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Master's Thesis

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

Today's television hosts an all-encompassing range of popular reality television programs that entice viewers to watch. No longer an off-season summer trend, reality television has become a leading prime-time program staple, easily dominating the ratings in numerous coveted time slots (Andrejevic, 2004). Characteristically, these reality shows are unscripted programs, with nonprofessional actors as participants in a variety of situations that claim to present reality. One specific format that falls within this genre of reality television is the interactive reality television (IRTV) program. These IRTV programs not only entice viewers to watch but they also call the viewer to participate.

The format of IRTV programs offers a unique opportunity for uses and gratifications researchers. The emergence of this relatively new format is breaking down the division between the program content and the audience in significant ways (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002). Whereas the act of watching traditional television programs is typically passive, watching these IRTV programs entices the active participation of the viewer. As a result, television "is increasingly becoming 'something to do' rather than just something to watch" (Syvertsen 2001, p. 319). These programs

begin to blur the boundaries between the producers and consumers of television in a variety of ways (Jones, 2003).

A defining characteristic of IRTV programs is that they invite audiences to participate and make viewer participation central to the development of the program. IRTV programs allow viewers to be increasingly more active in the development of the media content. For example, IRTV programs are unique in their ability for viewers to vote to change the direction and outcome of the program. Prior to IRTV programs, the "idea of the active audience was predicated on the assumption that activity constitutes an intellectual engagement with a text, rather than an intervention in a text" (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002, p. 200). However active past audiences were in their responses to and productions of meanings about a program, they could not mediate it. Today, however, IRTV programs such as *American Idol*, *Big Brother,* and *Paradise Hotel* enable the viewer to make choices and to actively affect the show's outcome. Viewers influence the direction and results of the show's episodes by voting (i.e., using text messaging and by telephone). In this way, the audience essentially becomes the "author" of the program (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002).

Another aspect of these IRTV programs is that they allow viewers to simultaneously watch the program and multi-task online. Viewers with television sets and computers with Internet can access enhanced content (e.g., content in addition to the program itself) and interact with both the program content and other viewers of the program (Perse & Ferguson, 2003). Interactive reality television programs allow viewers with Internet access to interact with other viewers by utilizing chat-rooms,

message boards, polls, editorials, and more (Business Wire, 2003). As a result, these programs are capable of connecting a show's audience via the Internet to establish a community in which people interact (PR Newswire, 2003). The Internet allows viewers to be content producers, rather than remaining merely consumers of the mediated version of reality in which they are immersed (Andrejevic, 2004). For example, *Big Brother, Paradise Hotel,* and *Survivor* offer program-sponsored and fan-sponsored Web sites to encourage viewers to participate in chat rooms, on-line discussions, polls, fantasy leagues and streaming video. In fact, in previous research Gardyn (2001) found that 70% of reality television viewers with Internet access visited web sites related to the reality shows they preferred.

Although at present a large body of research does not exist regarding the use of IRTV programming, the rate at which these controversial programs are created by the media and consumed by audiences warrants study. In the summer of 2003, one fifth of all prime time programs were reality television shows (Eyal, 2003). And in Fall of 2004, six of the top ten rated programs were reality television programs (Albiniak, 2004). While today's television viewership is fragmented, programs such as *Big Brother* and *American Idol* easily attract a mass audience. For example, *Big Brother* has had ratings success in more than twelve countries and has been watched by over two billion people (Johnson-Woods, 2002). In addition, each show of the second series of *American Idol* attracted an average of 21 million viewers, with the final hour of *American Idol* season two drawing 38 million viewers, the most watched *American Idol* episode ever, according to Nielsen Media Research (Larsen, 2002). The fourth season debut of

*American Idol* also set records, breaking all of season three's viewing records and drawing 33.6 million viewers, including one third of all 18 to 49 year olds watching television at that time (De Moraes, 2005).

## Importance

The uses and gratifications perspective maintains that people are active and goal-oriented in their use of media (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). With this evolution of a new media context of an interactive reality television program, it is theoretically beneficial to apply uses and gratifications tenets to this format to gain a comprehensive understanding of how IRTV programs influence and allow for audience activity and interactivity. In fact, Tincknell and Raghuram (2002) state, "the development of new kinds of interactive media texts, such as interactive reality television, makes the idea of the active audience newly interesting because it suggests that such audiences go beyond simply responding to a text – they also help to change it" (p. 201). In sum, an examination of interactive television for dimensions of audience activity will help to further theoretical understanding and explanation of how audiences interact with new and differentiated genres and formats of media.

Traditional uses and gratifications theorizations posit audience members to be potentially more affected by media content when they intentionally seek, attend to, and are involved with that content (Kim & Rubin, 1997; Levy & Windahl, 1984; Perse, 1990a; Rubin & Perse, 1987a). Liu and Shrum (2002) found that the mere perception of increased interactivity has a positive effect on users' attitudes and behaviors toward the

medium. Therefore, in order to theorize about possible effects of the relatively new IRTV programs on audience members, it is first necessary to posit how intentional, attentive, and involved audiences are with this new reality-based interactive format and why they use it. These findings can then be applied to research regarding potential audience effects both positive and negative.

In addition to exploring theoretical implications of IRTV, this study also has practical importance. Research finds that many viewers who ardently embrace IRTV programs fall into the 18 to 25 year old range and are "well placed" to relate to this relatively new IRTV format (Frank, 2003; Jones, 2003). These viewers are part of the "MTV generation who grew up watching *Real World,* [and so interactive reality television] was a natural progression in their viewing experiences" (Johnson-Woods, 2002, p.197). In other words, as today's younger viewers have been reared on fast-paced, high-energy stories and channel and web surfing, the high-energy, quick-takes of reality programs and their ties to the Internet are indeed a "real" programming choice for these viewers (Johnson-Woods, 2002).

Younger audience members use media to look for programs actively that satisfy their habits and interests but now also look to take part in opportunities to interact with new programs. The popularity of the format with today's youth might be a result of a society where the Internet, web cams, and other technologies give us the opportunity to personalize our entertainment (Andrejevic, 2004). And, as these young viewers continue to use these programs actively, they continue to change the face of the medium. As these young adults bring their media-active habits to adulthood, it will be important to

recognize the impact their media choices will have on the medium (Frank, 2003). In other words, as the younger audience members "develop as a generational audience, it will be interesting to track future viewing habits to see if their fondness for [interactive reality television] was merely an aberration or a beginning" (Jones, 2003, p. 419).

In sum, with the potential for greater theoretical understanding, an evolving viewing audience, and the potential for great effects a real possibility, research today must look at how audiences use and interact with current forms of interactive reality television. Therefore in this thesis, I chose to look at the audiences of IRTV programs to test theoretical links between audience viewing motives and involvement before, during, and especially after watching these programs. Based on the uses and gratifications perspective, I expect higher levels of audience involvement during exposure will be associated with participation in post-exposure activities (e.g. voting and communicating and interacting with related program content and others via the Internet).

## Interactive Reality Television

Reality television is widely consumed by today's demographically diverse television viewers. In fact, 45% of all Americans, regardless of age, watch reality-based television programs (Gardyn, 2001). Interestingly, although young adults (ages 18-24) are the most likely to watch reality-based programs, research has found that half of reality television viewers are ages 35 and older (Gardyn, 2001). In addition to an extensive age range, reality television also attracts viewers with varying demographic characteristics including education and income level, and geographic location as well.

Despite the sustained popularity of these programs however, existent research regarding this burgeoning genre is limited, even lacking a clear definition of reality-based television (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003). Instead, "reality television" can be described as a catch-all phrase, encompassing a host of television programs from daytime television talk shows to unscripted game shows (Johnson-Woods, 2002). As a result, attempts to define reality television range from overly limited to overly inclusive. While some definitions narrowly define reality television by coining new descriptions such as "docusoaps," "infotainment," or "dramalities," many definitions also err on the side of inclusiveness (Nabi et al, 2003). For example, Cavender and Fishman (1998) argue that reality television is television that presents reality – a definition that would encompass all news, broadcast magazines, talk and interview shows, and nonfiction narratives.

This landscape of various descriptions makes it difficult to find a unifying definition to encompass all types of reality-based programs. It also increases the difficulty to define specific formats of reality programs that fall underneath this umbrella term (e.g., include documentaries but not talk shows). To help alleviate this environment of uncertainty, this thesis offered the following as an operational definition of reality television: unscripted programs that film real people as they live out events in their lives, as these events occur. More specifically, in an effort to define the format of interactive television, I proposed three defining characteristics of IRTV programs: (a) real people serve as "characters," (b) the content is unscripted, and (c) audience participation is a central agent to the shared experience or lived reality of the program.

## Real People

One defining characteristic of reality television is that real people (i.e., non-professional actors) serve as the main "characters" of the television program. In other words, the audience is aware that the participants in these programs are not professional actors but are "ordinary" people not much different than the viewers themselves. The high-visibility of ordinary people on these programs might minimize the distance between the audience and the reality participants and might make it easier for viewers to relate to and become involved with the program and its participants. This might explain why 37% of all Americans and 44% of 18-24 year olds prefer to watch real people on television rather than scripted characters (Gardyn, 2001).

The events that form the basic ingredients of reality television cover a wide range of activities in a variety of interesting locales. A critical requirement, however, is that whatever the circumstance, the television audience must always be easily able to relate to and identify with the program, and more importantly, its participants. For example, Kilborn (1994) suggests that in many cases, part of the appeal of programs, such as *Big Brother* or *Real World*, is that the incidents or events depicted could just as easily have happened to the viewer at home. In sum, the presence of "ordinary" people on these programs might help viewers to relate to what the cast is going through, or might encourage viewers to believe they have an opportunity to be on a reality program themselves.

Prior to the emergence of reality television, ordinary viewers were afforded few opportunities to "star" in a program. Yet the desire for ordinary people to star on a

program is overwhelming. This longing of the audience to become a star led to over 100,000 people auditioning for the fourth season of *American Idol* (Retrieved on 1/30/05 from www.idolonfox.com/index.htm). According to Andrejevic, (2004) "you don't have to be a professional actor or entertainer – being on a reality show is work that anyone can do. Indeed this is precisely what makes it easer for fans to identify with cast member – the fact that the latter are drawn from the viewing public" (p. 7). Although only a few people are ever selected to participate on reality television programs, the remaining audiences can maintain the belief that they too have a chance to appear on television amongst these reality participants. And in a new development of reality television, programs offer opportunities to be the next cast member. For example, *Paradise Hotel* provided a continuing opportunity for viewers to win the chance to join the ongoing program they had been involved with since the show's beginning.

In addition, reality programs often monitor participants over time, allowing the audience ample opportunity to observe the interpersonal interactions of the show's members. In addition to access to these interpersonal interactions, reality programs provide additional opportunities for viewers to relate to and understand participants by allowing the members to speak directly to the audience in the form of confessions or daily diaries. Traditional television research has found that programs that have actors talk directly to the audience (i.e., breaking the fourth wall) rate as significantly more entertaining and more cognitively involving than programs that do not break this fourth wall (Auter, 1992; Auter & Davis, 1991).

Specifically, Auter and Davis (1991) find that "participation is a primary determiner of interest-involvement," and shows that break the fourth wall "invite their viewers to participate in the content by speaking directly to them. This interactive relationship redefines the normally passive relationship with a given show and makes the viewers part of the action" (p. 170). In sum, viewers like to be included in the context of their media.

To apply these traditional findings to a reality television context, reality participants often speak directly at the audience through confessionals, diary rooms, or other secluded places away from the action of the program. Although the participants do not specifically address the audience, participant confessions are a single person speaking directly into the camera as if to make contact with each viewer. Although reality television does not break the fourth wall in the traditional sense, the standard format of participants' one-on-one with the audience might also affect the levels of attention and emotional involvement of the viewer. This increased involvement in turn, might encourage viewers to interact during post-exposure viewing (e.g., vote and/or participate in online activities).

Reality television programs are also voyeuristic and afford the viewer "consumption of revealing images of and information about others' apparently real and unguarded lives through the means of the mass media and the Internet" (Calvert, 2000 p. 2). Voyeurism, a television viewing motive according to the uses and gratifications perspective, is the idea that people enjoy glimpses into other people's lives. In fact, research has found that viewers of reality television enjoy getting a peek into other

people's lives (Nabi et al., 2003). These programs allow us to experience the "real" world vicariously through observation of others' trials and tribulations.

Research has also found that viewers watch for the sex appeal of the programming and characters, and for the sexual arousal they feel (Kim & Rubin, 1997; Rubin & Perse, 1987a). In fact, voyeurism implies that an individual hopes to see something forbidden from an unsuspecting target (Nabi et al., 2003). For example, Gabler (1998) suggests viewers watch and enjoy programs like *Joe Millionaire* because when two people close the door to a bedroom, the audience essentially gets to "watch" these participants engage in sexual acts. Although the audience does not literally see, they can assume.

## Unscripted Action

According to a reality television study by Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt (2003), their respondents not only enjoyed watching real people (rather than actors) but also liked the unscripted nature of the programming. Whereas the majority of entertainment programs are generally rehearsed depictions of fiction, reality programs are purposely designed to present to the viewers a perception that the programs are live, unrehearsed and unscripted. In other words, the audience's perception that the interaction between participants is indeed spontaneous and unscripted is an important characteristic of reality television programs. And this "unscripted" interaction among the participants requires viewers to pay attention and think about the unrestrained exchange of ideas.

In other words, reality television programs emphasize capturing the vibrancy and spontaneity of real-life events of real people. Kilborn (1994) purports that reality television produces highly personalized accounts of incidents and events. This invites the viewer to react emotionally alongside the reality participants. The promise that interactivity represents a more authentic and fulfilling form of participation seems to be predicated on the fact that the audience relates to the people they see and have a natural curiosity about the events unfolding before them (Andrejevic, 2004). These unscripted elements result in a genre that is less predictable and thus seemingly more authentic than traditional fictional programming.

One avenue of research that offers further insight into how an unscripted program featuring real people affects audience activity is the study of call-in talk radio. Talk radio is one of the few public media that offers the perception non-scripted spontaneous interaction between people (Avery, Ellis, & Glover, 1978). From an audience-program perspective, although participation with IRTV is not spontaneous (voters must wait until the next week to learn how they influenced the program's outcome), the interaction time between an audience and its program is still relatively short. Additionally, many Internet activities available to viewers are spontaneous and do enable users access to enhanced content and additional interpersonal interactions, not unlike talk radio. Newhagen (1994) points out that the use of and attention to call-in talk radio programs differs from the use of more traditional media in that they are more involving. As IRTV programs share many of the same characteristics as call in talk

radio programs, it is possible to presume that IRTV programs would therefore reflect the same levels of use and attention by viewers of these programs.

## Interactivity

Unlike many genres of television programs that allow the audience to watch without ever requiring interaction with the television program, reality television programs differ because many offer the audience a participatory experience. For example, to win *Big Brother's* cash prizes, contestants agreed not to leave the house until members of the audience voted them out. However, to best explain an interactive reality program, it is necessary to operationally define the concept of interactivity.

To date, researchers offer a collection of definitions to explain the concept of interactivity, some of which can be directly applied to explain IRTV programs. For example, Van Dijk and DeVos (2001) define interactivity as simply "two-way TV in which the viewer can make programming choices and produce user input" (p. 446). In other words, interactivity involves the extent to which users are able to modify the format and content of a mediated environment. In this way, interactivity displays the degree to which the new communication systems are capable of responding to user's input. Other researchers define interactivity as the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment, which suggests elements of viewer choice, requirements of viewer effort, and responsiveness from television's form or content (Heeter, 1989; Steuer, 1992). Perse and Ferguson (2003) chose to define not only interactivity but interactive television itself, saying it "allows for viewer's

control or choices in form or content, requires some degree of effort on the part of the viewer, offers entertainment or other gratifications and responds to viewer's input" (p. 14).

New technologies are often associated with higher levels of audience activity. These technologies enable activity because they provide more content options and control in viewing and selecting these options (Perse, 1998). These higher levels of activity have been demonstrated in current technologies including remote control devices (RCD) and multi-channel cable television. Remote control devices facilitate audience activity because they allow people to change channels more easily and conveniently (Ferguson, 1994; Kim & Rubin, 1997). Cable television facilitates activity by offering the viewer an active choice among hundreds of channel options.

At the time of their introduction, these technologies were revolutionary in that they allowed for levels of audience activity not seen heretofore. Similar to these technologies, IRTV programs also allow for audience activity levels that are new to a viewing audience. To illustrate, technologies such as RCD and multi-channel cable television only allow people to be increasingly active before and during exposure, based on selection, while the audience remains restricted in its post-exposure activity. IRTV programs on the other hand, allow for the greatest amount of activity after exposure to the program. In other words, although not a new technology itself, the current technology surrounding IRTV programs (the ability to vote and companion Internet programs), enables people to be increasingly active because it provides an opportunity for control and an opportunity to influence the program's content (Perse, 1998; Rubin &

Bantz, 1989). In IRTV programs, viewer activity is visibly articulated in votes cast and the Internet activities the audience involves themselves with.

This ability of IRTV programs to directly involve the audience in physical activity (e.g., voting or going online) is not unlike the ability of call-in talk radio programs which allow for the unique opportunity of feedback (Newhagen, 1994). As research has found in the case of participants in call-in talk radio (Avery et al., 1978), interaction within the context of a program is an important event for those who participate. IRTV programs offer an appropriate and unique format to build upon this prior talk-radio research and to study involvement with a program before, during, and after exposure.

## Voting

IRTV programs offer several points of interaction including the ability to vote via telephone or text message to influence the outcome of the program. The regular voting procedure whereby viewers access the show and determine its outcome is a crucial interactive element to these programs. This interaction in turn might influence the gratifications viewers receive from these programs (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002).

## Two Screen Interactivity

By definition, a two-screen, multimedia experience occurs when the viewer watches television while also interacting on the computer (Perse & Ferguson, 2003). Networks today encourage viewer interactivity by offering websites that serve as

companion pieces for the reality program. Network sponsored web sites help viewers read more about the show, view background documents or images, view extra footage, participate in a related chats or polls, or even write haiku and short stories to express their reactions to the show (Swann, 2000).

This type of two-screen interactivity is prevalent among reality television users with approximately 50 million Americans regularly engaging in "tele-webbing" – watching television while multitasking on their computer (America Online poll, retrieved on 2/11/03 from www.aol.com; Bloxham, 2002).

According to Tincknell and Raghuram (2002), the fact that the *Big Brother* official website generated three to three and a half million visits a day was a clear indicator that the interactive dimension of the program was crucial to its success. One survey reports that respondents admit they "would not have gotten so completely hooked [on the show] without the [online] live feeds and updated boards [of *Big Brother*]" (Johnson-Woods, 2002, p. 189). One respondent mentioned, "I like to see what isn't being shown on TV, because, in conjunction with a fan forum, I feel as though I'm sharing the "secret stuff" with a group of like minded friends" (p. 189).

In sum, the Internet was an integral part of the functioning of the *Big Brother* program as it is with many other reality television programs. The audience was no longer temporally confined to a particular program spot but instead could "tune in" to the website at any time to participate in the activities involved with the program (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002).

It is important to note here that although voting and participating in online activities both allow for greater amounts of post-exposure activity, these two types of activity are not equivalent. Instead it is possible to see these activities as falling along a spectrum of interactivity. Online participation is important because it allows additional interactions with the program and with other viewers of the program, but this type of activity is a more peripheral discourse between viewers and program. Voting, on the other hand, is a direct discourse between how viewers are feeling and their vote is a direct correspondence with the program on how the viewers feel the program should develop. This study acknowledges the importance of the opportunities afforded online activities in conjunction with reality television programs however, this study specifically concentrated on voting.

## Audience Activity

At the core of the uses and gratifications approach lies the assumption that audience members seek out media to satisfy individual needs. In particular, uses and gratifications assumes a conscious, goal-directed and active audience motivated to make choices based on previous experience with the media and based on the gratifications they expect (Katz et al., 1974; McQuail & Windahl, 1993; Rubin, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 1985). Audience activity traditionally includes: the degree to which people are motivated to seek media content, how intentional audience members are when planning their media exposure, how attentive they are during exposure, how realistic audience members perceive the content to be, and how involved they are in the content (Perse &

Rubin, 1990b). The uses and gratifications perspective continues to be exceedingly useful in explaining audience activity.

Because audiences are variably active in their approach to and use of the media, audience activity is an important variable in media uses and gratifications (Blumler, 1979) and was a main focus of this study. In other words, the potential for activity (e.g., voting and online activity) offered by IRTV programs, in conjunction with the voluntary and instrumental action taken by the viewer before, during, and after exposure can be effectively described using the audience-centered theoretical framework of uses and gratifications.

## Types of Viewing

Uses and gratifications purports activity levels are predictably linked to television viewing motives (Levy & Windahl, 1984; Perse, 1998, 1990a; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Specifically, Rubin (1984) argues that television viewing motives are a primary signal of audience activity. According to Rubin, the categories of ritualized and instrumental viewing are two types of viewing behavior that encompass different levels of activity explained by media use motives. These broad categories are useful in describing the viewing patterns of audiences in today's media environment of maximum alternatives (Perse, 1990b).

Rubin (1984) explains that a ritualistic viewer is a habitual viewer. The ritualistic viewer watches television out of habit, to pass time, for companionship, relaxation, arousal, and escape and is characterized by a nonselective and less active use

of television. In addition, ritualistic viewing focuses more on using television as a medium and less on the specific program content differences available to the viewer (Rubin 1983, 1984; Rubin & Rubin, 1982a). To relate ritualized viewing to interactive reality television, ritualistic viewers are infrequent viewers who do not take advantage of the interactive aspects offered by the interactive reality programs.

On the other hand, instrumental viewing reflects selective and purposive exposure to television content. Traditional research supports the idea that instrumental television is a more active and involving viewing experience (Perse, 1998; Rubin, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1987). In other words, an instrumentalized use of television is reflected in planning to watch specific program content, attention to program content, cognitive and affective involvement with programs, and increased post-exposure activity. (Perse, 1998; Perse 1990a; Perse 1990b; Rubin, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1987). It is the instrumental viewer of IRTV programs that I expected to take advantage of the interactive elements offered by the program.

Rubin (1984) argues that because audience activity is variable, individuals use media ritualistically or instrumentally depending on situational demands. Based on this premise, in an IRTV context, the interactive elements of the programs themselves encourage a more active and participatory audience and I therefore expected voters to exhibit an instrumental media use. This idea was explored throughout the remainder of the study.

## Typology of Audience Activity

In looking at audience activity as parts of both ritualistic and instrumental viewing, it is possible to break down this activity into more specific actions taken at different times during viewing. In other words, audiences are not uniformly active in their media consumption, instead the audience activity is multidimensional – audiences are variably active along several dimensions and at different times in the media use process (Blumler, 1979; Kim & Rubin, 1997; Rubin & Perse, 1987).

Building on earlier research that recognized the variability of audience activity in media consumption (Blumler, 1979), Levy and Windahl (1984, 1985) developed and found support for a two-dimensional typology to describe a full range of audience activity. The typology created includes both a conception about the qualitative interaction of audiences with media content and a time consideration regarding activity throughout particular phases of the communication processes. The first, qualitative dimension exemplifies types of activity: "(a) selectivity, defined as how purposely people chose media and their content; (b) involvement, or the degree to which people personally relate to media content; and (c) utility, defined as how useful media and their content are to audience member" (Perse, 1990b, p. 676). This is not unlike the theorizations of ritualistic and instrumental viewing that posited a varying quality of media use by the audience. The second, temporal component, posits activity as occurring before, during, and after exposure.

This two-dimensional application of types of and time of activity reveals that audience members exhibit different types and amounts of activity both in different

communication contexts and at different times in the communication process. If activity is variable, then different ways of being active contribute to different outcomes (Kim & Rubin, 1997). Therefore, in order to understand how people use IRTV programs and why they actively vote, it was important to look at audience activity from both this two-dimensional typology and from a ritualistic and instrumental perspective.

## Involvement

Because the focus of this study was on the unique interactive aspects of reality television available to the audience, audience involvement as a dimension of audience activity and indication of participation was a critical, central concept. Specifically, involvement is defined as both "the degree to which an audience member perceives a connection between him or herself and mass media content; and, second, the degree to which the individual interacts psychologically with a medium or its messages" (Levy & Windahl, 1985, p. 112). Involvement can be seen as a direct personal experience during message reception and can be an indicator of cognitive, affective, and behavioral participation (Bowen & Chaffee, 1974; Kim & Rubin, 1997; Krugman, 1966; Perse, 1990a; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Rothschild & Ray, 1974). To apply these traditional theorizations to an IRTV context, these programs that allow for greater interaction of audience members with the program were more cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally involving than more traditional television programs.

Pre-Exposure Involvement

Involvement is exhibited before, during, and after exposure to media content. Before exposure, involvement is considered anticipation of and intentional exposure to media content. Intentional media exposure is purposive and planned and might best be operationalized as felt importance of media activity and content (Levy & Windahl, 1984, 1985; Rubin & Perse, 1987b; Perse, 1990b). Perse (1990b) found that measures of pre-exposure activity and intentionality were significantly related. In other words, people who exhibit higher levels of pre-exposure involvement with a program, including IRTV programs, intentionally select that program from various media choices. To place this in an instrumental viewing motive context, instrumental viewers of IRTV programs would exhibit greater levels of pre-exposure involvement including intention and planning to watch the program. Conversely, ritualistic viewing motives would not exhibit intentionality.

During Exposure Involvement

According to Rubin and Perse (1987b) involvement is cognitive, affective, and behavioral participation during, and because of, media exposure. During exposure involvement concentrates on the extent of psychological (e.g., cognitive and emotional) involvement audiences experience, and is reflected in activities that are oriented toward program content. Involvement also reflects active participation in the processing of messages (Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988). In other words, for viewers who are involved while they watch the programs, active participation is evidenced cognitively, in

paying attention to the message and information processing, or thinking, and affectively, in emotional reactions to the message, or feeling (Perse, 1990a; Perse, 1990c). In other words, when people are involved with media content, they both think and feel (Perse, 1990a).

Cognitive involvement.

Cognitive involvement includes attention to the program, including allocating mental effort directed toward the program and to evaluating messages during reception (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Kim & Rubin, 1997; Kahneman, 1973; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). In other words, based on past research, attention to both plot and participants on IRTV programs should indicate elevated levels of cognitive activity when viewing these programs and deeper processing of program content, suggestive of an instrumental use of media (Levy & Windahl, 1985; Rubin & Perse, 1987a). Kim and Rubin (1997) found that those who paid more attention to the characters and the content, exhibited higher levels of empathy and attraction with the characters and were more satisfied with their favorite programs. On the other hand, the more the audience engages in distracting activities while viewing, the less attention it pays to the content and the less likely it is to be involved in processing the information (Rubin & Perse, 1987b), suggestive of a ritualistic use of media.

The other aspect of during exposure involvement is elaboration. Elaboration is the way in which audiences interpret, attach meaning to, and respond to messages. Elaboration, a deeper level of involvement, relates the incoming information to existing knowledge and attaches connotative and associative meanings to it (Perse, 1990a; Rubin

& Perse, 1987a). It can be theorized that the engaging, interactive elements of IRTV programs leads to an increase in cognitive involvement (i.e., attention to the program and elaboration of what the viewer experiences) in order to understand, interpret and take advantage of the program's interactive options.

Emotional involvement.

In addition to a cognitive component, during exposure involvement has an affective component as well. Affective, or emotional involvement, is getting caught up in the action of the program (Bryant & Comisky, 1978). This involves a range of emotions from satisfaction and happiness, to frustration and anger. As viewers actively watch, they begin to interact with what they see, leading to specific emotional reactions about how the program is developing, what the characters are doing, or how they would feel if what was occurring on the program were happening to them.

A distinctive aspect of reality television is that the programs allow us to vicariously experience the "real" world through observation of others' trials and tribulations. These programs focus on the development of personal problems of people just like us, where audiences are encouraged to become emotionally involved with the experiences of the participants. And, research has found that regular viewers of reality television agreed they enjoy being involved with other people's lives (Nabi et al., 2003). A viewer's natural curiosity about others is an important factor in the appeal and enjoyment of reality television programs. This enjoyment while watching IRTV programs, stemming from emotional involvement, in turn might be the motivation

needed to engage in post-exposure interaction (e.g., voting and participating in online activities).

Identification is one part of emotional involvement. Identification with media characters is a critical aspect of viewing involvement and is a possible effect of active and purposive (i.e., instrumental) media use (Eyal, 2003; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). According to Cohen and Perse (2003), identification is operationalized as a fleeting relationship audiences form with a media character during exposure. More specifically, identification includes: imagining oneself as being the media character, adopting the perspective of the media character, becoming caught up in the action as experienced by the character, and viewing the media content from the perspective of the character (Cohen, 2001; Cohen & Perse, 2003; Eyal, 2003; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Hoffner, 1996).

Eyal and Rubin (2003) posit identification to be linked to greater perceived similarity. In other words, similarity, or the degree to which people who interact are comparable in beliefs, education, social status, and so on, encourages identification (Cohen & Perse, 2003). Viewers should be more likely to identify with program participants because viewers relate to these "real" (i.e., ordinary) participants on the basis of shared demographic, geographic, or personality characteristics.

To the extent that audiences perceive they share values or perceptions of reality with the participants they see on television, common bonds are established with the characters (Basil, 1996). According to Conway and Rubin (1991), because attraction is primary to relationships, the more viewers feel attracted to a television character, the more they will sense importance in the relationship. And, when this similarity or bond is

felt, audience members are more likely to be attracted to a television character and thus affected by what they see on the program.

Audience identification is enhanced by perceived similarity between the reality television participants and the viewers. Jones (2003) suggests part of the draw of a program such as *Big Brother* is that the program deals with the ordinary and is a context viewers can relate to. Johnson-Woods (2002) reported one *Big Brother* viewer as saying, "I love watching people and thinking, hey they are just like me. I am normal" (p. x).

Identification, in turn, can encourage viewers participate later in the interactive elements of the reality television shows. In other words, viewers are behaviorally affected (e.g. voting and/or participating in online activities) based on feelings of identification.

Hoffner and Cantor (1991) offer additional support for the importance of identification in their findings that similarity has the potential to confirm the validity of the viewer's own beliefs and concerns. This study supposed that viewers will be more likely to take advantage of interactive elements such as voting because they felt like the participants on television believe and want what the viewers believe and want. In this sense, if the participant for whom the viewers voted were to win, the viewers would also "win." In addition, audiences are not only invited to identify with the participants, but to participate alongside the participants in such interactive reality programs as *Paradise Hotel*. This new format provided an ongoing opportunity for viewers to interact with the participants by offering a chance to appear on the next episode. *Paradise Hotel* not only

incorporated the interactive opportunity of voting, but was prefaced on the fact that viewers became so involved with and identify so greatly with the program's participants that they were later motivated to act to become participants on that show.

Related research.

Soap opera research is another avenue that offers insight into understanding the effects of reality television. Rubin and Perse (1987a) found the development of personal problems encountered by attractive soap opera characters encouraged affective involvement during exposure. This was a result of audience members being "invited to participate in the experiences of characters through several mechanisms: the central role of characters in plots, the insight given into how characters think and feel, the resemblance of characters to everyday people, and the time spent on character history and plot development" (Rubin & Perse, 1987a, p. 251; see also Arnheim, 1944; Rose, 1979). Although the genre of reality television differs from soap operas, the two genres share several of the characteristics mentioned above. Therefore, like soap opera characters, reality programs invite the audience to identify with the characters in the programs. These similarities suggest that reality television audiences might experience identification in a similar way as soap opera audiences including a more instrumental motive for viewing and greater emotional involvement as well.

Finally, past research involving call-in talk radio also offers evidence about the effects of viewer involvement. Armstrong and Rubin (1989) found that users who call into talk radio programs are more involved with the program than those who do not to

call. To clarify, talk radio encourages three types of involvement: affective (identification with personalities and other callers), cognitive (thinking issues and information discussed), and behavioral (by calling in the show). Researchers did find that talk radio listeners experienced talk shows actively, including paying close attention to the program (Hofstetter, Donovan, Klauber, Cole, Huie, & Yuasa, 1994; Hofstetter & Gianos, 1997). Callers are not only cognitively and emotionally involved; they are also behaviorally involved during the program.

In conclusion, prior research suggests identification has both cognitive and emotional components (Cohen & Perse, 2003). Cognitively, identification is thinking about the similarities between oneself and the television character. Emotionally, identification is feeling *with* the character (Cohen & Perse, 2003). Identification with a television character is a mechanism through which vicarious emotions are experienced (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Identification is functional because it is a dimension of audience activity that signals people are involved with the content (Cohen & Perse, 2003; Rubin & Perse, 1987b). Viewers who identify with media characters are thus likely to be influenced by the character, are more satisfied with their viewing experience, and act as a result of this identification (Eyal, 2003). In other words, the "real" people of IRTV programs motivate levels of involvement that allows for deeper emotional and cognitive reactions (e.g., interacting with the features of the program).

Perceived realism.

As mentioned earlier, the elements of an unscripted program and the presence of non-professional actors add to the sense of "realness" in reality television. This perceived realism in turn can be an important factor in determining viewing motives in addition to being an antecedent to audience activity (Perse & Ferguson, 2003). In other words, the perceived realism of a program affects the attention paid to the program, the emotional reactions of the audience, and the amount of time audiences will think and talk about the program. Past research found that the more viewers did not believe the characters they saw were real, the less impact media use had on these viewers (Rubin et al., 1985). In addition, the degree to which the viewer feels a character is active in the viewer's real life, the greater the emotional involvement with the characters and program (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000). Rubin (1983) concluded that "watching television to acquire information, as well as to seek entertainment or amusement, would seem to indicate a heightened sense of the realism of television portrayals of life" (p. 48). Thus perceived realism is related to instrumental viewing motives (Rubin & Perse, 1987b; Rubin et al., 1985).

To place this in an IRTV television context, the unscripted nature of reality programs allows for spontaneous action and conversation by the participants. Although the settings of reality programs are often outrageous (e.g., *Survivor* or *Joe Millionaire*) and unlike life in the "real world," this environment of spontaneous communication affords a higher degree of "realism." Also, the recurring nature of these ongoing

situations (e.g., watching twice a week the lives and performances of the *American Idol* contestants) allows viewers to feel these real people are a part of their lives. Therefore when reality cues about a mediated message are explicit, people might be more likely to exhibit changes in behaviors and attitudes, in turn affecting voting.

## Post-Exposure Activity

It is also important to clearly operationalize post-exposure activity. This third type of audience involvement occurs after media exposure where information gained during exposure might be of some future intra- or interpersonal utility. Levy and Windahl (1984) suggested that by displaying a willingness to reflect on, discuss, or integrate information gained into mental processes and social behaviors, individuals might be thought of as being active in the post-exposure phase of the communication process. For example, a viewer who talks with others about messages they received during the program exhibits behavioral involvement in post-exposure media use (Rubin & Perse, 1987b). In the model of audience activity and gratifications proposed by Levy and Windahl (1984), the more enjoyable and useful the post activities are perceived as, the greater the possibility that the individual sought more gratifications related to after-exposure activities.

Levy and Windahl believed this seeking of additional gratifications in after-exposure activity was related to a reiteration of the media use process. In other words, involvement influenced subsequent planned media exposure (Rubin & Perse, 1987b). However, building on this traditional theorization about post-exposure audience activity,

IRTV programs offer new forms of post-exposure activity and opportunities for additional gratifications previously unavailable to television audiences. This includes seeking additional gratifications through voting to influence the program's outcome and using the Internet to participate in online activities.

## Related Audience Activity Research

Interactivity affects audience activity. For example, interactivity might inspire greater subsequent involvement as viewers pay attention to find out if their input has made a difference in the program's direction (Perse & Ferguson, 2003).

To return to talk radio research, it is possible to look at how interactivity directly affects the involvement dimension of audience activity. Rubin and Step (2000) suggest radio has a strong participatory quality because listeners move through stages of attraction to talk radio, from curiosity to participation. In other words, they are so intrigued, upset, delighted (i.e., a whole range of emotions) by what they are listening to, they are motivated to participate by calling in. Callers are not only cognitively and emotionally involved with talk radio, but they can also become behaviorally involved (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989) and this format for behavioral involvement offers a promising framework on which to build theorizations about IRTV programs. Viewers might feel enough positive emotion toward their favorite reality participant or even negative emotion toward another that they will vote to change the outcome of the program.

Just as with talk radio, to fully utilize the interactive elements of television programs, I believe viewers must increase mental and/or emotional involvement with the programs (Liu & Shrum, 2002). In other words, interactivity creates involving experiences through the viewer's active control of the media. In addition, the use of IRTV programs involves not only active traditional participation of selecting and processing media messages, but also active participation in creating them, as well. Therefore, in terms of voting, viewers who vote must exhibit higher levels of mental engagement in thinking about and paying attention to whom they chose to vote for. Viewers are now able to have a dialogue with the programs they watch and are no longer only message receivers, but are also active message creators (Liu & Schrum, 2002).

In related research, McClellan (2003) reports viewers who interact with programs spend more time watching the show, pay more attention to, and even have better brand recall of commercials. Statistically, McClellan (2003) reports a passive, or ritualistic viewer spends 43.2 minutes watching a program versus 54.3 minutes for those interacting with a program via personal computer. These interactive viewers in general reported having a better viewing experience than viewers who watch the program passively (i.e., without engaging in any interactive aspects of the programs).

Although at present there is little research regarding viewers' involvement with IRTV programs, prior research points to general principles about audience involvement with media. For example, involvement before and during exposure (including greater attention and cognitive involvement) is a sign of instrumental television use (Perse 1990b; Rubin & Perse, 1987b). In addition Rubin (1984) found positive associations

among instrumental television use and watching television to acquire topics for subsequent post-exposure conversation. This study looked to these past findings to guide the hypotheses and research questions below.

## Summary and Rationale

The purpose of this study was to examine the relatively new genre of IRTV programs. More specifically, this study sought to explain what factors motivated viewers of IRTV programs to vote to change the outcome of the program.

Past research identified that instrumental and active media use is a cognitively oriented experience and features higher pre-exposure activity, intentionality, and higher involvement (including affinity and perceived realism) while viewing (Perse, 1990b; Rubin & Perse, 1987b). And Perse (1998) found that newer technologies (e.g., text messaging and the Internet) are associated with higher levels of instrumental activity. With this in mind, it is plausible to posit that complex relationships exist between instrumental viewing motives and select characteristics of audience activity within an IRTV context.

It can be assumed that the act of voting requires more instrumental and active media use. To take full advantage of interactive elements of television programs, viewers would need to increase mental and/or emotional involvement with these programs. Therefore the same motives that drive instrumental viewers might also motivate viewers to actively vote and participate in online activities. Because instrumental use is marked by greater affective, cognitive, and behavioral involvement,

this study assumes viewers who vote should exhibit instrumental viewing motives. In fact, Carey (2002) noted that orientation to the television changes with interactive programs. Television viewing could not be only a secondary, or ritualistic, activity because of the need for heightened attention to the program (Carey, 2002; Perse & Furgeson, 2003).

Thus the first hypothesis predicted:

> H 1: Instrumental motives for viewing interactive reality television programs will be positively related to: (a) cognitive involvement, (b) emotional involvement, (c) pre-exposure intentionality, (d) attention while viewing, (e) identification with people on the program, and (f) perceived realism.

In addition to predicting that those who vote are motivated to use the media in specific ways, it was also proposed that those motivated to vote also identify with the people they see on the IRTV programs. The real or "ordinary" people on these IRTV programs might stimulate a type of involvement that allows for deeper emotional and cognitive reactions, which in turn, might lead to voting. Therefore the second hypothesis predicted:

> H 2: Identification with characters will be predicted by: (a) instrumental viewing motives, (b) perceived realism, and (c) greater exposure to the program.

Viewer identification with the reality participants, along with cognitive and emotional involvement, intention, attention, and perceived realism should in turn predict participation in influencing the outcome of the program.

Past research found positive associations between watching television and the desire to acquire topics for later conversation and that post-viewing cognition, and post-viewing discussion were related to more instrumental viewing motives and greater

audience activity (Rubin, 1994; Rubin & Perse, 1987a). Past research also found identification with characters and viewer's perceived realism affects how influenced viewers are by the content after exposure (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000). In other words, the more viewers identify with characters and perceive the program to be real, the more likely they are to act (e.g., engage in conversations with others about the program). To these types of traditional post-exposure activity, interactive reality television adds new possible post-exposure activities including: voting to influence the outcome of an IRTV program and participation in online activities.

Therefore the third hypothesis aimed to predict the post-exposure activity of voting based on previous research (Rubin, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1987b; Busselle & Greenberg, 2000):

> H 3: Post-exposure activity will be predicted by: (a) instrumental viewing motives, (b) attention, (c) cognitive elaboration, (d) emotional involvement, (e) identification, and (f) perceived realism of the reality programs.

It is important to recognize however that not all viewers of IRTV programs vote, and certainly not all reality television programs are interactive. As there is little existent research regarding reality television and voting, this study sought to answer the question of how viewers who choose to vote to influence the outcome of the program differ from viewers who watch reality television programs but choose not to vote to influence the outcome of the program. Specifically,

> RQ1: How do those who vote differ in (a) viewing motives, (b) level of attention, (c) cognitive elaboration, (d) emotional involvement, (e) identification, and (f) perceived realism than non voters?

In sum, with IRTV programs, audience members have more opportunities to interact with and influence the outcome of the media content. Those who take advantage of these opportunities must pay more attention to, elaborate on the program content, be more emotionally involved with and identify with those participants they see. Based on the propositions of the uses and gratifications perspective, in conjunction with recent reality television research, this study was designed to test these hypotheses.

# Chapter 2

# METHOD

This study was designed to investigate how aspects of interactive reality television (IRTV) programs encourage audience activity (i.e., voting to influence the program's outcome and participating in online activities) both during and after exposure to these programs. In other words, the aim of this study was to test the theoretical links between audience viewing motives and cognitive and emotional activity during and after watching these programs (Levy & Windahl, 1984). The study measured the following constructs: (a) exposure to IRTV programs, (b) motives for viewing IRTV programs, (c) intentionality, (d) attention while watching, (e) cognitive elaboration while watching, (f) emotional involvement while watching, (g) identification with the characters on the program, (h) perceived realism of reality television programs, (i) voting, and (j) participating in online activities. The study also addressed age and gender differences, as well as technological proficiency (i.e., use of text messaging and computers).

## Procedure and Sample

This study used University of Delaware undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory communication research methods course during Spring 2004. As one of their class assignments, students were trained in questionnaire administration and ethics

and were required to distribute and collect four questionnaires (i.e., two questionnaires to friends who watch reality television programs and two questionnaires to non-college age adults who watch these programs). All respondents were told that their responses were anonymous and confidential. Students received course credit for distributing and collecting the completed questionnaires.

Student interviewers returned the completed questionnaires sealed inside large manila envelopes and the whole names and phone numbers of each respondent were written on the outer envelope, with no connection to the questionnaires inside. This was done to deter students from filling out the four questionnaires themselves. A select number of names and numbers that were reported on the envelopes were called and the information about who the respondents were was accurate. The completed questionnaires were due in the Communication Office by April 27, 2004. Approval to administer the questionnaire was granted by the University's Human Subjects Review Board.

The sample consisted of a total of 464 respondents representing a geographically diverse population.

## Demographics

The questionnaire was designed to include demographic questions regarding age, gender, education level, and zip code. These demographic variables helped to describe the viewing audience and to serve as potential control variables. Although this sample was a purposive quota sample, the collection of data from various age groups, education

backgrounds, and geographic locations helped to ensure diversity within the sample population. This important demographic information allowed for comparison and contrast of viewers of IRTV programs in general to viewers who also interact with these programs.

Gender

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender on the questionnaire (see question 1 in Appendix, p. 119). The sample was 48.1% ($n$ = 222) male and 51.9% ($n$ = 240) female.

Age

The final section of the survey included a question that asked "how old are you as of your last birthday?" (see question 2 in Appendix, p. 119). The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 83 and the mean age was 31.3 years ($SD$ = 14.21). The median age was 23 years. Three respondents did not answer.

Education

Respondents were asked to self-report if they were enrolled in college at the time of questionnaire completion (see question 8 in Appendix, p. 119). The percentage of respondents "enrolled in college now" was 50.9% ($n$ = 234) while those not enrolled in college right now was 49.1% ($n$ = 226). Four respondents did not answer this question.

If respondents were enrolled in college, they were asked to indicate their current class in school (see question 9 in Appendix, p. 120). Of those respondents in school, 4.5% ($n$ = 21) were Freshmen, 28.4% ($n$ = 132) were Sophomores, 10.8% ($n$ = 50) were Juniors, 4.5% ($n$ = 21) were Seniors and 2.2% ($n$ = 10) were graduate students. One respondent listed option 6, "other" but did not indicate the type of student.

If the answer to the enrollment question was no, respondents were asked for their highest level of completed, formal education (see question 10 in Appendix, p. 120). Those respondents who were not enrolled in college exhibited a range of education levels: 2.2% ($n$ = 5) completed some high school, 11.6% ($n$ = 26) were high school graduates, 19.1% ($n$ = 43) completed some college, 42.2% ($n$ = 95) were college graduates, 6.2% ($n$ = 14) completed some graduate school, and 18.7% ($n$ = 42) were graduate school graduates. The average education level was ($M$ = 4.95) equivalent to a college graduate ($SD$ = 1.29).

Employment

Respondents were asked to indicate their occupation (see question 11 in Appendix, p. 120). If they were not employed, respondents were then asked to write the occupation of the principal wage earner in their household. Occupations were coded to represent occupational status (Warner, Mecher, & Ells, 1949). There were a range of occupations reported with the most frequent occupation reported being "student," (49.0% of respondents, $n$ = 223). The remaining 222 respondents were not "students." Of the respondents, 5.5% ($n$ = 25) were professionals (e.g., lawyers, doctors, bankers,

professors), 20.0% ($n$ = 91) were educators or involved in helping careers (e.g., school administrators, high school teachers, resident nurses, marketing and advertising managers), 17.1% ($n$ = 78) were salespeople or social workers (e.g., sales coordinators, small business owners, social workers), 6.2% ($n$ = 28) were farmers or tradesmen (e.g., courier, dance instructor, electricians, farmers), 0.7% ($n$ = 3) were service employees (e.g., bartenders, zamboni drivers, baggage men, waiters/waitresses), 1.3% ($n$ = 6) were homemakers, 0.2% ($n$ = 1) was disabled, and no respondents were skilled laborers (e.g., carpenters, plumbers, repairs, line cooks) or manual laborers (e.g., heavy labor, migrant work, odd-jobs).

Expertise

Additional questions gathered information regarding respondents' familiarity and use of Internet and text message technologies. Building on Recchiuti's (2003) computer expertise measure, respondents were asked to self-rank their level of computer expertise on a seven point scale (1 = novice, 7 = expert) (see question 4 in Appendix, p. 119). The mean score for computer expertise was a 5.12 ($SD$ = 1.51).

Respondents were also asked about text messaging. As text messaging is a relatively new technology, respondents were first asked if their mobile phone had text messaging technology. Possible responses included yes (72.1%, $n$ = 334), no (21.6%, $n$ = 100) or "I don't know"(6.3%, $n$ = 29) (see question 5 in Appendix, p. 119). Respondents were then asked to rank their own level of text messaging expertise on a

7- point scale (1 = novice, 7 = expert) (see question 6 in Appendix, p. 119). The mean score for text messaging expertise was a 4.67 (*SD* = 2.26).

Location of the Computer

The questionnaire inquired if the respondents had a computer in the room where they usually watch television (see question 3 in Appendix, p. 119). Of the respondents who answered this question, 53.9% (*n* = 249) had a computer in the room where they usually watch television while 46.1% (*n* = 213) did not. Two respondents did not answer this question.

## Television Viewing

Respondents were also asked to indicate how much they watched television on a "typical day" during each of four time periods (6 a.m. to noon, noon to 6 p.m., 6 p.m. to midnight, midnight to 6 a.m.) during the average weekday and weekend day (see questions 1 and 2 in Appendix, p. 107). The responses to these four time periods were summed to arrive at an overall measure of television viewing weekday and weekend. Television exposure ranged from 0 - 15 hours per weekday (*M* = 4.13, *SD* = 2.28) and 0 - 14 hours per weekend (*M* = 4.28, *SD* = 2.57).

## Exposure to Reality Television

The questionnaire also measured exposure to IRTV programs. First, I generated a list of IRTV programs by applying the definition of IRTV, as put forth by this study, to

all reality programs that had been aired over the past few years. The list was compiled from network schedules, websites, Nielsen ratings, and media publications and was updated until the time of data collection. To ensure the list was complete, I asked a sample of undergraduate students ($n$ = 66) to indicate what they believe to be IRTV programs. The final list was a compilation of researcher and student responses and included 36 programs.

Respondents were asked to rank on a 5-point scale how frequently (coded 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often 5 = always) they watched these 36 programs (see question 4 in Appendix, p. 108). Table 2.1 presents these programs ranked according to their mean of all respondents. *American Idol* was most watched out of all the programs ($M$ = 2.98). The least watched program was *College Hill* ($M$ = 1.10).

Table 2.1

Programs Ranked According to Mean

| Rank | Program | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | American Idol | 2.98 | 1.33 |
| 2 | Real World | 2.84 | 1.54 |
| 3 | The Apprentice | 2.79 | 1.52 |
| 4 | Real World/Road Rules Challenge | 2.64 | 1.53 |
| 5 | Newlyweds | 2.55 | 1.48 |
| 6 | My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiancé | 2.23 | 1.40 |
| 7 | Road Rules | 2.22 | 1.39 |
| 8 | Survivor | 2.21 | 1.36 |
| 9 | The Osbournes | 2.17 | 1.04 |

Table 2.1 Continued

| Rank | Program | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | The Bachelor | 2.13 | 1.33 |
| 11 | The Bachelorette | 2.02 | 1.31 |
| 12 | Simple Life | 1.94 | 1.23 |
| 13 | Extreme Makeover | 1.86 | 1.11 |
| 14 | Average Joe | 1.81 | 1.11 |
| 15 | Till Death Do Us Part | 1.68 | 1.15 |
| 16 | Temptation Island | 1.59 | 1.06 |
| 17 | America's Next Top Model | 1.47 | 0.97 |
| 18 | The Swan | 1.47 | 0.99 |
| 19 | Joe Schmo Show | 1.46 | 0.98 |
| 20 | Paradise Hotel | 1.46 | 1.06 |
| 21 | Big Brother | 1.46 | 1.02 |
| 22 | The Littlest Groom | 1.42 | 0.96 |
| 23 | Amazing Race | 1.41 | 0.92 |
| 24 | The Mole | 1.41 | 0.86 |
| 25 | Star Search | 1.33 | 0.77 |
| 26 | TLC's Home Free | 1.31 | 0.84 |
| 27 | High School Reunion | 1.25 | 0.67 |
| 28 | American Idol Juniors | 1.23 | 0.70 |
| 29 | For Love or Money | 1.22 | 0.67 |
| 30 | Oprah's Pop Star Challenge | 1.21 | 0.65 |
| 31 | Married by America | 1.21 | 0.65 |
| 32 | Surreal Life | 1.20 | 0.62 |
| 33 | Fame | 1.20 | 0.62 |
| 34 | The Family | 1.17 | 0.61 |
| 35 | Playing it Straight | 1.10 | 0.56 |
| 36 | College Hill | 1.10 | 0.41 |

Additional Programs

To ensure completeness, viewers had the opportunity to add any IRTV programs that they watched that were not included on the list (see question 5 in Appendix, p. 108). The most frequently listed shows that were not included in the study's original list of programs include: *ESPN's Dream Job* (*n* = 9), *Trading Spaces* (*n* = 9), *American Chopper* (*n* = 8), *Fear Factor* (*n* = 8), *Joe Millionaire* (*n* = 5) and *Making the Band* (*n* = 5). Additional reality television programs as reported by respondents are listed below.

Table 2.2

"Other" Reality Programs Listed by Respondents

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A Makeover Story | Extreme Makeover – Home | Mad Mad House | Sorority Life |
| American Chopper | Fear Factor | Made | Starting Over |
| Baby Story | Forever Eden | Making the Band | Spymaster (TLC) |
| Big Break | Fraternity Life | Monster Garage | Trading Spaces |
| Blind Date | Insomniac | Monster House | True Life |
| Boy meets Boy | I Want a Famous Face | Mr. Personality | Viva LaBam |
| Cheaters | Jackass | MTV Real Life | Wedding Story |
| Cops | Joe Millionaire | Pimp My Ride | What Not to Wear |
| Dream Job | Last Comic Standing | Queer Eye | While you were out |
| Elimadate | Love Cruise | Real TV | WildBoyz |
| 5th Wheel | | | |

Favorite Programs

Respondents were also asked to list their favorite reality television program (see question 6 in Appendix, p. 108). The majority of respondents only reported one favorite program ($n$ = 448) while 70 respondents listed a second favorite, 24 respondents listed a third favorite, 8 listed a fourth favorite, and only 1 respondent listed a fifth favorite program. When respondents listed more than one program as their favorite, the 10 programs listed below were repeatedly chosen as second, third, fourth, and fifth "favorite" choices as well. The favorite program first chosen by the respondent was the focus for subsequent questions about viewing motives, attitudes, and activity. Table 2.3 lists the respondents' favorite programs.

Table 2.3

Favorite Programs as Reported by Respondents

| Rank | Program | *N* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | American Idol | 76 |
| 2 | Real World | 73 |
| 3 | Apprentice | 68 |
| 4 | Survivor | 57 |
| 5 | Newlyweds | 33 |
| 6 | Real World/Road Rules Challenge | 24 |
| 7 | Bachelor | 14 |
| 8 | Joe Schmo Show | 13 |
| 9 | My Big, Fat, Obnoxious Fiancé | 10 |
| 10 | Paradise Hotel | 10 |

## Viewing motives

To test hypotheses concerning ritualistic and instrumental viewing motives, participants were asked to indicate how much their own reasons for watching reality programs coincided with statements about watching IRTV programs that ranged from "exactly" (coded 1) through "not at all" (coded 5) (see questions 1 through 38, Appendix, pp. 109 - 111).

Twenty seven-items representing the Television Viewing Motives Scale measured each of the 9 types of television viewing motives consistently identified in previous research: habit, pass time, companionship, arousal/excitement, relaxation, information/learning, escape, entertainment, and social interaction. These items were based on past research regarding instrumental and ritualistic motive factors in television viewing (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1981; Rubin, 1983; Perse 1994c; Perse, 1990a) and talk radio (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989). Cronbach alphas in prior research have been reported ranging from .68 (escape) to .87 (entertainment).

The questionnaire also included a 3 items designed to measure the voyeuristic motives of respondents as was used in past research (Perse, 1986). These statements depict a use based on the sexual appeal of the characters and content of reality television.

Additional viewer motives measures were adapted from reality television and interactivity literature (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002; Eyal, 2003; Perse & Ferguson, 2003) and were designed to understand the possibilities of identification, interactivity, and affinity for the new styles of IRTV programs. These measures were designed to understand how a viewer relates to the real people (i.e., non-professional actors) that

populate reality television shows. Responses to these measures were designed to show if people watched reality television programs because they identified more with the real people they saw on IRTV programs than they identified with professional actors in scripted programs.

Measures of interactivity were included to explore the possibility that people are motivated to watch IRTV programs because of their ability to interact with that program.

Finally, specific measures explored how viewers respond to the unscripted, "unpredictable" nature of reality programs. These measures were derived in a preliminary investigation of a sample of students ($n$ = 44) enrolled in a non-major introduction to communication course who were asked why they watch reality programs. Fifty percent of the respondents ($n$ = 22) mentioned they enjoyed the "drama of not knowing what will happen," the "unpredictability of the people," or "never knowing what to expect." Based on these responses, I thought it important to test unpredictability as a possible factor for viewer motivation. Table 2.4 presents the viewing motive statements, their mean scores, and their standard deviations.

The responses to the 38 motive statements were subject to principal access factoring with oblique rotation, recognizing the interrelated nature of motives for watching television (Nie, Hull, Jenkings, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975). Six factors were identified.

Table 2.4

Reality Television Viewing Motives

| I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| RELAXATION | | |
| Because it relaxes me | 2.54 | 1.11 |
| Because it allows me to unwind | 3.02 | 1.16 |
| Because it's a pleasant rest | 2.88 | 1.20 |
| COMPANIONSHIP | | |
| Because there was no one else to talk or be with | 1.68 | 0.96 |
| Because it makes me feel less lonely | 1.40 | 0.83 |
| So I won't have to be alone | 1.34 | 0.75 |
| HABIT | | |
| Just because it was on | 2.61 | 1.26 |
| Because it's a habit, just something I do | 2.37 | 1.24 |
| Because I just like to watch | 3.79 | 1.18 |
| PASS TIME | | |
| Because I had nothing better to do | 2.35 | 1.23 |
| Because it passes the time away, particularly when I'm bored | 2.57 | 1.25 |
| Because it gives me something to occupy my time | 2.48 | 1.20 |
| ENTERTAINMENT | | |
| Because it entertains me | 4.15 | 0.98 |
| Because it's enjoyable | 4.00 | 0.99 |
| Because it amuses me | 3.83 | 1.07 |
| SOCIAL INTERACTION | | |
| So I could talk with others about what's going on | 2.40 | 1.22 |
| Because it's something to do when friends come over | 2.23 | 1.30 |
| So I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching | 2.56 | 1.24 |

Table 2.4 Continued

| I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| INFORMATION | | |
| Because it helps me learn things about myself and others | 1.95 | 1.08 |
| So I can learn about what could happen to me | 1.52 | 0.94 |
| So I can learn how to do things that I haven't done before | 1.59 | 0.97 |
| AROUSAL | | |
| Because it's thrilling | 2.98 | 1.29 |
| Because it's exciting | 3.41 | 1.24 |
| Because it peps me up | 2.13 | 1.18 |
| ESCAPE | | |
| So I could get away from the family or others | 1.72 | 1.04 |
| So I can get away from what I'm doing | 2.24 | 1.14 |
| So I can forget about school, work, or other things | 2.86 | 1.37 |
| VOYEURISM | | |
| Because of the sex appeal in the program | 2.00 | 1.12 |
| Because I find some of it sexually arousing | 1.51 | 0.94 |
| Because the characters are sexually attractive | 2.12 | 1.14 |
| IDENTIFICATION | | |
| Because I like to see people like me on television | 1.75 | 1.07 |
| Because I can easily relate to the participants in the program | 2.10 | 1.09 |
| INTERACTIVITY | | |
| Because I would like to be a contestant on a program like this | 2.01 | 1.19 |
| Because there are online activities (like chatrooms, polls, quizzes) I can participate in | 1.18 | 0.62 |
| Because I feel like I can change the outcome of the program* | 1.95 | 1.22 |
| So I can vote on the outcome of the program* | 1.97 | 1.30 |

Table 2.4 Continued

| I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| UNPREDICTABILITY | | |
| Because of the unpredictability of the program | 3.10 | 1.25 |
| Because of the drama of not knowing what will happen | 3.07 | 1.28 |

* This question was intended for respondents whose favorite program is an interactive reality program (*n* = 128)

The criteria established in order for a factor to be retained for further analysis was an eigenvalue of at least 1.0 and a minimum for two primary loadings of at least .40. Two factors with an eigenvalue of .63 and .61 were excluded from further analysis. A summary of the factor analysis is presented in Table 2.5.

Factor 1 (Sexual Attraction) had an eigenvalue of 10.34, and accounted for 27.24% of the common variance. All 3 voyeurism statements that mention the sexual appeal of the program and its participants loaded on this factor (see questions 9, 22, 28 in Appendix, pp. 109 - 110). This factor depicts a use based on the sexual appeal of the participants and content of reality television programs. Because this is a relatively unexplored area of motivation, it is unclear whether or not to label the sexual attraction factor as either a ritualistic or instrumental viewing motive.

Factor 2 (Exciting Entertainment) had an eigenvalue of 5.59, and accounted for 14.72% of the common variance. It included loadings of all arousal statements (see questions 7, 15, 25 in Appendix, p. 109 - 110) and two entertainment statements including “because it entertains me” (see question 5 in Appendix, p. 109) and “because

it's enjoyable" (see question 11 in Appendix, p. 109). This factor depicts the seeking of excitement and arousal from reality television programs. Based on past research (Rubin, 1983), the Exciting Entertainment factor is an instrumental viewing motive.

Factor 3 (Habit/Pass Time) had an eigenvalue of 2.26, and accounted for 5.96% of the common variance. It included loadings of all 3 pass time statements (see questions 4, 10, 18 in Appendix, p. 109 - 110) in addition to one habit statement, "just because it was on" (see question 1 in Appendix, p. 109). This factor depicts reality television viewing as a non purposive time-filling activity. The Habit/Pass Time factor is representative of a ritualistic viewing motive as based on past research (Rubin, 1981).

Factor 4 (Interactivity) had an eigenvalue of 1.78, and accounted for 4.69% of the common variance. Two statements of interactivity, including "because I feel like I can change the outcome of the program" (see question 37 in Appendix, p. 111) and "so I can vote on the outcome of the program" (see question 38 in Appendix, p. 111) loaded on this factor. This factor depicts reality television viewing as an opportunity to interact with the program and to change the outcome. The interactivity factor is clearly an instrumental viewing motive (Rubin, 1984).

Factor 5 (Loneliness) had an eigenvalue of 1.32, and accounted for 3.47% of the common variance. All 3 companionship statements (see questions 8, 16, 23 in Appendix, p. 109 - 110) and one information statement, "so I can learn how to do things that I haven't done before" (see question 27 in Appendix, p. 110), and one escape statement "so I can get away from what I'm doing" (see question 29 in Appendix, p. 110) loaded on this factor. This factor depicts a use based on a diversion from

loneliness. Typically, a loneliness, or, companionship factor, is a ritualistic viewing motive (Rubin, 1984).

Factor 6 (Unpredictability) had an eigenvalue of 1.02, and accounted for 2.67% of the common variance. It included loadings of one unpredictability statement, "because of the drama of not knowing what will happen" (see question 36 in Appendix, p. 111) and one information statement, "so I can learn about what could happen to me" (see question 20 in Appendix, p. 110). This factor depicts a use of reality television to find out what might happen. It is unclear whether unpredictability is a ritualistic or instrumental viewing motive.

Factor scores created using the regression method were used in further analyses. Pearson correlations determined the relationships between the six factors identified as motives for television viewing. Table 2.6 presents these correlations.

Table 2.6

Pearson Correlations of Viewing Motives Factors

| | Sexual Attrac-tion | Exciting Entertainment | Habit Pass Time | Interact-ivity | Loneliness | Unpredict-ability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Exciting Entertainment | .07 | - | | | | |
| Habit P.T. | .38** | -.15 | - | | | |
| Interactivity | .30** | .19* | .20* | - | | |
| Loneliness | .53** | -.10 | .33** | .32** | - | |
| Unpredictability | .22* | . 37** | -.05 | .19* | .28** | - |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

## Attitudes

### Perceived Realism

Perceived realism indicates how true-to-life television content is seen to be. In this study, perceived realism was suggested to be a mediator of behaviors and effects. In other words, how true-to-life respondents feel the television content is affects how they behave (e.g., whether or not they vote for their favorite contestant). The perceived realism of IRTV programs was tested using a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree (coded 5) through strongly disagree (coded 1) drawn from Rubin (1981) that has been used reliably in past research (Perse, 1994a; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985) (see questions 7, 8, 23, 24, 38 in Appendix, p. 111 - 114). Responses were averaged to create a

perceived realism scale ($M$ = 2.22, $SD$ = 0.80, α = .82) Table 2.7 summarizes the perceived realism items.

Table 2.7

Perceived Realism Measures

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| My favorite reality TV program presents things as they really are in life | 2.41 | 1.07 |
| The program lets me see what happens in other places as if I were really there | 2.38 | 1.07 |
| My favorite reality TV program lets me see how other people live | 2.41 | 1.10 |
| If I see something on my favorite reality TV program, I can be sure it really is that way | 1.86 | .92 |
| My favorite reality TV program shows life as it really is | 2.04 | .99 |

Affinity

Television affinity reflects the importance people assign to specific programs (Perse, 1994b). Affinity is not usually the primary focus of the research, but is instead used to mediate the relationships between other television viewing variables (e.g., motives and exposure). Respondents were offered statements about watching reality TV and were asked to indicate the number on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) that expressed their own feelings about feelings of affinity while watching IRTV programs. These measures were drawn from Rubin (1981), Greenburg (1974), and Rubin and Rubin (1982a) (see questions 2, 17, 21, 36 in

Appendix, p. 111 - 114). Responses were averaged to create an affinity scale ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 0.70$, $\alpha = .73$). Table 2.8 presents the affinity items.

Table 2.8

Affinity Measures

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| I would rather watch my favorite reality TV program than anything else | 2.59 | 1.18 |
| I would feel lost without my favorite reality TV program to watch | 1.94 | 1.03 |
| I could easily do without watching my favorite reality TV program* | 3.32 | 1.16 |
| Watching my favorite reality TV program is one of the more important things I do | 1.94 | .98 |
| Whenever I'm unable to watch my favorite reality TV program, I really miss it | 2.39 | 1.16 |

*this item was recoded for further analyses

## Audience Involvement

This study also measured involvement. To do so, I researched the dependent variables of cognitive, affective, and behavioral involvement with IRTV programs and how these variables co-varied with different viewing motives, attitudes, and activities both during and after exposure (Perse, 1990b; Rubin & Perse, 1987b). To test the hypotheses of this study, I assessed several types of involvement including: intention, attention, elaboration, emotional reaction and identification.

Intention

In order to measure intention or in planning to watch IRTV programs, a characteristic of instrumental television viewing, respondents marked their agreement with 4 statements (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) drawn from prior research (Perse, 1998) (see questions 3, 18, 31, 46 in Appendix, p. 111 - 115). These measures helped to determine if viewers of IRTV programs intentionally planned to watch these programs. Responses were averaged to create an intention scale ($M$ = 2.98, $SD$ = 1.04, $\alpha$ = .86). Table 2.9 presents the intention scale.

Table 2.9

Intention Measures

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| I look forward to watching my favorite reality TV program | 3.63 | 1.12 |
| I plan my time so I do not miss my favorite reality TV program | 2.72 | 1.21 |
| I make arrangements so I don't miss watching my favorite reality program | 2.57 | 1.21 |
| If I can't watch my favorite reality TV program, I make sure I record it | 2.39 | 1.16 |

Attention

To measure self-reported attention to IRTV programs, participants considered how often a set of 5 statements, used reliably in past research, described respondents' typical thoughts and feelings when watching IRTV programs (Perse, 1990a; Rubin,

Perse, & Taylor, 1987) (see questions 1, 6, 16, 19, 20 in Appendix, p. 111 - 112). Response options to the 5 items ranged from strongly agree (coded 5) to strongly disagree (coded 1) Responses were averaged to create an attention scale ($M$ = 3.00, $SD$ = 0.75, $\alpha$ = .84). Table 2.10 presents the attention scale.

Table 2.10

Attention Measures

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| I pay close attention when I watch | 3.71 | 1.00 |
| I sometimes miss parts of the program* | 3.31 | 1.09 |
| I listen carefully when I watch my favorite reality TV program | 3.15 | 1.10 |
| My mind wanders when I watch* | 2.58 | .96 |
| I put a lot of mental effort into watching the program | 2.06 | .94 |

* Item was recoded for further analyses

Elaboration

Elaboration is the way in which audiences relate incoming information to existing knowledge and attach connotative and associative meanings to it (Perse, 1990a; Rubin & Perse, 1987a). The questionnaire measured elaboration by asking participants to respond on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) their level of agreement with specific statements, drawn from past research, that target elaboration (Perse, 1990a) (see questions 4, 15, 32, 45 in Appendix, p. 111 - 114). Responses were

averaged to create an elaboration scale ($M$ = 2.25, $SD$ = 0.70, α = .73). Table 2.11 summarizes the elaboration measures.

Table 2.11

Elaboration Measures

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| When I watch, I think about how the program relates to other things I know | 2.45 | 1.08 |
| When I watch, I think about the program over and over again | 2.11 | .98 |
| When I watch, I think about what the program means to me and my family | 1.70 | .91 |
| When I watch the program I think about what should be done | 2.99 | 1.05 |

Emotional Involvement

This study proposed viewers of IRTV programs are emotionally involved with the IRTV program's content. To asses the intensity of emotional reaction to IRTV programs, 20 items were adapted from Perse (1990a; 1990b; 1998) (see questions 1 - 20 in Appendix, p. 117). To measure viewers' positive emotions, respondents marked their feelings (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) about 10 different positive emotions drawn from prior research (Perse, 1998). The positive emotions included: amused, at ease, calm cheerful, content, delighted, happy, pleased, relaxed, and satisfied. Responses were averaged to create a positive emotion scale ($M$ = 3.55, $SD$ = 0.65, α = .91).

To measure the negative emotions respondents felt while they watched a particular program, respondents marked their feelings (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly

agree) regarding 10 different negative emotions drawn from Perse (1998). The negative emotions included: angry, ashamed, bored, depressed, embarrassed, fearful, gloomy, miserable, sad, worried. Responses were averaged to create a negative emotion scale ($M$ = 1.69, $SD$ = 0.59, α = .88). Table 2.12 presents a list of emotional measures.

Table 2.12

Emotion Measures

| WHEN I WATCH THE PROGRAM I FEEL | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| Amused | 4.15 | .74 |
| Angry | 2.26 | .98 |
| At ease | 3.45 | .91 |
| Ashamed | 1.52 | .84 |
| Calm | 3.35 | .88 |
| Bored | 2.09 | .93 |
| Cheerful | 3.43 | .89 |
| Depressed | 1.50 | .79 |
| Content | 3.54 | .88 |
| Embarrassed | 1.52 | .81 |
| Delighted | 3.33 | 1.02 |
| Fearful | 1.62 | .88 |
| Happy | 3.70 | .86 |
| Gloomy | 1.57 | .78 |
| Pleased | 3.54 | .87 |
| Miserable | 1.39 | .68 |
| Relaxed | 3.60 | .87 |
| Sad | 1.63 | .82 |
| Satisfied | 3.41 | .86 |
| Worried | 1.72 | .91 |

Identification

Hoffner (1996) defines identification as the viewer sharing a character's perspective and vicariously participating in the character's experiences while viewing. This study started with 19 items, drawn from prior research, that measured different aspects of identification (Eyal, 2003) (see questions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 in Appendix, p. 112 - 114). Respondents were asked to mark their agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) with these 19 statements while keeping in mind their favorite reality television participant (or "character"). In order to explore the dimension of viewers' identification with the characters on their favorite reality program, these 19 items were subjected to principal components analysis with oblique rotation. Three components, accounting for 66.2% of the variance were identified.

Factor 1 (Identification with People) had an eigenvalue of 10.00, and accounted for 52.6% of the common variance. Included in this factor were a variety of statements designed to measure involvement in the program, identification with participants in the program, and affinity felt toward the participants of the program. Together, the statements that loaded in this factor represented the identification people felt with the participants in IRTV programs.

Factor 2 (Emotional Involvement) had an eigenvalue of 1.42, and accounted for 7.5% of the common variance. It included statements designed to measure involvement such as "when my favorite people on the show succeed I feel joy but when they fail I am sad" and "when I watch, I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the TV program." It

also included an identification statement "when my favorite reality TV personality succeeds I feel joy but when (s)he fails I feel sad." This factor appears to depict the emotional responses viewers felt with the characters on the program.

Factor 3 (Capture) had an eigenvalue of 1.17, and accounted for 6.2% of the common variance. This factor represents a level of involvement where viewers feel that they are "captured" by the program (Rosengren, Windahl, Hakansson, Johnsson-Smaragdi, 1976). Statements that loaded in this factor included "when I watch my favorite reality TV program, I almost believe I'm in it," "when I am watching the program I sometimes feel like I am really one of the people in the story," and "when I watch my favorite TV personality on the program, I sometimes wish I was actually in it." This factor looked at the viewer's sense of being immersed in the action of the program (Bryant & Comisky, 1981; Kim & Rubin, 1997; Perse, 1987b).

Because this study's hypotheses focused on identification with people in IRTV programs, only the items loading on the first factor were included in the analysis. These items were averaged to create an identification scale ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 0.80$, $\alpha = .94$). Table 2.13 summarizes the Identification scale.

Table 2.13

Identification Oblique Factor Solution

| | Identification with People | Emotional Involvement | Capture |
|---|---|---|---|
| I think I have a good understanding of the people in my favorite reality TV program | ***.84*** | .11 | -.12 |
| When I watch my favorite reality TV program, I can understand the way the people on the show feel | ***.83*** | -.03 | .00 |
| I tend to understand the reasons why my favorite reality TV personality does what (s)he does | ***.83*** | .03 | -.10 |
| At key moments in the show, I feel I know exactly what my favorite reality TV personality is going through | ***.83*** | -.05 | .06 |
| When I watch my favorite TV personality on the program, I know exactly what (s)he is going through | ***.80*** | -.10 | .08 |
| At key moments in the show, I feel I know exactly what the people in the program are going through | ***.80*** | -.10 | .09 |
| When watching the show, I can feel the emotions of my favorite reality TV personality | ***.78*** | -.03 | .10 |
| When I watch my favorite reality TV personality on the program, I feel I understand the way (s)he feels | ***.77*** | .13 | -.01 |
| I think I have a good understanding of my favorite reality TV personality | ***.73*** | .11 | .01 |
| While watching the program I can feel the emotions of the people on the show | ***.67*** | .09 | .02 |
| When I watch, I feel I can really get inside my favorite personality's "head" | ***.52*** | -.00 | .36 |
| When my favorite reality TV personality succeeds I feel joy but when (s)he fails I feel sad | .05 | ***.91*** | -.03 |
| When my favorite people on the show succeed I feel joy, but when they fail I am sad | .04 | ***.89*** | .02 |

Table 2.13 Continued

| | Identification with People | Emotional Involvement | Capture |
|---|---|---|---|
| When I watch, I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the program | .05 | ***.47*** | .32 |
| When I watch my favorite reality TV program, I almost believe I'm in it | -.11 | .06 | ***.89*** |
| When I am watching the program I sometimes feel like I am really one of the people in the story | .10 | -.09 | ***.78*** |
| When I watch, I imagine myself doing the same things that the people on the program are doing | .06 | -.02 | ***.74*** |
| When I watch my favorite reality TV program, I sometimes wish I was actually in it | .05 | .09 | ***.70*** |
| While I watch the program I feel as if I were a part of the action | .13 | .06 | ***.69*** |

Table 2.14

Identification Measures

| *WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM* | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| I think I have a good understanding of the people in my favorite reality TV program | 2.69 | 1.00 |
| When I watch my favorite reality TV personality on the program, I feel I understand the way (s)he feels | 2.53 | 1.02 |
| I tend to understand the reasons why my favorite reality TV personality does what (s)he does | 2.51 | .98 |
| At key moments in the show, I feel I know exactly what my favorite reality TV personality is going through | 2.36 | 1.03 |
| When I watch my favorite TV personality on the program, I know exactly what (s)he is going through | 2.34 | .95 |
| At key moments in the show, I feel I know exactly what the people in the program are going through | 2.38 | 1.05 |
| When watching the show, I can feel the emotions of my favorite reality TV personality | 2.41 | 1.03 |
| I think I have a good understanding of my favorite reality TV personality | 2.53 | 1.01 |
| While watching the program I can feel the emotions of the people on the show | 2.90 | 1.06 |
| When I watch, I feel I can really get inside my favorite personality's "head" | 2.18 | .98 |

## Post-Exposure Activity

One of the interesting aspects of IRTV programs is their interactive nature. They encourage post-exposure activity that ranges from information gathering to voting to affect the outcome of the program.

Respondents were asked to what extent they participate in a variety of post-exposure activities ranging from "never" (coded 1) to "always" (coded 5). These activities were acquired from previously tested measures of online activities (Recchiuti, 2003). Additional post-exposure measures were derived from interactive reality television literature (Andrejevic, 2002; Bloxham, 2001; Johnson-Woods, 2002) (see questions 1 - 17 in Appendix, p. 115 - 116). As the focus of this study was to concentrate on reality television viewers who either go online or vote after watching a program, only those measures of online activity and/or voting were included in the analysis. Therefore two types of post-exposure categories were created: those viewers who went online and those who voted. Online post-exposure was comprised of responses to 8 items and was quite low ($M = 1.32$, $SD = .57$, $\alpha = .90$). Table 2.15 summarizes the online post-exposure activity measures.

Table 2.15

Online Post-Exposure Activity Measures

| AFTER I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|
| I go online to read more about the program | 1.44 | .81 |
| I go online to chat with friends about the program | 1.44 | .84 |
| I go online to talk to others about the program | 1.35 | .78 |
| I go online to participate in a poll about the program | 1.27 | .69 |
| I surf the Web for information about the program | 1.37 | .80 |
| I post messages online about the program | 1.24 | .71 |
| I go online to view additional video footage of the program | 1.25 | .62 |
| I go online to chat with people who have the same interest in reality TV as me | 1.21 | .63 |

Respondents were first asked if their favorite reality television program allowed them to vote. Approximately 20% of the responds ($n$ = 110) responded that their favorite program allowed them to vote. If the answer was yes, respondents were then asked if they vote for a contestant after watching a reality television program. Of the 110 respondents whose favorite reality television program allowed audiences to vote, voting was also low. Only 46 voted (41.8%).

Voters were asked to report how often they vote for a contestant of a reality television from "always" (coded 5) to "never" (coded 1). Specifically, the first measure asked how often they call the program to vote for a contestant (see question 16 in Appendix, p. 116) and the second measure asked how often respondents used text

messaging to vote for a contestant (see question 17 in Appendix, p. 116). These two measures were correlated, $r = .63$ $p < .001$.

## Statistical Analysis

After scale construction and reliability analyses, I took several steps to test the study's three hypotheses and answer the research question. Pearson correlations (one-tailed) were used to assess the first hypothesis's predicted relationship between instrumental viewing motives and activity before and while watching IRTV programs. The second hypothesis, which concerned the impact of motives and activity on the development of identification with IRTV program participants, was also tested with one-tailed Pearson correlations. Multiple regression was also used to identify the multivariate relationships among motives, activity, and identification. Similar tests, one-tailed Pearson correlations and multiple regression, were used to test Hypothesis 3, which concerned the how post-exposure online activity was linked to motives and activity while watching the programs. The study's research focused on the differences between IRTV viewers who voted to determine program outcomes and those who did not. I used *t*-tests to identify significant differences between voters and nonvoters in viewing motives and activity before and while watching the programs.

# Chapter 3

# RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study. The statistical tests used to test the hypotheses presented in chapter one and the results of these analyses will be discussed in greater length below.

## Hypothesis One

Hypothesis 1 predicted that instrumental motives for viewing interactive reality television (IRTV) programs will be positively related to several factors including: (a) cognitive involvement, (b) emotional involvement, (c) pre-exposure intentionality, (d) attention while viewing, (e) identification with people on the program and (f) perceived realism.

Correlations provided support for hypothesis 1a. Most viewing motives were linked in predictable ways to thinking about the content while viewing the programs. Exciting Entertainment, an instrumental viewing motive, was linked positively to elaboration, the way in which audiences interpret, attach meaning to, and respond to messages ($r = .38$, $p < .001$). Interactivity, another instrumental viewing motive, was positively linked to elaboration ($r = .44$, $p < .001$). Other viewing motives were also linked significantly to cognitive involvement. Unpredictability was linked positively to

elaboration ($r = .36$, $p < .001$). The factor of Sexual Attraction was positively correlated with elaboration ($r = .33$, $p < .001$). Loneliness was positively linked to elaboration ($r = .41$, $p < .001$). Habit Pass Time, a ritualistic motive, was not related to elaboration ($r = .02$, $p = .32$).

Correlations provided support for hypothesis 1b. The instrumental viewing motive Exciting Entertainment correlated positively with positive emotion ($r = .56$, $p < .001$) but not negative emotion ($r = .04$, $p = .20$). The Interactivity factor, also an instrumental viewing motive, was positively related to both positive emotion ($r = .20$, $p < .05$) and negative emotion ($r = .28$, $p < .001$). Other viewing motives were also linked significantly to emotional involvement. Sexual Attraction was positively linked to positive emotion ($r = .13$, $p < .001$) and negative emotion ($r = .31$, $p < .001$). The Loneliness factor was positively related to negative emotion ($r = .37$, $p < .001$) but not positive emotion ($r = .03$, $p = .30$). Unpredictability was positively correlated with positive emotion ($r = .34$, $p < .001$), but not negative emotion ($r = .03$, $p = .27$). Finally, Habit Pass Time, a ritualistic viewing motive, was positively linked with negative emotion ($r = .23$, $p < .001$) but not positive emotion ($r = -.04$, $p = .22$).

Hypothesis 1c was also supported. The instrumental motive Exciting Entertainment was positively linked to pre-exposure intentionality ($r = .60$, $p < .001$). The instrumental motive Interactivity was linked to pre-exposure intentionality ($r = .15$, $p < .05$). Unpredictability was also positively correlated with intention ($r = .51$, $p < .001$). The motive Sexual Attraction was also linked to intentionality ($r = .11$, $p < .01$). In addition, Loneliness was also linked to intentionality ($r = .08$, $p < .05$).

Finally, the ritualistic, Habit Pass Time motive was negatively correlated with intentionality ($r$ = -.33, $p$ < .001).

Correlations provided support for hypothesis 1d. Most viewing motives were linked in predictable ways to paying attention while viewing the programs. Exciting Entertainment, an instrumental viewing motive, was linked positively to attention ($r$ = .56, $p$ < .001). Interactivity, another instrumental viewing motive, was positively linked to attention ($r$ = .22, $p$ < .01). Unpredictability was linked positively to attention ($r$ = .48, $p$ < .001). Other viewing motives were not significantly to attention while viewing. The factor of Sexual Attraction was unrelated to attention ($r$ = .05, $p$ = .13*).* Loneliness was unrelated to attention ($r$ = .04, $p$ = .20). And Habit Pass Time, a ritualistic motive, was linked negatively to attention ($r$ = -.34, $p$ < .001).

Hypothesis 1e was supported by correlations. Exciting Entertainment, an instrumental viewing motive was linked positively with identification ($r$ = .37, $p$ < .001). Interactivity, also an instrumental viewing motive was positively linked to identification ($r$ = .37, $p$ < .001). Other viewing motives were also positively correlated with identification. Sexual Attraction was positively linked to identification ($r$ = .37, $p$ < .001). Loneliness was positively linked to identification ($r$ = .38, $p$ < .001). And Unpredictability was linked to identification ($r$ = .40, $p$ < .001). Habit Pass Time, a ritualistic viewing motive was not related to identification ($r$ = .07, $p$ = .08).

Finally, correlations provided support for hypothesis 1f. Exciting Entertainment and Interactivity, both instrumental viewing motives, were positively correlated with perceived realism. Exciting Entertainment was linked to perceived realism ($r$ = .35,

$p < .001$) and Interactivity was linked to realism ($r = .29$, $p < .001$). All other viewing motives were also positively related to perceived realism: Sexual Attraction was linked to realism ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), Loneliness linked to realism ($r = .36$, $p < .001$), and Unpredictability linked to realism ($r = .31$, $p < .001$). Habit Pass Time, a ritualistic viewing motive, was not linked to realism ($r = .07$, $p = .07$). Pearson Correlations are presented in Table 3.1.

## Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis 2 proposed that identification with IRTV participants will be predicted by: (a) instrumental viewing motives, (b) perceived realism and (c) greater exposure to the program. Correlations provided support for H2a (see Table 3.1). Identification with the participants was positively linked to the instrumental Exciting Entertainment motive ($r = .37$, $p < .001$) and the instrumental Interactivity motive ($r = .37$, $p < .001$). Identification was positively linked to other viewing motives. For example, identification was correlated with Sexual Attraction ($r = .37$, $p < .001$). Loneliness was also related to identification ($r = .38$, $p < .001$). Identification was also positively linked to Unpredictability ($r = .40$, $p < .001$). Identification was not positively related to the ritualistic motive Habit Pass Time ($r = .06$, $p = .08$).

Correlations supported H2b (see Table 3.1). Identification was positively correlated with perceived realism ($r = .68$, $p < .001$). And correlations also supported H2c where identification with participants was also positively linked to exposure ($r = .28$, $p < .001$).

To test H2 more specifically, I used multiple regression to determine the contribution of the set of variables to identification with the participants. Table 3.2 summarizes the regression.

Together, viewing motives, exposure, and perceived realism explained 57.5% of the variance in common with identification with the participants: $R = .76$, $R^2 = .58$, $F(8, 126) = 19.94$, $p < .001$. Identification was significantly explained by greater perceived realism ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$), greater Unpredictability ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$), greater

Interactivity (β = .17, $p < .001$), and greater Sexual Attraction (β = .19, $p < .05$). The regression provided partial support for the second hypothesis.

Table 3.2

Multiple Regression: Predicting Identification

| | *β* | *F* | *p* < |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sexual Attraction | .19 | 2.33 | .02 |
| Exciting Entertainment | -.01 | -.13 | .90 |
| Habit Pass Time | -.19 | -2.58 | .01 |
| Interactivity | .17 | 2.57 | .01 |
| Loneliness | .06 | .72 | .48 |
| Unpredictability | .27 | 3.40 | .001 |
| Exposure | -.06 | -.93 | .35 |
| Perceived Realism | .48 | 6.47 | .00 |

## Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis 3 stated that post-exposure activity will be predicted by: (a) instrumental viewing motives, (b) attention, (c) cognitive elaboration, (d) emotional involvement, (e) identification and (f) perceived realism of the reality programs. Correlations supported H3a, see Table 3.1. Post-exposure activity was positively correlated with the instrumental viewing motive Exciting Entertainment ($r = .21$, $p < .001$). Post-exposure activity was also positively linked with Interactivity, a second

instrumental viewing motive ($r = .50$, $p < .005$). Other viewing motives are also positively linked to post-exposure activity including Sexual Attraction motive ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), Unpredictability motive ($r = .23$, $p < .001$), and Loneliness ($r = .36$, $p < .001$). The ritualistic motive Habit Pass Time was not linked with post-exposure activity ($r = .03$, $p = .44$).

Correlations also showed support for the remainder of H3. Post-exposure activity was positively linked to attention ($r = .30$, $p < .001$). Cognitive elaboration was positively correlated with post-exposure activity ($r = .55$, $p < .001$). Emotional involvement, including positive ($r = .17$, $p < .001$) and negative emotion ($r = .44$, $p < .001$) are both linked to post-exposure activity. Identification was also positively correlated with post-exposure activity ($r = .40$, $p < .001$). Finally, post-exposure activity was significantly correlated with perceived realism ($r = .37$, $p < .001$).

To test H3 specifically, multiple regression was used to determine the contribution of the set of variables to post-exposure online activity. Table 3.3 summarizes the regression.

Together, viewing motives, exposure, and perceived realism explained 65.7% of the variance in common with post-exposure online activity: $R = .81$, $R^2 = .66$, $F(12, 127) = 18.33$, $p < .001$. Post-exposure activity was significantly explained by greater negative emotion ($\beta = .46$, $p < .001$), greater elaboration ($\beta = .30$, $p < .01$), the motive Interactivity ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$), greater levels of attention ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$), the Sexual Attraction motive ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$) and the Loneliness motive ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$) and lower levels for watching for Habit Pass Time ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$).

Table 3.3

Multiple Regression: Predicting Post-Exposure Online Activity

| | $\beta$ | $F$ | $p <$ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sexual Attraction | .19 | 2.42 | .02 |
| Exciting Entertainment | -.09 | -1.05 | .30 |
| Habit Pass Time | -.17 | -2.27 | .03 |
| Interactivity | .29 | 4.64 | .00 |
| Loneliness | .18 | 2.41 | .02 |
| Unpredictability | -.01 | -.08 | .94 |
| Perceived Realism | .01 | .11 | .91 |
| Attention | .20 | 2.48 | .02 |
| Elaboration | .30 | 2.85 | .01 |
| Positive Emotion | .03 | .48 | .63 |
| Negative Emotion | .46 | 6.57 | .00 |
| Identification | -.37 | -3.59 | .00 |

## Research Question One

Finally, the research question posed by the study sought to answer how those who vote differ in (a) viewing motives, (b) level of attention, (c) cognitive elaboration, (d) emotional involvement, (e) identification, and (f) perceived realism than those who do not vote. To test this research question specifically, *t*-tests were used to locate significant differences between voters and non-voters who watch reality television programs.

Voters felt more affinity toward the program ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .96$), than non-voters ($M = 2.23$, $SD = .84$), $t(53) = 3.76$, $p < .001$. They also felt greater identification

with the participants on reality television programs ($M = 2.73$, $SD = .79$) than non-voters ($M = 2.46$, $SD = .80$), $t(461) = 2.20$, $p < .05$. Voters felt greater negative emotion ($M = 2.15$, $SD = .93$) than non-voters ($M = 1.63$, $SD = .51$), $t(48) = 3.17$, $p < .001$. Voters however, did not feel significantly greater positive emotion ($M = 3.5$, $SD = .65$) than non-voters ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .65$), $t(461) = .60$, $p = .55$. Voters paid greater attention to the program ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .75$) than non-voters ($M = 2.97$, $SD = .74$), $t(461) = 2.01$, $p < .05$ and elaborated on the program ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .84$) more than non-voters ($M = 2.21$, $SD = .66$), $t(51) = 3.68$, $p < .001$. Finally, the instrumental viewing motive Interactivity was exhibited more by voters ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.20$) than non-voters ($M = 1.47$, $SD = .87$), $t(63) = 7.52$, $p < .00$. Similarly, intent to watch programs was greater for voters ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.08$) than non-voters ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.03$), $t(461) = 2.06$, $p < .05$. There were no significant differences in perceived realism between voters and non-voters. See Table 3.4 for a summary.

Table 3.4

*t*-test: Voters and Non-Voters

| | Voters ($n$ = 46) $M$ | Non-Voters ($n$ = 417) $M$ | $t$ | $df$ | $p <$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Affinity | 2.78 | 2.23 | 3.76 | 53 | .00 |
| Identification | 2.73 | 2.46 | 2.20 | 461 | .03 |
| Positive Emotion | 3.50 | 3.56 | 0.60 | 461 | .55 |
| Negative Emotion | 2.15 | 1.63 | 3.17 | 48 | .001 |
| Perceived Realism | 2.42 | 2.20 | 1.80 | 460 | .07 |
| Attention | 3.21 | 2.97 | 2.01 | 461 | .05 |
| Elaboration | 2.67 | 2.21 | 3.68 | 51 | .001 |
| Intention | 3.28 | 2.94 | 2.06 | 461 | .04 |
| Sexual Attraction | 2.17 | 1.85 | 1.73 | 51 | .09 |
| Exciting Entertainment | 3.47 | 3.32 | 1.08 | 460 | .28 |
| Habit Pass Time | 2.33 | 2.53 | 1.29 | 460 | .20 |
| Interactivity | 2.98 | 1.47 | 7.25 | 63 | .00 |
| Loneliness | 1.75 | 1.47 | 1.97 | 50 | .06 |
| Unpredictability | 3.03 | 3.09 | 0.32 | 460 | .75 |

# Chapter 4

# DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relatively new genre of interactive reality television. More specifically, this study sought to explore and explain the factors that motivate viewers of interactive reality television (IRTV) programs to vote to change the outcome of the program. This study found many interesting results, both hypothesized and non-hypothesized. The following chapter examines the results and possible implications of the findings of this study. Each of the hypotheses and the research question are discussed and future research ideas are offered. The limitations of the methodology used in this study are discussed at the conclusion of the chapter.

## Summary of Results

### Viewing Motives

The first hypothesis was based on the rationale of the uses and gratifications perspective that purports activity levels are predictably linked to television viewing motives (Levy & Windahl, 1984; Perse, 1998, 1990a; Rubin & Perse, 1987b). An instrumentalized use of television is reflected in more planning of time to watch specific program content and is marked by attention to program content, cognitive and affective

involvement with programs, and increased post-exposure activity (Perse, 1998; Perse 1990a; Perse 1990b; Rubin, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1987b). This study concentrated on instrumental viewing motives and identified two instrumental viewing motives clearly exhibited in the data: Exciting Entertainment and Interactivity.

The Exciting Entertainment motive describes a use of reality television programs based on feelings of excitement or entertainment that the viewers feel while watching and as a result of watching the program. In other words, Exciting Entertainment depicts the seeking of exhilaration, stimulation, and arousal from reality television programs. Based on past research, the Exciting Entertainment factor can be defined as an instrumental viewing motive and is related to the instrumental motive of arousal/excitement as identified in research (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Greenberg, 1974; Perse, 1990a; Rubin, 1983; Rubin, 1981a).

Similarly, the factor Interactivity can be defined as an instrumental motive. Statements that loaded on this instrumental factor included "because I feel like I can change the outcome of the program" and "so I can vote on the outcome of the program." This factor clearly depicts reality television viewing as an opportunity to interact with the program and to alter the result. The interactivity factor is clearly an instrumental viewing motive (Liu & Shrum, 2002; Rubin, 1984). Instrumental viewers watch IRTV programs to take advantage of the interactive aspects of the program.

Both the instrumental Exciting Entertainment and Interactivity factors were found to be positively linked to activity before, during, and after watching the program. Exciting Entertainment was positively correlated with cognitive involvement, indicating

that viewers who watch reality television for reasons of excitement or entertainment will spend time thinking about and elaborating on what they see on the program (Kim & Rubin, 1997; Perse, 1990b; Rubin & Perse, 1987a). Interactivity was also correlated with elaboration, indicating that viewers who watch for the interactive aspects of IRTV programs will think about and elaborate on the program (Perse & Ferguson, 2003; Liu & Schrum, 2002).

In addition, viewers who seek out excitement or entertainment by watching reality television programs also experience emotional involvement with the program. Exciting Entertainment was correlated with significant levels of positive emotions, but not significant levels of negative emotion. This is illustrated in the fact that respondents were overwhelmingly "amused" by reality television programs, where $M = 4.15$ (1 = strongly disagree, 1 = strongly agree) and $SD = .74$ (see question 1, Appendix, p. 117). Entertainment and even excitement are frequently associated with positive feelings of arousal, pleasure and happiness, which might explain why there is no significant correlation between Exciting Entertainment and negative emotion.

Interactivity, interestingly, was correlated with both positive and negative emotion. People who watch for the interactive aspects of the programs feel significant levels of positive emotion (e.g., enjoyment or amusement) while watching. Perhaps the existence of negative emotion was found because these viewers felt significant levels of negative emotion as a result of another factor, such as identification with the participants on the program. Viewers who watched with the intent to vote might have felt positively about one participant and want to vote for him or her. However, it is equally as plausible

that viewers felt negatively about one or several participants and voted with the intention to eliminate those participants that affected them negatively.

The results of this study found that viewers who watch for excitement or entertainment and/ or interactivity are often intentional in their planning to watch reality television programs. In other words, viewers purposely seek out reality television programs because of the belief or anticipation of feelings of excitement or entertainment or because of the opportunity of interaction with the program. Similarly, Exciting Entertainment and Interactivity were correlated with higher levels of attention. Viewers who watch programs purposely for excitement or entertainment or to interact with the program pay attention to the program they are watching. This supports finding from past research that puts forth people will pay greater attention to programs that they are receiving a positive benefit from (Levy & Windahl, 1984: Kim & Rubin, 1997).

Finally, viewers who watch reality television programs for excitement, entertainment, or interactivity perceive the program to be realistic. Past research found that the entertainment motive was one of the most important predictors of perceived reality (Rubin, 1983). In other words, watching television in order to seek entertainment or amusement indicates a heightened sense of the realism of program. Uses and gratifications researchers have also considered the perceived realism of television content to be an important response to viewing motives and an antecedent to audience activity and media effects (Perse & Dunn, 1998). Viewers might vote at the end of the program because they view the program to be real with real consequences. More broadly, it is

understood that the nature of these programs is to feature real people involved in real situations, and this might also result in increased levels of perceived realism.

## Identification

This study proposed that viewers of reality television programs and those viewers who are motivated to vote, identified with the people they saw on these programs. The real or "ordinary" people on the program might stimulate a type of involvement that allows for deeper emotional and cognitive reactions, which in turn, leads to imagining oneself as being the media character, adopting the perspective of the media character, becoming caught up in the action as experienced by the character and viewing the media content from the perspective of the character (Cohen, 2001; Cohen & Perse, 2003; Eyal, 2003; Eyal & Rubin, 2003: Hoffner, 1996). In other words, viewers' personal perceptions of these participants might influence exposure and attention to media messages, retention of media messages, and subsequent effects (Eyal, 2003). Therefore this study expected to find that identification with participants was predicted by: instrumental viewing motives, perceived realism and greater exposure to the program. This hypothesis was fully supported.

Identification with the reality television show participants was positively linked to the instrumental Exciting Entertainment motive and the instrumental Interactivity motive. This is consistent with past research that has found that instrumental viewers do identify with the participants they see on the program (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Rubin, 1994).

Identification was also positively correlated with perceived realism. Reality television is unique in that the participants on the program are "real people" and past research has found that viewers like to watch people who are "like them" and where there is perceived similarity (Eyal 2003; Gardyn, 2001). The results of this study suggest that if viewers enjoy watching people like themselves in a program, viewers will also identify with these real participants. Preliminary research provided empirical indications that there is a relationship between the reality orientation of the character (in this case a reality show participant) and identification with that character (Eyal, 2003). And this study found further indication of this relationship and the fact that realism is an important correlate of identification.

Identification with participants was also positively linked to exposure to the programs. In other words, this study found support for the fact that the greater exposure viewers have to the participants on reality television programs, the greater the opportunity for those viewers to develop a sense of identification with these participants. This finding is similar to results found in parasocial interaction research where parasocial interaction is linked to exposure (Kim & Rubin, 1997; Rubin & Perse, 1987a). And similar to parasocial interaction research and exposure, the question is, does identification result from exposure or does exposure result from identification? This question lends itself to investigation and future research.

It is also important to look at the extent to which these factors of instrumental viewing motives, exposure, and perceived realism really do explain viewers' identification with reality television programs. Based on the analyses of this study,

instrumental viewing motives, exposure, and perceived realism together explained over half of the variance in common with identification with participants. Specifically, perceived realism and Interactivity best explained the variance in common with identification.

## Post-Exposure Activity

Building on past call-in talk radio research, this study hypothesized that post-exposure activity, including going online and voting, would be predicted by instrumental viewing motives, attention, cognitive elaboration, emotional involvement, identification and perceived realism of the reality programs (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Newhagen, 1994). Armstrong and Rubin (1989) proposed that talk radio, one of the few media allowing spontaneous interaction, encourages three types of involvement: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Although not truly spontaneous (viewers find out vote results the following week), IRTV programs compel viewers to vote immediately after the program, allowing for immediate post-exposure behavioral involvement. Therefore, like the callers of talk radio, viewers of IRTV programs should be cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally involved with these programs.

This study found that post-exposure online activity was positively correlated with the instrumental viewing motives Exciting Entertainment and Interactivity, as well as attention, cognitive elaboration, emotional involvement (including both positive and negative emotion), identification, and perceived realism. This study found these factors explained over 60% of the variance in common with post-exposure activity. More

specifically, greater levels of negative emotion, greater elaboration, greater interactivity, and greater levels of attention were the strongest predictors of post-exposure activity.

The finding that negative emotion was the greatest predictor of post-exposure activity is especially interesting. Viewers might not be motivated to vote because of positive feelings toward a participant, but might vote because of strong negative feelings toward one or more participants, or the process itself, and do not want to see particular participants win, remain in the game, or continue to interact with other members of the program. The same might hold true for participating in online activities. Viewers might be more likely to go online to chat with friends or strangers because they are motivated by dislike for a participant or situation instead of participating because they are happy or satisfied with the program they are watching. In looking at news research, Roser (1990) found that heightened emotional reaction to a message was linked to attitude change following message reception. In other words, emotional reactions might influence viewers to become voters. This supports this study's finding that negative emotion felt during the program influenced the viewers to vote or go online at the end of watching an IRTV program.

This study found evidence to support that greater involvement predicts greater post-exposure activity. Involved television viewers not only pay attention to and think about the message, but they also get "caught up in" the action of the drama (Bryant & Comisky, 1978, p. 65; Rubin & Perse, 1988). This study's finding that both elaboration and attention, elements of involvement, predict post-exposure activity reinforces the idea that viewers "get caught up" in the program and engage in post-exposure activity as a

result. In sum, similar to past research, this study found that the more involved viewers are in an IRTV program, the more active they are likely to be after exposure to that program.

This study correctly predicted that the instrumental viewing motive Interactivity also predicts post-exposure activity. Past research has indicated that instrumental viewing might produce strong attitudinal and behavioral effects because instrumental orientations incorporate greater motivation to use and involvement with messages (Windahl, 1981). This research is consistent with this study's finding that people specifically sought out IRTV programs to take advantage of voting or going-online after the program. There is overwhelming evidence to support this in television ratings; the fourth season premiere of *American Idol* in January 2005 drew 33.6 million viewers and this was the third most watched night of entertainment programming in FOX history, falling only slightly behind two other reality television program episodes – the final night of season two of *American Idol* with 38 million viewers and the first season wrap up of the reality program *Joe Millionaire* with 40 million viewers (De Moraes, 2005).

## Voting

Finally, the research question posed by the study sought to answer how those who watch the program and vote afterward differ in viewing motives, level of attention, cognitive elaboration, emotional involvement, identification, and perceived realism than those who watch the program but do not vote (Rubin & Perse, 1987b). This study found significant differences between viewers that voted and viewers who did not.

It is possible to look to call-in talk radio research for a model of IRTV audience activity. Unlike more traditional forms of media, IRTV programs and call-in talk radio allow for not only thinking about the program and experience emotions in conjunction with the program, but they allow for the audience to act on these thoughts and feelings (Newhagen, 1994). Even though calls on radio shows are often screened and monitored, and although the feedback or outcomes of voting on IRTV programs are not known until the next week, both callers and voters perceive the opportunity for feedback, and that perception is important. The perception of feedback in turn, influences their behavior. In other words, like call-in talk radio, IRTV programs have a strong participatory quality as the audience moved from curiosity to participation with the programming (Avery & Ellis, 1979; Rubin & Step, 2000). This move from curiosity to participation includes several aspects of audience activity from intention to attention and involvement.

First, intent to watch programs was greater for voters than non-voters. Viewers that are likely to vote will purposely plan on watching the program so that they can vote at the end. In addition, voters were found to exhibit the instrumental viewing motive Interactivity more than non-voters. In other words, voters planed to watch and were motivated to watch for the interactive aspects of the program. As is discussed at length below, voters planned to watch the program, paid attention to what they saw, learned about and thought about the participants and their interactions, and then voted for the participant they liked or vote sot they could eliminate a participant they did not like.

Second, voters in this study were found to pay greater attention to the program than non-voters and thought about the program more than non-voters. Similar to the

findings about post-exposure activity, the more closely viewers pay attention to the program, the more they are likely to engage in post-exposure activity such as voting. The results of the research question support the notion that voters do pay greater attention to the program than those who just watch. Also, these findings suggest that voters thought about the programs more than non-voters. Voting is clearly a signal of viewer involvement during exposure to IRTV programs.

Similar results have been found in call-in talk radio research where those who call in are more involved than those who do not call in (Elliott & Quattlebaum, 1979). According to past research, when a radio listener is interested in a discussion topic and can relate that topic to direct experiences, (s)he becomes more involved with the programming. To become a more active participant, the listener might call the program, leading callers to be not only cognitively and emotionally involved, but behaviorally involved as well (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989). This prior research provides support for this study's finding that voters follow a similar path of involvement.

Third, voters felt more affinity toward the program and felt greater identification with the participants on reality television programs than non-voters. Voters were more likely than non-voting viewers to feel an attraction to the program and feel they could identify with and relate to the participants they came across. To illustrate, a young working student aspiring to be a singer pays attention and identifies with an *American Idol* contestant who is also a struggling singer working to "catch her big break." Based on these feelings of affinity and identification, that student might be moved to vote for the young singer she sees on television so that the singer can succeed.

It is interesting to note, however, that even though voters feel more affinity toward the program and pay more attention, voters also felt greater negative emotion than non-voters. This study found that negative emotion was the greatest predictor of post-exposure activity. Voters might not solely be motivated to vote because of positive feelings toward a participant but instead because of negative emotions such as dissatisfaction, dislike, or anger.

Past research offers support for the importance of negative emotion in audience activity. Research found the presence of negative video in news stories increased attention toward the program, the amount of capacity required to process the message, and the ability for viewers to retrieve the story (Lang, Newhagen, & Reeves, 1996). Results also indicated that the introduction of negative video increased the self-reported negative emotional impact of the story - making it more arousing and more negative. This study suggests that the presence of negative emotion leads to increased attention, and elaboration, which in turn might lead to greater levels of post-exposure activity (e.g., voting).

Finally, there were no significant differences in perceived realism between viewers and voters. This finding indicates that viewers and voters did not differ significantly in how realistic they felt the program to be. It might be that both viewers and voters understand that a characteristic of reality television programs is that they feature "ordinary" participants.

## Non-Hypothesized Findings

In addition to the hypothesized findings, this study also found some interesting non-hypothesized findings that help to better understand how IRTV programs are used within the perspective of uses and gratifications. These results are summarized below.

In addition to identifying two clearly instrumental viewing motives, this study also identified one clearly ritualistic viewing motive, Habit Pass Time. In analyzing the data, Habit Pass Time was consistent with prior research (Rubin, 1984; Rubin, 1983; Rubin & Perse, 1987). For example, Habit Pass Time was not correlated with the active activities of elaboration, intention to watch, paying attention, identifying with the participants, or engaging in post exposure activity. This clearly supports previous research that hypothesized ritualized viewing to be characterized by a nonselective and less active use of television (Rubin & Perse 1987). In other words, ritualistic viewing, watching television as a diversion, to fill time, for companionship, relaxation, arousal, and escape, focuses more on using television as a medium and less on the content differences available to the viewer (Rubin 1983, 1984; Rubin & Rubin, 1982a).

Interestingly, the Habit Pass Time motive was correlated with negative emotion but not positive emotion. This runs counter to past research that found ritualized use to entail greater exposure to and affinity with television (Rubin 1983, 1984; Rubin & Rubin, 1982a). A plausible explanation for this finding might be that rather than the IRTV program itself causing negative emotion, the negative emotion felt by viewers is a function of their already existing environment (i.e., a viewer was in a bad mood before using television) (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

In addition, according to mood management research (also known as the affect-dependent stimulus arrangement theory), individuals consume media entertainment purposively in efforts to manage moods (Zillmann, 1988; Bryant & Zillmann, 2002) According to this research, individuals are motivated to terminate noxious, aversive stimulation of any kind. In this case it could be said that for ritualistic viewers that want to continue with their state of relaxation, IRTV programs might not be the most effective choice to maintain those feelings. Or perhaps IRTV programs do not contain the necessary elements to alleviate a bad mood. Frequently IRTV programs offer a suspenseful, stressful, and highly involving competition which would not serve to increase levels of positive and relaxing feelings (Bryant & Miron, 2002). If people are not receiving the right mood adjustment or are not receiving the right gratifications from IRTV programs, their moods will not improve with use, thus resulting in feelings of negative emotions among ritualistic viewers.

In addition to the two decidedly instrumental and one clearly ritualistic viewing motive, this study identified three viewing motives that are important although difficult to classify as instrumental or ritualistic based upon existent research. The first motive is Sexual Attraction. The Sexual Attraction motive accounted for approximately 25% of the variance in viewing motives. This factor suggests that viewers watch for voyeuristic characteristics of reality television programs including the sexual appeal of the participants and the sexually arousing content of the programs. Past research has found strong evidence for viewers choosing to watch a program for its sexual appeal (Kim & Rubin, 1997; Rubin & Perse, 1987a), suggesting a more instrumental use. In addition,

according to the findings of this study, viewers who watched for the sexual appeal of the program thought about the program (elaborated), felt more positive emotion, and planned to watch the programs. The Sexual Attraction motive was also linked to identification with the participants on the program. Finally, Sexual Attraction was also a predictor of post-exposure activity. These factors traditionally signify instrumental viewing.

It is also important to note that Sexual Attraction motive was linked to both positive emotion and negative emotion. Perhaps viewers who watch for the sexual appeal might feel negative emotions toward themselves if they compare themselves to the participants on the program, or they might disapprove of the sexual activities evident in the programs, but watch out of curiosity.

Another interesting finding of this study is that attention to the program is negatively correlated with the Sexual Attraction motive. This might be explained by viewers watching for the sexual appearance and appeal of the participants without concentrating on the story or development of the program. Despite implications that Sexual Attraction is marked by lower levels of attention, enough support exists based on the results of this study to presume that Sexual Attraction exhibits more characteristics of an instrumental viewing motive than a ritualistic viewing motive. Future research should explore the nature of viewing for sexual attraction.

The second new viewing motive factor identified in the research is an Unpredictability factor. This factor depicts a use of reality television to find out what might happen. This is especially pertinent to reality television programs as the entire format of a reality television program is unscripted communication in an unpredictable

situation. Unpredictability was positively correlated with elaboration, positive emotion, planning to watch, greater levels of attention, and identification with the participants. These results suggest that watching a program for what might happen is a more active type of viewing; an instrumental viewing motive.

One interesting finding was that greater Unpredictability was a factor in explaining identification with the participants. Because the participants on the program are real people, viewers were anxious to know what would happen with those participants who are like them. To return to the previous example of a young student trying to start a singing career, she might be drawn to the young contestant on *American Idol* who is like her and is anxious to know what happens to her favorite participant in such a competitive, uncertain atmosphere.

The final factor identified in this study is Loneliness. Typically, companionship is a ritualistic viewing motive and indicates a less purposive and more passive use of television (Finn & Gorr, 1988; Kim & Rubin, 1997; Rubin, 1983; Perse & Rubin, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1982a). In fact, Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) found support that increased loneliness was a factor in increased television use, but less active media use (Finn & Gorr, 1988). There were, however, some interesting findings in regards to this traditionally ritualistic motive. For example, Loneliness was positively correlated with identification. Identification with characters is not characteristic of a ritualistic viewing motive, rather it signals increased levels of cognitive and emotional involvement.

In this study, loneliness was also positively correlated with intention to watch, elaboration or thinking about the program, and post-exposure online activity. It might be

supposed that someone looking to escape loneliness will plan to watch IRTV program to distract himself, will think about what is happening on the program, and will identify and form "relationships" with the participants on that program. These findings might also be explained by mood management research that has found that individuals in bad moods (i.e., lonely) are "partial to consuming highly absorbing, pleasant fare that features activities with little affinity to their experiential state" (Zillmann, 1988, p.161). Viewers who are lonely might watch IRTV programs because they feature human interaction that is often fast-paced, intense, and highly absorbing. Other uses and gratifications research has also suggested Loneliness to be correlated with purposive media use (Perse & Rubin, 1990).

This study however, found that despite the identification with characters, the Loneliness factor was not correlated with attention. Based on the findings of this study, viewers watch IRTV programs to alleviate loneliness, think about what they see, and identify with the participants (perhaps on the basis of perceived similarity) but these viewers do not pay close attention to what they are watching. Therefore, it remains difficult to classify loneliness as a purely ritualistic or instrumental viewing motive.

In addition, Loneliness was correlated with negative emotion, but not positive emotion. This study offers the same explanation for this phenomenon as for Habit Pass Time. Viewers who are lonely might be experiencing negative emotions before watching the program, and these negative feelings might carry over into watching the program but are not necessarily a factor of the program itself or IRTV programs do not offer the things needed to alleviate loneliness and restore positive moods. In addition, Finn and Gorr

(1988) found that loneliness related negatively with watching television for mood management. Perhaps in watching and thinking about the program, viewers' loneliness is reinforced in watching programs that are essentially about human interaction.

## Uses and Gratifications

The uses and gratifications perspective maintains that people are active and goal-oriented in their use of media. Uses and gratifications also recognizes that society and media systems affect the audience's uses of mass media (Katz et al., 1974) and that technological developments, like those used with IRTV programs, should have a significant impact on how actively the audience watches television (e.g., Lin, 1994; Perse 1990b). The results of this study strengthen the tenets of uses and gratifications and further our understanding of how audiences interact with new media forms. These interactive programs allowed for viewer control, choice, effort, gratifications and responsiveness (Perse & Dunn, 1998). The results found that viewers who watched IRTV programs and voted at the end were more active viewers.

In addition, traditional uses and gratifications holds that audience members are potentially more affected by media content when they intentionally seek, attend to, and are involved with that content (Kim & Rubin, 1997; Levy & Windahl, 1984; Perse, 1990a; Rubin & Perse, 1987a). In fact, Liu and Shrum (2002) found that the mere perception of increased interactivity has a positive effect on users' attitudes and behaviors. The results of this study furthered this understanding by finding viewers motivated to vote were increasingly more intentional, attentive, and involved.

This study was an attempt to add to traditional uses and gratifications theorizations an understanding of how IRTV programs influence and allow for new forms audience activity and how audiences interact with new and differentiated genres and formats of media such as interactive television.

## Future Directions

There is relatively little research written about reality television. With the continuous onslaught of new reality programs each season, it is important that research focus on gaining a clearer understanding of why people watch and/or interact with reality and interactive reality television, and what effects viewing has on viewers. The findings of this study suggest several potential future directions for future research.

The availability of reality programs across traditional media channels like television and newer channels such as websites or text messaging implies that it is difficult to define who and where the audience might be at any given time (Tincknell & Raghuram, 2002). Building on this research, it might now possible to suggest the viewing audience of an IRTV program to be a set of relations with a program and audiences can be defined in terms of their activity (e.g., non-voting viewers, voting viewers, and viewers who go online to participate in activities after viewing the program).

Beyond the traditional viewing audience demographics of age, education level, income, and geographic location, audiences can now be classified as traditional viewers, viewers who go online to pursue a more in-depth interaction with the program and other

viewers, viewers who text message one another or the program to vote, and viewers who call into the program to vote to change the outcome of the program. These new categories of how viewers actively relate to the program are not mutually exclusive, however. Future studies might clarify audience activity with IRTV programs by looking at voters specifically and their use of IRTV programs. Future research might also find distinction between categories of viewers: viewers who utilize online technology, and viewers who vote.

In addition, future research should explore how the audience's familiarity and/or expertise with computer and text messaging technology influence their voting. Voting after watching an IRTV program might be a function of how comfortable viewers feel with the technology they use. As the numbers of people utilizing computer and text messaging technology grow exponentially, will additional viewers become voters? Future research might consider how technology interacts with other factors to influence activity. This study provides a somewhat preliminary description of what voter activity "looks like," and helps uses and gratifications researchers see how different types of audience activity interacts with newer technologies.

Uses and gratifications research has explored how social and psychological antecedents of media use affect audience activity (e.g., Armstrong & Rubin, 1989). Talk radio research, for example, found that some of the most active listeners, the callers, were characterized by loneliness and other personality traits (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Avery & Ellis, 1979; Avery, Ellis & Glover, 1978). Future research on IRTV might build on

that research to explore if IRTV voters can be described by any personality characteristics.

Another direction of future research would be to categorize IRTV programs into different sub-genres to explore the uses of and the gratifications received from different types of reality programming. Competitive, participatory (where the audience physically participates, like IRTV programs), judgmental (participants judged on talent/merit), voyeuristic, game show, and documentary reality programs might have distinct appeals and uses. In other words, does an audience experience different levels of activity when watching the dramatic reality program *Real World* differently from a game show reality program such as *Survivor*? And what gratifications are sought from each of these different genres of programs?

The finding that the Interactivity motive was correlated with negative emotions also warrants further research. Understanding why people vote (i.e., feeling negative emotion) has variety of implications. If viewers are motivated to vote because of negative feelings they feel while watching the program, creators might be influenced in their choice of how to portray the program (e.g., they might look to choose or edit certain participants because of their sinister or vicious character in order to motivate people to vote). And if future studies find that indeed this pattern of negative emotion is linked to post-exposure activity, it raises the question of what might this means for how people use the media?

Communication researchers might also choose to study sustained activity over time. Younger audience members use media to look for programs actively that satisfy

their habits and interests but now also look to take part in opportunities to interact with new programs. And as these young viewers continue to look for additional types of interactive shows, they continue to change the face of television programming. Therefore, as these young adults bring their media-active habits to adulthood, it is important to recognize the impact their media choices will have on the field (Frank, 2003). This study can serve of a benchmark of levels of activity sought after by college students. Future research could follow these students into adulthood to see how their interaction with the media has changed.

It will be important for researchers to understand the possibility of a noticeable change in the activity levels of audience members as increasing numbers of IRTV programs are available, as the culture and popularity of reality television persists, and as the public becomes increasingly familiar with using the interactive aspects of these programs. It would serve to further the knowledge about uses and gratifications of these programs if the significance of this change was documented by future research.

## Limitations

Despite the contribution of this study toward understanding the uses and gratifications sought from reality television, this study was not without limitations. The limitations encountered in the study are listed and discussed below.

First, the results for interactivity are limited by the structure of the questionnaire. The questionnaire directed two questions about the respondent's views of the interactive nature of the programs only if their favorite program allowed them to vote (e.g.,

*American Idol* or *Paradise Hotel*). As a result there were significantly fewer respondents for interactivity measures ($n$ = 128) whereas the other factors featured a larger number of respondents ($n$ = 462).

However, despite the reduced power, which is a function of the size of the sample of respondents for interactivity measures, significant differences were nonetheless detected. Despite not having strong power, the study still found strong effects for the appeal of program interactivity.

A second limitation of this study is that uses and gratifications research utilizes a self-report method of collecting data, which exhibits some shortcomings. Self-report methods such as the survey used in this study rely on respondents to answer honestly and truthfully. The potential drawback for researchers who use this method is that respondents might not always answer questions truthfully or be able to accurately estimate measures of their own feelings. The questionnaire asks respondents their motives for watching reality television, the emotional reactions they have to such programs, and asks them to record activities they engage in while watching, but the study did not require that the respondent watch reality television around the time of filling out the questionnaire. As a result, there is no way to indicate how truthful the respondents are or if they are recalling accurately their behaviors while watching.

A third limitation of this study is the list of reality television programs provided. Although the list put together for the questionnaire was extensive, it was not complete. Between the time of putting the questionnaire together and the time of distribution, there were a host of new reality television programs added to programming schedules. In

addition, *American Idol* was the only IRTV program running at the time of data collection. A greater sampling of IRTV programs might have resulted in a greater number of respondents participating in voting and would give the study a more significant picture of what drives people to interact with interactive reality television.

A fourth limitation is the inherent multiplicity of definitions for reality television. Although this study carefully crafted a definition to be used throughout the study, this is not the only possible or viable definition. This landscape of different definitions of what reality television is might have confused respondents in the survey. For example, although the study's definition of reality television was explained at the beginning of the study, respondents still listed favorite programs and additional programs that did not fit the definition of what reality television was according to this study. For example, the study excluded programs that were self-contained (e.g., the entire story is encapsulated in one segment – *Trading Spaces*, *Extreme Makeover* or *A Wedding Story*) yet these were often listed as "additional programs" not included on the original program list or as "favorite" reality television programs.

A final limitation of this study is the lack of a random sample. This study used a convenience sample in order to obtain a large number of respondents. Although the study implemented measures to sample both college age and non-college age respondents, the sample was not truly random. In future research, a random sample might help to find even more information about how people watch and interact with reality television programs (e.g., representing a larger age, economic and geographic range).

## Conclusion

Despite the limitations mentioned, this study provides a wealth of information about viewers' uses and motives for watching reality television, and more specifically, interactive reality television. The exploratory nature of the study allowed for numerous areas to be examined which included both psychological and demographic antecedents. Because reality television remains a popular genre for viewers of different ages, economic backgrounds, and education levels, more research must be done in the area of reality television. Also, as the future of television might reflect more interaction between media and audience, it is important to continue to study this precursor to more interactive forms of television.

APPENDIX

Reality Television Questionnaire

University of Delaware, Department of Communication

WE ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT REALITY TV PROGRAMS. WOULD YOU PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS FOR US? YOUR ASSISTANCE IS VERY IMPORTANT. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND YOU MUST BE 18 YEARS OR OLDER TO PARTICIPATE. REMEMBER, YOUR ANSWERS WILL BE ANONYMOUS AND CONFIDENTIAL. THANK YOU!

**First, here are a few questions about the television you watch.**

1. On an average weekday, how many hours of television do you watch during the following 4 time periods?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 a.m. to Noon | _____ hours | Noon to 6 p.m. | _____ hours |
| 6 p.m. to Midnight | _____ hours | Midnight to 6 a.m. | _____ hours |

2. On an average weekend day, how many hours of television do you watch during the following 4 time periods?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 a.m. to Noon | _____ hours | Noon to 6 p.m. | _____ hours |
| 6 p.m. to Midnight | _____ hours | Midnight to 6 a.m. | _____ hours |

**This study looks at the use of reality television.**

**Reality TV programs feature real people (i.e., not professional actors) who do not have a script but freely interact with each other. These programs often feature a lot of drama and competition as reality TV participants compete with each other in contests and/or are forced to live together/survive.**

*For the purposes of this study, mini-documentaries (e.g., A Wedding Story, Blind Date, A Baby Story) and self-contained shows – shows that begin and finish within a single episode (e.g., Cops, While You Were Out, and Clean Sweep) are not included in the study of Reality TV.*

3. Do you ever watch reality television programs?

Please CIRCLE your response. Yes. . . 1 No . . . 2

4. **Please indicate how often you watch the following reality TV programs:**

| I WATCH THIS PROGRAM | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Survivor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| American Idol | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Osbournes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| America's Next Top Model | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| For Love or Money | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Temptation Island | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Newlyweds | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Real World | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Till Death Do Us Part | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Oprah's Pop Star Challenge | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Home Free (TLC) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Extreme Makeover | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Apprentice | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Simple Life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Bachelorette | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Playing it Straight. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| High School Reunion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Real World/Road Rules Challenge | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Joe Schmo Show | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Surreal Life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| College Hill | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Road Rules | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Bachelor. .. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Littlest Groom | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Amazing Race | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My Big, Fat, Obnoxious Fiancé | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Star Search | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| American Idol Juniors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Married by America | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Average Joe | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Fame | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Paradise Hotel | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Big Brother | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Mole | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Swan | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5. Do you watch other reality programs not mentioned on this list? Please list.

6. Which program is your favorite? Please list.

**Now think of your favorite reality TV program. Here are reasons people have given for watching reality television. Please CIRCLE ONE of the following numbers to indicate how much you feel these statements are like your reasons for watching YOUR FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM.**

| I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM … | Exactly | A lot | Some-what | Not much | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Just because it was on . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Because it relaxes me . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Because I would like to be a contestant on a program like this | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. Because I had nothing better to do . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Because it entertains me . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Because it helps me learn things . . . . about myself and others | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Because it's thrilling . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Because there was no one else to . . . talk or be with | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Because of the sex appeal . . . . . in the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Because it passes the time away, . . . particularly when I'm bored | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. Because it's enjoyable . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. So I could get away from the . . .. . . family or others | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. So I could talk with others . . . .. . . . about what's going on | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. Because there are online activities … (like chat rooms, polls, quizzes) I can participate in | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. Because it's exciting . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. Because it makes me feel less lonely. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM … | Exactly | A lot | Some-what | Not much | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. Because it's a habit, just something I do | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. Because it gives me something to occupy my time | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. Because it amuses me | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. So I can learn about what could happen to me | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21. Because I just like to watch | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22. Because I find some of it sexually arousing | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23. So I won't have to be alone | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. Because I like to see people. like me on television | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 25. Because it peps me up | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 26. Because it's something to do when friends come over | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 27. So I can learn how to do things that I haven't done before | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 28. Because the characters are sexually attractive | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 29. So I can get away from. what I'm doing | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 30. So I can be with other. members of the family or friends who are watching | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 31. Because it allows me to unwind | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 32. Because I can easily relate to the participants in the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 33. Because it's a pleasant rest | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM … | Exactly | A lot | Some-what | Not much | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 34. Because of the unpredictability of the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 35. So I can forget about school . . . work, or other things | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 36. Because of the drama of. . . . not knowing what will happen | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

If your favorite reality TV program allows you to vote, please answer the following 2 questions. If not, please proceed to the next section.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 37. Because I feel like I can . . . . . change the outcome of the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 38. So I can vote on . . . . . the program's outcome | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Here are some statements about watching reality TV. For each statement, please CIRCLE the number that expresses your own feelings about watching YOUR FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM.**

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM … | Strongly Agree | Agree | Agree Some & Disagree Some | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I pay close attention when I watch . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I would rather watch my favorite . . reality TV program than anything else | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. I look forward to watching my . . . . . favorite reality TV program | .5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. When I watch, I think about how the program relates to other things I know | . 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. I would feel lost without my favorite reality TV program to watch | . 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. I sometimes miss parts. . . . . of the program | .5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. My favorite reality TV program . . . presents things as they really are in life | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM … | Strongly Agree | Agree | Agree Some & Disagree Some | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. The program lets me. . . . . see what happens in other places as if I were really there | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. While I watch the program . . . . I feel as if I were a part of the action | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. When I watch, I imagine. . . myself doing the same things that the people on the program are doing | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. While watching the program. . . I can feel the emotions of the people on the show | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. When I watch my favorite TV . . personality on the program, I know exactly what (s)he is going through | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. When watching the show I. . . . . can feel the emotions of my favorite reality TV personality | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. When I watch, I feel I can. . . . really get inside my favorite personality's "head" | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. When I watch, I think about . . . the program over and over again | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. I listen carefully when I watch. . . . my favorite reality TV program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. I could easily do without watching.. my favorite reality TV program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. I plan my time so I do not miss my . favorite reality TV program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. My mind wanders when I watch . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. I put a lot of mental effort into . . watching the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM … | Strongly Agree | Agree | Agree Some & Disagree Some | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. Watching my favorite reality TV . . program is one of the more important things I do | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22. I pay attention to my favorite reality. TV program so I can go online and talk to others about the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23. My favorite reality TV program . . . lets me see how other people live | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. If I see something on my favorite . . reality TV program, I can be sure it really is that way | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 25. When I am watching the program . . I sometimes feel like I am really one of the people in the story | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 26. At key moments in the show, I feel . . I know exactly what the people in the program are going through | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 27. I think I have a good understanding . . of the people in my favorite reality TV program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 28. At key moments in the show, I feel I know exactly what my favorite reality TV personality is going through | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 29. I think I have a good understanding of my favorite reality TV personality | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 30. When my favorite reality TV . . . . personality succeeds I feel joy but when (s)he fails I feel sad | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 31. I make arrangements so I don't. . . . miss watching my favorite reality program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 32. When I watch, I think about what . . the program means to me and my family | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM … | Strongly Agree | Agree | Agree Some & Disagree Some | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33. I watch carefully when I watch my favorite reality TV program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 34. When I watch, I try to concentrate on the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 35. When I watch, I think about what the program means to other people | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 36. Whenever I'm unable to watch my favorite reality TV program, I really miss it | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 37. When I watch, I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 38. My favorite reality TV program shows life as it really is | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 39. When I watch my favorite reality TV program, I almost believe I'm in it | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 40. When I watch my favorite reality TV program, I can understand the way the people on the show feel | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 41. When my favorite people on the show succeed I feel joy, but when they fail I am sad | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 42. When I watch my favorite reality TV program, I sometimes wish that I was actually in it | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 43. When I watch my favorite reality TV personality on the program, I feel I understand the way (s)he feels | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 44. I tend to understand the reasons why my favorite reality TV personality does what (s)he does | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 45. When I watch the program I think about what should be done | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| **WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM …** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Agree Some & Disagree Some** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 46. If I can't watch my favorite reality TV program, I make sure I record it | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

If your favorite reality TV program allows you to vote, please answer the following 2 questions. If not, please proceed to the next section.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 46. I pay attention to my favorite reality TV program so I can vote at the end | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 47. I pay attention to my favorite reality TV program so I can vote for the contestant I I want to win | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**People may do other things while they are watching reality TV. For each of the following activities, please CIRCLE the number that best indicates how often you remember doing each of the following while you watch YOUR FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM.**

| **WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM, I ALSO** | **Almost all of the time** | **Most of the time** | **Some of the time** | **Rarely** | **Not at all** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Read a newspaper, book, or magazine | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Eat | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Talk to others about the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. Talk to others about things | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Do homework or paperwork | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Daydream or think about other things | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Checked e-mail | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Use instant messaging to talk to others about the program you are watching | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Surf the World Wide Web | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Change the channel | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. Use instant messaging to talk to others about things that have nothing to do with the program you are watching | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| **WHEN I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM, I ALSO** | **Almost all of the time** | **Most of the time** | **Some of the time** | **Rarely** | **Not at all** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Participate in online chat rooms . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. Call friends to talk about the program . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. Call friends just to talk . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. Listen to music . . . . . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. Use text messaging about the program. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. Use text messaging about other things . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Now tell us your thoughts about YOUR FAVORITE REALITY TV PROGRAM.**

| | **Not at all** | | | | | | **Completely** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How valuable do you find watching your favorite reality TV program to be? . . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. How pleasing is watching your favorite reality TV program? . . . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. How satisfied are you with your favorite reality TV program? . . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. How valuable do you find Internet sites dedicated to your favorite reality TV program to be? . . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. How satisfying do you find talking to others about your favorite reality TV program to be? . . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. **If your favorite reality program allows people vote**, how satisfying do you find voting for a participant to be? . . . . . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

If your favorite reality TV program **does not**, proceed to the next section

Below are some words that people have used to describe the feelings they sometimes get while watching television. Please CIRCLE the number that best expresses how often you felt the way described when you watch YOUR FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM.

| **WHEN I WATCH THE PROGRAM I FEEL…** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Agree Some & Disagree Some** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. amused | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. angry | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. at ease | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. ashamed | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. calm | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. bored | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. cheerful | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. depressed | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. content | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. embarrassed | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. delighted | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. fearful | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. happy | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. gloomy | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. pleased | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. miserable | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. relaxed | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. sad | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. satisfied | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. worried | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21. involved | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**After watching your favorite reality TV program, how often do you do these things?**

| AFTER I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM … | Always | Frequently | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I go online to read more about. . . the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I go online to chat with friends . . about the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. I think about being a participant . . on the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. I call friends to talk about. . . . .. . . . the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. I meet with friends to discuss. . . . the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. I go online to talk to others about . . the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. I go online to participate in a poll . . about the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. I write my friends an email about . . the program I just saw | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. I surf the Web for information . . . about the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. I applied to be a participant. . . . . on the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. I talk with others in the room about the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. I post messages online about. .. . . the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. I subscribe to an online newsletter . about the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. I go online to view additional video footage of the program | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| **AFTER I WATCH MY FAVORITE REALITY PROGRAM …** | **Always** | **Frequently** | **Sometimes** | **Rarely** | **Never** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. I go online to chat with people who have the same interest in reality TV as me | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Does your favorite reality TV program allow the audience to vote? Yes No
If no, go to the next section, If yes, please answer the following 2 questions.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. I call the program to vote for a contestant | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. I use text messaging to vote for a contestant | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Finally, here are some questions about you.**

1. Please CIRCLE the appropriate number to indicate if you are: Male . . .1 Female . . . 2

2. How old are you? (As of your last birthday) . . . . . _____ years

3. Do you have a computer in the room where you usually watch TV? Yes . . .1 No . . .2

4. How would you rate your own expertise with computers in general? (on a scale of 1-7)

   Novice 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Competent

5. Does your cell phone have text messaging? Yes . . . 1 No . . . 2 I don't know…3

6. If your cell phone has text messaging, how would you rate your own expertise with cell phone text messaging in general? (on a scale of 1-7)

   Novice 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Competent

7. Please list the Zip Code of your home residence _____

8. Are you enrolled in college right now? Yes . . .1 No . . . 2

9. If yes, what is your class in school?
Please CIRCLE your response.

Freshman . . . . . 1
Sophomore . . . . . 2
Junior . . . . . 3
Senior . . . . . .4
Graduate Student . .. . . . . 5
Other _____ . . . . 6
(please indicate)

10. If no, what is your highest level of completed, formal education?
Please CIRCLE your response

Grade/Elementary School .. . 1
Some High School . . . . . 2
High School Graduate . . . . . 3
Some College . . . . . .. . . .4
College Graduate . . .. . . . . .5
Some Graduate School . . . . 6
Graduate School Graduate. . . 7

11. On the line below, please write your occupation. If you are not employed, please write the occupation of the principle wage earner in your household. (If retired, please write your occupation before retirement)

_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION. BE ASSURED THAT YOUR ANSWERS WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

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