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“DO YOU EVEN LIFT, BRO?”AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MALE  
VIEWER’S RESPONSE TO IDEALIZED BODY IMAGES  
IN COMPETITIVE REALITY TELEVISION

Caitlin M. Shaffer

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August 2015

This study investigates the influence of exposure to idealized body images on competitive reality television shows, specifically the effects on men and their body satisfaction, including a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity, as well as the perception of a potential partner. An overwhelming amount of research on the effects on women exposed to idealized images has been completed by previous researchers, but men have been disregarded in comparison regarding this topic. Furthermore, this study will rely on social comparison theory and cultivation theory as theoretical lenses to analyze how male viewers respond to idealized images of males in reality television.

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VIEWER’S RESPONSE TO IDEALIZED BODY IMAGES  
IN COMPETITIVE REALITY TELEVISION

CAITLIN M. SHAFFER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Communication

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2015

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“DO YOU EVEN LIFT, BRO?”AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MALE  
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C.M.S.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

#### **Statement of the Problem**

With the average American consuming two hours and 48 minutes of television leisurely a day (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) it raises the question, what are the effects of this television consumption on the viewer's self-perceptions? Even with the emergence of other forms of media, TV is still the primary choice for the average American. By the close of 2015, it is estimated that Americans, as a whole, will consume over 1.7 trillion hours of both traditional and digital media, which equates to approximately 15 and a half hours<sup>1</sup> per day, per person (Short, 2013). These estimates were gathered from an analysis of more than 30 separate sources of media data, spanning from traditional media (television, radio, voice telephone) to new digital sources (tablet computers, mobile gaming devices, smartphones, mobile video) (Short, 2013). Additionally, this report found that traditional media continues to prevail over digital media in daily consumption, with TV and radio contributing to 60% of the reported hours. Therefore, TV programs will be more influential to the viewer's self-perceptions than any other type of media because of their permanence and scope.

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<sup>1</sup> Although this number seems to be extremely high, this is not a typo, but an estimate from 30 different sources.

One genre of television that has been gaining popularity in the past few decades is reality television (RTV). RTV programs are regularly among the most popular programs. According to the Nielsen Ratings (November, 2014) two of the top 10 primetime broadcast television shows in the fall broadcast season of 2014 were RTV (i.e., *Dancing with the Stars* and *The Voice*). In addition, other RTV programs are available across the dial, viewed on different channels. Primetime viewing of television begins around 9:15 P.M. and ends at 11:00 P.M., Monday through Friday (Nielsen, 2011), this is the scheduled time for most RTV programs. RTV is a genre of television programming which portrays non-actors in usually unscripted situations where contestants behave spontaneously with some direction from the producer during comprehensive events (Barton, 2007). This genre of TV is designed for 18 to 34 year olds (Deery, 2004), because it allows viewers to escape from reality and fulfill their social relationship needs (Lundy, Ruth, & Park, 2008). RTV programs also have a primarily female audience (Deery, 2004); thus, males in these programs are overwhelmingly mesomorphic as to appeal to the female audience. This genre of media has been known to influence the perception of viewers. Researchers have reported that some males feel pressured to conform to the media standards and have a decrease in their self-esteem (Muris, Meesters, van de Bloom, & Mayer 2005), a decrease in their body-esteem (Barlett, Vowels, & Saucier, 2005) and a decrease in their overall body satisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004) after viewing diverse types of media messages, across various channels. Therefore, RTV has the potential to negatively affect the perceptions of people who are continuously being exposed to the idealized physiques shown in RTV programs. The viewers may begin to view their realities in this idealized manner (i.e., body types,

lifestyles, level of masculinity) (Hentges, Bartsch, & Meier, 2007). At times these RTV programs show the objectification of the contestants and individuals of the show. This objectified culture displayed can create an elevated level of body self-consciousness and body dissatisfaction amidst young viewers (Shroff & Thompson, 2006).

One of the outcomes of this type of media consumption has been an influence on male viewers' perceptions of their own bodies. Throughout history a growing number of men have reported body dissatisfaction, primarily a lack of muscularity. In 1972, 18% of men disliked their chest and 25% were unhappy with their muscularity (Berscheid, Walster, & Bohrnstedt, 1973). Twenty five years later in 1997, 38% of men were dissatisfied with their chest and 45% were unhappy with their level of muscularity (Garner, 1997). In 1994, Jacobi and Cash's research demonstrated that approximately 91% of college-age men desired to be more muscular and that 39% of college-age men "frequently" or "always" attempted to increase their level of muscularity (McCauley, Mintz, & Glenn, 1988). Research has presented that both media consumption and obesity rates have a correlation with male body dissatisfaction. Men have reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction when their body shape did not resemble the lean and muscular mesomorphic body type (Keeton Cash, & Brown, 1990; Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1986; Thompson & Tantleff-Dunn, 1998). A mesomorphic body type is often characterized by a well-developed chest, well-developed arm muscles, and wide shoulders tapering down to a narrow waist (Mishkind et al., 1986). However, according to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013) 79% of males 20 and older in the U.S. are either overweight or obese. Therefore, the majority of men cannot embody the ideal

mesomorphic body type. An increase in male body dissatisfaction within the United States leads to a necessary exploration for an explanation of contributing factors and causation. This study has been designed to look at exposure to RTV as one of the possible causes of this growing level of male body dissatisfaction.

There are numerous sub-genres of RTV including following families around, investigating supernatural occurrences, documenting the jobs people do, and some focus on home renovation. However, I am interested in competitive RTV in particular because the competitions involved tend to draw only the most physically fit participants. So the bodies in competitive RTV are idealized to an even greater degree than they are on other types of RTV programs, and thus have the potential to influence male viewers even more. My study has been designed to investigate the influences on male viewers of watching competitive reality programs and the idealized male bodies that are shown in these programs. My argument is that viewing influences male viewers in two ways. First, RTV influences how they see themselves. It affects their body satisfaction, because seeing the idealized male bodies on the programs makes them feel less satisfied with their own bodies. We can assume that male viewers' body satisfaction is being influenced by looking at their drive for masculinity and drive for muscularity, as we know that these drives are related to body dissatisfaction. In other words, males who are less than satisfied with their bodies wish to be more masculine and more muscular in order to feel better about their bodies. Second, competitive RTV programs also influence how male viewers perceive others, particularly their actual or potential romantic partners. When viewers see idealized bodies on TV, they have a tendency to expect that kind of perfection out of others, so viewing will make them less satisfied with others' bodies too.

My hypotheses have been designed to explore the relationships between viewing competitive RTV programs and viewers' perceptions of self and others in these ways.

This study was designed to examine the influences of competitive reality television programs and the idealized male bodies that are displayed on these shows. I argue that viewing these types of RTV programs can influence male viewers in two ways. First, RTV influences how the males see themselves. It affects their body satisfaction, because seeing the idealized male bodies on the TV programs makes them feel less satisfied with their own bodies. Research, through looking at constructs like drive for muscularity and drive for masculinity, have determined that viewing TV images affects men's body images. In other words, males who are dissatisfied with their bodies desire to be more masculine and more muscular in order to increase their body satisfaction. Second, competitive RTV programs also influence how male viewers perceive others, specifically their actual or future romantic partners. When viewers see idealized bodies on TV, they have an affinity to expect that kind of flawlessness out of others, thus viewing will make them less satisfied with others' bodies as well. My hypotheses have been designed to explore the relationships between viewing competitive RTV programs and viewers' perceptions of self and others in these ways.

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>: Perception of realism in the characters in competitive RTV programs will be negatively related to body satisfaction.

This study was designed to explore how idealized images portrayed on RTV programs affect the male's perception of self. I strive to examine changes in participants' body satisfaction, drive for masculinity and drive for muscularity after viewing RTV

shows. The question remains, is there a connection between the participant's body satisfaction and the idealized images on RTV? Previous research has exposed relevant connections between TV programs and attitudes towards an individual's own body satisfaction. Many models, actresses and individuals on TV programs are praised for obtaining the idealized body types. Women who are thin and sexually attractive receive positive comments, while heavier women are associated with negative comments (Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan, & Davis, 1993, Wang, 2010). Meanwhile, heavier men play the funny guy and earn the laughs from the audience, whereas the lean, muscular men receive positive comments (Sommers-Flanagan et al., 1993; Wang, 2010). Therefore, if the individuals in RTV are rewarded for and are satisfied with their own muscularity, the viewers may believe that they themselves need to enhance their physique to resemble that portrayed on RTV. If they do not possess the idealized images portrayed on RTV then the male viewers may have lower self-esteem, leading to an increase in body dissatisfaction compared to those who do possess the physique of the idealized images.

Thus, cultivation theory comes into play. While Gerbner's (1969) theory has been used primarily to explore the relationships between TV violence and perceptions of real world violence, minimal research has been conducted on the potential cultivation of body image dissatisfaction. However, one can speculate that media effects will also be conducive to creating or reinforcing body image dissatisfaction. Research on cultivation theory has shown that the narrow and consistent messages shown in television programs produce an acceptance of the idealized images and values portrayed (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997). These researchers additionally reported that heavy television viewers (individuals



who consume TV more frequently than light viewers and are more likely to have watched TV more recently) of consumption-rich programs (e.g., *The Bachelor*, soap operas) is associated with the belief of what the consumers should possess and do. Furthermore, long-term exposure to specific subgenres of RTV has been shown to develop changes in viewers' attitudes about their own body image (Egbert & Belcher, 2012). If cultivation theory does extend to body image dissatisfaction, it may be possible that heavy reality television viewers will strongly believe that the male muscular-ideal is typical of the "average" male and that such an ideal is, or should be, easily attainable. The heavy viewers of competitive RTV will perceive these portrayed bodies not as idealized, but as actual – the way other people in the real world actually look.

One of the main concepts in my study is body dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction is defined as the negative thoughts and feelings individuals have in regards to their own bodies which are usually modestly related to their actual appearance (Cash, 1990; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2002). Muris et al. (2005) found that some males feel pressured to conform to the media standards and experience a decrease in their self-esteem, as well as their body-esteem (Barlett et al., 2005) and a decrease in their overall body satisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004) after viewing diverse types of media messages, across various channels. Body-esteem refers to how an individual feels about their body, how they care for it, and how they see their own body or how they believe they appear to others (Barlett et al., 2005). Ricciardelli and Clow (2009) reported that men who reported lower self-esteem believed that their appearance decreased their self-confidence. This may be due to the high pressure men feel to achieve a similar look as the idealized images of media shows. Consequently, this may lead to men feeling that their

own physical appearance is not adequate, leading to unhealthy body-esteem and body dissatisfaction.

H<sub>2</sub>: The drive for masculinity will be negatively related to body satisfaction.

Masculinity differs among cultures and evolves over times. For some, the Western characterizations of masculinity can be contradicting and may include attributes such as physical strength versus intellectual capacity, sexual virility versus sexual restraint, and blue collar versus white collar (Rogers, 2008). Thus the participants' connotative meaning of muscularity will be diverse. Therefore, participants with greater body dissatisfaction are more likely to have a greater drive for masculinity. Further, Schooler and Ward (2006) report that TV shows depict a larger breadth of body shapes and sizes for men, which demonstrates "the prevalence of larger male lead characters may provide men with the opportunity for positive comparisons and may further make body shape a less salient dimension for comparison" (p. 37). Therefore, if males have more diverse options to compare their physique to, then they may look at other contrasting factors such as partners, masculinity, muscularity, etc.

H<sub>3</sub>: The drive for muscularity will be negatively related to body satisfaction.

Previous research has argued that a lack of body satisfaction potentially leads to a drive for muscularity as well as muscularity. Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia (2000) reported that the exposure to muscular male models in magazine advertisements produces significant body dissatisfaction among men as well as an increased difference between the muscularity they perceive they have and the level they would like to have. This supports the idea that muscularity is more important than body fat or weight in regards to male body satisfaction. Thus, if the exposure to an advertisement and magazines causes

these negative effects to male body satisfaction, one can predict that the permanence and breadth of a RTV show could cause similar, if not more intensified effects. Over the years there has been little research into what men experience after viewing specific types of media, but, Muris et al. (2005) found that some males feel pressured to conform to the media standards and experience a decrease in their self-esteem, as well as their body-esteem (Barlett et al., 2005) and a decrease in their overall body satisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004) after viewing diverse types media messages, across various channels.

Morrison, Morrison, and Hopkins (2003) reported male participants' exposure to media which incorporated idealistic images of the male body were positively associated with the drive for muscularity. Furthermore, Harrison and Cantor (1997) reported a significant correlation between media exposure and a drive for thinness among women. Therefore if women are experiencing a drive for thinness, men may experience a drive for masculinity and muscularity after media exposure, thus leading to a drive for muscularity, or an endeavor to increase muscle mass within the viewers who are dissatisfied with their body. In short, the more muscular the individual is, the more self-confident he will be. This research has led me to my final hypothesis.

H<sub>4</sub>: Participants' perception of realism in the characters in competitive RTV programs will be negatively related to their perceptions of physical attractiveness of actual or desired romantic partners.

While body satisfaction plays an influential role in a viewers' drive for muscularity and drive for masculinity, it can also influence their perceptions of a current or potential partner. Myers and Crowther (2009) found that greater body satisfaction in

women was associated with higher standards for low investment relationships (e.g., one-night stands). In contrast, men with lower body satisfaction may be slightly more concerned about the potential implications that a relatively low quality partner may have on their reputations due to the potential negative outcomes. Furthermore, a study by Ward (1995) reported from a sample of 875 sexual themes coded from popular television shows, 11.5% of the sample included men valuing and selecting women based on their physical appearance. Therefore, if the viewers are receiving these types of messages, then they may emulate the behaviors and expectations portrayed on TV programs when considering a potential partner. Their expectations for a current or potential partner may be influenced on the level of body dissatisfaction the current or potential partner possesses.

### **Research Questions**

RQ<sub>1</sub>: Do the participants perceive the characters of RTV programs as real?

The greater the number of hours of television a person consumes, the more likely the viewer will perceive the realness of the people and events portrayed on soap operas (Shapiro & Chock, 2003). Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007) reported that TV viewers who perceive reality television as more real also have a greater interest for the reality television content are associated with using reality television for entertainment, relaxation, social interaction, and companionship. However, this can fluctuate across the various types of TV programs. For example, soap operas, sitcoms, nighttime talk shows and sports received the highest percentage of perceived realness (Shapiro & Chock, 2003). Further, Egbert and Belcher (2012) reported that participants of their study did not consider RTV to accurately portray real life and these TV programs did not influence

their body satisfaction. However, the study did not analyze the perception of realness among RTV programs. An additional study found that the viewers' perceived entertainment value and liking for RTV shows was based on their perceptions of the programs' realism (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007). Thus, viewers who believed the RTV program was accurate and authentically depicting reality were more entertained and enjoyed the medium more. Potter (1993) also found that viewer cultivation effects are often influenced by the perceived realism of television programming. In short, there are many effects on male and female viewers, however the effects of RTV on male viewers is not specifically demonstrated.

Heavy television viewers tend to overestimate the prevalence of crime, violence, sexual infidelity, natural disasters and other phenomena which occur quite infrequently in the real world according to actual statistics, but which are frequently portrayed on television. Thus, a heavy RTV viewer may potentially be more effected by the idealized images portrayed than a light viewer. The light viewer may find the events that are portrayed in RTV to be more relatable to than the heavy viewer.

RQ<sub>2</sub>: How will the perception of realism of competitive RTV characters influence the participant's perception of an actual or desired romantic partner?

In order to potentially be affected by RTV a viewer must be exposed to idealized images displayed in the TV programs. Furthermore, the individuals who watch RTV shows involving sexual relationship (e.g., *The Bachelor*, *Big Brother*) as compared to those who did not watch these types of RTV shows identified more readily with contestants portrayed on these shows, and were more likely to be sexually permissive and participate in one-night stands (i.e., have sex with someone they just met and did not date

after) (Fogel & Kovalenko, 2013). Male viewers are more likely to have one-night stands than women viewers (Fogel & Kovalenko, 2013). This proposes the question, is an individual's expectations in a partner elevated after consuming the idealized physique and sexual activity on the RTV shows? Or do the viewers become dissatisfied with themselves (i.e., physically) and believe individuals whom they are attracted to will not find them as attractive as the idealized males in RTV shows? Within the survey there are questions pertaining to this research question including items such as participants perception of individuals they find attractive and likelihood to socialize with a potential partner.

RQ<sub>3</sub>: How does the perception of realism of RTV characters influence a viewer's body satisfaction?

One previous study reported that participants did not consider RTV to accurately portray real life and these types of TV programs did not influence their body satisfaction (Egbert and Belcher, 2012). However, RTV may be influential specifically among young adults due to its semi-accurate portrayal of "real" people in "real-life" situations. Although RTV programming may be scripted and manipulated in reality, some viewers consider these shows to reflect reality. Specifically, college students who support the idea that RTV cast members are similar to people they know or meet, and self-reported more enjoyment watching RTV (Dallesasse & Kluck, 2013). Additionally, the repeated exposure of RTV may contribute to the perception that there is only one healthy and attractive male body type: the mesomorphic type. Thus, some RTV programs that are perceived to be real may have a stronger effect on viewers' perceptions of self, body dissatisfaction, drive for masculinity, and drive for muscularity. This leads me to wonder

if heavy viewers of RTV will believe the idealized body images are accurate representations of reality, and if they will potentially use these images as a gauge for their own body image.

Researchers have reported that some males feel pressured to conform to the media standards and experience a decrease in their overall body satisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004) after viewing diverse types of media messages, across various channels. Therefore, RTV has the potential to negatively affect the perceptions of people who are continuously exposed to the idealized physiques shown in RTV programs. A particular aspect of this TV genre is that viewers perceive the emotions and behaviors of the RTV program character as authentic (Aslama & Pantti, 2006; Fogel & Kovalenko, 2013). Furthermore, heavy television viewers tend to overestimate the prevalence of crime, violence, sexual infidelity, natural disasters and other phenomena which occur quite infrequently in the real world according to actual statistics, but are frequently portrayed on television.

RQ4: How is body dissatisfaction related to participants' drive for muscularity and masculinity?

Although the female body has traditionally been emphasized within the media, recently the media has placed an increasing emphasis on an ideal male body, exclusively focusing on muscularity (Pope, Olivardia, Gruber, & Borowiecki, 1999). Other researchers have reported that college men exposed to ideal, muscular male images possessed lower body satisfaction (Lorenzen, Grieve, & Thomas, 2004). Body dissatisfaction among males has consistently been linked to their lack of muscularity, particularly within their upper torso (Garner, 1997),

rather than weight loss as exhibited by women. These idealized images suggested that the “perfect” body shape for men who were not diagnosed with an eating disorder was the V-shaped body, whereas the eating disorder group strived for the “lean, toned, thin” physique (Kearney-Cooke & Steichen-Asch, 1990). Minimal research has been conducted on the effects the idealized images have on men, however if there is a negative impact on women, it is suggested that men will suffer similar effects. Men may even compare their lifestyle, muscularity, masculinity to those shown in the media. Then, in order to lessen the gap between the differences of their own bodies and of those portrayed in the media, young men may begin altering their body image through developing harsh diets which may ultimately lead to eating disorders, obsessive work out routines, steroid use, or investing in cosmetic surgery (Barlett et al., 2008). Meanwhile, when older men experience body dissatisfaction they become focused on losing weight and on their physical incapability’s (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004; Pompper, Soto, & Piel, 2007). Thus, the media generates unrealistic images of the ideal body shape while distributing a facade of how authentic and attainable the body shapes portrayed are. As a result, the media affects consumer’s body perception and satisfaction through continuous exposure to the idealized body shapes. In short, the media depictions of idealized physiques increase the distance between consumer’s actual self-perception and their ideal self.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study will be focused in a few ways. First, the focus of this study is on male RTV viewers. Therefore, male participants exclusively will be analyzed. Further, there are not distinguishing questions or identifying factors for distinguishing sexual orientation. It is important to understand that this study does not distinguish sexual



orientation as these types of questions could interfere with the participants' perception of the study (e.g., this study is about homosexual attraction rather than the influence of the idealized bodies of characters on competitive RTV programs). However, this lack of distinction might influence the findings when it comes to the influence of RTV on perceptions of actual or potential partners; because the homosexual participants seeing idealized male bodies in the programs may have stronger expectations of idealness in their partners than straight participants would. Additionally, this study is solely focusing on the medium of competitive RTV and excludes various types of media in which idealized images might be displayed. Finally, the participants of this survey will be drawn from the Illinois State University community as well as the researcher's extended community. The survey was also shared through University listserv and various social media sites. The results will be primarily collected from young men, 18 to 25 years, creating a narrow scope of participants.

### **Methodology**

This study will investigate the male participant's response to idealized images shown through RTV programs. Using related theories including social comparison theory and cultivation theory, as well as other theoretical ideas including body dissatisfaction and the third person-effect. I will be analyzing the participant's body image (dis)satisfaction, self-perception of lacked masculinity and muscularity, perceptions of partner, and perception of RTV realness. In order to collect the necessary data, Illinois State University students will be solicited through the School of Communication research pool. I will also solicit subscribers of a University listserv, and participants will also be solicited through social media sites. This study will collect its data solely through online

survey participation. Individuals of the male biological sex who are at least 18 years old will be the primary focus of this study. The primary focus of this study is biological sex males because this is an understudied area which needs to be investigated. RTV has the potential to affect male viewers by altering their perceptions of reality, others, and self. Following the participants' compliance to the informed consent they will be directed to the beginning portion of the survey where the participants will be asked to self-report their age on their last birthday, ethnicity, and highest level of education completed. The participants will then be asked to answer a few questions about their RTV consumption, "How many hours of reality television do you watch in a typical 7 day week?" and "What reality television shows do you ordinarily watch?" Then the participants will be directed to a video clip of *America's Got Talent* contestant and Illinois State University Alumnus, Christian Stoinev. The purpose of this video clip is to refresh the participants on what RTV is. Following the video clip, the participants will be asked what their perception of the individuals in the video, if the male contestant in the video is someone they would hang out with and finally, in what ways are they similar to the content of the video, and an open-ended question in which the participants will describe their personal definition of masculinity. Following these questions, I will use a Likert 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) in order to analyze the participants' body image (dis)satisfaction, self-perception of masculinity and muscularity, perceptions of a current of potential partner, and perception of RTV realness.

### **Analysis of the Data**

The results from this study will be analyzed through a bivariate correlation in order to determine whether the relationship between two of my variables is linear. This

bivariate correlation will be used each of my hypotheses in order to investigate a possible relation. Also a Cronbach's alpha will be used to determine the reliability of the four scales (i.e., reality, body, partner, and masculinity as well as muscularity).

### **Preview of Chapters**

In Chapter Two, I look at the current literature on TV and the effects of watching, influences of RTV and the influence on body satisfaction and expectations of attractiveness for a current or potential romantic partner. Chapter Three will lay out the method I will use to examine the relationships between viewing RTV and the perception of RTV character realness, body satisfaction, and the influences on the perceptions of a current or future romantic partner. Chapter Four will explain and discuss the analysis of my collected data. My final chapter, Chapter Five, will include a summary of my findings, my final conclusion regarding my data collection, and the recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review is setting the stage for my study into the influences of idealized bodies of RTV characters on male body satisfaction and expectations of attractiveness towards a current or potential romantic partner. First, I will examine the current literature on television and the effects of watching TV, followed by the current literature on reality television programs and the influence these programs have on body image. Finally, I will review the literature on social comparison theory and the media.

#### **Television and Effects of Watching**

Television has been studied through the years, including scripted and unscripted, drama and reality programs. Research into TV has focused on a number of different potential effects of television viewing. Studies on TV programs have ranged from *Sex and the City* to medical dramas (i.e., *Grey's Anatomy*, *ER*), news programs, RTV shows, and more. Research into the effects of TV viewing have covered a wide range of topics, and some of those effects have been shown to be positive. When analyzing the effects of a scripted drama, such as *Sex and the City*, researchers analyzed topics such as breast cancer narrative through edutainment (Gray, 2007). Although the narrative lacked medical information on breast cancer, it did provide the opportunity for viewers to develop a parasocial relationship and empathy for the character battling the disease.

Additionally the strong and positive attitude of the character may offer hope to those who can relate or may seem unrealistic which can dishearten those who do not hold the same outlook. Such medical drama as *Grey's Anatomy* (Quick, 2009; Quick, Morgan, LaVoie, & Bosch, 2014) and *ER* (Ye & Ward, 2010) have been analyzed through looking at organ donation attitudes, doctor-patient relationships and the depiction of illness, treatment and recovery. These studies found an increase in organ donation awareness and interest (Quick et al., 2014), doctors are courageous individuals (Quick, 2009), and that viewers gravely underestimate the seriousness of illness such as cancer and cardiovascular disease (Ye & Ward, 2010). Of course there has been research conducted on many other scripted drama TV programs, but these are the programs which have been the focus of many studies.

However, researchers have found the effects of TV viewing to be very negative as well. For example, a number of researchers (Aubrey, 2007; Eggermont, Beullens, & van den Bulck, 2005; Harrison & Cantor, 1997; Van Vonderen & Kinnally, 2012) have attempted to gain a better understanding of the influence of TV on female body image satisfaction. These studies focused on eating disorders, the cultivation of body dissatisfaction, and social comparison, but failed to study the influence on males. Scholars (Angelini, 2008; Brann & Himes, 2010; Grabe et al., 2011) who have investigated the influence of TV on males have focused on the credibility of male versus female news anchors, the differences in watching males and female athletes, the reportage style of male and female correspondents during presidential elections. These studies were comparing the works of the male and female gender, rather than taking a similar approach as the previous researchers. The researchers reported that the males

portrayed in these various situations are seen as more competent, composed and extroverted than the females. Thus, this field is lacking in research on TV influence on males. But, when it comes to analyzing the influence of TV programs on individuals many scholars refer to cultivation theory to assist in backing up their findings.

The most fruitful method of research on TV is through cultivation theory. It was developed by Gerbner and his colleagues, and states that television viewing can contribute to individuals' ideas of their social reality (Bryant & Oliver, 2009; Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Therefore, individuals view reality similarly to what they see on television. These TV consumers are capable of assimilating and then modeling what is being shown on their flat screen televisions, streamed through their high speed internet connections, and viewed on their mobile devices. Therefore these consumers may potentially model the carefree behaviors, attitudes and lifestyles of the individuals on RTV. This may have a negative effect on the consumers of RTV because if they are continuously being exposed to the idealized physiques, they could begin to view their realities in this idealized manner (i.e., body types, lifestyles, level of masculinity) (Hentges et al., 2007). It is key to keep in mind that Shrum (2009) reported that cultivation may not always create attitudes, but rather reinforces them. In regards to females, the more "thin ideal" images women observe, the more accessible these images become and vice versa. In addition, the more negative associations with overweight people that are observed, the more they may feel the desire to maintain a thin physique. If female viewers are influenced in this way, males may also be as well. However, instead of the "thin ideal" physique, the males will aim for a more muscular build. Further, researchers have

reported that viewers often seek out programming that reflects and reinforces their existing beliefs, thus additionally strengthening their attitudes (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010).

Research on the cultivation theory has shown that the narrow and consistent messages shown in television programs produces an acceptance of the idealized images and values portrayed (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997). These researches additionally reported that heavy television viewing (individuals who consume TV more frequently than light viewers and are more likely to have watched TV more recently) of consumption-rich programs (e.g., *The Bachelor*, soap operas) is associated with the reinforced belief of what the consumers should possess and do. Furthermore, long-term exposure to specific subgenres of RTV have been shown to develop changes in viewer's attitudes about their own body image (Egbert & Belcher, 2012). Specifically, heavy viewers of specific genres or programs may rely on TV messages when developing perceptions of the real world because they are easily accessible when processing information (Bond & Drogos, 2014).

Some researchers suggest that young as well as adult men have an increasing awareness of their own body image, as they are bombarded with hyper-masculine images. Images in lifestyle, fashion, and fitness magazines can also cause these individuals to feel inadequate because they are not as muscular as the models or contestants depicted. Thus, there is an influence on the television viewers which affects normative consumption. Finally, men have reportedly increased their efforts to maintain a lean body while still increasing muscle mass due to the real versus ideal discrepancies found within media (Pope et al., 1999).

However, individuals, men in particular, can also be affected by media messages beyond the body dissatisfaction. Studies have shown that idealized images and situations

on television can also alter the viewer's perception of real life scenarios. Therefore, viewers may perceive that the fantasized dates and events which occur on *The Bachelor* may occur regularly, in real life situations. Furthermore, a study by Ward (1995) reported from a sample of 875 sexual themes coded from popular television shows that 11.5% of the sample included men valuing and selecting women based on their physical appearance. Therefore, if the viewers are receiving these types of messages, then they may emulate the behaviors and expectations portrayed on TV programs when considering a current or potential romantic partner. Similar cultivation studies have found that diverse genres of TV can influence viewers each in a unique manner (Bliandzic & Rossler, 2004; Egbert & Belcher, 2012). Specifically, sitcom viewers were cultivated to believe the world is just and fair (Appel, 2008). Furthermore, specific genres (e.g., sitcoms, RTV). Subgenres of TV program content (e.g., family vs. friend-centered sitcoms) can contain unique messages and themes that are reinforced as a result of constant exposure (Egbert & Belcher, 2012).

Consequently, it is possible that the continuous exposure to diverse genres of RTV shows (e.g., dating competition shows vs. home renovation) may produce different degrees of influence on the viewer's attitudes and body satisfaction. For example, males exposed to unscripted dating programs led to sexual expectations of current or future romantic partners (Bond & Drogos, 2014; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2011). If watching these shows can influence viewers' sexual expectations, they may also influence viewers' more general perceptions of actual or potential romantic partners, and therefore may have a lasting effect on viewers' social experiences.



Although these and other researchers have focused on the influence of media consumption in general on men's attitudes about their bodies, my study will look specifically at consumption of RTV programs and the influence of such consumption on both self and others.

### **Reality Television**

As one of the most potentially influential genres of TV, reality TV has also been a focus of much media effects research. However, the field continues to lack when investigating the influences of the RTV programs on viewers. Scholars (Clark & Nabi, 2007; Cox, 2011; Cox & Proffitt, 2012) have investigated the influences of RTV on females through analyzing TV programs such as *The Real House Wives*, *I Want a Famous Face*, *Extreme Makeover*, and *What Not to Wear*. The studies on these programs narrowed their scope to body satisfaction, body consciousness, and consumerism. These three areas of study are primarily related to women or are considered "women's issues." Many times males are expected to be confident and satisfied with their body so the need to study the influences of TV on male body satisfaction is found irrelevant. Other scholars (Hanke, 1990; Hendriks, 2002) have argued that there is a more broad selection of body shapes and sizes for males to choose from. These researchers are arguing that the range of body types being portrayed on TV is wider for males, so male viewers shouldn't be as influenced by viewing as women are. But, when researchers narrow their scope of research to the influence of RTV on males (Bond & Drogos, 2014; Sung, 2011; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2011) they have primarily focused on topics such as male sexual expectations of a female partner and gender and leadership on programs (i.e., *The*

*Apprentice, Jersey Shore*). These studies reported on a masculine, male dominated media portrayal where men are competitive, domineering, sex crazed individuals.

In more recent years researchers have begun to explore alternative influences of RTV on males (i.e., body image satisfaction, muscularity, masculinity, and perception of a current or potential romantic partner) including Dallesasse and Kluck (2013). These researchers completed a content analysis of RTV programs aired during the fall 2009 broadcast season. This study reported that the majority of male characters of the RTV programs analyzed (i.e., *Dirty Jobs, Man vs. Wild, Jersey Shore, Real World, The Ultimate Fighter; Heavyweights, and Tool Academy*) were either somewhat muscular or very muscular and exhibited low or medium levels of body fat. Thus, the viewers of these programs are primarily exposed to levels of muscularity and body fat levels that differ from the average American. This study was a quantitative content analysis, thus did not allow the researchers to investigate the influence of these programs on the male viewers. Again, although few researchers have focused on the influence of RTV consumption on men's attitudes about their bodies, my study will look specifically at consumption of RTV programs and the influence of such consumption on the male self and others.

### **Reality Television and Body Image**

RTV is a genre of television programming which portrays non-actors, usually in unscripted situations where contestants behave spontaneously with some direction from the producer during extensive events (Barton, 2007). An additional definition of RTV comes from Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt (2003), stating that RTV are “programs that film real people as they live out events in their lives, contrived or otherwise, as they occur (p. 304). However, Dowd (2006) defined RTV as “a genre of television that, whether

scripted or not, offers its viewers an ostensibly real depiction of both individual's and issues" (p. 18). This definition is an inclusive definition which links both perspectives; RTV is scripted or unscripted. Therefore, this study will use Dowd's (2006) when referring to RTV. Although RTV is a genre of TV, there are also subgenres of RTV which include documentary style (e.g., *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *Deadliest Catch*), competition (e.g., *The Real World*, *The Bachelor*), social experiments (e.g., *Naked and Afraid*), renovation (e.g., *Property Brothers*), and supernatural (e.g., *Ghost Hunters*, *Ghost Adventures*). For the purpose of this study, I will not include talk shows or games shows as a form of RTV, rather competitive RTV programs will be used as the primary focus. Competitive RTV will be the primary focus of this study as the competitive nature of this programming tends to male bodies and physical attractiveness.

In 2010, there were 320 reality shows aired in the United States, when just ten years prior there were four RTV shows (Ocasio, 2012). RTV programs are designed for 18 to 34 year olds, with primarily a female audience (Deery, 2004). RTV shows primarily air from 9:15 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Monday through Friday on prime broadcast networks (e.g., NBC, CBS, FOX) and cable networks (e.g., FX, Discovery, USA) (Nielsen, 2011). As the total number of hours individuals spend on various media has increased, the number of hours spent watching television has continuously grown alongside as well over the years. Today, Americans are watching TV leisurely, more than any other possible leisure activity (e.g., playing sports, playing computer games) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

RTV is an adequate representation of the viewer's desire for stimuli. This desire for a stimulus is consistent with consumers' most basic motives (i.e., desire to influence,

desire for knowledge, desire for companionship, desire to get even, and desire for prestige) (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). These motives are a sample of Reiss' 16 basic motives (refer to Reiss, 2000). Reiss and Wiltz found that individuals who were especially status conscious were heavy viewers of RTV. Furthermore, participants who consumed RTV reported an above-average desire to feel self-important, followed by the desire for vindication, social contact, loyalty, security, and romance (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). These desires that are being fulfilled through RTV are some of the psychological and basic needs, including safety, love and belonging, and esteem, as suggested by Maslow in his hierarchy of needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of needs includes basic needs (e.g., physiological needs: food, water, warmth, sleep, Safety needs: security and safety), psychological needs (e.g., love and belonging: friends, family, intimate relationships, Esteem needs: self-esteem, confidence) and self-fulfillment needs (e.g., self-actualization: creativity, meeting ones potential, problem solving). Reiss and Wiltz suggested that these individuals were drawn to RTV because this genre of television often inflates the status and importance of ordinary people, on and off "stage" (refer to Goffman, 1966).

Additionally, research found that television viewers were motivated to watch RTV in order to escape from reality as well as fulfill social relationship needs (Lundy et al., 2008). Thus, RTV provides more than just leisurely activities for Americans, it is also an outlet for escape from daily problems. These viewers also watched RTV for inclusiveness in social relationships. The development of a parasocial relationship is primarily held by those who are lonely and socially isolated, however, research suggests that these relationships may be partially motivated by this desire of belonging and inclusiveness (Gardner & Knowles, 2008). Keeping up with weekly shows, live-tweeting,

and making an activity for a group of friends is the norm for American viewers. Thus this research supports Reiss and Wiltz' (2004) study involving TV viewers' desire to fulfill needs. RTV's popularity is often attributed to its low production cost and immense ratings (Cummins & Gordon, 2006; Egbert & Belcher, 2012; Hirschorn, 2007). RTV is a genre of television programming which can portray contestants competitively seeking to achieve a particular goal. Furthermore, the popularity of RTV is said to also come from "backstage behaviors" (Goffman, 1966) where the viewers are have the opportunity to see what they are typically unable to see what , a part from dramatizations in other genres of TV (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997).

Since these RTV programs portray real individuals in real situations there is a potential for a cultivation of body dissatisfaction to occur. Body dissatisfaction is defined as the negative thoughts and feelings individuals hold about their own bodies, which are usually modestly related to their actual appearance (Cash, 1990; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2002). It is important to understand that body satisfaction is not a starting point. All individuals do not start life satisfied with their bodies and then begin to experience body dissatisfaction as they are exposed to media, just as humans are not born happy and then move across the spectrum of happiness to unhappiness. With that being said, it is important to note that the exposure to muscular male models in magazine advertisements cultivates significant body dissatisfaction among men as well as an increased difference between the muscularity they perceive they have and the level they would like (Pope et al., 2000). This shows that the exposure to media may cultivate the feelings of body dissatisfaction that were in fact previously in place. Further, it demonstrates that muscularity is more important than body fat or weight in regards to

male body satisfaction. Further, the exposure to male-orientated magazines positively predicted male body self-consciousness (Aubrey & Taylor, 2009). Thus, if the exposure to an advertisement and magazines causes these negative effects to men's body satisfaction, one can predict that the permanence and breadth of a RTV show could cause similar, if not more intensified effects.

Over the years there has been little research on what men experience after viewing specific types of media. But, Muris et al. (2005) found that some males feel pressured to conform to the media standards and experience a decrease in their self-esteem, as well as their body-esteem (Barlett et al., 2005) and a decrease in their overall body satisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004) after viewing diverse types media messages, across various channels. Self-esteem is defined as the beliefs, values, and thoughts individuals possess about themselves. However, there are two types of self-esteem: high self-esteem and low self-esteem. High self-esteem is the liking or valuing of oneself, as well as seeing oneself as competent in dealing with the perceived environment (Fitch, 1970). Low self-esteem includes disliking, devaluing oneself, and perceiving that in general they are not competent to deal with their environment (Fitch, 1970). Focusing on these definitions of self-esteem, one can estimate that an individual with high self-esteem would exhibit minimal effects after viewing media, whereas an individual with low self-esteem might be more affected and susceptible to the messages produced by the media and will exhibit more side effects. Zeigler-Hill, Campe, and Myers (2009) found that high self-esteem in women was associated with higher standards for low investment relationships (e.g., one-night stand) but lower standards among men. In contrast, men with low self-esteem may be slightly more concerned about the potential implications

that a relatively low quality partner may have on their reputations due to the potential negative outcomes (e.g., unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection, or social rejection).

Meanwhile, body-esteem refers to how individuals feel about their bodies, how they care for them, and how they see their own bodies or how they believe they appear to others (Barlett et al., 2005). Ricciardelli and Clow (2009) reported that men who reported lower self-esteem believed that their appearance decreased their self-confidence. This may be due to the high pressure men feel to achieve a similar look as the idealized images in the media shows. Consequently, this may lead to men feeling that their own physical appearance is not adequate, leading to unhealthy body-esteem. The tripartite influence model also suggests that there are three primary sociocultural influences, including parents, peers, and mass media, which directly impact their individual body dissatisfaction (Shroff & Thompson, 2006). These primary sociocultural influences may also directly affect an individual's behavioral outcomes including things such as eating disorders, harsh diets, strict workout routines, or steroid use (Barlett et al., 2008). Cantor (1997) reported a significant correlation between media exposure and a drive for thinness among women. Therefore if women are experiencing a drive for thinness, men may experience a drive for masculinity and muscularity. Morrison, Morrison, and Hopkins (2003) reported male participants' exposed to media which incorporated idealistic images of the male body were positively associated with the drive for muscularity. Egbert and Belcher (2012) reported that the exposure to competition-based RTV programs was associated with increase in body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness among both males and females. This study included both male and female participants and did not distribute

sex specific surveys. Both parties received the same Likert-type scale survey questions (i.e., I am terrified of gaining weight, I think my buttocks are too large) which may not necessarily be relevant to both males and females. McCabe and McGreevy (2011) found that males exposed to media who were in the average, overweight and obese Body Mass Index (BMI) range were more likely than males exposed to media with lower BMIs to be unsatisfied with their bodies. This led the unsatisfied men to reportedly experimenting with body modifying strategies such as restricting their diets, creating a harsh workout regimen, or experimenting with steroids in order to create the masculine ideal body that media has portrayed (Thompson & Cafri, 2007). Thus, body dissatisfaction among males has consistently been linked to their lack of muscularity, particularly within their upper torso (Garner, 1997), rather than weight loss as exhibited by women.

There has been significant evidence to confirm the association between men's exposure to media portrayal of the male body and a drive for muscularity and the development of eating-disorder symptoms (Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002). This can lead to muscle dysmorphia, a type of body dysmorphic disorder which leads individuals, males in particular, to obsess about inadequate muscularity (Leit, 2002). This disorder leads to hours spent in the gym, abnormal eating patterns, excessive amounts of money spent on supplements and steroids (Mosley, 2008). This obsession with muscularity is additionally linked to the male perception of masculinity. Masculinity is experienced, enacted, and represented through culturally constructed expectations, including contexts of ethnicity, age, and additional variables (Pompper et al., 2007; Trautner, Kwan, & Savage, 2013). Many times a male's weight affects the level of perceived masculinity, with long, lean, and muscular bodies being representative of masculinity and overweight individuals



being seen as feminine (Montemayer, 1978). Overweight males have also been portrayed as having impotency, a loss of social inclusion, a loss of financial success, and a loss of leadership (Mosher, 2001).

Previous research involving males portrayed in the media reports that the media depict a larger range of body shapes and sizes of men than women (Schooler & Ward, 2006). As Schooler and Ward write, “the prevalence of larger male lead characters may provide men with the opportunity for positive comparisons and may further make body shape a less salient dimension for comparison” (p. 37). Therefore, with the depictions of body shapes of men in the media are evolving, and loosening the constraints of the “norm,” men may be able to avoid succumbing to the effects of media exposure.

However, only 25% of men on television were overweight or obese, compared to the estimated 60% of American men (Greenberg, Eastin, Hofschire, Lachlan, Brownell, 2003). This study also found that almost 90% of women on TV were portrayed at or below normal weight, compared to the only 50% of American women this represents. Women depicted in media who are plus size women are symbolically destroyed, both quantitatively, in that these women constitute only 1.7% of prime-time broadcasting hours, and qualitatively, because these plus size female characters that are present are frequently romantically ignored or considered sexually unattractive (Giovanelli & Ostertag, 2009). Researchers have reported that women who consumed TV programs with heavy main characters held greater body satisfaction (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

This raises the question, could male viewers have the same response? Or do males already have a greater level of body satisfaction because there is an array of physique to compare themselves to? It is required that the women be shown as young, beautiful and

thin, while men's requirements are less restrained (Bordo 2003; Trautner et al., 2013; Wolf, 1991). Thus, RTV is one medium which researchers must analyze in order to determine if there are indeed direct effects on the male audience as there is on the female audience. Although RTV has been around since the 1980s, there has been relatively few studies examining the effects of exposure to RTV programs.

These previous researchers have reported on why individuals watch RTV, however, my study will evaluate the effects, specifically on men after watching RTV. An additional significant theory for this study is social comparison theory. This theory will add to the influence of competitive RTV programs on body dissatisfaction.

### **Social Comparison Theory**

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests that individuals, primarily young people, consume media messages in order to compare their own assets, abilities, and physique to others, in order to determine how to define themselves (Botta, 2003). Simply, the consumers are determining how they "measure up" to those portrayed in the media. This type of comparison can be harmful physically and mentally. However, research suggests that individuals make these comparisons as a result of the continuous exposure to the images, but without being aware that they are doing this (Botta, 1999). Van Vonderen and Kinnally (2012) found there are the two different types of comparisons: upward and downward. Downward comparisons are when an individual compares themselves to someone else, but finds the other person to be lacking (Van Vonderen & Kinnally, 2012), whereas upward comparisons occur when an individual compares themselves to someone else and believes that they, themselves, are lacking (Van Vonderen & Kinnally, 2012). These types of comparisons may be daily occurrences in young people's lives with

the copious amounts of media they are exposed to in a single day. Bailey and Ricciardelli (2010) reported that upward comparisons are the most powerful and responsible for causing body dissatisfaction in young people today. The process of social comparison may provide the method by which exposure to media induces negative effects (Tiggemann & Slater, 2003).

Each sex experiences body dissatisfaction in alternative ways. While females experience body dissatisfaction with their weight, men experience this with their own muscularity (Botta, 2003). In accordance with the social comparison model, individuals who are influenced by media, are more likely to compare their bodies to what is portrayed in the media, across various channels. Therefore, these males are not only being negatively affected by TV shows, but also magazines, commercials, and music videos. A meta-analysis of 25 experimental studies regarding the societal standards of an ideal thin body throughout media messages, found that the exposure to idealized images negatively impacts women's body satisfaction (Groesz, Levine & Murnen, 2002; Nabi, 2009). Additionally, a study which analyzed viewers of romantic youth TV dramas (e.g., *Dawson's Creek*, *Felicia*, and *Popular*) reported there was a positive correlation between opposite-sex expectations regarding appearance among female and attractiveness and expected attractiveness from males (Eggermont et al., 2005). This study also reported that these expectations led to body dissatisfaction among females. Again, if these results are reported among female participants, it can be predicted that males may experience a change in expectations of attractiveness and behavior towards those they are attracted to, after viewing RTV programs. Although the female body has traditionally been emphasized within the media, recently the media have placed an increasing emphasis on

an ideal male body, exclusively focusing on muscularity (Pope et al., 1999). Other researchers have reported that college men exposed to ideal, muscular male images possessed lower body satisfaction (Lorenzen et al., 2004). These idealized images suggested that the “perfect” body shape for men who were not diagnosed with an eating disorder was the V-shaped body, whereas the eating disorder group strived for the “lean, toned, thin” physique (Kearney-Cooke & Steichen-Asch, 1990).

Minimal research has been conducted on the effects the idealized images have on men, however if there is a negative impact on women, it is suggested that men will suffer similar effects. Men may even compare their lifestyle, muscularity and masculinity to those shown in the media. Then, in order to lessen the gap between the differences of their own bodies and of those portrayed in the media, young men may begin altering their body image through developing harsh diets which may ultimately lead to eating disorders, obsessive work out routines, steroid use, or investing in cosmetic surgery (Barlett et al., 2008). Meanwhile, when older men experience body dissatisfaction they become focused on losing weight and their physical incapacities (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2004; Pompper et al., 2007). Thus, the media generate unrealistic images of the ideal body shape while distributing a facade of how authentic and attainable the body shapes portrayed are. As a result, the media affect consumers’ body perception and satisfaction through the inundating viewers with images of glamorous individuals. In short, the media depictions of idealized physiques increase the distance between consumer’s actual self-perception and their ideal self.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

The media have a direct effect on consumers' body perception and satisfaction. Each theory illustrates evidence that media consumers are led to believe that the fantasy portrayed throughout mass media is in fact reality, experienced by everyday people. Whether it is the events, behaviors, physiques, or outcomes of a scenario, consumers are persuaded it is all authentic. This type of behavior influences the viewers of the RTV shows to compare their own bodies, lifestyles and behaviors to those displayed on RTV for the consumer's entertainment. Once the audience has submitted to the idealized images portrayed, they begin to adopt the perceived idealized body images and behaviors as their own. These two theories are associated with one another through a step by step process of shifting views and adopting alternative perceptions as they previously possessed. When viewers are exposed to idealized images in RTV, they begin to compare themselves to what is portrayed. This comparison may include body images, behaviors, and attitudes. Additionally, if an individual portrayed in RTV is being objectified then the viewers may begin to associate those moments in RTV with potentially real scenarios they have experienced in real life. Therefore, viewers cultivate the idea that the idealized situations and images, as well as the objectification is normative, thus, causing a shift in their previous perceptions of themselves as well as their expectations of reality.

Previous literature has examined male and female responses to magazine images, advertisements, music videos, and sitcoms; however, limited research has been presented on RTV programs. Therefore exclusively RTV will be analyzed in this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions and the level of body satisfaction which may be altered as a result of media exposure. Specifically, the main goal of this

work is to interpret how idealized images depicted in RTV may alter a male viewer's perception of body satisfaction, masculinity and muscularity. Further, the study will analyze the level of cultivation of possible behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions (i.e., body dissatisfaction, masculinity, and muscularity, perceptions of a potential partner, and perceptions of RTV character realness) subsequent to viewing RTV.

This study will focus on the effects on male viewers' experiences subsequent to viewing RTV. Primarily, the focus will begin with the relationship between RTV consumption and the influence on the viewer's body dissatisfaction, and drive for masculinity and muscularity. The exposure to these idealized images has been positively associated with the drive for muscularity. However, masculinity is a term that varies among cultures and evolves over time. For some, the western characterizations of masculinity can be contradicting and may include attributes such as physical strength versus intellectual capacity, sexual virility versus sexual restraint, and blue collar versus white collar (Rogers, 2008). These items can all be portrayed in a positive manner, meaning it is favorable to be masculine. Therefore, the more masculine an individual perceives himself, the higher his self-esteem will be. Thus, if these idealized images display what viewers perceives as masculine, they will possess an increase in their drive for masculinity; consequently the individuals will simulate the masculine traits displayed in RTV. Ultimately, the ideal individuals for this study would be the heavy viewers who possess the perception that the idealized images are reality and are attainable to achieve their selves. On the other hand, light TV viewers are more likely to have greater body dissatisfaction and watch RTV to fulfil desires such as security, loyalty, romance, and social relationships. These heavy viewers of TV have also been reported to overestimate

the prevalence of crime, violence, sexual infidelity, natural disasters and other phenomena which occur quite infrequently in the real world according to actual statistics, but which are frequently portrayed on television. Many of these factors (e.g., crime, violence, sexual infidelity) may cross over and be displayed on RTV programs, thus potentially increasing the heavy viewer's perception of realness in TV depictions. The quantity of TV a participants watch may have a considerable impact on viewers' body satisfaction, which in turn could influence their drive for masculinity, and their drive for muscularity.

Research supports that social comparison is a potential influential factor in the media consumer's negative body perception and satisfaction, among both males and females. It has been previously reported that idealized images in the media have a more profound impact on women than men, when it comes to body image and satisfaction. However, other scholars found that media exposure may negatively influence male individuals' perceptions of body image. Thus, males are likely to be affected by the media depictions of masculinity and muscularity. However, because of the lack of empirical evidence investigating individual gender responses to RTV, it is unclear what damage can be done to the male's self-perception after consuming negative body messages, especially shown within RTV shows that are perceived as authentic reality. Thus, it is necessary to investigate how different the driving force of the social comparison process is, as well as the cultivation effect, by examining male participants exclusively. Although RTV may reproduce viewer effects similar to those of different genres of television shows, research has also demonstrated that RTV influences viewers in unique ways (Clark & Nabi, 2007). Distinctively, the concern is with the perception of

realness within RTV, in terms of the potential effects (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007). Previous research has additionally suggested that the effects of perceived realness of media derive from quantity of media exposure and the affinity for the specific media. Therefore, viewers who believe the media accurately depicted reality and who enjoyed the media more and were more entertained while watching, are more likely to perceive the likelihood of RTV realness. Furthermore, the research suggests that viewers who are often influenced by the perceived realness are likely to embrace the cultivation effects, including objectification (Potter, 1993). Thus, these elements combined construct a potential negative viewing environment. The adverse effects may develop subsequent to the exposure to of RTV programs. Nevertheless, in order to uncover the legitimate influences of RTV on male body and environmental perceptions, an investigation must be completed.

The following chapter will outline the method I will use and explain how I selected the participants in the study. Chapter Four will include the analysis of the data collected and the results of the study. The final chapter, Chapter Five, will include a summary of the study, conclusions on my results and future recommendations.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

This present study intended to investigate the influences of competitive reality television programs and the idealized male bodies that are presented to males through four hypotheses and four research questions. My argument is that viewing these types of RTV programs can influence male viewers in two ways. The first way proposed is RTV influences how the males view themselves. RTV programs affect their body satisfaction, as seeing the idealized male bodies on the TV programs makes them feel less satisfied with their own bodies. We can know that male viewers' body satisfaction is being influenced by looking at their drive for masculinity and drive for muscularity, as we know that these drives are related to body dissatisfaction. In other words, males who are dissatisfied with their bodies desire to be more masculine and more muscular in order to be more satisfied with their bodies. Second, competitive RTV programs also influence how male viewers perceive others, specifically their current or potential romantic partners. When viewers see idealized bodies on TV, they begin to expect that kind of perfection from others, thus viewing will make them less satisfied with others' bodies as well. My study was designed to explore the relationships between viewing competitive RTV programs and viewers' perceptions of self and others in these ways. The research study to follow will bring light to the influences of competitive TV on male viewers.

## Participants

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval, participation was solicited from random male participants who are subscribed to a University listserv. These participants were contacted through a campus list of males who agreed to participate in research surveys, creating a convenience sample. Participants were also solicited through social media sites (e.g., *Reddit*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Tumblr*). All participants consisted of males of the biological sex who are at least 18 years old. These participants were asked to distribute this survey to other biological males who are 18 years and older within their community.

## Procedures

Participants who were subscribed to a University listserv for survey participation were solicited. Additionally, participants were solicited through *Facebook* groups, *Twitter*, *Reddit* and *Tumblr* posts. Following the participants' compliance to the informed consent they were directed to the beginning portion of the survey where they were asked demographic questions. The participants were then be asked to answer a few questions about their RTV consumption. Participants were then be directed to a video clip of *America's Got Talent* contestant and Illinois State University Alumnus, Christian Stoinev. The purpose of this video clip was to refresh the participants on what RTV is. Following the video clip, the participants were asked about their perceptions of the individuals in the video and what similarities they may personally have with the content of the clip. They were also be asked how they would define masculinity. Following these questions, a Likert 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) will be used to analyze the participants' body image (dis)satisfaction, self-perception of

masculinity and muscularity, perceptions of a current or potential partner, and perception of RTV realism. The survey took approximately 18 minutes to complete.

### **Measures**

The survey instrument was developed by the researcher to assess the influence of competitive RTV programs on males' perception of realism of the characters which can lead to effects including body satisfaction, drive for muscularity, drive for masculinity, and perceptions of current or potential romantic partner. The survey was composed of 57 items which require a response from male participants. The complete survey is included in the Appendix A to this document.

### **Demographics and Reality Experience**

In the first three questions, basic demographic items regarding the research participants are asked. Example items included: "What was your age on your last birthday?" and "What is the highest level of education you have completed?" The next set of survey questions asked the participants "How many hours of reality television do you watch in a typical 7 day week?" and "What reality shows do you ordinarily watch?" Then the participants then watched a video clip of Christian Stoinev from *America's Got Talent*. Following the video clip, the participants were asked about their perception of the individuals (e.g., the judges, host, and contestant) in the video, if the male contestant in the video is someone they would hang out with and finally, in what ways are they similar to the content of the video, and an open-ended question in which the participants describe their personal definition of masculinity. Following these questions, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) was used in order to analyze the

participants' body image (dis)satisfaction, self-perception of masculinity and muscularity, perceptions of a current or potential partner, and perception of RTV realness.

### **Reality**

The amount of perceived realness of the competitive RTV characters was measured through a scale developed by the researcher. This scale contained 10 items. These items are placed on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale was developed to measure the amount of correlation between current or potential romantic partner expectations and perceived realness, as well as the correlation between body satisfaction and perceived realness. Example survey items included: "The participants in reality TV shows are real people," "I feel I can relate to reality television participants," and "The people in reality television are similar to people I know in real life."

### **Body Satisfaction**

The amount of body satisfaction held by the male participants was measured using a six item scale. Items included: "I wish my body looked more like the bodies of participants on reality television shows," "When I watch reality television shows, I feel differently about my own body" and "I should improve my physique." These items were placed on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale was created in order to measure the correlation between body satisfaction and perceived realism, as well as the correlation between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity.

## **Partner**

The level of expectations a current or potential romantic partner was measured with a six item scale. Examples included “I expect my romantic partners to be very physically attractive,” “I often feel I should pursue more attractive partners,” and “I expect my romantic partner to maintain a certain level of physical attractiveness.” These items are placed on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale was developed to measure the expected level of physical attractiveness in correlation to the perceived realism of the RTV characters.

## **Masculinity and Muscularity**

To measure the drive for masculinity and drive for muscularity of the male participants a 15 item scale was created. Example survey items included: “Being masculine means having a muscular body,” “I consider myself masculine,” “I feel pressure to be masculine,” “Being muscular means to have a large, well-built upper torso,” “Sometimes I wish I could be as muscular as the participants on reality television shows.” These items were placed on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale was created in order to measure the correlation between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity.

## **Data Analysis**

The results from this study were analyzed through a bivariate correlation in order to determine whether the relationship between two of my variables is linear. This bivariate correlation was used for each of my hypotheses in order to investigate a possible relation. Also a Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the reliability of the four scales (i.e., reality, body, partner, masculinity, and muscularity).

Hypotheses one through four were analyzed by conducting a simple bivariate correlation. H1 measured level of body satisfaction and perceived realism of RTV participants through items 10, 11, 15, 16, 20, 24, 26, 36, 40, 41, 42, 44, 52, 53, 56 (see survey items in Appendix A). These survey items also contributed to RQ1. H2 and H3 measured the relationship between level of body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity as well as a drive for muscularity. Survey items 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 25, 31, 35, 36, 38, 41, 42, 43, 46, 49, 50, 55, 57 are related to these hypotheses. RQ3 and RQ4 was answered through these survey items. RQ1 was analyzed through the reality scale (i.e., 11, 15, 20, 24, 26, 40, 44, 52, 53, 56) in order to find the mean response. This mean contributed to answering how real participants perceive the characters on RTV programs. The correlational relationship for H4 measured physical expectations of a current or potential romantic partner and perceived realism of the RTV participants. Numbers 10, 12, 16, 19, 23, 28, 34, 36, 37, 41, 42, 28, 49, and 51 are related to this correlation. RQ2 was also be answered through these survey items.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This study was designed to examine the influences of competitive reality television programs and the idealized male bodies that are displayed on these shows. I have argued that viewing these types of RTV programs can influence male viewers in two ways. First, RTV influences how the males see themselves. It affects their body satisfaction, because seeing the idealized male bodies on the TV programs makes them feel less satisfied with their own bodies. Research, through looking at constructs like drive for muscularity and drive for masculinity, have determined that viewing TV images affects men's body images. In other words, males who are dissatisfied with their bodies desire to be more masculine and more muscular in order to increase their body satisfaction. Second, competitive RTV programs also influence how male viewers perceive others, specifically their actual or future romantic partners. When viewers see idealized bodies on TV, they have an affinity to expect that kind of flawlessness out of others, thus viewing will make them less satisfied with others' bodies as well. My hypotheses have been designed to explore the relationships between viewing competitive RTV programs and viewers' perceptions of self and others in these ways. A series of correlation coefficients were computed to assess the bivariate relationships between several variables: if the perception of realism in the characters in RTV programs would negatively be related to body satisfaction, if the drive for masculinity is negatively related

to body satisfaction, if the drive for muscularity is negatively related to body satisfaction, and if participants' perceptions of the realism of the characters in RTV programs will be negatively related to their perceptions of physical attractiveness of actual or desired romantic partner.

### **Procedures**

I recruited participants for the study by turning to those who are subscribed to the University listserv for survey participation were solicited. Additionally, participants are solicited through *Facebook* groups and postings (i.e., *Food Network*, *Duck Dynasty*, and *Survivor*), *Twitter*, *Reddit* and *Tumblr* posts. Following the participants' compliance to the informed consent they were directed to the beginning portion of the survey where the participants were asked three demographic questions. The participants were then asked to answer a few questions about their RTV consumption. Then, the participants were directed to a video clip of *America's Got Talent* contestant and Illinois State University alumnus, Christian Stoinev. The purpose of this video clip was to refresh the participants on what RTV is. Following the video clip, the participants were asked about their perceptions and similarities of/with the clip as well as their definition of masculinity. Following these questions, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) was used to analyze the participants' body image (dis)satisfaction, self-perception of masculinity and muscularity, perceptions of a current or potential partner, and perception of RTV realness. The survey took approximately 18 minutes to complete. The complete survey instrument can be found in the Appendix A.



## **Participants**

Of the targeted sample, 96 participants responded to the survey. Of those 96 participants, 84 (87.5%) participants returned the survey completed. The mean age of participants was 24.53 years of age ( $SD = 11.181$ ), and the range was 18 to 57 years of age. The participants were primarily Caucasian 88 (91.7%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander 3 (3.1%), Latino/Latina 3 (3.1%), African American 1 (1.0%) and Bi-racial/Mixed 1 (1.0%). Most participants, 32 (33.9%) reported having a Bachelor's degree, followed by 22 (22.9%) reported a High School degree, 21 (21.9%) reported a Master's degree, 12 (12.5%) reported a Doctoral degree, 8 (8.3%) reported an Associate's degree, and 1(1%) did not provide a response. Nearly one third of my participants reported having earned a Master's or Doctoral degree. In terms of hours spent viewing RTV, the mean was reported as 2.79 hours ( $SD = 4.03$ ), they ranged from reporting zero hours a week (37%) up to 24 hours a week (1%). Again, a third of my participants reported watching zero hours of RTV programs.

## **Measures**

The survey instrument was developed by the researcher to investigate the influence of idealized bodies of characters on competitive RTV programs on males' perceptions. The perception of realism of the characters which can lead to effects including body satisfaction, a drive for muscularity, and a drive for masculinity, as well as the perceptions of current or potential romantic partner (see Appendix A for the complete survey instrument). The survey was composed of 57 items which require a response from male participants.

## **Reality**

The level of perceived realness of the competitive RTV characters was measured through a scale developed by the researcher. This scale contained 10 items. These items were placed on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). One item was recoded in this scale (see Appendix A number 20) to enhance the reliability of the scale. The recoding enabled all fives (strongly agree responses) to signify a higher percentage. This scale was developed to measure the amount of correlation between body satisfaction and perceived realness (H1) as well as the correlation between current or potential romantic partner expectations and perceived realness of competitive RTV characters (H4). Example survey items included: “The participants in reality TV shows are real people,” “The participants in reality television shows are more relatable than the characters in TV dramas and sitcoms” and “I would enjoy hanging out with some of the males contestants on reality television shows.” The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient was run to determine reliability of the scale and was reported as .84.

## **Body Satisfaction**

The amount of body satisfaction held by the male participants was measured using a six item scale. Items included: “I wish my body looked more like the bodies of participants on reality television shows,” “I am confident in my body” and “I should improve my physique.” These items were placed on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale was created in order to measure the correlation between body satisfaction and perceived realism of competitive RTV characters, as well as the correlation between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity. Items 10, 16, 36, 41, and 49 were recoded (see

Appendix A) in order to allow all items to be in the same direction. The reported Cronbach's alpha was .78.

In terms of the perceived realism of characters in RTV program and a negative relation to body satisfaction ( $r(84) = -1.86, p < .01.$ ) there was a negative, statistically significant correlation. Missing cases were excluded pairwise. The results of this study supported H1 with a reported negative, statistically significant correlation between the perception of realism of RTV characters and the influence of a viewer's body satisfaction; therefore the greater the participants' body satisfaction the less they perceive the competitive RTV character as real.

### **Partner**

The level of expectations a current or potential romantic partner were measured with six items. Example items included: "I expect my romantic partners to be very physically attractive," "I often feel I should pursue more attractive partners," and "I expect my romantic partner to maintain a certain level of physical attractiveness." These items were placed on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was developed to measure the expected level of physical attractiveness in correlation to the perceived realism of the RTV characters. Items 28 and 37 (see Appendix A) were deleted from this scale because they produced poor primary factor loadings of .253 and .440. The partner scale consisted of items 12, 19, 23, 28, 34, 37, 48, and 51. As a result, the reliability of the scale was enhanced. Following the elimination of the item 28 and 37 the Cronbach's alpha was .65.

A bivariate correlation was ran in order to analyze H4. There was a negative, non-significant correlation between perceived realism of the characters in RTV programs and

the participants' perception of physical attractiveness of actual or desired romantic partner ( $r(84) = .07, p = .26$ ). H4 was not supported. Therefore the participants do not use the idealized bodies of characters in competitive RTV as a comparison of physical attractiveness in relation to their current or desired romantic partner.

### **Masculinity and Muscularity**

To measure the drive for masculinity and drive for muscularity of the male participants, a 15 item scale was created. Example survey items included: "I consider myself masculine when compared to male participants in reality television shows," "I consider myself masculine," "Being muscular means to have a large, well-built upper torso," and "Sometimes I wish I could be as muscular as the participants on reality television shows." These items were placed on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale was created in order to measure the correlation between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity. Masculinity and muscularity function better as a single scale than as two individual scales. These scales were factored together because the reliability was much lower as individual items than when ran together. Items 13, 17, 18, 22, 25, 31, 35, 43, 46, 50, 55, and, 57 were recoded so that all items were in the same direction. Simply, the number five (simply agree responses represented a greater drive for masculinity and muscularity. H2 and H3 were supported and found to have a positive, statistically significant relationship between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity ( $r(84) = .62, p < .01$ ). There is a statistically significant, positive relationship between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity.

Therefore the lower the participants' body satisfaction, greater the drive for masculinity and drive for masculinity.

### **Post Hoc Analysis**

In order to investigate a correlation between the hours of RTV programs watched and perceived realness, partner expectations, body satisfaction, and a potential drive for masculinity as well as a drive for muscularity, a regression was screened. In reference to Gerbner's 1969 theory (i.e., cultivation theory). O'Guinn and Shrum (1997) reported that narrow and consistent messages shown in television programs produce an acceptance of the idealized images and values portrayed as real. These researchers additionally reported that heavy television viewing of consumption-rich programs (e.g., *The Bachelor*, soap operas) is associated with the belief of what the consumers should possess and do. Furthermore, long-term exposure to specific subgenres of RTV has been shown to develop changes in viewers' attitudes about their own body image (Egbert & Belcher, 2012).

A simple regression was screened to predict a participants' perceived realness of RTV characters based on their reported hours spent watching RTV; however, it did not produce the expected results. Results of the regression analysis indicated that 3.1% of the variance in perceived realness could be predicted by reported hours spent watching RTV. RTV,  $R^2_{adj} = .031$ ,  $(F(1,82) = 2.58, p = .11)$ . Thus, the non-significant results of the regression procedure indicate that the reported hours spent watching RTV is unable to account for a significant amount of variance in participants' perceived realness of RTV characters.

In order to predict the perceived realness of RTV characters based on their reported hours spent watching RTV a simple regression was calculated. Results of the regression analysis indicated that .7% of the variance in body satisfaction could be predicted by reported hours spent watching RTV. RTV,  $R^2_{adj} = -0.05$ ,  $(F(1,83) = .564, p = .45)$ . Thus, the non-significant results of the regression procedure indicate that the reported hours spent watching RTV is unable to account for a significant amount of variance in level of body satisfaction.

A simple regression was calculated to predict current or desired partner expectations based on the reported hours spent watching RTV. Results of the regression analysis indicated that .6% of the variance in partner expectations could be predicted by reported hours spent watching RTV. RTV,  $R^2_{adj} = -0.05$ ,  $(F(1,82) = .516, p = .47)$ . Thus, the non-significant results of the regression procedure indicate that the reported hours spent watching RTV is unable to account for a significant amount of variance in current or desired partner expectations.

In order to predict the level of drive for masculinity and a drive muscularity based on the reported hours spent watching RTV a simple regression was calculated. Results of the regression analysis indicated that 1.8% of the variance in drive for masculinity and a drive muscularity could be predicted by reported hours spent watching RTV. RTV,  $R^2_{adj} = 0.06$ ,  $(F(1,82) = 1.484, p = .22)$ . Thus, the non-significant results of the regression procedure indicate that the reported hours spent watching RTV is unable to account for a significant amount of variance in a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity.

## Qualitative Analysis

Items 5 and 9 (see Appendix A) were analyzed qualitatively in order to bring light to the potential influence of the genres of RTV programs males consume, as well as to better understand the participants' personal definition of masculinity. This analysis additionally allows us to gain some insight into the response to the scale items. Item number 5 asked the participants to report on the RTV shows they ordinarily watch. The definition of reality television was also provided as a refresher. According to Dowd (2006), reality television is defined as a “genre of television that, whether scripted or not, offers its viewers an ostensibly real depiction of both individuals and issues” (p. 18). Responses included shows from various sub-genres of RTV including 20 competition shows (i.e., *Survivor*, *American Idol*, *The Bachelor(ette)*), 23 documentary shows (i.e., *American Pickers*, *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*, *Teen Mom*), three house renovation shows (i.e., *Property Brothers*), three survival shows (i.e., *Get Out Alive*, *Dual Survival*), and two supernatural shows (i.e., *Ghost Adventures* and *Ghost Hunters*). RTV shows that were categorized as documentary programs received the most diversified mention of shows. However, the show *Survivor*, a competition show, received the most repetitive mentions. The top seven RTV programs reported can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Qualitative Responses for Reality Television Ordinarily Watched*

Television Show Reported	Number of viewers
<i>Survivor</i>	18
<i>Real House Wives (i.e. New York, Atlanta, Orange County, Beverly Hills)</i>	11
<i>The Voice</i>	9
<i>Master Chef (i.e., Master Chef Jr.)</i>	8
<i>Real World</i>	7
<i>Hell's Kitchen</i>	7
<i>The Amazing Race</i>	7
<i>American Idol</i>	6
<i>Big Brother</i>	5
<i>Keeping Up With the Kardashians</i>	5
<i>Deadliest Catch</i>	5

*Note. N = 96*

Survey item number 9 asked the participants to report what masculinity means to them. Participants mentioned physical strength 37 times. Participants mentioned defining words such as strong, strong and rough physically, muscles, athletic, and being fit to describe physical strength as an aspect of masculinity. However, the terms “force” and “aggressive” were reported three times to define masculinity. Responses including character attributes were reported 50 times. One participant stated “Being comfortable with yourself,” another reported “Masculinity to me is more about the way a man



behaves rather than looks. If he treats those around him with respect, helps when he can, and is chivalrous, that's masculinity. It doesn't matter how strong you are or how strong you look." Caring for your family or being a father figure was reported 11 times.

Supporting, providing and being a caregiver were defining words which participants reported. Participants reported 13 times the idea that being a biological male means you are masculine. Responses included "being manly," "being a dude," "If you are born a man, you're masculine," and "shaving your face, not your legs." The final theme of responses from participants involved the ideal that the term masculinity is a socially constructed idea. Twelve participants reported responses such as "Masculinity is the social construct created by humans to rank the level of "manliness" a person has" and "Masculinity is a social construct that promotes or privileges a perception of males as strong or muscular." The diversity in responses brings light to the fact that society has blended the definitions of masculinity and muscularity. Additionally the themes often reflect what is portrayed in media and accepted as expected behaviors of males.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1 asked how likely the participants were to perceive the characters of RTV programs as real. This research question was answered through a reliability analysis of the participants' responses to each of the 10 reality scale items. This analysis reported that participants held a low perception of realism towards competitive RTV characters ( $M = 25.48, SD = 6.873$ ). Only two of the 10 items scored a 3 or higher, therefore the participants did not perceive the competitive RTV characters as real. Remarkably, the participants did not see the RTV participants as any more real than the characters of TV dramas and sitcoms (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Item Statistics for Perceived Realness of Competitive Reality Television Characters*

Reality Scale Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The participants in reality TV shows are real people.	3.24	1.126
The participants in reality TV shows are more realistic than the characters in TV sitcoms and dramas.	2.54	1.092
Reality television is highly scripted. (RC)	2.02	.744
I feel I can relate to reality television participants	2.18	1.043
The people in reality television shows are similar to people I know in real life.	2.37	1.159
The participants in reality television shows are more relatable than the characters in TV dramas and sitcoms.	2.32	1.214
I know people in real life who look similar to the participants in reality television shows.	3.50	1.036
I would enjoy hanging out with some of the male contestants on reality television shows.	2.61	1.098
The participants in reality TV shows are more realistic in their physical appearance than are the characters in TV sitcoms and dramas.	2.24	1.037
I can identify with individuals in reality television.	2.46	.950
Reality Scale	25.48	6.873

*Note.* *N* = 84. The correlation composite mean score was 2.54.

RQ2 asked how the perception of realism of RTV characters will influence the participant's perception of an actual or desired romantic partner. RQ2 were answered through a bivariate correlation. There was a negative, non-significant correlation between

perceived realism of the characters in RTV programs and the participants' perception of physical attractiveness of actual or desired romantic partner ( $r(84) = .07, p = .26$ ). The lack of significant results indicates that viewers may not compare the RTV characters to their actual or desired romantic partners as they use RTV as an escape from reality. Therefore the participants do not compare the idealized bodies of characters in competitive RTV to the physical attractiveness of their current or desired romantic partner.

RQ3 asked how the perception of realism of RTV characters influences a viewer's body satisfaction. RQ3 was also answered through the bivariate correlation. In terms of the perceived realism of characters in RTV program and a negative relation to body satisfaction ( $r(84) = -1.86, p < .01$ ). The negative, statistically significant results suggest that the viewers' perception of realism of the competitive RTV does not influence body satisfaction. This suggests that if viewers possess higher levels of body satisfaction then they are less likely to perceive the competitive RTV characters as real.

The final research question, RQ4, asked how body satisfaction is related to participants' drive for muscularity and masculinity. RQ4 was answered through the bivariate correlation and found to have a positive, statistically significant relationship between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity ( $r(84) = .62, p < .01$ ). There is a statistically significant, positive relationship between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and a drive for muscularity. The significant results indicate that there is a positive relationship between body satisfaction and a drive for masculinity and muscularity. This suggests if a male viewer is dissatisfied with his body he may have a drive to be more masculine and/or muscular.

## Summary

These four scales have supported some of my hypotheses and failed to support others. The scales (i.e., body, reality, partner, and masculinity/muscularity) have been found to be reliable. Three of my hypotheses were found to be statistically significant. H1 was found to be statistically significant, but the relationship was negatively related. This supports the hypothesis that the perceived realism of RTV characters is related to male body satisfaction. Simply, there is a negative relationship between the levels of body satisfaction that is affected by the perceived realness of the competitive RTV characters. H2 and H3 were also found to have a statistically significant relationship, which is positively related. However, this could potentially mean a Type I error occurred. H2 and H3 were supported and reported that if males possess low body satisfaction, then they may have a drive for masculinity and muscularity. H4 was found to have a negative and non-statistically significant relation between the perceived realism of competitive RTV characters and expected physical attractiveness of actual or desired romantic partners. Therefore this hypothesis was not supported.

This following chapter, Chapter Five, will include a discussion and a comprehensive summary of my findings, including the findings which answered my research questions. The implications of this study will also be included in the following section. Followed by my recommendations for future research and an exhaustive conclusion of this study.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

Through four hypotheses and four research questions this study investigated the influences of perceived realness of competitive reality television characters, and the idealized male bodies displayed on these programs, on male body satisfaction and expectations of physical attractiveness for a current or potential romantic partner. Previous research has stated that the exposure to idealized bodies in media have increased the likelihood of body dissatisfaction within males and females. Body dissatisfaction among males has consistently been linked to their lack of muscularity, particularly within their upper torso (Garner, 1997), rather than weight loss as exhibited by females. Cantor (1997) reported a significant correlation between media exposure and a drive for thinness among women. Therefore if women are experiencing a drive for thinness, men may experience a drive for masculinity and muscularity after media exposure, thus leading to a drive for muscularity, or an endeavor to increase muscle mass within the viewers who are dissatisfied with their bodies. There has been significant evidence to confirm the association between men's exposure to media portrayals of the male body and a drive for muscularity as well as the development of eating-disorder symptoms (Leit et al., 2002). This can lead to muscle dysmorphia, which leads individuals, males in particular, to obsess about inadequate muscularity (Leit et al., 2002). This obsession with muscularity is additionally linked to the male perception of masculinity. In short, the more muscular

the individual is, the more masculine he may feel and the more self-confident he will be. These findings compelled me to focus on the influence of competitive RTV on male perception of both self and others. In the section that follows, I will summarize the findings of my study, findings that both support and add to what researchers have already discovered about the relationship between viewing reality television and influences on viewers' perceptions of self and others. There are clearly multiple influences on individual's body image, but this study has focused on competitive RTV as one of those influences.

### **Summary of Findings**

The results of this study supported H1 (Perception of realism in the characters in RTV programs will be negatively related to body satisfaction) with a reported negative, statistically significant correlation between the perception of realism of RTV characters and the influence of a viewer's body satisfaction; therefore the greater the participants' body satisfaction the less they perceive the competitive RTV character as real. This study reiterates previous researchers in that watching competitive RTV programs can influence how males see themselves. Egbert and Belcher (2012) reported that long-term exposure to specific subgenres of RTV can develop changes in viewers' attitudes about their own body image. Thus, RTV programs affect male body satisfaction, as seeing the idealized male bodies on the TV programs makes them feel less satisfied with their own bodies. There is a connection between the levels of body satisfaction how real the RTV characters are perceived to be by the viewers. Thus, these individuals who perceive the competitive RTV characters as real also have a lower level of body satisfaction. It is important to understand that body satisfaction is not a "starting point" on a spectrum of

body satisfaction. Individuals are not born satisfied with their bodies; there are numerous influences (i.e., romantic, family, and friend relationships, media, level of self-esteem, etc.) on the evolution of body satisfaction one experiences.

H2 (The drive for masculinity will be negatively related to body satisfaction) and H3 (The drive for muscularity will be negatively related to body satisfaction) were supported as this study reported that the lower the body satisfaction, the greater the drive for masculinity and/or drive for muscularity. Previous research has reported that male viewers' body satisfaction is influenced by their drive for masculinity and drive for muscularity, as we know that these drives are related to body dissatisfaction. In other words, males who are dissatisfied with their bodies desire to be more masculine and more muscular in order to be more satisfied with their bodies. However, H2 and H3 were also found to have a statistically significant relationship, with a positive relationship to body satisfaction. These results can be supported by the qualitative data for survey item 9 (see Appendix A) was analyzed the participants reported a variety of definitions of what masculinity means to them. Participants' responses included items such as from physical strength, aggressiveness, character attributes, family values, manliness, and the idea that masculinity was a social construct. The diversity in responses brings light to the fact that society has blended the definitions of masculinity and muscularity. Rogers (2008) stated that the Western characterizations of masculinity can be contradicting and may include attributes such as physical strength versus intellectual capacity, sexual virility versus sexual restraint, and blue collar versus white collar. But this is just one aspect of the entire, complex construct of masculinity. The lack of solidified, distinguished definitions supports that there is a need to investigate where these blended definitions come from.

With the ever-changing social norms and standards it is difficult to pinpoint the exact definitions. This study's discovery that masculinity and muscularity are often perceived to belong together brings to light the idea that something is occurring in society which is encouraging these items to be linked to one another. Masculinity and muscularity are currently linked and can be simply expressed thusly: to be masculine is to be muscular, and to be muscular is to be masculine. This could potentially mean a Type I error, or false positive, occurred. This false positive suggests that an effect was detected that may not actually be present. If the survey would have had more participants complete the entire survey then this may have been eliminated.

The inclusion of survey item number 5 (see Appendix A) may have also influenced or altered the results. A qualitative analysis was completed and found that the majority of participants reported watching some version of a documentary style RTV program (e.g., *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*, *The Real House Wives: New York*, *Atlanta*, *Orange County*, *Beverly Hills*). RTV programs are primarily aimed towards females, but these documentary style RTV programs are certainly aimed toward a female viewer. Which raises the question, are these participants watching these programs on their own, or do they watch these programs with their significant other? On the contrary, the most watched program that was reported was *Survivor*, a competitive RTV program. The viewership and target audience of specific RTV programs is an additional area which needs to be analyzed more in depth.

H4 (participants' perception of realism of the characters in RTV programs will negatively be related to their perceptions of physical attractiveness of actual or desired romantic partners) was found to not be statistically significant, finding no relation



between the perceived realism of RTV characters and expected physical attractiveness of current or future romantic partners. If viewers are seeing RTV as unrealistic, then they may not necessarily compare those individuals on RTV to their current or potential romantic partner. RTV is designed to allow its viewers to escape from reality and fulfill their social relationship needs (Lundy et al., 2008). So if the viewers are watching RTV as an escape from reality or to develop a parasocial relationship, then these viewers may have a distinction between their real life and the depictions on television. Ward (1995) reported from a sample of 875 sexual themes coded from popular television shows, 11.5% of the sample included men valuing and selecting women based on their physical appearance. Therefore it was suggested that if the viewers are receiving these types of messages, then they may emulate the behaviors and expectations portrayed on TV programs when considering a potential partner. However, expectations for a current or potential partner were not found to be influenced by the level of body dissatisfaction the current or potential partner possesses. When viewers see idealized bodies on TV, they did not begin to expect that kind of perfection from others. Many competitive RTV programs do not depict characters “getting together” with other characters at all as Ward (1995) reported on. This type of behavior does occur on programs like *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, of course, but RTV programs such as the one shown in the video prompt (see Appendix A) does not depict these types of hookups (e.g., *America’s Got Talent*, *The Voice*, *American Idol*).

While a number of the hypotheses were not supported, this study does significantly add to our knowledge of the complexity of body satisfaction as a construct, and points to viewing RTV as a possible influence on body satisfaction.

The study also reinforces the value of both social comparison theory and cultivation theory as explanations and predictors of the effects of media consumption. Significant findings in H1 confirmed that the participants in my study were actively comparing themselves to the characters of RTV programs. When the participants perceived the RTV characters to be realistic they felt less satisfied with their own bodies when compared to the idealized bodies in the RTV programs. This finding supports SCTs conclusion that media consumers actively seek to model ideal others that they encounter in their lives. While my survey did not specifically seek to connect effects on body image with long term viewing of RTV programs, the study did support the main ideas of cultivation theory as well. First order cultivation effects link viewing with perceptions of realism in media content. My study found that exposure to RTV in linked to perception of realism in the RTV characters. This support for both SCT and cultivation theories is one of the important outcomes of my research.

### **Limitations**

Perhaps the largest limitation of this study was related to the participant pool. Of the 96 participants who participated in my survey, 12.5% did not complete the survey fully. These 12 participants failed to answer the survey questions past survey item number 5. This early withdrawal could be due to the structure of the survey instrument. Following survey item number 5 was the clip of *America's Got Talent* contestant Christian Stoinev. This clip was used to refresh the participants what RTV is. It is possible that the video clip did not work properly on the browser the participant used to complete the survey. The video itself may have been too long to keep the interest of the participants. The video was intended to prompt the participants to think about RTV, but it

may have limited their thinking of types RTV or convinced some participants that the study was about same sex attraction which may have deterred them from continuing. If the participant did continue past the video he was greeted with a page with four open ended response questions (survey items 6, 7, 8, 9). This may have seemed to require too much effort for some participants, and may have deterred them from completing the survey. Only 84 individuals fully complete the survey. A much larger pool of participants would have produced more reliable results.

Nearly one third (30.2%) of participants reported having earned a Master's or Doctoral degree. This, in addition to the distribution of the survey to individuals within my community who also study communication, could also have potentially altered my responses as this community may have more experience with media effects than the average American male. Research has found that those who are more-educated tend to under estimate the media influence, while those who are less educated may overestimate it (Baran & Davis, 2009). The estimates of influence are often strongly linked to an individual's perception of the various genres of media. Since Lundy et al. (2008) found that many people deny watching RTV or describe it as a "train wreck" (p. 214) they may believe they are being less influenced by this genre of TV. The more highly-educated participants, particularly those who were familiar with media effects research, may have been more aware of the consequences of their media consumption, and thus may have been less willing to answer the survey questions in an honest way.

In terms of hours spent viewing RTV, the majority of participants (37%) reported watching zero hours of RTV programming weekly. More than one-third of the participants reported not watching any RTV at all, and thus their responses could not be

used to evaluate the influences of RTV viewing. Having a larger pool of participants would have yielded more participants who watch RTV regularly, and thus would have ended up with more usable surveys. Cultivation based research seeks to compare the effects on heavy viewers versus those on light viewers. Even among those participants in my study who reported watching RTV, the amount they viewed per week was too low to comfortably label them as heavy viewers. A study with a larger number of participants, as well as a larger number of active RTV viewers, would enable me to divide the participants more effectively into light and heavy viewer groups. My survey instrument could also have benefited from establishing greater distinctions between sub-genres of RTV. By providing a list of RTV programs of various sub-genres to the participants the influences of different types of RTV programs on body satisfaction could better analyzed. In this study I hypothesized that competitive RTV will have a strongest influence on body satisfaction, but it is possible that different sub-genres of RTV or even scripted television could have similar effects. A more refined survey instrument would help me identify those effects. Finally, my study did not distinguish clearly between participants who were familiar with RTV and participants who were devoted fans of a specific RTV show. Research would indicate that devoted fans would be more influenced by the RTV shows and distinguishing between the two may have resulted in more useful findings.

### **Future Research Directions**

Further research is required to complete our understanding of the influence of RTV and the general perceptions of characters as real people and how that influences viewer's' body satisfaction. In relation to RTV, future researchers can look into the mesomorphic bodies displayed on RTV programs. RTV viewers could potentially see

these idealized bodies and through social comparison, think that their own bodies should resemble the mesomorphic body. If viewers see this body type on RTV programs and see the body as well as the character as real, what does that say about the world around them? If viewers are seeing RTV as unrealistic, then they may not necessarily compare those individuals on RTV to their current selves.

Additionally, there is a need to investigate where these blended definitions of masculinity and muscularity come from. With the ever changing social norms and standards it is difficult to pinpoint the exact definitions. Masculinity and muscularity being factored together brings to light the idea that something is occurring in society which is encouraging these items to be unified with one another. This leads me to assume that there is some kind of suggestion in society which cultivates the idea these are two in the same. One of the most substantial contributions of my study was recognizing the many ways the concepts of masculinity, muscularity, and body image overlap for males. For many of the participants in my study, masculinity is linked to physical attributes, for others masculinity is more of a character attribute, still others suggested masculinity is a social construct and is not related to individuals at all. When my study attempted to look at the masculinity and muscularity scales individually the results were not reliable. Which indicates for many of my participants the concepts are blended. Future research needs to explore in much more detail how masculinity, muscularity, and body image relate to each other and specifically what other characteristics males perceive to be part of the masculinity construct.

Taking a different theoretical approach would contribute new perspectives to the relationship between RTV viewing and body image. For example, looking at the

relationship through a uses and gratifications theory lens would enable the researcher to identify different motives for RTV viewing. My study suggested that viewers of a wide age range watched RTV for a similar purpose; to identify idealized models for their own bodies. It is likely that younger male RTV viewers are drawing something very different from watching than older viewers, who are likely more comfortable with their bodies and not looking for idealized images to model their own bodies after. A U&G approach in a future study could more effectively determine these different motives for watching.

Finally, an experimental design would enable the researcher to identify the immediate effects on participants' body image after they have watched specific sub-genres of RTV programs. While the video used in my study was intended to merely prompt the participants' thoughts of RTV. An experiment could monitor the direct effect of watching full episodes of RTV programs on viewer's attitudes. This approach would add greatly to our understanding of similarities and differences between specific RTV programs. One possible benefit of this research could be using the influence of RTV shows as means to encourage healthy behaviors.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This study has attempted to highlight an important media effect: the relationship between RTV viewing and the influence on body satisfaction. Through H1 this influence was highlighted. This genre of media has been known to influence the perception of viewers. Researchers have reported that some males feel pressured to conform to the media standards and experience a decrease in their self-esteem (Muris et al., 2005), a decrease in their body-esteem (Barlett et al., 2005) and a decrease in their overall body satisfaction (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004) after viewing diverse types of media

messages, across various channels. RTV draws primarily a female audience (Deery, 2004), which contains an overwhelmingly mesomorphic males as to appeal to the female audience. But the prevalence of the idealized body across media channels has the ability to influence male viewers who may possess lower levels of body satisfaction as those who watch RTV tend to desire a stimulus which fulfills some of the most basic motives (i.e., desire to influence, desire for knowledge, desire for companionship, desire to get even, and desire for prestige) (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). Furthermore, participants who consumed RTV reported an above-average desire to feel self-important, followed by the desire for vindication, social contact, loyalty, security, and romance. These desires that are being fulfilled through RTV are some of the psychological and basic needs, including safety, love and belonging, and esteem, as suggested by Maslow in his hierarchy of needs. Therefore these RTV programs may provide an escape reality as well as fulfill social relationship needs (Lundy et al., 2008). The results of this present study consistently suggest that those who watch RTV and perceive it as real may possess lower body satisfaction; which consequently can increase the drive for masculinity and muscularity.

It is also important to understand how the perceived realism of competitive RTV characters is particularly valuable for society as a whole. It can be difficult to understand what you physically should expect from a current or desired romantic partner because TV tends to distort what is valued versus what should be valued (i.e., intelligence, trustworthiness, sense of humor). However, it is more complex than that. Society has adopted a frame of reference that media is always distorted, but there are complex components that define what it means to be masculine, muscular, and to possess body

satisfaction. Schooler and Ward (2006) reported that TV shows depict a larger breadth of body shapes and sizes for men, which demonstrates “the prevalence of larger male lead characters may provide men with the opportunity for positive comparisons and may further make body shape a less salient dimension for comparison” (p. 37). Therefore, if males have more diverse options to compare their physique to, then they may look at other contrasting factors such as partners, masculinity and muscularity. My study has reported that masculinity and muscularity are linked to body satisfaction. However, the lines between masculinity and muscularity seem to be blended. As when these two items were factored they were factored together which produced more reliable results. Accordingly, these items are crucial in the understanding of male body satisfaction.

The analysis of influence on perceptions of realness of RTV characters in relation to the participant’s perception of physical attractiveness of a current or potential romantic partner was not as successful as predicted; however if viewers are seeing RTV as unrealistic, then they may not necessarily compare RTV characters to their current or potential romantic partners. RTV is designed to allow its viewers to escape from reality and fulfill their social relationship needs (Lundy et al., 2008). Therefore the viewers may be using the RTV programs as a recreational activity, in order to fulfill a social need. But it should still be noted that recently, researchers have found that males exposed to unscripted dating programs led to sexual expectations of current or future romantic partners (Bond & Drogos, 2014; Vandebosch & Eggermont, 2011). So, watching these RTV dating shows can influence viewers’ sexual expectations, but they may not necessarily influence the expectations of physical attractiveness for an actual or potential romantic partner.



Generally, the media continue to influence the perceptions and opinions of viewers. Although I did not receive the results that I expected, the study did provide some insight. The lack of significance may demonstrate that there is a need for more specific measures. Fine tuning the scales demonstrated in this current investigation could produce more significant, reliable results. The significance of perceived realism of competitive RTV characters and the influence on body satisfaction indicates that the characters' idealized bodies are influencing the viewers' level of body satisfaction, including their drive to be more masculine and more muscular. This current research study has however exposed the influence of the idealized bodies of competitive RTV characters on viewers' body satisfaction, including masculinity and muscularity. Further, the line between the definitions of masculinity and muscularity have become unified by society. These influences on male body satisfaction and the increasing exposure to idealized, mesomorphic bodies provides all the more reason to continue to examine the media effects on viewers specifically males. If these television programs are negatively impacting the viewer's today, then a better understanding of the effects must be pursued in future research efforts.

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## APPENDIX

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

*Directions: To begin, we would like to get some information about you. Your answers to these questions will help us better understand the opinions you express in other sections of this questionnaire.*

1. What was your age on your last birthday? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your ethnic background/race?

African American      Caucasian      Latino/Latina      Asian/Pacific Islander

Native American      Bi-racial or mixed      Middle eastern      Other (please specify)

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many hours of reality television do you watch in a typical 7 day week? \_\_\_\_\_

(Scale)

5. What reality television shows do you ordinarily watch? \_\_\_\_\_

(Please keep in mind the definition of reality television for this survey: Reality television is defined as “a genre of television that, whether scripted or not, offers its viewers an ostensibly real depiction of both individuals and issues” (Dowd, 2006))

*The following video is a clip of a RTV show. The purpose of this clip is to refresh your memory of what a reality television shows.*

{{ {<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIqFAkKuIjY>} } }

America’s Got Talent, Christian Stoinev clip: (Begin: 1:38 End: 2:50?)

*Directions: For this set of questions, please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.*

6. What is your perception of the individuals shown in the video? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Is the male contestant shown in the video someone you would hang out with? \_\_\_
8. In what ways are you similar to the content of the video? If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_
9. What does masculinity mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_ (open end)

*Directions: For the next set of questions, please mark the answer that best describes your feelings or response to the statements. Mark 1 if you strongly disagree, 2 if you disagree, 3 if you neither agree nor disagree, 4 if you agree, 5 if you strongly agree.*

10. When I watch reality television shows, I feel differently about my own body
11. The participants in reality TV shows are real people.
12. When I watch reality television shows, it affects how attractive an actual or desired romantic partner is to me.
13. Being masculine means having a muscular body.
14. I consider myself masculine when compared to male participants in reality television shows.
15. The participants in reality TV shows are more realistic than the characters in TV sitcoms and dramas.
16. I am not as physically attractive as the participants in reality television shows.
17. After watching reality television shows, I think differently about what it means to be masculine.
18. The participants in reality television are more muscular than I am.
19. My actual or desired romantic partner is not as physically attractive as I am.
20. Reality television is highly scripted.
21. I consider myself to be masculine.
22. Male participants in reality television shows are the best examples of what it means to be masculine.
23. I expect my romantic partners to be very physical attractive.
24. I feel like I can relate to reality television participants.
25. Men who are masculine are quick to anger.
26. The people in reality television shows are similar to people I know in real life.
27. Some reality television shows negatively portray the male sex.
28. A lot of the participants on reality television shows aren't nearly as attractive as my actual or desired romantic partner.

29. Reality television shows rarely appeal to homosexual individuals.
30. I enjoy watching reality television shows.
31. Being masculine is very important is one wants to be successful.
32. The male sex is not accurately portrayed in reality television.
33. I enjoy watching television shows that give me an inside look into other people's lives.
34. I often feel I should pursue more attractive partners.
35. Being muscular means to have a large, well-built upper torso.
36. I wish my body looked more like the bodies of the participants on reality television shows.
37. My actual or desired romantic partner is just as physically attractive as I am.
38. I am more masculine than most other males I know.
39. I enjoy television programs that show a side of people that I would not normally see.
40. The participants in reality television shows are more relatable than the characters in TV dramas and sitcoms.
41. Reality television tells me what it means to be attractive in American society today.
42. I am confident in my body.
43. The participants in reality television are more masculine than I am.
44. I know people in real life who look similar to the participants in reality television shows.
45. The female sex is not accurately portrayed in reality television.
46. Males who are successful in their careers are more masculine than males who are not successful.
47. I wish I could be a contestant on a reality television show.
48. My actual or desired romantic partner isn't as attractive as the participants in reality television shows.
49. I should improve my physique.
50. I feel pressure to be masculine.
51. I expect my romantic partner to maintain a certain level of physical attractiveness.
52. I would enjoy hanging out with some of the male contestants on reality television shows.

53. The participants in reality TV shows are more realistic in their physical appearance than are the characters in TV sitcoms and dramas.

54. Some reality television positively portray the male sex.

55. I sometimes wish I could be as muscular as the participants on reality television shows.

56. I can identify with individuals in reality television.

57. I enjoy watching reality television shows where the participants are extremely muscular.