	607	607

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Data Reduction

The items in Study I measuring participants' social attitudes and beliefs (items 6-25) were subjected to a factor analysis with Varimax rotation. The original 20-item factor analysis yielded a six-factor solution with two of the factors loading with only one item each. The minimum requirement for an item to load into one of the factors was .40, as these are considered the "more important" loadings (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998, p. 111). A subsequent factor analysis was run with seven items removed based on scores loading below .40 (items 6, 7, 17, 19, 20, 21, and 22) and a three-factor solution was produced. Cronbach's alpha for the all 13 items was .823.

Separate factor analyses were conducted on each of the three subfactors examined in Study I. For the first subfactor, three items from the primary factor analysis mentioned above (items 11, 13, and 18) all loaded into a single factor. As a result, responses to these items were

averaged for each participant, yielding a single factor called 'trustworthiness.' As Table 3 illustrates, all items loaded greater than .5, a "practically significant" loading (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The total variance explained by the factor was 60.23%. Cronbach's alpha was .67.

Table 3
Factor Analysis Results for Trustworthiness

Item	Factor 1
"Most people can be trusted" (#13)	.690
"Most people will keep a promise" (#11)	.638
"I can always depend on people when they tell me they will do something" (#18)	.579
Eigenvalue	1.81
Cronbach's alpha	.67
Variance Explained	60.23%

For the second subfactor, four items from the primary factor analysis mentioned above loaded into a single factor. As a result, responses to these items were averaged for each participant, yielding a single factor called 'lying.' As Table 4 illustrates, all items loaded greater than .5. The total variance explained by the factor was 55.35%. Cronbach's alpha was .72.

Table 4
Factor Analysis Results for Lying

Item	Factor 1
"People regularly do unethical things in order to succeed in life" (#24)	.773
"Manipulation and backstabbing are common methods people employ to get what they want" (#25)	.721
"You have to be skeptical about things other people tell you" (#23)	.537
"People lie all the time" (#15)	.509
Eigenvalue	2.21
Cronbach's alpha	.72
Variance Explained	55.35%

For the third and final subfactor, four of the items from the primary factor analysis previously mentioned loaded into a single factor. As a result, responses to these items were averaged for each participant, yielding a single factor called 'ruthlessness/competitiveness.' As Table 5 illustrates, all items loaded greater than .5. The total variance explained by the factor was 56.27%. Cronbach's alpha was .74.

Table 5

Factor Analysis Results for Ruthlessness/Competitiveness

Item	Factor 1
"Most people don't care about hurting other people's feelings" (#8)	.784
"Most people are not concerned with the welfare of others" (#10)	.682
"Most people don't mind hurting others in order to get ahead in life" (#12)	.577
"Most people are inclined to help others" (#9)	.539
Eigenvalue	2.25
Cronbach's alpha	.74
Variance Explained	56.27%

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6 reports all means and standard deviations for variables included in Study I. Specifically, Table 6 provides data associated with television consumption and the dependent variable factors.

H1 & H2: Trustworthiness

The first pair of hypotheses proposed that increased consumption of television in general (Hypothesis 1) and reality TV specifically (Hypothesis 2) would be correlated with increased perceptions of society as an untrustworthy place. In order to test these hypotheses, a linear regression procedure was used. A correlation matrix was produced (see Table 7) showing the relationships between the dependent variable (perceptions of trustworthiness) and the independent variables (overall television consumption and consumption of competition-based reality programming).

Table 6

Means Table for Television Consumption and Dependent Variables for Study I

	n	M	SD
Overall Television Consumption	606	2.729	2.068
Reality Television Consumption	607	.516	.987
Trustworthiness	607	3.074	.675
Lying	607	3.461	.687
Ruthlessness/Competitiveness	604	2.800	.675

As Table 8 shows, the overall model for this regression was found to be significant at the .01 level (p=.003). As Table 8 also indicates, the results for Hypothesis 1 suggest a statistically significant relationship between the variables at the .05 level (p=.037) while the results for Hypothesis 2 suggest a statistically significant relationship between the variables at the .01 level (p=.001).

Table 7

Correlation Matrix for Trustworthiness

		Hours per day you watch TV	Hours per day you watch reality TV	Trustworthiness
Hours per day you watch TV	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	606		
Hours per day you watch reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.403**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	606	607	
Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	-.034	.109**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.402	.007	
	N	606	607	607

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8

Linear Regression for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 on Trustworthiness

	B	SE *B*	β	t	Sig.
Hours per day of watching TV	-.030	.014	-.092	-2.091	.037
Hours per day of watching Reality TV	.119	.036	.144	3.274	.001

Model

R^2	.019
Adj. R^2	.015
F	5.716
df	605
p	.003

What this means is that television consumption, both in general and of reality-based programming specifically, can have an influence on viewers' perceptions of trustworthiness. A negative correlation was found, however, between general television consumption and these attitudes, which will be discussed in more detail below. A hierarchical regression was also conducted, but the subsequent analysis provided no added clarity. Overall, due to the negative relationship, Hypothesis 2 was supported but Hypothesis 1 was not.

As a follow-up analysis, a one-way analysis of variance procedure was conducted to determine if comparing high versus low consumers of television (of television in general and reality TV specifically) would show significant differences in perceptions of trustworthiness. For consumption of television in general, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of television watched per day: Low (0 to 1.5 hours per day, N=180), Medium (2 to 3 hours per day, N=275), and High (3.5 or more hours per day, N=165). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared, as is common with cultivation studies. As Table 9 shows, no significant difference was found between Low and High consumers of television in terms of perceptions of trustworthiness (p=.183).

Table 9
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Television in General on Trustworthiness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.765	1	.765	1.784	.183
Within Groups	147.108	343	.429		
Total	147.873	344			

For the analysis of variance on consumption of reality television, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality television watched per day: Low (0 to .1 hours per day, N=157), Medium (.11 to .49 hours per day, N=275), and High (.5 or more hours per day, N=175). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 10 shows, there was found to be a significant difference between Low and High consumers of reality television in terms of perceptions of trustworthiness (p=.014). These findings support those from above (see Table 8) indicating that consumption of competition-based reality programming has an influence on viewers' perceptions of trustworthiness. Specifically, heavy viewers are more likely to see the world as less trustworthy than light viewers.

Table 10
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Reality Television on Trustworthiness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.729	1	2.729	6.129	.014
Within Groups	146.953	330	.445		
Total	149.682	331			

Lying

The second pair of hypotheses proposed that increased consumption of television in general (Hypothesis 3) and reality TV specifically (Hypothesis 4) would be correlated with increased perceptions of how often people lie and do not tell the truth. In order to test these hypotheses, a linear regression procedure was used. A correlation matrix was produced (see Table 11) showing the relationships between the dependent variable (perceptions of lying) and the independent variables (overall television consumption and consumption of competition-based reality programming). As Table 12 shows, the overall model for this regression was found to be significant at the .05 level (p=.031). As Table 12 also indicates, the results for Hypothesis 3 suggest a statistically significant relationship between the variables at the .05 level (p=.023). Additionally, the results for Hypothesis 4 also suggest a statistically significant relationship between the variables at the .05 level (p=.033).

Table 11
Correlation Matrix for Lying

		Hours per day you watch TV	Hours per day you watch reality TV	Lying
Hours per day you watch TV	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	606		
Hours per day you watch reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.403**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	606	607	
Lying	Pearson Correlation	-.063	.054	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.123	.182	
	N	606	607	607

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

What this means is that television consumption, both in general and of reality-based programming specifically, can have an influence on viewers' perceptions of the prevalence of lying. Similar to the results for Hypothesis 1, a negative correlation was found between general television consumption and attitudes about lying, which will be discussed in more detail below. Overall, because of the negative relationship found with general television consumption, Hypothesis 4 was supported but Hypothesis 3 was not.

Table 12
Linear Regression for Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 on Lying

	B	SE *B*	β	t	Sig.
Hours per day of watching TV	-.034	.015	-.101	-2.279	.023
Hours per day of watching Reality TV	.079	.037	.095	2.137	.033

Model

R^2	.011
Adj. R^2	.008
F	3.485
df	605
p	.031

As a follow-up analysis, a one-way analysis of variance procedure was conducted to determine if comparing high versus low consumers of television (of television in general and reality TV specifically) would show significant differences in perceptions of lying. For consumption of television in general, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of television watched per day: Low (0 to 1.5 hours per day, N=180), Medium (2 to 3 hours per day, N=275), and High (3.5 or more hours per day, N=165). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 13 shows, there was not found to be a significant difference between Low and High consumers of television in terms of perceptions of trustworthiness (p=.263).

Table 13
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Television in General on Lying

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.589	1	.589	1.258	.263
Within Groups	160.574	343	.468		
Total	161.162	344			

For the analysis of variance on consumption of reality television, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality television watched per day: Low (0 to .1 hours per day, N=157), Medium (.11 to .49 hours per day, N=275), and High (.5 or more hours per day, N=175). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 14 shows, no significant difference was found between Low and High consumers of reality television in terms of perceptions of trustworthiness (p=.489).

Table 14
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Reality Television on Lying

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.234	1	.234	.480	.489
Within Groups	160.887	330	.448		
Total	160.121	331			

Ruthlessness/Competitiveness

The third pair of hypotheses proposed that increased consumption of television in general (Hypothesis 5) and reality TV specifically (Hypothesis 6) would be correlated with increased perceptions that people will do get what they want and achieve their goals. A correlation matrix was produced (see Table 15) showing the relationships between the dependent variable (perceptions of ruthlessness/competitiveness) and the independent variables (overall television consumption and consumption of competition-based reality programming). In order to test these hypotheses, a linear regression procedure was used. As Table 16 shows, the overall model for this regression was not found to be significant at the .01 level (p=.162). As Table 16 indicates, the results for Hypothesis 5 were not found to have a statistically significant relationship at the .05 level (p=.287). Also, Hypothesis 6 was not found to be significant at the .05 level (p=.060).

What this means is that television consumption, both in general and of reality-based programming specifically, were not found to influence viewers' perceptions of ruthlessness or competitiveness. A hierarchical regression was also conducted, but the subsequent analysis provided no added clarity. Therefore, both Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 6 were not supported.

Table 15
Correlation Matrix for Ruthlessness/Competitiveness

		Hours per day you watch TV	Hours per day you watch reality TV	Ruthlessness/ Competitiveness
Hours per day you watch TV	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	606		
Hours per day you watch reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.403[**]	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	606	607	
Ruthlessness/ Competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	-.014	.086[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.735	.036	
	N	603	604	604

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
[*]. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 16
Linear Regression for Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 6 on Ruthlessness/Competitiveness

	B	SE *B*	β	t	Sig.
Hours per day of watching TV	-.015	.014	-.047	-1.066	.287
Hours per day of watching Reality TV	.069	.037	.084	1.828	.060

Model

R^2	.006
Adj. R^2	.003
F	1.828
df	602
p	.162

As a follow-up analysis, a one-way analysis of variance procedure was conducted to determine if comparing high versus low consumers of television (of television in general and reality TV specifically) would show significant differences in perceptions of ruthlessness/selfishness. For consumption of television in general, the sample was divided into

three groups based on total hours of television watched per day: Low (0 to 1.5 hours per day, N=180), Medium (2 to 3 hours per day, N=275), and High (3.5 or more hours per day, N=165). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 17 shows, no significant difference was found between Low and High consumers of television in terms of perceptions of trustworthiness (p=.183).

Table 17
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Television in General on Ruthlessness/Competitiveness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.000	1	.000	.000	.990
Within Groups	157.028	341	.460		
Total	157.028	342			

For the analysis of variance on consumption of reality television, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality television watched per day: Low (0 to .1 hours per day, N=157), Medium (.11 to .49 hours per day, N=275), and High (.5 or more hours per day, N=175). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 18 shows, no significant difference was found between Low and High consumers of reality television in terms of perceptions of trustworthiness (p=.275).

Table 18
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Reality Television on Ruthlessness/Competitiveness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.556	1	.556	1.95	.275
Within Groups	155.275	328	.473		
Total	155.841	329			

Cultivation Differential

A common value reported in cultivation studies is the difference in the observed scores between the perceptions of heavy viewers and light viewers. Though not a primary focus of the current study, these values are reported in Table 19.

Table 19

Means Table for Heavy versus Light Viewers and Cultivation Differential for Study I

	Heavy Viewers	Light Viewers	Cultivation Differential
Trustworthiness			
Overall TV	3.069	3.163	-.094
Reality TV	3.175[a]	2.994[b]	+.181
Lying			
Overall TV	3.441	3.524	-.083
Reality TV	3.494	3.441	+.053
Ruthlessness/Competitiveness			
Overall TV	2.833	2.834	-.001
Reality TV	2.857	2.774	+.083

Note. Means having subscripts are statistically different at the .05 level.

Discussion

The purpose of Study I was to determine if exposure to competition-based reality programming would influence viewers' perceptions of the world as a mean and scary place. As evidenced by Hypothesis 2, and Hypothesis 4, this seems to be the case. The results for both of these hypotheses confirmed that viewers who watched higher levels of reality television significantly correlated with increased perceptions of untrustworthiness and lying present in today's society.

Study I did, however, reveal a negative relationship between consumption of television in general and perceptions of a mean world. Results from Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 indicate that heavier consumption of television will yield perceptions of society as a more trustworthy place (H1) and with less prevalence of lying (H3). The fact that the correlation strength for Hypothesis 3 was one of the largest in Study I has interesting implications for cultivation

research. How these results may have occurred and what they mean for cultivation research will be explored in more depth in Chapter VI.

One of the limitations inherent with Study I is the question of generalizibility resulting from drawing a sample from a university population. Despite reality-based programming being predominantly targeted towards the 18-24 year old demographic, cultivation effects may manifest differently in different portions of the population. Despite this, however, the results do indicate a strong correlation between perceptions of society and television consumption within this group, and future studies with broader populations would benefit the overall applicability of the research.

Another area with weakness in Study I is the set of variables used to test for ruthlessness/competitiveness. Despite high loading scores in the factor analysis, the overall model for the linear regression on hypotheses 5 and 6 was not significant. A more focused study specifically on the ruthlessness, competitiveness, and selfishness might produce better results. But despite these flaws, Hypothesis 6 was found to be approaching significance, which suggests that more clearly defined variables may yield significant results in this area.

Finally, it may be worth investigating how voyeur-based reality programming would effect perceptions of untrustworthiness, lying, and ruthlessness. Certainly shows such as *The Real World*, *The Osbournes*, *House of Carters*, and *My Super Sweet 16*, to some degree, all depict the same antisocial behaviors as competition-based reality programs. Each of these shows has become infamous for fighting, manipulation, and selfishness to the point where viewers tune in specifically for those reasons. Expanding this line of research to encompass the other type of reality television would give researchers a more complete picture of the cultivation effects of reality-based programming as a whole.

CHAPTER V

Study II

While the previous chapter examined how competition-based reality programming can have a significant effect on viewers' attitudes and perceptions about reality, the current chapter focuses more specifically on competition-based reality programs where the theme or focus is on dating. What follow are the methodology, results, and discussion of the first part of this overall examination, which will from this point forward be referred to as Study II.

Methodology

Participants

Participants were recruited from undergraduate communication courses at Florida State University using convenience sampling methods. These classes represent a diversity of disciplines across campus since subjects were recruited from large lecture classes for non-majors such as public speaking (SPC 2600) and introductory communication classes (e.g., MMC 2000). Some students received extra credit for completing the study, while others received research participation credit.

A total of 557 participants completed surveys for Study II. Subjects fell largely (97.1%) into the 18-24 year old category (mean = 20.53 years old, with no participants failing to identify their age).

The majority of participants (68.8%) identified themselves as White, with 17.6% identifying themselves as Black, 9.9% identifying themselves as Hispanic/Latino, 1.6% identifying themselves as Asian, and 2.0% identifying themselves as race other than those listed. Three participants failed to identify a race. In terms of gender, females accounted for 69.3% or the participants and males accounted for 30.5%. One participant failed to specify his/her gender.

Procedure

        Participants were recruited from classes in the Department of Communication at Florida State University with enrollments ranging from 8 to 200 students. Students were informed that their participation in the survey was voluntary, but that research participation credit or extra credit toward the class would be allocated to those who participated. Students agreeing to participate in the survey were first asked to read and sign an IRB-approved informed consent form (see Appendix A for IRB approval letter and consent form). After signing the consent form, students were given the survey associated with the current study (see Appendix C). The survey for Study II was administered during the second 6-week session of Summer 2006 (June 26 through August 4), as well as the first three weeks of the Fall semester 2006 (August 28 through September 15). Surveys were administered to the students either by the researcher or by the lead instructor for the course. In cases where the researcher was present, the instructor introduced the researcher and gave a short explanation of how credit would be assigned for participation. In cases where the researcher was not present, the instructors briefly explained the guidelines for completing the survey and distributed the surveys themselves. As completed surveys were collected, data were entered into an SPSS (version 13.0) file for analysis.

Survey

        The objective of Study II was to measure participants' attitudes towards dating as a result of exposure to reality-based dating programs. To assess participants' consumption of television in general and of reality-based dating programs specifically, participants were asked to indicate levels of televisions consumption per day, levels of reality-based programming consumption per week, levels of reality-based dating programming per week, as well as enjoyment of certain television genres and specific reality-based dating programs. Attitudes about dating were derived by asking participants to evaluate statements about dating as a competition, levels of truthfulness when dating, ruthlessness in dating, general cynicism, and to answer several statements about their personal dating history.

Independent Variables

        Television Viewing Habits. In order to determine participants' overall exposure to television, three items were included which asked participants to report on their overall television consumption patterns. These items included asking participants about how many hours of television they watch on an average day, their weekly consumption of reality-based

programming, and more specifically their weekly consumption of reality-based dating programming.

In order to more specifically measure participants' exposure to reality-based dating programs, an item was included that asked the participants to indicate how often they watch certain reality dating shows. The shows included in this item were *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Average Joe*, *The 5th Wheel*, *Elimidate*, *Next*, *Temptation Island*, *Date My Mom*, *Blind Date*, *Dismissed*, *The Real World*, and *Road Rules*. These shows were selected based on a) the broad appeal they hold across demographics, and b) their consistently high ratings (as compared to other competition-based reality dating programs). It should be noted that while *The Real World* and *Road Rules* and not specifically reality dating shows, much of the content and drama depicted on the shows revolve around cast members becoming attracted to one another and initiating dating behaviors while on the show. Participants were asked to indicate how often the watch by using a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Never Watch It") to 5 ("Always Watch It"). The independent measures of total television consumption per day and consumption of reality-based programming per week from Study I were employed in Study II.

Television Enjoyment. Enjoyment of television was also measured as it related to specific reality-based dating programs and for television genres in general. As in Study I, participants were asked to indicate their level of general enjoyment for five television genres (Comedy, Drama, News, Reality Programming, and Sports) on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Do Not Enjoy") to 5 ("Enjoy A Lot"). The selection of these five genres was based on the fact that they represent a majority of the programs aired during primetime television. Additionally, participants were asked to indicate their level of enjoyment for specific reality-based dating shows (as listed above) on a five-point graduated scale from 1 ("Do Not Enjoy") to 5 ("Enjoy A Lot").

Dating History. Participants were asked to answer several questions pertaining to their personal experiences with dating. These seven items required participants to respond by answering "Yes," "No," or "N/A" (Not Applicable) to each question. These items were developed by the researcher from observing some of the behaviors and scenarios commonly depicted on reality-based dating programs.

Dependent Variables

Dating as a competition. To test hypothesis 7, seven items were employed to measure the degree to which participants view dating as a competition. These items included "In today's society, dating is a competition in which there are winners and losers" (#1), "Not all people are in the same 'league' when it comes to dating" (#4), "In general, only highly attractive people date other highly attractive people" (#7), "Dating can be compared to a game or recreational sport" (#11), "There are 'rules' that people must know in order to successfully attract a potential date" (#15), "Using her body and looks is the best way for a woman to attract a man" (#20), and "If more than one woman is interested in a man, the woman will use her sexuality to get his attention (#23). Two of these items (#11 & #20) were originally developed and employed by Ward (2002), while the others were developed by the researcher as a result of themes that emerged from a review of the literature. Participants responded to each statement on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Lying in dating. To test hypothesis 8, five items were employed to measure the degree to which participants felt that lying and telling lies was a common practice in dating situations. These items included "People often try to make others look bad in order to make themselves appear more appealing as a potential date" (#2), "People often present a false image of themselves to potential dates in order to impress them" (#5), "People lie all the time in order to get dates with people they find attractive" (#8), "It is common for people to use manipulation in order to get a date with someone they find attractive" (#12), and "You have to be skeptical about things other people tell you when considering dating them" (#16). All of these items were developed by the researcher as a result of themes that emerged from a review of the literature. Participants responded to each statement on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Ruthlessness in dating. To test hypothesis 9, six items were employed to measure participants' perceptions of how far people are willing to go in dating another person. These items included "Most people are not concerned with hurting the feelings of someone they are 'just dating'" (#3), "Most people don't mind hurting others to get a date with someone they find attractive" (#6), "You should do whatever it takes to get a date with someone you like" (#10), "You should always consider the impact your decisions will have on the person you are dating" (#14), "People regularly do unethical things in order to get dates with people they like" (#17),

and "Friends backstabbing each other in order to get a date with an attractive person is a common occurrence" (#19). All of these items were developed by the researcher as a result of themes that emerged from a review of the literature. Participants responded to each statement on a five-point graduated scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Commitment. To determine the impact exposure to reality-based dating shows may have on long-term commitment values, the commitment subscale from Sternberg's (1988) Triangular Love Scale was used. The use of the Triangular Love Scale in contemporary scholarly research is still very common as evidenced in Kurdek (1995), Sternberg (1997), Lemieux and Hale (200), Means (2001), Lemieux and Hale (2002), Wojciszke (2002), and Andrews (2003). The current study utilizes the commitment subscale independent of the rest of the Triangular Love Scale as used in other research such as Fitzpatrick and Sollie (1999) and Sanderson and Kurdek (1993). The seven items drawn from Sternberg's subscale consist of statements about long-term relationship goals and ideals which require participants to indicate their level of agreement on a 9-point graduated scale (as in the original) ranging from 1("Disagree") to 9 ("Agree").

The dependent measures of cynicism (items #9, #13, #18, #21, & #22) and perceived reality (item #44) from Study I were employed in Study II.

Results

Prior to examining Hypotheses 7 through 9, a linear regression was conducted to determine if exposure to television programming had influenced participants' attitudes and beliefs toward romantic love. The seven items incorporated into Study II from Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale (items 24-30, see Appendix C) were averaged and regressed against the three items regarding to television consumption (items 38-40, see Appendix C). The model for this regression was not found to be significant at the .05 level, and neither was there found to be a statistically significant relationship between television consumption and attitudes toward love (see Table 20).

Table 20

Linear Regression on Television Consumption and Attitudes toward Love

	B	SE *B*	β	t	Sig.
Hours per day of watching TV	-.051	.028	-.083	-1.815	.070
Hours per day of watching Reality TV	.016	.012	.076	1.404	.161
Hours per day of watching Dating-Reality TV	-.020	.025	-.041	-.787	.431

Model

R^2	.008
Adj. R^2	.002
F	1.419
df	549
p	.236

Data Reduction

The items in Study II measuring participants' overall social attitudes and beliefs as well as those specifically pertaining to dating (items 1-23) were subjected to a factor analysis with Varimax rotation. The original 23-item factor analysis yielded a six factor solution with two of the factors loading with only one item each. The minimum requirement for an item to load into one of the factors was .40, as these are considered the "more important" loadings (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998, p. 111). A subsequent factor analysis was run with seven items removed based on scores loading below .40 (items 7, 9, 16, 21, and 22) and a three factor solution was produced. Cronbach's alpha for the all 18 items was .808.

Separate factor analyses were conducted on each of the three subfactor examined in Study II. For the first subfactor, five items from the primary factor analysis mentioned above all loaded into a single factor. As a result, responses to these items were averaged for each participant, yielding a single factor called 'dating as a competition.' As Table 21 illustrates, all items loaded greater than .4. The total variance explained by the factor was 42.84%. Cronbach's alpha was .66.

Table 21

Factor Analysis Results for Dating as a Competition

Item	Factor 1
"In today's society, dating is a competition in which there are winners and losers" (#1)	.646
"Dating can be compared to a game or Recreational sport" (#11)	.593
"Not all people are in the same 'league' when it comes to dating" (#4)	.551
"There are 'rules' people must know in order to successfully attract a potential date" (#15)	.441
"Using her body and looks is the best way for a woman to attract a man" (#20)	.427
Eigenvalue	2.14
Cronbach's alpha	.66
Variance Explained	42.84%

For the second subfactor, four items from the primary factor analysis mentioned above loaded into a single factor. As a result, responses to these items were averaged for each participant, yielding a single factor called 'lying and manipulation.' As Table 22 illustrates, all items loaded greater than .5, a "practically significant" loading (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The total variance explained by the factor was 55.73%. Cronbach's alpha was .73.

Table 22

Factor Analysis Results for Lying and Manipulation

Item	Factor 1
"People regularly do unethical things in order to get dates with people they like" (#17)	.741
"It is common for people to use manipulation in order to get a date with someone they find attractive" (#12)	.679
"People lie all the time in order to get dates with people they find attractive" (#8)	.572
"Friends backstabbing each other in order to get a date with an attractive person is a common occurrence" (#19)	.571
Eigenvalue	2.23
Cronbach's alpha	.73
Variance Explained	55.73%

For the third and final subfactor, three items from the primary factor analysis previously mentioned loaded into a single factor. As a result, responses to these items were averaged for each participant, yielding a single factor called 'ruthlessness/competitiveness in dating.' As Table 23 illustrates, all items loaded greater than .4. The total variance explained by the factor was 55.89%. Cronbach's alpha was .60.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 24 reports all means and standard deviations for variables included in Study II. Specifically, Table 6 provides data associated with television consumption and the dependent variable factors.

Table 23
Factor Analysis Results for Ruthlessness/Competitiveness in Dating

Item	Factor 1
"Most people don't mind hurting others to get a date with someone they find attractive" (#6)	.696
"People often try to make others look bad in order to make themselves appear more appealing to a potential date" (#2)	.591
"Most people are not concerned with hurting the feelings of someone they are 'just dating'" (#3)	.465
Eigenvalue	1.68
Cronbach's alpha	.60
Variance Explained	55.89%

Table 24
Means Table for Television Consumption and Dependent Variables for Study II

	n	M	SD
Overall Television Consumption	557	2.742	2.020
Reality Television Consumption	557	.558	.826
Dating Reality Television Consumption	557	.188	.397
Dating as a Competition	556	3.098	.708
Lying and Manipulation	557	3.169	.716
Ruthlessness/Competitiveness in Dating	556	3.365	.699

H7: Dating as a Competition

The first hypothesis put forth in Study II proposed that increased consumption of competition-based reality-dating shows would be correlated with increased perceptions of dating as a competition, where individuals must compete for a potential date. In order to test this hypothesis, a linear regression procedure was used. A correlation matrix was produced (see Table 25) showing the relationships between the dependent variable (perceptions of dating as a competition) and the independent variables (overall television consumption, consumption of competition-based reality programming, and consumption of competition-based reality dating programming).

As Table 26 shows, the overall model for this regression was found to be significant at the .01 level (p=.004). As Table 26 also indicates, the results for Hypothesis 7 were not found to have statistically significant relationships between the consumption of television in general or the consumption of competition-based reality dating programming at the .05 level (p=.601). However, a statistically significant relationship was found to be present between the perception of dating as a competition and consumption of competition-based reality programming in general at the .05 level (p=.016).

What this means is that consumption of competition-based reality programming as a whole was found to influence perceptions of dating as a competition. Television consumption in general and consumption of competition-based reality dating shows, however, were not found to influence viewers' perceptions of dating as a competition. A hierarchical regression was also conducted, but the subsequent analysis provided no added clarity. Despite all of this, Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Table 25
Correlation Matrix for Dating as a Competition

		Hours per day you watch TV	Hours per day you watch reality TV	Hours per day you watch dating reality TV	Dating as a competition
Hours per day you watch TV	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	557			
Hours per day you watch reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.348**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	557	557		
Hours per day you watch dating reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.185**	.583**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	556	556	556	
Dating as a competition	Pearson Correlation	.058	.153**	.111**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.169	.000	.009	
	N	556	556	555	556

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 26
Linear Regression for Hypothesis 7 on Dating as a Competition

	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
Hours per day of watching TV	.002	.016	.006	.129	.897
Hours per day of watching Reality TV	.017	.007	.134	2.408	.016
Hours per day of watching reality dating programming	.007	.014	.028	.523	.601

Model

R^2	.024
Adj. R^2	.019
F	4.512
df	554
p	.004

As a follow-up analysis, a one-way analysis of variance procedure was conducted to determine if comparing high versus low consumers of television (of television in general, competition-based reality programming, and competition-based reality dating programming) would show significant differences in perceptions of dating as a competition. For consumption of television in general, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of television watched per day: Low (0 to 1.5 hours per day, N=165), Medium (2 to 3 hours per day, N=247), and High (3.5 or more hours per day, N=145). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 27 shows, a significant difference was not found between Low and High consumers of television in terms of perceptions of dating as a competition (p=.131).

Table 27
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Television in General on Dating as a Competition

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.039	1	1.039	2.298	.131
Within Groups	138.850	307	.452		
Total	139.890	308			

For the analysis of variance on consumption of reality television, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality television watched per day: Low (0 to .1 hours per day, N=121), Medium (.11 to .49 hours per day, N=261), and High (.5 or more hours per day, N=175). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 28 shows, a significant difference was found between Low and High consumers of reality television in terms of perceptions of dating as a competition (p=.015). These findings support those from above (see Table 26) indicating that consumption of competition-based reality programming has an influence on viewers' perceptions of dating as a competition.

Table 28
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Reality Television on Dating as a Competition

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.947	1	2.947	5.931	.015
Within Groups	145.604	293	.497		
Total	148.551	294			

Finally, for the analysis of variance on consumption of reality dating television, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality dating television watched per day: Low (0 hours per day, N=283), Medium (.01 to .25 hours per day, N=141), and High (.26 or more hours per day, N=133). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 29 shows, a significant difference was found between Low and High consumers of reality television in terms of perceptions of dating as a competition (p=.000). These findings contrast those from above (see Table 26), suggesting that consumption of competition-based reality dating programming has an influence on viewers' perceptions of dating as a competition.

Although this does not directly support Hypothesis 7, it does indicate that further study may yield some statistically significant relationship between consumption of competition-based reality dating programming and the perception of dating as a competition.

Table 29
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Reality Dating Television on Dating as a Competition

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.295	1	8.295	16.870	.000
Within Groups	203.070	413	.492		
Total	211.365	414			

H8: Lying and Manipulation

The second hypothesis put forth in Study II proposed that increased consumption of competition-based reality-dating shows would be correlated with increased perceptions that people lie, manipulate others, and are generally deceitful in order to win the attention of a perspective date. In order to test this hypothesis, a linear regression procedure was used. A correlation matrix was produced (see Table 30) showing the relationships between the dependent variable (perceptions of dating as a competition) and the independent variables (overall television consumption, consumption of competition-based reality programming, and consumption of competition-based reality dating programming).

As Table 31 shows, the overall model was not found to be significant at the .05 level (p=.083). As Table 31 also shows, the results for Hypothesis 8 were not found to have a statistically significant relationship between perceptions of lying and manipulation in dating and any of the independent variables (consumption of television in general, consumption of competition-based reality shows, and consumption of competition-based reality dating shows) at the .05 level.

Table 30
Correlation Matrix for Lying and Manipulation

		Hours per day you watch TV	Hours per day you watch reality TV	Hours per day you watch dating reality TV	Lying and manipulation
Hours per day you watch TV	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	557			
Hours per day you watch reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.348**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	557	557		
Hours per day you watch dating reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.185**	.583**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	556	556	556	
Lying and manipulation	Pearson Correlation	-.007	.097*	.074	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.871	.022	.080	
	N	557	557	556	557

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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What this means is that consumption of television as a whole was not found to influence perceptions of lying and manipulation in dating. A hierarchical regression was also conducted, but the subsequent analysis provided no added clarity. Because of this, Hypothesis 8 was not supported.

As a follow-up analysis, a one-way analysis of variance procedure was conducted to determine if comparing high versus low consumers of television (of television in general, competition-based reality programming, and competition-based reality dating programming) would show significant differences in perceptions of lying and manipulation in dating. For consumption of television in general, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of television watched per day: Low (0 to 1.5 hours per day, N=165), Medium (2 to 3 hours per day, N=247), and High (3.5 or more hours per day, N=145). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 32 shows, a significant difference was not found between Low and High consumers of television in terms of perceptions of lying and manipulation in dating (p=.948).

Table 31
Linear Regression for Hypothesis 8 on Lying and Manipulation

	B	SE *B*	β	t	Sig.
Hours per day of watching TV	-.017	.016	-.049	-1.090	.276
Hours per day of watching Reality TV	.012	.007	.099	1.818	.070
Hours per day of watching reality dating programming	.007	.013	.026	.494	.621

Model

R^2	.012
Adj. R^2	.007
F	2.241
df	555
p	.083

Table 32
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Television in General on Lying and Manipulation in Dating

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.002	1	.002	.004	.948
Within Groups	155.692	308	.505		
Total	155.694	309			

For the analysis of variance on consumption of reality television, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality television watched per day: Low (0 to .1 hours per day, N=121), Medium (.11 to .49 hours per day, N=261), and High (.5 or more hours per day, N=175). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 33 shows, a significant difference was not found between Low and High consumers of reality television in terms of perceptions of lying and manipulation in dating (p=.686).

Table 33
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Reality Television on Lying and Manipulation in Dating

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.086	1	.086	.163	.686
Within Groups	154.823	294	.527		
Total	154.909	295			

Finally, for the analysis of variance on consumption of reality dating television, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality dating television watched per day: Low (0 hours per day, N=283), Medium (.01 to .25 hours per day, N=141), and High (.26 or more hours per day, N=133). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 34 shows, a significant difference was not found between

Low and High consumers of reality dating television in terms of perceptions of lying and manipulation in dating (p=.104).

Table 34
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Reality Dating Television on Lying and Manipulation in Dating

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.367	1	1.367	2.661	.104
Within Groups	212.604	414	.514		
Total	213.971	415			

H9: Ruthlessness/Selfishness

The third hypothesis put forth in the current study proposed that increased consumption of competition-based reality-dating shows would be correlated with increased perceptions that people will do whatever it takes to get a date with a desired person. In order to test this hypothesis, a linear regression procedure was used. A correlation matrix was produced (see Table 35) showing the relationships between the dependent variable (perceptions of ruthlessness/selfishness in dating) and the independent variables (overall television consumption, consumption of competition-based reality programming, and consumption of competition-based reality dating programming).

As Table 36 indicates, the overall model was not found to be significant at the .05 level (p=.305). As Table 36 also shows, the results for Hypothesis 9 were not found to have a statistically significant relationship between perceptions of ruthlessness/selfishness in dating and any of the independent variables at the .05 level.

What this means is that consumption of television as a whole was not found to influence perceptions of ruthlessness/selfishness in dating. A hierarchical regression was also conducted, but the subsequent analysis provided no added clarity. Because of this, Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

As a follow-up analysis, a one-way analysis of variance procedure was conducted to determine if comparing high versus low consumers of television (of television in general, competition-based reality programming, and competition-based reality dating programming) would show significant differences in perceptions of ruthlessness/selfishness in dating. For consumption of television in general, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of television watched per day: Low (0 to 1.5 hours per day, N=165), Medium (2 to 3 hours per day, N=247), and High (3.5 or more hours per day, N=145). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 37 shows, a significant difference was not found between Low and High consumers of television in terms of perceptions of ruthlessness/selfishness in dating (p=.287).

Table 35
Correlation Matrix for Ruthlessness/Selfishness

		Hours per day you watch TV	Hours per day you watch reality TV	Hours per day you watch dating reality TV	Ruthlessness/ Selfishness
Hours per day you watch TV	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	557			
Hours per day you watch reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.348**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	557	557		
Hours per day you watch dating reality TV	Pearson Correlation	.185**	.583**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	556	556	556	
Ruthlessness/ Selfishness	Pearson Correlation	.058	.062	.064	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.168	.144	.130	
	N	556	556	555	556

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 36
Linear Regression for Hypothesis 9 on Ruthlessness/Selfishness

	B	SE *B*	β	t	Sig.
Hours per day of watching TV	.014	.016	.041	.914	.361
Hours per day of watching Reality TV	.003	.007	.022	.410	.682
Hours per day of watching reality dating programming	.011	.013	.044	.840	.401

Model

R^2	.007
Adj. R^2	.001
F	1.210
df	554
p	.305

Table 37
ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Television in General on Ruthlessness/Selfishness in Dating

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.587	1	.587	1.140	.287
Within Groups	158.108	307	.515		
Total	158.695	308			

For the analysis of variance on consumption of reality television, the sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality television watched per day: Low (0 to .1 hours per day, N=121), Medium (.11 to .49 hours per day, N=261), and High (.5 or more hours per day, N=175). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and High groups were compared. As Table 38 shows, a significant difference was not found between Low and High

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consumers of reality television in terms of perceptions of ruthlessness/selfishness in dating
(p=.436).

Table 38
*ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Reality Television on Ruthlessness/Selfishness in
Dating*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.337	1	.337	.608	.436
Within Groups	162.523	293	.555		
Total	162.860	294			

Finally, for the analysis of variance on consumption of reality dating television, the
sample was divided into three groups based on total hours of reality dating television watched
per day: Low (0 hours per day, N=283), Medium (.01 to .25 hours per day, N=141), and High
(.26 or more hours per day, N=133). The Medium group was dropped and only the Low and
High groups were compared. As Table 39 shows, a significant difference was not found between
Low and High consumers of reality television in terms of perceptions of ruthlessness/selfishness
in dating (p=.104), although it is approaching significance at the .05 level.

Table 39
*ANOVA Results for High vs. Low Consumers of Dating Reality Television on
Ruthlessness/Selfishness in Dating*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.698	1	1.698	3.482	.063
Within Groups	201.425	413	.488		
Total	203.123	414			

Cultivation Differential

A common value reported in cultivation studies is the difference in the observed scores between the perceptions of heavy viewers and light viewers. Though not a primary focus of the current study, these values are reported in Table 40.

Table 40

Means Table for Heavy versus Light Viewers and Cultivation Differential for Study II

	Heavy Viewers	Light Viewers	Cultivation Differential
Dating as a Competition			
Overall TV	3.161	3.045	+.116
Reality TV	3.238[a]	3.035[b]	+.203
Dating Reality TV	3.265[c]	2.962[d]	+.303
Lying and Manipulation			
Overall TV	3.169	3.164	+.005
Reality TV	3.237	3.206	+.031
Dating Reality TV	3.252	3.129	+.123
Ruthlessness/Competitiveness in Dating			
Overall TV	3.417	3.329	+.088
Reality TV	3.397	3.328	+.069
Dating Reality TV	3.450	3.312	+.138

Note. Means having subscripts are statistically different at the .05 level.

Discussion

The purpose of Study II was to determine if exposure to competition-based reality dating programming would influence viewers' perceptions of the current state of dating and how ones initiates getting a date. While none of the hypotheses proposed in Study II were directly supported, Hypothesis 7 and Hypothesis 8 yielded results that indicate a possible trend in this direction. The results for both of these hypotheses suggest a trend whereby viewers who watch higher levels of reality television in general may have increased perceptions of dating as a competition and the frequency of people lying and manipulating others in order to get a date.

Similar to Study I, one of the primary limitations inherent with Study II is the question of generalizibility resulting from drawing a sample from a university population. Despite reality-

based dating programming being predominantly targeted towards the 18-24 year old demographic, cultivation effects may manifest differently in different portions of the population. Despite this, however, the results do indicate a strong correlation and future studies with broader populations would benefit the overall applicability of the research.

Another area with weakness in Study II was the lack of previous research in the field of competition-based reality dating programming. Study II serves as a starting point for the direction research in this field should take, but more in-depth analysis of the elements incorporated in dating reality shows would be useful. As the results in Hypothesis 7 and Hypothesis 8 suggest, further research may produce significant results with more practical application.

Finally, it may be worth investigating how voyeur-based reality programming would effect perceptions of dating as a competition, lying and manipulation, and ruthlessness. Certainly shows such as *Cheater*, *Laguna Beach*, and *My Fair Brady*, to some degree, all depict the same approach to dating and relationships as competition-based reality dating programs. Among numerous others, these shows feature the exploits of people engaged in romantic relationships where lying, cheating, manipulation, and competition between cast members are the focus of the shows' drama. Expanding this line of research to encompass the other type of reality television would give researchers a more complete picture of the cultivation effects of reality-based dating programming as a whole.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

The overall results of the current research offer a wide range of conclusions that can be drawn. Results from Study I show positive correlations of consumption of competition-based reality television programming with perceptions of trustworthiness and the prevalence of lying within society. Additionally, the results also indicate that there may be a correlation between consumption of competition-based reality programming and perception of competitiveness as well. As Table 15 showed, the correlation between the two was approaching significance at the .05 level, and further research may produce significant findings. Conversely, Study II failed to produce any significant results correlating consumption of competition-based reality dating programs with increased perceptions of dating as a competition, prevalence of lying, or ruthlessness in dating.

The dependent variables employed in Study II were developed specifically for this study, and therefore may have been at fault for the lack of significant results. The examination of competition-based reality dating programming has been the focus of few previous research studies, therefore, Study II may be seen as more of a pilot study. For example, Ward (2002) examined television in general and the effects it had on attitudes, with reality dating shows encompassing only a portion of the overall study. A textual analysis of the reality show *Blind Date* (DeRose, Fursich, & Haskins, 2003) examined the influence cartoon supertext and commentaries may have on perceptions of events on the show. And while this show should not technically be categorized as "competition-based," it does serve to illustrate where some of the previous research has begun exploring. Expanding these lines of research along with the current research study will help to strengthen the foundation for future studies in this area and provide a clearer picture of the direction it may need to take.

Another possible weakness in Study II may have resulted from inherent characteristics of the sample. While the sample was within the 18-24 year old demographic that reality dating shows focus on (Andrejevic, 2003; Nabi, Beily, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003; Oliver & Armstrong, 1995), the social norms that permeate the college experience at a large public university may be influencing the results. It may be the case that the behaviors and attitudes that regularly appear on competition-based reality dating shows may independently exist within the wanton and flirtatious culture of undergraduate college students. The question then becomes whether reality television is imitating college life in this regard, or if college students are imitating the behaviors they see their social peers enacting on television. Identifying to what degree these attitudes result from exposure to television and to what degree social learning theory plays a role may explain how these behaviors are being adopted. This can be addressed through long-term research designed to chart the phenomenon over time.

Despite the lack of significant findings from Study II, the results for Study I are much more encouraging in terms of finding significant relationships. The correlations run for Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4 were both found to be significant, confirming that issues of trust and perceptions of lying are influenced by heavy consumption of competition-based reality programming. Because these shows have only become a staple of network and cable primetime line-ups in the past seven years, uncovering correlations between watching them and viewers' acceptance of the antisocial behaviors they portray may become even more important as the next generation is raised with reality television as a regular part of their television diets.

Additionally, the results for Hypotheses 5 and 6 in Study I also show promise of future findings. Much like the issues with Study II, little quantitative research has been conducted on issues of competitiveness, ruthlessness, and selfishness in competition-based reality programming. The fact that the model (and the correlations on the hypotheses themselves) approached significance suggests that it would be worth continuing to examine this area. As Table 5 illustrates, the factor loadings, eigenvalue, and alpha score for the competitiveness variables were overall higher than those for the trustworthiness and lying variables. A study specifically designed to examine issues of competitiveness in competition-based reality programs may be able to more accurately identify the relevant issues in a way the current study could not.

One area that yielded results contradictory to those expected were for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3. In both of these cases, overall television consumption was found to have a

negative relationship with trustworthiness and lying, respectively. These results are counterintuitive to the proposed hypotheses and to what previous mean world research would suggest. One possible explanation for this could be because of the degree to which participants reported enjoying comedy programming as compared to other genres. For example, 90.9% of participants in Study I reported that they enjoy comedy programming, as compared to 59.4% for drama, 40.6% for sports, 37.4% for reality programming, and 35.3% for news. This higher reported enjoyment could result in more consumption of comedy programming in general and higher levels of involvement. As Berkman (1993) noted, situation comedies beginning in the 1950s had a tendency to show idealized family environments with positive, happy outcomes for characters. Even in the 1990s, when sitcom families were depicted as sexually frustrated (*Married With Children)*, living in economic deterioration *(Roseanne)*, and general dysfunctional *(The Simpsons)*, episodes were still resolved with the underlying ideal that family stays together and does what's right. Because most comedies regularly feature storylines where characters "do the right thing" in the end, this may suggest that people watching more television in general are being exposed to these socially positive examples.

Another possibility for these counterintuitive results may result from college students' perceptions of reality being different from what would traditionally be expected. That is to say, today's college student may take it as a common occurrence that people regularly lie to each other and are generally untrustworthy. Research in a number of fields has supported the idea that the way college students view the world may be somewhat distorted. In a study by Kean and Albada (2003), the authors noted that when college students were asked to write a story about a student who had a difficult day and had a drink upon arriving home, students who reported having personal experience driving under the influence of alcohol generally wrote stories that were much more positive in tone. It could be assumed that the more responsible drinkers, who didn't have to worry about driving under the influence or regret their decision to do so the next day, would write more positive stories as compared to those exhibiting dangerous and socially unacceptable behaviors such as drinking and driving. But this sort of skewed perception of reality may be what produced the negative correlations associated with Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3.

Determining the exact cause of the negative relationships between television consumption in general and perceptions of trustworthiness and lying will require future study

and a more focused set of research questions. Additionally, a content analysis of overall television programming specifically examining the prevalence of lying and untrustworthiness may be helpful in determining what research in this area should expect to find. After an extensive search conducted throughout the course of the current study, no research on this subject could be found.

Implications for Competition-Based Reality Programming

These findings have practical implications for a number of related fields. First, future studies in this area with similar findings may impact the way producers and television companies format their competition-based reality programming. Understanding the negative effects that repeated depiction of antisocial behaviors can have may result in a shift in how shows are presented. One recent example of this new direction competition reality shows is NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, in which contestants who are overweight compete to see who can lose the most weight over the course of several months. Similar to other competition-based shows, *The Biggest Loser* works under the premise that individuals are eliminated from the show until only one remains to claim the grand prize (in this case, $250,000). But unlike other shows that follow this format, the contestants are rarely (or at least, very less frequently) depicted scheming, backstabbing, or manipulating others for the sake of the game. Instead, contestants support and help each other despite being in direct competition. Findings from the current research may help foster this approach to reality programming and help change the direction the genre is headed.

Study I would also suggest that current competition-based reality programs may want to decrease or downplay the level or degree to which contestants on their shows exhibit untrustworthy characteristics or lie in order to get ahead in the game. Knowing that these shows increasingly convey these negative social attitudes and behaviors to audience members at rates proportional to their viewing levels, producers and networks should consider focusing on and featuring other aspects of the competition. And while conflict has been and will continue to be one of the cornerstones of reality programming, eliminating some of the personal attacks contestants make against each other not directly resulting from the competitive nature of the game (i.e., personal insults or slights against each another) would serve to decrease the overall impact these shows have on viewers' negative perceptions of society.

Implications for Mean World Effects

These findings may also be of interest to parents and educators who are tasked with helping develop and shape children and adolescents. As stated earlier, children today will be the first generation to have a regular and consistent number of competition-based shows available for consumption during their formative and impressionable years, and many studies have illustrated the impact viewing aggressive behavior can have on them. For example, Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, and Eron (2003) tracked subjects who watched television violence from childhood through adulthood (a 15 year period) and found significant results indicating that, for some subjects, adult aggression was correlated with viewing television violence as a child. Friedrich and Stein (1973) found that preschool children who were exposed to aggressive programs showed a decline in rule obedience, while the opposite was true for children exposed to prosocial programming (i.e., *Mister Roger's Neighborhood*). Numerous other studies exist which illustrate the relationship between children's' development and television programming, so awareness of the effects of reality-based programming may help parents make better and more informed decisions when determining what their children should and should not watch.

Future research on mean world effects may also want to compare contemporary mean world scores with those found in earlier studies using the same instruments. For example, one might assume that because television standards have become more lax (allowing antisocial behaviors and language to become more prevalent, including violence), that the result would be an overall increase in societal perceptions of the world as a mean and scary place. Conversely, it may be the case that the frequency with which these behaviors are exhibited on television has caused a society-wide desensitization to them, and resulted in lower mean world scores.

Implications for Cultivation

Finally, the current research has implications for cultivation theory itself. Competition-based reality programming can now be added to other television genres such as soap operas, religious programming, news programming, crime shows, and children's programming, among others, which have been found to influence viewers' perceptions of the world. Each piece of the puzzle that is added to the canon of cultivation research helps scholars gain a better view of how television influences our views of society. But beyond that, the current research also suggests that there may be different levels of media effects resulting from various subgenres of television programming. For example, what effects result from cartoons versus live action children's

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programming? Network news versus cable news channels? High-concept dramatic programming such as *Lost* or *Heroes* versus traditional dramatic fare? While Study II did not yield many significant results, it was shown that heavy consumers of reality-based dating shows will be more likely to see dating as a competition than light consumers (see Table 26). The impact different subgenres or formats have within a genre may lead to a better understand of exactly what factors promote or encourage certain behaviors and their adoption.

The current research also has implications for cultivation as new media emerge and become popular in relatively short periods of time. For example, the rise of online social networking websites such as MySpace.com and Facebook.com may lead to new perceptions of dating among younger account holders who frequent those sites. As Stanley (2006) noted, the popularity of traditional online-dating sites such as Match.com and Yahoo Personals has decreased for the younger demographics, which are now choosing to go with free sites such as MySpace to search for potential dates. The competition inherent in this type of online dating may derive from building a more aesthetically pleasing site, incorporating more attractive pictures, and including more "flashy" content to catch visitors' attention. As more relationships are formed as patronage grows on these sites, competition for a date may no longer be limited to two, four, or even 25 other singles as depicted on reality TV, but could expand to encompass entire geographic areas and demographic groups. How these and other forms of new media influence our perceptions of reality is the next step in our continued understanding of cultivation effects.

APPENDIX A:

IRB APPROVAL LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 11/18/2005

To:
Kristin Barton
MC 1531

Dept.: **COMMUNICATION**

From: **Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair**

Re: **Use of Human Subjects in Research**
The Cultivation Effects of Reality-Based Television Programming

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101(b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by **11/17/2006** you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Arthur Raney
HSC No. 2005.956

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Communication
Principal Investigator: Kris Barton

The Impact of Reality TV viewing

The purpose of today's research project is to better understand how reality TV impacts the way different people view the world around them. Your participation will involve answering a series of questions pertaining to your views of the world and you television viewing habits. The entire survey should last no longer than 15 minutes. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the survey at any time, you may do so with no penalty (including no negative effect on your course grade). You should be aware that all responses are anonymous and will be kept separate from your signed consent form.

The results of the research study may be published or presented at a conference, but your name will not be used. All information obtained in this study will remain confidential, to the extent allowed by law. No foreseeable risks or discomforts are associated with this study.

Although you may not receive direct benefits from this research project, the possible benefit of your participation is a better understanding of why people enjoy reality-based programming and why they watch it. Your participation will assist communication scholars worldwide in better understanding this difficult-to-pinpoint subject.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please feel free to contact me at 644-4322 or kmb3155@garnet.acns.fsu.edu or Dr. Arthur Raney at 644-9485 or araney@mailer.fsu.edu. Thank you again for your participation today.

I give my consent to participate in the above study. Furthermore, my signature certifies that I am at least 18 years of age.

_____   _____
Printed name   Date

_____
Signature

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Vice President for the Office of Research at (850) 644-8633.

APPENDIX B:

STUDY I SURVEY

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the current study looking at viewers' attitudes towards competition-based reality television shows. The following pages will ask you to respond to statements according to how you feel about them as well as provide some basic information about your television viewing habits. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to provide your honest opinions about the statements made.

Part I
In this section, you will be asked a variety of different questions. The questions ask you to supply a numerical answer. Please use whole numbers, not fractions or decimals, and indicate a single number, not a range.

1. What would you estimate your chances out of 100 of being involved in a violent crime if you spent a month in New York City? ⎽

2. What are the chances out of 100 of an average adult Americans being involved in a violent crime within the next year? ⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽

3. Out of 100 of police officers, how many would you estimate draw their gun (in an average day) in the United States? ⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽

4. What are the chances out of 100 that a person jogging after dark will be a victim of a violent crime? ⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽

5. What would you estimate your chances be out of 100 of witnessing a violent crime in the next year? ⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽⎽

Part II
For this section, please indicate your feelings about the statements on the left by circling one of the corresponding answers on the right using the following scale:

SA – Strongly Agree with the statement
A – Agree with the statement
N – Neutral or unsure about the statement
D – Disagree with the statement
SD – Strongly Disagree with the statement

	SD	D	N	A	SA
6. In general, the world is a mean and scary place	1	2	3	4	5
7. Most of my close friends and family have lied to me at some point in time	1	2	3	4	5
8. Most people don't care about hurting other people's feelings	1	2	3	4	5
9. Most people are inclined to help others	1	2	3	4	5

	SD	D	N	A	SA
10. Most people are not concerned with the welfare of others	1	2	3	4	5
11. Most people will keep a promise	1	2	3	4	5
12. Most people don't mind hurting others in order to get ahead in life	1	2	3	4	5
13. Most people can be trusted	1	2	3	4	5
14. If you don't watch yourself, people will take advantage of you	1	2	3	4	5
15. People lie all the time	1	2	3	4	5
16. You should do whatever it takes to achieve your goals	1	2	3	4	5
17. No one is going to care much what happens to you, when you get right down to it	1	2	3	4	5
18. I can always depend on people when they tell me they will do something	1	2	3	4	5
19. Most people talk badly about others behind their backs	1	2	3	4	5
20. You should always consider the impact your decisions will have on others	1	2	3	4	5
21. Human nature is fundamentally cooperative	1	2	3	4	5
22. People take advantage of others in situations where others are less fortunate	1	2	3	4	5
23. You have to be skeptical about things other people tell you	1	2	3	4	5
24. People regularly do unethical things in order to succeed in life	1	2	3	4	5
25. Manipulation and backstabbing are common methods people employ to get what they want	1	2	3	4	5

Part III: TV Viewing Habits

26. On average, how many hours **PER DAY** do you watch television? _____ (out of 24)

27. On average, how many hours **PER WEEK** do you watch reality TV shows? _____
   (For this study, reality TV shows are defined as any show featuring non-actors reacting in spontaneous and unscripted ways to their environment which is recorded at all times. Some examples would include *Survivor*, *The Real World*, and *American Idol*)

28. Please rate how much you enjoy the follow television genres in general:

	Do Not Enjoy				Enjoy A Lot
Comedy programming	1	2	3	4	5
Dramatic programming	1	2	3	4	5
News programming	1	2	3	4	5
Reality programming	1	2	3	4	5
Sports programming	1	2	3	4	5

29. In a regular television season, how often do you watch each of the following?

	Never Watch It				Always Watch It
Survivor	1	2	3	4	5
Big Brother	1	2	3	4	5
The Apprentice	1	2	3	4	5
The Amazing Race	1	2	3	4	5
The Bachelor	1	2	3	4	5
Beauty and the Geek	1	2	3	4	5
Project Runway	1	2	3	4	5

30. Based on your exposure to each of the following (regardless of how often you watch) how much do you enjoy each of the following?

	Do Not Enjoy				Enjoy A Lot
Survivor	1	2	3	4	5
Big Brother	1	2	3	4	5
The Apprentice	1	2	3	4	5
The Amazing Race	1	2	3	4	5
The Bachelor	1	2	3	4	5
Beauty and the Geek	1	2	3	4	5
Project Runway	1	2	3	4	5

31. How real or true to life do you think reality based shows are? (Circle one number)

Not At All Real   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Real

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Part IV: Demographics

32. What is your age? _____

33. Please place a check mark next to all of the races you identify yourself with.

    ☐ African American   ☐ Asian   ☐ Caucasian

    ☐ Hispanic/Latino   ☐ Other

34. Please place a check next to you current status in school.

    ☐ Freshman   ☐ Sophomore   ☐ Junior

    ☐ Senior   ☐ Graduate

35. Please place a check next to your gender.

    ☐ Male   ☐ Female

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX C:

STUDY II SURVEY

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the current study looking at viewers' attitudes towards competition-based reality television shows. The following pages will ask you to respond to statements according to how you feel about them as well as provide some basic information about your television viewing habits. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to provide your honest opinions about the statements made.

Part I

For this section, please indicate your feelings about the statements on the left by circling one of the corresponding answers on the right using the following scale:

SA – Strongly Agree with the statement
A – Agree with the statement
N – Neutral or unsure about the statement
D – Disagree with the statement
SD – Strongly Disagree with the statement

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. In today's society, dating is a competition in which there are winners and losers.	1	2	3	4	5
2. People often try to make others look bad in order to make themselves appear more appealing as a potential date.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Most people are not concerned with hurting the feelings of someone they are "just dating"	1	2	3	4	5
4. Not all people are in the same "league" when it comes to dating	1	2	3	4	5
5. People often present a false image of themselves to potential dates in order to impress them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Most people don't mind hurting others to get a date with someone they find attractive	1	2	3	4	5
7. In general, only highly attractive people date other highly attractive people	1	2	3	4	5
8. People lie all the time in order to get dates with people they find attractive	1	2	3	4	5
9. Most people are inclined to help others	1	2	3	4	5
10. You should do whatever it takes to get a date with someone you like	1	2	3	4	5

		SD	D	N	A	SA
11.	Dating can be compared to a game or recreational sport	1	2	3	4	5
12.	It is common for people to use manipulation in order to get a date with someone they find attractive.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	If you don't watch yourself, people will take advantage of you	1	2	3	4	5
14.	You should always consider the impact your decisions will have on the person you are dating	1	2	3	4	5
15.	There are 'rules' that people must know in order to successfully attract a potential date	1	2	3	4	5
16.	You have to be skeptical about things other people tell you when considering dating them.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	People regularly do unethical things in order to get dates with people they like.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	No one is going to care much what happens to you, when you get right down to it	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Friends backstabbing each other in order to get a date with an attractive person is a common occurrence	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Using her body and looks is the best way for a woman to attract a man	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Human nature is fundamentally cooperative	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Generally speaking, most people can be trusted	1	2	3	4	5
23.	If more than one woman is interested in a man, the woman will use her sexuality to get his attention	1	2	3	4	5

Part II

For this section, please read each statement and indicate your level of agreement by circling one of answers on the scale provided.

24. When I find the right person, I expect my love for him/her to last for the rest of my life.

Disagree				*Neutral*				*Agree*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

25. When I find the right person, my relationship with him/her will be permanent.

Disagree				*Neutral*				*Agree*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

26. I would stay with the right person through the most difficult times.

Disagree				*Neutral*				*Agree*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

27. I view my commitment to the right person as a matter of principle.

Disagree				*Neutral*				*Agree*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

28. I will be committed to maintaining my relationship when I find the right person.

Disagree				*Neutral*				*Agree*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

29. I would not let anything get in the way of my commitment to the right person.

Disagree				*Neutral*				*Agree*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

30. I will have confidence in the stability of my relationship with the right person.

Disagree				*Neutral*				*Agree*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Part III

For this section, please respond to the following questions regarding your personal experiences with dating. Please circle the corresponding answer on the right side of the page. If a question does not apply to you or if you do not feel comfortable answering, please circle "N/A."

31. Have you or anyone close to you ever been cheated on?   Yes   No   N/A

32. Have you or someone you know ever been lied to or
mislead by someone who was trying to get a date?   Yes   No   N/A

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33. Have you ever had difficulty trusting someone you were
    dating?   Yes   No   N/A

34. Has someone you know ever said something negative
    about you to someone you were interested in dating?   Yes   No   N/A

35. Have you or someone you know ever been manipulated
    by someone you were dating?   Yes   No   N/A

36. Have you or someone you know ever been in a situation
    where you were forced to choose between dating two
    different people?   Yes   No   N/A

37. Have you or someone you know ever broken up with
    another person because there was someone else he or she
    wanted to date?   Yes   No   N/A

Part IV: TV Viewing Habits

38. On average, how many hours **PER DAY** do you watch television? _____ (out of 24)

39. On average, how many hours **PER WEEK** do you watch reality TV shows? _____
    (For this study, reality TV shows are defined as any show featuring non-actors
    reacting in spontaneous and unscripted ways to their environment which is
    recorded at all times. Some examples would include *Survivor*, *The Real World*,
    and *American Idol*)

40. On average, how many hours **PER WEEK** do you watch Reality TV shows that
    focus on relationships/dating (ex: The Bachelor, Blind Date, etc…)? _____

41. Please rate how much you enjoy the follow television genres in general:

	Do Not Enjoy				Enjoy A Lot
Comedy programming	1	2	3	4	5
Dramatic programming	1	2	3	4	5
News programming	1	2	3	4	5
Reality programming	1	2	3	4	5
Sports programming	1	2	3	4	5

42. In a regular television season, how often do you or did you watch each of the following?

	Never Watch It				Always Watch It
The Bachelor	1	2	3	4	5
The Bachelorette	1	2	3	4	5
Average Joe	1	2	3	4	5
The 5th Wheel	1	2	3	4	5
Elimidate	1	2	3	4	5
Next	1	2	3	4	5
Temptation Island	1	2	3	4	5
Date My Mom	1	2	3	4	5
Blind Date	1	2	3	4	5
Dismissed	1	2	3	4	5
The Real World	1	2	3	4	5
Road Rules	1	2	3	4	5

43. Based on your exposure to each of the following (regardless of how often you watch) how much do you enjoy each of the following?

	Do Not Enjoy				Enjoy A Lot
The Bachelor	1	2	3	4	5
The Bachelorette	1	2	3	4	5
Average Joe	1	2	3	4	5
The 5th Wheel	1	2	3	4	5
Elimidate	1	2	3	4	5
Next	1	2	3	4	5
Temptation Island	1	2	3	4	5
Date My Mom	1	2	3	4	5
Blind Date	1	2	3	4	5
Dismissed	1	2	3	4	5
The Real World	1	2	3	4	5
Road Rules	1	2	3	4	5

44. How real or true to life do you think reality based shows are? (Circle one number)

Not At All Real   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Real

Part V: Demographics

45. What is your age? _____

46. Please place a check mark next to all of the races you identify yourself with.
   ☐ African American   ☐ Asian   ☐ Caucasian

   ☐ Hispanic/Latino   ☐ Other

47. Please place a check next to you current status in school.
   ☐ Freshman   ☐ Sophomore   ☐ Junior

   ☐ Senior   ☐ Graduate

48. Please place a check next to your gender.
   ☐ Male   ☐ Female

THANK YOU!

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kristin Michael Barton was born in Greensburg, Pennsylvania and moved to Jupiter, Florida at the age of seven. He received his bachelors degree in english and communication from Florida State University in 2000; his masters degree in mass communication from Florida State University in 2002; and his doctorate of philosophy degree in mass communication with an emphasis in contemporary American culture from Florida State University in 2007.

During his time at Florida State University, he has taught a number of classes, including Elements of Speech, Public Speaking, Introduction to Mass Media, Introduction to Film, Elements of Broadcasting, and Mass Media and Society. He also spent his last year at Florida State as a research associate at the Information Use Management and Policy Institute in the College of Information. In August, 2007, he will serve as an assistant professor in the Division of Humanities at Dalton State College in Dalton, Georgia.