

An Exploratory Study of Reality Appeal: Uses and Gratifications of Reality TV Shows

Zizi Papacharissi and Andrew L. Mendelson

A survey administered to reality TV viewers revealed that the most salient motives for watching reality TV were habitual pass time and reality entertainment. Additional analysis indicated that those who enjoyed reality TV the most for its entertainment and relaxing value also tended to perceive the meticulously edited and frequently preplanned content of reality interaction as realistic. Concurrently, those externally controlled, with low mobility and low levels of interpersonal interaction, were more likely to watch reality TV programming to fulfill voyeuristic and companionship needs. Functional alternative uses of reality TV and the appeal of realistic programming were documented.

For the past several years reality television has dominated mainstream television programming, providing relatively inexpensive entertainment (Gardyn, 2001). The premise of reality TV requires that individuals place themselves on public display, thus forfeiting all claims to personal privacy for the sake of transient fame and the possibility of monetary compensation. Some critics argue that reality TV poses a new low denominator for television content, promotes models of questionable social validity, and proliferates a culture of exhibitionism and voyeurism (Dauncey, 1996; Kaminer, 2000; Reiss & Wiltz, 2004), while others find that reality TV produces more realistic prime-time content that allows producers to move away from big budget sitcom/drama formulas (Gardyn, 2001; Kilborn, 1994). Moreover, the reality model could potentially empower audiences, by allowing them to participate, directly or from home, and influence the creation of media content (Dauncey, 1996; Wong, 2001). On the other hand, this potential empowerment could reinforce the commodification of audiences, who not only “buy” the reality show product, but become the surveilled reality show product themselves (Andrejevic, 2002; Kilborn, 1994; Wong, 2001). Finally, the growing appeal of reality programming raises the question of dis-

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inction between real and fictional programming, especially in terms of how audiences perceive reality versus fiction (Fetveit, 1999; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2005).

Reality TV places the audience member on the opposite side of the entertainment arena, providing all viewers with the possibility of becoming potential entertainers. The growing popularity of the reality genre invites questions regarding its utility and consequences for audiences. This study examines the reasons why individuals watch reality, and considers how social and psychological antecedents influence reality TV viewing from a uses and gratifications perspective.

Uses and Gratifications and the Reality TV Context

Uses and gratifications (U & G) examines the nature of audience involvement and gratification obtained from viewing television, with an emphasis on motives for medium, psychological, and social traits that influence this use, and behaviors or attitudes that develop as a result of the combined influence of motives and traits. Since the popularity of this particular incarnation of participatory television is relatively new, the body of scholarly work dedicated to it so far is small. However, previous studies of reality-like genres can further enlighten this approach, especially as they pertain to motivation and gratification obtained from viewing reality television. This study employs a U & G perspective, applied to the context of reality TV, and enlightened by other scholarly work on the reality genre.

Contemporary U & G is grounded in the following five assumptions: (a) "communication behavior, including media selection and use, is goal-directed, purposive, and motivated"; (b) "people take the initiative in selecting and using communication vehicles to satisfy felt needs or desires"; (c) "a host of social and psychological factors mediate people's communication behavior"; (d) "media compete with other forms of communication (i.e., functional alternatives) for selection, attention, and use to gratify our needs or wants"; and (e) "people are typically more influential than the media in the relationship, but not always" (A. Rubin, 1994, p. 420). Applied to the context of reality TV, U & G supports the understanding of viewer motives and predisposition, while placing reality TV on the larger spectrum of communication channels that are more or less available to audiences, with the understanding that individuals are frequently, but not always, actively engaged in the selection of media content. Therefore, U & G permits the examination of both instrumental and ritualized uses of media, both of which could drive the appeal of reality TV. The distinction between instrumental and ritualized uses rests on a combination of individual amount and type of media use, attitudes and expectations from the media content. Ritualized use involves the habitual use of the medium, to consume time, and has been connected to greater affinity for and greater exposure to the medium (A. Rubin, 1994). Instrumental use, on the other hand, is connected to information uses of the medium, and relates to greater exposure to informational programming and perceiving content to be realistic. This distinction is especially pertinent to this study, as several viewers may watch real-

ity TV not for a specific purpose, but because there is not much else available. Concurrently, other viewers may be drawn to different types of reality programming, especially if the content is perceived to be realistic and contains information that could be of use. Moreover, additional viewers might be drawn to a program so as to function effectively within daily social rituals at home or in the office, which involve the discussion of popular reality shows.

Additional studies that examine the historical context behind participatory programming and consider the appeal of the reality genre can suggest possible motives and traits that influence selection and involvement with reality TV. As Griffen-Foley (2004), among others, has shown, participatory media date back to the appearance of periodicals relying on contributions from the readers in late 19th century American and British popular journalism, leading to confessional women's magazines gaining popularity in the United States and Australia in the early 20th century, mass marketing strategies of women's magazines in the interwar years, the growth of talk and daytime radio, and eventually the emergence of the TV talk show, game show, and other reality genres. The popularity of the reality genre relies on the domestication of video and other technologies that allow audiences to become content producers as well as the ability to capture the unexpected, thus providing content with a particular flavor of the here and now (Jagodozinki, 2003). Concurrently, however, this television format permits the production of programming that satisfies both overt and subliminal voyeuristic tendencies, which range from the direct involvement of audiences to participate in TV content (game shows) to the more detached observation of the daily interactions of "ordinary" people (as is the case with reality shows like *Big Brother*, or MTV's *The Real World*). Thompson (2001) captured both the real and artificial elements of reality content by arguing that "the *Real World* and its descendants. . . resemble the dramaturgical equivalent of jazz: a controlled structure that invites improvisation and unpredictability" (p. 22).

Several scholars and critics assess the contribution of the reality genre to the cultural landscape. For instance, Wong (2001) evaluated the relevance of *Big Brother* surveillance and Foucault's Panopticon in making sense of the cultural value of reality TV. In a similar vein, Fetveit (1999) claimed that the reality genre symbolizes an ambiguous longing for the real. In an age infested with digital reproduction, the "powerful urge for a sense of contact with the real is inscribed in much of the reality TV footage" (p. 798). Jagodozinki (2003) also viewed reality TV as a symptom of the postmodern era; a reaction to the "sense that in our post-photographic, digitalized and 'comic book' world everything is constructed, nothing seems 'real'" (p. 326). Dauncey (1995) considered the empowering effect of reality TV and concluded that while reality shows modernize notions of what is considered culture, they also challenge traditional values.

Empirically guided investigations of reality programming seek an understanding of how audiences use and process reality content. Specifically, Jones (2003) conducted quantitative and qualitative interviews of *Big Brother* fans, to determine how they negotiated perceived "realness" of reality programming. She found while the narratives

of such "docu-soaps" were indeed popular, the audiences were aware of the artificiality of the whole experience, but incorporated it to their mechanisms for deriving pleasure from this media genre. Engstrom and Semic (2003) examined treatment of religion on reality TV programming, and found that most portrayals of religion were hegemonic, in terms of the religious ceremonies, beliefs, and behaviors featured.

Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt (2003) conducted two separate studies, focusing on viewing reasons and mediators of reality TV attitudes and behaviors. In Study 1, they found that reality programs, perceived as distinct from other programs although not really a genre of their own, were only viewed as moderately real. In Study 2, they were able to confirm that reality programs cater to different gratifications for regular versus periodic viewers. Strikingly, voyeurism was not identified as primary motivation for seeking reality content (Nabi et al., 2003). Need for cognition and impulsivity were considered as antecedents of reality viewing, but did not emerge as predictors, therefore the researchers recommended investigating additional predictors of reality appeal.

Reiss and Wiltz (2004) took a different approach to studying the appeal of reality TV and conducted a survey of adult viewers, employing the 16-motive Reiss profile standardized instrument. The researchers focused on five specific reality TV shows and measured "intrinsic" or "end-trait" motives that covered a wide array of human needs, including social contact, honor, family, power, idealism, and other categories. According to their findings, the more status-oriented people were, the more likely they were to watch reality TV out of the need to feel self-important, because "the idea that these are 'real' people [gave] psychological significance to the viewers' perceptions of superiority" (p. 373). In addition, the reality genre glorified the experiences of ordinary people, thus allowing ordinary viewers to fantasize about gaining celebrity status themselves and confirming the vicarious experience hypothesis of the researchers.

So far, research on reality TV has indicated some possible reasons for viewing, although research results seem to indicate that viewers tend to watch more out of habit rather than for specific needs. Moreover, certain attitudes related to self-perception or sense of self-value appear to interact with the appeal and uses of reality television, as do levels of involvement with the program. Therefore, this study builds on previous research to further explore reality TV motives, additional attitudes related to self-perception and aspects of involvement with reality TV. The particular model proposed within this study combines reality TV motives, with certain social and psychological antecedents, and investigates how these concepts influence involvement with reality TV. Specifically, under involvement, exposure to reality TV, affinity with and perceived realism of reality TV content are examined; therefore, focus is on the following three research questions:

RQ1: What are salient motives for watching reality television?

RQ2: How do motives, social and psychological antecedents and attitudes toward reality TV (perceived realism, affinity) relate to each other?

RQ3: How do motives and social/psychological antecedents predict affinity, perceived realism, and exposure to reality TV?

Method

Sample and Procedures

A total of 157 students enrolled in an introductory communication class within an urban university were surveyed about their viewing of reality TV. Some graduate students also participated to expand the sample. The sample breakdown was 70.7% female ($n = 109$) and 29.3% male ($n = 48$); 57.3% of the students were first-year ($n = 144$), 14.6% sophomore ($n = 23$), 8.9% junior ($n = 14$), 7.0% senior ($n = 11$), and 7.6% graduate ($n = 12$). Age ranged from 18 to 34 years ($M = 19.99$), with a modal value of 19 years; 65.6% of the sample was White, 22.4% African American, 4.4% Asian American, 2.4% Hispanic, and 5.2% of multiethnic origin. Participants watched an average of 74 minutes of reality TV ($SD = 77.53$) per week. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants received extra credit in the introductory course. While the use of a college sample in communication research is frequently perceived as convenient and nonrepresentative, in this particular case it was appropriate, since college students view reality TV programming on a regular basis. Basil (1996) argues that use of college student samples is justified when this demographic group is theoretically of interest to the topic of study. College students represent a significant portion of the demographic age group that several reality shows target (Andrejevic, 2004; Brioux, 2004; Gardyn, 2001). Gardyn (2001) suggests that over 70% of 18- to 24-year-olds regularly watch reality television programs. Moreover, young people and college students especially are frequently the early adopters of new television formats and shows, and therefore present a valid sample for the study of new television genres. Similarly, college students have been surveyed in the past to study previous programming "fads," including soap operas and talk shows (e.g., Babrow, 1987; Perse, 1986; A. Rubin, 1985).

Measurement

Reality TV Motives

Motives present general dispositions that influence people's actions taken for the fulfillment of a need or want and behavior. A. Rubin (1983) identified nine reoccurring television use motives: relaxation, companionship, entertainment, social interaction, information, habit, pass time, arousal, and escape. Researchers have come up with some additional motives, such as parasocial interaction for news watching (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980) and surveillance and voyeurism for certain program types (Bantz, 1982). TV motives are frequently combined or overlap with in-

terpersonal communication motives, as the medium has been shown to support both mediated and interpersonal communication. (R. Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1988).

To construct a reality TV motives scale, the researchers combined interpersonal (inclusion/companionship), media (entertainment, habit, information, social interaction, escape, pass time, and relaxation), soap opera/talk show (parasocial interaction/arousal), and one reality TV specific category, which focused on the realistic elements of the programming that might appeal to viewers. The selection of categories rested upon previous U & G research (e.g., Alexander, 1985; Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Babrow, 1987; Bantz, 1982; Perse, 1986; A. Rubin, 1985; A. Rubin & Perse, 1987; R. Rubin et al., 1988) and research on the uses of reality TV (Nabi et al., 2003; Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). Three items were used to represent each of these a priori categories, and adapted the statements from previous research to the reality TV context. Respondents were asked to indicate how much these reasons were like their own reasons for viewing Reality TV on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = exactly, 1 = not at all).

Social and Psychological Antecedents

Contextual Age. Contextual age is a construct that was developed to account for the inaccuracies resulting from only using chronological age in communication research and was developed as "a transactional, life-position index of aging" (A. Rubin & Rubin, 1986). Depending on contextual age, people may also use mediated channels as functional alternatives (over interpersonal ones) for the fulfillment of interpersonal needs (A. Rubin & Rubin, 1982, 1986; R. Rubin & Rubin, 1982). A. Rubin and Rubin's (1982) Contextual Age Scale was used to assess life position, consisting of the following dimensions: physical health, interpersonal interaction, mobility, life satisfaction, social activity, and economic security. The physical health and economic security dimensions were not included due to low expectation of significant variation within the college population. Each remaining dimension—life satisfaction, mobility, social activity, and interpersonal interaction—contained five items (A. Rubin & Rubin, 1982; R. Rubin & Rubin, 1982). Respondents stated their levels of agreement with these statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). Responses to the items of each subscale were summed and averaged. The mean scores for the separate dimensions were: life satisfaction ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.65$, $\alpha = .75$); mobility ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.64$, $\alpha = .62$); social activity ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.68$, $\alpha = .67$); and interpersonal interaction ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.63$, $\alpha = .62$).

Locus of Control. The concept of locus of control suggests that people differ in terms of how much responsibility for their own lives they attribute to internal or external factors. People with high internal locus of control perceive that they are steering their own life-course, while those with high external locus of control perceive that factors outside themselves steer their life (Lefcourt, 1972; Trice, 1985). Trice (1985) modified this concept for college students, comparing those who tend to equate academic success with external factors and internal means believe they have

more personal control over academic outcomes. To be consistent with other measures in the study, a 5-point Likert scale was used for the measure (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). The mean for the locus of control scale dimension was 2.80 ($SD = 0.44$, $\alpha = .72$).

Reality TV Use and Attitudes

Patterns of media use (i.e., amount of use, duration of use, types of use) and attitudes about the media have been previously used in U & G research and should be relevant to this study. A. Rubin (1981b) found that "those who exhibited increased levels of identification with each of (the) motivations viewed greater quantities of television" (p. 155) and confirmed that motives were related to television viewing patterns (A. Rubin, 1983). As measures of frequency of reality TV watching, respondents were asked to indicate the number of days they watch reality TV on an average week, and to also estimate the number of hours they watch reality TV per day. Respondents were also asked to identify examples of reality TV shows they watched, and to indicate the average number of hours, per day, spent watching television.

Affinity with television has been linked to many motives, such as arousal, habit, pass time, escape, entertainment, companionship, and information seeking (A. Rubin, 1981b). A. Rubin (1985) found that felt affinity toward soap operas was related to entertainment and relaxation needs. Perse (1986) added that motives of information, escape, and voyeurism were related to affinity for the same genre. The Television Affinity Scale (A. Rubin, 1981b) was adapted to assess liking or affinity with reality television. This was a 5-item Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). Responses to the items were summed and averaged. The mean for the 5-item scale was 2.25 ($SD = 0.85$, $\alpha = .84$).

The Perceived Realism Scale was also adapted to the context of reality television, as a way of estimating how true-to-life viewers understand reality depictions to be. Perceived realism has been used to understand how different individuals react to TV messages based on motivation (e.g., Greenberg, 1974; A. Rubin, 1979), or specific content like TV news (Perse, 1990; A. Rubin, 1981a; A. Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985), and soap operas (Perse, 1986; A. Rubin & Perse, 1987). A five-item version of this scale was employed in the present study, measuring perceived realism on a 5-point Likert range (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). Responses to the items were summed and averaged, yielding a mean of 2.44 ($SD = 1.70$, $\alpha = .74$).

Results

RQ1: Reality TV Motives

The factor analysis of the reality TV statements yielded six interpretable factors: reality entertainment, relaxation, habitual pass time, companionship, social interaction, and voyeurism. Table 1 summarizes the factor analysis that produced these fac-

Table 1
Factor Analysis Results for Reality TV Motives

Reality TV Motive Statements	Reality TV Motive Factors					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
"I watch Reality TV shows (because)..."	1	2	3	4	5	6
Factor 1: Reality Entertainment						
Characters are more interesting than those in fiction programs	.74	.00	.22	.27	.10	.13
It is more enjoyable than fiction programming	.74	.00	.18	.32	.23	.13
I just like to watch	.63	.39	.17	.00	.24	.14
It amuses me	.72	.39	.17	.00	.24	.00
It entertains me	.69	.38	.29	.00	.20	.00
It is exciting	.63	.39	.17	.17	.15	.24
Factor 2: Relaxation						
It relaxes me	.22	.73	.00	.31	.18	.15
It allows me to unwind	.18	.77	.14	.32	.15	.10
It is a pleasant rest	.20	.80	.18	.17	.00	.11
Factor 3: Habitual Pass Time						
Just because it's there	.10	.00	.69	.00	.24	.00
When I have nothing better to do	.15	.00	.86	.11	.00	.00
It gives me something to do to occupy my time	.38	.255	.67	.00	.13	.00
Factor 4: Companionship						
It makes me feel less lonely	.19	.19	.00	.72	.20	.00
So I won't have to be alone	.00	.29	.00	.73	.19	.00
When there's no one else to talk or be with	.11	.00	.37	.65	.00	.16
Factor 5: Social Interaction						
So I can be with other family or friends	.00	.11	.17	.24	.70	.00
It is something to do when friends come over	.24	.22	.35	.18	.63	.15
So I can talk with other people about what's on TV	.37	.00	.26	.14	.62	.12
Factor 6: Voyeurism						
I find the characters attractive	.13	.19	.00	.15	.17	.85
The program has sex appeal	.12	.00	.14	.12	.10	.84

Note: A principal component analysis, with a varimax rotation, eigenvalues of 1 or higher, and a 60/40 criterion were used for the present factor solution. The retained factors explained 64.10% of the total variance after varimax rotation. The first factor (reality entertainment) had an eigenvalue of 6.42 and explained 17.82% of the variance, the second factor (relaxation) 4.54 and accounted for 12.61% of the variance, the third factor (habitual pass time) 3.74 and explained 10.38% of the variance, the fourth factor (companionship) 3.52 and 9.77% of the variance, the fifth factor (social interaction) 2.49 and 6.92% of the variance, and the sixth factor had an eigenvalue of 2.12 and explained 5.89% of the total variance.

tors. The first factor, *reality entertainment* ($\alpha = .92$), accounted for 17.82% of the variance after rotation. It contained six items from a priori categories of reality TV appeal, habit, entertainment, and arousal that all attested to entertainment aspects specific to the nature of reality TV programming. *Relaxation* ($\alpha = .89$) consisted of three items, all of which comprised that a priori category, and explained 12.61% of the variance. *Habitual pass time* ($\alpha = .80$) contained three items from the a priori categories of habit and pass time, which suggested a cross between entertainment routines and spare time entertainment, and accounted for 10.38% of the variance. *Companionship* ($\alpha = .78$) included all three items from the a priori category of companionship and explained 9.77% of the variance. *Social Interaction* ($\alpha = .75$) also contained all three items from the respective a priori category and explained 6.92% of the variance after rotation. *Voyeurism* ($\alpha = .82$) included two items from the a priori category of voyeurism and explained 5.89% of the total variance.

Habitual pass time ($M = 3.01$, $SD = .86$) and reality entertainment ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .94$) had the highest mean scores. Social interaction ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .91$), voyeurism ($M = 2.41$, $SD = .98$), and relaxation ($M = 2.39$, $SD = .93$) were also fairly salient factors, whereas companionship ($M = 1.74$, $SD = .73$) was a less salient reason for watching reality TV. Primarily, respondents within this sample watched reality television because they were used to doing so to pass the time and because they found certain aspects of reality television programming appealing. Most motives correlated moderately. The highest correlations were between reality entertainment with habitual pass time ($r = .57$), relaxation ($r = .64$) and social interaction ($r = .59$), all $p < .001$. This suggested that specific aspects of programming unique to reality TV (i.e., realistic and not fictional nature of story and characters) facilitated pass time, relaxation, and socially interactive uses.

RQ2: Reality TV Motives and Social/Psychological Antecedents and Media Attitudes

The most significant and highest correlations were noted among several reality TV motives and affinity, especially between reality entertainment ($r = .70$, $p < .001$), relaxation ($r = .67$, $p < .001$), social interaction ($r = .51$, $p < .001$), and companionship ($r = .48$, $p < .001$) and affinity. Correlations were significant, but much lower between reality TV motives, perceived realism and antecedents.

To investigate correlations among these groups of variables, a canonical correlation was conducted, which produced two significant roots (see Table 2). For Root 1 ($R_c = .80$, $\lambda = .25$, $p < .001$), perceived reality and affinity had the highest correlations among the set of antecedents and media attitudes and were positively related to each other. This indicated that the more realistic reality TV programming was perceived to be, the greater the affinity viewers experienced with and vice versa. Reality TV entertainment and relaxation dominated the set of motives and were also positively related to each other, reflecting the tendency to associate reality TV viewing with entertainment and relaxation needs. Across the two sets, those who perceived reality TV content as more realistic and developed greater affinity for reality TV content were more likely to

Table 2
Canonical Analysis of Reality TV Motives and Social/Psychological
Traits and Media Attitudes

Reality TV Motives	Canonical Loading	Antecedents	Canonical Loading
Set 1: Reality TV Motives		Set 2: Social/Psychological Traits, Media Attitudes	
Root One			
Reality Entertainment	.89	Perceived Realism	.49
Relaxation	.82	Affinity	.98
Habitual Pass Time	.32	Interpersonal Interaction	-.08
Companionship	.62	Mobility	-.02
Social Interaction	.66	Life Satisfaction	.04
Voyeurism	.46	Social Activity	.24
		Locus of Control	.03
Root Two			
Reality Entertainment	.05	Perceived Realism	-.26
Relaxation	.08	Affinity	.05
Habitual Pass Time	-.33	Interpersonal Interaction	.42
Companionship	-.45	Mobility	.49
Social Interaction	-.37	Life Satisfaction	.34
Voyeurism	-.20	Social Activity	-.00
		Locus of Control	-.87

Note: Root 1: $R_c = .80$, $R_c^2 = .64$, $\lambda = .25$, $F[42, 631] = 5.22$, $p = .001$, Root 2: $R_c = .48$, $R_c^2 = .23$, $\lambda = .68$, $F[30, 542] = 1.84$, $p < .01$.

watch to fulfill entertainment and relaxation needs primarily, as well as social interaction and companionship needs on a secondary level.

For Root 2 ($R_c = .48$, $R_c^2 = .23$, $p < .01$), the antecedents and attitudes set was dominated by locus of control and the contextual age dimensions of interpersonal interaction and mobility. Locus of control was negatively related to interpersonal interaction and mobility, indicating that for this sample, those externally controlled were likely to experience lower levels of mobility and interpersonal interaction. In other words, those who felt that major decisions in their lives were controlled by others and external forces were less mobile and enjoyed lower amounts of interpersonal interaction. The highest loadings for the reality TV motives set were for voyeurism and companionship, which were positively related, revealing that those who enjoyed the voyeuristic appeal of reality TV were the same viewers who valued the companionship

aspects of viewing. Across the two sets, those externally controlled, with low mobility and low levels of interpersonal interaction were more likely to watch reality TV programming to fulfill voyeuristic and companionship needs. Alternatively, those who watched as voyeurs and to obtain a sense of companionship were more likely to attribute events in their lives to external forces, experience low mobility and less interpersonal interaction.

RQ3: Predictors of Affinity, Perceived Realism, and Exposure to Reality TV

Three separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to further investigate the nature and direction of these relationships. Variables associated with the amount of reality TV viewing (days/week) and overall amount of TV viewing (minutes) were entered on the first step of the regression analysis, antecedent variables the second, and reality motives on the third step of the analysis. For *affinity*, days/week of watching reality TV emerged as a positive predictor on the first step of analysis (see Table 3). This predictor maintained its significance on the second step of the analysis as the only predictor of affinity. Once motives were entered on the third step, however, this predictor retained its significance and was joined by the total amount of viewing and all the reality TV viewing motives (reality entertainment, habitual pass time, companionship, relaxation, social interaction) except voyeurism as positive predictors of affinity, in an overall significant equation ($R = .82$, $R^2 = .67$, $F [6, 126] = 14.47$, $p = .000$). These results indicated that the more people watched TV and reality TV for entertainment, relaxation, as a habitual pass time, for companionship, and as a basis for social interaction with others, the more likely they were to develop greater levels of affinity for reality TV programming.

The same hierarchical regression procedure was repeated for *perceived realism*, yielding only one significant predictor, total number of hours of television viewing, but the overall equation was not significant ($R = .50$, $R^2 = .25$, $F [6, 125] = 2.02$, $p = .07$). When regressing *total time of reality TV viewing*, days per week of watching reality TV and total amount of TV viewing naturally emerged as positive predictors of statistical significance. The antecedent variables produced no significant predictors on the second step. On third step of the analysis, reality entertainment emerged as a predictor, and days/per week watching ($R = .75$, $R^2 = .55$, $F [6, 123] = 2.71$, $p = .02$). Therefore, greater exposure to reality TV is linked to appreciation of its entertainment value and a general tendency to just watch television a lot, thus pointing a ritualized orientation toward the medium.

Discussion

Based on the factor analysis results, for this particular population, the mode of engagement with reality TV was rather passive, and designed to fill time when no other activities are available. The habitual statements, however, suggested that this pass

Table 3
Hierarchical Regressions for Affinity and Reality Time

	Affinity		Reality Time (hrs/day)	
	*	F	*	F
Step 1: Days/week watching Reality TV	.62	91.02***	.55	73.63***
Minutes/day watching TV	.10	2.18	.32	24.67***
Step 2: Days/week watching Reality TV	.62	80.63***	.54	67.08***
Minutes/day watching TV	.12	2.82	.33	26.38***
Interpersonal Interaction	.02	.09	-.04	.35
Mobility	-.08	1.35	.01	.01
Life Satisfaction	-.06	.50	-.00	.00
Social Activity	.08	1.18	.10	2.09
Locus of Control	-.06	.63	-.10	2.04
Step 3: Days/week watching Reality TV	.27	14.25***	.43	25.64***
Minutes/day watching TV	.15	7.39**	-.26	20.63***
Interpersonal Interaction	.09	1.83	-.04	.29
Mobility	-.05	.86	.00	.00
Life Satisfaction	-.06	.71	.00	.00
Social Activity	-.00	.00	.05	.45
Locus of Control	-.03	.20	-.13	2.79
Reality TV Entertainment	.36	15.73***	.28	6.88**
Relaxation	.22	8.00**	-.17	3.46
Habitual Pass Time	-.28	18.22***	-.12	2.47
Companionship	.15	4.58*	.00	.00
Social Interaction	.15	3.97*	.16	3.51
Voyeurism	.01	.03	.06	.61

Note: Affinity: $R = .82$, $R^2 = .67$, $F[6, 126] = 14.47$, $p = .000$, Reality Time: $R = .75$, $R^2 = .55$, $F[6, 123] = 2.71$, $p = .02$.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

time activity was integrated into the daily routine of the individual to the point where it became a ritual. This was supported by correlational and regression findings that demonstrated significant and striking relationships between the motive of habitual pass time and affinity with reality TV. The second most salient motive, reality entertainment, captured the appeal of reality content and reality characters. Consistent with previous findings (Jones, 2003; Reiss & Wiltz, 2004), this suggested that viewers were drawn to the novelty and entertainment aspect of the reality genre, especially as it compared with fictional programming.

Viewers valued the entertainment and habitual pass time motives over that of voyeurism, which was fairly surprising, considering that popular folklore frequently describes vicarious living through reality characters as one of the top appeals of reality TV. Still, this does not imply that voyeurism is not present as a motive and possible gratification obtained from watching reality TV; it is present, but not the most important motive. This is consistent with the findings of Nabi et al. (2003), who found that curiosity was not a significant motive for studying reality television, and Reiss and Wiltz (2004), who perceived voyeurism as only a means to attaining fundamental motives. Either voyeurism is not the most popular motive for watching reality TV, or respondents are reluctant to report voyeuristic tendencies on a self-report measure like a survey, for fear that it might be perceived as socially undesirable. Qualitative interviewing can be employed in the future to create an environment within which these questions can be explored.

The canonical correlation findings, in response to the second research question, further illuminated these observations. The first significant root produced indicated that those who perceived reality TV content as more realistic and developed greater affinity for reality TV content were more likely to watch to fulfill entertainment and relaxation needs primarily, as well as social interaction and companionship needs on a secondary level. This implied that in order for people to enjoy reality TV as an entertaining and relaxing medium, they had first to accept the realism of its content and develop a liking for it. Alternatively, those who enjoyed reality TV the most for its entertainment and relaxing value also tended to perceive the meticulously edited and frequently preplanned content of reality interaction as realistic. The second root correlations further suggested that those externally controlled, with low mobility and low levels of interpersonal interaction, were more likely to watch reality TV programming to fulfill voyeuristic and companionship needs. Aligned with previous findings on similar genres, these results point to uses of reality TV as a functional alternative to interpersonal communication channels and experiences. For viewers who used the medium for its voyeuristic appeal and companion value, reality TV substituted for other activities that could not be experienced due to lower mobility and lower interpersonal interaction levels. Moreover, for viewers who found that events in their lives were controlled by others, voyeuristic and companionship motives ranked highly, further supporting the functional alternative uses of participatory media.

Finally, the regression findings investigated the possibility of identifying predictors of amount of reality TV watching, perceived realism, and affinity with reality TV. Affinity with reality TV was related with all the motives except that of voyeurism, which challenges the popular notion that reality TV possesses voyeuristic appeal. For this population, the results indicated that the more people watched TV and reality TV for entertainment, relaxation, as a habitual pass time, for companionship, and as a basis for social interaction with others, the more likely they were to develop greater levels of affinity for reality TV programming. Amount of reality viewing, in this particular model, was predicted by days per week of watching reality, total amount of TV watching, and the reality entertainment TV motive. Therefore, among fans of TV and reality

TV as an entertainment TV medium, amount of reality TV viewing was high. Interpreted further, this could indicate that unless people watch a lot of TV for its entertainment value to begin with, reality TV will not have any additional appeal. In other words, the reality genre is not likely to attract new audiences or lead to high consumption of TV, unless those tendencies are already pronounced.

The regression findings lent support to previous research on the instrumental and ritualized uses of mass media. Specifically, much like in previous studies, habitual uses of reality TV were connected to greater exposure to and greater affinity for the medium of reality television. At the same time, the canonical correlation findings, especially in relation to the first root, suggested a connection between certain uses and both greater affinity and tendency to perceive reality content as realistic. This runs counter to previous research, which tended to associate perceived realism with more instrumental uses, but makes sense in this particular case, because of the nature of the reality genre. Affinity for the reality genre cannot develop unless the audience, to a certain extent, accepts the reality of what is being presented. The uniqueness of the reality genre rests in its ability to adopt the realism of news content with the incredulity of fictional content; and this is reflected in the felt needs and involvement individuals develop toward reality content. Moreover, the particular types of uses associated with greater affinity and perceived realism were entertainment, relaxation, social interaction, and companionship, thus pointing to habitual uses of the medium—specifically habits related to individual and social daily rituals.

While college students were appropriate for study, because they represent a significant percent of the reality viewing audience, future research, of a less exploratory nature, could survey a more representative and larger sample. The reasons people watch reality television might vary for different demographic groups (Gardyn, 2001). In addition, qualitative interviewing or ethnographic study of smaller communities of reality viewers could help understand more complex behavioral tendencies, such as voyeurism or the use of media to complement or substitute for interpersonal channels of communication. Additional future research could focus on specific reality shows or subgenres, since this type of programming is quite diverse and open to many interpretations, motivations, and viewer predispositions.

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