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Cultural Values, Narratives and Myth in Reality Television

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The University of Southern Mississippi

ABSTRACT

CULTURAL VALUES, NARRATIVES AND MYTH IN REALITY TELEVISION

by Alison Rebecca Foster Miller

Alison Rebecca Foster Miller

Abstract of a Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Television programming today consists of many unique genres, many of which have existed since the beginning of television. Reality television is considered a relatively new genre that has become a vital, contributing type of programming since the development of early programs such as *Candid Camera*, *Queen For a Day and I'd Like to See*.

Scholarly research has demonstrated the importance of television programming as a form of cultural transmission within society. Further, scholarly research on reality television programming has investigated the implications of the genre of reality television programming on the broadcasting industry as a whole. This critical analysis recognizes the contribution of research on reality television as a genre, but questions the thoroughness and the limited amount of research to determine the viability of this genre of programming. Additionally, there is limited, if any, research on the values, narratives and myths, which exist within this genre. Thus, this study illustrates how reality television may create, nurture and perpetuate certain ideological positions and value systems within society.

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Television programming today consists of many unique genres, many of which have existed since the birth of television in 1948. Although reality television is considered a relatively new genre of television programming, this genre has proven a vital, contributing type of programming since the development of early programs such as *Candid Camera*, *Queen For a Day* and *I'd Like to See*.

Scholarly research has demonstrated the importance of television programming as a form of cultural transmission within society. Further, scholarly research on reality television programming has investigated the implications of the genre of reality television programming on the broadcasting industry as a whole. This critical analysis recognizes the contribution of research on reality television as a genre, but questions the thoroughness and the limited amount of research to determine the viability of this genre of programming. Additionally, there is limited, if any, research on the values, narratives and myths, which exist within this genre. Thus, this study illustrates how reality television may create, nurture and perpetuate certain ideological positions and value systems within society.

This critical analysis examined a range of reality television programs to reveal values, narratives and myths within the texts and also revealed prevalent ideologies by interpreting the ideological, narrative and mythic structures, which are a part of the television production process. Although many instances are revealed to demonstrate the viability and power of reality television as reflective of dominant positions within society, reality television narratives themselves are not judged to be completely unique as a cultural agent. The study concludes reality television, through elements embedded in the narratives of these programs, depicts preferred positions of the dominant ideology, as well as cultural values and myths, and analysis of the medium of television helps members of society understand how reality television content embodies modern culture. Further, this study found reality television programming to be representative of the dominant ideology, and through realistic depictions of culture and society, reality television was found to be a viable and powerful genre within television programming.

The University of Southern Mississippi

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A Dissertation

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Approved:



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To the Memory of My Grandparents,

Daniel Andrew Johnston, Sr.

and

Ellen Rebecca Cox Johnston

To the Honor of My Children,

Special thanks is also given to my parents and brother, Duany, Andrea, and Matt for their unconditional love and support through my entire college years; to Amber, friend and research confidante, who helped this project come together; to Dr. Tim Hubert, who logged videotape of reality programs; to Lindsey, whose countless hours of babysitting allowed time to write; to David, for love, support and cooking dinner while I worked; and to Austin and Drew, the loves of my life, for support, laughter, and keeping me grounded through the dissertation process.

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CHAPTER I

REALITY TELEVISION EXPOSED

Before television was introduced as a full-scale commercial enterprise in 1948, Arnheim (1935) speculated television had the potential to become a substitute for life itself, to provide experiences through which audiences would be dazzled and beguiled. Though this prediction might seem grim, even humorous, today, the American audience is frequently bombarded by images via television serve as a socializing factor in our culture. Reality television, though not a new phenomenon in American television or popular culture, is one such genre of programming that serves as a form of cultural transmission. Today, there are as many as 200 reality programs available for viewing on network and cable channels. Criticism of reality television grows at a rate almost proportional to the growth of reality programming, as scholars question the role of reality television in the decline of so-called quality television.

However, Rieder (2000) notes that “when an entire nation is riveted by such a spectacle” as *Survivor*, we can learn something about our society (p. 6). One of the central questions arising around reality television is how well this genre of programming mirrors societal values, narratives and myths. There has been little, if any, research on reality television that deals specifically with these questions. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill a void in the literature by examining the cultural values, narratives and myths, which may exist within reality television programming.

What is reality television?

Jagodozinki (2003) defines reality television as the careful video construction displaying “the ‘lives’ of ordinary people engaged in sometimes extraordinary events” (p.

320). Ouellette and Murray (2004) explain reality television as “an unabashedly commercial genre united less by aesthetic rules or certainties than by the fusion of popular entertainment with a self-conscious claim to the discourse of the real” (p. 2). Pecora (2002) explains reality programming as “largely unscripted, though heavily edited, programs” filled with nonprofessional actors, which focus on some element of group dynamics. Reality television is a means by which television programmers attempt to portray a constructed reality, one in which the reality will gratify the needs of the audience, a similar goal of much, if not all, of the programming found on television. Gitlin (1982) notes that the “most popular shows are those that succeed in speaking simultaneously to audiences that diverge in social class, race, gender, region, and ideology. . .appealing to a multiplicity of social types at once” in order to satisfy market demands (p. 248). Further, there is considerable evidence indicating “television plays at least some role in the construction of social reality” (Shapiro & Lang, 1991, p. 685). Fiske and Hartley (1978) assert the more “realistic a program is thought to be, the more trusted, enjoyable - and therefore the more popular - it becomes” (p. 160). Thus, the diverse audience and the depiction of realistic events have caused reality television to enjoy an enduring popularity.

The roots of reality television can actually be linked to the beginnings of television programming. Early television programs, such as *I'd Like to See*, *Candid Camera*, or *Queen For A Day*, placed real people in dramatic situations. Ouellette and Murray (2004) note, “the landmark cinema verite series, *An American Family*...is often cited as the first reality television program” (p. 3). According to McCarthy (2004) the “first-wave of reality television” began in 1948 with the release of *Candid Camera*, with

host and creator Allen Funt often hailed as “reality television’s creative ancestor” (p. 20). Programs such as *Star Search* and *America’s Funniest Home Videos* can also be considered a part of reality television history for their portrayal of amateur talent and mundane activities. Ouellette and Murray (2004) also cite daytime talk programs of the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as *Geraldo Rivera* or *The Jerry Springer Show*, as programs which paved the way for current reality formats by presenting the drama within the lives of real people. Like reality programs, these daytime talk shows, particularly those along the line of *The Jerry Springer Show*, presented material in some way manipulated before presentation to the audience. However, the first modern network to push the limits of realism through programming was the Fox network production of *America’s Most Wanted* and *Cops*.

When the Fox debuted in 1986, the network struggled to gain momentum into competition with the three main broadcasting networks of NBC, ABC, and CBS. Therefore, Abelman (1998) notes, Fox was “most successful in establishing itself in this highly competitive industry by pushing actualism – drama presented realistically – to its limits of realism” (p. 419). *America’s Most Wanted* and *Cops* arrived on the air in 1988 and 1989 respectively. Though both programs were centered on events concerning crime, *America’s Most Wanted* offered only dramatic reenactments of committed crimes, whereas *Cops* placed a cameraperson with a patrol car to tape actual criminals and arrests. *Cops* was the first reality program to utilize production techniques from prime-time drama to depict real-life events that also followed a narrative formula (Abelman, 1998). By the time *The Real World* debuted on MTV in 1991, the groundwork for the exciting narratives and cultural conflicts, hallmarks of the reality format, were already in

place.

Each generation of television programming reflects some element of the major beliefs and values of the time in which it was created. This supposition is evidenced by the popular culture equation, which states, "the popularity of a given cultural element (object, person, event) is directly proportional to the degree to which that element is reflective of audience beliefs and values" (Nachbar & Lause, 1992, p. 5). The higher the level of popularity, whether in that era or over time, is indicative of the level of reflexivity of the era in which it was produced. For example, television programming in the 1950s, known as the decade of conformity, often reflected the myth of family values, in which the nuclear family of four is the most desirable (e.g., *The Donna Reed Show*, *Ozzie and Harriet*). Reality programming today, like the programming of past decades, is a reflection of current audience beliefs and values regarding access, celebrity and the concept of culture as commodity.

According to Rifkin (2000), we live in the age of access, in which the consumer is constantly searching for the right to view, own, or experience as much culture as quickly as possible. Reality television allows viewers to experience or access the lives of others, a "real-life soap opera" (Littleton, 1996, p. 26). *Big Brother*, a reality show entering a seventh season on CBS summer 2006, incorporates a 24-hour web camera, allowing audience members' unlimited access to game participants via the Internet for a small fee. Additionally, reality programming illustrates access by the method in which viewers receive instant gratification from these programs. Jagodozinki (2003) notes reality television has a "particular flavor of 'presence,' of the here and now" (p. 321). Reality television exists in a post-modern society, where television is written in "present

tense...everything is always happening right now" (Gitlin, 1989, p. 57). Gone are the days of waiting patiently for satisfaction on the tube: viewers want to know what is happening at any given moment.

Reality programming is also a reflection of audience beliefs in the virtues of celebrity culture in two different ways. A celebrity can be defined as an individual distinguished by image, a product of the media pushing him or herself into the public spotlight (Boorstin, 1961; Campbell, 1988; Gamson, 1992). In today's society, celebrities are held in high regard, as viewers look to celebrities for guidance on such topics as fashion or relationships. Campbell (1988) asserted society seems to worship celebrities, as people seek to be known and enjoy name and fame themselves. Thompson (2001) stated that, as Americans, we place a "large degree of value and power on celebrity," and Americans have an obsession with their moment in the proverbial media spotlight (p. 22). Warhol's notation of everyone getting fifteen minutes of fame in their lifetime proved remarkably accurate two decades later; Waters (1986) notes becoming famous may be easier than finding employment. The general fascination with instant fame and celebrity, "focused on everyday people who find fame overnight, has been fueled by reality TV" ("The Tribe Has Spoken," 2001, p. 37). Casting calls for reality programming generate response levels in the tens of thousands; *Survivor* alone draws an average 50,000 applicants, while *The Apprentice* logged 215,000 in the first season. Reality program performers often attempt a continuation in show business after their stint in reality programming is over, with the program itself acting as a springboard to stardom. *Survivor: Outback* (2001) cast-off Elizabeth Filarski-Hasselbeck has been a co-host of the ABC morning talk show *The View* since 2003, while *Apprentice* cast-off

Omarosa has been on ten television programs and is debuting a talk show in 2006 (Hamilton, 2005). Plans to launch the Reality Central Network, a 24-hour reality television network, were scheduled for summer 2004, with "over 100 former reality contestants...signed to pitch the network and as on-air talent," though as of early 2006 these plans have not come to fruition ("Network," 2003).

Secondly, American viewers are generally preoccupied with celebrities, where they are, how much they spend, who they are dating or divorcing. It is no surprise that reality programs featuring access to celebrity culture are fairly popular. MTV offers three reality programs granting viewers access to the personal lives of celebrity. *The Osbournes*, which completed its third and final season in 2005, followed the life of rock musician Ozzy Osbourne and his family. *Newlyweds*, featuring pop singer Jessica Simpson and husband/fellow pop star Nick Lachey, documented the trials of the couple as they began life together in a married relationship. The newest member to the celebrity reality show granting viewers access to their private lives is *Til Death Do Us Part: Carmen and Dave*, starring newlyweds Carmen Electra and musician Dave Navarro. VH1 has also contributed to the element of celebrity by offering the viewer *The Surreal Life*, a program in which six celebrities from times past live together and perform random tasks.

Finally, reality television is a reflection of the concept of culture as commodity. Over the course of the past few decades, capitalism has shifted from the industrial production of goods and services to the production of culture. Culture has become a commodity, up for sale to any consumer willing to pay top dollar not for products, but for experiences. According to Fiske and Hartley (1978) "television is one of the most highly

centralized institutions within our culture” due to commercialism, government control and the need for a common center in a highly fragmented society (p. 86). Berger (1995) notes “capitalism, from the perspective of consumer culture theorists, is not simply an economic system, but a kind of culture in which almost everything is subordinated to consumption” (p. 55). The main source of this new trend in capitalism: technology. According to Bogart (1995), “new technology [has] added more than 50% to the consumer’s entertainment and information budget” (p. 267). The digital channel is the method of dissemination to the masses (Rifkin, 2000). Reality television is an example of this new trend in consumer culture in several ways.

First, the marketing of these programs allows viewers to purchase items or souvenirs from the programs; *Survivor* offers t-shirts, handkerchiefs and other gear frequently during each broadcast. The Internet is also a source of merchandise, as this new medium provides a means of instant gratification (e.g., ordering the products immediately). Some reality programs utilize marketing tactics as part of competition between contestants, as in *The Apprentice*. These programs have been criticized for depicting “marketing as a bunch of hyperbolic nonsense brainstormed into existence by teams of cutthroat opportunists who understand the brands they work on only as a means to win the game” (Hardison, 2005).

However, the true illustration of consumer culture occurs in reality programming with the reason many viewers are drawn to the genre: to view the interaction between contestants and watch their experiences. As viewers of reality programming, we buy into the idea that we can live vicariously through the participants; we thrive on knowing every detail of contestants’ experiences, creativity, and imagination. Recent scholarship has

focused on these consumer culture aspects of reality television, investigating not only consumer practices as related to reality television (see Rose & Wood, 2005; Frutkin, 2005; & Hardison, 2005), but also the culture of surveillance and voyeurism (see LeBesco, 2005; Jagodozinki, 2003; Pecora, 2002; and Jonathan, 2004).

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, it is important to identify the various facets of reality television programming. Reality programming can be identified as a genre of television programming, one that stands apart from traditional television formats. In 2001, media experts predicted reality television would meet its demise at the conclusion of the 2001-2002 television season, noting, "over-scheduling tends to lead to overkill" ("The Tribe Has Spoken," 2001). However, diverse American audiences remain riveted to reality television. Part of the appeal of reality programming is the genre includes many sub-genres, which appeal to varying members of the television audience. This research has identified nine major sub-genres of reality programming. However, it is important to understand due to certain elements of the programs, some shows can be classified into other categories. The nine programs selected for analysis are *The Bachelor*, *Wife Swap*, *Survivor*, *The Simple Life*, *The Swan*, *Trading Spaces*, *Trauma: Life in the ER*, *Cops* and *Frontier House*.

The first sub-genre of reality television is Love and Relationship programs. Love and Relationship reality programs have existed in some form since the emergence of *The Dating Game* in the 1960s to the production of *Love Connection* in the late 1980s. The difference today is, whereas viewers never saw the dates on the earlier shows, viewers can now observe the dating ritual onscreen. The dating ritual is outlined in several reality

programs, ranging from nice (e.g., TLC's *A Dating Story*), to naughty (e.g., the WB's *Elimidate*). Marriage reality programs have also made an impression on the reality scene. Unlike their predecessor, *The Newlywed Game*, reality game shows concerning the rite of marriage are far more in-depth and serious. Perhaps the first example of the reality marriage game show was the FOX production of "*Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?*" Though the union between Rick Rockwell and Darva Conger did not last longer than the curtain call, Conger had staying power, posing in *Playboy* and starring in a television movie. However, in the case of the ABC hit program, *The Bachelorette*, Trista Rehn and Ryan Sutter appear to have found true romance, following a two-hour, nationally broadcast prime-time wedding in December 2003. Along the same lines, TLC offers *A Wedding Story*, which documents the weddings of real-life couples. Engstrom (1999) notes *A Wedding Story* helps promote traditional gender roles and consumerism through the display of the marriage ritual.

Family, the second sub-genre of reality programming is closely related to Love and Relationship programs. Whereas Love/Relationship programs focus on achieving romantic involvement with a partner, Family shows are more focused on examining the intricacies of the American family, both traditional and non-traditional. Although previously mentioned as the first reality program, *An American Family* can also be considered the first reality program to focus on Family. The 1973 PBS documentary featured a California family that, during the thirteen-episode run of the program, appeared on magazine covers and television talk shows. The family became "an emblem for the 'American family' of the early 1970s" (Kompere, 2004, 98). The newest versions of this type of programming focuses on raising children. Fox has released *Nanny 911*,

while ABC promotes *Supernanny*. Both of these shows stress the importance of parental control in raising children, as the nannies are called upon to correct misbehavior and delinquencies in the children and parents of each family. Participants in these programs have appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to discuss the transformation in their home lives, courtesy of the nanny. Another example of the Family oriented reality program is the current ABC hit *Wife Swap*. In this program, families are asked to exchange, or swap, members of their family with another who has a completely different lifestyle. For example, a January 2005 episode featured a swap of mothers, with one from southern Louisiana and the other from southern California.

Game and Competition shows dominate the reality format. In these programs, contestants are asked to compete against one another in arduous tasks, often for the reward of a large sum of money, or in some cases, employment. The most popular reality programs in this category are *Survivor*, currently in its twelfth season on CBS, and *The Amazing Race*, also a CBS program and the recipient of two Emmy awards. Both shows pit contestants against each other for a grand prize of one million dollars, with *Survivor* contestants forced to survive in a different environment and *The Amazing Race* contestants racing around the world over the course of two weeks. Interestingly, in both season six and seven of *The Amazing Race*, two sets of contestants are formerly of other reality programs (*Big Brother* and *Survivor*, respectively). Programs ending with a final contestant earning employment or an employment contract are also popular. Examples of these programs are ESPN's *Dream Job*, in which contestants compete for a position on the ESPN anchor desk; *The Apprentice*, an NBC program where competitors vie for a position in the Donald Trump organization; and *American Idol* (Fox) and *Nashville Star*

(USA), competitions where vocalists attempt to win a recording contract.

Celebrity programs are also entering the foray. There are two types of Celebrity reality programs: programs utilizing celebrities as contestants and programs focused on the lives of celebrities. As previously mentioned, some reality programs are created with the sole purpose of allowing viewers access to the lives of celebrities. Other programs falling into this category are *Cribs*, an MTV production which takes the viewer on a tour of celebrity homes; SoapNet's *One Day With...* in which host (and daytime soap star) Wally Kurth spends a day with a daytime soap star from each network; VH1's *Strange Love*, a spin-off from season two of *The Surreal Life* which chronicled the relationship between Bridgitte Nielson (of *Red Sonja* film fame) and rapper Flava Flav, and the Fox program *The Simple Life* featuring wealthy socialites Nicole Ritchie and Paris Hilton completing tasks of ordinary people.

The second type of Celebrity program is one in which celebrities compete as contestants on already established programs. Since some reality programs lose viewers in the second and third seasons of programming once the newness wears away, the producers often take steps to increase viewing numbers. One tactic is to introduce celebrities as contestants. ABC's *The Mole* began losing viewers in its third season, prompting producers to re-create the program using celebrities as contestants.

Interestingly, the majority of reality programs using the celebrity angle choose celebrities who have faded from the limelight. In this way, reality programs serve as a career rejuvenator for celebrities no longer receiving recognition from the press. Networks and cable television seek "minor celebrities and has-beens who come cheap to endure humiliating tests of their mettle" (Raphael, 2004, p. 124). For example, Corbin Bernsen,

formerly of *L.A. Law*, appeared in two editions of *Celebrity Mole*. The career boost allowed Bernsen to move back into mainstream Hollywood, as he enjoyed a stint as a regular cast member on the ABC daytime drama *General Hospital* and now stars in the USA Network hit *Psych*. A viewer's preoccupation with celebrity has led to the development of programming in the fifth sub-genre of reality programming, Plastic/Cosmetic Surgery.

Plastic/Cosmetic Surgery programs are becoming an increasingly popular form of reality television. These programs are devoted to transforming individuals into a new person, molded with surgery to become part of the ideal image. The media, particularly celebrities, contribute to the concept of this ideal image. One program, MTV's *I Want a Famous Face*, utilizes the obsession with celebrity to create a reality show, which features "seven individuals hoping to acquire the face of a pop star" (Turner, 2004, p. 1208). Each contestant undergoes a series of plastic surgeries in order to become the celebrity they most admire. On the debut program in March 2004, one contestant, an aspiring model named Sha, received breast and lip implants and underwent liposuction to look more like Pamela Anderson. Fox also offers reality programming focused on surgery, introducing *The Swan* in April 2004. *The Swan* chose contestants to participate in a three-month program of a strict diet, exercise, and psychological counseling, all coupled with multiple surgical procedures. Page (2005) describes *The Swan* as "a grotesque show in which women unhappy with their physical appearance volunteer as 'ugly ducklings' eligible to be transformed...before viewers into a beautiful human being" (p. 3). Other programs falling into this category are TLC's *What Not to Wear* and *A Makeover Story*. Though these programs do not involve actual surgery, the programs

still require an individual to undergo a body or image transformation.

Transformation via reality programming is also present in Home/Interior Design programs. This sub-genre of reality programming includes programs such as TLC's *Trading Spaces* or ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. Though home improvement programs of the do-it-yourself variety are not new to television programming, these reality programs offer the homeowner an opportunity to participate in the transformation process. *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, featuring Ty Pennington (carpenter for *Trading Spaces*) as host, rebuilds the hopes and dreams of American families who are in dire need of improved living arrangements. *Three Wishes*, a NBC program debuting in fall 2005, is built on the same premise, with host Amy Grant bringing hope and joy to various families in need. The selection of guests for these programs is dependent upon a great need, such as homelessness, loss of home due to fire, or loss of employment, whereas participants on *Trading Spaces* are on the program for a change to an existing home (there is no stress on need on this program.).

Medical reality programs, such as TLC's *Trauma: Life in the E.R.* and *Maternity Ward*, are the seventh sub-genre of reality programming. Throughout television history, medical melodrama has attempted to address social issues and present the inner workings of the hospital in an honest manner (Himmelstein, 1994). Medical reality shows, specifically those programs depicting the miracles of life and death (e.g., birth), also strive to make clear the importance of technology in the field of medicine in an honest manner in front of the cameras.

Reality programming which focuses on Police and Crime, specifically the program *Cops*, are considered the breakthrough reality programs. First debuting on Fox Network in

1989, *Cops* is the longest running reality program to date, with new episodes airing on *Court TV* and Fox. Other programs were soon to follow the lead of *Cops*, with such creations as *Real Stories of the Highway Patrol*, *Police Videos*, and *Emergency Call* all part of the initial reality programming boom. These shows focus on the capture of criminals by putting "the viewers as close to being a cop as possible, to let them experience what a cop experiences" (Littleton, 1996, p. 27). Himmelstein (1994) notes police melodrama often provides viewers with "an interesting ideological perspective...what was to be valued above all was the maintenance of order;" whether it was maintained through police work or vigilante justice was of no consequence, as it was all acceptable (p. 210). Newer programs which fit into this sub-genre of reality television are those focusing on the court systems. *The People's Court* is the prototype to this latest craze in reality television, where shows entitled *Judge Judy* and *Divorce Court* examine disputes between family and friends, often using the actual participants during filming of the court case.

The final sub-genre of reality programming can be identified as Rural Simplicity. These programs can fall into one of two types, historical programs (e.g., the PBS program *The 1900 House*), or programs which illustrate getting back to the basic ruggedness of everyday American life (e.g., *The Simple Life*). Historical programs are most often filmed on locations reflective of a historical period in our society. For example, *Pioneer House* films participant families engaging in a pioneer experience set in 1880s Montana. In the case of *The Simple Life*, celebrity Paris Hilton removes herself from the extravagant lifestyle to which she is accustomed in order to work in a normal occupation.

Interestingly, as fascinated as our culture has become with the rich and famous, the rich and famous living among everyday, average Americans equally intrigues society.

Methodology

How does reality television function as a form of cultural transmission in regards to values, narratives, and myths? What are the dominant cultural values presented to the audience in reality television programming? What cultural myths can be identified in reality television? How does the narrative of these programs contribute to or represent cultural values, beliefs and attitudes? This study will look at the various types of reality programming to determine if this programming contributes to the mainstream views of society and culture. The study assumes that reality television is not an all encompassing genre, but rather a genre of programming that can be divided into varying subsections. A majority of the reviewed literature focuses on the basic assumptions of reality television. There is a void in the literature regarding if this type of programming is reflective of society. The current study seeks to critically analyze how reality television programming reflects culture and society by examining the values, narratives and myths within the genre of reality television.

The study analyzes television texts from a critical perspective including ideological, value, narrative and myth analyses to illustrate how reality television programming reflects cultural values and myths. Further, the values, narratives and myths will be analyzed to illustrate how the stories within reality programming are reflective of the dominant ideology.

Anderson and Meyer (1988) note “qualitative research methods are distinguished from quantitative methods in that they do not rest their evidence on the logic of

mathematics, the principle of numbers, or the methods of statistical analysis” (p. 247).

Rather, qualitative methods utilize the logic of discovery and interpretation to analyze some form of a text. According to Lindlof (1995), there are four key characteristics of qualitative study: “as a theoretical interest in human interpretational processes, all are concerned with the study of socially situated human action and artifacts, all use human investigators as the primary research instruments, and all rely primarily on narrative forms for coding data and writing the texts to be presented to audiences” (p. 22).

Qualitative studies call for the researcher to identify the object of study, or text, which will be used for interpretation. Lindlof (1995) asserts a text’s significance is derived from its relationships to other signs or sign systems, and the burden of the researcher to select a specific artifact for study is of great importance. Textual analysis enables the researcher to look beyond the interpretation already exists in a text, and allows the researcher to penetrate the latent meanings found within (Hall, 1980).

Textual analysis also allows the researcher the opportunity to review the selected artifacts to discover and examine themes and elements presented to the audience or consumer. According to Lindlof (1995), textual analysis is an appropriate method for analyzing television programming for this purpose. Newcomb and Hirsch (1987) note for textual analysis to be effective in television analysis and criticism, the researcher must view television as both a “communications medium, central to contemporary society,” as well as a medium which utilizes story-telling functions to unite and examine a culture (p. 455). In order for television to succeed as a popular medium, the texts must contain messages, which appeal to a wide, diverse audience who can internalize the meanings based on their membership within various cultures in society (Fiske, 1986). Thus, to be

successful, the producers of reality programming should ensure these programs are diverse enough to reach a mass audience, yet also conform to the standards of the dominant ideology.

Though Chapter III will offer a more in-depth analysis of ideology and ideological criticism, the ideological critic must remember four main principles when conducting ideological criticism (Sillars, 1991). First, ideological analysis is judgmental in nature and can be added to any other critical approach (e.g. value analysis, narrative analysis), which may contain sources of ideological judgments. Second, ideological analysis, as well as the ideological critic, acknowledges a political point-of-view because this type of criticism examines relationships between messages, society and power. Third, ideological analysis requires extensive historical analysis beyond the text in order to determine context and meaning. It is impossible to understand the textual or cultural artifact without placing these objects within a historical and/or cultural framework. Finally, all four elements of Rosenfeld's "anatomy of critical discourse" (source, message, environment, critic) are utilized in ideological analysis, an element creating a unique tool for criticism (1968). Gross (1985) points out ideological studies are intrinsically linked with values, noting "values are articulations or components of those dominant, at times powerful, ideologies" (p. 27).

Thus, value analysis is also an important tool in analyzing texts. Specifically, value analysis "allows the critic to focus on messages beneath the surface of many other program elements" (Sandeen, 1997, p. 81). Further, television programs themselves are considered texts emerge from dominant cultural values, ideas and beliefs (Williams, 1974). Value analysis has been conducted on a variety of television programming. In

1984, Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, and Grube conducted a study in which the researchers developed a program known as The Great American Values Test. Participants were shown survey data related to American values, and were then asked to confront their own values for internal consistency after viewing a 30-minute production regarding values of the American people in general and hosted by two celebrities without compensation. Based on the results of this experiment, Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, and Grube (1984) found even a 30-minute exposure to television programming could significantly impact the beliefs and behaviors of large numbers of people for an undetermined time period.

In a longitudinal study spanning twenty-five years of television, Chesebro (2003) found television programming, specifically prime time television series, functions as communication systems containing values "that promote certain life orientations and not others" (p. 409). Utilizing 1985 broadcasts from the news program *PM Magazine*, Sandeen conducted a value analysis to determine the value systems prevalent in the program. Sandeen (1997) found the dominant value system present in the program was one of personal success, which in 1985 reflected the 1980s cultural trends of materialism and capital gain. Therefore it can be assumed that the context of the programming can, in part, help determine the base value system presented in television programming.

Utilizing the framework of American values presented by Bearden, Netemeyer, and Mobley (1993), this study will analyze the various sub-genres of reality programming to identify how these following values are presented: achievement, activity, collectivism, competence, competitiveness, conformity, culture, democracy, dominance, efficiency, equality, family orientation, freedom, generosity, idealism, imagination, independence, individualism, intelligence, materialism, morality, optimism, patriotism,

peace, progress, rationality, responsibility, sociality, and the work ethic. Although the literature suggests values such as the above list are found within media content, in reality, more values may be discovered which are not found in Bearden et al. Sillars (1991) delineates four methods for identifying values and value systems within a cultural text: positive terms, negative terms, values implied in beliefs and formal indicators (p. 143). Bearden, Netemeyer, and Mobley (1993) and Sillars (1991) were utilized as a working guide from which to begin the value analysis; however, more implicit values were discovered in the ideological and value analysis.

Narrative analysis is also useful in media studies to identify the cultural implications of television programming. Narratology, or narrative theory, was developed in the early 1920s with the work of Soviet Union scholars such as Vladimir Propp. Since that time, narrative theory has been utilized in a vast array of textual criticism across diverse fields and disciplines. Narrative studies have been conducted on a wide variety of television formats, including soap operas (see Allen, 1985, 1992a), news (see Baym, 2000), and dramas (see Cummins-Gauthier, 1999; Deming, 1985; Kackman, 1998; Porter, Larson, Hathcock, & Berg-Nellis, 2002). Narrative analysis is also closely linked with mythic analysis. Sillars (1991) notes, "narrative analysis emphasizes the users of stories and the culture revealed in their understanding of symbols" (p. 150). Kozloff (1992) asserts narrative structure on television programming serves as a "portal or grid through which non-narrative television must pass" (p. 69). According to Sillars (1991), there are three main assumptions regarding narrative analysis. First, humans make sense of the world around them by the stories the culture generates. Secondly, narrative acts as a vital source of information to the members of society and provides a forum for

interpretive discourse. Finally, narratives can act as symbolism, which can create social reality. Thus, examining the narratives of reality television programming can provide insight into their impact on culture and society.

Five elements of narrative can be examined in reality programming. The first element is theme, or the underlying stories found within the main narrative discourse. Themes can offer clues to the cultures found within reality programming, and these themes might vary across sub-genre. The second element of the narrative is the structure, or the format that these programs follow (e.g. beginning, middle, end). Abelman (1998) notes although each genre of television programming contains fundamental differences, each program follows basic storytelling structure. There are five steps to basic narrative structure: status quo, pollution, guilt, redemption and purification. Status quo refers to the state of normalcy found within each program, as in each episode begins with the same theme music, introduction of characters, and so forth (Abelman, 1998, p. 55). Following the traditional introduction, something interesting or extraordinary will happen. This pollution disrupts the status quo, thereby engaging the audience and enhancing the narrative. Guilt occurs when the characters attempt to reach a resolution for the conflict, ending in redemption when the solution is reached within the narrative. Purification is attained when the narrative reverses back to the original status quo found at the beginning of the episode.

The third narrative element to examine is the characters. As reality programming is heavily edited and offers scripted scenarios, the characters chosen to participate in these programs are reflective of a diverse cross-section of American society. Chesebro (1987) identifies five categories of characters most often found within any narrative:

mimetic, ironic, leader-centered, romantic and mythical. Mimetic characters are portrayed as one of us, equal members of society and equal to the audience. They often share a common set of values, skills and perceptions of reality as everyday people. Ironic characters “unintentionally articulate, defend and represent positions inconsistent with other characters and known events in the course of the program or the world at large” (Abelman, 1998, p. 56). Leader-centered characters exhibit authority and control, and are portrayed as more intelligent than the average person, often quickly emerging as leaders within a particular group. Romantic characters are also perceived as more intelligent and possessing of leadership, however, they appear more natural in their ability to symbolize bravery and heroics. Finally, mythical characters are not only superior in intelligence and their ability to control environments, they also possess inhuman or god-like qualities.

Peripeteia, or the reversal of fortune, is also an element of narrative. This is indicated by a shift in the momentum of the narrative. For example, as *Survivor* participants are voted off, sometimes in a surprise vote, the strategy of the game will shift as alliances are eliminated or reformed. The final element of narrative for analysis is narrative voice, or who tells the story. In some instances, reality programs utilize a host or narrator to tell the audience what has passed previously on the program and what to expect in upcoming events. However, in the majority of the programs, the contestants themselves are woven into the narrative in their own voice. For example, the CBS summer hit *Big Brother* utilizes video diaries, in which contestants are required to spend a set amount of time recording their own thoughts and strategies regarding the game in a secluded diary room. *Survivor* will also pull castaways to the side at random to divulge tribe secrets. Interestingly, participants who are voted off early or who do not draw a

large fan base often blame these experiences on their lack of airtime through the narrative voice.

As previously noted, narrative analysis is closely linked with myth analysis.

Malinowski (1961) notes "myth is a body of narratives woven into culture which dictates belief, defines ritual, and acts as a chart of the social order" (Breen & Corcoran, 1982, p. 128). Myths imply a sense of order to chaos, and speak to us of traditions and norms.

Nachbar and Lause (1992) define myths as "bedrock cultural beliefs, which provide the foundation of a mind-set" (p. 85). Barthes described myths as "insidious vehicles employed to consolidate the power of the dominant" class (Himmelstein, 1994, p. 10).

Within popular culture, myths are often reflections of the dominant ideology, thus Barthes' notion of the dominant class utilizing myth to exert power over the lower classes may hold some ring of truth.

Breen and Corcoran (1982) identify four functions of myth in regards to television programming. First, as television is a pervasive form of communication in our society, the myths found within programming function as a perceptual model of society in which programming encodes the culture's dominant modes of perception in its coverage of both familiar and unfamiliar situations. For example, news programming is often structured to meet the needs of audience perception. This is particularly evident in times of struggle or crisis, such as war, when the dichotomy of good and evil is prevalent in news coverage (see Said, 1981).

Secondly, myth performs as an exemplary model in which viewers of programming can learn patterns of behavior and cultural norms. In this manner, myth is closely linked with ideology, as formal cultural institutions such as education and religion

are displayed for the viewer. Further, fictional programming also indicates ideology in that television relies on a serial or genre format within programming. Breen and Corcoran (1982) note comparing episodes within a program can illustrate how myths are persistently presented to the viewers. For example, when a genre of programming is examined as a whole and in parts, the ideologies and myths of the program become more evident.

The third function myth performs is one of presenting conflict and mediation to the viewer. These contestations and resolutions can be between individuals, cultures, or within groups and cultures. Levi-Strauss (1963) proposed that the principle components within myth, such as characters or events, always stand in opposition to one another, and the resolution occurs within the narrative of the programming. Claus (1976) conducted a myth analysis of *Star Trek* and discovered that a majority of episodes were based on the opposition between good (e.g. the Federation) and evil (e.g. an opposing alien nation).

Finally, myths are a part of the reification of culture, meaning that myths are part of the cultural foundation and help to create a reality for said culture. Myths help to create a harmony or balance with history, as in some historical events are lost in time, whereas dominant myths such as the narrative of George Washington and the cherry tree remain intact throughout history. Viewers are innocent consumers of myth, and audience members read myths as facts rather than culturally constructed images of reality (Breen & Corcoran, 1982). Geertz (1973) refers to this process as semantic tension, when tension is created between members of society over the meanings of myth in the cultural system after a dominant myth has been challenged (a rare occurrence in our society).

As reality television is a long-withstanding genre of television programming, the

programs selected for this analysis were chosen based on their length of running time on network television. Syndicated reality programs running on cable channels were also taken into consideration. One program from each sub-genre was selected based on these criteria. Five episodes from the oft run program were analyzed for a total of 45 programs. The programs analyzed were taped or acquired during the spring of 2006 from broadcast network, off-network, syndication, or DVD collections of the program by season when available. The programs were reviewed by the researcher before analysis and information from each program across the categories of ideology, values, narratives and myth were placed into tables. Certain portions of the program episodes were transcribed for illustration purposes.

The shows selected for analysis within each sub-genre are: *The Bachelor* (Love and Relationships); *Wife Swap* (Family); *Survivor* (Game and Competition); *The Simple Life* (Celebrity); *The Swan* (Plastic/Cosmetic Surgery); *Trading Spaces* (Transformation); *Trauma: Life in the E.R.* (Medical); *Cops* (Crime); and *Frontier House* (Rugged Individualism). Table 1 provides a listing of exact episodes for each program analyzed in this study.

The Bachelor, which recently completed its eighth season on ABC, places 25 single women in competition for the affection of one eligible bachelor. The women are then weeded out in a process known as the Rose Ceremony, in which the bachelor decides which women remain in the quest for romance and the possibility of engagement for marriage. As the bachelor decreases the number of women to the final four, the competition evolves to include one-on-one dates and meeting the families of the women in their respective hometowns.

Table 1
List of Programs Analyzed

Program <i>known</i>)	Season	Episode Number	Title (if any)	Original Air Date (if
The Swan	1	1	"Kelly and Rachel"	4/7/2004
The Swan	1	4	"Beth and Kathy"	4/26/2004
The Swan	2	1	"Jennifer and Kimberly"	10/25/2004
The Swan	2	3	"Erica and Christina"	11/8/2004
The Swan	2	6	"Delisa and Lorraine"	11/29/2004
Trauma: Life in the ER	3	4	"Going the Distance"	9/1998
Trauma: Life in the ER	3	5	"Loss of Innocence"	9/1998
Trauma: Life in the ER	4	4	"Friendly Fire"	1999
Trauma: Life in the ER	6	2	"Trick or Trauma: Las Vegas"	2002
Trauma: Life in the ER	5	5	"Last Exit to Oakland"	2000
Trading Spaces	3	N/A	"Boston: Ashford St."	2000
Trading Spaces	7	N/A	"Charleston"	2005
Trading Spaces	3	N/A	"Seattle"	2000
Trading Spaces	5	N/A	"New Orleans: Freret St."	2004
Trading Spaces	6	N/A	"Scott Air Force Base"	2003
WifeSwap	3	1	"Martincaks/Schachtners"	2006
WifeSwap	2	10	"Johnsons/Thompsons"	2005
WifeSwap	3	3	"Askems/Thompsons"	2006
WifeSwap	3	4	"Rays/Aguirres"	2006
WifeSwap	3	12	"Stonerocks/Finleys"	2006

(continued on following page)

Table 1 continued
List of Programs Analyzed

Program	Season	Episode Number	Title (if any)	Original Air Date (if known)
Frontier House	1	1	"The American Dream"	4/2002
Frontier House	1	2	"The Promised Land"	4/2002
Frontier House	1	3	"'Til Death Do Us Part"	4/2002
Frontier House	1	4	"Survival"	4/2002
Frontier House	1	5	"A Family Affair"	4/2002
The Bachelor	8	7	"The Bachelor Goes to Paris,8-7"	2006
The Bachelor	8	1	"The Bachelor Goes to Paris,8-1"	2006
The Bachelor	8	3	"The Bachelor Goes to Paris8-3"	2006
The Bachelor	1	1	"The Bachelor,1-1"	2003
The Bachelor	1	3	"The Bachelor,1-3"	2003
Cops	12	N/A	"Albuquerque"	2000
Cops	12	N/A	"Tucson"	2000
Cops	16	N/A	"Palm Springs"	2004
Cops	16	N/A	"Coast to Coast"	2004
Cops	9	N/A	"San Antonio"	1997

(continued on following page)

Table 1 continued
List of Programs Analyzed

Program	Season	Episode Number	Title (if any)	Original Air Date (if known)
Survivor	1	1	"Borneo: Day 1"	2000
Survivor	7	1	"Pearl Islands: Day 1"	2004
Survivor	12	7	"Exile Island: Day 19"	2006
Survivor	1	13	"Borneo: Finale"	2000
Survivor	7	5	"Pearl Islands: Day 13"	2004
The Simple Life	1	5	"Louisiana"	2004
The Simple Life	1	1	"Leaving Miami Beach"	2004
The Simple Life	2	3	"Interns: Airline"	2004
The Simple Life	1	6	"Texas"	2004
The Simple Life	3	8	"Finale: The Monkeys"	2005

Wife Swap also airs on ABC and is currently in its third network season. *Wife Swap* debuted in the United States in September 2004, however, the program first gained popularity on British television. The program allows families to experience a swap in their daily routines by sending one wife from each family to live with the other family for two weeks. For the first week, the participants must follow rules and guidelines developed by the vacating wife. However, during the second week, the new wife is allowed the opportunity to create a new set of household rules and regulations for their new family. In the first season of *Wife Swap*, the new members of the family were allowed to choose how the family spent a gift of \$50,000; however, this practice was eliminated in the second and third season of the program.

Survivor is one of the most popular reality programs still currently airing new episodes. Currently in its fourteenth season on CBS, *Survivor* sends sixteen castaways to a remote location where they compete to earn the title of sole survivor. The goal of the game is to "outwit, outlast, outplay" the competition to make it to the final two, where a jury of evicted castaways will vote to decide who earns one million dollars.

The Simple Life, starring celebrities Paris Hilton and Nicole Ritchie, aired its first three seasons on the Fox network. The fourth season of this program debuted in April 2006 on E! Network. Each season of *The Simple Life* places Paris and Nicole in different ordinary activities. For example, the theme of the first season was Paris and Nicole experiencing life in rural America, whereas season two placed the women as interns for various companies across the nation.

The Swan, a Fox network production, aired for only two seasons. Two contestants were selected to participate in each episode, undergoing extensive cosmetic procedures. In addition to the medical transformation, contestants also participated in psychological treatments (such as counseling or therapy), weight loss programs, and etiquette training. At the end of the three-month transformation period, during which contestants were not allowed access to a mirror or have contact with loved ones, the contestants were reintroduced to society as their new selves. The judges would then vote on which contestant had undergone the more dramatic makeover, with the winner moving ahead in the competition to participate in the beauty pageant to be held at the end of the season.

Trading Spaces debuted on the cable network TLC in 1996. This program allows two families to trade houses for two days of renovations. In the early seasons of this program, participants were allowed a \$1,000 budget by the producers to transform each other's homes. However, in later seasons, the participants received a bonus \$1,000 if they chose the bonus room, or the room in the opposing home which needed the most renovations. The participants are not allowed to see the renovations in their home during the competition, and the homeowners work with a designer and a carpenter to ensure quality workmanship.

Trauma: Life in the ER, a TLC production in conjunction with The Discovery Health Channel, examines the emergency rooms of different American cities as they receive critical patients. The viewer is then allowed to follow the doctors and nurses as they fervently use any available technological advances to save the life of the patient. Though early medical reality programs focused on "re-enactments...with doctors who

recounted stories of how they handled cases," recent medical reality programming filmed live footage at hospitals, often receiving consent to release the footage from the patients after they have been discharged (Stanley, 1997, p. 28). The use of real footage and no professional actors could possibly increase the viewer's belief in the program's depiction of social reality.

Cops is the longest running reality program currently still in production. As previously noted, *Cops* debuted on Fox in 1989. Police officers from select cities in the United States are paired with camera crews in order to capture the justice system at work. New episodes of *Cops* are aired on the Fox and Court TV networks and on the cable network Spike TV through syndication.

The Frontier House placed three family groups in the setting of the Wild West, living as frontier men and women in 1883 Montana. The goal of *Frontier House* was to test the limits of the modern family by placing them in a technologically disadvantaged location, with activities ranging from building their own home to catching food, all while producers measured the success of each group against the other.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Although qualitative research has gone through much debate as an authentic and justifiable means of communication research, qualitative methods are commonly used to analyze texts, specifically paying attention to original form and context. Qualitative, or critical, analysis may incorporate a variety of methodologies, such as semiotics, structuralism, narrative analysis, or formal criticism. Ideological analysis is concerned with ways or how cultural artifacts produce knowledge and position for viewers or readers. The verbal and visual systems revealing the ideology of a culture cannot be divorced from the material conditions of the society. Since ideological analysis is utilized in this study, it is necessary to trace the historical implications of the ideological approach, as well as determine how ideological criticism is useful in studying media texts.

According to Larrain (1994), the concept of ideology was “born in the context of the early bourgeois struggles against feudalism and the traditional aristocratic society” (p. 9). During the Enlightenment, the term ideology emerged, conceptually as a science of ideas embracing reason as the highest order. There is some debate as to which scholar originated the term in the seventeenth century. According to Mark (1973), French philosopher DeStutt de Tracy was responsible for developing the terminology during the Enlightenment, while other gives credit for the term to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology* (Thompson, 1984; Williams, 1983).

In the most recent use of the term in media studies, ideology refers to a system of beliefs, values and behaviors that have a dominant position in society (Casey, et al.,

2002). The Marxist concept of ideology is a system of illusory beliefs, also referred to as a “false consciousness” (Haque, 2003). Marx and Engels (1976) referred to dominant ideology as “ruling ideas...the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships...” (p. 60). The ideas of the dominant class are viewed and accepted as natural and normal, and the ruling class are the dominant producers of ideas, as well as the main distributors of those dominant ideas and concepts. Marxist ideology perpetuates the notion knowledge is class based, with lower or working classes receiving less information than higher classes. Further, the information is limited to those views the dominant class disseminates within the media or along other channels. This dissemination is based on the Marxist concept of production within a given culture.

According to Marx, the core elements of a culture are determined by the modes of production within that society (Casey et al., 2002). All society’s institutions, whether political, educational, legal or cultural, can be placed with the base/superstructure model. The base consists of the modes and means of production, whereas the superstructure contains the ideas and values of the culture. The base can significantly impact the superstructure, as changes within the base “affect all other changes in society, the entire culture, above all, of the ideas, institutions, values, religion” (Gross, 1985, p. 31). For example, media is dependent upon the context of production, and thus is considered part of the superstructure. Television programming in the 1950s (e.g. *The Donna Reed Show*) was indicative of a particular era in society. As the basic modes of production within society changed (i.e., women entering the workforce in record numbers), the face of programming also began to shift. By the 1970s, the ideologies of some network programs were becoming more focused on the independence of women (e.g. *Maude*).

In the 1930s, the Marxist concept of ideology and culture being linked by economic determinism was supported by a group of German and American scholars known as The Frankfurt School. These scholars extended the Marxist assumption mass media and other structures are grounded in economics and capitalist enterprise, yet stressed culture was the most important facet of the argument. Real culture within capitalist societies was replaced with a "false" sense of culture, vulgar commodities created to "ideologically ensnare and hypnotize the masses" (Casey et al., 2002, p. 130). Further, some scholars extended this argument, noting, in true Marxist fashion, "the mass media are a powerful ideological weapon for holding the mass people in voluntary submission to capitalism (see McQuail, 1977; Marcuse, 1964; Miliband, 1969). Many scholars supported this definition of ideology, however, some questioned the authenticity of an argument virtually ignored the individual member of society, or in the case of the media, the individual audience member. Scholarship emerged to question this reading of ideology, namely a French Marxist by the name of Louis Althusser.

Althusser (1971) refined the Marxist view of ideology and noted rather than the dominant classes imposing ideas on lower classes, ideology is a dynamic process in which all classes participate. Althusser divided ideology into two parts: a theory of general ideology and a theory of particular ideologies. General ideology is intended to "reproduce relations of production and to secure cohesion of social totality" (Larrain, 1994). Society contains concrete and historical ideology. In this sense, people in society are exploited subjects who are forced to accept the "particular ideologies" of the dominant class. Therefore, Althusser argues there are various ideological tendencies at work in society, both dominant and dominated. Dominated ideologies are can be

expressed by the subordinate classes, but are often suppressed by the dominant ideology of society.

Haque (2003) asserts Althusser's view of ideology is often considered more effective because it asserts all members of society are constantly reproducing ideologies in social and cultural practices. However, criticism of Althusser's views in the 1970s led Althusser to retract some concepts and expand the argument to include ideological state apparatuses and repressive state apparatuses. Ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) which include social institutions such as family, educational systems, religion and media, produce in individuals the values and tendencies to think and act in ways which are socially acceptable; repressive state apparatuses (RSAs) operate within society through the use of force (e.g., military or police) (Stevenson, 2002). Further, Althusser argued against the classic Marxist view of production as a base for societal structure; Althusser proposed society is actually created and maintained through relationships between economic, political and ideological systems in which individuals discover their place in society.

Althusser's inclusion of the autonomy of the individual within society is distinctive as such all systems of representation (e.g. myth, values, language) help to shape each individual and their place in society. Further, individuals possess the ability to choose systems with which to interact, as well as the ability to respond to systems. According to White (1992), because Althusser's definition of ideology is inclusive of both systems of representation and the individual's relationship to society and societal institutions, this version of ideology is useful to the study of television as it represents a "system of representation through which individuals experience and understand their

world" (p. 170).

Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci further expanded upon the concept of ideology by developing the idea of hegemony. Hegemony is the mechanism by which the dominant class maintains control in society by propagating news and ideas on society and society accepting them. Corcoran (1987) asserts "hegemony implies the active engagement of individuals with the ideology of the dominant sectors of society and therefore active cooperation in their own domination" (p.548). The hegemony model views media and culture as a terrain of an ever shifting and evolving hegemony in which consensus is forged around competing ruling-class political positions, values and views of the world (White, 1992). This version of the media allows other views the opportunity to be presented, however, the dominant perspectives will win out the majority of the time in media decisions. Hegemonic relationships are based on class, and therefore based on culture. Without culture, there are no class relationships and, therefore, no grounds for contesting, negotiating, or resisting hegemony. Casey et al. (2002) point out Gramsci's work is emphatic that hegemonic ideology cannot be assumed, and is always won and re-won when faced with opposition from subordinate groups. Therefore, hegemony must be regarded as grounded in a constant state of tension and contradiction. According to Hall (1996), ideology and hegemony do not imply a single dominant ideology, but "a complex field of competing ideas which have points of separation and break as well as those of juncture; in short, an ideological complex, ensemble or discursive formation" (p. 434). For example, successful television programming must accomplish two goals concurrently: win support from the audience and propose ideological views which do not threaten the status quo (Casey et al, 2002).

Ideology, Values and Culture

According to Blumler and Katz (1974) mass media are cultural institutions serving social and psychological functions and can evoke longitudinal effects on participants or viewers. Nelson (1975) notes television is a strong socialization agent, capable of stimulating broad questions of public values by conveying a sense of reality and personal involvement. Sanders and Atwood (1979) posit a single communication event along a channel does not have as much potential to influence, motivate or reinforce value systems. Haque (2003) notes a basic function of the mass media is to reinforce existing cultural values, through a combination of "themes, characters, and personalities in fictional and reality-based media content" (p. 380). The longevity of reality television suggests this programming has the potential to enact long-term value and attitude change. Before exploring how television programming has the potential to impact individuals through value change, the concept of values must first be defined.

Ideology and ideological analysis is intrinsically linked with values and culture. Gross (1985) asserts idea systems and values cannot be separated, and together, "ideas and values have a major relevance in shaping and initiating our history" (p. xxvi). Gross also identifies three social functions of values. First, values are integrative, as they serve to merge idea systems and groups into "collective representations of society" (Durkheim, 1961). These representations appear in various forms, such as social control or symbol systems. Secondly, values are regulatory and directive by setting standards and norms of conduct within established social groups. Finally, values can act a motivating factor for individual and social action.

Rokeach (1970) defines a value as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of

conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p. 5). Each individual has a core value system, which consists of only a dozen values, arranged in hierarchical form in terms of importance. Within all the research on values and value systems, researchers have identified two distinct types of values: terminal and instrumental. Terminal values are those values that delineate an end state of existence, such as justice or world peace. Instrumental values reflect modes of behavior, such as honesty.

The order of importance of these values can change over time and from individual to individual, yet no new values have been added to the 36 core values identified by the 1968 publication of the Rokeach Value Survey. Whereas beliefs and attitudes are somewhat easier to influence, value systems remain stable and more enduring. Williams (1970) found American values had changed little from 1950 to 1970. According to a 1988 longitudinal study by Kahle, Poulos, and Sukhdial, Americans were consistent with their evaluation of societal values over a ten-year period. The most recent compilation of values and value systems is found in the research of Bearden, Netemeyer, and Mobley (1993), which analyzed American values from 1962 to 1990, and found 30 values to be most prominent in American society. Within American culture, scholars have identified six prominent value systems (Sillars, 1991).

The first value system identified by Sillars (1991) is the Puritan-pioneer value system. This value system is closely linked with the myth of individualism, yet as a member of society we have an obligation to also consider those around us. Further, members of society must be prepared to succeed and fail while understanding the

limitations of their individual abilities. Positive values in this system include hard work, selflessness, and frugality; this value system views frivolous activities as a waste of time.

The Enlightenment value system is the second value system identified by Sillars (1991). During the Enlightenment, rational thought and individuality became valued more than the collective thought of society. Haque (2003) notes the Enlightenment value system supports a nationalist ideology, which utilizes the mass media as a solution to socio-economic problems within culture. Accordingly, the Progressive value system is linked directly to the Enlightenment value system, as the rational thought of the individual leads to progress within society. Though the progressive value system is not utilized as often, the idea of progress is still highly regarded in western cultures. Sillars (1991) notes positive terms associated with the progressive value system are change, modernity, and the future; negative terms associated with this system are regression and old-fashioned.

According to Sillars (1991), the transcendental value system also developed out of the Enlightenment tradition; however, transcendentalism rejects the emphasis on individual reason. Rather, individuals possess intuition and other means of acquiring or developing knowledge than reason alone. Haque (2003) asserts the transcendental value system is supported by the supposition intuition and natural laws govern the universe. Transcendentalism is defined by a natural simplicity, a return to truth, a sensitivity for fellow individuals, and is usually found to be a value system supported by younger individuals which might focus more on intellectualism.

The final two values systems seem almost at odds within American culture. The personal success value system is the value system focusing most on personal values, or

the individual happiness which one can attain in society. Americans place high importance on personal values, particularly as they relate to individual achievement and success (e.g. materialism) (Sillars, 1991). On the other hand, the collectivist value system upholds the virtues and values of community over the needs and wants of the individual. Collective action is lauded, particularly as it relates to the control of greed and excess within mass society (Sillars, 1991).

Culture and Narrative

The term culture in itself is a widely debated concept within society. The most general definition of culture is “the total range of human action which is socially rather than biologically transmitted” (Casey et al., 2002). Silverstone (1988) defines culture as a “coherent set of values, beliefs, and practices that have an identifiable social location,” linked to ideology in that culture will not exist without the formation of power distinctions (p. 22). Hall (1996) refers to culture as the shared representations and practices within a society as a whole, a definition which places culture as a collective term with emphasis on shared meaning. Sillars (1991) notes culture is created, adapted and assimilated through stories, or narratives following three main assumptions: our individual understanding of culture and society comes from the stories told about it; narratives are an integral and pervasive form of communication; and narratives help to create social reality. One of the earliest scholars to influence the study of narrative and culture was Aristotle.

In *Poetics*, Aristotle proposed the mimetic theory of art, which states literary works are imitations of reality regarding the medium, mode and objects of imitation (Berger, 2003). Aristotle also established rules for plot conventions and the nature of

comedy and tragedy, which were followed for centuries. Although literary works have expanded today to include film, television, and other forms of media, Aristotle's descriptions of narrative conventions are often referenced in the development of modern narrative. Berger (2003) defines the modern concept of narrative based on Aristotle's basic elements: "A narrative tells a story by having characters interact with one another, and in doing so it can use many different techniques and media, involving matters such as lighting, music, sound, scenery, and costuming," and thus imitating culture and society (p. 125). Within media, television is perhaps the most vital and well-known source of cultural transmission.

According to Newcomb and Hirsch (1983), "television acts as a cultural forum, in which televisual communication is the process of ritualized negotiation of cultural reality" (p. 247). Television culture is also unique as television allows for the constant display of simplistic stories easily recognized and translated due to formulaic structures and content (Silverstone, 1988). Certeau (1984) asserts narratives have powerful social and cultural significance, particularly in relation to the media. Thus, because television narratives are so pervasive and easily lend themselves to transcending cultural boundaries, television acts as a mediator between culture, society and the audience. Fiske and Hartley (1978) refer to this function of television as the bardic function.

According to Fiske and Hartley (1978) "television is our culture's bard," the storyteller of our culture (p. 85). Fiske and Hartley place emphasis on the relationship between television as a bard and ideological concerns within our culture by delineating the concept of socio-centrality:

The bardic mediator tends to articulate the negotiated central concerns of its culture, with only limited and often over-mediated reference to the ideologies, beliefs, habits of thought and definitions of the situation which obtain in groups which are for one reason or another peripheral. Since one of the characteristics of western culture is that the societies concerned are class-divided, television responds with a predominance of messages, which propagate and represent the dominant class ideology. Groups which can be recognized as having a culturally validated but subordinate identity, such as the young, blacks, rock music fans, women, etc., will receive a greater or lesser amount of coverage according to their approximation to the mythology of the bourgeois. (p. 89)

Barthes (1977) recognized the importance of narrative in our culture by noting narratives whet society's desire to learn what happens next. Therefore, the television medium possesses the ability to reinforce messages within our society using narrative structures. Barthes (1977) asserts television producers act as mediators for the dissemination of those messages, yet dismisses producers as the genius behind television production. It is the intended audience receiving the narratives possess the authority to determine the importance of the stories within our society. Fiske and Hartley (1978) identify seven bardic functions of television as a mass medium: (1) to state or illustrate the established cultural norms regarding reality; (2) to entice members of society and culture into dominant value systems by "exchanging a status-enhancing message for the endorsement of the message's underlying ideology"; (3) to reinforce socio-centrality; (4) to assure culture of its practicality by reaffirming dominant ideologies and mythologies; (5) to

expose cultural inadequacies when compared to the “world out-there” or refute pressure to change to new ideological viewpoints; (6) to convince the audience of their place within culture; and (7) to “transmit by these means a sense of cultural membership” (p. 91).

Culture and Myth

According to Barker (1999), Barthes (1972) notes “myth naturalizes that which is historically contingent making particular world-views appear unchangeable and God-given” (p. 108). Kellner (1987) stated myths are simplistic stories, which “explain, instruct, and justify practices and institutions” (p. 480). Kaminsky (1985) stated it is most likely mythology came from the dominant ideology, which “controls how we look at reality” (p. 167). The dominant ideology, the ideas and belief systems presented by the dominant elite, are relatively conservative, “identifying and perpetuating a narrow range of ‘correct’ choices in the political, economic, sexual, familial, and other spheres of life,” as well as expressing certain myths concerning “the veneration of industrial capitalism, individualism, the traditional nuclear family, [and] heterosexual romance” (Mumford, 1995, p. 11). Further, the functional aspect of ideology is stability for the people, but also deception, as the dominant class ideology fools the masses into believing certain ideas about their reality, situations, and interests (Berger, 1995). Further, myths are linked with the hegemonic ideology found within society, as myths can help to illustrate or resolve conflicts. Kellner (1987) offers an example of this hegemonic relationship by examining the police drama *Starky and Hutch*, noting the program dealt with the conflict between social conformity and individuality. Finally, myths act as a unifying agent in what often appear to be diverse narratives. There are two approaches to the study of

mythic narrative, and though they have little in common, both methods recognize “myth-making is a universal cultural process and that the deeper ‘truer’ meanings of myths are not immediately apparent but can be revealed by theoretical analysis” (Fiske, 1989, p. 131).

Levi-Strauss studied myth from the structuralist approach, and asserted myth is “an anxiety-reducing mechanism that deals with irresolvable [sic] contradictions in a culture and provides imaginative ways of living with them” (Fiske, 1987, p. 132). Levi-Strauss proposed these contradictions were presented in the form of binary oppositions, or broad abstract generalizations such as good and evil or nature and culture. Levi-Strauss argues myths are closely related to language, and based on Saussure’s division of language into two parts, the *langue* and the *parole*, thus myths can be broken down for analysis (Berger, 2003). For example, as myths are historically specific, they function as *parole*, or what Saussure describes as a specific instance or event in language. Myths are also ahistorical, or timeless, and thus acts as the *langue*, or the simple structure itself which can exist in the past, present or future. However, myths also exist on a third level, which acts as separator between myth and basic language. This third level of analysis involves identifying the binary oppositions which exist within the narrative of the myth. For Levi-Strauss, culture is viewed as homogeneous, and does not account for the possibility myths may work hegemonically in society. Barthes theory of myth analysis sought to close this gap.

The second approach to studying myth is found within the works of Barthes, who approached mythic analysis from a functional perspective. In this approach, the study of myth begins with semiotic analysis, or how signs and sign systems are organized into

relationships, which then are viewed as cultural codes used to create meaning. According to Fiske (1989), Barthes (1972) was most concerned about how myth was utilized in industrialized capitalist society, which is most often marked by class conflict rather than acting as a homogeneous entity. For Barthes, myths work in the favor of the ideological positions held by the dominant elite, and those viewing or hearing the myth were unaware of the myth's existence. Thus, Barthes viewed myth as ideological and part of the power-class structure of capitalist societies (Fiske, 1989). Whereas Levi-Strauss takes a more universal approach to understanding myth, Barthes seeks for more culturally and historically significant meanings and terms within the narrative. Though the researcher can choose the best possible approach for the study of myth within narrative, all mythic analyses emphasize the importance of understanding the cultural-ideological systems underlying the narratives of the texts in question.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Television has long been regarded as a form of cultural transmission. However, individual audience members will determine the impact of the cultural information presented through the television airwaves. Barker (1999) asserts ideology as seen in television formats is not the simple transmission or injection of dominant ideas into audience members, but rather the ideological representations found within television programming present a preferred meaning for readers. Hall (1980) determined there are three types of reading to which an audience can ascribe upon viewing a television text. Based on the assumption audience members' share cultural meaning with the producers of the text, most decode the text with the dominant, or preferred, meaning. The negotiated reading occurs when the viewer partly shares the text's code and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but sometimes resists and modifies the reading based on personal experiences or reflections. The oppositional reading occurs when the viewer's social situation places them in a directly oppositional relation to the dominant code presented, thus the viewer rejects the dominant reading in favor of an alternative. Further, Althusser (1968) coined the term "symptomatic reading", a strategy that searches not only for the dominant meanings and ideologies within a text, but most importantly, for the omissions possibly indicative of what the dominant ideology seeks to repress or marginalize.

Smythe (1954) notes television is a transactional process, in which the program material has a relationship with the members of the audience, an exchange of ideas, symbols and concepts where audience members act on program content by "taking it and molding it in the image of their individual needs and values" (p. 143). Further, Fiske

(1989) asserts, "ideological forces of domination are at work in all products of patriarchal consumer capitalism" (p. 105). Mass media, such as television, are linked to ideologies: together, these two "form an articulated belief system that finds its expression in the work of media and support from a community (of believers) which resists change" (Hardt, 2004, p. 68).

The dominant ideological views regarding politics, economy, education, society and religion have changed over time. Meyrowitz (1985) asserts as changes in society occur, television programming evolves to mirror those changes. Viewers have the opportunity to observe ideological representations challenging their own ideological views as well as views challenging societal views as a whole. The critical analysis in this chapter begins by defining the ideological representations found within the analyzed programs. Then, specific value systems and values encoded in the texts will be identified and discussed. Thirdly, the elements of the narratives of each program will be discussed. Finally, the dominant myths found within the programs will be categorized and correlated across the analyzed episodes.

Ideologies in Reality Programming

According to Fiske (1987), television works "ideologically to promote and prefer certain meanings of the world, to circulate some meanings rather than others, and to serve some social interests better than others" (p. 20). This research analyzed ideology within reality television across five general categories: political, economic, educational, social and religious, and found educational, social and religious ideologies to be more prominent in the programs analyzed, whereas political and economic ideologies were limited in their representations within these programs.

Educational Ideology

Bourdieu (1980) proposed a theory of cultural capital, in which the educational system is the main agency of cultural propagation. Education is proposed as neutral and equal, with all individuals afforded the same opportunities within the system. However, Bourdieu suggests while education “pretends to measure and develop the natural talent of each individual while actually promoting middle-class values and rewarding middle class students” (Fiske, 1987, p. 266). Therefore, television programming, which offers a competition or game, uses knowledge and education to separate winners from losers in such a way the division of knowledge is supposedly based on individual differences between the contestants. In the case of reality television programming, however, Ellzey and Miller (2006) found education to be a non-significant factor in the success or failure of reality program participants. Individual personality and value characteristics of the participants were more influential on the outcome of the game. In addition, the televised representation of education has not fared well over time. Mayerle and Rarick (1989) analyzed all series centering on education over a forty-year period from the beginnings of television until 1988. Out of the 40 series fitting the category, only six lasted three or more seasons. The researchers attributed this poor track record to a lack of inherent drama in education or the educational setting.

Thus, this study analyzed how reality television presented mainstream educational ideology to the viewer. This study found education to be framed predominantly in two distinct ways: public schooling versus home schooling. Insofar as educational ideology within our culture is concerned, traditional education methods involve public school. Public schools were framed as the dominant means of education, and were naturalized

through commentary. Table 2 provides information regarding the representation of education and educational ideology within the programs analyzed.

Table 2

Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Educational Ideology

<i>The Bachelor</i>
<p>Being in Paris is like a fairy tale for the women, particularly meeting your romantic partner in a city like this. In addition, the girls get to learn about another culture. ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-1")</p> <p>The girls have to "learn" how to deal with Travis. ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3")</p>
<i>Wife Swap</i>
<p>The Stonerocks home school their children from a religious point of view. No public schools allowed, stopping the children from learning inappropriate material. ("Stonerocks/Finleys")</p> <p>The two Thompson children are home-schooled to learn the Wiccan religion, not necessarily traditional material appropriate for that age group. ("Askems/Thompsons")</p> <p>Once again, as in the earlier program, home schooling is seen negatively by the new mom, whereas the mom who home-schools attempts to change the rules of the other family to let the children stay at home. Further, each mother wages a battle over education with the home-schooled children in that the new mom wants a tutor for the home-schooled children. ("Rays/Aguirres")</p>

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Table 2 continued
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Educational Ideology

<i>Survivor</i>
<p>Learning to survive both the land and each other is a challenge for the castaways in the competition. It is quickly evident that knowledge is power. ("Borneo: Day 1")</p> <p>"I knew it was going to be the adventure of a lifetime...I didn't know it was going to be this big of an adventure of a lifetime." – Ryan S. ("Pearl Islands: Day 1")</p> <p>Osten learns his limitations and volunteers himself to go home. "Your mind controls your body" – Andrew of Osten's decision to leave ("Pearl Islands: Day 13")</p>
<i>Trauma: Life in the ER</i>
<p>The residents in the ER are learning from the trained and educated physicians. Their medical education comes from this rotation while earning their medical degree. ("Going the Distance")</p> <p>Education is a choice and no one could do it for you. "The key to stopping drugs, violence and crime is education. Teach them a basic trade and give them something to do." – Wayne Williams, EMT ("Loss of Innocence")</p>
<i>Frontier House</i>
<p>Finally education has been incorporated as an ideological construct in this program. This is interesting because it appears that the ideology of education has remained quite stable over time (from 1883 until modern times). In 1883, education was required by law. The settlers during that time had a choice between private school and public school. This choice was allowed because in 1883, African Americans could not attend public school. Because the Brooks are interracial, the community votes for a private school (although the Brooks have no children). There are no government funds available for private school, and therefore the community must hire and pay for a teacher. ("A Family Affair")</p>
<i>Cops</i>
<p>The police are represented as intelligent crime-fighters, whereas the criminals are portrayed as possessing lesser intelligence. ("Albuquerque"; "Tucson")</p>

The main debate within education reflected in these reality programs was the difference between home-schooling and public education. In the "Askems/Thompsons" episode, the two older Thompson children were home-schooled to learn the Wiccan religion. This is noted by Alison Askem as inappropriate learning material for children of this age, and when the rule change begins, she not only sends the older child to school but also hires a tutor for private instruction. In the "Rays/Aguirres" episode, the swapped families again revisit the debate. Home schooling is seen negatively by the new mom, whereas the mom who home-schooled attempts to change the rules of the other family to let the children stay at home. The Ray mom brings in a private tutor, who discovers the Aguirre children are far behind their age group in their studies. Finally, the "Stonerocks/Finleys" episode portrayed home schooling as a negative means of education, as the Finley mother noted the children were only receiving one world view, as the Stonerock children were home-schooled using only Christian learning material. Additionally, all three programs claimed home schooling to be detrimental to the social development of children because the children were not interacting with others in their age group on a regular basis.

Within programs utilizing a setting within another culture, such as *The Bachelor* set in Paris or *Survivor* in exotic locales, education is in the form of learning about the culture and about fellow contestants. *Survivor* offers a strong example of this type of educational representation. For example, a frequent competition on *Survivor* for reward or immunity is to answer personal questions about fellow castaways. Again, this is indicative of Bourdieu's theory knowledge is power. The more the individual survivor can learn about their opponents, the bigger the edge they have in the game. Further,

another example from *Survivor* is in each season of the program the contestants are given the opportunity to learn about the new culture in which they find themselves stranded. In *Survivor: Panama*, the castaways are sent to a local village to trade for goods upon arriving in Panama. The tribe must learn quickly about the culture and its trading practices in order to succeed in finding the materials required for survival. Additionally, some challenges and competitions in *Survivor* are centered on the culture in which the program is filmed (e.g., a quiz about the culture for a reward). In *The Bachelor*, not only are the girls learning about themselves, they are also expected to learn about the other women who are participating, they must learn about the bachelor, and how they interact with another person on a relationship level. This may come naturally to some, but interactions with others are also learned social behaviors.

Many contestants of these shows leave a message in their video diaries about what they learned about themselves, particularly in the case of shows involving physical limitations or transformations. For example, participants in *The Swan* learn about themselves and how to improve their daily lives. Unfortunately, this may come at a price. Some contestants lost their families in the process of educating themselves about who they are or want to become after participating in the show. For example, in "Beth and Kathy," Kathy's transformation led her to believe more in her self-worth, but according to the program, was also the final step in the dissolution of her marriage.

Frontier House was the only program to mention the historical implications of education within our culture. The program noted education became required by law in 1883. The settlers of frontier regions had a choice between private and public school. This choice was allowed on individual location basis because, in 1883, African American

children could not attend public school. In the six-part series of *Frontier House*, the community voted for a private school because a participating family, the Brooks, were interracial (although they had no children as newlyweds, the community treated the settlers as though they would be remaining in the area and bearing offspring). There are no government funds available for private school, and therefore the community was forced to hire and pay for a teacher. Good teachers were hard to find during those times, and 70% of the teachers in the west were female. There was a discrepancy between the pay of men and women teachers. Men earned \$71.40 per year, whereas women earned \$54 per year. The community as a whole was responsible for paying the salary of the teacher when private school was chosen as the option for education.

The formal education of the doctors, physicians and nurses of *Trauma: Life in the ER* appeared to be taken for granted. There was only one brief mention of the importance of education to the doctors and caretakers within this program. One doctor makes mention they are still learning on their rotations within the ER (she is completing her ER rotation within her residency at Vanderbilt) and she knows she is not a grown-up and could easily fit back into the college lifestyle. The concept of formal education being taken for granted is also indicated on *The Swan*, as there is no mention of the training or education of the cosmetic and plastic surgeons who perform the surgical procedures on the contestants.

Finally, *Cops* illustrated education briefly, as the police officers were portrayed as intelligent members of society who were driven to uphold the law. The criminals were seen as possessing a lesser intelligence. For example, in one scene of "Coast to Coast," the criminals were apprehended while trying to dispose of the drugs in their possession

(e.g., the criminals were throwing the drugs out of the car while stopped by the officers).

Society and Ideology

As indicated by Bourdieu (1980), knowledge is a key component to the power structure within our society. The mass media, specifically television, "produces symbolic patterns that create the invisible tissues of society on the cultural level," thus providing the members of the social system with certain levels of knowledge, which exist to perpetuate power structures and help to implement social change (Alexander, 1981, p. 18). As this study analyzed the social aspects of ideology, the concept of social expanded to include not only society but also societal structures, such as family and gender roles. Reality programming proved reflective of the social structures evident within our culture. Table 3 illustrates social structures and ideologies represented in the analyzed programs.

Lyra gets irritated when the 7-year-old disrupts her, and Tony gets irritated when she ignores the child. This is reflective of the American ideology within our society: it is positive gender role behavior when you respect someone's person, a child, no matter what ("Lily's World").

There is a dramatic development of women within the kitchen household. This is presented as the dominant or preferred place for women, in the kitchen, doing all the cleaning, etc. After the swap, the Thompsons move Thelma, who, according to herself, is a graduate in her home, is expelled by the treatment of women within the Adams home, particularly by the youngest male of home. Family is also presented as the best to present facets of both households. ("Lily's World")

According to the Aguirres, women's liberation and women are the key to a good family life. "Life is too much for us to worry about identity up the house." - Kimberly Aguirre. (Thompson as an important element of family - women who play up in their programs. ("Lily's World"))

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Table 3
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Social Ideology

<i>The Bachelor</i>
<p>This is the final show before the last rose ceremony. All the women who have participated in this quest for love return to the stage to discuss their experience. Prior to Travis' arrival, the women are catty and trash talk one another. The entire social mood of the program changes when Travis arrives on the set. ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7")</p> <p>Travis' two best friends meet the girls and decide who gets to go on the trip with him for the day. ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3")</p>
<i>Wife Swap</i>
<p>The Martincaks state beauty and money are equal to power. "Being average is not an option." They lead a rather lavish lifestyle in Florida. Danny M. refuses to participate in the rule changes, and acts more like the children than an adult. ("Martincaks/Schactners")</p> <p>Lynn gets irritated when the 3-year-old disrespects her, and Tony gets irritated when she corrects his child. This is reflective of the dominant ideology within our society: it is neither proper nor welcome when you correct another person's child, no matter what. ("Johnsons/Blackburns")</p> <p>There is a distinctive devaluation of women within the Askem household. This is presented as the dominant or preferred place for women, in the kitchen, doing all the cleaning, etc. After the swap, the Thompson mom (Bella), who, according to herself, is a goddess in her home, is appalled at the treatment of women within the Askem home, particularly by the younger males at home. Family is also presented as the most important facets of both households. ("Askems/Thompsons")</p> <p>According to the Aguirres, communication and trust are the keys in a good family life. "Life is too much fun to worry about cleaning up the house." – Kristina Aguirre. Cleanliness as an important unstated or implied value often pops up in these programs. ("Rays/Aguirres")</p>

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Table 3 continued
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Social Ideology

<i>Survivor</i>
<p>Learning when to self-disclose and when to shut-up is important to surviving game play. Half the battle of this program is based on the interactions with other tribe members ("Borneo: Day 1")</p> <p>Learning to befriend people for your own gain is an important component to success in the game of <i>Survivor</i>. ("Exile Island: Day 19")</p>
<i>The Swan</i>
<p>The participants attempt to fit better within their standards of normal society through surgical transformation. (all episodes)</p>

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Table 3 continued
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Social Ideology

<i>Trading Spaces</i>
<p>This show offers the idyllic illustration of suburban America. Society and how we live are often normalized on these programs. Interestingly, this program sometimes presents social views that are not consistent with dominant society views, as in homosexual couples and interracial families represented by participants in this program. ("Boston: Ashford St.")</p> <p>Both families are artistic. One family has one child, the other none. The traditional gender roles are evidenced on this program. Andrew says to carpenter, You and I do carpenter work and I don't have to go shopping. The women end up going shopping for fabric. ("Charleston")</p>
<i>Trauma: Life in the ER</i>
<p>Family togetherness is presented as a dominant position in our society. In times of crisis, it is human tendency to put aside differences. The families displayed in this program pulled together to help their loved ones. In some cases, a number of extended family members arrived to care for the injured family member. This is also different among differing races. ("Going the Distance")</p> <p>Innocence of youth collides with a troubled city. New Orleans is one of the most violent cities in the nation. ("Loss of Innocence")</p>

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Table 3 continued
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Social Ideology

<i>Cops</i>
The cops really like each other; they are their own community and society. We are bombarded in our society about the brotherhood of the police. Somewhat militaristic in style and bonding. (all episodes)
<i>Frontier House</i>
The program makes mention in the 1880s, in the eastern regions of the country interracial marriages were discouraged and not allowed. However, it was possible to have an interracial marriage in the American west. Two participants in this program will have a wedding on the frontier, and the program makes note of this ideology by stressing in the 1880s west, this marriage could have taken place. ("The American Dream")

A component of sociality within American culture is acceptance by our peers. *The Bachelor* offers two distinct representations of this concept. First, on each season of the program, the bachelor's friends and family are charged with the difficult task of making judgments regarding the participants' worthiness of spending time with their loved one. For example, on the episode "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3," Travis' two best friends meet the girls and decide who gets to go on the trip with him for the day. In the final episode of the season, the two remaining women, Sarah and Moana, spend an entire day with Travis' immediate family in order to gain acceptance as the love of his life. The opinions of Travis' friends and family do influence his decisions regarding the women in the competition, with Travis choosing Sarah in the final episode based largely in part to his family's acceptance of her as a potential family member and mate for Travis. These two incidents illustrate the power peers and family have on decision

making, and thus illustrate an important aspect of the social realm in which all persons reside in this culture.

Frontier House also indicates the power of acceptance by other members of society. For example, the program mentions in the 1880s, interracial marriages were discouraged and not allowed in the eastern regions of the country. However, it was possible to have an interracial marriage in the American west. Two participants in this program held a wedding on the frontier, and on the episode "The American Dream," the narrator stresses in the 1880s west, this marriage could have taken place. The stress placed on the importance of this union, regardless of the time frame, is an example of hegemony in society, where the dominant view of intra-racial marriage is challenged through the production of this program.

Finally, *The Swan* episodes utilize peer and societal acceptance as underlying theme within the narrative of the program. The purpose of participation in *The Swan* is to correct a self-perceived abnormality through surgical procedures in order to better fit in with what they consider normal body image in our society. Each of the participants in the analyzed episodes mentioned being teased about their image as a child, thus illustrating their need and desire for transformation.

A second component to American society is the upholding of traditional gender roles, a dominant ideology in society reflected in television programming. Television programming breaking from this norm is often viewed as in the minority, yet over time these roles are shifting (see Dow, 1996). This study examined the social aspects of the interactions between men and women and the roles they filled while performing the assigned tasks of the programs. *Trauma: Life in the ER* was more indicative of

hegemony, by placing males and females in nontraditional roles, the minority views of society were supported and illustrated. For example, women were seen in traditionally male roles of medical doctor and emergency room physicians while males were seen as nurses. Masculine and feminine roles are also not traditional in *Cops* as there are an equal number of female and male police officers. The social ideology at work in this program is the community or sense of brotherhood among the blue, whether female or male. This is also indicative of the ideology justice is served through our nation's police force. Within our culture we strive to believe in the justice system, and upholding the rights of all individuals. However, a majority of the programs placed men and women in specific traditional roles.

First, there is a distinct devaluation of women present in each episode of *Wife Swap*. In the "Askems/Thompsons" episode, this is particularly evident in the Askem home. The kitchen and home is presented as the preferred place for women, doing all the household cleaning and chores. After the swap, the Thompson mom (Bella), who, according to herself, is considered a goddess in her home, is appalled at the treatment of women within the Askem home, particularly by the younger males. The older Askem child, a male aged 12, actually notes he is higher in the household pecking order than his own mother, and admits she is almost equivalent to the family pet. Further, the Askem father controls all the money, and the wife has to ask for all monies, including money for the grocery shopping or cleaning supplies. It is the opposite in the Thompson home, where the mother is in charge of the money although the father works two jobs. Interestingly, during the swap, Bella Thompson made Roy Askem relinquish control of the Askem family funds in an attempt to illustrate to Roy how demeaning this behavior

was to his wife. Roy noted how he felt belittled by this treatment, and resolved to make amends. During the update at the end of the program, the viewers learn although the Askems learned lessons throughout the swap, not much had changed in the Askem home.

In the "Rays/Aguirres" episode, Wendy Ray is dominated by her husband and when he says jump, she says "How high?" Again, the Ray household is a house dominated by the masculine. The parents treat their 14-year-old daughter as if she is sin waiting to happen because she is a girl. During the swap, Kristina Aguirre wants to take the 14-year-old daughter for a temporary tattoo, and the father (who is informed by the younger sibling, a boy) pitches an absolute fit. The swapped mom is forced to back down and submit to the Ray father's demands. Also, both the Ray and Askem father refuse to take on any duties during the swap, although the new moms lay down the rules they must follow while they are there.

Secondly, *Trading Spaces* offers a pointed example of how traditional gender roles are accepted as the norm within society. In the "Charleston" episode, the participants are in need of both carpentry work and fabric for the home decoration projects. One participant, Andrew, comments to the carpenters, "You and I do carpenter work and I don't have to go shopping." Though the women end up going shopping for fabric while the men build the furniture, this example supports the dominant ideology of what is perceived as women's work or men's work, thus supporting the necessity for traditional gender roles.

A final component of social ideology category was the portrayal of the normal or real. For example, *Trading Spaces* offers the viewer an idyllic illustration of suburban America in which society and how Americans live are normalized. The only time this

program steps outside the "normal" box is when the participants of a specific episode do not fit into the mainstream mold of what is a typical American household (e.g., one episode viewed for this study featured a homosexual household trading spaces with two women who were best friends--the important thing to notice about this is the show focuses on the living arrangements and furnishings that go into a decorating program, not so much dwelling on the participants were not traditional in their home roles.). As *Trading Spaces* progressed through seasons four and five, the idyllic view of suburban America was expanded to include college students transforming apartment and dormitory housing. Interestingly, this program does present social views not consistent with dominant society views because homosexual couples and interracial families are also represented.

Religious Ideology

Abelman (1998) boldly compares television programming to Christianity:

It has long been argued television stories serve the same purpose for American viewers in general that the Bible does for the Christian community. It has been similarly suggested television programs have become the Christian community's secular manna from Hollywood. As such, television has been criticized for its presentation and glorification of immorality, particularly in the form of gratuitous sex and violence. It has also been suggested that there is an intentional effort among many of the leaders of the television industry to reshape our society...(p. 73).

The dominant religious ideology in the United States is Christianity. The programs analyzed in this study illustrated the dominant ideology of Christianity,

however, only five of the nine programs analyzed mentioned religion and/or religious ideology (*Wife Swap*, *Survivor*, *The Simple Life*, *Trauma: Life in the ER* and *Frontier House*), and only one program incorporated religious ideology as a major theme within the discourse (*Wife Swap*). Within these programs, Christianity was normalized whereas other religious affiliations were marginalized. Table 4 illustrates the representations of religious ideology found in the programs analyzed.

The majority of representations of religious ideology were found in the program *Wife Swap*. This study supposes these representations are more abundant in this program because a majority of families in American culture will observe some form of spirituality practices. Since a fundamental aspect of the program relied upon families and family interactions, religious ideology would seem a logical choice of illustration. For example, the "Askems/Thompsons" episode illustrated the differences between the dominant religion in our society and a lesser-known religious practice, Wicca. At the Thompsons, the Wiccan religion is practiced. Within this religion, the female is held in highest regard, and men hold all household responsibilities. Alison Askem notes, "There is a place for spirituality and a place for regular life." This commentary provides an interesting glimpse into the dichotomy within American life regarding religion. Still a taboo topic in most social circles, it appears Alison Askem is uncomfortable with the idea the Thompsons' religion is such an important factor in their daily life and daily routine. It also appears the Wiccan lifestyle consumes the household, having an impact on the children's educational activities and the division of gender roles within the home. Alison Askem

Table 4
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Religious Ideology

<i>Wife Swap</i>
<p>At the Thompsons, the Wiccan religion is practiced. Within this religion, the female is held in highest regard, and men hold all household responsibilities. The Askem mom notes, "There is a place for spirituality and a place for regular life." This mom is concerned the entire family life centers on religion in her mind is relative to devil worship. The children are being deprived of family interaction because the coven meets in their home. She refers to the Thompson home as a "pagan palace." Alison marginalizes the Wiccan religion, however there is no mention of alternative religion in the Askem household. Is the viewer to assume the alternative is the dominant ideology of Christianity? ("Askems/Thompsons")</p>
<p>The Rays from South Carolina are pegged in the introduction as "a Christian family." There are Bibles and scriptures everywhere in their home, which is noticed immediately by Kristina. Kristina is afraid she will not fit in with a family is so religious. She says "it is offensive and presumptuous to leave a Bible on the bed" in the room she will be staying in. ("Rays/Aguirres")</p>
<p>This episode centers on religious ideology. The Stonerocks are a preacher's family in Michigan while the Finleys are Atheists from Georgia. Again, Christianity is normalized. ("Stonerocks/Finleys")</p>
<i>Survivor</i>
<p>Dirk brought his Bible and enjoyed his peace in the Bible. ("Borneo: Day 1")</p> <p>Dirk is praying when the show reflects on him. ("Borneo: Finale")</p>
<i>The Simple Life</i>
<p>The girls ask two other girls if they are Christians and virgins. The girls say they are Christians, but avoid the virgin question. ("Texas")</p>

(continued on the next page)

Table 4 continued

Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Religious Ideology

<i>Trauma: Life in the ER</i>
<p>Families unite in prayer. The dominant religious affiliation displayed in this program was Christianity. ("Going the Distance")</p> <p>The preacher is brought in to pray over GSW to the head of Keith Gardner. ("Loss of Innocence")</p>
<i>Frontier House</i>
<p>Interestingly, there is not a mention in the first episode about how important religion was to the families of the American West. In this episode, the only mention of religion occurs when the Glens pray before their meal. ("The Promised Land")</p> <p>The participants refer to the frontier as "God's country," and begin to wonder why they decided to be "At war with Mother Nature." ("Survival")</p> <p>The Glens are into supporting whatever moral decisions must be made. Karen is worried about what her preacher thinks back home as she participates, and bases a majority of her decisions on ethics, morality, and Christianity. ("A Family Affair")</p>

is concerned the entire family life centers on a religious belief system, which, in her mind, is akin to devil worship (Alison Askem often refers to the Thompson home as "the pagan palace"). This appears to be an implicit illustration of the dominant ideology. Alison Askem marginalizes the Wiccan religion, however there is no mention of alternative religion in the Askem household. The central question for the viewer becomes one of assumption: Do we assume the dominant religion practiced in the Askem home is Christianity?

In the second episode of *Wife Swap*, "Rays/Aguirres," the Rays from South Carolina are pegged in the introduction as a "Christian family." There are Bibles and scriptures everywhere in their home, a feature noticed immediately by Kristina Aguirre. Kristina is afraid she will not fit in with a family so religious. She says "it is offensive and presumptuous to leave a Bible on the bed" in the room she will be staying in. Again, Christianity is presented as the dominant or preferred religious view in our culture or families. Interestingly, though the Aguirres are presented to the viewers as outrageous and somewhat pagan, as they are members of a punk band and their children have many freedoms regardless of age, the perception of devil worship is not accurate. At the beginning of the program, Wendy Ray thinks the Aguirres are members of a satanic cult based on the everyday photographs of the family she sees in their home. The narrator notes, "Wendy learns that a lack of cleanliness may not mean a lack of Godliness," as the Aguirre father Allen leads the family and friends in prayer before a backyard barbecue. Wendy is shocked to learn the Aguirres are Christians like her. She regrets thinking they are devil worshippers, and notes she may need to be more open-minded in the future. The audience is reminded how appearances may be deceiving.

Aspects of religious ideology dominated the content of the "Stonerocks/Finleys" episode. The Stonerocks, a middle-class family of five from Michigan, are a preacher's family. Kelly Stonerock is depicted by the narrator as "the typical preacher's wife." However, the family they will be swapping with, a southern family named the Finleys, are Atheists. Christianity is once again normalized as the most important religious ideology within our culture. At one point in the episode (after the swap), Reggie Finley accuses Kelly Stonerock of not believing he was a worthy person because of his lack of

faith in a higher power, a discussion that left Reggie Finley in tears. Further, the Stonerocks make it known the education in their home is second only to the spirituality of the children, a statement that sparks much debate between Amber Finley and Jeff Stonerock, as Amber claims the children are only being exposed to one point of view (see the above educational ideology section for more information regarding this discourse).

Survivor, *The Simple Life*, *Trauma: Life in the ER*, and *Frontier House* all contained small mentions of religion and/or religious ideology. First, throughout *Survivor* there has always seemed to be a token character who is a Christian and is an outcast. For example, in "Borneo: Day 1," castaway Dirk is shown as having brought his Bible to camp in order to bring himself a sense of peace. In "Borneo: Finale," when the remaining two castaways are seen reflecting on their fellow contestants now eliminated from the game, Dirk is seen praying when the show presents highlights of him as a participant. Throughout the season, Dirk was not depicted as a true member of the team, and his religion was belittled by his fellow castaways within their video diaries. In "Exile Island: Day 19," Austin and Bruce pray together before going to tribal council. Bruce also builds a Zen rock garden to bring peace and harmony to the tribe. Once again, as the religious character, Bruce was depicted as an outcast on the tribe.

The Simple Life contained only one illustration of religion. In "Texas," Paris and Nicole ask the two young girls from the host family if they are Christians and virgins. The girls say they are Christians, but refuse to answer the virginity question. It seems as if Paris and Nikki are marginalizing the religion of the girls and make it seem immature and uncool they are Christians and waiting until marriage to have intercourse. There were no other mentions of religion on the *Survivor* or *The Simple Life* programs analyzed,

leaving the viewer to question why religion was a topic only visited briefly in this manner.

On *Trauma Life in the ER*, families are often seen united in prayer over their loved ones. The dominant prayer illustrated or represented was Christianity. On "Going the Distance," two separate families were seen praying over their dying family member. In the "Loss of Innocence" episode, the family pastor is brought in to pray over the football player Keith Gardner, who suffered from a gunshot wound to the head. Family and friends continued to offer prayer for the betterment of Keith throughout the episode, and his recovery was attributed to the power of prayer in the end.

Finally, *Frontier House* also offered examples of the dominant religious ideology within our culture. Interestingly, there was no mention of religion in the first two episodes of the six part series. In "The Promised Land," the only mention of religion occurs when the Glenn family prays before their meal. Religion was an important aspect to families in the America West, with the show noting often the Bible was one of the few luxury items families were sure to bring along on their journey westward. In "Survival," the families refer to the frontier valley in which they live as "God's country," and they begin to wonder why they decided to be "at war with Mother Nature." It was not until the fifth episode, "A Family Affair," religion is a part of the show fabric. The Glenns are into supporting whatever moral decisions must be made. Karen Glenn voices concern about her home church family and pastor seeing the decisions she made during the show. These people are a central part of her life in the 21st century, and her decisions are reflective of her spirituality. She bases a majority of her decisions throughout the episode on ethics, morality, and Christianity. It is interesting we only see a small glimpse

of the spirituality of the participants at the end of the program series.

It is important to note there is no mention of religion in *The Bachelor*. This is interesting because within our culture, marriage is often viewed as a religious ceremony where two individuals are joined spiritually. Further, there was also no mention of religion in *The Swan*, which, as a program containing medical procedures much like *Trauma: Life in the ER*, a viewer might expect to see contestants utilizing religion if only as a means to say thank you to a higher power for their safe transformations.

Political Ideology

The roots of political socialization theory can be traced back several centuries. In *The Republic*, Plato noted education is the heart of politics; the government depended on civic training for stability and growth. Aristotle expanded his mentor's philosophy on political education, noting the legislator would be wise to make education of the young a priority. However, it was not until centuries later, in the 1950s, the generic term political socialization was popularized. Hess and Torney (1967) note political socialization is "simply a developmental process through which orientations and patterns of behavior are acquired" (p. 9). Interestingly, politics for children usually refers to teaching right political attitudes and values, specifically dealing with more abstract ideals such as patriotism, nationalism (e.g., love of country), and the importance of history (e.g., our founding fathers) (Andrain, 1971; Coles, 1986). As the targeted demographic age range for reality television varies across programs (e.g., *Survivor* contains program attributes appealing to children as young as seven), producers of programs containing political meanings or references must be aware in the differences of political socialization levels among viewers (Thompson, 2001). In addition, Abelman (1998) notes the underlying

assumption of ideological analysis is the “television industry as a whole or individual artists within the industry embrace a particular political position which, in turn, is reflected incidentally or intentionally in the programming” (p. 73).

As the producers of reality programming perhaps endeavor to adopt political positions within the program narratives, the producers must also acknowledge the political nature of their intended audience. Wildavsky (1982) identified four political cultures, which exist in democratic society: fatalist, individualist, elitist and egalitarian:

What matters to people is how they should live with other people. The great questions of social life are “Who am I?” (To what kind of a group do I belong) and “What should I do?” (Are there many or few prescriptions I am expected to obey?). Groups are strong or weak according to whether they have boundaries separating them from others. Decisions are taken either for the group as a whole (strong boundaries) or for individuals or families (weak boundaries).

Prescriptions are few or many indicating the individual internalizes a large or small number of behavioral norms to which he or she is bound. By combining boundaries with prescriptions...the most general answers to the questions of social life can be combined to form four different political cultures. (p. 7)

According to Berger (2003), these political cultures can also be considered audiences.

Berger (2003) further argues audience members traditionally seek “reinforcement” in the media for their basic beliefs and values and wish to avoid cognitive dissonance.

Television programming can tailor messages in the narrative to suit these political cultures, as well as reflect the beliefs and values of these groups.

Fatalists are categorized as having numerous prescriptions with weak group

boundaries. The fatalists are generally apolitical and perceive themselves as victims of bad luck. An example of reality programming suited for fatalists could be *Cops*. The second political culture is identified as individualists, where group boundaries are also weak but with fewer prescriptions. The individualists favor limited government and believe in free competition. Berger (2003) points out *Survivor* to be a reality program to which individualists could ascribe. Elitists have numerous prescriptions with strong group boundaries. The elitists believe stratification within society is necessary, however, individuals do have an obligation to those below them. *The Simple Life* is a reality program that may ascribe to the elitist viewer. The girls, Paris and Nicole, follow social boundaries even while attempting to live a simpler life in a lower social standing. The girls attempt to help the families they interact with to see how upper class citizens live (e.g., taking the family members shopping for expensive clothing). The girls want to transcend class, and their actions show them upholding obligations to those they encounter, however, they still realize their place as upper class socialites. The final political culture is egalitarians, where group boundaries are strong and prescriptions are few. In this culture, individuals recognize all have certain needs to be taken care of within society. *Frontier House* is perhaps the best example of a reality program appealing to the egalitarian culture. In the Old West, there were few laws and regulations. All members of the frontier society worked hard to take care of necessary tasks for the entire community (e.g., working to raise a schoolhouse for the community children). Yet group boundaries are still strong, and the families of *Frontier House* only come together for community events, such as a wedding or festival. The families work hard for themselves at all other times in Frontier Valley.

There are limited examples of political ideology at work in the programs analyzed. Though there are reality programs dealing specifically with political issues, the programs viewed in this study did not illustrate political ideology in the sense Americans are politically oriented to certain events in our society. However, the inner workings and group dynamics of these programs were politically charged in nature, in such the more powerful leaders of the program emerged early on to take control of the situations and tasks arising during production of the program. Table 5 offers the representations of political ideology found within the programs analyzed.

Table 5
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Political Ideology

<i>The Bachelor</i>
<p>This is the first show having any elements of political ideology. Though the definition is broad here, the women struggle against one another for positions of power. Wealth does not factor here, but looks and personality are the major political weapons of the game. ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7")</p> <p>Shiloh takes Travis on a walk to ask Travis to give everyone a chance. Her ultimate goal was to let Travis know that Moana may not have good intentions. ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3")</p> <p>The girls begin turning on each other, saying why he should not pick the others to stay. ("The Bachelor, 1-3")</p> <p>The girls want to come out on top. The girls politic Alex for attention in their first meeting. ("The Bachelor, 1-1")</p>
<i>Survivor</i>
<i>Cops</i>
Political divisions reflected in the justice system. (all episodes)

Political socialization is a process through which cultural values or behaviors are normalized. Though these three programs reflected a political ideology, the ideology was not necessarily one of civic engagement. Rather, the programs illustrated a natural human tendency to utilize information as an advantage over rivals or competition.

Perhaps the best example of political leanings occurred in four of the five episodes of *The Bachelor*. The participants on this program utilized information about each other to gain an advantage with the bachelor. This type of political maneuvering was evident from the first season of the program. Upon being introduced one at a time to Alex, the bachelor from season one, the girls immediately politic for his attention. This is a recurring politically charged theme within the program, as found in "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7." The women utilize personality strengths and weaknesses to manipulate themselves into a better position with the bachelor. The female participants parade their personalities and image to gain attention, control, and attempt to empower themselves in what essentially is a human chess match for romance. In "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3" episode, Shiloh intentionally takes Travis aside on a one-on-one walk to disclose information about a fellow participant, and alleges to the bachelor (Travis) one woman is not wholeheartedly participating to win his affection. The woman in question, Moana, is confronted by the bachelor regarding her true motivations and intentions while participating in the program. However, in the end, it is the other women who ended up wounded in this political maneuvering, as Moana actually made it to the final two women remaining in the competition.

Survivor also illustrates political maneuvering through participants garnering for positions within their tribal community. "Borneo: Day 1" offers viewers the first glimpse

into the *Survivor* mantra: outwit, outlast, outplay. Leaders emerged quickly within each camp. For example, Richard Hatch, the ultimate winner of the first *Survivor*, took control around camp by telling fellow castaways how to survive on the land, when and how to build fire, and how to succeed. Sue also participated in the leadership duties within the Tagi tribe.

However, perhaps the most politically charged activity within the *Survivor* episodes was the creation of alliances between the castaways. In order to gain the upper hand, tribe mates were forced to bond with other participants in a game which has only one winner. The ability to politically align with the enemy proved an integral part of game play. Mixon (2001) found *Survivor* to be an excellent pedagogical example for students of politics and economics based on the use of cartels within the tribal communities. For example, in "Borneo: Finale," the program detailed the alliance formed early on between Kelly, Sue, Richard and Rudy. Unfortunately, in a game with only one winner, the alliance was broken in the end, with Sue and Rudy feeling the weight of the betrayal. The betrayal of Sue prompted the rats and snakes dialogue, in which the Sue verbally attacked Kelly and Rich based on their poor performance within the alliance (see Appendix A). After the merge on "Pearl Islands: Day 13," Rupert, Christa and Sandra remained committed to one another in the alliance. Tribal events and competitions lent a hand in the defeat of this alliance, as Rupert was eventually the first to go. Interestingly, on all *Survivor* episodes, the alliances formed to gain advantages over other members of the tribe were all based on corruptness and dishonesty. Mixon (2001) notes the instability of the alliances on *Survivor* relate directly to cartel behavior, as "individual outcomes are often more important to cartel members than group results"

(p. 91).

Cops is inherently a politically charged reality program. The base theme of this reality program is to provide the viewer with a vision of the justice system within American culture. Some scholars note "reality programs about the police present a skewed view of law enforcement work where order maintenance and crime control are continuously emphasized and the notion of a highly authoritarian officer is routinely depicted" (Chong Ho Shon & Arrigo, 2006, p. 64). Consalvo's 1998 study of *Cops* and its depictions of cultural and societal problems such as domestic violence found the program to be indicative of a "society composed of multiple, competing interest parties who hold varying degrees of power and influence...in which the actors compete to have their views heard, with greater and less success" (p. 65). In turn, this reality program is further indicative of political culture by illustrating the dichotomy in culture regarding good and evil. In order to understand this illustration, it is perhaps best to consider the program from the political culture of fatalists, discussed previously.

Cops would likely appeal to an audience of the fatalist nature, according to Berger (2003), based on the narratives within this program. The police are portrayed as just and right, enforcing the political boundaries within culture. The accused, or the villains, are portrayed as evil, apolitical and possessing of the ability to live outside the law until caught. The boundaries between these groups (i.e., the law enforcement officers and the criminal) are weakened by criminal activity. Societal boundaries are enforced and strengthened with the criminals' capture.

In the most traditional sense, political ideology was not a prevalent ideology found within the programs analyzed in this study. Unlike a vast majority of television

programming, the political agenda of the producers of these reality shows remained hidden or unmentioned throughout the programs.

Economic Ideology

The economic structure within our society remains a class divided. Our culture and social structure still abides by the economic divisions recognized by Marx and Engels (1976). According to Marx society is based on the division of class (working class versus the upper class). Though American society claims to not operate on such a divisive structure, the evidence of class division still remains. Dobb (1973) notes early economists, such as Adam Smith, supported the proposition "individual self-interest as the driving economic force" within society (p. 38). This is a philosophy supported in the reality programming illustrations found within this study, as the programs analyzed served individuals' self-interest as a means for achieving an economic goal of sorts. Further, recent scholarship on the economic aspects of our culture have dispelled the conventional notion of economics in which social events, religious ideas, and other variables have no impact on economic factors by asserting the economic market within our culture is indeed culture based and driven (see Zelizer, 1988). Television programming itself is culture driven and produced, therefore it is not surprising to find economic ideology embedded within programming. Table 6 illustrates the limited, yet informative, representations of economic ideologies found within the programs analyzed.

Table 6
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Economic Ideology

<i>The Bachelor</i>
<p>Profession breeds the ideology of social status. The women consistently mention that Travis is a doctor, perhaps they are taken with money and the power that can come with it? ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7")</p>
<i>Wife Swap</i>
<p>Money is an important factor in the everyday lives of the Martincak family, who are fairly wealthy. This illustrates a minority in American culture. Schachtners: No monetary problems mentioned, with the exception of the father working two jobs while mother stays at home, however, this is more in tune with the dominant ideology of capitalism in our culture. Hard work is equated with getting ahead. The Martincaks seem to have an idyllic social lifestyle: both parents work outside the home, but the father works for the father-in-law and spends a majority of his time playing around at sports rather than working. ("Martincaks/Schachtners")</p> <p>Askem: Man controls family money. Thompson: Man works two jobs but is not in control of the finances at all. Both families are from the middle class. ("Askems/Thompsons")</p>
<i>Survivor</i>
<p>\$1 million dollar prize. (all episodes)</p> <p>\$1 million up for grabs. \$100 Panamanian "dollars" to buy goods and have a boat. Morgan got mad because Drake did so well. Ryan S. was angry they didn't spend all their money. ("Pearl Islands: Day 13")</p>

(continued on next page)

Table 6 continued
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Economic Ideology

<i>The Simple Life</i>
<p>The girls have no money. They bait crawfish traps for money. They overdo the traps with too many fish. ("Louisiana")</p> <p>The girls have no money. They must make the trip from Miami Beach to Beverly Hills without any cash. ("Leaving Miami Beach")</p> <p>The girls have no money and must earn it. Somehow, they avoid work and still have money to get from place to place. ("Texas")</p>
<i>Trading Spaces</i>
<p>The budget for each family participating is \$1,000. In later seasons of the program, the budget would increase to \$2,000 if the family chose the "bonus room," a room selected by producers as in most need of redecorating. This is indicative of our materialistic culture, and presents a dominant message that with money all problems can be solved. ("Boston: Ashford St.")</p> <p>The budgets for each room are \$1,000. In some way this is representative of the American way to economize interior design for the average homeowner. ("Charleston")</p>
<i>Frontier House</i>
<p>In this opening episode of the six-part series, the only economic ideology discussed is the American west during the 1880s. In the 1880s, the land was free for the taking to anyone willing to move west. All homestead families were guaranteed 160 acres if they agreed to move west and work the land for 5 years. ("The American Dream")</p> <p>Based on their family history, and not their modern living, the families are told what type of living conditions to expect when they arrive on the frontier. The Glens will have a completed cabin upon arrival, the Clunes will have a half-built cabin, and the Brooks will have to start from scratch. ("The Promised Land")</p>

The Bachelor provides the first example of economic ideology at work in reality television. On each episode of the program, the girls are taken with the concept of falling in love with an eligible bachelor, but also seem just as taken with the notion of falling for a man who lives in a world that speaks of an elevated social status. The women seek to preserve their own self-interest through a pairing which can possibly transcend class. The women of *The Bachelor* are most indicative of the dominant economic ideology (i.e., self-interest is a driving force toward an economic goal). Though the program offers the explanation for participation as finding true romance, the women of "The Bachelor Goes to Paris" season seem preoccupied with the socioeconomic status of the bachelor more so than participants of previous seasons. For example, upon meeting the bachelor, Travis, in the "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-1," several comment on his profession in addition to his personality and good looks. Further, there are two women who specifically mention his status as a doctor versus the other key components of Travis' charm. In the later episode, "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7," a few of the remaining women who have received a rose continue to comment on their potential match with a man who works in an esteemed profession (medicine). It is apparent to the viewer these women will engage in behavior one might consider extreme to grab the attention of Travis.

Wife Swap also illustrates economic ideology. In the episode "Martincaks/Schachtners," money plays a key role in the everyday lives of the Martincak family. The family enjoys a fairly idyllic lifestyle in Florida, supported by their substantial income. Danny Martincak works for his wife's father in an architectural firm, while his wife works as a real estate agent. The father spends only three to four hours per day actually working; the rest of the time he is out playing on the water, shooting hoops,

or spending time with his friends. This family is most definitely upper class, a minority in American culture and lifestyle. The Schachtners live a more middle class lifestyle, but the father works two jobs and rarely spends time with the family while Pam Schachtner stays home with the children. There is no mention of money problems within the Schachtner family, yet the episode makes a much bigger deal about the Martincak family's ability to do more things for themselves and their children. It is almost as if the middle class family is looked down upon because of the stress they place on family over material objects. During the show, Pam Schachtner illustrates through her dealings with Danny Martincak money does not create a solid foundation within a family, and the program seems to show family values are more prevalent in the middle class home. Essentially, money is viewed as more of an evil than a good, and in the end, the Martincaks are forced to deal with their family problems.

The "Askems/Thompsons" episode also illustrates economic ideology: Askem household funds are completely controlled by the Askem father, the head of the household. This is the opposite in the Thompson home, as Danny Thompson works two jobs to provide income for the family while Bella Thompson oversees the money management for the family. During the swap, Bella Thompson forces Ray Askem to relinquish his control of the family funds to her to prove there needs to be equal opportunity for economic management, a practice which she does not practice in her own home. Interestingly, Bella is pushing for the rights of the female member of the Askem home (Alison) whereas the program as a whole continuously points out the uneven power balance in the finances of both households. The viewer is bombarded with a sense of economic balance being the best way to handle family finances.

Survivor offers participants an opportunity to compete for \$1 million dollars. The impact of this amount of money on someone's economic status and lifestyle is potentially life changing. Participants discuss their need for the money and what they would do with such a large amount, but these occurrences are rare. Viewers are most often reminded by the host, Jeff Probst, about the ultimate prize. Of the *Survivor* episodes analyzed in this study, the single instance of economic ideology illustrated occurred on "Pearl Islands: Day 13." The castaways were given \$100 in Panamanian currency to acquire supplies for their stay in Panama. While one tribe, Morgan, searched through the market for goods, Rupert, a member of the opposing Drake tribe, pirated supplies from the Morgan raft. This is evidence of capitalist society as well as a brief example of preserving self-interest for economic gain. Rupert's theft of the supplies from the Morgan raft provided his team with an edge for camp, therefore providing an edge in the competition for the money.

The Simple Life is the exception to the reality programs analyzed in this study in which contestants compete for money as Paris Hilton and Nicole Ritchie are extremely wealthy celebrities. The purpose of the show in season one is to travel from Miami Beach to Los Angeles without money. This study analyzed three separate episodes from this first season of *The Simple Life*. In each episode, the girls are supposedly penniless and must find a way to earn cash for travel. In the first episode, "Leaving Miami Beach," the program establishes the premise of the show and the girls make their way eventually to Louisiana. In "Louisiana," the girls stay with a family in Southern Louisiana. They are asked to bait crawfish traps to earn money for the next leg of their journey. In "Texas," the girls work with horses on a ranch. Though these girls have lived a privileged life and have had the opportunity to own and play with horses for most of their

lives, they comment on how hard it is to raise horses. In the end, it is interesting how the girls have no money for travel, try to earn it, avoid work at all costs, and still have money to get to Los Angeles.

Both *Trading Spaces* and *Frontier House* are programs offering the viewer potentially the strongest illustrations of the economic system within our culture. On *Trading Spaces*, the families participating in this program are charged with redecorating a room in their neighbor's home. The budget for each family participating is \$1,000. In later seasons of the program, the budget would increase to \$2,000 if the family chose the bonus room, a room selected by producers in most need of redecorating. This is indicative of our materialistic culture, and presents a dominant message: with money all problems can be solved. Further, in some instances it is possible this program sends a false message about economic ideology as it communicates all viewers can afford not only their own homes, but also afford to redecorate on what some may feel is a sizable budget.

Frontier House is an interesting program regarding economic ideology, illustrating historical and current components of economic ideology within one program. For example, in the opening episode of the six-part series, "The American Dream," the economic impact of the American West is discussed at length. All Americans had the opportunity to receive a guaranteed 160 acres of land if they agreed to move westward and work the land for five years. The Homestead Act provided many people with the chance to achieve economic gain, though the work was hard and survival rates were low. In a culture where many Americans are rewarded with little work, the families participating in this program were taken aback by the small economic gains achieved by

large amounts of work. In addition, the families had to learn how to trade at the local mercantile (an authentic replica of the frontier-style general store was created by producers and historians for the show). The families learned about the economic implications the historical period in which they were living, and were able to compare this to their current economic situations. For one participating family, the Clunes, an upper class family from Malibu, California, the new economic situation on the frontier was appalling, particularly to the younger members of the Clune clan.

Value Systems

The overviews of the dominant ideological positions found within reality television programming illustrate the current ideologies held within our society as well as how it is reflected within television programming. Analysis of the values displayed within these programs will support how these texts propose preferred modes of behavior for members of society. Bok (1995) suggests, "certain basic values must exist in even the smallest of societies to assure survival of the culture" (p.104). Therefore, this study first identified how the value systems within our culture were displayed through reality programs.

Sillars (1991) notes six value systems have been identified within our culture. This study analyzed the programs for indicators of value systems. All programs contained representations of four out of the six major value systems; both the transcendental and collective value systems were not strongly indicated in the programs analyzed within this study. The first value system identified by Sillars (1991) is the Puritan-pioneer value system. Steele and Redding (1962) refer to this system as Puritan and pioneer morality and note, "the central themes in this ethic have been derived from

the Christian religion and mores of the Puritan immigrants, as reinforced in the frontier experience" (p. 85). Positive value term indicators associated with this value system include hard work, selflessness and frugality, whereas laziness, irresponsibility, and a lack of respect for time are viewed negatively. Interestingly, the programs analyzed in this study illustrate this dichotomy of the Puritan-pioneer value system. Further, of the nine programs analyzed, four programs reflected the Puritan-pioneer value system in specific instances, whereas the remaining five programs embraced this system as an underlying theme in all episodes analyzed. Table 7 summarizes the indicators of the Puritan-pioneer value system found within the programs analyzed.

After my kinda looks annoyed and confronts her. "Kendra? No, I'm not annoyed at all. I'm just... I know what I want. I know what I am doing, and I'm not here to play games." ("The Bachelor, 1-2")

Wife Swap

There is a local swap specialty for the Johnsons. Both work hard. Lynn is submissive to Jay in all aspects of their relationship (Jay is the fitness expert for the Dallas Cowboys). Jay calls Deborah out on her laziness. ("Johnson/Blackburn")

There is a lot of hard work in the Adams house, but much goes unacknowledged. Adam's wife works very hard as a mother and wife, but is treated as a subordinate member of the household. In the Puritan system, hard work earns benefits. Though hard work is prevalent in this house, there are no benefits to reap, according to Holly Thompson. Adam disagrees, and takes great pride in the work she accomplishes. ("Adams/Thompson")

Once again, evidence of hard work by one mother and not the other. ("Scott/Johnson")

Ruggie Finley works almost 20 weeks a week to support his family. Every Thursday night due to the expense of this family, and is supportive only occasionally. ("Scott/Finley")

Table 7
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Puritan-pioneer value system

<i>The Bachelor</i>
<p>Travis notes, "For the last eight years of my life, it has been medicine, medicine, medicine." He has obviously put a lot of time and energy into being educated and a hard worker. He feels lucky to be the bachelor as if this is his reward for working so hard. ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-1")</p> <p>The women show their unique talents to Travis' friends to try to earn a one-on-one date with him. ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3")</p> <p>The girls are excited when offered a rose. ("The Bachelor, 1-1")</p> <p>Alex says Ronda looks annoyed and confronts her. Ronda: " No, I'm not annoyed at all. I'm just...I know what I want. I know what I am doing here, and I'm not here to play games." ("The Bachelor, 1-3")</p>
<i>Wife Swap</i>
<p>There is a boot camp mentality for the Johnsons. Both work hard. Lynn is submissive to Jay in all aspects of their relationship (Jay is the fitness expert for the Dallas Cowboys.). Jay call Rebekah out on her laziness. ("Johnsons/Blackburns")</p> <p>There is a lot of hard work in the Askem house, but much goes unrewarded. Alison Askem works very hard as a mother and wife, but is treated as a subservient member of the household. In the Puritan system, hard work reaps benefits. Though hard work is prevalent in this home, there are no benefits to reap, according to Bella Thompson. Alison disagrees, and takes great pride in the work she accomplishes. ("Askems/Thompsons")</p> <p>Once again, evidence of hard work by one mother and not the other. ("Rays/Aguirres")</p> <p>Reggie Finley works almost 80 workweeks to support his family. Kelly Stonerock notes this is at the expense of this family, and is supportive only monetarily. ("Stonerocks/Finleys")</p>

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Table 7 continued
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Puritan-pioneer value system

<i>Survivor</i>
<p>Rudy discusses structure with the group. Fire? Camp? Hatch is the organizer and emerges as a leader early on. ("Borneo: Day 1")</p> <p>The group with fewer members in alliance (Nick, Terry, Austin, and Sally) realizes one of them is going home. ("Exile Island: Day 19")</p> <p>They're simply fighting for their lives now. There are not worried about life at camp. "I don't know that the best person is sitting up here, but I do hope you vote for the best person," says Kelly. ("Borneo: Finale")</p>
<i>The Simple Life</i>
<p>Nikki and Paris realize taking care of horses takes more than just riding them. ("Leaving Miami Beach")</p> <p>The family lives on a farm and talks about what they will make the girls do. ("Texas")</p> <p>"It's great to have fun, but fun doesn't get the job done". – The other intern. The girls win the internship. ("Finale: The Monkeys")</p>
<i>The Swan</i>
<p>The women work extremely hard for three months in sequester to achieve their transformation. The benefit of this hard work is two-fold: self-esteem and a chance to compete in the Swan beauty pageant. (all episodes)</p>
<i>Trading Spaces</i>
<p>Hard work by homeowners and staff of the program results in new rooms in each home. (all episodes)</p>
<i>Trauma: Life in the ER</i>
<p>Hard-working doctors, no rest it seems until situation is solved or under control. (all episodes)</p>

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Table 7 continued
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Puritan-pioneer value system

<i>Cops</i>
The cops work together and organize their efforts. The cops band together and bust the criminals. (all episodes)
<i>Frontier House</i>
The struggle to survive on the frontier was extremely hard, and took a lot of hard work and patience. The first task the settlers had upon arriving was building home and shelter for their families. ("The American Dream")
Throughout each episode of this program, the participants lament how much work they have to do in order to survive in the valley. At the end of the series, however, each family has learned to appreciate the hard work they put into this project. (all episodes)

In the "The Bachelor Goes To Paris, 8-1," Travis notes, "For the last eight years of my life, it has been medicine, medicine, medicine." He has obviously put a lot of time and energy into being educated and is a hard worker in his career. He feels lucky to be the bachelor, and sees this as his reward for working so hard. In "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3," the women show their unique talents to Travis' friends to try and earn one-on-one dates with him. The hard work of only four women will pay off for the reward of spending alone time with Travis. The Puritan-pioneer system is also indicative of a sense of adventure. In the episode "The Bachelor, 1-3," Alex says Ronda looks annoyed and confronts her. Ronda replies, "No, I'm not annoyed at all. I'm just...I know what I want. I know what I am doing here, and I'm not here to play games." Ronda indicates she is a hard worker in the side of romance, willing to work hard with no frivolities to win the

love of Alex.

Wife Swap is also an interesting illustration of this value system. These programs illustrate to the viewer hard work is required when parenting and raising a family. It is also hard work to enter the lives of another family and conform to their rules and ways of life. In the "Johnsons/Thompsons" episode, there is a boot camp mentality at the Johnson home. Both work very hard in running their business and keeping up in their fitness training.

Although Jay and Lynn work together on the family business, Lynn is a submissive partner in the relationship. During the swap, Jay Blackburn is taken aback by not only Rebekah Thompson's disregard for a healthy lifestyle, but also her inability to work within the home. For example, at one instance during the swap, Rebekah actually fakes illness to get out of doing any housework in the Johnson home, a decision which illustrates the negative aspects of the Puritan-pioneer system. Laziness is seen as derogatory and unnecessary, a taboo in this value system. At the final meeting between the families, Jay calls Rebekah out about her laziness, to which Rebekah does not seem concerned.

A second illustration of the Puritan-pioneer system within *Wife Swap* occurs on the "Askems/Thompsons" episode. There is a lot of hard work in the Askem house, but much goes unrewarded. Alison Askem works hard as a mother and wife, but is treated as a subservient member of the household. Sillars (1991) notes the Puritan system rewards hard work and those who work hard can reap many benefits. Though hard work is prevalent in this home, there are seemingly no benefits to reap. Alison disagrees, and takes great pride in the work she accomplishes. To Alison Askem, the benefit of her hard

work is the joy and relaxation of her husband and the cleanliness of the home. By comparison, the hard work (e.g., household chores in the home and work outside the home) in the Thompson home is completed by Danny Thompson. Bella Thompson takes her husband's work for granted, and there is no perceived reward for the Thompson father, except for his own perception of pleasing his wife and supporting his family.

Survivor is also representative of the dichotomy of the Puritan-pioneer system. The very structure of the program is about hard work and survival in the wilderness by the participants. The participants must quickly organize the tribes to maximize strength and work time. The Puritan-pioneer value system recognizes order and leadership, and frowns upon persons who waste valuable time. In "Borneo: Day 1," Rudy discusses camp structure with the group. Will there be a fire? How do we set up camp? Hatch is the organizer and emerges as a leader early on in the show. In all episodes of *Survivor*, castaways who are lazy or do not pull their weight around camp are talked about negatively and often quickly eliminated from the game. By the "Borneo: Finale," there are four survivors left, and they are simply fighting for their lives at this point. Tired, worn out and hungry, the survivors still engage in hard work to ensure life at camp continues.

In *The Simple Life* episodes, the negative aspects of the Puritan-pioneer system are displayed more often than the positive aspects. The girls supposedly embark on these adventures to learn about hard work, but spend a lot of time discussing frivolous things, such as shopping, beauty treatments and material goods. The girls avoid hard work in most of their situations, yet still reap the rewards of continued travel and material goods. In "Leaving Miami Beach," the girls are forced to take care of horses by working in the

stables. They do realize taking care of horses requires more work than they thought, not just riding them. During season one of *The Simple Life*, the girls often must live in rural settings and learn about the agricultural side of life in the United States. In the "Texas" episode of the show, the girls are to be working on a farm. The farm family discusses hard work they will make the girls do, but this work is not shown. It is implied to the viewer the girls managed to escape with working as little as possible.

The remaining programs reflected the Puritan-pioneer system as an underlying, general theme throughout the episodes. *The Swan* indicates the Puritan value system in that all contestants must be active participants in their transformation and work hard to achieve the goals set for them before the reveal to the judges. For example, not only did each contestant undergo rigorous surgical procedures, they also participated in counseling, strict exercise and diet regimens. The reward at the end of each episode was the opportunity to participate in the beauty pageant, as well as improved self-esteem.

In the program *Trading Spaces*, hard work by the homeowners and staff of the show result in the new rooms in each home. Sweat and tears go into creating the new rooms in the home. Some homeowners work all night long to complete homework assigned by the designers. The end result for the teams is a new room, won by hard work. Also, frugality is a positive term associated with this program. The budget for each room is only \$1,000 and is demonstrating how new, modern rooms can be achieved on a tight budget. Further, laziness is not rewarded in this value system. An example of this occurred in the "Boston: Ashford St." episode, in which one homeowner is found napping by the host, and subsequently reprimanded for "sleeping on the job."

Trauma: Life in the ER also illustrates the Puritan-pioneer value system as a

general theme. In each hospital, the doctors are all hard-working, often working long shifts to ensure all patients receive the best possible care. There seems to be no rest until the situations and/or problems have reached resolution. The doctors work hard to save lives each time they are in the hospital emergency rooms. A doctor in "Albuquerque" noted, "Each patient who walks through the door is important, a member of someone's family, important in another's life. I work as hard as I possibly can to preserve that relationship."

Cops episodes are also indicative of the Puritan value system. Criminal justice requires hard work, effort and devotion to upholding the law. The reward for this hard work is the apprehension of criminals in the end. Interestingly, what may be perceived by the viewer as a waste of time activity by law enforcement leads to the job getting done. The cops in each episode of this program work together to ensure the capture of the criminals. The objectives of the cops themselves are also indicative of this value system.

In *Frontier House*, the Puritan-pioneer value system is most evident, largely because of the context in which the show is filmed. The struggle to survive on the frontier was extremely difficult and took a lot of hard work and patience. The first task the settlers had upon arriving in the frontier was building a home and shelter for their families. For the purposes of this show, the producers based the frontier property acquirements of the families on their modern day earnings. The Glens arrived on the frontier with their cabin already completed, but the Brooks and Clune families had to build their cabins using materials they found on the frontier. This proved a daunting task for the Clunes, who had four children to shelter while the cabin was being completed.

Nate Brooks, who was with his father upon arriving to the frontier before the arrival of his bride-to-be, had to build the cabin from the ground up and had less troubles. Once the task of shelter was completed, the hard work continued, with all members of the family often laboring 14 hours per day. In each episode of the program, participants constantly lament about how much work they have to do in order to survive each day. For example, preparing hay for the winter food supply for the livestock required long hours of chopping hundreds of acres of grass, a task only one family completed adequately to survive the winter. At the end of the series, however, each family had learned a key lesson from the experience (which is also a key lesson of the Puritan-pioneer system): The amount of hard work one puts into a project is equivalent to the reward one will receive (in this case, the reward and lesson was also a greater appreciation for modernity).

Enlightenment Value System

The key concept of the Enlightenment value system is rational thought, and individuality as more important than the collective views of society. Sillars (1991) notes "the Enlightenment position stems from the belief that we live in an ordered world in which all activity is governed by laws similar to the laws of physics" (p. 139). Further, Sillars (1991) asserts the Enlightenment recognizes humans as basically good, and they require limited restraint on their ability to seek answers; the possibility of foolish action exists, however society can restrain those people as necessary. Haque (2003) notes the Enlightenment value system supports a nationalist ideology which utilizes the mass media as a solution to socio-economic problems within culture. This study found the Enlightenment value system to be evident as an underlying theme in three of the nine

programs analyzed. Table 8 illustrates the enlightenment value system as found within the programs analyzed.

Table 8
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Enlightenment value system

<i>The Simple Life</i>
<p>Paris definitely used the media to garner attention after her fall off the horse. The reporters were all over her. ("Leaving Miami Beach")</p> <p>The girls use the CB to have fun. Paris gets truck stuck as soon as she gets to the farm. ("Texas")</p>
<i>Trauma: Life in the ER</i>
<p>Doctors rely on reason and intelligence to make decisions. Rational logical thought influences decision-making skills of the doctors and residents. (all episodes)</p>
<i>Cops</i>
<p>The cops use media to inform public about political activity. ("Albuquerque")</p> <p>The cops use the media to inform society about criminal activity, and the viewers also learn about our society through this program, specifically criminal behavior. ("Tucson")</p> <p>The cops use the media to inform public of criminal activities, as well as the consequences of criminal behavior (e.g., poverty). The cop describes the problems prostitution causes - diseases, etc. ("Coast to Coast")</p>

The Simple Life offers the viewer an example of utilizing the media to gain attention. In "Leaving Miami Beach," Paris suffers a fall from a horse. She uses the media to gain public attention after her accident. The reporters were all over her in terms of trying to get a good story about what happened.

In *Trauma: Life in the ER*, doctors rely on reason and intelligence to make

decisions. Rational, logical thought influences decision-making skills of the doctors and residents. However, they work collectively together as a team to ensure the patients have the best possible care during their time in the emergency room.

Cops is perhaps the strongest example of the Enlightenment value system at its finest hour. The mass media are offered as a solution to the socio-economic problems within our culture. For example, Americans spend billions of dollars on our justice system each year. *Cops* illustrates how criminal behavior affects our culture and society. By bringing awareness to the viewer about problems within this system, the viewers can use this information to take action. The viewers have the opportunity to learn about criminal behavior and its consequences through this program. Further, the viewer is also informed about certain criminal activities in great detail. For example, on the episode "Coast to Coast," the cops describe the problems associated with prostitution, with its causes and effects, the impact on society as well as the women involved and the diseases most often associated with this crime. In the episode "Albuquerque," the police officers discuss political activities as well as how changes in our political system will bring changes in our justice system.

Progressive Value System

Haque (2003) asserts the progressive value system is "inextricably linked with enlightenment" (p. 375). Steele and Redding (1962) note change and progress as values in our society which are based on "the Enlightenment thesis that human nature can be improved and that society is inexorably moving toward a better form of life," an idea reinforced by the American experience (p. 86). Our culture and society revolve around change, modernity, and evolution. Negative values associated with the progressive value

system might be failure to accept or want change, or living in the past. Within the reality programming analyzed in this study, the progressive value system is evident as an underlying theme in four of the nine programs (*The Swan*, *Trading Spaces*, *Trauma: Life in the ER*, and *Cops*). Table 9 illustrates the progressive value system as indicated within the programs analyzed.

Table 9
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Progressive value system

<i>The Swan</i>
The women all advance in self-esteem and sociality as a result of their transformations. (all episodes)
<i>Trading Spaces</i>
Modernizing and updating homes is indicative of progress. (all episodes)
<i>Trauma: Life in the ER</i>
Modern medicine techniques are utilized to save lives. Without the modern advances in medicine, many of these patients would not survive. Medical advancements, lots of communication between chopper nurses and the ER. (all episodes)
<i>Cops</i>
Criminals try to progress against society; the cops strive for the progression and advancement of society without crime. (all episodes)

The contestants on *The Swan* are chosen on the basis of their perceived necessity for a physical transformation. The participants are in need of change to further their sociality and their ability to feel accepted in society. This transformation is achieved through the technological advances in modern medicine, specifically plastic and/or

cosmetic surgery. On each of the episodes analyzed, the women participating undergo surgery to progress in both society and their personal lives. In this manner, the progressive value system acts as an underlying theme on *The Swan*.

On *Trauma Life in the ER*, modern medicine techniques are utilized to save lives. Without the modern advances in medicine, many of these patients would not survive. One doctor remarked medical technology advancements are responsible for the advent of these trauma units in the larger city hospitals. Steele and Redding (1962) note, "technological developments have encouraged acceptance of the new as a necessity of modern industrial life" (p. 87). In each of the *Trauma: Life in the ER* episodes, the technological advances in medicine are highlighted, as well as the importance of trauma centers within emergency rooms. For example, in the episode "Going the Distance," the Albuquerque trauma unit is the only trauma unit with a 400-mile radius. Though this implicates the negative value terms in this system (i.e., the surrounding areas are regressive and living beneath modernity), the positive aspect of the system is also reinforced as the trauma unit does provide progress and modernity for a large portion of New Mexico.

On *Trading Spaces*, the modernizing of homes is progressive in nature. Our society is driven by the need to achieve, earn and prosper. Steele and Redding (1962) note "early American experience taught that change was both necessary and beneficial; hence, the present is better than the past, and the future was better than the present" (p. 86). The Enlightenment value system embraces modernity and evolution, as well as progress and change within society. As participants strive to create new and improved rooms within their homes, they embrace the importance of modernity and progress

through interior design. The Progressive value system is an underlying theme on each episode of *Trading Spaces*. For example, in the "Charleston" episode, the homes to be redecorated are in the historic district of the city known as the Battery. Though the designers and the homeowners want to preserve the historic integrity of the home, some aspects of the homes are not functional or practical in modern times. The show focuses on the transformation of rooms in the historic homes into functional modern rooms. Another example of modernity and progress as a theme is found on the "Boston: Ashford St." episode, in which both the rooms transformed are redecorated and modernized for two young girls who are making the transition from childhood to adolescence (i.e., the rooms are dubbed too childish and young for the teenagers).

Cops is a program indicative of the dichotomy of the Progressive value system, offering the viewer representations of both positive and negative values within the system through its discourse. The police officers themselves represent the positive aspects of the Enlightenment value system as the criminal justice system strives to maintain the pace of society's evolution into a world without crime, or at least lessened amounts of criminal activity. On each episode of the program, the police officers work together to ensure capturing the criminals and ending their abhorrent behavior in order to serve justice.

Personal success value system

Within American culture, personal success is highly regarded. Haque (2003) notes, the personal success value system "places emphasis on values that are focused on the individual – his or her happiness, sense of self-respect, and freedom of choice"(p. 375). Steele and Redding (1962) assert personal achievement and success in many activities is valued and equated with moral effort, whereas failure is more often identified

with personal inadequacy. This research found the personal success value system to be evident in five of the nine programs analyzed (e.g., *The Bachelor*, *Wife Swap*, *Survivor*,

The Swan and *Cops*). Table 10 outlines the illustrations of the personal success value

system in the reality programming analyzed in this study.

"I had problems in being what in the past I've... I definitely did love him, and these girls are saying I am fake." (*The Bachelor Goes to Paris*, 1-7)

The girls want to win. (*The Bachelor Goes to Paris*, 8-17)

All the girls tell their values in the beginning. (*The Bachelor*, 1-17)

Wife Swap

"Average is not acceptable." The Martinko's mom is surprised to find the Schachters family supports their children to be average. "If average is the best you can do, then that is okay." The Martinkos, on the other hand, push their children to excess where success is expected. The girls are involved in a number of activities from girl bands to gymnastics. The Schachters mom is afraid that they are losing their childhood and puts an end to all these activities when the rules change is implemented. (*Martinkos/Schachters*)

The Johnsons want to succeed through fitness. The Blackburns want what they want. Jay realizes that he needs to spend more time with his wife and child. (*Johnson/Blackburns*)

Survivor

Richard brags he's the winner from day one. (*Bornes; Day 1*)

People definitely start thinking about the 11 million and how is it within their reach. Kelly plays up that she's a better person than Rich. (*Bornes; Finale*)

Bornes experiences a lot of personal success, particularly when it comes to playing the game and learning a lot about himself (overcoming some difficulty from his childhood). Often volunteers to be voted off because he was out of gas. The tribe no longer tries to talk to him cause he has gone. (*Bornes Inside; Day 12*)

The Swan

The contestants all succeed in their attempts to transform their body, change and improve their self-esteem issues. (all episodes)

Cops

The cops catch the criminals. (all episodes)

Table 10
Summary of Findings in Programs Analyzed
Personal success value system

<i>The Bachelor</i>
<p>Susan, after being eliminated from the show, states she is proud of how she acted on the show. "I had intentions of being open to the idea of love...I absolutely did love him, and these girls are saying I am fake." ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7")</p> <p>The girls want to win! ("The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-1")</p> <p>All the girls sell their values in the beginning. ("The Bachelor, 1-1")</p>
<i>Wife Swap</i>
<p>"Average is not acceptable." The Martincak mom is surprised to find the Schachtner family supports their children to be average. "If average is the best you can do, then that is okay." The Martincaks, on the other hand, push their children to excess where success is concerned. The girls are involved in a number of activities from girl bands to gymnastics. The Schachtner mom is afraid that they are losing their childhood and puts an end to all these activities when the rules change is implemented. ("Martincaks/Schachtners")</p> <p>The Johnsons want to succeed through fitness. The Blackburns want what they want. Jay realizes that he needs to spend more time with his wife and child. ("Johnsons/Blackburns")</p>
<i>Survivor</i>
<p>Richard brags he's the winner from day one. ("Borneo: Day 1")</p> <p>People definitely start thinking about the \$1 million and how is it within their reach. Kelly plays up that she's a better person than Rich. ("Borneo: Finale")</p> <p>Rupert experiences a lot of personal success, particularly when it comes to playing the game and learning a lot about himself (overcoming some difficulty from his childhood). Osten volunteers to be voted off because he was out of gas. The tribe no longer tries to talk to him once he has quit. ("Pearl Islands: Day 13")</p>
<i>The Swan</i>
<p>The contestants all succeed in their attempts to transform their body image and improve their self-esteem issues. (all episodes)</p>
<i>Cops</i>
<p>The cops catch the criminals. (all episodes)</p>

The participants on *The Bachelor* first illustrate the personal success value system by their presence on the program. Out of 10,000 applicants, the top 25 women are chosen to participate. The women in the program episodes acknowledge their success in being selected, and appear to take their participation in the quest for love seriously. This concept of success is illustrated in each episode of the program, and in this manner the personal success value system acts as an underlying theme (e.g., the girls of "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-1" all note their desire to win.). Although elimination from the hunt for the bachelor's affections could be considered failure, some women still viewed the experience as positive and successful. For example, after Susan is eliminated in the rose ceremony on "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7," she comments: "I had intentions of being open to the idea of love...I absolutely did love him, and these girls are saying I am fake." Though Susan failed to win the love of the bachelor, she has recognized her own success at taking the competition seriously, and is offended when the other women accuse her of being false. Further, *The Bachelor* is indicative of the negative aspects of the personal success value system, in that some women are willing to sell out their morals and values in order to win. Personal success as a value system is equated with morality. However, as the women often seem misguided with their actions and discourse (i.e., lying about other participants for their own gain), their own personal success is compromised by their lack of ethics.

Two episodes analyzed within the program *Wife Swap* illustrate the personal success value system. In the "Martincaks/Schachtners" episode, the families have their own ideas about personal success. In the Martincak household, the family lives by the standard "average is not acceptable." The Martincaks push their children to excess where

success is concerned, although the success is not marked by educational success or achievement, but rather their achievements in extracurricular activities. For example, Lynn Martincak creates an all-girl band for her 10-year-old to be the lead singer, and builds a studio for the girls to practice every day. The Schachtners have an opposing view of success, stating, "if average is the best you can do, then that is okay." For example, of the six children in the Schachtner family, only two are still in public schools. The college age children live with their parents and do not work outside the home, an indication of their laziness. However, to the Schachtners, their children are successful and have gained personal success and achievement through their perceived mediocre accomplishments. Personal success to the Schachtners is spending quality time with the family on a daily basis. During the swap, Pam Schachtner is afraid the Martincak children are losing their childhood and puts an end to their activities when the rules change is implemented, while Lynn Martincak forces the Schachtner children to participate in more activities (e.g., she creates an all-boy band for the older Schachtner children to perform at a local event.). This episode provides a dichotomous look at the individual ways personal success is measured, particularly within two different families. This dichotomy is also represented in the "Johnsons/Blackburns" episode, though on a smaller scale. For the Johnsons, personal success is health and fitness, and they truly believe their bodies to be their temples. The Blackburns do not perceive a healthy lifestyle as an important key to success and prefer spending time with family or in front of the television. During the swap, both families learn to accept the different perspectives on personal success, with Jay Johnson learning to spend more time with his children and Tony Blackburn maintaining his fitness regimen developed by Lynn Johnson.

Both *The Swan* and *Cops* utilize the personal success value system as an underlying theme of the programs. For the contestants of *The Swan*, the desire to achieve personally and physically is an undercurrent of each episode. The participants take an active role in their success by not only applying for the program but also participating in the activities such as therapy, counseling or exercise. Contestants who do not put forth their greatest effort are viewed as lesser than their counterparts. For example, in the episode "Jennifer and Kimberly," Kimberly expresses her problems with the proposed diet plan she must follow and refuses to participate 100 percent. Though the doctors eventually convince her the plan is in her best interest, she does not appear completely committed to her own personal success. *Cops* utilizes the personal success value system in a similar manner, as an underlying theme of the program is for the police officers to succeed in catching the criminals and upholding justice. Personal inadequacies leading to failure are not acceptable, as these failures would lead to the criminals escaping justice. Further, the police officers also see personal success as not only apprehending criminals but also helping citizens in the community stay out of trouble. For example, in the episode "Albuquerque," the police officers show concern for a female suspect who was clean from drug use but has now relapsed into a life of crime. They offer to find her assistance through rehabilitation, and at the end of the day the police officers feel successful in helping the woman attempt to regain control of her life.

Dominant Values Displayed

The ideological positions discovered within the texts can also be connected to the values within our society. This analysis of the specific values will demonstrate the reflections of cultural values systems and values of society within reality television

programming. Additionally, implied values were also identified. In some instances, the negative aspects of the dominant value were displayed more often than the positive aspects. Of the values presented by Bearden, Netemeyer, and Mobley (1993), the most dominant values displayed were achievement, activity, conformity, competitiveness, individualism, independence, materialism, morality, progress and work ethic. The values of progress and work ethic are not discussed at great length in this section, as these values were discussed in greater detail previously under the headings of the Puritan-pioneer and Progressive value systems. Implied values present in the programs analyzed were identified as truth, fairness, honesty, motherhood, life, safety, time, gratitude, conflict and humility.

Achievement and Activity

Perhaps the most prevalent values displayed in all the programs are achievement and activity. These two values are inherently linked, as achievement and reward is only obtained through a modest amount of activity. Steele and Redding (1962) discussed the value of achievement as the following:

In an America characterized by an almost unlimited opportunity for the acquisition of material wealth, European measures of personal status soon broke down and competitive occupational achievement (evidenced by accumulation of wealth) became a crucial measure of personal merit. (p.86)

Steele and Redding (1962) note, "activity, when guided by reason, tends to emphasize getting things done through the choice of the most effective means" (p. 86). Within the reality television programming analyzed, each program episode offered examples of the achievement and activity values.

The reality programs featuring forms of competition offer perhaps the strongest examples of the values of activity and achievement. In these programs, (e.g., *The Bachelor*, *Survivor*, *The Swan* and *Frontier House*), activities are rewarded and achievement is gained in the form of romance or material or personal gain. In *The Bachelor*, the women show their abilities to achieve through activity which wins the affections of the bachelor. For example, in each episode of the program, the women have the opportunity to earn dates with the bachelor. On "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3," Susan is rewarded with the opportunity to accompany Travis on the first one-on-one date. In the episode "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7," the women have the chance to accompany Travis on five-on-one dates, two-on-one dates, or one-on-one dates. The women who are chosen for one-on-one dates, Sarah and Moana, asserted their ability to achieve over the other women, earning the reward of alone time with Travis, a scarce commodity in a competition between 25 women. Later in the same episode, Travis' two best friends are allowed the chance to meet the women and select to five women to go with Travis on an overnight trip to the French Riviera. The narratives of these programs reinforce the importance of achievement by illustrating the potentiality of the ultimate reward, which in this case is the love of the eligible and attractive bachelor.

Achievement and activity as values in our culture are also illustrated on the program *Survivor*. The program itself is built upon the premise achievement and activity brings great reward (i.e., material and monetary prizes). The castaways are driven to push themselves to the utmost limits of their personal and mental strength in order to outlast and outplay their fellow contestants. Failure to achieve or succeed within the group puts the guilty castaway at a greater risk for removal from the game. On the

episode "Borneo: Day 1," B.B. comments, "There are a lot of lazy people if you want to know the truth. I can't do it all myself." This statement by a castaway illustrates the high value placed on participating in tribal activities, as well as pulling weight around the campsites. Further, on the episode "Pearl Islands: Day 13," in which Osten eliminates himself from the game, his fellow tribe members had already noticed his lack of effort around game and within group competitions.

Group and individual competitions on *Survivor* also illustrate achievement and activity. As the tribes come together in group competitions, their ability to competently participate in the challenges is highly regarded by other members. Some activities are more physical in nature, while others call for the mental abilities of the tribe members to be tested. Regardless of the type of competition, the value of activity is clear during each competition as each tribe or individual contestant works diligently to be successful. Steele and Redding (1962) state the essence of activity, as a value, is the ability to become efficient and practical through action, which requires problem solving; failure is equated with abstraction. For example, on "Exile Island: Day 19," the remaining tribe members compete for an immunity challenge in which the participants were made to swim into the ocean and retrieve multiple bags containing puzzle pieces. Once all bags were retrieved, the tribe members could then begin solving the puzzle, with the first person having the creation solution winning immunity, or safety from being eliminated from the game. In this sense of activity, the castaways of *Survivor* utilize all available means to win the competition, specifically problem solving and thus illustrate the value of activity.

Frontier House also illustrates activity and achievement in this same manner.

The participants of this program are forced to live together in a community on the frontier while working hard to live off the land. The value of achievement is noted throughout each episode of the program as the families realize their success at living on the frontier without modern amenities. For example, on the episode "A Family Affair," the children of the Glenn and Clune families realize children on the frontier were treated almost as slaves. The historian working with the families relayed the fact children as young as three were put to work on the frontier in the 1880s. Though the children have a hard time adjusting to the amount of work required in this setting, they come to appreciate the lives they lead in the modern world. Further, at the end of the series, the children marvel at their level of achievement during their experience, an illustration of the appreciation of their activities and the value one should place on achievement and activity in all accomplishments.

Episodes of *The Swan* offer a different representation of the values of achievement and activity. In this program, the achievement is transformation into a new person with a new look, achieved through surgical procedures. The participants take an active role in their transformation process by participating in counseling sessions, therapy and exercise regimens. However, the value of achievement was only recognized after the contestants were able to create a new body image and personal makeover.

Competitiveness

Americans are driven by the need to succeed, and competition, whether through mental or physical challenges or business enterprise, is a means by which to gain a modicum of success. The value of competitiveness is also closely linked with the value of achievement, where a desire to win (i.e., motivation or need to achieve) is directly

correlated to the difficulty of the task (Brunstein & Maier, 2005). In each of the programs analyzed in this study, the participants or characters are competing for something or against others. Thus, the value of competitiveness is illustrated through the discourse and actions found and analyzed in each episode.

Individualism

Another dominant value displayed in a number of reality television narratives is individualism. Cecil (1994) says the religious upheaval of the Renaissance coupled with cultural and intellectual activities led to the emergence of individualism. Steel and Redding (1962) note, "in both colonial and contemporary America every person is valued as an autonomous, unique, decision-making personality, worthy of concern and possessing intrinsic dignity" (p. 86). At the very core of American policy, all individuals are encouraged and granted the right to pursue life, liberty and happiness. Our ability for individual choice and freedom are an important value preference in our society, a position evident in reality programming. Individualism is closely linked with the value of independence.

Wife Swap indicates the value of individualism in the episodes analyzed in this study. In the "Askems/Thompsons" episode, individuality is key and is important to the members of the Thompson family. In the Askem home, Alison Askem has virtually no identity of anything but wife and mother. She does not even wear her own clothes and owns nothing feminine. Though Alison Askem finds it difficult to understand the Thompson lifestyle, she understands their importance in upholding individuality. In the end of the program, she decides she needs to develop her own identity and individuality within her masculine-oriented home. A similar example is found the "Rays/Aguirres"

episode, in which the Aguirres encourage their children to be individuals by allowing them the independence and freedom to express their feelings and emotions. One way in which the Aguirre children do this is through their music and body art. This approach to raising children as individuals capable of making their own judgments scares Wendy Ray at the beginning of the swap. However, like Alison Askem, Wendy Ray eventually accepts the Aguirres for the unique individuals they are, and even participates in dressing as a punk rocker for the day (the Aguirres are members of a punk band).

On the program *Trading Spaces*, participants want to pursue the individual needs and desires of the homeowners, and want the rooms to be reflective of their personalities and individuality. In some instances on this program, the designers miss the mark, and the homeowners are unhappy with the end results of the design. For example, in the episode "New Orleans: Freret St.," the homeowners are excited to own property in the oldest section of one of the oldest cities in the United States. One participating family specifically requests the designers preserve the cottage feel of the home, however, the designers take a more contemporary approach to the design. The owners are disappointed, and feel their individuality as well as their independence in decision-making was compromised. Unfortunately, this lack of respect for individualism and independence is inherent in the program, as the participants relinquish a bit of control by agreeing to participate in the swap.

Conformity

In juxtaposition with the values of individualism and independence exists the value of conformity. Acceptance within social circles requires not only a sense of identity, but also a sense of belonging. Conformity allows members of society to fit in

and feel accepted socially, and is also achieved through participation in groups (e.g., religious affiliation) (Steele & Redding, 1962).

Reality television narratives in themselves are indicative of the value of conformity by the narrative structures followed within the programming (e.g., narrative formulas). Further, the participants follow certain rules or guidelines. A specific example can be found in the program *Frontier House*. In the first episode, "The American Dream," the participating adult family members hold a meeting to decide the ground rules for participation. To retain the authenticity of 1883, certain rules must exist in the frontier community, and some exceptions were found. Crucial decisions about topics such as contraception, menstruation (e.g., there were no feminine hygiene products until the 1930s) and hunting were reached during this meeting.

Also within reality narratives, participants (i.e., characters) illustrate the value of conformity when and if their survival in the game or competition is in jeopardy or have reached a critical or pivotal juncture. An example of conformity as a value in this manner is illustrated in the game play of Richard Hatch, the winner of *Survivor: Borneo*. Though certain behaviors by Hatch would lend the viewer to consider him more of an extremist (e.g., he walked around camp naked), his chameleon-like game play, such as his ability to be a part of each individual alliance, allowed him to utilize conformity to aid him on to victory.

The women of *The Bachelor* also seek to utilize conformity to their advantage in the competition. The women put a lot of time and effort into becoming what they think the bachelor wants them to be. For example, in "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7," Travis confronts Moana about her feelings for participating in the game. Moana

comments to the audience and the camera she should be more focused, and vows to become less “whatever” and more in love with him. Further, in each episode the women spend a majority of their time together trying to determine how they should interact with the bachelor to gain his attention. The irony of this type of game play is it is indicative of the negative aspect of conformity as a value, where a more rational approach to the game would be to assert individualism and independence to win the bachelor’s affections (i.e., being true to one’s self).

Pressure by the designers and carpenters on homeowners in *Trading Spaces* to conform to their plan is indicative of conformity. Although appearing to ignore the value of individualism, the compromise reached between them is illustrative of the power and benefit of conformity. It is important to note this instance is one specific example, and conformity as a value may not always lend support to values of individualism and independence.

The participants of *The Swan* also illustrate the value of conformity. The women perceive themselves as outcasts from society who require physical improvements to meet the criteria for societal norms of beauty. Thus, the value of conformity is upheld as the women, suffering from low self-image, seek to conform to perceived standards of image through surgical procedures.

Finally, the program *Cops* indicates the value of conformity by capturing criminals, and upholding societal norms and standards of behavior through the justice system. Though the criminals display signs of individualism by committing these acts, the laws within our culture are clear: Conform to the rules set forth or be punished accordingly.

Materialism

Materialism is identified as a core American value which shapes consumption patterns (Bearden, Netemeyer and Mobley, 1993). Materialism is not only concerned with money, but also concerned with nonmaterial goals such as democracy or love, a process identified by Inglehart as postmaterialism (Clark, 2000). However, Easterlin and Crimmins (1991) conducted a study of value trends among high school seniors and college freshmen and concluded private materialism emerged as the most prevalent value, with a steady increase since the 1960s (Clark, 2000). Within the reality programs analyzed in this study, four of the nine programs offered illustrations of the value of materialism (e.g., *Survivor*, *The Simple Life*, *Trading Spaces* and *Frontier House*).

Though the participants on *Survivor* do not live in a setting conducive to the value of materialism (e.g., the tribe members must live off the land and build their own shelter.), the competitions between the tribes are reflective of materialism. The tribes compete for rewards, which usually consist of food. However, one reward competition in each season of the program results in the winner receiving a new car. This competition is usually fierce, as materialism in the form of greed for the new car is evidenced by the competitor's actions. However, the competitions alone are not illustrative of materialism on *Survivor*. As the final prize in *Survivor* is one million dollars, the contestants are willing to do almost anything to win. Materialism, as greed, is valued above human interaction and, in some cases, valued above decency. For example, in a past season of the program, two female contestants were willing to undress completely to win a reward challenge in which the prize was peanut butter and chocolate.

The Simple Life, featuring the wealthy socialites Paris and Nicole in a somewhat

more realistic, middle class setting, is unable to take the materialistic nature out of the celebrities. In each episode analyzed, Paris and Nicole spend the majority of their time discussing fashion, beauty tips (i.e., cosmetics), material goods and their fame. In "Texas," Paris and Nicole proclaim they are most concerned with "looking hot and loving it." In another example, found in the episode "Louisiana," the girls take the teenage daughter from the host family shopping for new clothes. Paris and Nicole encourage the girl to spend \$480 on new clothes, when her parents had given her a budget of only \$75. However, in a lesson on frugality, the mother forces her daughter to return the items. Paris and Nicole embrace the value of materialism, whereas the young girl's parents illustrate the negative aspect of this value: The family cannot afford to make extravagant purchases.

On the program *Frontier House*, the young children are very concerned with materialism. The series begins with the episode "The American Dream," in which the children from each family are shown discussing what they will miss most, which is a long litany of modern items, such as cell phones, cars and video games. Specifically, the children of the Clunes cannot seem to make it on the frontier without modern amenities. For example, in the episode "The Promised Land," Adrienne Clune, her daughter and her niece get in trouble for sneaking makeup contraband into the frontier cabins. Kristen Brooks remarks she is "not cute" without her makeup, and laments life on the frontier without modern luxuries. The Clune girls spend a majority of the time onscreen complaining about how much they miss their lifestyle in the 21st century, and in each episode the viewers are shown the extravagant Clune family home, as well as scenes of the younger Clunes relaxing in the hot tub.

Of the programs offering representations of the value of materialism, *Trading Spaces* is the only program of the four in which positive aspects of this value are more pronounced than the negative aspects. The participants value materialism as they spend \$1,000 remaking a room in their home. The participants are granted almost every wish, and are excited to participate in the program. At the end of each episode, the designers and host reveal the rooms to the homeowners, pointing out the lavish new items in their new rooms. There is no mention or implicit undertone of materialism being seen negatively, but rather the new items and new look to their home is embraced and welcomed.

Morality

Morality and ethics, as values within American culture, stem from the Puritan belief system established by the founding fathers. Steele and Redding (1962) note:

Hedonistic as we are, Americans have never ceased to regard impulse gratification with deep suspicion; we may insist upon our comforts and our gadgets, but we guilty and rationalize about in the name of 'moral purpose.'

Pursuit of power, prestige or economic success for its own sake has been considered immoral. Today the *ideal* American does not lie, cheat or dissimulate; and he practices what he preaches. (p. 85)

Though morality is highly valued in our culture, the Clunes of *Frontier House* seem more interested in benefiting from immorality and a lack of ethics. The Glens are always concerned about how every action they take will be viewed by their peers, especially their church. In the episode ""Survival," the Clunes build a still to make moonshine and encourage the children to participate in bottling the liquor. Though the

Glenns are concerned about the lack of morals in this scheme, this lack of morality is rewarded, as crime pays and the Clunes get 25 dollars for each bottle of corn liquor sold at the general store. As noted in the religious ideology section, the Glenns base many of their decisions in each episode on morality and the principles of Christianity.

Progress

American culture embraces progress and change through modernity and technological advancements. Steele and Redding (1962) note, “‘optimism’ about future, and derogation of the ‘old fashioned,’ of the ‘backward,’ and of the ‘obsolete’ verbalize standardized attitudes” (p. 86). As previously discussed, the value of progress, inherent in the Progressive value system, is an underlying theme in *Trauma: Life in the ER*, *The Swan*, *Trading Spaces* and *Cops*. However, *Frontier House* also displayed some elements of progress as a value, though not as a theme. In the episode “The Promised Land,” the Glenns had to call a real doctor to the scene of an accident in the cabin. Though the house call by the modern doctor cost 46 dollars, a charge concurrent with 1883 Montana, the total of the bill was equivalent to $\frac{1}{4}$ of their savings on the frontier. The Glenns commented on their appreciation of living in modern times, and they valued the progress of culture, which brought about such innovations as medical insurance, a commodity taken for granted in the 21st century.

Work Ethic

The standards of work in American culture, like the value of progress, also stem from the values inherent in the Puritan-pioneer value system. The value of work ethic was discussed in detail in the Puritan-pioneer value system section of this study; however, other specific examples of the value of work ethic also exist within the

programs analyzed. For example, within the program *Frontier House*, all three families developed a new respect for hard work, and at least one member of all three families commented they would never say, "I'm too busy" again.

Implied Values

Not all value representations within television programming will be explicit. Some values are implied within the narrative context of each program, and can also vary according to episode. The implied values found within the programs analyzed were not evident on each program or each episode; however, these implied values might appear in various forms within any reality program. The implied values identified in this section are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather offer an illustration of the types of implied values found within reality programming.

Narrative Analysis

The narrative of a text can help the researcher identify the stories of the culture. As narrative is identified as a fundamental cultural process, "it is not surprising that television is predominantly narrational in its mode" (Fiske, 1989, p. 128). The narratives of the nine reality programs were analyzed in order to determine the narrative structure and impact of these stories on the genre and the potential impact on the viewer. According to Berger (2003), narratives have two axes: a linear or syntagmatic one, which involves one action following another sequentially in time, and a horizontal or paradigmatic one, in which actions and characters take their meaning by being the opposite of something else. This study examined the theme, structure, characters, peripeteia and narrative voice of each program. Further, this narrative analysis examined each individual episode of the nine programs to determine narrative structures based on

Chatman's (1978) narrative typology.

Theme

The theme of the program is the major narrative structure, the driving story or plot sometimes subplots form within each program. The overarching themes of each program were discussed previously, however, within each reality program, episodes can also generate sub-themes or subplots to help enhance the narrative. Though the themes of each program are inherently different, there are some striking similarities across all sub-genres of reality programming.

Fiske (1989) asserts that game and competition shows follow a specific narrative formula known as ritual-game-ritual, which supports capitalist ideology. Fiske suggests, however, all players begin different yet equal in opportunity. It is only a matter of time before individuals begin to display natural ability, and "the reward of upward mobility into the realm of social power which 'naturally' brings with it material and economic benefits" (p. 266). In this way, the class system of our culture is naturalized, as social and class differences become masked by individual natural differences. Within each episode of the programs analyzed, discourse and interactions between the participants illustrate the abilities, successes and failures of each contestant. The outcomes of the programs, whether monetary gain or personal experience, also imply success or failure depends on human ability. Even programs such as *Trauma: Life in ER*, which does not rely on competition, follows the formula outlined by Fiske in that the natural ability of the doctors, when combined with education and experience, set them apart from regular, average citizens. Thus the underlying themes of each program were previously revealed as different and unique. Yet, arguably, these themes could all be related into one

overarching theme illustrating the dynamics of human interaction and the human experience. For example, the previous value system section of this study identified the value systems which act as themes for the programs analyzed.

Structure

The narrative structure of the programs was not found to be dramatically different across all programs analyzed in this study. For example, the reality programs selected for this study were partly serial in nature (e.g., *The Bachelor*, *Survivor*, *The Simple Life*, *The Swan* and *Frontier House* episodes build on one another but do not rely on the previous episode for all narrative structure), whereas the other programs were non-serial (e.g., *Trauma: Life in the ER*, *Trading Spaces* and *Wife Swap* episodes are contained into individual episodes which do not build on one another). Though another structure of television programming exists, the format of pure serials, none of the programs analyzed can be specifically categorized as this type of programming.

This study examined the narrative structure of the reality programs viewed based on Deming's (1985) adaptation and simplification of Chatman's (1978) diagram of narrative structure. The model identifies five essential elements of narrative: a real author, an implied author, the discourse, an implied audience and a real audience. Further, the five steps in narrative structure identified by Abelman (1998), status quo, pollution, guilt, redemption and purification, will be used to analyze each episode of the programs viewed in this study. First, the elements of Chatman's model must be clearly outlined.

The real author constructs the narrative according to the rules or norms of the medium. In the case of television, the real author consists of producers, writers, directors

and all other technical support members involved with the production. Mittelli (2006) asserts narrative complexity is limited within reality programming as producers find it difficult to generate dramatic plots and characters.

Deming (1985) defines the implied author as “a controlling principle (re)constructed by the viewer from elements of discourse manifested in the medium” (p. 241). The elements can be editing principles or camera movements. For example, the use of first-person camera shots on the program *Cops* gives the viewer a sense of being part of the action, thus allowing the viewer to live vicariously through the camera and experience more fully the chase for the criminal. Further, the editing techniques utilized in programs such as *Survivor* or *The Bachelor* allows the viewer the opportunity to string together events on the narrative timeline, which may or may not be accurate depictions of actual events. This technique allows the implied author, as well as the real author, some leeway in the narrative story elements, which are crucial to narrative resolution.

The discourse consists of the statements organized sequentially or non-sequentially to tell the story of the narrative. The discourse also includes the events, the characters, the setting and time. The characters and setting within the narratives of the reality programs analyzed are examined in the following section; however, the other elements of the discourse, such as story form, events and time for each episode are analyzed here. Story form refers to the basic story or narrative structures evident within the discourse of the reality program. These elements include serial or non-serial formats, opening and closing themes and stability, as well as how the narrative flows (e.g., how the competitions are structured toward the final outcome of the program). Story events are the basic points of the narrative, who does what with whom, how and why.

According to Chatman (1978), story time can be analyzed as three separate, yet linked, structures: story structure, discourse structure and manifestation structure, which are all "independently systematic" within the narrative (p. 137). Each program episode was analyzed for form, events and time.

The Bachelor

Story form

The Bachelor episodes are all connected to previous episodes, marking this reality program as a serial. Each individual episode opens with scenes of the location where the program is filmed. Further, the bachelor and the women are introduced to the viewer through the opening montage, as pictures of each character appear onscreen along with their names. Elimination from the competition does not call for elimination of the photographs in the beginning sequence. Additionally, these characters have memories from week to week, as the narrative builds on the discourse and interactions between the women and the bachelor each week.

Story Events

The narrative of *The Bachelor* is not complex. This reality program is serial in nature, and each episode builds upon the previous weekly installment. Each episode selected for analysis in this study was representative of the seasons of the program as a whole, with two episodes from the first season and three episodes from the most recent season airing on ABC. The cast of each episode consists of the participating women (a total of 25 at the beginning of the season), the bachelor, the bachelor's family and/or friends, the families of the women (in the later episodes of the season only) and the host. The story events for all five episodes are outlined in the following section.

"The Bachelor, 1-1"

The host of the program tells the story, though commentary is provided from the women and the bachelor. In this episode, the characters consist of the 25 women, the bachelor and the host. The following stories are illustrated throughout the narrative of this episode.

1. In the beginning of the episode, the viewer meets the bachelor, Alex. The viewers are then introduced to the women participating in this the first season of the reality program. Alex then mingles with all 25 girls and then decides who stays and who goes by giving them roses and asking if they accept. The introduction of Alex and the women and their initial reactions and discourse is the main story within this episode. The character development of the women is lacking in this first episode, as the host spend more time relaying information about the bachelor and his background to the audience. For example, Alex wants to follow in his parents' footsteps, who met and married quickly.
2. A secondary story within this episode is the brief introduction of the women, including their occupations and why they chose to participate in this competition. Although all 25 women are introduced, the viewer is only offered brief introductions, as some of the women will not make it past this first day in the competition. For example, the viewer learns the girls' occupations range from waitress to neuropsychologist.
3. The final story within this episode occurs as the discourse and interactions between all characters culminate at the final rose ceremony, in which Alex selects the first women to be eliminated from the competition.

"The Bachelor, 1-3"

This episode is also from the first season of *The Bachelor*. The characters

remained the same, however, five of the women participants were eliminated from the competition from the first and second episodes of the season. There are several key story events from this episode.

1. The women embark on group dates with the bachelor, and three women are selected to participate in individual, one-on-one dates with Alex. For example, on their individual date, Alex tells Christine he makes her "have butterflies" in his stomach, and then remarks "she didn't exactly respond...I don't think she feels a ton of chemistry."
2. The women meet two of Alex's best friends, as the friends are brought to the show to judge for themselves which women are better suited for Alex. The girls try to impress Alex's friends, Stephanie and Sam, making a show for them in order to secure favor with Alex. One of the women, Ronda, remarked, "This is harder than I thought it would be. If I could make a list he fits it all."
3. The final rose ceremony sees the elimination of four women. After not being selected, Ronda had to have emergency rescue workers called because she could not breathe due to a panic attack.

"The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-1"

The eighth season of *The Bachelor* was filmed on location in Paris, France. The women comment in their introductory interviews Paris is a fairy tale setting to find true love. Further, the bachelor, Travis, is marketed for this season as the most attractive bachelor yet to appear on this reality program. Once again, the main characters on this episode are the host, the bachelor and the participating women. Interestingly, in terms of story events, this episode is lacking in events and momentum, which is perhaps strange for an introductory episode for a new season of the program.

1. The program opens with the introduction of the bachelor, Travis, and the introduction of the new participants. There are 25 women at the beginning of the contest. Travis meets everyone and exchanges small talk with each of the women. Travis comments, "I'm having a great night, and I still have more women to meet." He also says every woman has been "amazing, smiling, engaging... with their own personalities." One of the women is from Nashville like Travis, which sparks his interest. Additionally, one of the women introduces herself to Travis in French, because she minored in French in college.
2. Ali thought reproduction was the way to get to Travis and gets angry when he tells her that is not what is looking for. Her attempt as simplicity as a baby maker and the natural laws of a woman's place actually succeed in getting her kicked out of the contest.
3. The episode concludes with the rose ceremony, in which five women are eliminated.

"The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-3"

This episode is the third installment in the eighth season of *The Bachelor*. This episode further highlights the interactions between the bachelor, Travis, and the women remaining in the competition. There are two stories integral to the production of this episode.

1. As on previous seasons of the program, the women are introduced to the bachelor's best friends. Travis' two best friends meet with the women to decide who gets to go on a day trip alone with the bachelor. The women compete, though not physically, for the attention of Travis' friends by showcasing their unique talents to earn the one-on-one date. Interestingly, Travis' friends choose the girls who seem most sincere based on their own intuition rather than those girls who flaunted their talents.
2. The girls begin to target one girl in particular for elimination. Moana claims to have

developed strong feelings for Travis, and the other girls are jealous of them growing closer in the competition. Several of the girls discuss banding together to work against Moana. One of the women, Shiloh, takes Travis on a walk to let him know Moana may not have good intentions, and asks him to give everyone a fair chance in the competition for his heart. At the end of the episode, the girls are disappointed when Moana gets a rose in the rose ceremony.

"The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7"

This episode is the final episode before the last rose ceremony, in which Travis must choose between the two remaining contestants, Sarah and Moana. All the women who have participated in this quest for love return to the stage to discuss their experience. The theme of this episode is to reveal the hidden or underlying stories which occurred during the filming of all episodes. The story events within this episode are linear, and there is only one long discourse between the women and Travis.

Prior to Travis' arrival, the women engage in discussion about their experiences on the program. The women appear to be catty and spend a large amount of discourse on making harmful and hurtful remarks toward one another. Though the women have been eliminated from competition, they continue to fight over Travis as if they can still win his heart. The entire social mood of the program changes when Travis arrives on the set, but deteriorates again with the arrival of the remaining two women. The eliminated women appear emotionally devastated about being kicked off the show. Some of the women are proud of their appearances on the program. One woman, Susan, remarked, "I had intentions of being open to the idea of love...I absolutely did love him, and these girls are saying I am fake."

Time

The manifestation structure of the episodes of *The Bachelor* is one hour. The total running time of one hour includes story and non-story elements, such as commercials, station identifications, news briefs and credits. At the manifestation level, the chronology is linear in sequence. With the exception of "*The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7*," the discourse structure occupies the space of approximately two weeks of real time.

Wife Swap

Story form

The episodes of *Wife Swap* are non-serial in nature. Each episode is self-contained, with the characters (participants) changing for each installment of the program. The program begins with an introduction to the participating families. The locations of the families are also discussed in relation to the participants, including how the location factors into the lives of the participants (e.g., living in suburbia implies certain values). The next segment shows the swap and how the wives cope with their new surroundings for the first week. The next segment shows the new families coping with the rule changes. At the end of the program, the two couples come together to share their experiences. There is often some revelation about what they have learned or will try to do better after living with someone else and alternate rules. The narrative form of this program is not complex.

Story events

Each episode of *Wife Swap* contains key events leading to the narrative and contributing to story flow. The theme of *Wife Swap* is to trade the wives from two

families. For the first week, the new wives must live by the rules provided by the original wife in a handbook. During the second week, the new wife can implement her own set of rules for the new family to live by. The focus of the program is to give families a chance to see how other families live within our society. However, the new husbands may not be as welcoming to the new rules a new female introduces into their home. This research analyzed episodes from each season of *Wife Swap* released (at the time of this study, three seasons of the program were completed on ABC). The story events from each episode analyzed are outlined below.

"Martincaks/Schachtners"

This episode focuses on the lives of the Martincak and Schachtner families. Participants in this episode include the narrator and the members of the participating families, including the parents, the children and the Martincaks' nanny. The Schachtner family consists of six boys and one girl. They refer to this family as a fraternity, a brotherhood in which femininity is discounted and masculinity embraced. The opposite is true in the Martincak household, where estrogen rules the roost. The Martincaks have two children, both girls. The Martincak father is not in control of family activities, as the mother in this household plans all activities for the children and the household. The story events are linear. There are several stories told simultaneously within this episode.

1. The economic plight of the families participating is a central focus of this episode. Money is an important factor in the everyday lives of the Martincaks, as they are portrayed as fairly wealthy, illustrating a minority in American culture. No monetary problems are mentioned where the Schachtners are concerned, with the exception of the father working two jobs while mother stays at home, however, this is more in tune with

the dominant ideology of capitalism in our culture. The Martincaks seem to have an idyllic social lifestyle; both parents work outside the home, but the father works for the father-in-law and spends a majority of his time playing around at sports rather than working.

2. Personal success: "Average is not acceptable." The Martincak mom is surprised to find the Schachtner family supports their children to be average. Pam Schachtner points out her belief as "if average is the best you can do, then that is okay." The Martincaks, on the other hand, push their children to excess where success is concerned. The girls are involved in a number of activities from girl bands to gymnastics. The Schachtner mom is afraid they are losing their childhood and puts an end to all these activities when the rules change is implemented.

3. The interaction between the participants after the swap is also a focus of this episode. The episode spends a large amount of discourse on defining the concept of family. Each family on *Wife Swap* feels that their ideological view of family is correct. Changing definitions of family in modern times often make the dominant view hard to pin down. It is interesting how on this program, each family makes it a point to stress how good their family is at the beginning of each episode. By the end meeting of the two parents in the household, each family has learned a lesson of sorts about the inherent problems with their lifestyles or home life. However, as the program ending tells us, in each case, these revelations for the most part do not bring about long-term change.

"Johnsons/Blackburns"

This episode focuses on the lives of the Johnson and Blackburn families. The participants in this episode include the families, the children and the narrator.

1. The first story event of this episode focuses on the lifestyles of the two families. Lynn and Jay run a fitness center. They are a military family, and Jay runs the household as a military operation focused on fitness. Jay comments, "Your body is your Ferrari." The Blackburns are not as focused on healthy living, as Tony weighs 370 pounds and Rebekah is also overweight. A portion of the rule change Lynn prescribes for Tony and the Blackburn household is to implement a fitness regimen. In the Johnson household, Rebekah wants Jay to focus less on the militaristic style of the household and spend more time with the family. The lifestyle interaction is also reflective of the gender differences within the households. For example, Lynn is submissive to Jay in all aspects of their relationship, whereas Rebekah comments, "I wear the pants in this family." Interestingly, Lynn points out to Tony his need to assert himself in the home, whereas Rebekah spends time trying to get Jay to back off and allow Lynn some freedom to make decisions. Rebekah comments, "Real women don't need schedules," referring to Lynn's structure designed by Jay.

2. Lynn notes that she needs love from her husband, Jay. This is supportive of the dominant ideology: Romance is a) important in our society and b) romantic love is an integral part of marriage. This is a shift in society from 100 years ago, when marriages were arranged between families, or a product of convenience. Rebekah and Jay go out on a romantic dinner during the swap, dispelling some ideology surrounding romance.

3. Rebekah spends much of her first week in the Johnson household complaining about the amount of work Lynn does in her home. Rebekah is portrayed as extremely lazy, and she fakes illness to be able to sit on the couch. Further, Rebekah threatens the producers she will run away if she isn't able to talk to Tony before the table meeting. She won't

leave the car, attempting to sabotage the show. Jay eventually calls Rebekah out on her laziness.

4. At the end of the episode, it is revealed to the viewer Lynn took charge and feels good about making decisions without having to ask Jay's permission. Further, Tony maintains his fitness regimen designed by Lynn, much to Rebekah's dismay. It appears the families were able to take some lessons from the swap experience in this episode.

"Askems/Thompsons"

The participants on this episode include the Askem and Thompson families, private tutors and the narrator. Both families are portrayed as middle class, with the Askems from Iowa and the Thompsons residing in Georgia. The key story events are:

1. As previously discussed, one of the main themes of this episode is the devaluation of women within the Askem household. This is presented as the dominant or preferred place for women, in the kitchen, doing all the cleaning, etc. After the swap, the Thompson mom (Bella), who is a goddess in her home, is appalled at the treatment of women within the Askem home, particularly by the younger males at home. Family is also presented as the most important facets of both households.
2. The second main story within this episode involves the religious background of the two families. As previously discussed, the Thompsons practice the Wiccan religion. Within this religion, the female is held in highest regard, and men hold all household responsibilities. The Askem mom notes, "There is a place for spirituality and a place for regular life." This mom is concerned that the entire family life centers on religion so much that in her mind it is relative to devil worship. The children are being deprived of family interaction because the coven meets in their home. She refers to the Thompson

home as a "pagan palace." The Wiccan religion is marginalized by Alison, however, there is no mention of alternative religion in the Askem household. Is the viewer to assume that the alternative is the dominant ideology of Christianity?

"Rays/Aguirres"

The participants on this episode are the Ray family, the Aguirre family and the narrator. There are three main stories woven into this episode.

1. The main story within this episode revolves around religion. As previously discussed, the Rays from South Carolina are pegged in the introduction as "a Christian family."

There are Bibles and scriptures everywhere in their home, which is noticed immediately by Kristina Aguirre. Kristina is afraid that she will not fit in with a family with such a religious lifestyles. She says "it is offensive and presumptuous to leave a Bible on the bed" in the room she will be staying in. Again, Christianity is presented as the dominant or preferred religious view in our culture and families. However, the joke is on the viewers this time. The Aguirres are presented to the viewers as outrageous and somewhat pagan, as they are members of a punk band and their children have many freedoms regardless of age. Wendy Ray thinks, based on the photographs she see in their home, the Aguirres are devil worshippers. The narrator notes, "Wendy learns that a lack of cleanliness may not mean a lack of Godliness," as the Aguirre father Allen leads the family and friends in prayer before a backyard barbecue. Wendy is shocked to learn they are Christians like her. She regrets thinking they are devil worshippers, and notes she may need to be more open-minded in the future.

2. The second main story within this episode is educational in nature, as the debate between home-schooling and public schools is explored in each home. Once again, as in

the earlier program, home-schooling is seen negatively by the new mom, whereas the mom who home-schools attempts to change the rules of the other family to let the children stay at home. Further, each mother wages a battle over education with the home-schooled children in that the new mom wants a tutor for the home-schooled children.

"Stonerocks/Finleys"

The participants in this episode are the Stonerock and Finley families and the narrator. There are two central stories and one lesser story within this episode.

1. Religion is again a central theme in an episode of the program, as the Stonerocks are portrayed as a Christian family, and Jeff Stonerock is a pastor in a local church. The Finleys are an Atheist family, and Reggie Finley produces an online radio program devoted to Atheism. Christianity is once again normalized throughout the episode. The location of the two households is also discussed at length, with the Stonerocks hailing from Wisconsin and the Finleys located in Georgia. Interestingly, the program makes mention the Finleys are from a region of the United States most often associated with Christianity and a strong religious upbringing, although they practice Atheism.
2. The second central theme within this episode involves education. Once again the debate between home-schooling and public schools is explored through the discourse and the interaction between the new moms and their new families. The parent who home-schools is portrayed as straying from the norm of public schools, and therefore portrayed as a lesser parent.
3. The lesser story within this episode involves traditional and nontraditional gender roles, as both households are male dominated where chores and household duties are

concerned. In the Stonerock home, Jeff Stonerock devotes a majority of his at home time cleaning and cooking, whereas Kelly Stonerock's main home duty is the care and education of the children. In the Finley home, Reggie Finley and their 13-year-old son are responsible for the cleaning and cooking while Amber Finley spends her entire day playing games on the computer. This is a distinct difference from traditional roles within the home.

Time

The manifestation structure of the program episodes is one hour, including commercials and advertisements. The episodes are told in linear sequence, though reality programs are often edited out of sequence for sake of manifestation structure. The discourse structure of the program is two weeks in real time. The first week of production involves the swap of families, with the mothers living under the current rules of the home. The second week of production involves the new mothers creating rules for the new household to live by. The discourse of the program episodes is told chronologically, as the program episodes progress from week one to week two with certain elements not relating to the critical stories edited out for time constraints.

Survivor

Story form

Survivor is a true serial reality program. In the opening montage of the program, the viewer is first introduced to the events of "previously on *Survivor*" to keep the viewers updated on the events of the program in case they missed prior episode discourse. The opening theme music of the program plays as each castaway is pictured with their name displayed for the audience. During the actual running of the program,

the castaways are further introduced to the audience as their names, occupations or where they are from are displayed when they appear on camera. Each episode follows the same structure: a rundown of previous events, opening music, a look at camp life, a reward challenge, back to camp life, the immunity challenge and the final tribal council.

Story events

The central focus of the program is a competition for one million dollars, and castaways are voted off the island one by one by their fellow tribe members. Story events are explained by the host, individual castaways in personal diary sessions in front of the camera, as well as the discourse between the castaways while in their camps. The central themes and stories within each episode analyzed in this study are outlined below.

"Borneo: Day 1"

Sixteen castaways compete for one million dollars while trying to avoid being voted off the island. As the episode opens, the castaways are divided into two tribes, Tagi and Pagong, thus named in tribute to the culture of Borneo. In this episode, underlying stories are about professional backgrounds and personal attributes which helped to shape their success. Also, they discuss social and survival skills required to compete for the ultimate prize. The characters in this episode are the 16 castaways (no one is voted out of the cast until the end of the episode), the narrator Jeff Probst and camera and production crew (though these participants remain off camera).

1. Learning to get along with another and how to survive off the brutal landscape is the main focus of this episode, the premiere of *Survivor*. Leaders within both tribes emerge quickly to attempt to take control of the tribes and competitions. In the Tagi tribe, Rudy discusses structure of camp life with the group, wanting to decide early on who is

responsible for fire, cooking and keeping the camp clean and organized. Richard takes over the organization of camp and emerges as a leader early in the episode. Richard notes everyone must work together, and Rudy comments on the key to surviving the camp life, saying, "I've got to fit in with them. There's more of them than there is of me." In the Pagong tribe, leaders are also emerging as Gretchen takes charge of the camp. For example, BB tries to work alone to keep the camp running, but Gretchen warns him he will tire himself out too quickly if he does not work with the group.

2. The second story within this episode is the challenges. There is both a reward challenge and an immunity challenge. The reward challenge is for the ability to make fire (e.g., a flint). The Tagi tribe wins the reward challenge, as well as the immunity challenge. The Pagong tribe loses immunity, and must therefore vote out one castaway at the final tribal council.

3. Tribal council is the final segment on each episode of *Survivor*. Before the vote, the Pagong castaways start thinking and talking about strategy for survival within the tribe. Since Sonya, an elderly member of the Pagong tribe, was responsible for the loss of immunity, she is the first castaway to be voted off the island.

"Borneo: Finale"

Prior to this episode, the two tribes have been merged together. There are four remaining castaways, as well as the host, participating in this episode. Kelly, Sue, Rudy and Richard are the final competitors, and form an alliance to work together. This is interesting because there can be only one winner, and an alliance at this point in the game between all competitors seems unimportant and fragile. The key story events of this episode are:

1. The episode opens with the first of three challenges to determine who will be the final two competing for the money. Kelly wins the first challenge, and therefore wins the ability to decide who is eliminated first. Richard asks Kelly to keep him in the game, which infuriates Sue. Sue is the first person eliminated from the final four, and although she leaves gracefully, the impact of this action is felt at the final tribal council (see Appendix A). Kelly, Richard and Rudy are left to reflect on their experiences on Borneo.

2. The second challenge for the final two spots also sees Kelly as the victor, and now she must decide who will be sitting beside her in the final tribal council. Both Richard and Rudy reflect on her final decision. Richard comments, "It is in Kelly's best interest to keep me here," while Rudy notes, "I don't know hardly anybody who would vote for Rich. He stepped on some toes and people aren't going to forgive him." Kelly eventually decides to take Richard to the final two.

3. The final tribal council is the final segment of this episode. Richard and Kelly must face the inquisition of the members of the jury. The previous seven castaways voted off the island are allowed the opportunity to ask questions of Kelly and Richard in order to determine who gets their vote for the money. Kelly comments, "I don't know that the best person is sitting up here, but I do hope you vote for the best person." Richard takes a different approach to the jury, lauding himself as the best player in the game, noting, "I had a strategy, and I was here to play the game. It is about who played the game better." After the vote, the show moves to a live finale based in Los Angeles. Richard Hatch is declared the winner of the first season of *Survivor*.

"Pearl Islands: Day 1"

This episode is the first episode in the seventh season of *Survivor*. The

participants are the 16 castaways and the host, Jeff Probst. The teams are divided into two tribes, Drake and Morgan, in honor of the pirates who tormented the waters off the Pearl Islands long ago. More than previous episodes, personalities shape the mood of the program, as well as the culture surrounding the episode location. The story events of this episode are outlined below.

1. The episode opens with an introduction to all the new castaways participating in this seventh installment of the *Survivor* series. The first story event to emerge in this episode occurs after the 16 castaways are divided into the two tribes. The two tribes, Morgan and Drake, are given 100 dollars in Panamanian money to purchase necessary items for their respective camps. The Drake tribe was successful in securing a majority of the items they needed for the tribal camp, however, Morgan tribe members were upset their group did not fare as well. For example, Drake member Rupert stole goods from the Morgan raft to benefit the Drake tribe, claiming the groups were supposed to represent pirates. A member of the Morgan tribe, Ryan S., lamented the Morgan tribe's inability to spend all their money. Shawn and Burton attempt to emerge as leaders within the Drake tribe, yet Rupert is portrayed as the leader of the Drake tribe.

2. Challenges all require community attitude. Drake wins the first reward challenge as well as the first immunity challenge and therefore their immediate community as a tribe kept them from tribal council. They come together in celebration before they work together. Morgan finally starts to come together to build the house. Nicole becomes the first person eliminated from the Morgan tribe because she committed an act perceived as dishonest by the rest of tribe.

"Pearl Islands: Day 13"

The characters involved in this episode are 12 castaways and the host, Jeff Probst. The story structure changes slightly in this episode as the two tribes are broken apart in order to create three new tribes on the island. The story events of this episode are outlined below.

1. The first story within this episode is the deconstruction of the two tribes to form three. The third tribe is known as the outcasts. The tribes must participate in a reward and immunity challenge combined into one, in which the winning tribe can vote two members back into the game. As for the immunity, Drake and Morgan are each forced to eliminate one member at tribal council. The tribes are merged into one large tribe at the end, in which Rupert, Christa and Sandra form an alliance to attempt to make it to the final two.
2. One member of the Drake tribe, Osten, feels responsible for the loss of the reward and immunity challenge. Osten learns his physical limitations and volunteers himself to leave the game. Andrew, a fellow Drake member, comments, "Your mind controls your body. Osten gave up." Once Osten has volunteered to go home, the remaining tribe members no longer engage him in conversation, treating him as an outcast within the tribe.
3. Rupert has a hard time coming to terms with someone voting for him to be eliminated from the game. The discourse between Rupert, Sean and John is explored as the conversations between these three competitors become heated. Sandra, Rupert, and Christa form a tight bond, which gives them numbers when it's time to see Sean or John go home.

"Exile Island: Day 19"

This episode is the found within the twelfth season of the *Survivor* series. The characters on this episode are the 10 remaining castaways and the host, Jeff Probst. This

is the episode in which the two tribes are merged to form one large tribe, with one former tribe having a numbers advantage over the other (i.e., 6 to 4). The story events from this episode are:

1. The group with fewer members in alliance, Nick, Terry, Austin and Sally, realize one of them is going home after tribal council. The four form a tight alliance and compete strongly for reward and immunity. Terry, a former Lamina tribe member, immediately attempts to garner support for him and his fellow Lamina members. After spending one night on Exile Island, Terry is in possession of the Immunity Idol, which allows him the ability to save himself from tribal council if he is the one voted out. The group with the bigger alliance does a team chant of unity before tribal council, illustrating to the weaker group they are in control of the camp. Much of the discourse within this episode focuses on the dislike between the two groups.
2. The tribe competes in the reward challenge, which for the first time is a challenge and competition for individual reward, not a team reward. Terry wins the immunity challenge, yet is unable to save a member of his former tribe as Nick is selected to go home after tribal council.

Time

The manifestation structure of these episodes is one hour, including non-story elements such as commercials, announcements or newsbreaks. The castaways of *Survivor* spend 39 days in the remote location during production. Each episode is illustrative of roughly three days, thus the discourse structure of each episode contains information occurring over roughly a three-day period of time. The story elements do not take place chronologically, but rather are organized in sequence through editing by

the production team. Elements not affecting the discourse are eliminated to fit the allotted time.

The Simple Life

Story form

The episodes of *The Simple Life* can be identified as a hybrid between serial and non-serial. As each episode follows Paris and Nicole on their adventures, the memories of the girls on their travels continue on to further episodes. However, the supporting characters change within each episode as the girls continue on their journey or their jobs. The narrative formula for these episodes is not complex.

Story events

The themes of the analyzed episodes of *The Simple Life* vary across the seasons. In the first season of the program, Paris and Nicole set forth on a road trip from Miami to California, and are forced to make the trip without money. The second season of *The Simple Life* focuses on the girls working at various internships to gain work experience. The story events for all five episodes analyzed in this study are outlined below, however, it is important to note these narratives are truly simplistic and lack substance.

"Leaving Miami Beach"

This episode launches *The Simple Life* series, as Paris Hilton and Nicole Ritchie are challenged to live without money, something they have had their entire lives. The girls must make the trip from Miami Beach to Beverly Hills without any cash. The characters found within this episode are Paris and Nicole, the host and the families the girls interact with along their journey.

1. The girls are learning to live without money. The first stop along their travels is a

farm. The central story within this episode involves Paris and Nicole learning how to take care of horses. The girls actually remark they did not realize it was so much work to take care of animals, having only been concerned with owning them or riding them in the past.

2. The family embraces Paris and Nicole as two of their own family members. Paris takes a nasty fall from a horse, and is immediately showered with attention. Prior to Paris' accident, the grandfather of the family had given her and Nicole a hard time about being wealthy socialites who did not know the meaning of hard work. However, after Paris fell from the horse, Grandpa was feeling guilty and would do anything to make it all up to her.

"Louisiana"

Paris and Nicole continue their travels toward California. In this episode the girls are staying with a family in rural Louisiana. Further, this episode highlights the girls experiencing Southern culture. The characters within this episode are Paris, Nicole, the narrator and the Louisiana family. The story events are outlined below.

1. Once again, the girls have no money. They begin the adventures of this episode by arriving in Louisiana to stay with a family living in the bayou. First, the girls must bait crawfish traps for cash. Paris and Nicole overdo the traps with fish, but the family is still willing to pay a small fee for baiting the traps. Their second attempt at baiting the traps results in more money, as Paris and Nicole realize they do not have enough bait in the bags and add boiled crawfish to the traps to make them larger.

2. The girls learn about the Cajun lifestyle in Louisiana. Paris comments, "It's all swamp they live on." Paris and Nicole take the teenage daughter shopping, and have no

respect for the spending limit imposed by the girl's mother. The mother is appalled they spent over \$75 dollars on frivolous items, and makes the daughter take the clothing back to the store.

"Texas"

This episode is also from season one of *The Simple Life*, and highlights the girls' road trip as they proceed from Louisiana to Texas on their way to California with no money. The characters on this episode are Paris, Nicole, the narrator and the Texas ranch family. Within this episode, it is actually not clear what activities the girls participate in for money, as the episode focuses more on the discourse and interactions between Paris, Nicole and the Texas family. Interestingly, the girls pointedly avoid work in this episode yet still end up with funds to continue their travels.

1. At the beginning of the episode, the Texas family members discuss what activities Paris and Nicole will be participating in to earn money. The audience does not see these activities come to fruition. The girls spend the first portion of the program trying to learn how to use a CB radio. Paris and Nicole spend a lot of time talking to several people on the CB for entertainment. While talking on the CB, Paris gets the family truck stuck in the mud.
2. Paris and Nicole spend more time interacting with the teenaged children on the ranch. First, Paris and Nicole introduce the boys of the family to some girls in the community. Paris and Nicole also spend time with the young girls, enticing the girls to talk about their Christianity and virginity. The teenagers seem to be in awe of Paris and Nicole and their antics.

"Interns: Airline"

This episode is taken from the second season of *The Simple Life*, in which Paris and Nicole attempt to work in the real world as interns for various companies. Paris and Nicole stay with host families in the various cities while they work at their internships. This specific episode finds Paris and Nicole working as interns for an airline. The characters on this episode are Paris, Nicole, the narrator, members of the host family, customers and airline employees.

1. A central theme to this episode is the amount of time Paris and Nicole spend disregarding the rules of their internship. The girls seem to disregard all norms of behavior, living in their own world playing by their own rules. Further, the girls are constantly looking for any way to avoid work. For example, Nicole spends a fair amount of time trying to get other interns to take on her duties at the counter.
2. The second main story event in this episode is the interactions between Paris and Nicole and their host family. In one discourse interaction, Paris and Nicole coach the teenaged son on how to flirt with girls. Nicole kicks the parents of the family out of their own bed in order to allow the family pet to recuperate from an injury in the master bedroom.

"Finale: The Monkeys"

This episode is the season finale of the program for season two, in which Paris and Nicole live and intern with a host family who raises and cares for monkeys. The girls work as interns with the family, and must create an advertising campaign to raise awareness about monkeys. The characters in this episode are Paris, Nicole, the narrator, the host family and other interns. As in previous episodes, the story lacks substance, and focuses more on the interactions between Paris, Nicole and the host family more than

their work experience at the internship.

1. Paris and Nicole are forced to compete with other interns while creating their campaign for monkeys. The girls spend a fair amount of time goofing off instead of working. A fellow intern remarks, "It's great to have fun, but fun doesn't get the job done." Interestingly, though Paris and Nicole are not hard workers, they still compete for the internship and win the assignment. By design, Paris and Nicole are never implicated as failures at the tasks they are assigned. The ethics of this design within the program can be questioned by the viewer, as the girls are most often rewarded regardless of how their tasks are completed.

2. Paris and Nicole comment on how this host family is the best family they have stayed with during any of their journeys. Thus, the girls create their campaign about monkeys and the host family comments on how the campaign was the best they had ever seen from interns.

Time

The manifestation structure for this program is one hour, including all story and non-story elements. The discourse structure of this program is approximately one week of real time, with elements not critical to the outcome of the final program episode edited out for time constraints. Though the discourse structure is over the course of one to two weeks, there is countless footage utilized in the final version of the episode, which does not relate directly to the narrative flow of the story. The narrative form is not complex, and there is narrative closure for each episode as the storylines do not continue into the next episode.

The Swan

Story form

Each episode of *The Swan* is connected to the previous episode, marking this reality program as one of the hybrids between serial and non-serial programming. Though each episode features different women undergoing transformations, these women are only connected in the ends of each episode as one is chosen to compete in the beauty pageant. The format of each episode is stable: the two women are profiled, transformed and put on display for judges, reunited with friends and/or family, and one is selected for the final pageant. These characters have no memories (as do characters in a serial format) from week to week as is typical in a serial program. However, the viewer (i.e., the implied audience) is expected to remember the pageant finalists.

Additionally, the narrative form of *The Swan* is not complex. The audience is only presented with two new characters per episode. The stories of the individual characters are told parallel throughout the episodes. The story events for each episode are outlined in the section below.

"Kelly and Rachel"

This episode is the premiere episode in *The Swan* series. The episode begins with an introduction to the participants, Kelly and Rachel. Further, as this is the premiere episode, the host outlines the specific rules about the competition and transformation, such as the contestants will not be allowed to look in a mirror for three months. The surgeons and experts are also introduced. The story events are:

1. Kelly is the first contestant to be introduced to the audience. Kelly is portrayed as an individual with low self-esteem who has trouble developing intimate relationships with

other people due to her self-perception. Kelly first has a consultation with the plastic surgeon, followed by a trip to the dentist. Kelly expresses fear about meeting with the dentist, but eventually is able to go through with the dental work and gain a new smile. Kelly also experienced post-operative depression, as she was not prepared for the overwhelming emotional roller coaster the transformation set in motion.

2. Rachel is also portrayed as someone who suffers from low self-esteem, and feels average, particularly in her marriage. Rachel meets with the team of specialists to decide what needs to be done in her transformation. Rachel was able to make it through the surgical procedures with no depression problems, but experienced personal problems due to her husband's lack of emotional support. Rachel was placed in therapy sessions to deal with the problems in her marriage and family relationships.

3. In the final segment of the episode, the women and their new looks are revealed to their families and the panel of judges. Rachel went first to the mirror, and no longer felt she was average, describing herself as beautiful. Although Kelly did not meet her weight loss goals, she was still impressed by the new look. In the end, Rachel was selected to compete in the beauty pageant.

"Beth and Kathy"

This episode was the fourth episode of the first season of *The Swan*. The participants on this episode were Beth and Kathy, doctors and other various health experts, the host and the judges. This episode also includes commentary about the locations from which the women hail, information not included in the previous episode.

1. Beth is the first contestant in this episode, and comes to the competition from Washington. It is revealed Beth has relationship and marriage issues (e.g., her husband

has committed adultery in the past), as well as self-esteem issues about her weight and teeth. Beth consults with the plastic surgeons about her appearance and the required surgeries for her transformation, which will include a tummy tuck and breast augmentation. Beth also became the first contestant to undergo LASIK eye surgery.

2. Hailing from Illinois, Kathy is introduced to the audience as having low self-esteem stemming from her appearance, specifically her nose. Kathy consults with the plastics surgeons, and discovers she will be undergoing rhinoplasty and breast augmentation.

3. The final reveal arrives after three months of hard work by the contestants. Beth was the first woman to see herself in the mirror, and began screaming with joy. Beth was also reunited with her husband after receiving extensive marriage counseling during the process. Kathy was also impressed with her new look. Beth was selected to compete in the pageant.

Jennifer and Kimberly

This episode marks the first episode of season two of *The Swan*, in which 16 new women from around the country arrive to participate in the contest. This season's competition is also held in Los Angeles. The characters in this episode are Jennifer and Kimberly, the participants, the medical and health experts and the host.

1. Jennifer is the first contestant in this season opener. Jennifer is a 30-year-old mother of three from Arizona who was burned in a house fire when she was 6 years old. Jennifer wants to have the scars lessened and have her smile and nose fixed. After meeting with the plastic surgeons, Jennifer will undergo lip augmentation, nose surgery, breast augmentation, liposuction and a tummy tuck. She will also be forced to spend at least two hours per day at the gym and maintained a 1200-calorie per day diet. Jennifer spends

much of her time in the three month sequester crying about missing her family.

2. Kimberly, the second participant, is a mother of four from Ohio. Kimberly's desire for transforming her appearance stems partly from a difficult childhood as well as from her inability to lose weight after having children. Kimberly meets with the doctors and it is decided she must undergo liposuction, a breast augmentation and a tummy tuck.

Kimberly's recovery proves challenging, as she has problems dealing with the therapist and complains about having to attend the gym.

3. The night of the final reveal proves to be an improvement for Kimberly's spirits, as she is astounded by her appearance. Jennifer also cannot believe how different she looks after the surgeries. In the end, although the judges felt Kimberly had made great strides in overcoming her resistance to the program, Jennifer is selected to attend the pageant.

"Erica and Christina"

This is the third episode from the second season of *The Swan*. The characters in this episode are the participants, the medical experts, the host and the judges. This episode marks the first episode analyzed in which the contestant did not fully cooperate with the medical team.

1. Erica, a 24-year-old-woman from Washington, blames her boyfriend for her weight and emotional issues. Erica will undergo a total of 13 medical procedures during the process, as well as two hours per day in the gym. At first, Erica is excited to participate in the program and seems determined to win the pageant. However, at the dentist's office, Erica backs out of her appointment and has trouble committing to therapy and the gym.

2. Christina is a married mother of one from Washington. A child of divorce and battling obesity since youth, Christina will not allow her husband to see her naked.

Christina meets with surgeons and decides to have a minimal list of procedures completed. Christina has an extremely difficult time cooperating with the doctors in the competition. For example, she refuses to wear the required chin strap after her facial surgery.

3. Erica and Christina arrive for the final reveal to the audience and the judges. Both women are pleased with their new appearance, and Erica is chosen to move forward in the competition, mostly because her attitude is better than Christina.

"Delisa and Lorraine"

This is the sixth episode aired in season two of *The Swan*. The characters on this episode include the participants, Delisa and Lorraine, the medical experts, the judges and the host. The story events are:

1. Delisa, the first participant in this episode, is a military veteran whose skin was damaged after serving in the Middle East desert. She is also coping with a failing marriage, and feels her husband no longer finds her physically attractive. In order to better prepare Delisa for dealing with interpersonal relationships, she meets with a life coach and attends therapy sessions for the duration of the competition. She will also receive a facelift, a tummy tuck, a breast lift and dental work. Unfortunately, Delisa was served with divorce papers during her 12 week transformation period, however Delisa relies on her inner strength to force herself to succeed at the program.

2. Lorraine, 38, was ridiculed as a child and is especially self-conscious about her teeth and smile. Lorraine claims to have never felt pretty, even on her wedding day. The following procedures were conducted on Lorraine: nose surgery, facelift, breast augmentation, tummy tuck and dental implants. There was such extensive dental work

completed the doctors felt Lorraine would not be healed in time to go before the judges.

3. The women arrive at the final reveal anxious to see their new looks. Both women are amazed at their new appearance and are reunited with their families and friends. The judges chose Delisa to move on to the pageant.

Time

The time length for the episodes of *The Swan* are one hour in viewing time, however, the transformation of the participants takes place over a period of three months. Thus, the discourse structure for each episode is created and edited together from footage garnered during the three-month time frame. There is a level of narrative closure at the end of each episode, with one participant being selected for the beauty pageant to be held at the end of the each season. However, the audience is still expected to remember the contestants previously selected for the pageant, as there is no mention at the end of each episode of who has been selected on prior episodes.

Trading Spaces

Story form

Another example of non-serial programming within reality television is found on the program *Trading Spaces*. The basic story form of each episode remains the same. For example, the host of the program introduces the city or location at the beginning of the episode, followed by the introduction of the participants and interior designers. The theme music introduces the premise of the show by offering the viewer illustrations of the homes to be redecorated intermingled with written dialogue such as “two homes,” “two days,” “\$1,000” and “two designers.” The story structure follows the same patterns for each episode: introduction, day one segment, day two segment and the reveal to the

homeowners. The narrative structure is not complex. The story events for each episode analyzed is outlined in the section below.

Story events

The story events for *Trading Spaces* follow the same formula. For the purposes of this study, the story events regarding home renovations were not outlined in great detail. The interactions between the characters, which in the case of each episode consist of the homeowners, the designers, the carpenters and the host, were analyzed for each episode. This analysis of *Trading Spaces*, therefore, was limited in its scope.

"Boston: Ashford St."

This show offers the idyllic illustration of suburban American society and how Americans live are often normalized on these programs. Designers use intuition to create the designs for the new rooms. Homeowners are afforded little input, but are allowed to make small suggestions, as they know their neighbors better than the experts. The characters on this episode were the host, the participating families, the designers and the carpenter.

1. The two families are renovating rooms for their children. Both sets of parents comment they want to preserve their children's personalities through the designs of the rooms. The girls are interviewed in the beginning of the episode to hear their opinions of what they would like in their rooms.
2. The designer of one home, Genevieve Gorder, gets into a dispute with the father, Nick, after he decides to install electrical outlets in the room without asking for permission. Nick actually ruins the wall paint, and the group is set back on time as they have to make repairs in the room.

3. The participating families have an opportunity to discuss their experience via the personal camera of the host, Paige Davis.

4. The final reveal is held at the end of the two-day work period. Both families in this episode are pleased with the outcomes of the designs.

"Charleston"

This episode is set in the historic district of the city of Charleston, South Carolina. The characters are the participating families, the designers and the carpenters. This episode does not have a host. This is a new format from the other episodes of *Trading Spaces*. There is no host. Each group has their own carpenter and designer. The envelopes in each room determine the budget that the groups will be using.

1. Both participating families are artistic. One family has one child, the other none. The traditional gender roles are evidenced on this program. Andrew says to the carpenter, "You and I do carpenter work and I don't have to go shopping. The women end up going shopping for fabric."

2. The teams work well together. Also, this is the only episode analyzed from this program where the designers actually stay and help the homeowners with the homework.

3. The final reveal is held at the end of the two-day work period. One family is pleased with the design of their newly renovated room; however, the other family is not happy with the outcome.

"Seattle: 137th Street"

This episode of *Trading Spaces* is unique in that one set of homeowners was so displeased with the outcome of the renovation, the homeowners spent over \$3000 to remodel their home to its original condition. The characters in this episode are the host,

the participating families, the carpenters and the designers. The story events are outlined below.

1. The homeowners are introduced individually at the beginning of the program. The families make clear their desires for renovation. One family has placed a note on their fireplace to not renovate or paint the bricks around the family hearth. The family also requested the room to not be painted a dark color. The designer for this home chooses to ignore the wishes of the homeowners and designs a new wood covering to completely block the fireplace. The room is then painted a dark brown color.
2. The final reveal finds the host not knowing how to react when one set of homeowners is so upset, the female participant sobs uncontrollably on camera. This episode is one of the most well known episodes because of the severity of the homeowners' reaction to the redesign of their room.

"Philadelphia: James Street"

This episode features the remodeling and renovation of two basement /bonus rooms in Philadelphia. The characters in this episode are the participants, the designers, the carpenters and the host. The story events are:

1. The participants of the first home refer to their basement as a male sanctuary and desire to maintain the guy-friendly feel of the room. Designer Gen Gorder, who based her design off a Scrabble game board, renovates the first basement. The floor tiles were painted as Scrabble squares. Carpenter Amy Wynn Pastor created a wall length wet bar.
2. The second basement was renovated in a more simplistic design, with neutral colors. There was no main discourse adding to the story events regarding the second home.
3. The final reveal was successful, as both sets of homeowners were pleased with the

new designs in their homes.

"New Orleans: Freret Street"

This episode of *Trading Spaces* first aired in 2002 as part of the fifth season of the program. The characters in this episode were the participating homeowners, the host, the designers and the carpenter.

1. The opening of this episode spends time introducing the families and the city of New Orleans. This episode is filmed in one of the oldest neighborhoods in the historic district of the city. Both sets of homeowners want to maintain the history of their homes during the renovation.
2. One of the designers decides to take a more modern approach in the renovation. This is directly against the homeowners' wishes to maintain history and elegance. The designer goes so far as to nail wooden cutouts of animals on the walls between the exposed beams.
3. The final reveal of the rooms brings mixed reactions from both sets of participants. One set of homeowners are pleased with the results, however, the owners of the more modernized home are not happy. One owner remarked, "I'm not mad, but you'll be helping me fix it."

Time

The manifestation structure of this program is one hour, including all story and non-story elements. The discourse structure of the program episodes is two days in real time, as the story form discussed previously revealed the two-day filming format of the episodes. Program footage, such as homework time (filmed during the overnight hours between day one and two), is edited for time constraints. There is narrative closure at the

end of each episode, as the characters change and do not continue from week to week.

Trauma: Life in the ER

Story form

Trauma: Life in the ER is also a non-serial reality program. Each program episode is individually contained, with no characters carrying over into the next episode. This is due to the changing location for each episode, as major trauma units around the United States are examined on each program. The narrative structure is not complex. Each episode begins with an introduction by the narrator to the city or location for the specific episode. The theme music plays over generic footage of the hospital and crew. The story segments are separated by each trauma, with each segment introduced with a tag line telling the viewer the name of the victim and the type of accident suffered. Each episode averages between four and five traumas. The narrator, doctors, nurses and victims tell the story events to the viewer. The story events of each of the five episodes analyzed are outlined below.

"Going the Distance"

This episode is set in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The trauma unit at this hospital is the only trauma unit within a 400-mile radius. The hospital is also a teaching hospital. The doctors, residents, interns and nurses all work together as a collective unit to make and implement life-saving decisions. They all work together for the common good of the patient. These collective actions illustrate the importance/value of working together within society. The characters in this episode are the patients, doctors, nurses and hospital staff.

1. The residents in the ER are learning from the trained and educated physicians. Their medical education comes from this rotation while earning their medical degree. Doctors

rely on reason and intelligence to make decisions.

2. Family togetherness is presented as a dominant position in society. In time of crisis, it is human tendency to put aside differences. The families displayed in this program pulled together to help their loved ones. In some cases, a number of extended family members arrived to care for the injured family member. This is also different among differing races.

3. There are three main trauma cases discussed in this episode. The first patients were victims of a car crash in a rural area of the county. The two victims, husband and wife, are taken to the trauma center via helicopter. The husband pulls through, but the elderly man will face the loss of his new bride, as she did not survive the crash. The second patient was involved in a motorcycle accident, and is not expected to live through the night. However, the young man is able to pull through. Finally, the last patient highlighted in this episode was the victim of a single car motor vehicle accident, and is not as severely injured as the other patients discussed.

"Loss of Innocence"

This episode is taken from the second season of the program, and is set in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. The narrator notes New Orleans if one of the most violent cities in the nation, and, according to the narrator, this episode portrays how "innocence of youth collides with a troubled city." The characters in this episode include patients, doctors, nurses and hospital staff.

1. The first segment of the program introduces the viewer to the violent lifestyle found in downtown New Orleans. There are over 40,000 traumas per year in New Orleans and over half are caused by violence.

2. A four-old-girl is brought to the trauma unit with burns on her arms. The doctor notices previous injuries on the girl, and calls Child Protective Services about the potential abuse.

3. A college athlete and football star is brought in with a gunshot wound to the head. The family is brought in to see their loved one and a preacher administers last rites to the young man. The hospital is required to contact the Louisiana organ procurement agency in the event of a major trauma such as this one. Amazingly, the young athlete is able to survive.

"Friendly Fire"

Filmed in Nashville, Tennessee, this episode from the third season of the program highlights the trauma unit at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center. The narrator notes the pace in Tennessee is slow, with old-fashioned values at the core of the hospital's motto. The characters in this episode are the patients, the doctors, nurses and hospital.

1. This episode features opposing approaches to medicine. The surgeon is more personal and interested in the families. She wants to help and wants to know how the outcome is and how the family is doing. The chief physician is not as involved or personal. He knows they have their own doctors, so he treats and moves on.

2. Interestingly, this episode only discusses two trauma cases. The first case involves an entire family, as one adult brother shot his three siblings and then turned the shotgun on himself. The second trauma is a high school wrestler who thought his neck was broken during a tournament. This episode focuses more on the interactions between the doctors than the actual patients.

“Trick or Trauma: Las Vegas”

This episode begins with an introduction to the city of Las Vegas, where the narrator notes: “Life is an endless gamble.” The setting of the episode is the University Medical Center, partly a teaching hospital. The characters in this episode include doctors, nurses, hospital staff and patients. The story events are:

1. The first patient treated was a soccer player with a deep cut on his foot. The injury occurred while playing a game with friends, and the accident resulted in a laceration under his toe requiring extensive stitches.
2. The second emergency patient highlighted in this episode was a 2-year-old boy diagnosed with the croup. The doctors and nurses were concerned about neglect of the child as far as the boy not receiving adequate medical treatment.
3. The final patient highlighted in this episode was the case of a young deaf boy hit by his neighbor’s car. *Trauma: Life in the ER* episodes imply the values of life and safety. This case is also indicative of these values. Specifically, this accident spawns discussion of increased safety awareness regarding deaf children at play in a neighborhood.
4. The episode ends with scenes and additional footage from the city of Las Vegas. The ending scenes also offer some closure regarding the families and victims highlighted in this episode.

“Last Exit to Oakland”

This episode is set in Oakland, California, at Alameda County Medical Center’s Highland Hospital. The introduction to the hospital notes this is one of the busiest hospitals in Oakland, servicing over 65,000 emergency patients per year. The characters in this episode are the patients, doctors, nurses and various hospital staff.

1. The opening scenes of this episode involve discussion amongst the doctors, nurses and staff about the funding problems with Highland Hospital.
2. The first emergency victim to be treated was involved in a car crash. Family members are seen at the hospital uniting in prayer over the recovery of their loved one. The second victim was taken via helicopter from the scene of a motorcycle crash.

Time

The manifestation structure of the program is one hour, including all story and non-story elements. The discourse structure of the program is approximately a three to four day period in the trauma unit; however, in some instances the producers give the audience an update on the progress of the patients, which implies a longer amount of discourse time in some cases. There is narrative closure in all episodes of this program, particularly the episodes in which the resolutions of the cases are disclosed to the audience.

Cops

Story form

Cops is a reality program non-serial in nature, as each episode is self-contained and the characters vary from episode to episode. The opening montage of the program shows the viewer footage from various arrests by the officers, though the footage is not necessarily taken in the location of the actual episode. The beginning sequence of the story introduces the location for each individual episode, as well as introduces the officers on patrol. The story form of *Cops* is not complex. The cameras follow the officers as they participate in the arrests of criminals and uphold the justice system.

Story events

The story events of each episode of *Cops* are not complex, and are not linear in sequence. The story events can also vary, as some episodes feature only scenes of the police officers on patrol and making arrests, while others feature a foot or car chase of criminals or scenes from the squad room. There is always more than one criminal's story within each program. The arrests or stops are not always violent or urgent. Some are mundane. A majority of the story events in the episodes analyzed are simplistic, thus, as the story events for each episode are outlined below, the analysis of these episodes were brief due to lack of content.

"Albuquerque"

A camera crew follows the officers on their busts. The audience is introduced to the city, then the cops, then begin to follow them on their patrol. The characters in this episode are the police officers, the criminals and in some cases, the victims.

1. The police officers spend time in their patrol units with the camera crew discussing the criminal activities taking place within the city. They also discuss how the media can help to aid them in their police duties, such as informing the public about crime and criminals who are avoiding arrest.
2. The cops stop to make a routine traffic stop, and end up in a police chase after the criminal. The police officers are forced to call for backup in order to catch the suspect. The chase begins in the car, but ends with the police officers chasing and capturing the suspect on foot.
3. The police officers interview a security guard who claims a woman pulled a knife on him in the shopping center. After interviewing the victim, the police officers place the

suspect woman under arrest.

"Tucson"

The structure of this episode remains the same as the previous, but with the characters the police officers on patrol in Tucson. The camera crew follows the officers on the arrests.

1. This episode highlights the brotherhood of the police community. The police officers act as their own community within society. When one of the police officers is injured, the entire force comes together to solve the crime. The cops work together and organize their efforts to get the job done.
2. The cops utilize the media to inform society about criminal activity. Specifically, the police officers discuss the dangers of crime, and this episode mentions how the officers conduct safety workshops throughout the community. The officers also discuss all the resources at their disposal to capture criminals, such as witnesses, weapons and police dogs.
3. There are only two arrests in this episode. The first arrest is for domestic violence. The second arrest is for petty theft and assault.

"Palm Springs"

This episode finds the camera crew on location with the police officers of Palm Springs, California. The story events of this episode are limited.

1. The cops once again use the media to discuss criminal activity. The criminals are portrayed as egotistical. The older police officer in the unit finds a suspect accused of stabbing a man and arrests him for attempted murder. The police officers spend a majority of this episode patrolling the streets and monitoring activity.

"Coast to Coast"

This episode of *Cops* takes the viewer on a journey to the top locations of crime throughout the nation to show America's various police departments at work. The characters of this program are the criminals and the police officers from the variety of locations. The story events are:

1. The cops use the media to discuss the inherent problems with the crime of prostitution. In one scene, the undercover cop (dressed as a prostitute) asks for only \$15 for a sexual encounter. The first man who approaches is arrested, and comments he was just playing, while denying prior activity.
2. In a smaller town in the Southern United States, the cops make several arrests, from domestic violence to robbery to assault.

Time

The manifestation structure of this program is half an hour, including story and non-story elements. The discourse structure of the program varies by episode. An episode contains footage from either one night following the officers, one day following the officers (i.e., roughly 12 hour shifts of footage and criminals) or a complete 24-hour period. Further, the characters in the discourse structure can also vary from episode to episode, as half an episode might follow two officers on patrol, and the next half following two separate officers. Additionally, some discourse takes place at the police station in the location of the episode. There is no narrative closure at the end of the episodes, as the audience does not learn what happens to the criminals after their arrests.

Frontier House

Story form

Frontier House is a six-part series focusing on the participants living and working in 1883 Montana conditions. This program is a hybrid of non-serial and serial programming; although each episode is self-contained (non-serial), the characters and interactions build into the next episode segment (serial). The episodes each begin with a narrator describing various historical facts about the frontier and life in 1883. The opening montage was filled with footage of the frontiers of Montana as they appear today, still untouched after 100 years of modernity and progress in surrounding areas. The historical information presented at the beginning of each episode was utilized as lead-in to the activities for each episode. The theme of this program is: "Can modern families survive on the 1880s frontier?" Three families are transported from the 21st century and participate in 1883 Montana frontier life. They are not allowed access to any modern amenities, and can only take one period item with them to the frontier. The story events for each episode are outlined below.

Story events

In this opening part of the six-part series, the narrator introduces the purpose of the social experiment to place modern families back in time to 1883 Montana. "Idealized, and often romanticized," according to the narrator, this is not only a project about modern versus history, but the program does provide education to the viewer about this period in American history. This program is a competition of sorts as each family must prepare for the Montana winter. Historical experts arrive in the end to judge which family is more prepared to survive the winter. There is no reward in this but the

satisfaction of success and personal achievement. The characters of this episode are the Clune family, the Glenn family, the Brooks family, the narrator and various historical experts who aid the families in learning about the 1883 lifestyle.

1. There is a genuine love for history displayed by the families selected for the program. At the beginning of the series, the audience is introduced to the modern day versions of each family, learn about their lives and how they live day to day. The historical experts were on-hand to discuss the lifestyle of 1880s Montana, and served as life coaches for the participants. Some methods of lifestyle were not allowed into the project, such as firearms. Though we do have firearms in our society today, in the American West firearms were extremely valuable. The participants on the program were not allowed to hunt for game as a source of food due to modern laws. Therefore, firearms were not stressed on the program, though participants could have them for protection. Gordon Clune was upset to learn they would not be allowed to use guns to hunt as this was not keeping with the authenticity of the project.
2. The participating families came together for a discussion about certain ethical issues and rules the communities should live by while undergoing the project. Some of the rules discussed at the table were methods of birth control and menstruation practices for the females living on the frontier.
3. The children also engage in a discussion or diary sessions for the camera at the beginning about what they will miss most about the 21st century. There are also many mentions of ethical issues in this first episode, particularly after the families learn they must be trained in how to kill a chicken and prepare it for eating.
4. At the closing of the first episode, the families were gathered together and placed in

period dress before being transported to the frontier. The families also participated in a group photograph to document their appearance before the project began. All of the Clune women, including the mother and the female children, are distressed about their appearance, mainly because of not being allowed to wear make-up or take toiletry items to the frontier. The first task assigned the families upon arriving in Frontier Valley is to construct shelter.

"The Promised Land"

This episode begins with narration stating, "The American West was a romantic vision that hides a harsh reality." The narrator is referring to the families' rude awakening on just how harsh the conditions were upon arriving in Frontier Valley. The characters in this episode are the same as the first episode: The participating families, the narrator and the historical experts. The story events are outlined below.

1. Based on their family history, and not their modern living, the families are told what type of living conditions to expect when they arrive on the frontier. The Glens will have a completed cabin upon arrival, the Clunes will have a half-built cabin, and the Brooks will have to start from scratch.
2. Adrienne Clune breaks down about how horrible she looks and feels without modern amenities, particularly make-up. The Clune girls (the children) are obsessed with material items and are quite bitter about participating. They smuggled in modern luxuries, such as make-up and shampoo. These families really had no clear picture about what 1883 would be like, and are having a hard time adjusting.

"Til Death Do Us Part"

Community values and communitarianism are stressed in this episode as the Brooks family prepare for a frontier wedding. Everyone participates in the wedding

events. Further, reality of their social situation has begun to set in, as the narrator notes that reality is harsher than the illusion of the West. Once again, the characters in this episode remain the same, though family and friends of the wedding party are allowed to visit Frontier Valley for the ceremony, provided they also wear period dress.

1. The two married couples have noted how their relationships have changed while participating in the project. The Glens are on the verge of divorce, while the Clunes note the sexual aspect of their relationship has deteriorated. Divorce was actually easier to obtain in the 1880s west than in modern times, and the couples have taken note of how easy it must have been in those times to lose the illusion of romance and love. The ideology of romance and heterosexual, one-race marriages are celebrated in our culture and normalized. Since the Brooks are a biracial couple, the historical aspects of race and biracial marriage are explored in this episode.

2. The couple decides to conduct the frontier marriage on July 4th, not only celebrating the freedom of the west but the freedom of their choice to wed outside their race. This is something that could have take place in the West no matter what time in history, as interracial marriages were allowed in 1883 Montana.

"Survival"

In this episode, the trials and tribulations of life on the frontier are explored further. The participants are beginning to understand how hard life in 1883 Montana was, and their physical and emotional health is starting to wane. The characters remain the same as previous episodes, but add a new addition with the owner of the new general store. There are two main story events in this episode.

1. The first main story event of this episode is the addition of a general store. Though

this store is half a day's travel by horseback, the participants are given limited credit at the mercantile. The Clunes begin \$38 in debt, as they have 4 children to feed in addition to themselves. The Clunes refuse to take any generosity from the Glens, as it has become quite competitive economically on the frontier. Further, the groups are informed that a cattle drive will be taking place during the course of the program. The participants must pay to fence in their property if they do not want the cattle to eat their supply of grass, which will become hay for their livestock in the winter. This is due to the open range laws within the state of Montana, which not only exist today but were developed in the 1860s.

2. The second storyline to follow involves the difficulties in the relationships among the participants, both internally within the families and externally among all groups. The Clunes and the Glens have a hard time getting along the community. Most of their aggression toward one another is a result of differing backgrounds and value systems, as well as their methods of working on the frontier. The Glens view the Clunes as slackers, while the Clunes wonder at how the Glens survive sticking together as a family because of their infighting.

"A Family Affair"

This episode focuses once again on the trials and tribulations of the participating families as they plan to come together for a community festival. The characters remain the same, but guests are allowed to come to the festival and participate in the games and activities developed by the families. There are three key stories to follow in this episode.

1. All economic expectations were fulfilled in the 1880s by the use of child labor.

Children were extra hands, and not allowed to spend a lot of time being youthful. The

participating families are forced to rely on their children for a bulk of the work in the valley. For example, the time has arrived to start harvesting grass to become hay, thus providing a stockpile of food for the livestock to eat in the winter. The children are also responsible for milking the cows, cleaning the cabin, and other chores. The Brooks are at somewhat of a disadvantage in this respect, as they have no children. However, the Brooks are also not responsible for feeding a large family, and have more time to rest and prepare for the winter.

2. Education is discussed in this episode with the arrival of a schoolteacher for the children in the community. The elder family members decide on a location, and the children are sent to school for the first time since their arrival in Frontier Valley.

3. The families make preparations for the harvest festival, which will take place in the sixth and final episode of the program. The families have difficulty deciding how to proceed with the planning. Community relations remained strained, as well as the relationship between the Glenns.

Time

The manifestation structure of this program is one hour, including all story and non-story elements. The discourse structure of this program is harder to determine. The overall time length for filming of *Frontier House* was five months. Therefore, it can be assumed each episode of the programs contained footage from approximately three weeks to one month of real time. The footage was heavily edited for time constraints.

Characters

Abelman (1998) notes "producers attempt to create and offer characters the audience finds authentic, believable, attractive, and comfortable - characters that can and

will be invited into the homes of millions of viewers and become a welcome part of the audience's daily or weekly regime" (p. 63). Further, character development is critical to viewer satisfaction in such as audiences "are interested in what happens to the characters - how they develop relationships, how they cope with various obstacles week after week, season after season" (Porter et al., 2002, p. 23). The appeal of reality television characters is the participants are more like the average member of society, and therefore the audience relates to them on a different level. Further, the challenge for reality program producers is to develop characters, which will relate to the audience in a short time. As the narratives of these programs are ever evolving and characters are in constant change (e.g. some participants are eliminated), the narrative of the program itself often becomes more important than the characters. Still, character development is an integral part of reality programming.

More than one reality program seeks to fill certain stereotypical roles in the programming to feed into audience gratification. According to "25 Things You Never Knew About Reality Television," a special program aired on VH1, producers of reality programs enter contestant searches with certain character types in mind. For example, one aspiring contestant noted the producers approached him with a set of personal changes, a makeover of sorts, in order for him to best fill what producers called the nerd role for the program. Upon his refusal to change his overall appearance and personality, the potential contestant was released from the program. Haralovich and Trosset (2004) note *Survivor* contestants are grilled mercilessly before selection and are chosen from a generated form of character types, such as "the entertainer, leader, flirt, determined victim (i.e., the underdog), professor, zealot, mom, athlete, wild and crazy guy or girl,

quiet one, everybody's friend, feral child, introvert, redneck, slacker, or snake" (p. 89). These character types have both positive and negative attributes, which the producers hope will make for a more interesting program.

Abelman (1998) notes characters themselves serve, as "metaphors for sociopolitical values and issues, and conflicts between characters are enactments of conflicts over ideologies between social groups" (p. 67). In addition, Himmelstein (1994) suggests several real-world ideological constructs which pervade our television programming through the use of characters, including: the sanctity of the ordinary American family, the celebration of celebrity, personal initiative triumphs over bureaucratic control, one's gain at another's expense and personalizing and dismissing social ills. This narrative analysis applies the character classifications identified by Chesebro (2003) in combination with Propp's character functions within narrative.

Chesebro Character Typology Analysis

As previously noted, each sub-genre of reality programming is reflective of similar ideological constructs. Similarly, although the themes of each program are different, the characters all maintain elements of the character typology set forth by Chesebro (2003). This study found programs with a serial format relied more heavily upon character development as an integral element of the narrative. Programs non-serial in nature, offering segments with closure and resolution in the allotted time frame, did not stress the importance of characters within the narrative. This study examined the characters of each reality program to determine how these characters are classified, as well as how they are reflective of the ideological constructs proposed by Himmelstein (1994). It is important to note this typology is not mutually exhaustive; some characters

within the programs can be classified into differing categories as the narrative develops over time, particularly in serial reality programs in which changes in the characters occur (e.g., characters are voted out).

Mimetic characters, or characters reflective of the average citizen within our culture, are the most dominant type of character found in reality programming. Virtually all participants in these programs, with the exceptions of celebrity participants, hosts, or additional team members, are drawn from an applicant pool of everyday persons. Both serial and non-serial programs relied on the use of mimetic characters within the narrative.

The women participating in *The Bachelor* were selected from an applicant pool with characteristics prioritized by the bachelor prior to the screening process. In addition, these women are mimetic characters since they are everyday persons within society whose images are consistent with the dominant images of women found within all media.

The characters found within *The Swan* were selected on a case-by-case basis for the transformation via cosmetic procedures. The appeal of this program to viewers, particularly women suffering from similar disillusionments regarding self-perception and self-image, lies within the program's reliance on the mimetic quality of the characters. According to Maslow (1970), one of our most basic individual needs is a strong self-perception, a sense of belonging with elevated self-esteem. Increased self-esteem resulting from the cosmetic surgery furthers the contestant's sense of belonging to the social world, thus increasing their mimetic character appeal.

The narrative elements surrounding these characters, specifically stories involving the personal lives of the women, also contribute to their mimetic quality. For example, in

“Beth and Kathy,” the narrator notes the first participant, Beth, has dealt with insecurities regarding her personal appearance since childhood. These insecurities reached a critical moment when her husband committed adultery, and she thought she could not end her marriage because she was not worthy of another person’s love. Her competition for this episode, Kathy, is portrayed as a woman who has lost her sense of belonging in society since her father’s death, and has also dealt with insecurities about her personal appearance and weight since elementary school.

Further, these women are reflective of Himmelstein ideological construct referred to as “personalizing and dismissing social ills.” Himmelstein (1994) notes “misdeeds and injustices are identified as isolated phenomena conducted by self-governing individuals rather than problems stemming from a troubled system” (p. 70). Though the female characters from *The Swan* are mimetic, they are also indicative of a larger social ill in our culture, namely issues arising from body image and self-esteem. These women reflect the concept they are flawed characters within the larger functioning system and concept of beauty in our society.

Wife Swap, a non-serial reality program, also offers examples of mimetic characters. Virtually all the participants of this program can be classified as mimetic characters. Though the audience may not identify with certain aspects of the families portrayed, such as their lavish social lifestyles, a majority of viewers can relate to mundane and normalized activities of the everyday life of a family. This type of mimetic character is also found on *Trauma: Life in the ER* (e.g., the patients and families being treated in the emergency rooms) *Trading Spaces* (e.g., participating families in the renovation) and *Frontier House* (e.g., the families live and work together on the frontier).

Further, *Wife Swap* also illustrates the ideology Himmelstein (1994) identified as the sanctity of the ordinary American family. Himmelstein (1994) notes this ideology is most displayed by family members becoming alienated and miserable, their dysfunction on display to the viewer until real world advice is offered to help families achieve the “desired status of the ordinary family” (Abelman, 1998). For example, each family on *Wife Swap* feels their ideological view of family is correct. The dominant views of family in American society have shifted from the 1950s nuclear family viewpoints to the more eclectic and nontraditional families of today. Changing definitions of family in modern times often make the dominant view hard to pin down. It is interesting how on *Wife Swap* each family makes it a point to stress how good their family is at the beginning of each episode. By the final meeting of the adults featured in the program, each family has learned a lesson of sorts about the inherent problems with their lifestyles or home life. However, as the program ending tells us, in each case, these revelations for the most part do not bring about long-term change. For example, after the airing of “Martincaks/Schachtners,” the families appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to discuss their attitudes and feelings about the swap. This forum provided an opportunity for the families to discuss their experiences and in this particular case, allowed the Martincak father to redeem himself in the public eye.

Chesebro (2003) defines the ironic character as one who “intentionally articulates, defends, and represents positions inconsistent with other characters and known events in the course of the program or in the world at large” (Abelman, 1998, p. 56). These characters are not as prevalent in reality programming. However, five programs analyzed (*The Bachelor*, *Wife Swap*, *Survivor*, *The Swan* and *Cops*) offer ironic characters as part

of the character scheme.

Ironic characters found on the episodes of *The Bachelor* analyzed within this study can be best described as those women who stood out among the other participants due to their personalities or actions. However, on this program, the ironic characters did not fare as well as the other participants, as their actions as an ironic character could be considered part of the reason for their departure from the competition. For example, on "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-1," Ali makes comments to the other women regarding reproduction, stating, "The reason I'm here is to find a husband...quite frankly, my eggs are rotting." The producers of the program present her comments on reproduction as her means for attaining the bachelor's attentions. However, this discrepancy from the other women's attitudes toward the competition caused her to stand out and she was eliminated from the program upon Travis hearing about the commentary.

On the program *Wife Swap*, the participating wives act as ironic characters during the week of the rule swap. Once the women are ensconced within the opposing households and begin making changes to the lifestyles and routines of their new families, they become ironic characters in such they are representative of inconsistent belief and value systems within those households. For example, on the "Martincaks/Schachtners" episode, Pam Schachtner forces Danny Martincak and his daughter to wear family tee shirts to a gymnastics competition for the younger sibling. Danny Martincak is unhappy with this rule, and deliberately attempts to sabotage Pam's attempts at family unity. Though she remains quiet about the incident, it is apparent to the viewer her rules make the Martincak household uncomfortable.

The ironic character found on *Survivor* is perhaps most notable with the character

of Richard Hatch. Hatch openly defies the norm and presents attitudes and behaviors inconsistent with what the tribe might consider normal. For example, Hatch frequently walked around camp nude, an action discomfoting to his fellow castaways. Further, his heightened level of constant lying and backstabbing to get ahead in the game, though normal behavior in the tribe, was later described as phenomenal. Finally, Hatch was the first contestant on *Survivor*, as well as the only contestant on *Survivor: Borneo*, who was openly homosexual.

Both *The Swan* and *Cops*, by their very nature, are inherently filled with ironic characters. First, the women selected for *The Swan* are not only mimetic, but are also ironic as they are reflective of a certain group within society, namely a group of persons some consider odd and/or brave for taking such drastic measures to overcome self-perceived esteem issues. *Cops* is full of ironic characters in the form of the criminals, as they represent citizens within society who do not fit within the mainstream concepts of normal, just behavior.

Leader-centered characters compel the audience with their bold authority and leadership skills, and in general are possessing of superior intelligence (Chesebro, 2003). However, the leadership of these characters is a result of specialized training in a particular field. Within this study, there were only two programs that utilized leader-centered characters: *Trauma: Life in the ER* and *Trading Spaces*. The doctors on *Trauma: Life in the ER* are experienced and well-trained doctors and nurses who work everyday to save the lives of their patients. The formal education of these physicians and nurses are what enables them to perform the modern day miracles in the emergency room. The designers on *Trading Spaces* can also be considered leader-centered

characters in such they are specially trained in interior design, acting as the sole authority on how the rooms should be redecorated on the program (although some contestants make their wishes known, the designers are not required to follow their suggestions).

Romantic characters, like leader-centered characters, are symbols of leadership, authority and bravery; however, these leadership qualities are perceived as innate and natural (Abelman, 1998). Only one program within this study offered representations of romantic characters in their truest sense. The police officers and officers of the justice system in general on the program *Cops* are perhaps the strongest example of romantic characters found within the reality programs analyzed in this study. These characters are the epitome of bravery and courage, qualities perceived and portrayed as natural for those tracking down the criminals and prosecuting criminal activity. There is no mention on any of the episodes analyzed regarding the training or education of the cops who enforce the laws, and their natural abilities in their chosen profession are lauded. They are portrayed as heroes however they are not portrayed as so heroic they stand above others within our society.

Mythical characters are perceived as god-like, otherworldly, and heroic because of inhuman and special abilities in dealing with situations (Chesebro, 2003). The reality programs analyzed in this study did not offer representations of the mythical character in the sense of the traditional superhero; however, the ability of these characters to become celebrities or begin as celebrities, as the case may be, can be considered a mythical quality as the audience views celebrities as larger than life. Further, these characters are indicative of the ideology Himmelstein (1994) identified as the celebration of celebrity, where "those who have achieved media exposure, are, in turn, given greater access to the

media exposure because of their celebrity” (p. 68). A majority of reality television participants use their stint on the program as a springboard into more fame and media

exposure. Thus, those characters on reality television programs who endure continued media exposure after the program has ended could be considered as mythical characters. However, it is important to note since the viewer has no way of predicting which characters can achieve greater success, the participants of reality programming in some sense are all mythical.

Propp's Character Functions in Reality Narratives

According to Propp (1968), “the functions of characters are stable constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled...they constitute the fundamental components of a tale” (p. 137). Propp outlines eight character roles

within seven spheres of action occurring in narratives. These character roles are villain, donor (provider), helper, the princess and her father, the dispatcher, the hero (seeker or victim) and the false hero. Table 11 presents the character roles and their corresponding spheres of action (Fiske, 1989, p. 137).

The reality programs analyzed in this study are indicative of each character role. As each individual program follows the same structure for each episode, the characters also follow similar patterns within each individual episode. This study analyzed each episode in order to identify how these character roles and spheres of action were represented within the narrative.

Villains are not only concerned with villainy, action and fighting, but can also be identified as those characters who upset the equilibrium or balance within the narrative, causing some disturbance which needs to be addressed or rectified by the actions of the hero. On *The Bachelor*, the individual woman who seek to gain the attention of the

Table 11
Propp's Character Roles and Spheres of Action

Character Roles	Spheres of Action
Villain	Villainy, fighting, action
Donor (provider)	Giving magical agent or helper
Helper	Moves the hero, makes good a lack, rescues from pursuit, solves difficult tasks, transforms the hero
The princess and her father	A sought-for person; assigns difficult tasks, brands, exposes, recognizes, punishes
The dispatcher	Sends hero on quest/mission
The hero (seeker or victim)	Departs on search, reacts to donor, attempts difficult tasks, marriage
The false hero	Unfounded claims to hero's spheres of action

It is important to note, that although Propp's character roles and spheres of action have been applied to contemporary television, the accuracy of the narratives to these roles and actions can be more or less precise. However, the conformity can be, at times, astonishing in its precision (Fiske, 1989). The reality programs analyzed in this study are indicative of each character role. As each individual program follows the same structure for each episode, the characters also follow similar patterns within each individual episode. This study analyzed each episode in order to identify how these character roles and spheres of action were represented within the narrative.

Villains are not only concerned with villainy, action and fighting, but can also be identified as those characters who upset the equilibrium or balance within the narrative, causing some disturbance which needs to be addressed or rectified by the actions of the hero. On *The Bachelor*, the individual women who seek to gain the attention of the

bachelor, by upsetting the balance within the house, fill the character role of the villain. In *Cops*, the villains are the criminals themselves, engaging in criminal activity, which upsets the social order. On *Wife Swap*, as the women swap families the new mother figure within each home can be considered the villain, specifically after the rule change in each home.

The donor or provider role is utilized in conjunction with the helper character within reality narratives. The donor is marked by their ability to offer help to the hero in a variety of forms. The donor is responsible for providing the hero with the helper character or a magical agent. Helpers can transform the hero, or aid the hero in their quest to restore the balance. An example of the combination of these character roles in reality television might be the doctors on *Trauma: Life in the ER* and the designers on *Trading Spaces*. The magical agent for the doctors is their ability to utilize modern medicine to help their patients in a time of emergency or crisis, whereas the magical agent for the designers is their ability to design the rooms with artistry and creativity. Through the use of these magical agents, the doctors and designers are helpers for the heroes or participants of these programs. An additional example can be found on the program *The Swan*, where the doctors, counselors and therapists act as donors and helpers in the transformation of the participants.

The princess and her father, an unusual label for a character, is a sought-for person who assigns difficult tasks to the hero. In the case of reality television, the narrator or host of the programs fill this role. The reality programs featuring a narrator or host utilize the narrative voice to explain competition rules or the format of the game or program. For example, the host of *Survivor*, Jeff Probst, spends a good portion of each

episode describing and explaining the competition rules to the survivors. The viewers at home are led step-by-step through the competition as the program uses extra actors and actresses to walk through the game or competition set up before the actual competition takes place.

Interestingly, the character role of the dispatcher, who sends the hero on their quest or mission, is best filled with the producer or creator of the reality narratives. The producers of reality television set the pace for the program by determining ahead of time the competitions or quests for the heroes (i.e., the participants) to complete in order to achieve the goal for the program. For example, the producers of Game and Competition reality programs, such as *Survivor*, set the pace of the program by delineating the reward and immunity challenges before the show is even taped.

The final character role identified by Propp (1968) is the hero. Heroes can be categorized as seekers or victims. Fiske (1989) notes seekers have a search goal as the reason for departure on the journey, whereas victim heroes depart on the journey without a specific search and have various adventures awaiting them on their way. For example, each program analyzed in this study has participants who may or may not have realized the goal awaiting them on their journey. *Frontier House* is perhaps the best example of a program beginning with victim heroes, due to several factors. First, the participating families had never lived in the wilderness, nor in a historical setting in which they had to work off the land. Secondly, the participants had no idea what to expect once they arrived in Frontier Valley, and each participant commented on how difficult life on the frontier was once they arrived. Finally, there was no way for the participants to expect certain events occurring which had an impact on their performance in Montana, such as

illness (e.g., Karen Glenn spent $\frac{1}{4}$ of the family savings on a doctor's house call).

Additional examples of reality programs using victim heroes are *Survivor* and *Wife Swap*. The castaways arrive in the exotic location unaware of what may happen during their time on the island, and are not even aware of how long they will be staying in the game. The families participating in the game of *Wife Swap* are also unaware of the person who will be entering their home and what rules will be changed during week two of the swap.

An example of reality programs utilizing seeker heroes is *Trading Spaces*. The participants, or heroes, enter into the program with the understanding of their goals for the program. Though the homeowners may not be aware of the type of renovations taking place, they are aware of the goals of the program, which is to renovate and redesign one room in the other's home. Women participating in transformations on *The Swan* are also seeker heroes, as they seek new body images through the surgical procedures gained on the program episodes.

Characters, Values and Setting

It is important to understand how characters function within the narrative. This study analyzed the characters of nine reality programs from the perspectives of Chesebro (2003) and Propp (1968). However, further analysis of characters can be utilized to illustrate their power to represent values and ideology. One such analysis involves observing how characters interact with setting to promote previously identified values and ideologies. As Fiske (1989) asserts, "characters turn setting into actions and events and in doing so, operationalize the ideological values and closures of the plot" (p. 162). Fiske (1989) also outlines a triangular, reciprocal relationship between setting, values and

characters (see p. 162).

Peripeteia

Peripeteia is the reversal of fortune, a shift in the momentum of the narrative.

This can be an event or action, the introduction or removal of a character, or a shift in the story or plot of the narrative itself. The weekly narratives of the reality television program are driven based on this aspect of the narrative formula. The shift in momentum caused by certain key events brought audience members closer to the personal lives and actions of the participants within the programs. With the exception of *The Simple Life*, all other programs analyzed within this study offered examples of how peripeteia influenced the narrative development of the programs.

The Bachelor illustrates peripeteia in the narrative with each Rose Ceremony.

The Rose Ceremony is conducted by the bachelor at the end of each program to eliminate women from the competition while keeping other women in the running for the bachelor's affections. The deliverance of a rose to some women and the elimination of others indicate peripeteia in such the women experience a reversal of fortune within the competition. For example, in "The Bachelor Goes to Paris, 8-7," the women are eliminated from the competition based on their interactions with the bachelor during their dates. One woman, Sarah, pleads with Travis to reconsider his impending decision to eliminate her from the game. In the ensuing Rose Ceremony, Travis does rethink his decisions, changing the fortune of Sarah in the game, while ending the game for another woman.

Survivor also offers the viewer illustrations of peripeteia through competitions, namely the competitions for rewards and immunity. Reward competitions are held

during each episode of the program, with the rewards increasing in grandness as the game progresses (e.g., one survivor inevitably wins a car each season). The reward competitions for food, however, have the greatest impact on the momentum of the game. As the castaways are forced to live on meager rations, such as rice and corn, the toll of the limited diet on their ability to compete in physical competitions is great. Winning a reward challenge for a meal has the possibility to change the momentum in the game for the one or two tribe members who win the food, as their ability to compete will be enhanced by the protein and nourishment. Immunity challenges can also create a momentum shift or reversal of fortune for the castaways. For example, in "Exile Island: Day 19," Terry has found the hidden immunity idol on Exile Island, which allows him the power to remove himself from the possibility of being voted out at tribal council. Although Terry found the idol early in the program, he did not have a chance to utilize the idol to its fullest advantage; however, the potential threat of using the hidden idol allowed Terry to remain safe from eviction for at least three votes at tribal council.

Peripeteia within the narrative of *Wife Swap* does not involve competitions, but rather is revealed at the end of the program when the spouses are reunited at the table meeting. The reversal of fortune can be understood by asking what the families learned new about themselves or how they live. Further, do the families conform to the new rules or revert to past behavior? Of all the episodes, the "Blackburns/Johnsons" episode is perhaps the strongest illustration of peripeteia within the *Wife Swap* narrative. The Johnson family runs a fitness center. Lynn Johnson encourages Tony Blackburn to change his health habits during the week of rule changes. When *Wife Swap* visits the families after the show, Tony has maintained his newfound joy in exercise and healthy

eating, a lifestyle wife Rebekah is not too happy he picked up on the show.

Trauma: Life in the ER also utilizes peripeteia in the narrative, as a momentum shift occurs when everyday people face moments of tragedy or adversity. For example, in the episode "Loss of Innocence," a promising, young football star is the victim of a random shooting. The gunshot wound to the head of Keith Gardner threatens to end his athletic career; however, the end of the program provides closure to the viewer as we learn he is back participating in team events after six months of rehabilitation.

The Swan, Trading Spaces, Cops and *Frontier House* all utilize peripeteia within the narrative, but mostly as an underlying theme of the program. *The Swan* utilizes peripeteia within the narrative to illustrate the various life changes the contestants undergo following their transformations via surgical procedures. Within the program *Trading Spaces*, changes within the homes of the participants can act as a booster for self-esteem and pride in their home, as well as indicators of personal success. The act of repairing or renovating the home is the peripeteia theme in each program, as the new home is reversal of the fortunes of the homeowners. *Cops* also enjoys peripeteia as an underlying theme, as the very nature of the narrative of *Cops* is to catch criminals, therefore changing the fortunes of the criminals and victims and illustrating the momentum behind the criminal justice system. *Frontier House* uses peripeteia as theme to illustrate the families dealing with the transition from modern times to the past, dealing with life without the amenities to which they were accustomed. Further, the families lived with the possibility of one false move on their part leading to a disaster on the frontier (e.g., not cutting enough hay for livestock food for the winter).

Narrative Voice

According to Ellis (1987), the use of a narrator in broadcast television “offers a continuous refiguration of events,” whether the program is fiction or non-fiction (p. 555). Each of the 45 programs analyzed in this study utilized the same structure for narrative voice. Each episode consisted of a narrator or host who ensured the ebb and flow of the story within the program. Television narrative does not often offer a sense of closure to the viewer, particularly in television formats that are repetitive in nature (e.g., serials) (Ellis, 1987). Therefore, the use of a host or narrator in each of these programs helps the viewer maintain the concepts of the narrator or hook viewers into the program during any episode of the series. For example, *Survivor* begins each episode with host Jeff Probst outlining the events of the previous episode. Further, Probst provokes discussion about the events of the episode at each tribal council by questioning castaways about specific happenings around camp. Hosts and narrators also provide information on the characters of the program in order to draw the audience further into the drama of the show. This is evident in programs that are both serial and non-serial in nature. For example, though *Trading Spaces* is not a serial program (each episode is an individual segment with new participants), the host offers personal information about the participants throughout the show to maintain continuity of the characters and narrative flow.

In addition, all participants of each program are allowed the opportunity to share their personal experiences with the audience. This is an integral part of the story being told. For example, on *Frontier House*, the only luxury item the families were allowed from the modern time was a video camera, which was utilized by the participants to compose video diaries about their time on the frontier. By the end of the six-part

series, the video camera had become a source of entertainment for the families, who had grown bored with the frontier life and sought additional means by which to entertain themselves. *Survivor* castaways are seen alone on camera discussing various events within the tribal communities. These diary-like moments of narration by the participants are a form of circumspect movement, which are events in the narrative designed to “generate tidal waves of verbiage, of gossip, discussion, speculation, [and] recrimination” (Ellis, 1987).

Finally, each program analyzed ended with the narrator or host leading the viewer through a series of scenes previewing the next episode in the serial. Programs not serial in format also offered a preview for the next episodes. Ellis (1987) notes “the characteristic form of series narration is that of the continuous update, returning to the present and leaving a question or a cliff-hanger for the future” (p. 565). Reality television programming follows this basic concept of television narration by allowing the viewer an opportunity to explore previous events of the program and have expectations for the program’s future.

Myth and Reality Television

According to Kellner (1987), “the symbols, thematic patterns, and social functions of myth persist in our society, and are especially visible in television culture” (p. 480). Myths are related to the concept of the dominant ideology found within television programming, specifically, they “naturalize the dominant institutions and way of life” (Kellner, 1987, p. 481). Campbell (1988) referred to myth as a public dream accessible to all members of society. Watts (1971) described myth as the following:

I venture to define myth as a complex of stories – some no doubt fact, and some

fantasy – which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life. Myths appeal to imagination, and serve in one or another to reveal or explain the mysteries of life, death, and the universe. Mythic images at once reveal and conceal; meaning is divined rather than defined, implicit rather than explicit. Myths are maps, and are not to be taken literally. Humans are themselves the gods and demons of myths, acting out, not the piddling business of worldly life, but the archetypal situations of life. Myths are a complex of images which give significance to life as a whole. They dramatize the order and disorder of the world, giving the villain his part, and the devil his due.

Television programming serves several functions in society by espousing the components of the basic myths perpetuated by the dominant ideology. This study discovered all reality programs analyzed contained elements of the most common myths identified by Nachbar and Lause (1992). The myths outlined by Nachbar and Lause (1992) include the United States as a special nation, anti-intellectualism, endless abundance, individual freedom, material success, nuclear family, romantic love, rural simplicity, technology as savior and vigilante justice. It is important to note this list is not exhaustive, as there are other myths existing within our culture. For example, Reich (1992) identified four basic morality tales embodying myth in popular culture: the mob at the gates, the triumphant individual, the benevolent community, and the rot at the top. The nine reality programs were analyzed for evidence of these popular myths as well as Reich's morality tales and found these myths to be evident in all nine programs. The myths of anti-intellectualism and endless abundance were the only myths not found in the

analyzed episodes.

The first house of popular culture identified by Nachbar and Lause (1992) is the "House of America as a special nation," which is based on the myth the United States is a nation with purpose and destiny (p. 92). One of the beliefs within this myth is the concept of American democracy is a superior means of social structure, a belief consistent with Reich's (1992) concept of "the mob at the gates," in which "America is portrayed as a beacon of light...a small island of freedom and democracy in a perilous sea" (p. 113). The concept of democracy is illustrated by voting. Voting takes on several variations in reality television. First, some reality programs allow participants to expel a member of the group by majority vote (e.g., *Survivor*, *Big Brother*). Interestingly, the rejected member is usually someone the others see as a powerful adversary (Jagodozinki, 2003). One could argue the alliances and partnerships formed and dissolved on these programs detract from the myth of democracy. However, this aspect is reflective of the partisan nature of our political realm, as noted in the previous discussion on political ideology. Both *The Bachelor* and *Survivor* offer the viewers examples from this mythic narrative.

Within *The Bachelor*, the bachelor himself is in control of voting off the women in the order of his choosing. Each week the women are brought together as a group, where the bachelor selects women to continue in the competition by offering his women of choice a red rose. The women add to the bachelor's decision through political maneuvering (e.g., belittling each other). On *Survivor*, no one individual is responsible for a castaway's eviction from the group. The collective remaining tribe members' vote for the one person they want to send home at tribal council. Once again, group politics

and alliances can be the key to sway one particular member's vote.

Although none of the other programs analyzed in this study utilize voting in the narrative, one other program illustrated the myth of America as a special nation through the narrative of the series. In the opening narration of the series *Frontier House*, the narrator notes the American West is "idealized and often romanticized" as a place of special beauty and historical significance (Graham et al., 2002).

The fourth myth discussed by Nachbar and Lause (1992) is located within the "House of Individual Freedom," which states "Americans have an innate right to personal freedom; the right to choose their own destinies, pursue their dreams" (p. 94). Interestingly, this myth illustrates two distinct, yet connected, morality tales presented by Reich. First, individual freedom can be tied to the morality tale of the triumphant individual, in which the American dream is attainable through hard work and a little elbow grease. In some cases, reality programming allows the American dream process to speed up, though hard work is still an integral part of the process.

Another version of this myth is the Americanized ideal of the "independent spirit – one who acts and stands alone, who follows some solitary path outside the group, but who nevertheless operates within constraints imposed by the dominant culture" (Himmelstein, 1994, p. 339). This modification of the myth can be connected with the morality tale of "the rot at the top," in which the members of the ruling class (the dominant culture) are corrupt in some way; giving one individual too much power could be the downfall of other individuals in the group. In reality programming, abuse of and/or controlling too much power results in one of two occurrences: eviction from the group (e.g., a *Survivor* tribe member controlling the voting is ousted quickly) or earning

respect and intrigue from both the group and viewers. Additionally, the "rot at the top" could be illustrated in a simpler fashion, such as the eligible handsome bachelor seeking to dole out individual freedom and privilege by selecting individual women for one-on-one dates. In the case of *The Bachelor* and *The Swan*, individuals compete and strive toward their own destiny, whether it is with a new career, attitude and/or life perspective. Learning how to deal with relationships developed on these programs, whether intimate or professional, a key element in the myth of individual freedom, is also key to the myth of romantic love.

Harrington and Bielby (1991) note the myth of romantic love can be delineated in western cultures as the achievement "of a full, mature identity and psychic completeness through choosing a love partner and remaining true to that partner until forces beyond one's control intervene" (p. 131). The myth of romantic love: For every person there exists a perfect match. The shows within the sub-genre Love and Relationship best fit within this mythic narrative; however, elements of the myth of romantic love were found on the program *Trauma: Life in the ER*.

Within Love and Relationship reality programs, the key focus is to espouse the notion there is one true match for each individual. For example, each season of *The Bachelor* features romantic settings and sensual evenings between the bachelor and his love interests, with the most recent segment of the program taking place in the romantic setting of Paris, France. The producers, with the premise of romantic love in mind, control the atmosphere of each episode. Specifically, the one-on-one dates between the bachelor and the selected women are usually in exotic locations with the opportunity for the bachelor and his date to spend the night together in the fantasy suite.

Romantic love is also viewed on *Trauma: Life in the ER*, though not always with a traditional happy ending. The myth of romantic love is only evident when the program episode focuses on the romantic partners of the victims brought into the emergency room. It is important to note romantic love in these episodes should not be confused with familial love, which is also illustrated. An example of the myth of romantic love can be found in the episode "Going the Distance." An elderly couple on their honeymoon is involved in a car accident. Although both husband and wife are critically injured, the husband, Richard is able to pull through, while his wife, Wylis, remains in a coma. From the time he is able to move about in his wheelchair, Richard stays at his wife's side, professing his love and devotion to his new bride. Unfortunately, Wylis does not survive her injuries and the program talks with Richard about his broken heart and grief.

Nachbar and Lause (1992) define the myth of material success as "hard work lead[ing] to good fortune which in turn results in money/fame/power for the virtuous individual" (p. 95). Marsden (1983) notes American culture is filled with "the lavish array of material objects which connote the comfort, the status and the security which are the components of The American Dream" (p. 135). Further, Marsden points out the myth of material success is perhaps the oldest myth in our culture, dating as far back as 1600 and the first settlements in the New World. There are some drawbacks to the myth of material success, as the price of fame and power can be high in terms of social and personal relationships. Thus, this myth is closely related to Reich morality tale of the rot at the top, in which "power corrupts, and privilege perverts" (1992, p. 117). Three of the nine programs analyzed in this study presented evidence of the myth of material success (e.g., *Wife Swap*, *Trading Spaces* and *Frontier House*).

Wife Swap illustrated the myth of material success by exposing the lives of upper class families who participate in the program. One episode analyzed specifically dealt with families who can be considered upper class with lavish lifestyles. The episode "Martincaks/Schachtners" featured the Martincak family of Florida. The Martincaks enjoy spending money and material goods, sparing no expense when it comes to materials objects or their family. For example, Robin Martincak equates beauty and talent with money and power, and creates an all girl band for her ten-year old daughter to be the lead singer. The opposing family is portrayed as lesser because of their lesser economic status.

Trading Spaces also illustrates the myth of material success. The theme of the program in itself is to promote the idea of the American Dream. Although not all Americans are homeowners or can afford extensive remodeling, the program perpetuates the idea anyone can remodel their living arrangements with time and a relatively small amount of money. For example, though a majority of the program episodes feature remodeling of homes owned by the participants, later seasons of the show featured the transformation of dormitory rooms, apartment homes and fraternity or sorority houses on college campuses.

Frontier House is indicative of the myth of material success in two ways. First, the opening narration of the series mentions the economic implications of the move westward during the 1880s. This program allowed modern families to experience life in the Old West based on the cultural premise all Americans can achieve the American Dream. Further, the quest for the American Dream is an underlying theme throughout the series.

The second illustration of material success is found in the portrayal of the participating Clune family as upper class, wealthy citizens from trendy Malibu, California. Much like the *Wife Swap* episode, "Martincaks/Schachtners," in which the Martincak family were depicted as lavish spenders with an upper class lifestyle, the Clunes are also portrayed as above the other participants based on their income and lifestyle. In contrast, the middle class Southern family on the program, the Glenns, is portrayed as lesser because of their background. For example, the series finale showed the participating families after the program, and the viewers learned the Clunes had recently moved into an enormous mansion overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The Clunes spent their time on camera regaling the viewer with stories about their new home while mocking the lifestyle and actions of the other participating families. This is indicative of the Reich's tale the "rot at the top" as the Clunes' behavior supported Reich's claim of privilege perverts.

Audience members are also interested in viewing reality programs illustrating the myth of rural simplicity, or the idea American virtue and happiness can be achieved escaping the hectic atmosphere of life and getting back to the basics, usually indicated by living in the country or on a farm (Day, 1994; Nachbar & Lause, 1992; Himmelstein, 1994). This myth is also referred to as the myth of the frontier, in which the American West is utilized to illustrate masculinity, ruggedness and freedom. Though this myth is stereotypically male dominated, reality programming extends the frontier to each gender usually in a family format. These reality programs chronicle the return to the good ol' days, and frequently use a family unit or a variation thereof as participants for the show. Two programs were found to be indicative of the myth of rural simplicity: *Survivor* and

Frontier House. *...simplicity, the myth of family values and togetherness remains strong.*

Though *Survivor* is filmed in an exotic locale versus a frontier, country, or farm, the exotic locations chosen for the castaways featured harsh living conditions. The tribes lived without a large food supply or adequate shelter while competing for the million-dollar prize. It is important to note the living conditions were in part manufactured by the producers of the program. Nonetheless, the show's location illustrates the myth of rural simplicity by the contestants utilizing survival skills throughout the program. For example, in "Borneo: Day 1," the survivors must compete to earn flint in order to make fire for each camp.

Frontier House is inherently indicative of the myth of rural simplicity, or the myth of the frontier. The premise of the program is to learn how to survive in the Old West during the 1880s setting. The participants lived without modern amenities in order to preserve the authenticity of the competition. The Clune family struggled the hardest in their attempts to live off the land, while the Glenns prospered in the Old West and the harsh living conditions, taking the competition more seriously than the other families. Mark Glenn comments about the ease of rural life, and laments about how our culture has become so consumed with the modernity and technology of the 21st century and have forgotten our basic rural and agrarian roots. The return to the basics as illustrated in *Frontier House* is also indicative of the family struggles the participants endure, and happiness is not necessarily based on a return to the simpler life. This difference in family communication is best described by the myth of the nuclear family.

The myth of the nuclear family holds the most desirable family unit is two parents (a mother and a father), two children and a pet. Though the face of the typical family unit

has shifted over generations, the myth of family values and togetherness remains strong. Research suggests parents within the family unit strive to continually offer their children bigger and better life experiences over time (Himmelstein, 1994). Of the programs analyzed, three of the nine programs were indicative of a family structure (*Wife Swap*, *Trauma: Life in the ER* and *Frontier House*).

Each of these programs utilizes a family format in the narrative of the episodes. As previously discussed, *Wife Swap* features two families from differing backgrounds. Although each family possesses a different lifestyle in regard to economic and social background, the family units are still traditional, following the myth of nuclear family. *Trauma: Life in the ER* also focuses in part on the interactions between family members as they endure tragedy or life-changing events. The families exhibit togetherness and family values. For example, in the episode "Loss of Innocence," family members came together to pray for the well being of Keith Gardner, the gunshot victim and football star. Of the three programs illustrating the myth of nuclear family, *Frontier House* offers perhaps the strongest example of this myth within reality television narratives analyzed in this study. Each episode of *Frontier House* is focused on the family interactions on the frontier.

The ninth myth identified by Nachbar and Lause (1992) is the myth of technology as protector and savior. Nachbar and Lause (1992) note that the underlying belief of this myth is that "technology is good because it protects other myths and helps ensure their continued validity" (p. 97). Science is seen as a virtue, an important service to humankind. Although programs within the sub-genre of Medical reality programs would fit best with representing this myth (e.g., *The Swan*), one other program analyzed in this

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study illustrated the myth of technology as protector and savior (i.e., *Trauma: Life in the ER*). Both programs utilize the modern advantages of medicine and technology to save lives or enhance the lives of others. For example, *The Swan* a vast array of medical procedures, including but not limited to face lifts, brow lifts, liposuction, breast augmentation, micro-dermabrasion, Lasik eye surgery, rhinoplasty and extensive dental work.

Each episode of *The Swan* also mentions how the transformation via technology (i.e., surgery) has acted as a savior for the personal lives of the participants. For example, in the episode "Kelly and Rachel," Kelly discusses her relationship issues with her boyfriend Bob including her inability to be intimate because of her low self-esteem. At the end of the episode Kelly and Bob were reunited and Bob discussed his love and respect for Kelly's new and improved look. Further, the viewer is updated on the progress of their relationship and it seems technology and medical advancements were able to aid in the improvement of Kelly's personal relationships.

Reality programming focused on police and crime, specifically the program *Cops*, are considered the breakthrough reality programs. Specifically, the programs found within the sub-genre Police and Crime are the strongest indicators of the myth of justice. Embodied in these programs is a myth fundamental to society: justice, whether vigilante or through the legal system, is highly regarded in American society. Nachbar and Lause (1992) identify the myth of justice as "the Law is made by powerful figures who...create a legal web which protects the status quo, punishes the innocent," noting that justice outside the law is also an acceptable practice (p. 98). *Cops* is the only reality television program analyzed in this study which illustrates the myth of justice.

The myths of anti-intellectualism and endless abundance were not found in the analyzed episodes. Anti-intellectualism presupposes an inherent distrust of intellectualism and proposes intelligence to be lesser than ignorance (Nachbar and Lause, 1992). An example of this myth might be the unpopular nerd who spends more time with his or her studies than with other people in a social setting. Within the genre of reality television, intelligence is almost a requirement to compete; to be able to outwit or outplay your opponents requires a modicum of skill and logical thought. Endless abundance was also not found within this programming. The myth of endless abundance assumes America to be the ultimate land of opportunity, in which all persons are granted equality, to work hard and have a plethora of resources at their fingertips from which to work. This is also not the case in the reality programs analyzed within this study. For example, the separate tribes on *Survivor* must compete against each other to earn flint to make fire. The teams on *Trading Spaces* work within a strict budget, and the doctors on *Trauma: Life in the ER* are limited by the technologies available in specific hospitals. It is important to note, however, these myths might be found within other reality programs. It is the argument of this research these myths were not found within the 45 specific episodes analyzed in this study.

Summary of the Critical Analysis

What can be determined from this critical analysis? The textual analysis has revealed the dominant ideologies, value systems, values and myths existent within the narratives of reality television programming. Television viewers construct meaning from the programs they choose to watch, and producers are forced by popular demand to create narratives which will meet viewer expectations. The viewers of reality television

programming increasingly demand bolder and bigger narratives, and the producers of reality television do not fail to meet the public's requests for more spectacle and excess. Television is a pervasive form of communication in society, and viewers accept not only messages from reality television programming, but from all television programming, as usual and ordinary, when in fact the production of television narratives serves first and foremost the political economy of the television industry.

Although previous studies of reality television were presented in Chapter II, specific points of comparison should be noted between prior research and the present critical analysis. First and foremost, it must be acknowledged the majority of the research and commentary on reality television is found within the popular press (e.g., newspapers and magazines). The limited examples of scholarly research were presented in the literature review found in Chapter II. This study recognizes the merit of previous scholarly research into the genre of reality television, but questions the broad assumptions made in previous attempts to find widespread agreement on the viability and place of reality television programming within the broader scope of traditional television genres. Past research focuses more on the impact of reality television on the television industry as a whole, arguing reality television has had the power of remaking the industry. However, this study questions this supposition, maintaining reality television has been a consistent thread in the television industry fabric over time. Reality television serves essentially the same purpose of all television programming: supporting the political economy of the industry while reflecting dominant ideological positions for the viewer. Additionally, this study questions the limited research on reality television programming from a cultural studies perspective and argues more research from a

cultural perspective is required to determine the impact of reality television as a cultural agent. This critical analysis has attempted to determine the representation of cultural norms embedded within the text of reality television.

How can reality television be utilized as a form of cultural transmission? By analyzing the dominant ideologies found within the discourse of reality television programming, this critical analysis has revealed reality programming to be a vital and active component of television programming. Through analysis of political, economic, educational, social and religious ideologies embedded within the narratives of reality programming, this study found the dominant ideologies to be present within a majority of the programs. Thus, reality television is a reflection of the views of the majority. The viewer is allowed the opportunity to comprehend the preferred positions proposed by reality television programming, and situate their own individual meanings and understanding of the dominant ideology within this frame. The educational, religious and social ideologies reflected within reality programming analyzed in this study were more prominent than political or economic ideologies. However, it is interesting to note in a business driven by political economy, the absence of both political and economic ideologies is significant. In a sense, this is in complete opposition to one of the major reasons reality television is produced on a large scale as a dominant format, which is cost efficiency of production (Magder, 2004). Further, this study revealed the values and myths embedded in the narratives of reality programming served to espouse the notions of the dominant ideology, and presented preferred meaning to the viewers regarding culture and society.

This critical analysis has also revealed the dominant value systems and values

within reality television programming. Recognizing television's role as a cultural agent, this study found significant instances in which reality television narratives might possibly influence the hegemonic process of supporting or negotiating cultural values. Yet, at the same time, this study cannot claim reality television as an all-powerful source for cultural transmission within society. Nonetheless, the mere existence of reality television, based on the demands of the viewing audience as well as economic concerns within the industry, indicates the necessity for understanding of this genre of programming as viable.

How does the narrative of these programs contribute to or represent cultural values, beliefs and attitudes? This study found the narratives of reality television utilize value systems, values and myths as underlying themes throughout each episode of the programs to reflect cultural standards and present preferred meanings to the viewers. This study also recognizes, however, the meanings generated in the texts analyzed can differ from the interpreted meanings taken by the viewer. Alexander and Fry (1986) observe:

Though viewers are clearly engaged by the texts, these same texts exist within a larger cultural context within which they are produced and consumed. It is less crucial to understand *what* a specific text or genre of texts mean to individual audience members or why a viewer choose specific texts than it is to explore *how* selected texts come to acquire various meanings as viewers interact with the texts during both primary and secondary encounters with given texts. (p. 237)

Thus, the ideological positions represented through the narratives of reality television can be influenced by individual perceptions of the audience. This study

revealed the ideological positions, as well as the value systems, values and myths, embedded within the narratives in order to illustrate how reality television programming is situated within the larger framework of television programming as a whole.

Further, Hall (1980) suggests media provide an environment in which ideological value systems and values are negotiated, and the value systems and values are displayed through a hierarchy of acceptability. However, the analyzed television narratives of the current study found the hegemonic process to be lacking in reality television, as the more dominant or mainstream positions are displayed as preferred and powerful. Minority positions within the ideological frame are often downplayed or invisible. Reality programs attempting to display minority positions do so only in select episodes within the programs. This study found dominant ideological positions to be more common as underlying themes within the narrative.

The argument reality television is not real does not hold up. The narratives of these programs, though scripted, tells the story of the human experience and gives viewers the basis for an argument for certain ideological positions. The programs offer representations to the viewer of value systems and cultural values. The narratives also tell the stories of cultural myths, the foundations of our culture's popular culture supported with each character and their dialogue, as well as the setting for the stories. The final question, then, is this: If reality television portrays the dominant ideology, the mainstream values, follows narrative structures and espouses cultural myth, then isn't reality programming actually as real as all other television production? The argument of this research, the crux of the matter, is reality television is a viable, cost-effective genre of programming which is reflective of real life. Perhaps this genre of television

programming is more suitably named than all other programming.

CONCLUSIONS

This critical analysis of reality television programming has investigated the genre of reality television in order to determine the role of reality television in the promotion of dominant ideological positions within society, as well as to determine the role cultural value systems, values and myths play in the narratives of this type of programming. The study analyzed one program from each of the nine identified sub-genres of reality programming. Television is possibly one of many factors contributing to the socialization process, as well as the development and support of the dominant ideologies regarding political, economic, educational, societal and religious influences through the presentation of values and myths embedded in the narrative of the program.

Chapter I established reality television as an area under scrutiny and proposed a direction for the critical analysis to investigate the oft-ignored phenomena of reality programming within our television culture. Chapter II demonstrated how ideological analysis developed and how it could be used to investigate the values, narratives and myths of reality television programming. Chapter III, the critical analysis, which provides examples of the reality television programming analyzed and the value systems, values and myths preferred in the texts, then incorporates the dominant or preferred ideologies of which television is only a small part. Overall, the analysis of reality television revealed this type of programming to be a viable resource for preferred meanings and dominant value positions within society, but also each type of programming relies on different methods for purporting these positions to the viewer. Further, the analysis revealed reality television to be a complex genre of television.

CHAPTER IV

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programming, which cannot be definitively labeled into categories, and viewers have the opportunity to take multiple meanings from the discourse of each text.

Television programming as a cultural agent is a complex process. As demonstrated in this study, reality television is a relatively large part of the television programming landscape, and has remained a stable, popular entity within the scope of television production. Individuals within society must determine societal conventions and norms, as well as how to incorporate the dominant ideologies into their own worldview (Feuer, 1975). Events of a national scale, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, can be classified as extremist positions within the hegemonic process, serving to illustrate to members of society how those opposing dominant ideological positions are dealt with swiftly. Such incidents reflect how extreme ideological views are dismissed and excluded by culture as a whole (Crane, 1992). Thus, television programming more often presents mainstream, dominant views to the viewers. Reality television programming does not attempt to fight against what is perceived as the cultural norm, which is the presentation of mainstream and acceptable ideological constructs, values systems, values and myths.

Summary of Findings

This study has shown the scholarly research on the impact of reality television on society is far from definitive and although the genre of reality television has existed for decades, there is no consensus of opinion regarding reality television's place as a viable television format. At the same time, television producers continue to churn out reality programs at a rate comparable or higher than traditional television formats, indicative of reality television coming into its own. Reality programming was shown to be cyclical

like all other programming, such as situation comedy, drama, action adventure or other primetime genres. As individuals watch television programming, they bring to the process of watching a culturally shaped knowledge base, which enables audience members to make sense of what they are watching through decoding. This study has shown the producers of reality television programming encode the narrative texts with aesthetic and cultural codes common in American culture. Again, this finding proves reality television to be comparable to other genres, as the goal of all programming is to exemplify and reproduce culture and cultural codes.

This critical analysis demonstrated reality television is a viable genre of television programming and the ideologies, values and myths of reality narratives are reflective of current societal trends and behaviors. Further, this study has shown ideological, value, narrative and mythic elements can be pinpointed through critical inquiry of the texts and this interpretation supports prior research which positions television as a cultural agent (Fiske, 1989).

According to Fiske (1989), "classic realist narrative and its preferred reading strategy try to construct a self-contained, internally consistent world which is real-seeming" (p. 130). In this manner, television seeks to offer viewers an objective reproduction of real society. Yet, critics of reality television argue the name to be a misnomer, and the narratives to be falsified. Berger (2003) argues reality programming is fraudulent, offering a distorted picture of reality. However, this critical analysis has revealed the argument reality television is not real does not hold up. Through scripted scenarios, the narratives of these programs tell the story of the human experiences and give viewers the basis for an argument for certain ideological positions. Scholars agree

cultural studies have found certain cultural ideologies prevalent in television texts (e.g., White, 1992; Kellner, 1987; Fiske, 1987). Reality television programming is indicative of this research, offering viewers a number of preferred meanings through its depiction of real life. Although television programming may not offer an accurate portrayal of members of society, this study previously identified attempts, as well as success, of reality producers to fill character roles within reality programs conducive to representing a wide variety of societal members.

Further, critical analysis of reality television narratives illustrate the conventions of narrative, as well as how these narrative conventions are utilized to support value systems and present values and myths to the audience. Though these messages can be contradictory at times, the producers of these texts are inevitably contributing to the socialization process of society members. As viewers process the given information within the narratives, they can begin the individual reading process, navigating the (un)clear waters of texts to learn about society and cultural codes and systems.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, reality television is a product and reflective of pure capitalism. Hall (1991) notes the function of ideology, according to Althusser, is to "reproduce the social relations of production" (p. 96). In other words, ideology requires superstructures within culture, such as the media, to produce ideology and ideological positions. Society must be capable of producing labor that understands and is willing to be completely subordinate to the discipline or task at hand to adequately reproduce the dominant ideology. Producers of media are no exception to this rule of production, as each and every creator of television programming is trained in the technical competence required for "advanced systems of capitalist production" (Hall,

1991, p. 96). Reality television, therefore, is a skillfully created product, which thrives because the producers have subjugated themselves to the capitalist system by offering viewers their versions of the dominant ideology. Additional evidence to support this argument can be found in the cost efficiency of reality television production. For example, *The Simple Life* costs a mere \$600,000 per episode to produce, whereas a sitcom of the same length costs over \$1 million (Dempsey, 2004). Within this study, the existence of political, economic, educational, social and religious ideology on a majority of the analyzed episodes indicate support for the basis of Marxism: "Society's institutions – legal, educational, familial, political, cultural and so forth – work to reproduce the fundamental needs of the capitalist system" (Casey et. al., 2002, p. 129).

Implications and Limitations

A media researcher could focus on one particular category of reality television and attempt to recognize the role of reality programming in the cultural processes of society, as well as comparisons of ideologies, values and myths from that specific category to cultural contexts. In order to elucidate understanding of this point, other questions arise regarding the general impact of television as a whole. What other resources exist from which to draw preferred positions of the dominant ideology? What role do parents, peers or several other social contexts play in the development of individual value systems, values or belief in mythic structures? Understanding these questions for oneself will help the individual truly grasp how television and/or other media systems are involved in the acculturation process. Further, the understanding of these concepts could lead to other areas of research regarding reality television programming as a cultural agent.

This research supports the hypothesis that reality television is a reflection of American culture. Much like the majority of television programming, reality television is not so far removed from traditional programming in terms of cultural values, narratives, myth and ideologies. This critical analysis assumed a broad position regarding research questions for the cultural transmission via reality television programming. Though broad in assumptions, this critical analysis was able to pinpoint specific elements in the cultural texts for analysis, specifically cultural value systems and values, myths and ideological positions. However, this research did not specifically address questions of race, gender or class within reality television programming. The need for further research tying reality television to a more complete set of cultural practices and norms seems the next logical step.

Media scholars have long debated the possibility cultural industries, namely television programming, provides society the opportunity to view dominant ideological concepts without realizing the nature of the dominant paradigms which they view (Fiske, 1989). Fiske (1989) also concluded, "despite the homogenizing force of the dominant ideology, the subordinate groups in capitalism have retained a remarkable diversity of social identities, and this has required capitalism to produce an equivalent variety of voices" (p. 310). Therefore, for a cultural commodity to gain and retain popularity, it must meet the various interests of the target viewing groups, as well as maintain and project the interests of the producers. The value systems, values and myths analyzed in the narratives of reality programs in this study have demonstrated a blurring of the lines between these two arguments.

This critical analysis argues reality television supports the dominant ideological positions within our society. Qualitative researchers believe these methods to be the best way to discover the influence and impact of cultural texts. However, while accepting this method as providing some truth, one can also recognize this method as providing only a glimpse of parts within the whole text. By only analyzing the most popular reality television programs, or those with longevity, one can assume the research has only looked at a part of reality television's place in societal structure or television programming. However, it is important to note the most popular reality programs most often lead to less popular clones. This is not to say the popular formula failed, but producers for other networks could not exactly mirror the narrative elements, which provided the original with so much success.

Modern American society features a multitude of cultural texts from which consumers of cultural commodities can identify social realities, standards of behaviors and social norms and values. The immediate access to information and ideas, through the Internet, news, video games and other technological advancements, combined with the need of consumers for more instant gratification, pose even greater questions about the role of television programming as cultural agent within society. Television itself offers a wide variety of programming to meet these demands for gratification. With over 200 reality programs to choose from in the television line-up each week, individual viewers may experience information overload, as well as a sense of being overwhelmed by the choices of reality narratives.

Additionally, as scholars become increasingly aware of the impact of ideological philosophies and values present in these programs, can there be one clear determination

of how reality television guides or contributes to culture? Preferred meanings in the reality television narratives analyzed in this study indicate the dominant positions presented by these programs are in line with the dominant ideologies found within society's institutions, specifically regarding educational and religious constructs. In contrast, the narratives analyzed in this study also revealed the potential for reality programs to present views from the minority perspective in society. Thus, the blurring of the lines between providing viewers with dominant or preferred positions in which the viewers are passive, and the argument consumers actively seek these texts for their ability to represent diverse social voices is converged within this type of programming. The appeal of reality television is as diverse as the viewers and is perhaps evidenced best in the selection of characters or participants chosen for each program. Through the depiction of these reality participants, as well as the presentation of ideology, values and myths, the television narratives of this study often provide various, and sometimes contradicting, preferred meanings.

This study has attempted to illustrate the power of reality television programming to reflect cultural ideologies, as well as the ability of reality narratives to display cultural values and myths. This study has shown reality television reflects and promotes the dominant ideology, but has only briefly shown how the interests of other groups can be presented through this programming. Yet, many questions are still unanswered. This study does not attempt to how society reacts to the presentation of real life via television programming. Also, this study does not assume qualitative methods to be the only means by which to investigate the cultural impact of reality programming. Can the influence of reality television programming be measured more precisely against other social

influences? Does this type of programming, through its characters and participants, accurately reflect the diversity of American society? How does reality television programming compare with other, more traditional genres, in terms of viability and power? These issues have not been addressed in this study, but point toward the necessity for continued research into the role reality television plays in not only the television industry, but also in society.

Further, this research is also limited by the programs selected; although the nine programs selected for analysis in this research were chosen because of their longevity and success, there are other programs which could have been utilized for study. The number of programs analyzed, though suitable for this study, could also be expanded to further illustrate the power and viability of this programming. Additionally, as these popular programs lead to less popular clones, the clone-type programs could be used in a comparative analysis between successful programs and failed programs within the same sub-genre. This research also does not address those reality programs existing which are extremely successful but only last for one season. Where do these programs with lesser longevity fit into the reality television genre as a whole?

Finally, this research does not investigate reality television programming from the perspective of the audience. This critical analysis has investigated how this genre of programming presents dominant ideological positions and cultural codes and conventions. However, this research has not investigated the direct or indirect relationship between reality programming and the viewer. There is limited research into audience demographics as they relate to reality television. The most popular demographic for reality producers is 18 to 34-year-olds, yet some programming is

targeted specifically for a younger demographic (e.g., *Trading Spaces: Boys vs. Girls* features preteens remodeling each other's bedrooms) ("The Tribe Has Spoken", 2000). Further, there is limited research on reality television from a media effects perspective, as one study by Leone, Peek and Bissell (2006) investigated the effect of three reality television programs on themselves and third-person perception.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, as Hall (1980) argues, one cannot limit understanding of culture and ideology to mere analysis of how it works for the dominant, but rather one must recognize there are alternative and resistant ideologies maintained by other social groups who are not accommodated. The current study described how reality television perpetuates the dominant ideologies, and how these narratives are indicative of powerful values and myths within our culture.

The increased number of reality television programs, due in part to political economic processes of the television industry and in part to the increased demand for programming which provides instant access and gratification, is indicative of the power of reality television. A media scholar might suggest this study has only reaffirmed what is known about reality television. However, one purpose of this critical analysis was to challenge critics of reality television to place reality television within a framework of viable and worthy television programming. If the goal of research is to provide a greater understanding and appreciation for a cultural text, then this analysis should be recognized for attaining this goal for some readers.

Scholars and society should recognize the powerful images and cultural implications presented in reality television. Within society, the influence of television

has been noted, yet the lack of recognition of reality television as an important genre in television programming is a gap which must be filled. Regardless of how one classifies this genre of programming, this critical analysis has determined the ideologies, value systems, values and myths present in reality television are reflective of culture. As Oulette and Murray (2004) conclude, "reality television's staying power renders an investigation of its relationship to truth and authenticity even more urgent" (p. 5).

One could argue this research supports the proposition that reality television is dominant and popular, like other more traditional genres, because reality television's dominance makes it more real?

In conclusion, there is much more study which can be done within the genre of reality television. This critical analysis has merely touched on the beginnings of a fruitful field of study. By continuing to analyze reality television in future research, perhaps more light can be shed on this viable and enduring genre of programming.

ELLY: Thomas: Interviewing.

ELLY: As at that point in the game, I decided to go out with the alliance to my family and just to hold my dignity and values in check and hearing I hadn't lost too many of them. And play the game as long as possible. Jeff said to you, what just around corners around. It's nice - you will not say yes. My vote will go to Richard. I hope that is the way you help you lose the money. It's not, so be it. I'll shake your hand, and I'll go on from here. But if I ever pass you long in life again and you were lying there dying of that, I would not give you a drink of water. I would let the vultures take you and do whatever they want with you with no regrets. I plead to the jury tonight to think a little bit about the school we've been on. It's full of your things... smiles and raw. And in the end of Million Dollars, you have Richard the winner, who knowingly went after Joey, and Kelly who moved into the red that ran from the center. I feel we give it to the island, the spirit we have come to know to let it be in the end the way Million Dollars intended it to be. Let the money be on the way.

APPENDIX A

PROGRAM TRANSCRIPTIONS

This appendix provides a transcription of the interaction between contestants during the finale of the first season of *Survivor*. Lines which are spoken are in upper and lower case lettering, while descriptions are all in capital lettering.

Survivor

"Borneo: Finale"

THE JURY MEMBERS ARE ALLOWED TO CONFRONT THE TRIBE MEMBERS IN A FINAL MEETING BEFORE CASTING THEIR VOTE FOR THE WINNER OF THE ONE MILLION DOLLAR PRIZE. THE SCENE OPENS WITH ALL JURY MEMBERS AND THE TWO FINALISTS SITTING AT TRIBAL COUNCIL.

SUE: Kelly, you're acting persona queen. You did get stomped on on national TV by a city boy that never swam, let alone been in the woods or jungle or rode a boat in his life. You sucked on that game. Anyways, I was your friend in the beginning of all this, really thinking that you were my friend. I was willing to be sitting there and put you next to me. At that time, you were sweeter than me. I'm not a very open and nice person. I'm just frank, forward and tell you it the way it is. To have you sit there next to me and me lost \$900,000 just to stomp on somebody like this [Rich]. But as the game went along and the two tribes merged, you lied to me, which showed me what the true person you are. You're very two-faced and manipulative to get where you're at anywhere in life. That's why you fail all the time."

KELLY: Hmmm. Interesting.

SUE: So, at that pointing the game, I decided to go out with the alliance to my family and just to hold my dignity and values in check and hoping I hadn't lost too many of them. And play the game as long as possible. Jeff said to you, what goes around comes around. It's here – you will not my vote. My vote will go to Richard. I hope that is the one vote that helps you lose the money. If it's not, so be it. I'll shake your hand, and I'll go on from here. But if I ever pass you long in life again and you were lying there dying of thirst, I would not give you a drink of water. I would let the vultures take you and do whatever they want with you with no regrets. I plead to the jury tonight to think a little bit about the island we've been on. It's full of two things...snakes and rats. And in the end of Mother Nature, you have Richard the snake, who knowingly went after prey, and Kelly who turned into the rat that ran from the snake. I feel we owe it to the island, the spirits we have come to know to let it be in the end the way Mother Nature intended it to be – for the snake to eat the rat.

KELLY REPLIES TO THE JURY. REFERENCES

KELLY: Sue, I'm sorry you feel that way. I can tell you the many number of lies and backstabbing she's done to me and this person right here (POINTS TO RICH). I don't think anyone who's played this game is without faults or errors or unproud [sic] moments. To the rest of you, I hope you vote the way you feel, not because of what happened between Sue and I, because that was between us...it's in your hands.

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