RICH REALITY TV PERFORMERS AND MATERIALISM IN VIEWERS:
CONNECTING PARASOCIAL INTERACTION AND CULTIVATION THEORY

By

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To my parents, David and Carol

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This study examines the potential relationship between parasocial interaction and cultivation theory in regard to reality shows. Specifically, the author surveyed fans of reality shows that predominately feature wealthy individuals to discover their levels of parasocial interaction with a character on the show and their levels of materialism. A total of 340 usable responses were gathered by posting requests to take the survey on shows' Facebook® pages as well as messaging fans who were active on those pages. Linear regressions were performed comparing parasocial interaction scores with materialism scores. Results indicate that a parasocial relationship with a rich reality show star predicts materialism in viewers and amount of exposure to shows featuring wealthy individuals predicts materialism, as well.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Who doesn't have a favorite celebrity? Who has never read a magazine article only because it featured that celebrity or caught an episode of a talk show on which that celebrity appeared? Regardless of the reason for a person's fame, he or she has fans somewhere in the world. To some extent, these fans follow the celebrity's career. When fans have more than a passing interest in a celebrity, Horton and Wohl refer to this as a "parasocial relationship" (1956). Parasocial relationships are one-sided relationships in which a first party knows quite a bit about a second party, but the second party knows nothing about the first (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

According to Horton and Wohl (1956), parasocial relationships exist along a spectrum. On one end there is a simple preference for a particular famous person, causing a fan to watch that celebrity's television show every week. More toward the middle of the spectrum, a fan may have a fascination with a particular celebrity, causing him or her to follow the star's Twitter™ feed, read magazine articles written about the celebrity and maybe put up posters of the star in his or her bedroom. On the other end of the spectrum is a more sinister type of infatuation.

On December 8, 1980, John Lennon of the rock group the Beatles was shot and killed - not by a jealous girlfriend or a bitter enemy; he was murdered by one of his own fans (Caughey, 1984; Mayer, Agrest & Young, 1980). A fan of Lennon's for fifteen years, Mark David Chapman emulated the rock star as much as he could. He played Beatles' songs on his guitar, covered his name with Lennon's on his work ID badge and even married an older Asian woman just like Lennon had (Mayer et al., 1980). This

obsession Chapman had for Lennon (which resulted in the musician's murder) is an extreme example of parasocial interaction.

Celebrities are understandably wary of obsessive admirers. In a recent interview with *Vogue* magazine, recording artist Taylor Swift stated, "I don't have security to make myself look cool, or like I have an entourage. I have security because there's a file of stalkers who want to take me home and chain me to a pipe in their basement" (Van Meter, 2012, p. 193). Admittedly, these types of fans exist on the extreme side of parasocial interaction; plenty of people idolize their favorite celebrity without resorting to murder or stalking. However, again, according to Horton and Wohl, parasocial interaction is a spectrum. On one end are dangerous cases and on the other end is simply making an appointment with the television to catch a favorite celebrity's show or talking with a friend about its most recent episode (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This thesis focuses on a more benign form of parasocial interaction – not the treacherous kind that resulted in Lennon's death or Swift's fears.

Does a person's favorite celebrity (with whom he or she has a parasocial relationship) say something about that individual's personality? Are people who idolize professional sports players considered to be highly athletic themselves? Do people who admire musicians tend to be more musically-minded than their peers? Do people who have parasocial relationships with wealthy television stars place a high value on material possessions in their own lives?

In this research, the author explores how parasocial relationships with reality show characters may be connected with viewers' perceptions about the real world. Because a reality show is presenting the real life of its stars, it is logical that viewers will

recognize and accept the show's themes as nonfiction. This includes the financial situation of its characters. This research specifically focuses on how a parasocial relationship with a wealthy reality star may be positively correlated with a higher level of materialism in the viewer. For instance, do fans of *Real Housewives of New Jersey* aspire to owning fancy homes? Do *Basketball Wives* devotees dream of traveling to exotic locations on a whim? Do viewers of *Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding* find it commonplace to spend $1 million to exchange vows?

In today's world, fans have many venues for gathering information on their favorite celebrities. Besides the traditional outlet of the celebrity's career (movies, television, concerts, magazine articles, etc.), one can check in with a favorite celebrity via his or her Facebook® page or Twitter™ account. Many of these celebrities have their own reality shows on which fans get to see a glimpse of the personal lives of their favorite famous people.

Cultivation theory posits that people get their views of the world from what they see on television (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Original research in the field was on television watching in general and fiction television shows, but what about reality shows? Reality shows are supposedly just that: reality. Does it stand to reason that people will accept what they see on reality shows as fact? Furthermore, if a person consistently watches reality television shows centered around wealthy individuals, could that predict the viewer's level of materialism?

This is an exploratory study that examines how parasocial relationships with reality show characters influence viewers' perceptions about the real world. In an attempt to narrow its focus, this research focuses specifically on how a viewer's

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parasocial relationship with a wealthy reality star may cultivate materialism in the viewer.

Through surveys conducted through the social networking site Facebook[®], the author gathered a sample of 340 respondents. Fans of eight different reality shows featuring wealthy individuals were surveyed regarding parasocial interaction, material values and personal experience with wealth.

This study is important because it seeks to advance understanding of how viewers connect with media. By learning how reality shows correlate with viewers' ideas about the real world via parasocial relationships the spectators have with the performers, mass communication researchers will have a clearer picture of media engagement.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Reality Television

For the past couple decades, reality television has been popular in American and

European programming (Kilborn, 1994). Since the early 1990s, reality television has

been studied at length, including topics like its history and social context (Andrejevic,

2004; Baker, 2003; McCarthy, 2009; Murray, 2009; Ruoff, 2002), creation of celebrity

(Bell, 2010), its presentation of realism (Baker, 2003; Biressi & Nunn, 2005; Chvasta &

Fassett, 2003; Couldry, 2009; Godard, 2003; Halbert, 2003; Holmes, 2006; Kilborn,

1994; King, 2006; McGoldrick, 2004; Ogdon, 2006; Patkin, 2003; Roth, 2003; Vrooman,

2003), its perpetuation of stereotypes (Gray, 2009), the business of the genre (Jenkins,

2009; Magder, 2009) and how reality television affects its viewers (Dyer, 2011; Kavka,

2008). The most relevant information will be discussed.

Biressi and Nunn state that reality television is characterized by "The highly

visible presence of ordinary people in 'unscripted' situations" (2005, p. 2). Kilborn

offered an earlier but more comprehensive definition of the genre (1994). According to

the author, reality programming

> will involve (a) the recording 'on the wing', and frequently with the help of
> lightweight video equipment, of events in the lives of individuals or groups,
> (b) an attempt to simulate such real-life events through various forms of
> dramatized reconstruction and (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. 423).

Jenkins posits that "perhaps the single most important factor separating reality from

other kinds of nonfiction programming is serialization" (2009, p. 354). With several

different formats of reality television, Andrejevic argues that providing a definition for

reality television is almost impossible: "there isn't any one definition that would both

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capture all the existing genres and exclude other forms of programming such as the nightly news or daytime game shows" (2004, p. 64). Several different formats of reality television do exist. According to Ouellette and Murray, reality TV subgenres include gamedocs, dating programs, makeover programs, docusoaps, talent contests, court programs, reality sitcoms, charity programs, lifestyle games and "celebrity variations that tap into many of the conventions for presenting 'ordinary' people on television" (2009, p. 5).

History of Reality TV

Although its popularity began picking up speed in the 1990s, reality television was already beginning in the 1950s (Baker, 2003; Bell, 2010; Ouellette & Murray, 2009). During the 1954-55 season of the television program *Omnibus*, a short hidden-camera film called *Children of the U.N.* aired. The comedic film featured interviews with and footage of children who attended an international school in New York City. *Children of the U.N.* was just one of several reality-type films that aired on *Omnibus* that season (McCarthy, 2009). A few years later, the producer of *Children of the U.N.*, Allen Funt, created the television show *Candid Camera* (McCarthy, 2009; Baker, 2003). *Candid Camera* involved filming "comical reactions of ordinary people in ordinary settings – dealing with humorous situations" (Baker, 2003, p. 63). In its premiere season, the show ranked number seven and had a Nielsen rating of 27.3; two seasons later, it rose to number two with a rating of 31.1 (Baker, 2003).

The 1970s saw the reality programming genre start to really take shape with the airing of *An American Family* on PBS (Ouellette & Murray, 2009; Ruoff, 2002; Smith & Wood, 2003). In fact, it is thought by some to be the first true reality program (Oullette & Murray, 2009). A camera followed the Loud family of Santa Barbara, California, and

recorded their lives. That footage was edited and broadcast on PBS. The first episode aired in January 1973 and the series ran for a total of twelve weeks (Ruoff, 2002). The documentary-type show was described by its producer Craig Gilbert as a "real-life soap opera" (Ruoff, 2002, p. 23).

Reality TV Today

One popular current American reality show in the docusoap subgenre is MTV's *The Real World* (Kilborn, 1994; Ouellette & Murray, 2009; Smith & Wood, 2003). *The Real World* first aired in 1992 and is hailed by MTV as being "the longest-running reality series in history" (MTV, 2007, p. 2). Each season, seven new roommates are chosen to live together in a fancy house in a different city. Their lives are filmed around the clock and eventually aired on the MTV network (MTV, 2007). The show casts "young adults in a manner intended to ignite conflict and dramatic narrative development, placing the cast in a house filled with cameras and microphones, and employing rapid editing techniques in an overall serial structure" (Ouellette & Murray, 2009, p. 4-5). When the show debuted, it started a surge of reality programming (MTV, 2007; Ouellette & Murray, 2009; Bell, 2010). *The Real World* influenced the format of other reality shows such as *Big Brother* and *Survivor* (Ouellette & Murray, 2009). As of September 2012, *The Real World* is still part of MTV's programming.

CBS's reality television gamedoc *Survivor* debuted in the summer of 2000 and introduced the component of competition to the world of reality programming (Smith & Wood, 2003). The premise of the show is to place ordinary people in a "hostile environment" where they "would find themselves challenged by living conditions that deprived them of everyday creature comforts like shelter, by contests of physical and mental endurance, and by social dynamics of learning to cooperate with complete

strangers" (Smith & Wood, 2003, p. 5). Contestants are voted off the show one by one

by fellow contestants, with the final one standing being rewarded with a purse of $1

million (Smith & Wood, 2003). For the final episode of season one of *Survivor,* over 50

million people watched (Magder, 2009). As of September 2012, *Survivor* is still part of

CBS's programming.

American Idol* is a reality singing talent contest on FOX that first aired in 2002. At

the beginning of each season, *American Idol* opens with audition episodes, showcasing

memorable auditions from around the country. Contestants sing in front of three judges

and are either invited to the next round or not. The next few rounds consist of various

singing competitions after which some contestants are eliminated by the judges. Once

the contestants are whittled down to 24, audience members get to vote for their favorite

finalists week after week. Performers with the lowest number of votes are sent home

and the eventual winner is awarded with a recording contract (Bell, 2009; Jenkins,

2009). As of September 2012, the show is still part of FOX's programming.

ABC's reality dating show *The Bachelor* was introduced in 2002 (Gray, 2009). On

the show, 25 women compete for a marriage proposal from one man. Each week, the

bachelor goes on multiple dates with one or several of the women. At the end of each

episode, one or more contestants are eliminated in a ceremony during which the

bachelor hands roses to the women he chooses to stay. Each season ends with a

marriage proposal. A spin-off version was created called *The Bachelorette*, on which the

situation is reversed and 25 men compete for the love of a single woman (Gray, 2009).

As of September 2012, *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* are still part of ABC's

programming.

There has been much speculation about just how "real" reality television is (Biressi & Nunn, 2005; Holmes, 2006; Kilborn, 1994; King, 2006; McGoldrick, 2004; Ogdon, 2006; Roth, 2003). The essence of reality programming is about "capturing the vibrancy and spontaneity of real-life events" (Kilborn, 1994, p. 424). Some of the evidence that a reality program is depicting real life is the way in which it is filmed: "the tell-tale 'handheld' signs (picture wobble, problems with framing, temporary loss of focus, poor sound quality) are considered as an index of the 'reality' claim of what is being shown" (Kilborn, 1994, p. 424). Despite all the different subgenres of reality programming, all types "make certain claims for the authenticity of the real-life events depicted and all are concerned to extract the maximum entertainment potential from the material they have gathered" (Kilborn, 1994, p. 425). This entertainment factor has led some to question how much of reality programming is factual.

The actuality of events in reality programming has been deemed questionable and contrived (Chvasta & Fassett, 2003; Godard, 2003; Kilborn, 1994; Roth, 2003). In particular, some producers employ a reconstruction technique in which an event is reproduced to be filmed. No matter how much producers attempt to keep reenactments true to the original event, the added element of drama is usually apparent (Kilborn, 1994). Roth specifically describes the reality show *Survivor* as a "pseudo-event" (2003). Boorstin initiated research on pseudo-events which the author states is a result of Americans' "extravagant expectations" which creates "the demand for the illusions with which we deceive ourselves. And which we pay others to make to deceive us" (1964, p. 5). Roth claims that the show meets all four of Boorstin's criteria for a pseudo-event, which includes an event that is loosely connected to reality being deliberately created to

be reported on (Roth, 2003; Boorstin, 1964). Roth criticizes the vagueness of CBS's

portrayal of *Survivor* as "reality television", asking "is it 'reality TV because everything

but castaway interaction has been meticulously planned, or 'reality TV' because the

location, challenges, and castaway interaction were real/unscripted?" (2003, p. 32) It

was also not explained if the *Survivor* locations were filmed as-is or if producers had

spruced them up before the castaways arrived (Roth, 2003). Roth states that "*Survivor*

left audiences wondering if what they were seeing was, in fact real" (2003, p. 32).

In addition to the events on reality TV, viewers and reviewers have questioned

the authenticity of people shown on reality programs; there has been speculation that

the camera's presence influences the action of the performers (Baker, 2003; Couldry,

2009; Ruoff, 2002). On Great Britain's *Big Brother 3*, a recurring emphasis was "the

housemates' mutual accusations of performing to the cameras and the anxious denials

that resulted" (Couldry, 2003, p. 87). The casting process has been criticized; people

filmed for reality television "appear to be conscientiously chosen to represent various

ethnic and racial groups in American society" (Patkin, 2003, p. 14). The editing process

has been accused of creating characters out of real people (Halbert, 2003; Vrooman,

2003). Halbert states that

> It takes hundreds or thousands of hours of footage to construct a 30-60
> minute program and editorial genius can erase the banality of human life.
> Any remaining "authentic" personhood is transformed into a simulation of
> authenticity for the masses – the "reality" of *Survivor* is constructed and
> these "real" people become TV simulations of themselves (2003, p. 49).

The performers themselves have complained about their portrayal on television,

specifically in regard to the editing process (Halbert, 2003; Roth, 2003; Ruoff, 2002).

After initially approving the series before it aired, the Loud family, documented by *An*

American Family, claimed they were misrepresented by editors who "had a cynical view

of American life" (Ruoff, 2002, p. 121). Stacy Stillman of *Survivor* fame criticizes editing

for the negative image of her portrayed on the show (Halbert, 2003). Craig Gilbert (the

producer of *An American Family*) has even stated, "Real life depiction is not the same

as real life itself" (Gilbert, 1982, p. 24).

Whatever the issues surrounding reality television, the assumption of viewers is

that the shows are presenting the real world (Kilborn, 1994). In regard to fiction

television shows, however, what is shown on television has been shown to skew

viewers' perceptions of the actual real world (Chory-Assad & Tamborini, 2003; Gerbner

& Gross, 1976).

Involvement/Engagement

Engagement with a form of media, also referred to as involvement, means a

person is "connected with it and relates to it" (Calder & Malthouse, 2008, p. 2). It

indicates a higher level of viewing than simply watching a television show or flipping

through a magazine. According to Calder and Malthouse, "It is engagement with a TV

program that causes someone to want to watch it, to be attentive to it, to recommend it

to a friend, or to be disappointed if it were no longer on the air" (2008, pg. 2). Using the

term "involvement" instead of "engagement", Rubin and Perse define it as "cognitive,

affective, and behavioral participation during, and because of, media exposure" (1987,

pg. 247). Anyone who has ever made an appointment with one's television to watch a

specific program every week or talked with a friend about the storyline on a drama that

both watch has experienced engagement.

Krugman was one of the first researchers to discuss involvement. Krugman

differentiated between low and high involvement (1965; 1966). According to the author,

low involvement is regarded as a lack of personal attachment to a form of media while

high involvement is not "attention, interest, or excitement" but instead "the number of conscious 'bridging experiences,' connections, or personal references per minute that the viewer makes between his own life and the stimulus" (1965, p. 355). The author states that a "*direct personal experience*" is a defining characteristic of involvement (Krugman, 1966, p. 583).

Nordlund described involvement as "readiness to be preoccupied with and muse upon media characters, to talk about them with others, to relate their circumstances with one's own, to feel as if in some relationship with them and, at the extreme, to get fully involved in their fate" (1978, p. 151). In order to experience engagement with a television show and/or its characters, an audience member's life is altered in some way because of the program.

Parasocial Relationships

One aspect of media involvement is parasocial relationships (Nordlund, 1978; Rubin & Perse, 1987). The term "parasocial relationship" was coined in 1956 by Horton and Wohl. The phrase was developed in order to name the phenomena of mass media performers being revered as a peer by audience members. The authors posit that parasocial relationships are characterized by being "one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible of mutual development" (p. 215). An "illusion of intimacy" is felt by the spectator (p. 217). This is especially felt when performers directly address the audience in a conversational manner and tone. Viewers involved in parasocial interaction think of the performer as a friend, and have come to depend and rely on the performer to appear at regular times. Furthermore, over time, the viewer comes to believe that he or she knows the performer more familiarly than any other spectators (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

A spectator can withdraw from a parasocial relationship at any time; specifically, that is a spectator's only recourse if he or she is displeased with a parasocial relationship. Granted, a spectator can attempt to contact the performer or technicians involved with the performance, but these actions are not considered to be a part of the parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Horton and Wohl cite the difference between theater and mass media (specifically, radio and television). The authors point out that the theater is a temporary suspension of fact: an actor "becomes" a fictional character for the duration of a performance. At the end of a show, the actors are released from the characters they play and take their bows as their true selves. However, mass media are different because radio and television continually toggle between the factual world and the fictional world (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Parasocial relationships can form between a spectator and public figures, fictional characters, puppets given personalities, theatrical stars that appear in mass media and personas "whose existence is a function of the media", such as quizmasters, announcers and interviewers (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 216).

The authors explain that the effects of parasocial relationships can vary greatly, but they all affect a spectator's day-to-day life to some degree. An example is given of a spectator participating in a parasocial relationship that wrote in to Ann Landers' advice column. Her life had been so altered by an infatuation with a local television star, she could not sleep and had completely lost interest in all other men. This is cited as an extreme example of a parasocial relationship effect. However, the authors point out, talking with friends about something a character said or taking care to not make plans

during the time a favorite television program airs is responding in a comparable way, just to a lesser extent (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Since Horton and Wohl gave it a name, parasocial interaction has been studied extensively in mass communication (Alperstein, 1991; Ashe & McCutcheon, 2001; Auter, 1992; Cohen, 1997; Cole & Leets, 1999; Dhanda, 2011; Dyer, 2011; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Hoffner, 1996; Levy, 1979; Miller, 1983; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Phelps, 2011; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin, Perse & Powell, 1985; Sood & Rogers, 2000; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason 2010; Turner, 1993). The 1980s in particular was a time in which much parasocial relationship research was completed (Miller, 1983; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin et al., 1985; Rubin & Rubin, 1985). The most relevant studies will be discussed below.

Many studies on parasocial interaction attempt to answer the question: what makes a person develop a parasocial relationship (Ashe & McCutcheon, 2001; Chory-Assad & Cicchirillo, 2005; Chory-Assad & Yanen, 2005; Dhanda, 2011; Nordlund, 1978; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972; Rubin et al., 1985)? Specifically, this type of research has attempted to discover different psychological predictors of parasocial interaction.

Parasocial interaction has been researched in regard to loneliness, particularly in uses and gratifications research, with mixed results (Ashe & McCutcheon, 2001; Chory-Assad & Yanen, 2005; Dhanda, 2011; Nordlund, 1978; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972; Rubin et al., 1985). Rosengren and Windahl explored mass media as a functional alternative to human needs not being met by outside sources (1972). For example, the authors cite the need of social interaction. They claim that in order to meet this need, a person needs to exhibit certain characteristics; namely, extroversion and empathy. If an

introvert who is low on empathy does not have his or her need for social interaction met by his or her environment, he or she "will be very dependent on such functional alternatives as may be offered, for instance, by the mass media" (p. 169). Rubin and Rubin also mentioned that parasocial relationships can act as a substitute for interpersonal relationships (1985). The authors described mass media as acting as a functional alternative to interpersonal or group relationships.

Media interaction, Nordlund (1978) explains, includes parasocial interaction. As briefly mentioned previously, according to Nordlund, "media interaction treats such phenomena as constituent elements of an overarching, more multifaceted phenomena of audience involvement" (p. 151). The author offered media interaction as a possible way for audience members to achieve unmet social needs. If one does not receive enough social stimulation, "One may, for instance, try to replace social interaction with some form of 'interaction' with people in the mass media world" (p. 153).

In 2001, Ashe and McCutcheon hypothesized that shyness and loneliness would be predictors of how strongly one felt about his or her favorite celebrity. The authors also proposed that visibility of the favorite celebrity would have an impact on this relationship: the higher the visibility, the more strongly shyness and loneliness would predict one's attitude toward his or her favorite celebrity. However, the authors found that "the link between two measures of social anxiety and the strength of parasocial interaction to a celebrity is either very weak or non-existent" (p. 130). Researchers also found loneliness to not be a significant predictor of parasocial relationships (Rubin et al., 1985). This particular study looked solely at parasocial interaction with local television newscasters. The authors concede, however, that their sample did not include people

who were very lonely; there was not much variance found on the loneliness scale that was used (Rubin et al., 1985).

In another study that examined loneliness and parasocial interaction, Chory-Assad and Yanen studied how parasocial interaction related to identification, wishful identification, hopelessness and loneliness (2005). The authors found that loneliness did not affect parasocial interaction but gender did (women were more likely to form parasocial relationships than were men). The authors also created four hierarchical regression models designed to predict the four types of involvement they studied. The first block of the models included respondents' age, sex, number of cohabitants, work/volunteer status, and pet-owning status. The second block included hopelessness variables. The authors discovered that the addition of the hopelessness variables improved the parasocial interaction prediction model. All the variables together predicted 20% of variance in parasocial interaction (Chory-Assad & Yanen, 2005).

A thesis published in 2011 also examined loneliness and other possible predictors of parasocial interaction (Dhanda). The author surveyed respondents using the parasocial interaction scale, a loneliness scale and several other scales measuring psychological attributes such as empathy, depression and self-esteem. Controlling for age, gender, education, income and relationship status, Dhanda found several significant predictors of parasocial interaction: empathy, extraversion, companionship loneliness and isolation loneliness. Social loneliness, however, was not found to be a significant predictor of parasocial interaction (Dhanda, 2011).

Empathy was also studied as a predictor of parasocial interaction in a 2005 study by Chory-Assad and Cicchirillo. The authors researched whether viewer empathy and

affective orientation predicted how that viewer identified with a favorite television character. The authors defined empathy as the ability to adopt another's point of view and affective orientation as the tendency to consider and use emotions to guide communication. They found that affective orientation did predict identification with the viewers' favorite television characters and viewer empathy partially did (Chory-Assad & Cicchirillo, 2005).

Cole and Leets used attachment theory to discover how attachment styles affect parasocial relationships (1999). The authors examined how likely people with three different attachment styles (Secure, Avoidant and Anxious-Ambivalent) were to form parasocial relationships. A survey was administered to respondents using the parasocial interaction scale and two attachment measures. The authors found that respondents with an Anxious-Ambivalent attachment style were most likely to form parasocial relationships with a favorite television performer (Cole & Leets, 1999). Anxious-Ambivalent attachment style is represented by a negative view of oneself and an idealized view of a relationship partner (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1992).

Much research has been conducted comparing parasocial relationships to interpersonal ones (Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Turner, 1993). In 1987, Rubin & McHugh posited that the development of parasocial relationships parallels the development of interpersonal relationships, or "real-life" relationships. The authors claimed that both types of relationship begin with an initial attraction and, over time, as uncertainty about the other party is lessened, attraction increases and the relationship grows. This is known as uncertainty reduction

theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Rubin and McHugh delivered a survey that included use of the parasocial interaction scale, a scale testing how important the respondents deemed establishing a relationship with their favorite television performer, the length of time respondents had been exposed to their favorite television performer and a scale measuring the respondents' attraction toward their favorite television performer. The results of the study showed that attraction for a performer was positively correlated to engaging in a parasocial relationship with that performer and toward perceived importance for establishing a relationship. However, the length of time exposed to a performer was not found to be an important aspect of parasocial interaction (Rubin & McHugh, 1987).

Perse and Rubin also researched parasocial relationships in terms of interpersonal ones (1989). The authors used the framework of interpersonal relationships to shed light on how parasocial relationships are constructed. A particular area of interest in this research was a proponent of uncertainty reduction theory: attributional confidence, or feeling confident about the ability to predict the feelings of a person with whom one is in a relationship. The authors claim that the longer one is acquainted with and the more one knows about the other person, the higher the attributional confidence. Furthermore, "Attributional confidence, then, contributes to relationship development" (p. 63). The authors surveyed college students who were fans of television soap operas. It was found that length of viewing time of a program did influence parasocial relationships, albeit indirectly through increased attributional confidence. The authors state that uncertainty reduction theory provides an explanation for why parasocial relationships are formed (Perse & Rubin, 1989).

Parasocial interaction has been studied in regard to old age (Miller, 1983). Miller gives reasons why older viewers may experience higher instances of parasocial relationships:

> because of the higher incidence of social isolation caused by declining health, loss of friends through death, and isolation caused by a lessened ability to pay for or maintain means of transportation, many older adults are expected to be high parasocial users of television (1983, p. 2).

However, the author's hypothesis that age is positively correlated with parasocial program viewing was not supported. Miller states that because of the type of sample gathered for the study (predominately older females living in a senior citizen high-rise building), the results might be atypical and unable to be generalized to a larger population. The author also concedes that there simply might not be a relationship between age and the forming of parasocial relationships (Miller, 1983).

Parasocial interaction has also been studied in regard to young age (Hoffner, 1992; Theran et al., 2010). In 1992, Hoffner delivered surveys regarding favorite television characters to children aged 7 to 12. On the survey, respondents named their favorite television characters and answered questions about their traits. The survey also contained the parasocial interaction scale and items measuring wishful identification: "the desire to be like or behave in ways similar to the character" (p. 390). The author found that the formation of parasocial relationships with male characters was predicted by attractiveness and intelligence for girls and by attractiveness, intelligence and strength for boys. Parasocial relationships with female characters were predicted by attractiveness only for girls. Too few boys listed females as favorite characters to analyze that particular subgroup (Hoffner, 1996).

Another study surveyed adolescent females in regard to parasocial interactions with female celebrities. For the survey, the authors used the parasocial interaction scale, an emotional intensity scale, a media figure questionnaire and a scale measuring parental attachment. Results showed that 94% of respondents were engaged in a parasocial relationship of some sort (Theran et al., 2010).

Parasocial interaction has been studied in regard to television news viewing (Levy, 1979; Rubin et al., 1985). In 1979, Levy hypothesized that the stronger a viewer's parasocial interaction with a newscaster, the more news a viewer will watch. The author's hypothesis was supported:

> People who watch television news engage in varying degrees of para-social interaction with the news personae. Those viewers who find the para-social relationship particularly attractive or gratifying increase their exposure in order to increase their "contact" with the news personae (p. 78).

As for why people form parasocial relationships with newscasters specifically, the author included parasocial interaction propositions in the survey with which respondents indicated a level of agreement. Fifty-two percent of the respondents agreed that newscasters were "*almost* like friends one sees everyday" (p. 72). Furthermore, 25% of respondents reported that they are upset when their favorite newscaster is out on vacation.

In the same study for which the oft-used parasocial interaction scale was developed, researchers tested if lonely people used local television news to meet social needs, if those people became dependent on the news program and if they developed a parasocial relationship with a favorite newscaster (Rubin et al., 1985). As mentioned previously, this study did not find loneliness to be a predictor of parasocial relationships with local newscasters (Rubin et al., 1985).

Parasocial interaction has been examined in regard to soap operas (Rubin & Perse, 1989). As mentioned previously, Rubin and Perse concluded that uncertainty reduction was a reason college students form parasocial relationships with soap opera characters (1989). The authors compared the students' answers on items asking about classmates they liked and disliked to their answers on items asking about soap opera characters they liked and disliked. Viewers were found to use interpersonal constructs when discussing the soap opera characters. This makes sense, according to the authors, "given the emphasis of soap opera content on interpersonal relationships" (p. 73).

A qualitative study by Sood and Rogers published in 2000 examined parasocial interactions with an Indian soap opera called *Hum Log*. The authors examined why viewers wrote 400,000 letters to the network that aired the program and the actors and actresses that appeared on it. They identified five dimensions that were present in the 763 letters they sampled: affective interaction, cognitive interaction, behavioral interaction, referential involvement and critical involvement (Sood & Rogers, 2000).

In recent years, parasocial interaction has been studied in newer forms of media (Ballatine & Martin, 2005; Dyer, 2010; Phelps, 2011). Ballatine and Martin (2005) discussed the possibility of parasocial relationships in online communities, occurring between non-participative and highly participative users. The authors offered research questions to guide future studies.

For a master's thesis in 2011, Phelps examined parasocial relationships and social media. The author administered a survey about favorite celebrities and social media sites to a snowball sample. Phelps found that 47.8% of respondents followed

their favorite celebrity on Facebook® while 43.4% followed their favorite celebrity on Twitter™. Furthermore, 16.7% of respondents reported that they checked their social networking site of choice for their favorite celebrity daily (Phelps, 2011).

A 2010 master's thesis by Dyer studied reality television programming and parasocial interaction. For this research, the author did a qualitative study of focus groups. One of the author's research questions sought to discover the nature of relationships viewers form with reality show characters. Acting as moderator, Dyer divided the group into two smaller sets, separated by gender. The author claimed a minimal role in the conversation during each focus group, speaking only when posing questions to start the discussion down a certain path or to get it back on track. Dyer guided participants to discuss what they liked and didn't like about reality and scripted television, how often they watched each genre and how they connected with the characters of reality television.

Interestingly, Dyer found that the "focus group participants did suggest that these para-social relationships are likely to form in reality programs as much, or even more than relationships formed with characters from scripted programs" (p. 71).

Dyer's results helped guide the basis for this study, as it focuses on parasocial relationships with reality stars. However, this research is slightly more focused, as it seeks to study parasocial relationships with specifically *wealthy* reality show characters. Focusing further, this study's goal is to discover if this type of parasocial relationship predicts a higher level of materialism in the viewer's own life. Since the viewers are engaging in parasocial interaction with stars whose wealth is a topic of the show on

which they appear, is wealth extremely important to them in the viewers' own lives as well?

Parasocial Interaction Scale

The parasocial interaction scale was developed in 1985 for a study on parasocial relationships with local television newscasters (Rubin et al.). Each item on the scale offers a statement with which a respondent can choose one of five responses, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Examples of items on the scale include: "The newscasters make me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends", "My favorite newscaster keeps me company when the news is on television", and "I would like to meet my favorite newscaster in person" (p. 167). Originally, the scale consisted of 29 items, but in order to "create a useful and reliable empirical scale of parasocial interaction, nonsalient and redundant items were eliminated" (p. 166). The condensed 20-item parasocial interaction scale was found to have a Cronbach's alpha of .93 and a mean response score of 2.70 with a standard deviation of .68. Many researchers have since used the parasocial interaction scale for their own studies (Auter, 1992; Cole & Leets, 1999; Dhanda, 2011; Hoffner, 1996; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Theran et al., 2010; Turner, 1993). Four years after introducing their original scale, Perse and Rubin further condensed the scale to a 10-item one (1989). The Cronbach's alpha for the 10-item version was .83.

In 1992, Auter studied the validity of the 20-item version of the scale. This time, the scale was found to have a Cronbach's alpha of .81. The author found the scale to be a valid one: "The results of this research suggest that the construct measured by the A. Rubin et al. (1985) scale is indeed parasocial interaction" (p. 179).

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory was proposed by Gerbner and Gross (1976) and claims that television shapes the way people view the world. Television viewers, especially those classified as heavy viewers, will, according to cultivation theory, believe the world to truly be like how it is presented to them on television. This is rooted in the way the television world differs from the real world. For instance, Gerbner and Gross claim that "in the total population of the television world, men outnumber women four to one" and that, on television, "with all the violence, the leading causes of real life injury and death – industrial and traffic accidents – are hardly ever depicted" (1976, p. 179). It is disconnects such as these that cause people to get distorted views of the real world. In their research, the authors discovered that from 1967-75, action shows contained the most violence in television drama programs and accounted for "more than half of all prime-time and weekend daytime programming" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 185). Gerbner and Gross backed up cultivation theory with surveys in which it was shown that heavy television viewers saw the world as more dangerous than it really was. Respondents indicated the amount of television they watched and were classified as light or heavy television viewers; those who watched two hours or less per day were considered light viewers and those who watched four hours or more per day were considered heavy viewers. Respondents answered questions such as "During any given week, what are your chances of being involved in some kind of violence?" Possible answers were either slanted toward the television world or the real world. For the aforementioned item, the choice "one in ten" was the television answer and the choice "one in a hundred" was the real world answer. The authors found that heavy television viewers "were always more likely to give the television answer than the light viewers"

(Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 191). Gerbner and Gross summed up cultivation theory by stating that "Ritualized displays of any violence (such as in crime and disaster news, as well as in mass-produced drama) may cultivate exaggerated assumptions about the extent of threat and danger in the world and lead to demands for protection" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, pg. 193).

The "Mean World syndrome" grew from cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980). The "Mean World syndrome" describes a tendency to believe that people only look out for their own interests. The researchers developed a three-item "index of interpersonal mistrust" called "the Mean World Index" (Gerbner et al., 1980, p. 17). The Mean World Index measures "the degree to which respondents agree that most people are just looking out for themselves, that you can't be too careful in dealing with people, and that most people would take advantage of you if they got the chance" (Gerbner et al., 1980, p. 17). Again, respondents were classified as light or heavy viewers of television. The Mean World Index was found to have a Cronbach's alpha of .68 (Gerbner et al., 1980). This represents a moderate internal consistency between the three items on the index; respondents generally answered each question the same way. Upon analysis of the collected data, the authors found that "television viewing overall is significantly associated with the tendency to express mistrust" (Gerbner et al., 1980, p. 17).

A facet of cultivation theory is the concept of "mainstreaming" (Gerbner et al., 1980). Mainstreaming involves the converging of deviating views of the real world into a standardized one. This happens as viewers gain (mis-)perceptions about the real world through watching television (Gerbner et al., 1980). The researchers explain that

mainstreaming "can be thought of as a relative commonality of outlooks that television

tends to cultivate. By 'mainstreaming' we mean the sharing of that commonality among

heavy viewers in those demographic groups whose light viewers hold divergent views"

(Gerbner et al., 1980, p. 15). Another part of cultivation theory is "resonance": when

real-life experiences of the viewer mirrors what the viewer sees on television.

Resonance can also reinforce cultivation perceptions (Gerbner et al., 1980). The

authors clarify:

> 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. Thus, the congruence of the television world and real-life
> circumstances may "resonate" and lead to markedly amplified cultivation
> patterns (1980, p. 15).

Since 1976, the theory of cultivation has been examined extensively (Chorry-

Assad & Tamborini, 2003; Cohen & Weimann, 2000; Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Elliott &

Slater, 1980; Gerbner, 1998; Gerbner et al., 1980; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan &

Signorielli, 1994; Morgan & Signorielli, 1990; Perse, 1986; Perse, 1990; Romer,

Jamieson & Aday, 2003; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999; Signorielli, 2005). Cultivation

theory has also been examined in regard to television topics other than violence and

mistrust. Cohen and Weimann studied cultivation theory in respect to different genres of

television (2000). The authors surveyed Israeli youth regarding their television viewing

habits, several demographics, the Mean World Index and the Cultivation Index.

However, due to low alpha scores (.53 and .25 respectively), the three items on each

index were not used as a scale but separately from each other. The authors found that

religiosity affects cultivation greatly, demographic variables were important in

comprehending cultivation, and older youths were more susceptible to the cultivation effect than younger youths.

Chory-Assad and Tamborini examined perceptions of physicians based on representations of doctors in prime-time fiction programs (2003). A previous content analysis by the same authors showed that physicians were being shown in a less positive angle than they were previously (Chory-Assad & Tamborini, 2001). Their survey for the cultivation research showed that increased negative portrayals of doctors in prime-time physician programs impacted viewers' perceptions of characteristics of physicians (Chory-Assad & Tamborini, 2003). Chory-Assad and Tamborini state: "Increased exposure to prime-time fiction programs featuring physicians as main characters was associated with perceiving doctors as more uncaring, cold, unfriendly, nervous, tense, and anxious" (2003, p. 209).

Like parasocial interaction, cultivation theory has also been examined in regard to soap operas (Perse, 1986). Perse delivered a survey which studied respondents' soap opera viewing habits, general television viewing habits, the length of time the respondents watched soap operas, how many times per week the respondents watched soap operas and their motives for watching soap operas. The survey also asked several cultivation-related questions. For instance, the respondents were asked to estimate "the number of marriages (out of 100) that end in divorce" (Perse, 1986, p. 181). Perse found that soap opera viewing exposure (how many times per week the respondents watched soap operas) "was related significantly to increased cultivation perceptions" (Perse, 1986, p. 184). However, the relationship was not deemed a considerable one by the author.

Materialism and Wealth

Cultivation theory has also been examined in regard to materialism (Harmon, 2001; Shrum, Burroughs & Rindfleish, 2005). A person's level of materialism does not necessarily account for how many material possessions he or she owns, but rather how important he or she believes material possessions to be. For example, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines materialism as "a preoccupation with or stress upon material rather than intellectual or spiritual things" (Materialism, 2012). Rassuli and Hollander define materialism as "an interest in getting and spending" (1986, p.10). Being materialistic may indeed lead a person to obtain many material possessions; however, one does not necessarily have to do that in order to be materialistic.

In 2001, Harmon conducted two secondary analyses to discover if heavy television viewing was positively correlated with materialistic values; one analysis was done using Simmons® Market Research Bureau data and the other with General Social Survey data. While the Simmons® Market Research Bureau analysis did not show any strong association, the General Social Survey analysis did on three variables. For the GSS analysis, Harmon found that individuals who watched more television were also more likely to think owning nice things is important, to believe in taking care of one's self before others and that having a high income is important (Harmon, 2001).

Another study also examined cultivation theory and materialism (Shrum et al., 2005). The authors hypothesized that the amount of television a person views will be positively correlated to the person's level of materialism and that this effect will be higher in individuals who pay more attention when watching television. The authors created surveys measuring the amount of television viewers watched, how much attention viewers paid to television when watching it, and materialism. To measure

materialism, the authors used Richins' 15-item version of the material values scale. They found that their hypotheses were supported by the results of the survey.

Materialism and Wealth Today

Today, the topic of wealth is at the top of many Americans' minds. The "Occupy Wall Street" movement began on September 17, 2011. The protestors of the movement were taking "a stand against corporate greed, social inequality and the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process" (New York Times, 2012). The protestors claimed themselves the "99 percent". The 1 percent was considered the "haves" of the country, or the wealthy industries like banks and insurance companies. The 99 percent was the "have nots" of America, or everyone else (New York Times, 2012).

The Republican nominee for the 2012 presidential election, Mitt Romney, also put a spotlight on the topic of wealth (Associated Press, 2012). As a former businessman, Romney built up a sizeable personal fortune of about $250 million. Democrats used that against Romney, claiming that his money put him out of touch with most Americans. In his own defense, Romney stated that criticizing his previous success would only yield "a lot less success" (Associated Press, 2012).

Material Values Scale

The material values scale was created by Richins and Dawson in 1992. This 18-item scale was developed to measure the level of materialism in respondents. To determine what was popularly viewed as materialistic values, the authors interviewed 11 adults with open-ended questions. They asked the participants to describe the values and attitudes of people they knew that they considered to be materialistic. Descriptions that were mentioned frequently by the participants were turned into items on the scale.

The scale contains three subscales: success, centrality and happiness. The success subscale had coefficient alphas that varied between .74 and .78, the centrality subscale had coefficient alphas that ranged between .71 and .75 and the happiness subscale had coefficient alphas that varied between .73 and .83. The scale as a whole had coefficient alphas that ranged between .80 and .88 (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

In 2004, Richins reexamined the material values scale and attempted to create shorter versions. Richins conducted an individual item analysis on each of the original material values scale's 18 items. After deleting the three most poorly performing items on the scale, the author created a 15-item version of the scale. Richins claimed the newer version to be more reliable and suggested that any future research using the material values scale utilize the 15-item version. The Cronbach's alpha for the 15-item scale was found to be .87. The author also experimented with short scales derived from the material values scale; 9-item, 6-item and 3-item short scales were attempted. The Cronbach's alphas for the scales were .84, .81 and .64, respectively.

Basis for Study

There is a lack of research that specifically focuses on how exposure to reality television shows predicts cultivation perceptions. As cultivation theory focuses on viewers' perceptions of the real world and it is assumed that reality television presents the real world, this dearth of research is unfortunate. It seems to be a natural subject for examination.

There has been some research that combines cultivation theory and involvement (Perse, 1986; Perse, 1990). Perse's 1986 research that examined soap operas and cultivation theory did not specifically measure parasocial interaction; however, the author did take affinity into account. Citing a 1985 study, Perse states "a recent

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investigation found that affinity was the most significant predictor of parasocial interaction with television news personalities" (Perse, 1986, p. 178).

Perse examined cultivation theory, involvement and local television news (Perse, 1990). Again, parasocial interaction was not explicitly tested. The author measured whether viewers who were more involved when watching their local television news felt unsafe. Perse found that high levels of involvement did not in fact predict a higher sense of decreased personal safety (Perse, 1990).

The basis for this study is an attempt to measure if parasocial interaction cultivates materialism in viewers. This study will particularly focus on reality television. In an attempt to further narrow the focus of this research, this study attempts to examine one particular type of reality show: docusoaps. This type of show revolves around a storyline similar to a fictional soap opera but involves real people in what is assumed to be real situations. The same characters appear from episode to episode and season to season. Examples of docusoaps include MTV's *The Real World*, shows from Bravo's *The Real Housewives* franchise and Oxygen's *Bad Girls Club*.

Docusoaps are appropriate for this research because they feature the same individuals on each episode, which, in the author's opinion, make the development of a parasocial relationship more likely than a reality show with different characters every week. To narrow the study even further, the author will specifically examine docusoaps that predominately feature wealthy individuals. Docusoaps about wealthy people offer a peek inside their lives, giving viewers a chance to see how the rich live. The purpose of this study is to measure the likelihood of viewers experiencing a high level of materialism based on parasocial relationships with wealthy performers in reality shows.

The respondents' level of materialism will indicate how much they think material

possessions, like the ones they see on these programs, are important in their own lives.

Research Questions

Therefore, this study proposes the following research questions:

- **RQ 1:** Is the amount of exposure to reality docusoaps of wealthy individuals positively correlated with materialism in viewers?

- **RQ 2:** Is the duration of exposure to reality docusoaps of wealthy individuals positively correlated with materialism in viewers?

- **RQ 3:** Are parasocial relationships with performers on reality docusoaps of wealthy individuals positively correlated with materialism in viewers?

CHAPTER 3
METHOD

According to Babbie, "survey research is a frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences" (2010, p. 254). Furthermore, Babbie claims surveys are "probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting data for describing a population too large to observe directly" (p. 254). Babbie states that online surveys in particular are becoming more common; however, the author does point out that it is questionable whether those surveyed will be generalizable to a greater population (2010).

In an attempt to answer the proposed research questions, this study posed a survey to fans of docusoaps featuring wealthy individuals. During the summer of 2012, the survey was posted on Facebook® fan sites of these programs. The target population for the survey was individuals who have a parasocial relationship with a wealthy docusoap star; posting and/or reading online content devoted to a particular show would indicate parasocial interaction with one or more characters on the program. Because the survey was posted on a fan site, which a person who is not involved with the show will probably not visit, it is believed that those who are exposed to the survey will be involved in a parasocial relationship with a wealthy reality show character on some level.

Sample

A non-probability sample was collected via Facebook® pages. The usable responses created a total sample of 340 responses. No incentive was offered to participants. The survey was posted to the walls of Facebook® sites for the programs (when user posting was allowed by administrators) and messages asking viewers to

take the survey were sent to users active on the pages. Originally, 2,465 Facebook® messages were sent to potential participants and 1,714 follow-up messages were sent. This made for a total of 4,179 Facebook® messages sent with a request to take the survey. The response rate was 12.3%. However, this does not take into account the participants who may have seen the link posted on the program's Facebook® page wall and chose to take the survey.

Surveyed Reality Shows

This study only surveyed fans of programs that were on the air at the time that the survey was delivered (summer of 2012). This was done in an attempt to have the respondents answer the survey while actively experiencing a parasocial relationship. The reality shows on whose Facebook® fan pages the survey was posted are: *Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding* on Bravo, *Real Housewives of New York City* on Bravo, *Real Housewives of New Jersey* on Bravo, *Kendra on Top* on WE TV, *Hollywood Exes* on VH1, *Giuliana & Bill* on the Style network and *Basketball Wives* on VH1. Fans of the show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* on E! were also surveyed. However, the Facebook® page for this show was not able to be posted on by users other than the page administrator. Because of this, fans of the show that commented on or "liked" an administrator's posts were messaged directly and asked to participate in the survey.

It is worth noting that all of these programs were predominately watched by female viewers. For instance, for the month of July 2012, *Real Housewives of New York City* had over three times as many female viewers as male. That same month, *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* and *Hollywood Exes* were both watched by about 2.5 as many women as men. *Kendra on Top* had the smallest gap between viewers' genders, but there were still twice as many female viewers than men (Nielsen NPOWER, 2012).

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The program *Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding* on Bravo followed Kim Zolciak (from Real Housewives of Atlanta fame) as she planned her wedding to Atlanta Falcons® defensive end Kroy Biermann. The show highlighted Kim and Kroy's lavish Atlanta mansion and the cost of the extravagant wedding. Viewers witnessed drama between Kim and her mother and maid of honor as well as all the stress that planning a wedding in a few months brings.

Real Housewives of New York City on Bravo stars a group of high-society women living and socializing in New York City. Viewers of the show get treated to lots of arguments between the ladies of varying intensities, more than one lavish vacation and views of swanky New York City hot spots.

Real Housewives of New Jersey on Bravo, is almost the same as its sister show except that the women live in New Jersey. Drama between one character (Teresa) and each of the stars occurs at some point throughout the season and the women and their families all go on an extravagant vacation to Napa Valley. Discussions of whether or not Teresa will go to jail pop up repeatedly while the characters relax in their multi-million dollar homes.

WE TV's *Kendra on Top* follows Kendra Wilkinson, former girlfriend of Hugh Hefner, in her marriage to former NFL® player Hank Baskett. Viewers watch Kendra as she navigates her career and family life. Things get tense between Kendra and her husband as Hank searches for a job.

Hollywood Exes on VH1 stars the former wives of five celebrities. The show highlights the current ambitions of the women and how their famous ex-husbands can still affect their lives.

The Style network's *Giuliana & Bill* features E! News host Giuliana Rancic and her husband, former *Apprentice* winner Bill Rancic. The program follows the couple in different business ventures and in their struggle to conceive.

Basketball Wives on VH1 follows ex-wives and ex-girlfriends of professional basketball players. The women lead lavish lives and go on expensive vacations. Viewers are witness to lots of interpersonal friction between the women.

Keeping Up with the Kardashians on E! features the blended family of former Olympic gold medalist Bruce Jenner and his wife Kris. The cameras follow the clan as they pursue business ventures and relationships, go on extravagant vacations and fight amongst themselves. The show mostly revolves around Kris's adult daughters from a previous marriage, Kourtney, Kim and Khloe.

Each show was chosen because the main characters can all be considered wealthy. They live in expensive homes and take vacations to exotic locations. They own designer clothes and don't seem to worry about price tags. These shows feature real people (and real money), not characters dreamed up by a set of writers. For that reason, the author deemed these programs appropriate for the goal of this study. For an idea of how many viewers each show had, see Table 3-1 for each show's season finale ratings.

Each show had its own unique survey, as questions were adjusted to reflect the characters on each show. For instance, an item asking viewers to choose their favorite character from a list was different for each show. For example, the character choices on the *Real Housewives of New York City* survey reflected the characters on that show while the character choices on *Kendra on Top* reflected the characters on that show.

Furthermore, the viewer's choice of character was piped into questions about parasocial interaction. For example, if a viewer chose Royce as his or her favorite character on *Basketball Wives*, the first parasocial interaction scale item would be displayed as: "I think Royce is like an old friend."

The surveys were opened at different times, depending on when the show premiered on the air. For instance, the first completed responses for *Basketball Wives* and *Giuliana & Bill* were collected on May 23, 2012, as they were on the air at the beginning of the summer. However, the first completed response for the *Hollywood Exes* survey was collected on July 2, 2012 as the show debuted at the end of June 2012. All surveys closed on August 28, 2012. See Table 3-2 for first completed response dates for each show along with the total number of completed responses for each show.

Survey

The survey consisted of an informed consent page indicating that respondents needed to be over the age of 18, demographic information, the 15-item parasocial interaction scale, an item measuring amount of exposure to reality shows featuring wealthy individuals, an item measuring duration of exposure to reality shows featuring wealthy individuals, the 15-item material values scale and a scale measuring personal experience with wealth. Two additional optional questions were included asking respondents to list what they liked best about the shows and what they liked best about their favorite characters. Several foil questions asking respondents how often they viewed particular shows were included in the hope of concealing the true purpose of the study. See Appendices A-H for the surveys for each show.

Demographic Information

Respondents were asked to answer age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, income and education level demographic items consistent with cultivation analysis in the past (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). The choices for race match the choices given on the 2000 U.S. Census (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001). Also, consistent with the census, a question regarding Hispanic origin was on the survey. The choices for education level were also the same choices as given on the 2000 U.S. Census (Bauman & Graf, 2003). Income level ranges were chosen to match the IRS 2012 federal income tax brackets for single filers (IRS, 2011). The demographic information will be used as control variables when analyzing the data.

Foil Questions

In an attempt to shield the nature of the study, respondents were asked how often they watched particular shows. Some shows listed were other reality shows about wealthy people and some were scripted shows. These questions were included merely to try to conceal the goal of the study and were not used in analysis.

Amount of Exposure

Respondents were asked to indicate about how many hours per week they watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals.

Duration of Exposure

Respondents were asked to indicate for about how many weeks they have watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals.

Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents responded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" on the 15-item parasocial interaction scale as given by

Cole and Leets (1999). Cole and Leets found the scale to have an alpha of .87 (1999). The items were modified to specifically reflect reality show parasocial relationships. A lead-in item asked respondents to identify their favorite wealthy reality show character from that show from a list of the show's main characters. Because of this, each show had its own survey, though the items (except the aforementioned one listing main characters) remained the same on each survey.

Material Values Scale

Respondents answered the 15-item material values scale as proposed by Richins (2004). The questions were designed to measure materialism in participants and Richins found the scale to have a Cronbach's alpha of .87. Before analysis, six of the items had to be reverse scored.

Experience with Wealth

Respondents answered a 7-item experience with wealth scale devised by the study's author. The scale was an attempt to gather information about each respondent's current experience in his or her own life with wealthy people. During analysis, the scale was used as a control variable.

Optional Questions

Two optional questions were included at the end of the survey. The first question asked respondents to list their favorite thing about watching the reality show for which they were surveyed. The second question asked them to list their favorite things about the favorite character they chose.

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Complications

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Initially, not many people took the surveys. For instance, within the first 24 hours, only one completed response was gathered. In an attempt to raise the number of

responses, fans of each show that commented on the show's page or commented on or "liked" posts were messaged directly and asked to take the survey in the same fashion as the *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* survey.

Because of the high volume of messages being sent to fans of television shows in a short amount of time, Facebook® banned the author from sending messages on more than one occasion. After waiting about a day, message sending was able to be resumed. Furthermore, some reply messages were received by the author from fans long after the original message was sent requesting them to take part in the survey. In these messages, the fans stated the original message had gone to an "Other" folder within the users' message folder. This "Other" folder seems to operate as a sort of spam filter.

The author was also banned from posting the survey links to the Facebook® pages for *Real Housewives of New Jersey* and *Real Housewives of New York City*. No message or alert was given to the author by the page administrators, but the option to post on the pages disappeared. Because fans were still freely posting on the pages, the author concluded that she was blocked from posting by the pages' administrators.

Data Collection

The survey software Qualtrics™ was used for data collection. Four hundred fifty-two unique responses were recorded. However, upon closer inspection, several responses were either not complete and/or, despite the informed consent indicating respondents must be age 18 or older, had a self-reported age under 18. These responses were removed from the study. This left a total N of 340.

Table 3-1. Surveyed shows' season finale ratings.

Show	Season Finale Air Date	Adult 18-49 Rating (Live + SD)	Number of Viewers (in millions)
Basketball Wives	May 28, 2012	1.0	1.78
Giuliana & Bill	June 5, 2012	*	*
Real Housewives of New Jersey	September 23, 2012	1.6	3.41
Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding	June 14, 2012	1.0	2.35
Keeping Up with the Kardashians	September 16, 2012	1.8	3.57
Real Housewives of New York City	October 1, 2012	.9	1.84
Hollywood Exes	August 29, 2012	.5	.97
Kendra on Top	July 31, 2012	*	*

Source: TVbythenumbers.com

*Show was not in top 100 cable shows the night it aired; therefore, data are not available.

Table 3-2. Completed responses by show.

Show	First Completed Response Collected	Close Date	Number of Completed Responses
Basketball Wives	May 23, 2012	August 28, 2012	55
Giuliana & Bill	May 23, 2012	August 28, 2012	51
Real Housewives of New Jersey	May 23, 2012	August 28, 2012	65
Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding	May 25, 2012	August 28, 2012	43
Keeping Up with the Kardashians	June 18, 2012	August 28, 2012	36
Real Housewives of New York City	June 20, 2012	August 28, 2012	39
Hollywood Exes	July 2, 2012	August 28, 2012	24
Kendra on Top	July 11, 2012	August 28, 2012	27

The survey results show that amount of exposure per week predicts materialism in a viewer, though the correlation is a slight one. However, a parasocial relationship with a character on a reality show featuring wealthy individuals is a predictor of materialism in a viewer. The positive correlation remains significant even after introducing several control variables.

Respondent Demographics

After data collection was complete, the Cronbach's alpha for each scale was computed. The author found the parasocial interaction scale to have a Cronbach's alpha of .92, the material values scale to have a Cronbach's alpha of .87 and the experience with wealth scale to have a Cronbach's alpha of .80.

Of the 340 usable responses, 93.8% of respondents were female and 6.2% were male. The average age of respondents was 36.84 years. Hispanic origin was identified by 12.6% of respondents. Race was coded as either white or non-white. See Table 4-1 for the racial breakdown of respondents.

Income levels for the study were derived from the 2012 IRS income tax brackets. See Table 4-2 for respondent income levels.

Highest level of education completed, as consistent with the 2000 U.S. Census, were reported by respondents, as well. See Table 4-3 for education information.

Scales

Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents also answered the 15-item parasocial interaction scale. For each item, each respondent indicated his or her answer on a five-point Likert scale ranging

from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Each respondent's score was averaged to create his or her PSI score. The mean score for the parasocial interaction scale was 3.52 with a standard deviation of .69. The respondents' scores were normally distributed. See Figure 4-1 for a graphic representation of the parasocial interaction scale score.

Material Values Scale

The material values scale also consisted of 15 items. Respondents answered each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Each respondent's score was averaged to create his or her materialism score. The mean materialism score was 2.65 with a standard deviation of .63. The respondents' scores were normally distributed. See Figure 4-2 for a graphical representation of the material values scale score.

Experience with Wealth Scale

The experience with wealth scale contained seven items meant to gauge a respondent's personal experience with wealth in his or her own life. Respondents answered each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Upon analysis, each respondent's score was averaged. The mean score for the experience with wealth scale was 2.59 with a standard deviation of .75. The respondents' scores were normally distributed. See Figure 4-3 for a graphic representation of the experience with wealth scale score.

<div align="center">

Amount of Exposure

</div>

When analyzing the survey data, not all responses for amount of exposure to reality shows featuring wealthy individuals were usable. For instance, because it was an open-ended response item, many worded responses were given, such as "to [sic]

many," "literally the whole day even repeats," "once a week," "when their [sic] on," etc. For responses in which an actual number could not be gleaned, the response was deleted from analysis. If a range was given ("two or three- depends when and what is on," "1-2 hours," "40-60 hours," etc.), the median value was recorded. If "never" was written, it was recorded as zero hours per week. If a value over 168 was given (as there are only 168 hours in a week), it was deleted. Two outliers (157 and 100) were also deleted. This left a total of 312 responses able to be analyzed, ranging from 0 hours per week to 66 hours per week. Of these, the mean was 6.28 with a standard deviation of 7.77. The median was response was 4 hours per week. See Figure 4-4 for a graphic representation of the amount of hours per week respondents watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals.

Duration of Exposure

Responses for duration of exposure to reality shows featuring wealthy individuals were again not all usable. This was an open-ended response item as well, and also garnered many worded responses ("countless," "every week," "every week for the past severl [sic] years," etc.). For responses in which an actual number could not be garnered, the response was deleted from analysis. Responses that obviously indicated how often per week the respondent watched, not for how many weeks ("atleast [sic] 2-3 times," "40-60 hours," etc.) were deleted as well. Symbols indicating less than or more than were ignored. If a range was given ("100-200," "4-5 years," etc.), the median value was recorded. If the answer was given in years or months, it was converted to weeks and recorded. A response of "never" was recorded as zero weeks. This left a total of 236 responses able to be analyzed, ranging from 0 weeks to 364 weeks. The mean was 57.61 weeks with a standard deviation of 77.35. The median response was 30 weeks.

See Figure 4-5 for a graphic representation of the amount of weeks respondents have watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals.

Mean Parasocial Interaction Scale Scores by Show

To compare fans of each show to each other, the mean parasocial interaction scale score was computed for each show. Scores ranged from 3.305 to 3.933. Fans of *Giuliana & Bill* and *Kendra on Top* exhibited the highest mean PSI scale scores and were the only ones to get above 3.9. See Table 4-4 for a representation of this data.

Mean Material Values Scale Scores by Show

To compare fans of each show to each other, the mean material values scale score was computed for each show. Scores ranged from 2.462 to 2.794. See Table 4-5 for a representation of this data.

Research Questions

In order to answer the research questions, three linear regression analyses were performed in SPSS from the data collected from survey respondents. Materialism scores were compared to amount of exposure to reality shows featuring wealthy individuals, duration of exposure to reality shows featuring wealthy individuals and the parasocial interaction scale.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 of this study asked: is the amount of exposure to reality docusoaps of wealthy individuals positively correlated with materialism in viewers? The research discovered that yes, amount of exposure to reality show featured rich people is positively correlated with materialism in viewers. In order to answer the research question, respondents' scores on the material values scale were compared to their answers for the question: "About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows

featuring wealthy individuals?" The standardized Beta was .145. The r^2 equaled .021;

hours per week of exposure accounted for 2.1% of the variance in materialism. This

linear regression had a p value of .010. Therefore, according to the results of this study,

amount of time spent watching reality shows featuring wealthy individuals is a predictor

of materialism at the p<.05 level. See Figure 4-6 for data from this regression.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 of this study asked: is the duration of exposure to reality

docusoaps of wealthy individuals positively correlated with materialism in viewers? The

research showed that no, duration of exposure to reality shows featuring rich performers

was not positively correlated with materialism in viewers. To answer this research

question, respondents' scores on the material values scale were compared to their

answers for the question: "About how many weeks have you watched reality shows

featuring wealthy individuals?" This linear regression had a p value of .112, which is not

statistically significant. See Figure 4-7 for data from this regression.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 of this study asked: are parasocial relationships with

performers on reality docusoaps of wealthy individuals positively correlated with

materialism in viewers? The study gave evidence to support that yes, parasocial

interaction with rich performers on reality shows is positively correlated with materialism

in viewers. In order to answer this research question, respondents' scores on the

material values scale were compared to their scores on the parasocial interaction scale.

The standardized Beta was .229. The r^2 equaled .052. The parasocial interaction score

accounted for 5.2% of the variance in materialism. This linear regression had a p value

of <.0001, making it statistically significant. See Figure 4-8 for data from this regression.

Control Variables

After it was discovered that a parasocial relationship with a wealthy reality show performer was a predictor of materialism in the viewer at the $p<.0001$ level, several control variables were introduced into the linear regression. Age, gender, ethnicity, race, income level, education level and experience with wealth were all controlled for in a regression comparing respondents' parasocial interaction scores with materialism scores. Each was controlled for individually then as a group in a multiple regression. Results for grouped demographic control variables were taken with and without experience with wealth included.

It was discovered that when any demographic variable except age or experience with wealth score was introduced into the linear regression as a single control variable, parasocial interaction with a wealthy reality show performer remained a predictor of materialism at the $p<.0001$ level. When age was controlled for, parasocial interaction was a predictor of materialism at the $p<.01$ level. The data also show that age negatively predicts of materialism at the $p<.0001$ level and experience with wealth score is a predictor of materialism at the $p<.01$ level. See Figures 4-9 through 4-15 for data from these regressions. In fact, even when every demographic variable was controlled for at once in a multiple regression without experience with wealth scores included, parasocial interaction was still a predictor of materialism at the $p<.0001$ level. When every demographic variable was controlled for at once in a multiple regression including experience with wealth scores, parasocial interaction was a predictor of materialism at the $p<.01$ level. See Figures 4-16 and 4-17 for data from these regressions.

After data collection, it was concluded that the question regarding income level was not exactly clear. Respondents were not expressly told whether to list their

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individual or household income. This could have created some inconsistency in the data. Therefore, a last multiple regression including all demographic variables except for income and including experience with wealth scores was conducted. See Figure 4-18 for data from this regression.

The results of the survey show that while duration of exposure to reality shows featuring wealthy individuals does not predict materialism in a viewer, amount of exposure per week does. Furthermore, a parasocial relationship with a character on a reality show featuring wealthy individuals is a predictor of materialism in a viewer.

Additional Findings

Interestingly, although previous research did not find a positive correlation between age and parasocial interaction (Miller, 1983), this study found age to be negatively correlated with parasocial interaction. In fact, the findings were significant at the $p<.0001$ level. This suggests that younger viewers are more likely to experience parasocial interaction (at least, with rich reality stars).

Table 4-1. Reported races of respondents.

Race	Number Reported	Percent Reported
White	228	67.1%
Black or African-American	75	22.1%
Other Race	22	6.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	.9%
Asian Indian	3	.9%
Other Asian	3	.9%
Chinese	2	.6%
Filipino	2	.6%
Native Hawaiian	1	.3%
Guamanian or Chamorro	1	.3%

No respondents identified themselves as Samoan, Other Pacific Islander, Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese.

Table 4-2. Reported income levels of respondents.

Income Level	Number Reported	Percent Reported
Not Over $8,700	55	16.2%
Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350	98	28.8%
Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650	121	35.6%
Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650	45	13.2%
Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350	17	5%
Over $388,350	4	1.2%

Table 4-3. Reported education levels of respondents.

Education Level	Number Reported	Percent Reported
No Schooling Completed	2	.6%
9th Grade	4	1.2%
10th Grade	1	.3%
11th Grade	2	.6%
12th Grade, No Diploma	2	.6%
High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED)	60	17.6%
Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year	41	12.1%
1 or More Years of College but No Degree	55	16.2%
Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS)	56	16.5%
Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS)	72	21.1%
Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA)	29	8.5%
Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)	13	3.8%
Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD)	5	1.5%

Table 4-4. Mean parasocial interaction scale scores by show.

Show	Mean PSI Scale Score
Basketball Wives	3.305
Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding	3.496
Giuliana & Bill	3.916
Hollywood Exes	3.511
Keeping Up with the Kardashians	3.611
Kendra on Top	3.933
Real Housewives of New Jersey	3.307
Real Housewives of New York City	3.328

Table 4-5. Mean material values scale scores by show.

Show	Mean MV Scale Score
Basketball Wives	2.776
Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding	2.687
Giuliana & Bill	2.624
Hollywood Exes	2.664
Keeping Up with the Kardashians	2.794
Kendra on Top	2.733
Real Housewives of New Jersey	2.546
Real Housewives of New York City	2.462
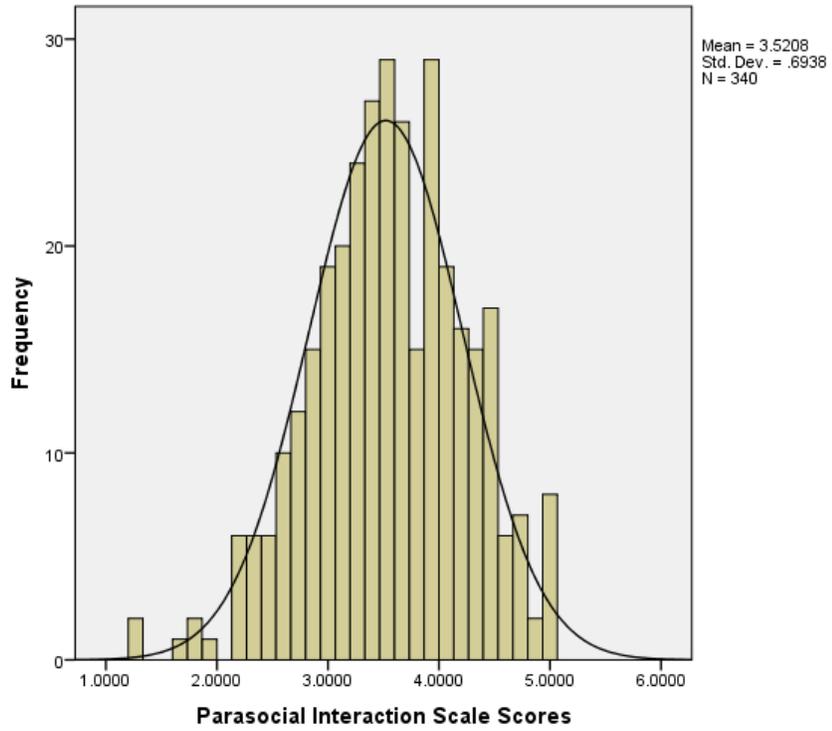
Figure 4-1. Distribution of parasocial interaction scale scores.
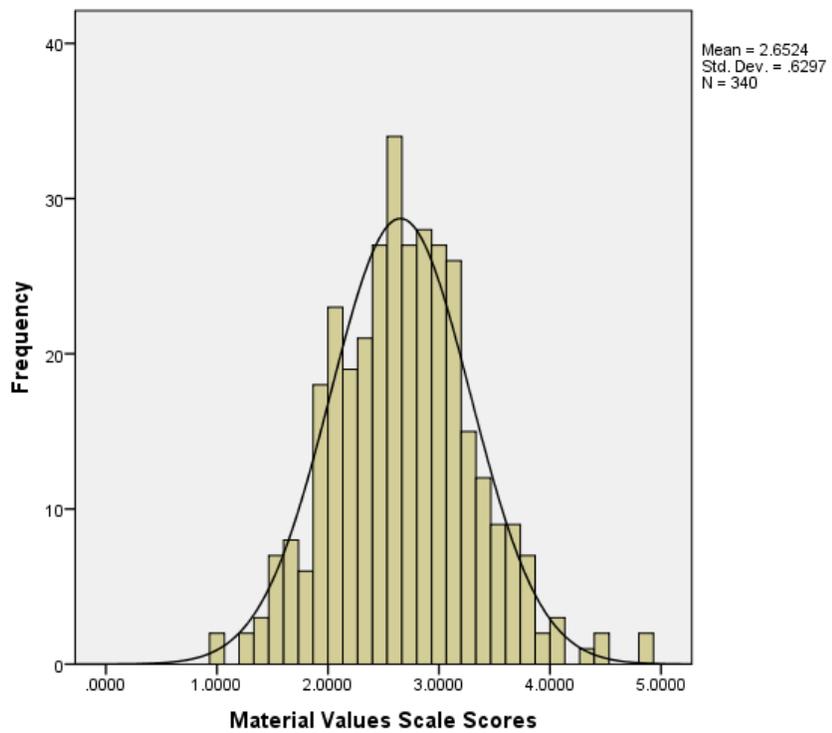
Figure 4-2. Distribution of material values scale scores.
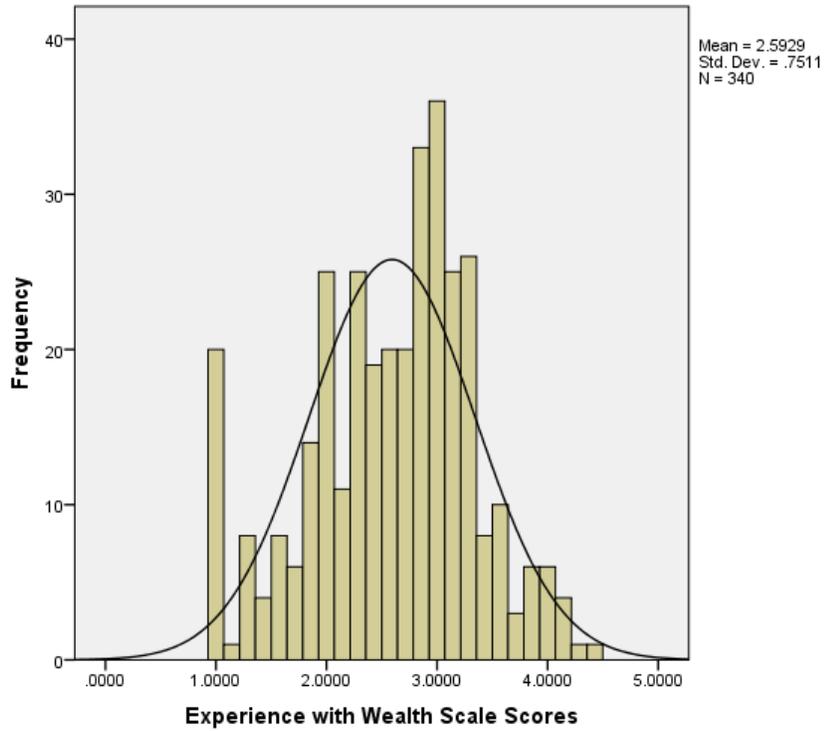
Figure 4-3. Distribution of experience with wealth scale scores.
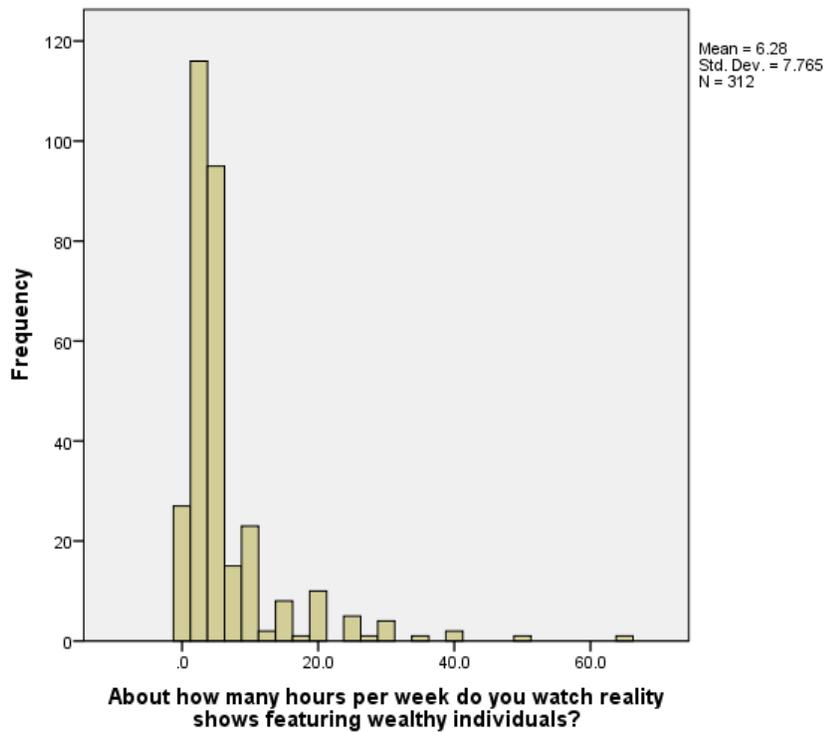
Figure 4-4. Distribution of amount of exposure responses.
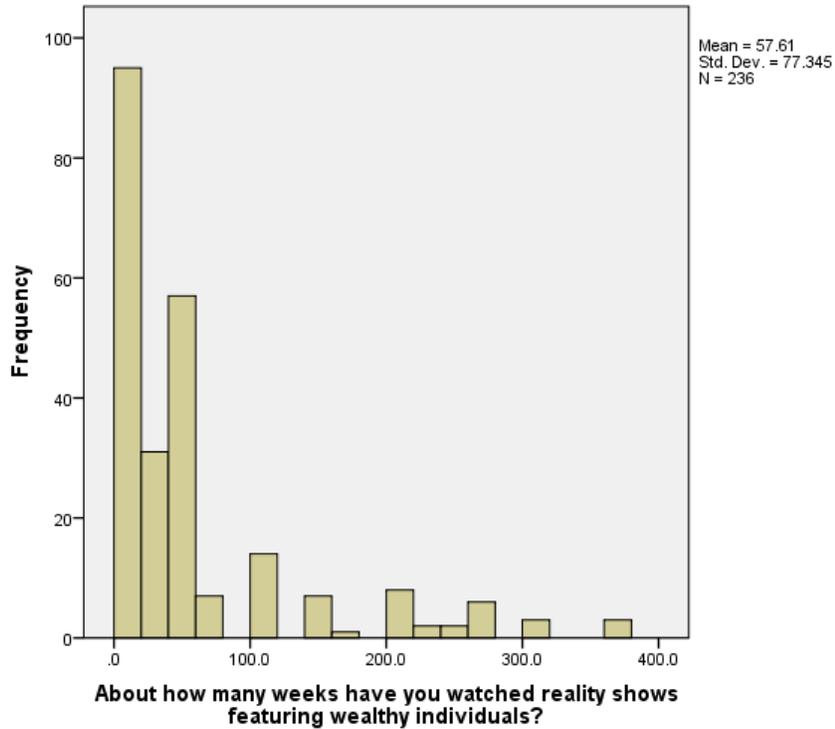
Figure 4-5. Distribution of duration of exposure responses.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.574	.047		55.274	.000
	How many hours per week	.012	.005	.145	2.589	.010

a. Dependent Variable: Materialism

R^2 = .021

Adjusted R^2 = .018

Figure 4-6. Regression analysis for amount of exposure predicting materialism score.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.567	.049		52.172	.000
	For how many weeks	.001	.001	.104	1.595	.112

a. Dependent Variable: Materialism

$R^2 = .011$

Adjusted $R^2 = .007$

Figure 4-7. Regression analysis for duration of exposure predicting materialism score.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.922	.172		11.146	.000
	Parasocial Interaction	.207	.048	.229	4.315	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Materialism

$R^2 = .052$

Adjusted $R^2 = .049$

Figure 4-8. Regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.081	.110		28.090	.000
	Age	-.012	.003	-.221	-4.137	.000
2	(Constant)	2.408	.222		10.838	.000
	Age	-.010	.003	-.183	-3.409	.001
	PSI Scale Score	.171	.049	.186	3.467	.001

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .049

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = .046

R^2 Model 2 = .082

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .076

Tolerance = .958

Figure 4-9. Regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for age.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.646	.035		75.001	.000
	Gender	.100	.142	.038	.703	.482
2	(Constant)	1.916	.173		11.085	.000
	Gender	.101	.138	.039	.732	.465
	PSI Scale Score	.207	.048	.229	4.314	.000

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .001

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = -.001

R^2 Model 2 = .054

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .048

Tolerance = 1.000

Figure 4-10. Regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for gender.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.655	.037		72.561	.000
	Hispanic origin	-.021	.103	-.011	-.203	.839
2	(Constant)	1.924	.173		11.139	.000
	Hispanic origin	-.044	.100	-.023	-.437	.663
	PSI Scale Score	.209	.048	.230	4.327	.000

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .000

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = -.003

R^2 Model 2 = .053

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .047

Tolerance = .997

Figure 4-11. Regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for Hispanic origin.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.657	.060		44.593	.000
	Race	-.007	.073	-.005	-.098	.922
2	(Constant)	1.922	.180		10.656	.000
	Race	.001	.071	.000	.009	.993
	PSI Scale Score	.207	.048	.229	4.308	.000

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .000

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = -.003

R^2 Model 2 = .052

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .047

Tolerance = .999

Figure 4-12. Regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for race.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.757	.088		31.403	.000
	Income	-.039	.030	-.070	-1.288	.199
2	(Constant)	1.969	.209		9.403	.000
	Income	-.012	.030	-.021	-.396	.693
	PSI Scale Score	.203	.049	.224	4.122	.000

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .005

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = .002

R^2 Model 2 = .053

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .047

Tolerance = .953

Figure 4-13. Regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for income level.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.415	.173		13.952	.000
	Education	.023	.016	.076	1.396	.164
2	(Constant)	1.576	.251		6.276	.000
	Education	.030	.016	.100	1.887	.060
	PSI Scale Score	.217	.048	.239	4.501	.000

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .006

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = .003

R^2 Model 2 = .062

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .057

Tolerance = .990

Figure 4-14. Regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for education level.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.301	.121		18.942	.000
	Experience with Wealth Scale Score	.136	.045	.162	3.014	.003
2	(Constant)	1.611	.201		8.002	.000
	Experience with Wealth Scale Score	.128	.044	.153	2.909	.004
	PSI Scale Score	.202	.048	.222	4.237	.000

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .026

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = .023

R^2 Model 2 = .075

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .070

Tolerance = .998

Figure 4-15. Regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for experience with wealth score.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.810	.216		12.988	.000
	Age	-.012	.003	-.219	-3.763	.000
	Gender	.065	.141	.025	.461	.645
	Hispanic origin	-.076	.104	-.040	-.727	.467
	Race	.048	.075	.036	.642	.521
	Income	-.018	.035	-.032	-.509	.611
	Education	.028	.018	.092	1.571	.117
2	(Constant)	2.030	.301		6.742	.000
	Age	-.010	.003	-.188	-3.243	.001
	Gender	.081	.138	.031	.587	.558
	Hispanic origin	-.082	.102	-.043	-.797	.426
	Race	.045	.073	.033	.611	.542
	Income	-.003	.035	-.005	-.080	.936
	Education	.032	.017	.104	1.813	.071
	PSI Scale Score	.182	.050	.199	3.650	.000

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .059

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = .041

R^2 Model 2 = .095

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .076

Tolerance = .932

Figure 4-16. Multiple regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for age, gender, Hispanic origin, race, income level and education level.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.617	.228		11.457	.000
	Age	-.011	.003	-.200	-3.435	.001
	Gender	.053	.140	.020	.379	.705
	Hispanic origin	-.087	.104	-.046	-.839	.402
	Race	.033	.074	.024	.437	.662
	Income	-.032	.035	-.057	-.903	.367
	Education	.018	.018	.061	1.024	.307
	Experience with Wealth Scale Score	.118	.047	.140	2.478	.014
2	(Constant)	1.891	.306		6.189	.000
	Age	-.009	.003	-.172	-2.970	.003
	Gender	.070	.138	.027	.507	.613
	Hispanic origin	-.091	.102	-.048	-.896	.371
	Race	.031	.073	.023	.424	.672
	Income	-.016	.035	-.028	-.459	.646
	Education	.023	.018	.076	1.294	.197
	Experience with Wealth Scale Score	.106	.047	.126	2.262	.024
	PSI Scale Score	.174	.050	.190	3.501	.001

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .076

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = .056

R^2 Model 2 = .109

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .087

Tolerance = .927

Figure 4-17. Multiple regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for age, gender, Hispanic origin, race, income level, education level and experience with wealth score.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.645	.226		11.691	.000
	Age	-.012	.003	-.219	-4.012	.000
	Gender	.059	.140	.023	.424	.672
	Hispanic origin	-.078	.103	-.041	-.757	.449
	Race	.026	.074	.019	.351	.726
	Education	.013	.017	.043	.768	.443
	Experience with Wealth Scale Score	.111	.047	.131	2.364	.019
2	(Constant)	1.893	.305		6.202	.000
	Age	-.010	.003	-.181	-3.307	.001
	Gender	.073	.137	.028	.533	.595
	Hispanic origin	-.087	.101	-.046	-.859	.391
	Race	.028	.073	.021	.382	.703
	Education	.020	.017	.067	1.212	.226
	Experience with Wealth Scale Score	.102	.046	.121	2.219	.027
	PSI Scale Score	.177	.049	.193	3.594	.000

a. Dependent Variable: MV Scale Score

R^2 Model 1 = .074

Adjusted R^2 Model 1 = .057

R^2 Model 2 = .109

Adjusted R^2 Model 2 = .090

Tolerance = .943

Figure 4-18. Multiple regression analysis for parasocial interaction score predicting materialism score, controlling for age, gender, Hispanic origin, race, education level and experience with wealth score.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

As it turns out, there does seem to be a link between watching rich people on reality shows and aspiring for wealth. The results of this study show that there is a positive correlation between parasocial relationships with wealthy reality show performers and materialism in viewers. This confirms cultivation theory's position that the amount of television one watches is positively correlated with one's ideas about the world. In fact, this research actually extends cultivation theory because of its intense focus: the author did not simply study the *amount* of television in general the respondents watched but *how much of a specific type* of programming (docusoaps featuring wealthy people) they watched. By then surveying the respondents on how the themes of the shows were present in their own lives (materialism), the author found support for cultivation theory. This study also extends cultivation theory by focusing on the reality television genre which consists of programming the audience is already accepting as real life.

Focusing the research even more was the introduction of the parasocial interaction scale. This scale measures *how involved* the respondents are with the show for which they were surveyed. Respondents' parasocial interaction scale scores differentiated them from each other based on involvement with the show. Thus, the study contributes to parasocial relationship research by showing evidence for the notion that the more involved a person is with a show, the more likely that show's themes will affect their view of the world. The correlation between parasocial interaction score and materialism score is significant at the p<.0001 level; this gives strong evidence that the two are truly linked.

Explanation

Parasocial relationships with rich reality show performers may be linked with materialism because wealth is a central theme of this type of reality show. Viewers get an inside look at the lives of the rich and (somewhat) famous. Lavish houses, expensive cars, designer clothes, shopping sprees and extravagant vacations are all depicted. It's a fly-on-the-wall type of experience for the viewers; they get to see how the "1%" lives. However, passively viewing the program is not enough to crave the type of lifestyle one sees. In order to envy a higher standard of living or be convinced that more money would equal more happiness, a viewer must be highly involved with the program. This is exhibited through a parasocial relationship. The viewer must be engaged with the storylines of the show, pick sides during arguments between performers and care about what happens to the people on the show. More than any other factor tested by this study (amount of exposure per week, duration of exposure, experience with wealth, or demographic information), being involved in a parasocial relationship with a rich reality show performer is the strongest predictor of materialism in a viewer.

Another interesting finding of the study was that there is also a positive correlation between how many hours per week a viewer spends watching reality shows featuring wealthy individuals and materialism. A weaker link than materialism and parasocial interaction, this correlation was significant at the $p < .05$ level. This supports Gerbner and Gross's cultivation theory that the more television one watches, the more he or she believes the real world to be like the one depicted on the screen (1976).

This particular finding is logical because of the compounding factor: the more of a particular type of program a person watches, the more that person subscribes to the values presented on that type of program. Furthermore, if a viewer enjoys what he or

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she sees on the television show, it stands to reason that he or she will seek out that show more often along with similar programs.

When the correlation between parasocial interaction and materialism controlled for demographic variables, age and experience with wealth also appeared to be predictors of materialism in viewers. Age was negatively correlated with materialism scores, suggesting that younger viewers are more likely to exhibit materialism. This is particularly interesting given that previous research did not find a connection between age and parasocial relationships (Miller, 1983). Experience with wealth was positively correlated with materialism, suggesting that people who have more experience with wealth in their personal lives, whether by being wealthy themselves, having wealthy family members or associating with wealthy people, tend to be more materialistic.

Favorite Thing About the Show

The survey for this study included an optional open-ended question asking respondents to list their favorite thing about watching the reality show of choice. This question was answered by 283 fans. The author hoped to gain some insight into motivations for watching reality shows about wealthy people and to see if money was mentioned in any of the responses.

Several fans of *Basketball Wives* stated reasons such as "entertainment" and "drama" as their favorite reasons for watching the show. Many also listed reasons of a materialistic nature: "the glamour and the way they dress," "the fashion" and "seeing the clothes hair and shoes [sic]". Not all answers that touched on materialism did so in a positive way, however. One viewer claimed her favorite part about *Basketball Wives* was "seeing how wealthy shallow women of color act and live." Another started a lengthy call for more uplifting shows by stating:

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I had been waiting to see if they would show them actually doing something positive. It's all been about clothing, weaves, shoes, earrings, gossiping, eating, drinking, yelling, fighting. I wanted to see them do challenges to benefit a community organization like the Boys and Girls Club.

While *Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding* viewers gave some materialistic reasons for watching ("the outrageousness," "the bling" and "the clothes and jewerly [sic]"), many claimed they watched for family reasons: "how Kim & Kroy are as a couple and family," "I like Kim and Kroy's relationship and how he is with her kids" and "I enjoy seeing her in a home environment." Not all fans had positive reasons for watching, however. Many made claims such as "it has a train-wreck quality about it," "how dumb it is" and "watching Kim make an ass of herself." Still other fans liked seeing the process of the main character, Kim, planning her wedding to a professional football player: "getting ready for the wedding. All the things that happen in the short process," "Kim preparing for a large wedding in such a short amount of time" and "how she is decorating her wedding and ceremony."

Fans of *Hollywood Exes* commended the ladies for their class ("the ladies showing us the finer things in life with class," "they have more class than the ladies on other reality shows" and "middle aged women acting their age. Rarely any fighting or drink throwing") while also enjoying getting a peek at the trappings of their lifestyles: "I love seeing the life after being married to someone famous" and "the fashion they wear."

Keeping Up with the Kardashians fans were surprisingly scant with materialistic answers. Family was a common favorite theme of the show: "the family dynamic," "that regardless they stay as a family unit when the going gets tough," "they are all a happy family and have a strong close bond with each other" and "I love the family. They are

hilarious and kind of free." The fans that did give materialistic answers focused on characters' clothing: "beautiful clothes and people," "outfits" and "I like seeing the clothes they wear then trying to find similar looks with pieces within my budget."

Fans of *Kendra on Top*, which followed the life of a former girlfriend of Hugh Hefner, had conflicting favorite things about the show. Many stated they liked to see the former Playboy® darling in a more familial role ("seeing how her life has changed as a wife and mother," "I love her little family and friends" and "I like watching her blossom as a mother & wife") while others claimed "I would like to party with her" and they liked "seeing what crazy thing she does next."

As *Kendra on Top* fans had the third highest mean materialism score, it is interesting to note that materialistic answers were not included as reasons for watching the show. So, although the fans did not claim to watch the show for materialistic reasons, they did exhibit a relatively higher materialism score than fans of several other shows surveyed. However, the show's fans also topped the list of mean parasocial interaction scale scores.

Fans of *Real Housewives of New Jersey* tune in for the drama of the show: "not going to lie, drama is a big part of it" and "the drama to me is funny." "Entertainment" was also a commonly listed reason. Only a few materialistic reasons made the list. For instance, some viewers mentioned "I like their beautiful homes" and "seeing how the wealthy people live" as reasons for watching. Showing what money cannot provide was also cited as a reason to watch: "it reminds that money can't buy happiness, these people seem to have it all, yet they fight and bicker constantly. Never happy."

Many watched *Real Housewives of New Jersey* for the reason that they can't relate with the people depicted on the show: "the characters are so foreign to me, what they say and do is just crazy," "it is an escape from my life" and "a peak [sic] into someone's life that is completely different than mine." Still other viewers seem to watch to find themselves incredulous over what they see: "the laughs at the stupidity of people," "every time I watch, I am so horrified. Sadly, I continue to watch" and "the mind-numbing realization that this is the real America." Interestingly, these types of answers are counterintuitive to cultivation theory, which was the essence of this study. The viewers that provided this type of answer may not be swayed by what they see on television or may be unaware of its effects.

Along with the ever-present "drama" and "entertainment" factors, some *Real Housewives of New York City* fans interestingly saw the show as a cautionary tale, stating their favorite reasons for watching as "being reminded that money does not buy friends or happiness," "I get a great laugh seeing that even rich people aren't happy nor have perfect lives," "even people with money, have no class" and "I know my life is much more fullfilling [sic] even though I don't have their wealth." Interestingly, many viewers enjoyed the background shots of New York City the show provided. "Seeing the city," "watching New York City in the background" and "the scenery" were all listed as favorite things about the program.

A notable exception to materialism was why fans enjoyed watching *Giuliana & Bill*. The show featured *E! News* host Giuliana Rancic and her husband, first season *Apprentice* winner Bill Rancic, and chronicled their struggle to get pregnant. Viewers of the show listed their favorite things about it as "they are so relatable," "stories about her

battle with infertility," "their relationship seems real and they are a positive influence" and "their love for each other." Any mentions of money were from the perspective that the characters are relatable in spite of it: "it shows no matter how wealthy, well-known, tv personality you are...they still have problems like you and me...money just can't buy everything..." and "G&B (even though they have both fame and fortune) seem like a down to earth, real couple. I can relate to many of the things they say and do." Many fans of the show sympathized with the performers' infertility troubles on a personal level and stated this as their favorite thing about the show: "my husband and I have a story just like them," "feeling a personal connection to their struggles" and "hope that we'll someday have a baby." Tuning in for the drama, fashion or lifestyle was not mentioned by one respondent.

It might be interesting to note that *Giuliana & Bill* fans exhibited the second highest mean parasocial relationship scale score and the third lowest mean materialism score among all shows. Fans of the show are particularly involved in it but do not seem to exhibit higher than average materialistic values. Considering there was also a lack of materialistic reasons given for watching *Giuliana & Bill*, this suggests a possible exception to the parasocial relationship and materialism link.

Favorite Thing About Favorite Character

A second optional open-ended question was included in the survey asking respondents to list their favorite thing about their favorite character from the chosen show. This question was answered by 287 fans. The author hoped to discover some viewer motivations for forming parasocial relationships with these characters.

Despite frequently listing the drama as a favorite thing about *Basketball Wives*, many fans gave reasons for picking their favorite character that were quite the opposite:

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"she tends to stay away from drama," "she doesn't participate in the negativity," "doesnt [sic] involve herself in all the drama. She tries to be logical about things" and "doesn't start drama or conflict." Class was named several times: "she's classy," "she has more class than the rest of them" and "poised, classy, intelligent and someone you would want your daughter to emulate." The characters' values were also cited: "she shows she was raised with values" and "she has values and stands up for what is right." Good character traits were listed often as well: "her humility," "she is a down to earth, nice person," "shes [sic] tough but sweet and kind hearted," "her intelligence, dignity, honesty & positivity" and "quiet confidence." Materialistic reasons were not named as often, but they did pop up: "I like her style, her hair, fashion," "style" and "she is beautiful and has great fashion sense."

  Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding fans enjoy their favorite character's sense of humor: "she's funny," "she is a smart, funny kid" and "her humor." Attitude was also listed as reasons for choosing a favorite character. Statements of "she is always just herself and like who cares. I want to be more like that," "his laidback attitude," "she tells it like it is" and "her wigs! Her attitude!" were all included.as favorite things about favorite characters.

  Materialistic answers were not given by *Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding* fans when discussing their favorite characters. However, one respondent made it clear that wealth was not why she watched reality shows about rich people: "I like Kim because she is open about her feelings and is straight forward. I do not watch these shows because of these peoples [sic] wealth, I watch because of either how I relate to the

person, or in most cases, how I don't, and I realize how materialistic and ridiculous grown women can be, and I realize I never want to be like that."

Concurrent with their reasons for watching the show, fans of *Giuliana & Bill* did not list many materialistic favorite things about their character of choice. Style was the only materialistic reason given and was listed only three times as a favorite thing: "style," "I think she has great style" and "her honesty, style and jokes!" The quality of "down to earth" came up again and again as well as personal strength: "her strength and optimism," "her personality and how strong she is" and "her courage." Interestingly, ambition was mentioned a few times, as well: "worked very hard to get where she is now," "not afraid to do anything" and "she's such a go getter." One character's love for the other was brought up a couple times by statements like "you can tell he loves his wife" and "it seems like he genuinely cares about Giuliana."

Again, if money was mentioned by *Giuliana & Bill* fans, it was that the characters' personalities thrived in spite of it. One Bill fan stated that Bill was "normal and doesn't let money go to his head." Another fan of Bill pointed out, "even though he is wealthy, he is practical about his money, unlike his wife!" On the flip side, a Giuliana fan stated, "she got money but is such [a] down to earth person."

Hollywood Exes fans like their favorite characters to exhibit the elusive quality of realness: "shes [sic] ghetto and real," "she is SO real" and "she keeps it real 100%." Materialistic answers were not given per se, but physical beauty was listed several times: "she is VERY attractive," "her beauty," "she has a[n] amazing body" and "she is into taking care of her body." The qualities of being "down to earth" and "level headed" were also common themes among favorite characters of *Hollywood Exes* fans.

Fans of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* admire the humor of their favorite characters: "laid back and funny," "she's funnier then [sic] the rest of the family," "her humour" and "I love how playful and funny she is!" Many people liked the confidence and outspokenness their favorite characters exhibited: "she doesn't care what others think but in a good way," "she says it like it is," "she speaks her mind" and "she is not afraid to be herself." Realness was mentioned a few times as a reason for choosing a favorite character on *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*: "she's funny and real," "she is so true in everything she says and does" and "natural and real." Interestingly, references to a character's style and physical attractiveness were brought up only a few times.

Kendra on Top viewers also stated that they liked their favorite characters' quality of being "down to earth" several times. "Funny" and "personality" were given many times as reasons for choosing a favorite character. There were a couple mentions of main character Kendra's struggles earlier in life and her ability to remain true to herself: "she had a tough childhood," "what she has went through in life and where she is now," "kendras [sic] always herself," "she is real" and "she's funny, a great mom, and is real."

Some *Real Housewives of New Jersey* fans claim to appreciate a lack of intelligence in their favorite characters: "shes [sic] dumb as a bat, so it makes the show hilarious," "she may not be the brightest, but she tries, that's commendable" and "how clueless she is. Love when she mispronounces words also." Conversely, many give positive qualities as their favorite things about their chosen characters. The traits of being "sweet" and a "nice person" were brought up several times. On the other hand, some fans liked the opposite traits in their favorite characters: "her caustic attitude" and

"her attitude and feistiness" were mentioned. Many fans appreciated how their favorite

characters were "down to earth," "level headed" and "genuine." "Honesty" was

mentioned a lot, as well. Only one partially materialistic answer was given ("she has it

all – family, friends, wealth") and a few fans felt that their favorite characters actually

weren't concerned with money: "she is not wrapped up in the glamorous lifestyle" and "I

strongly feel that she would trade all the wealth and money for the happiness of her

family!"

Fans of *Real Housewives of New York City* mentioned several times that they

enjoyed the "honesty" and "truthfulness" of their favorite characters. Again, "down to

earth" was mentioned many times as a favorite trait. Being real was another common

theme: "her realness and humbleness," "she does not pretend to be someone she is

not" and "I think she is really real." Sense of humor was listed several times: "she's

funny," "her sense of humor and sarcasm" and "her comedic take on the situation is

great!" Fans did not list one materialistic reason for choosing a favorite *Real*

Housewives of New York City character.

Comparison of Optional Question Answers

One interesting finding of the optional questions was the difference between what

viewers stated was their favorite thing about watching the show and their favorite thing

about their favorite characters on that show. The first question regarding respondents'

favorite reason for watching the show was answered by 283 fans. The word "drama"

was listed in some capacity 32 times. Including the word "fight" brings the count up to

39. The second question asking respondents to state their favorite thing about their

favorite character from the shows was answered by 287 fans. The phrase "down to

earth" was given 29 times. Including the words "genuine" and "real" brings the count up to 49.

There seems to be a notable disconnect between why a viewer likes a particular show and why they like a particular character on that show. One explanation could be that fans like to see their favorite character rise above the drama depicted on the shows. How fans interpret their favorite character "rising above" the drama may differ from fan to fan. Furthermore, an argument could be made that fans interpret the fights on the show based on preexisting favorite characters. They may choose sides based on who their favorite character is and then interpret the situation so that their favorite character comes out of it, in their opinion, smelling like roses. Conversely, some fans may watch a show's drama from a somewhat objective viewpoint and choose a favorite character based on who they believe to be in the right.

Limitations

One limitation of this research is that the question regarding income level was not necessarily understandable. Respondents could have interpreted the question as to list either their individual or household income, as the item did not explicitly mention one or the other. This could have created some inconsistency in the data. Clearly asking for either individual or household income would have been a better tactic.

Furthermore, the item examining duration of exposure asked respondents to list how many weeks they had watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals. There was varying response types and confusion regarding this question. In hindsight it may have been better to ask respondents to list for how many years they had watched these types of shows or for how many seasons.

It was noticed by the author that the Facebook® pages for these shows do not attract only fans of the shows, but also people who claim to severely dislike the show and/or its characters. Several posts on the Facebook® walls for shows and comments on administrator posts were disparaging and critical of the show and/or its performers. This creates a possible limitation of this study. If a person who actually disliked one of the shows were to take the survey, it could skew the results.

Another limitation of this study is that it does not prove causality. The results do not show whether materialistic people are more likely to form parasocial relationships than non-materialistic people or if materialism is a product of forming the parasocial relationship. It also cannot be determined if materialistic people seek out reality shows about rich people or if viewers become materialistic because they watch those shows.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given the amount of Facebook® comments that expressed distaste for a particular reality show and its wealthy characters, future research could study the difference in materialism in viewers who make agreeable statements about a show and those that make disparaging comments about a show. A future study could include items to gauge the amount of enjoyment viewers experience when watching a particular program. Also, the same type of study could be recreated but on a different social media site, such as Twitter™, or in blogs.

The correlation between parasocial relationship and fans of other types of shows could be tested. For instance, fans of a fiction television drama featuring rich people could be surveyed for parasocial interaction and materialism. Fans of shows that feature a look into different extravagant lifestyles on every episode instead of following the

same people week to week (like the former *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* and MTV's *Cribs* and *My Super Sweet 16*) could also be surveyed.

As age exhibited a negative correlation with materialism, a study specifically surveying fans of shows with different target demographics, could be interesting as well. Shows about rich people that have a younger audience could be compared to shows that have an older audience in terms of materialism and parasocial relationships in its viewers.

It could be interesting to do a focused study of one particular reality show featuring wealthy people and compare viewers experiencing parasocial relationships with each of the different characters. A longitudinal study testing causality on materialism and parasocial relationship could be created as well.

Another study that might produce notable results would be for researchers to conduct a content analysis of particular reality shows featuring wealthy individuals for mentions of money and material possessions. Researchers could then administer a survey measuring parasocial relationships and materialism to respondents. Comparing the results between shows that mention money often and those that don't could provide some additional insight into the link between parasocial interaction with wealthy reality stars and materialism. Considering fans of *Giuliana & Bill* and *Kendra on Top* did not list money or possessions as reasons for watching the show, there may be differences between shows that feature money as a theme and those that do not.

An in-depth study based on the optional questions could be devised. Finding a more detailed way to compare motivations for watching a particular show with

motivations for choosing a favorite character on that show could produce some

interesting results.

Conclusion

This exploratory study produced an interesting addition to the current literature

on parasocial relationships. It demonstrated a link between the type of people with

whom viewers form parasocial relationships (rich people on reality shows) and how the

fans view the world (being slightly more materialistic). Furthermore, results also

suggested that amount of exposure per week to similar shows, viewer age and previous

experience with wealth can work with parasocial interaction to more accurately predict

materialism in a viewer.

This research provides evidence that cultivated ideas in viewers does not

necessarily solely rely on the amount of television viewers watch. The parasocial aspect

of this study supports the idea that viewers who are more engaged in a specific type of

show will develop views of the world similar to the values presented on that show more

so than viewers who watch the show more passively. Additionally, viewer age can

compound with involvement to affect how views of the world are cultivated. Personal

experience with a particular subject can affect cultivated views, too. In this particular

study, materialism was studied, so viewers' own interactions with wealth were

examined. If a different world view was studied, a different type of experience could be

examined in the viewers. For example, if violence were to be researched, conducting a

scale to measure viewers' personal experiences with violence along with parasocial

interaction with a performer on a violent show could be studied.

Additionally, this study uncovered a curious disconnect between viewers'

motivations for watching a particular reality show about wealthy people and their

reasons for choosing favorite characters from those shows. The fans' self-reported love of drama on the shows contrasts sharply with their appreciation for characters who appear down to earth. This could be because a viewer likes to favor characters who appear to be the eye of a storm: drama swirls all around them but they refuse to participate (or they participate at a level the viewer deems appropriate). Hopefully a future study could delve into this topic more comprehensively and provide additional possible answers.

Two shows stood out in this research: *Giuliana & Bill* and *Kendra on Top*. While both feature wealthy people, materialistic motivations and "drama" as reasons for watching the shows were surprisingly scarce. Furthermore, these shows had the two highest mean parasocial interaction scale scores. This may suggest that the less drama and fighting between characters, the higher the parasocial interaction.

Producers of docusoaps about rich people may be interested in the results of this study to help guide future endeavors. It appears that fans of this type of show enjoy watching the drama and fighting but want to have someone to root for through all of it. Providing viewers with one or more "white knights" may help a particular show's ratings and, ultimately, advertising revenue.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY FOR *BASKETBALL WIVES* FANS

Demographic Information

Respondents answered the following demographic items:

1. What is your age? (open-ended)

2. What is your sex? Choice of male or female.

3. As a reminder, Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity. Are you of Hispanic origin? Choice of Yes or No.

4. What is your race? Choice of White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander or Other Race.

5. What is your yearly income level? Choice of Not Over $8,700, Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350, Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650, Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650, Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350 or Over $388,350.

6. What is your education level? Choice of No Schooling Completed, Nursery School to 4th Grade, 5th Grade or 6th Grade, 7th Grade or 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade No Diploma, High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED), Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year, 1 or More Years of College but No Degree, Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS), Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS), Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA), Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) or Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD).

Foil Questions

For each of the following foil questions, respondents had a choice of: Never, Less than Once a Month, Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week or Daily.

1. How often do you watch Basketball Wives when it's on the air?

2. How often do you watch 30 Rock when it's on the air?

3. How often do you watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians when it's on the air?

4. How often do you watch The Big Bang Theory when it's on the air?

5. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New Jersey when it's on the air?

6. How often do you watch The Office when it's on the air?

7. How often do you watch American Idol when it's on the air?

8. How often do you watch Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding when it's on the air?

9. How often do you watch CSI when it's on the air?

10. How often do you watch The Real Housewives of New York City when it's on the air?

11. How often do you watch Giuliana & Bill when it's on the air?

Exposure

About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Duration of Exposure

About how many weeks have you watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Favorite Character

Who is your favorite character on Basketball Wives? Choice of Shaunie, Evelyn, Royce, Suzie, Jennifer, Kenya or Kesha.

Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. I think (favorite character choice) is like an old friend.

2. (Favorite character choice) makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

3. (Favorite character choice) seems to understand the things I know.

4. If (favorite character choice) appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.

5. (Favorite character choice) keeps me company when his or her program is on television.

6. I would like to meet (favorite character choice) in person.

7. I like hearing the voice of (favorite character choice) in my home.

8. I like to compare my ideas with what (favorite character choice) says.

9. When I'm watching the program (favorite character choice) is on, I feel as if I am part of the group.

10. I miss seeing (favorite character choice) when his or her program is not on.

11. If there were a story about (favorite character choice) in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

12. I am not as satisfied when other characters replace or overshadow (favorite character choice).

13. I look forward to watching (favorite character choice)'s show.

14. When (favorite character choice) shows me how he or she feels about some issue, it helps me make up my own mind about the issue.

15. I see (favorite character choice) as a natural, down-to-earth person.

15-Item Material Values Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes.

2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.

3. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.

4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.

5. I like to own things that impress people.

Centrality

6. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

7. The things I own aren't all that important to me.

8. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.

9. I like a lot of luxury in my life.

10. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Happiness

11. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.

12. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.

13. I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things.

14. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

15. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Experience with Wealth

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. My family is wealthy.

2. I am personally wealthy.

3. I have one wealthy friend.

4. I have several wealthy friends.

5. I am in a relationship with someone who is wealthy.

6. I work for at least one person who is wealthy (boss or superior).

7. I work with at least one person who is wealthy (colleague).

Optional Questions

Optional: What is your favorite thing about watching Basketball Wives?

Optional: What is your favorite thing about (favorite character choice)?

APPENDIX B
SURVEY FOR *GIULIANA & BILL* FANS

Demographic Information

Respondents answered the following demographic items:

1. What is your age? (open-ended)

2. What is your sex? Choice of male or female.

3. As a reminder, Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity. Are you of Hispanic origin? Choice of Yes or No.

4. What is your race? Choice of White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander or Other Race.

5. What is your yearly income level? Choice of Not Over $8,700, Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350, Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650, Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650, Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350 or Over $388,350.

6. What is your education level? Choice of No Schooling Completed, Nursery School to 4th Grade, 5th Grade or 6th Grade, 7th Grade or 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade No Diploma, High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED), Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year, 1 or More Years of College but No Degree, Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS), Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS), Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA), Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) or Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD).

Foil Questions

For each of the following foil questions, respondents had a choice of: Never, Less than Once a Month, Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week or Daily.

1. How often do you watch Giuliana & Bill when it's on the air?

2. How often do you watch 30 Rock when it's on the air?

3. How often do you watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians when it's on the air?

4. How often do you watch The Big Bang Theory when it's on the air?

5. How often do you watch Basketball Wives when it's on the air?

6. How often do you watch The Office when it's on the air?

7. How often do you watch American Idol when it's on the air?

8. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New Jersey when it's on the air?

9. How often do you watch CSI when it's on the air?

10. How often do you watch The Real Housewives of New York City when it's on the air?

11. How often do you watch Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding when it's on the air?

Exposure

About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Duration of Exposure

About how many weeks have you watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Favorite Character

Who is your favorite character on Giuliana & Bill? Choice of Giuliana, Bill, Colet, Pam, Anna, Eduardo, Gail, Karen or Pasquale.

Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. I think (favorite character choice) is like an old friend.

2. (Favorite character choice) makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

3. (Favorite character choice) seems to understand the things I know.

4. If (favorite character choice) appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.

5. (Favorite character choice) keeps me company when his or her program is on television.

6. I would like to meet (favorite character choice) in person.

7. I like hearing the voice of (favorite character choice) in my home.

8. I like to compare my ideas with what (favorite character choice) says.

9. When I'm watching the program (favorite character choice) is on, I feel as if I am part of the group.

10. I miss seeing (favorite character choice) when his or her program is not on.

11. If there were a story about (favorite character choice) in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

12. I am not as satisfied when other characters replace or overshadow (favorite character choice).

13. I look forward to watching (favorite character choice)'s show.

14. When (favorite character choice) shows me how he or she feels about some issue, it helps me make up my own mind about the issue.

15. I see (favorite character choice) as a natural, down-to-earth person.

15-Item Material Values Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes.

2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.

3. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.

4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.

5. I like to own things that impress people.

Centrality

6. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

7. The things I own aren't all that important to me.

8. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.

9. I like a lot of luxury in my life.

10. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Happiness

11. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.

12. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.

13. I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things.

14. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

15. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Experience with Wealth

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. My family is wealthy.

2. I am personally wealthy.

3. I have one wealthy friend.

4. I have several wealthy friends.

5. I am in a relationship with someone who is wealthy.

6. I work for at least one person who is wealthy (boss or superior).

7. I work with at least one person who is wealthy (colleague).

Optional Questions

Optional: What is your favorite thing about watching Giuliana & Bill?

Optional: What is your favorite thing about (favorite character choice)?

APPENDIX C
SURVEY FOR *REAL HOUSEWIVES OF NEW JERSEY* FANS

Demographic Information

Respondents answered the following demographic items:

1. What is your age? (open-ended)

2. What is your sex? Choice of male or female.

3. As a reminder, Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity. Are you of Hispanic origin? Choice of Yes or No.

4. What is your race? Choice of White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander or Other Race.

5. What is your yearly income level? Choice of Not Over $8,700, Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350, Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650, Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650, Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350 or Over $388,350.

6. What is your education level? Choice of No Schooling Completed, Nursery School to 4th Grade, 5th Grade or 6th Grade, 7th Grade or 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade No Diploma, High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED), Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year, 1 or More Years of College but No Degree, Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS), Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS), Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA), Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) or Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD).

Foil Questions

For each of the following foil questions, respondents had a choice of: Never, Less than Once a Month, Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week or Daily.

1. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New Jersey when it's on the air?

2. How often do you watch 30 Rock when it's on the air?

3. How often do you watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians when it's on the air?

4. How often do you watch The Big Bang Theory when it's on the air?

5. How often do you watch Basketball Wives when it's on the air?

6. How often do you watch The Office when it's on the air?

7. How often do you watch American Idol when it's on the air?

8. How often do you watch Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding when it's on the air?

9. How often do you watch CSI when it's on the air?

10. How often do you watch The Real Housewives of New York City when it's on the air?

11. How often do you watch Giuliana & Bill when it's on the air?

Exposure

About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Duration of Exposure

About how many weeks have you watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Favorite Character

Who is your favorite character on Real Housewives of New Jersey? Choice of Caroline, Teresa, Jacqueline, Melissa or Kathy .

Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. I think (favorite character choice) is like an old friend.

2. (Favorite character choice) makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

3. (Favorite character choice) seems to understand the things I know.

4. If (favorite character choice) appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.

5. (Favorite character choice) keeps me company when his or her program is on television.

6. I would like to meet (favorite character choice) in person.

7. I like hearing the voice of (favorite character choice) in my home.

8. I like to compare my ideas with what (favorite character choice) says.

9. When I'm watching the program (favorite character choice) is on, I feel as if I am part of the group.

10. I miss seeing (favorite character choice) when his or her program is not on.

11. If there were a story about (favorite character choice) in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

12. I am not as satisfied when other characters replace or overshadow (favorite character choice).

13. I look forward to watching (favorite character choice)'s show.

14. When (favorite character choice) shows me how he or she feels about some issue, it helps me make up my own mind about the issue.

15. I see (favorite character choice) as a natural, down-to-earth person.

15-Item Material Values Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes.

2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.

3. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.

4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.

5. I like to own things that impress people.

Centrality

6. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

7. The things I own aren't all that important to me.

8. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.

9. I like a lot of luxury in my life.

10. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Happiness

11. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.

12. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.

13. I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things.

14. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

15. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Experience with Wealth

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. My family is wealthy.

2. I am personally wealthy.

3. I have one wealthy friend.

4. I have several wealthy friends.

5. I am in a relationship with someone who is wealthy.

6. I work for at least one person who is wealthy (boss or superior).

7. I work with at least one person who is wealthy (colleague).

Optional Questions

Optional: What is your favorite thing about watching Real Housewives of New Jersey?

Optional: What is your favorite thing about (favorite character choice)?

APPENDIX D
SURVEY FOR *DON'T BE TARDY FOR THE WEDDING* FANS

Demographic Information

Respondents answered the following demographic items:

1. What is your age? (open-ended)

2. What is your sex? Choice of male or female.

3. As a reminder, Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity. Are you of Hispanic origin? Choice of Yes or No.

4. What is your race? Choice of White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander or Other Race.

5. What is your yearly income level? Choice of Not Over $8,700, Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350, Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650, Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650, Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350 or Over $388,350.

6. What is your education level? Choice of No Schooling Completed, Nursery School to 4th Grade, 5th Grade or 6th Grade, 7th Grade or 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade No Diploma, High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED), Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year, 1 or More Years of College but No Degree, Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS), Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS), Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA), Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) or Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD).

Foil Questions

For each of the following foil questions, respondents had a choice of: Never, Less than Once a Month, Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week or Daily.

1. How often do you watch Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding when it's on the air?

2. How often do you watch 30 Rock when it's on the air?

3. How often do you watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians when it's on the air?

4. How often do you watch The Big Bang Theory when it's on the air?

5. How often do you watch Basketball Wives when it's on the air?

6. How often do you watch The Office when it's on the air?

7. How often do you watch American Idol when it's on the air?

8. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New Jersey when it's on the air?

9. How often do you watch CSI when it's on the air?

10. How often do you watch The Real Housewives of New York City when it's on the air?

11. How often do you watch Giuliana & Bill when it's on the air?

Exposure

About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Duration of Exposure

About how many weeks have you watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Favorite Character

Who is your favorite character on Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding? Choice of Kim, Kroy, Jen, Karen, Joe, Brielle or Ariana .

Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. I think (favorite character choice) is like an old friend.

2. (Favorite character choice) makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

3. (Favorite character choice) seems to understand the things I know.

4. If (favorite character choice) appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.

5. (Favorite character choice) keeps me company when his or her program is on television.

6. I would like to meet (favorite character choice) in person.

7. I like hearing the voice of (favorite character choice) in my home.

8. I like to compare my ideas with what (favorite character choice) says.

9. When I'm watching the program (favorite character choice) is on, I feel as if I am part of the group.

10. I miss seeing (favorite character choice) when his or her program is not on.

11. If there were a story about (favorite character choice) in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

12. I am not as satisfied when other characters replace or overshadow (favorite character choice).

13. I look forward to watching (favorite character choice)'s show.

14. When (favorite character choice) shows me how he or she feels about some issue, it helps me make up my own mind about the issue.

15. I see (favorite character choice) as a natural, down-to-earth person.

15-Item Material Values Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes.

2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.

3. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.

4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.

5. I like to own things that impress people.

Centrality

6. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

7. The things I own aren't all that important to me.

8. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.

9. I like a lot of luxury in my life.

10. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Happiness

11. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.

12. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.

13. I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things.

14. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

15. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Experience with Wealth

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. My family is wealthy.

2. I am personally wealthy.

3. I have one wealthy friend.

4. I have several wealthy friends.

5. I am in a relationship with someone who is wealthy.

6. I work for at least one person who is wealthy (boss or superior).

7. I work with at least one person who is wealthy (colleague).

Optional Questions

Optional: What is your favorite thing about watching Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding?

Optional: What is your favorite thing about (favorite character choice)?

SURVEY FOR *KEEPING UP WITH THE KARDASHIANS* FANS

Demographic Information

Respondents answered the following demographic items:

1. What is your age? (open-ended)

2. What is your sex? Choice of male or female.

3. As a reminder, Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity. Are you of Hispanic origin? Choice of Yes or No.

4. What is your race? Choice of White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander or Other Race.

5. What is your yearly income level? Choice of Not Over $8,700, Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350, Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650, Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650, Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350 or Over $388,350.

6. What is your education level? Choice of No Schooling Completed, Nursery School to 4th Grade, 5th Grade or 6th Grade, 7th Grade or 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade No Diploma, High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED), Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year, 1 or More Years of College but No Degree, Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS), Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS), Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA), Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) or Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD).

Foil Questions

For each of the following foil questions, respondents had a choice of: Never, Less than Once a Month, Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week or Daily.

1. How often do you watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians when it's on the air?

2. How often do you watch 30 Rock when it's on the air?

3. How often do you watch Giuliana & Bill when it's on the air?

4. How often do you watch The Big Bang Theory when it's on the air?

5. How often do you watch Basketball Wives when it's on the air?

6. How often do you watch The Office when it's on the air?

7. How often do you watch American Idol when it's on the air?

8. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New Jersey when it's on the air?

9. How often do you watch CSI when it's on the air?

10. How often do you watch The Real Housewives of New York City when it's on the air?

11. How often do you watch Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding when it's on the air?

Exposure

About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Duration of Exposure

About how many weeks have you watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Favorite Character

Who is your favorite character on Keeping Up with the Kardashians? Choice of Kris, Bruce, Kourtney, Kim, Khloe, Rob, Kendall, Kylie, Scott or Lamar.

Modified Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. I think (favorite character choice) is like an old friend.

2. (Favorite character choice) makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

3. (Favorite character choice) seems to understand the things I know.

4. If (favorite character choice) appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.

5. (Favorite character choice) keeps me company when his or her program is on television.

6. I would like to meet (favorite character choice) in person.

7. I like hearing the voice of (favorite character choice) in my home.

8. I like to compare my ideas with what (favorite character choice) says.

9. When I'm watching the program (favorite character choice) is on, I feel as if I am part of the group.

10. I miss seeing (favorite character choice) when his or her program is not on.

11. If there were a story about (favorite character choice) in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

12. I am not as satisfied when other characters replace or overshadow (favorite character choice).

13. I look forward to watching (favorite character choice)'s show.

14. When (favorite character choice) shows me how he or she feels about some issue, it helps me make up my own mind about the issue.

15. I see (favorite character choice) as a natural, down-to-earth person.

15-Item Material Values Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes.

2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.

3. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.

4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.

5. I like to own things that impress people.

Centrality

6. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

7. The things I own aren't all that important to me.

8. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.

9. I like a lot of luxury in my life.

10. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Happiness

11. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.

12. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.

13. I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things.

14. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

15. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Experience with Wealth

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. My family is wealthy.

2. I am personally wealthy.

3. I have one wealthy friend.

4. I have several wealthy friends.

5. I am in a relationship with someone who is wealthy.

6. I work for at least one person who is wealthy (boss or superior).

7. I work with at least one person who is wealthy (colleague).

Optional Questions

Optional: What is your favorite thing about watching Keeping Up with the Kardashians?

Optional: What is your favorite thing about (favorite character choice)?

SURVEY FOR *REAL HOUSEWIVES OF NEW YORK CITY* FANS

Demographic Information

Respondents answered the following demographic items:

1. What is your age? (open-ended)

2. What is your sex? Choice of male or female.

3. As a reminder, Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity. Are you of Hispanic origin? Choice of Yes or No.

4. What is your race? Choice of White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander or Other Race.

5. What is your yearly income level? Choice of Not Over $8,700, Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350, Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650, Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650, Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350 or Over $388,350.

6. What is your education level? Choice of No Schooling Completed, Nursery School to 4th Grade, 5th Grade or 6th Grade, 7th Grade or 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade No Diploma, High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED), Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year, 1 or More Years of College but No Degree, Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS), Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS), Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA), Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) or Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD).

Foil Questions

For each of the following foil questions, respondents had a choice of: Never, Less than Once a Month, Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week or Daily.

1. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New York when it's on the air?

2. How often do you watch 30 Rock when it's on the air?

3. How often do you watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians when it's on the air?

4. How often do you watch The Big Bang Theory when it's on the air?

5. How often do you watch Basketball Wives when it's on the air?

6. How often do you watch The Office when it's on the air?

7. How often do you watch American Idol when it's on the air?

8. How often do you watch Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding when it's on the air?

9. How often do you watch CSI when it's on the air?

10. How often do you watch The Real Housewives of New Jersey when it's on the air?

11. How often do you watch Giuliana & Bill when it's on the air?

Exposure

About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Duration of Exposure

About how many weeks have you watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Favorite Character

Who is your favorite character on Real Housewives of New York? Choice of LuAnn, Ramona, Sonja, Aviva, Carole or Heather.

Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. I think (favorite character choice) is like an old friend.

2. (Favorite character choice) makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

3. (Favorite character choice) seems to understand the things I know.

4. If (favorite character choice) appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.

5. (Favorite character choice) keeps me company when his or her program is on television.

6. I would like to meet (favorite character choice) in person.

7. I like hearing the voice of (favorite character choice) in my home.

8. I like to compare my ideas with what (favorite character choice) says.

9. When I'm watching the program (favorite character choice) is on, I feel as if I am part of the group.

10. I miss seeing (favorite character choice) when his or her program is not on.

11. If there were a story about (favorite character choice) in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

12. I am not as satisfied when other characters replace or overshadow (favorite character choice).

13. I look forward to watching (favorite character choice)'s show.

14. When (favorite character choice) shows me how he or she feels about some issue, it helps me make up my own mind about the issue.

15. I see (favorite character choice) as a natural, down-to-earth person.

15-Item Material Values Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes.

2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.

3. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.

4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.

5. I like to own things that impress people.

Centrality

6. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

7. The things I own aren't all that important to me.

8. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.

9. I like a lot of luxury in my life.

10. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Happiness

11. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.

12. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.

13. I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things.

14. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

15. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Experience with Wealth

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. My family is wealthy.

2. I am personally wealthy.

3. I have one wealthy friend.

4. I have several wealthy friends.

5. I am in a relationship with someone who is wealthy.

6. I work for at least one person who is wealthy (boss or superior).

7. I work with at least one person who is wealthy (colleague).

Optional Questions

Optional: What is your favorite thing about watching Real Housewives of New York?

Optional: What is your favorite thing about (favorite character choice)?

SURVEY FOR *HOLLYWOOD EXES* FANS

Demographic Information

Respondents answered the following demographic items:

1. What is your age? (open-ended)

2. What is your sex? Choice of male or female.

3. As a reminder, Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity. Are you of Hispanic origin? Choice of Yes or No.

4. What is your race? Choice of White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander or Other Race.

5. What is your yearly income level? Choice of Not Over $8,700, Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350, Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650, Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650, Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350 or Over $388,350.

6. What is your education level? Choice of No Schooling Completed, Nursery School to 4th Grade, 5th Grade or 6th Grade, 7th Grade or 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade No Diploma, High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED), Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year, 1 or More Years of College but No Degree, Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS), Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS), Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA), Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) or Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD).

Foil Questions

For each of the following foil questions, respondents had a choice of: Never, Less than Once a Month, Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week or Daily.

1. How often do you watch Hollywood Exes when it's on the air?

2. How often do you watch Kendra on Top when it's on the air?

3. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New York when it's on the air?

4. How often do you watch 30 Rock when it's on the air?

5. How often do you watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians when it's on the air?

6. How often do you watch The Big Bang Theory when it's on the air?

7. How often do you watch Basketball Wives when it's on the air?

8. How often do you watch The Office when it's on the air?

9. How often do you watch American Idol when it's on the air?

10. How often do you watch Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding when it's on the air?

11. How often do you watch CSI when it's on the air?

12. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New Jersey when it's on the air?

13. How often do you watch Giuliana & Bill when it's on the air?

Exposure

About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Duration of Exposure

About how many weeks have you watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Favorite Character

Who is your favorite character on Hollywood Exes? Choice of Mayte, Andrea, Sheree, Nicole or Jessica.

Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. I think (favorite character choice) is like an old friend.

2. (Favorite character choice) makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

3. (Favorite character choice) seems to understand the things I know.

4. If (favorite character choice) appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.

5. (Favorite character choice) keeps me company when his or her program is on television.

6. I would like to meet (favorite character choice) in person.

7. I like hearing the voice of (favorite character choice) in my home.

8. I like to compare my ideas with what (favorite character choice) says.

9. When I'm watching the program (favorite character choice) is on, I feel as if I am part of the group.

10. I miss seeing (favorite character choice) when his or her program is not on.

11. If there were a story about (favorite character choice) in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

12. I am not as satisfied when other characters replace or overshadow (favorite character choice).

13. I look forward to watching (favorite character choice)'s show.

14. When (favorite character choice) shows me how he or she feels about some issue, it helps me make up my own mind about the issue.

15. I see (favorite character choice) as a natural, down-to-earth person.

15-Item Material Values Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

Success

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes.

2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.

3. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.

4. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.

5. I like to own things that impress people.

Centrality

6. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

7. The things I own aren't all that important to me.

8. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.

9. I like a lot of luxury in my life.

10. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Happiness

11. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.

12. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have.

13. I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things.

14. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.

15. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Experience with Wealth

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. My family is wealthy.

2. I am personally wealthy.

3. I have one wealthy friend.

4. I have several wealthy friends.

5. I am in a relationship with someone who is wealthy.

6. I work for at least one person who is wealthy (boss or superior).

7. I work with at least one person who is wealthy (colleague).

Optional Questions

Optional: What is your favorite thing about watching Hollywood Exes?

Optional: What is your favorite thing about (favorite character choice)?

Demographic Information

Respondents answered the following demographic items:

1. What is your age? (open-ended)

2. What is your sex? Choice of male or female.

3. As a reminder, Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity. Are you of Hispanic origin? Choice of Yes or No.

4. What is your race? Choice of White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander or Other Race.

5. What is your yearly income level? Choice of Not Over $8,700, Over $8,700 but not Over $35,350, Over $35,350 but not Over $85,650, Over $85,650 but not Over $178,650, Over $178,650 but not Over $388,350 or Over $388,350.

6. What is your education level? Choice of No Schooling Completed, Nursery School to 4th Grade, 5th Grade or 6th Grade, 7th Grade or 8th Grade, 9th Grade, 10th Grade, 11th Grade, 12th Grade No Diploma, High School Graduate (Diploma or equivalent, for example, the GED), Some College Credit but Less than 1 Year, 1 or More Years of College but No Degree, Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS), Bachelor's Degree (for example, BA, AB, BS), Master's Degree (for example, MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA), Professional Degree (for example, MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) or Doctorate Degree (for example, PhD, EdD).

Foil Questions

For each of the following foil questions, respondents had a choice of: Never, Less than Once a Month, Once a Month, 2-3 Times a Month, Once a Week, 2-3 Times a Week or Daily.

1. How often do you watch Kendra on Top when it's on the air?

2. How often do you watch Hollywood Exes when it's on the air?

3. How often do you watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians when it's on the air?

4. How often do you watch 30 Rock when it's on the air?

5. How often do you watch Giuliana & Bill when it's on the air?

6. How often do you watch The Big Bang Theory when it's on the air?

7. How often do you watch Basketball Wives when it's on the air?

8. How often do you watch The Office when it's on the air?

9. How often do you watch American Idol when it's on the air?

10. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New Jersey when it's on the air?

11. How often do you watch CSI when it's on the air?

12. How often do you watch Real Housewives of New York City when it's on the air?

13. How often do you watch Don't Be Tardy for the Wedding when it's on the air?

Exposure

About how many hours per week do you watch reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Duration of Exposure

About how many weeks have you watched reality shows featuring wealthy individuals? (open-ended)

Favorite Character

Who is your favorite character on Kendra on Top? Choice of Kendra, Hank, Little Hank, Rosa, Kira, Holly, Judy or Hank, Sr.

Modified Parasocial Interaction Scale

Respondents answered on a Likert scale ranging from a low of 1 for "strongly disagree" to a high of 5 for "strongly agree".

1. I think (favorite character choice) is like an old friend.

2. (Favorite character choice) makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

3. (Favorite character choice) seems to understand the things I know.

4. If (favorite character choice) appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.

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5. (Favorite character choice) keeps me company when his or her program is on television.

6. I would like to meet (favorite character choice) in person.

7. I like hearing the voice of (favorite character choice) in my home.

8. I like to compare my ideas with what (favorite character choice) says.

9. When I'm watching the program (favorite character choice) is on, I feel as if I am part of the group.

10. I miss seeing (favorite character choice) when his or her program is not on.

11. If there were a story about (favorite character choice) in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

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Centrality

6. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.

7. The things I own aren't all that important to me.

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10. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.

Happiness

11. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life.

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4. I have several wealthy friends.

5. I am in a relationship with someone who is wealthy.

6. I work for at least one person who is wealthy (boss or superior).

7. I work with at least one person who is wealthy (colleague).

Optional Questions

Optional: What is your favorite thing about watching Kendra on Top?

Optional: What is your favorite thing about (favorite character choice)?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Erin Cassidy Pinkston was born in 1985 in Rochester, New York, and raised (mostly) in Hendersonville, Tennessee. In 2007, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Electronic Media Journalism from Middle Tennessee State University. Cassidy completed her Master of Arts in Mass Communication at the University of Florida in December 2012 and plans to enter the field of television journalism.