Aggressive Reality Docuseries and Cyberbullying: A Partial Test of Glaser's Differential Identification Theory

Aggressive Reality Docuseries and Cyberbullying: A Partial Test of Glaser's Differential Identification Theory

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Abstract:
Reality docuseries have dominated primetime airwaves for the greater part of three decades. However, little is known about how viewers who are enamored with the genre's most aggressive characters are influenced. Using Glaser's (1956) theory of differential identification, this study employs survey data from 210 college students at a historically Black college and university to explore whether identification with characters from aggressive reality docuseries (ARDs) and the frequency of viewing ARD are positively associated with cyberbullying. Results of multivariate analyses revealed that men were more likely than women to publicly shame others and air other's dirty laundry online. Additionally, the frequency of viewing ARDs was positively associated with all cyberbullying outcomes, while identification with ARD characters was positively associated with trolling others online. This study contributes to an emerging body of literature about the impact of viewing reality television on antisocial behavior.

Introduction

For the past three decades, reality television programs have rapidly grown in viewing and popularity. In 2015, an estimated 750 reality television programs aired on primetime television (VannDerWerff, 2016). Moreover, in 2017, the highest-rated cable programs were reality television programs (Dehnart, 2018). Previous studies have found that the popularity of reality television is directly tied to the personal gratification experienced by those who regularly view such programs (Barton, 2009). Regarding viewers' motivation for watching reality television, Godlewski and Perse (2010) found that viewers' support of these programs is due in part to their imagining themselves as reality television characters, adopting reality characters' perspectives, and immersing themselves in the situations in which the characters find themselves.

One genre of reality television that has regularly gained public and scholarly attention is the reality docuseries. Filmed over the course of multiple seasons, reality docuseries allow viewers to follow the day-to-day activities of reality characters in various personal and professional settings during half an hour to a hour-long episode (Fearn-Banks & Burford-Johnson, 2014). Thus, viewers of reality docuseries are exposed to reality characters' private lives, behaviors, and interpersonal interactions for longer durations than traditional documentaries with limited episodes.

While lauded and consumed by many, reality docuseries receive a significant amount of criticism. Parti-

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cularly, critics argue that reality television shows, especially docuseries, contain an exorbitant amount of aggressive content, with popular docuseries like *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* and *Love & Hip Hop Atlanta* at the fore (Coyne, Linder, Nelson & Gentile, 2012; Dehnart, 2018; Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2018; Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018; "Tops of 2017: Television and social media," 2017). Fearn-Banks and Burford-Johnson (2014) contend that reality docuseries promote drama, chaos and turmoil to boost their popularity and ratings.

Additionally, critics maintain that reality docuseries frequently valorize cast members who engage in acts of verbal and physical aggression (Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2018; Gibson, Thompson, Hou & Bushman, 2016). They further contend that the behavior of these characters affects viewers' behaviors and promotes unhealthy conflict resolution. In addition to citing verbal and physical aggression, critics condemn reality docuseries characters' perceived participation in cyberbullying or online attacks against their fellow castmates (Coyne, Robinson, & Nelson, 2010). Similar to reality docuseries, the Internet has been cited as a medium in which aggressive social interactions between individuals proliferate, albeit virtually. The Internet is particularly vulnerable to these kinds of interactions, as it allows users to socialize and communicate with others with little oversight and inhibition. However, there is little consensus with regard to how to define this aggression, and a myriad of terms have been used, including *cyberbullying, cyberaggression, internet harassment, electronic aggression, and online aggression* (Dooley et al., 2009; Kowalski et al., 2012; Pyżalski, 2012; Smith, 2009).

The literature has frequently examined aggressive social interactions between internet users online. Most of this literature has cited individual characteristics such as sensation-seeking, assertiveness, individual mood, and exposure to others engaging in aggressive cyberbullying as predictors of cyberbullying (Kokkinos, Antoniadou, & Markos, 2014; Runions, Bak, & Shaw, 2017). However, studies have not examined whether a link exists between cyberbullying and the frequent viewing of aggressive reality docuseries (ARDs) and viewer identification with ARD reality characters. Using Glaser's (1956) differential identification theory, this study examines the following hypotheses regarding the relationship between viewing ARDs and cyberbullying:

> H0: Frequency of viewing ARDs is not associated with cyberbullying (i.e., flaming, trolling, airing dirty laundry, public shaming).
> H1: Identification with ARD characters is positively associated with cyberbullying (i.e., flaming, trolling, airing dirty laundry, public shaming).

Literature Review

Glaser's Theory of Differential Identification

The theoretical framework for the current study draws from the differential identification theory, which has its intellectual origins in the work of Edwin Sutherland (1934). In his theory of differential association, Sutherland argued that people learn delinquent and criminal behavior through an excess of associations with others who propagate delinquent "definitions," or more precisely, antisocial values and attitudes that promote law-violating behaviors. Sutherland maintained that the frequency of contact with delinquent

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or deviant others was central to the transmission of definitions. However, he asserted that the successful transmission of definitions is contingent on one having frequent face-to-face contact with carriers of delinquent definitions.

Drawing on Sutherland's (1934) theory of differential association, Daniel Glaser (1956) argued that the transmission of delinquent and antisocial definitions does not require regular face-to-face interactions with others who have delinquent definitions. Instead, he argued that criminality and analogous deviant behaviors can be learned from persons who an individual has not met in person through a process of identification. Identification, Glaser argued, occurs when an individual develops affection toward a real or imaginary person whom they perceive as similar to themselves. These similarities can be as simple as belonging to the same racial, ethnic, or social class groups or sharing the same gender (Stratton, 1967). In essence, Glaser's differential identification theory holds that deviant or criminal behavior is learned from strangers and non-strangers alike based on the extent to which individuals identify with them rather than the frequency of contact with these real or imaginary persons.

The theory of differential identification has largely been ignored in the criminological and deviance literature. However, some evidence suggests that individuals regularly gravitate towards reference groups with whom they identify (Basil, 1996; Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1984). For example, Leggett (2020) found that differential identification with persons who engage in high-risk activities was associated with risk-taking behavior among a sample of emerging adults. However, the measures used for differential identification did not include race as a basis for identification. Similarly, Huesmann and colleagues (1984) found that individuals who identified with aggressive television characters were likely to behave aggressively.

ARD Depictions of African Americans

Because of the recurrent casting of African Americans on ARDs, African American viewers may be more likely than groups of people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds to identify with ARD characters. This is particularly problematic because of how African Americans are portrayed in ARDs. Although research on the depiction of African Americans in reality television is scarce, a handful of studies have explored the topic in depth, with the majority focusing on African American women. These studies have found that African American women are frequently depicted in ways that condone and perpetuate centuries-long stereotypes of Black women as overly aggressive and hypersexual. For instance, Tyree's (2011) content analysis of 10 reality television shows showed that Black castmates fit into several stereotypical portrayals of African American women, including the angry Black woman. The surveyed television programs demonstrated these characterizations through displays of African American women regularly behaving in a manner that Tyree described as bossy, demanding, verbally aggressive, and keen to incite confrontation.

Similarly, Glascock and Preston-Schreck's (2018) survey of reality television shows revealed that African American women were more likely than other groups to be depicted engaging in and being the victims of verbally aggressive conflicts with other cast members. Specifically, they were depicted as significantly more verbally aggressive than cast members of other racial groups. Lundy (2018) has argued that the stereotypical depictions of African Americans, as portrayed on reality television, contribute to the maintenance of a racialized status quo and promote self-destructive and violent behavior.

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Predictors of Cyberbullying

Online aggression, or what is sometimes referred to as cyberbullying, is a problem among college students and adults and has become a significant issue in society. The term *traditional bullying* is generally defined as harassment or unprovoked aggression repeatedly directed toward another individual or group in person. Traditional bullying—although involving verbal taunting, name-calling, threats, or insults—is generally physical in nature and typically occurs when the perpetrator and victim are in the same space (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011). Cyberbullying, on the other hand, has customarily been defined as a form of bullying using some form of electronic technology.

Definitions of cyberbullying typically identify aggressive bullying behavior through the medium of email, instant messaging, chat rooms, websites, online gaming sites, text messaging, cellphones, computers, and social media (Kowalski et al., 2012; Mesch, 2009; Vandebosch & Can Cleemput, 2008). Pyżalski (2012) has argued that traditional bullying has historically been limited to perpetrators and victims who belong to the same peer group but that the Internet provides cyberbullying perpetrators with access to other electronic users with whom they have no personal ties or affiliation. Other definitions of cyberbullying suggest that it only includes internet acts of aggression that repeatedly occur over a prolonged period (Chen et al., 2017). The current study focuses on any act of internet bullying, even those that are limited in frequency, intensity, and duration.

Traditional bullying and cyberbullying are comparable in some respects. Nevertheless, there are some unique characteristics of the latter that make it categorically different from other forms of interpersonal aggression (Mason, 2008). Cyberbullying typically has three distinct characteristics. These characteristics include (1) anonymity, which allows perpetrators to distance themselves from their target, and (2) the speed at which cyberbullying such as cyberbullying reaches a broader audience (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). As Mason has argued, anonymity breeds disinhibition due to the distance provided by electronic devices, which enables cyberbullies to be physically and emotionally removed from their victims and can thus lead to the loss of or a significant reduction in one's usual self-control. Perpetrators may consequently feel protected from the consequences of their actions in cyberspace.

Most research on predictors of cyberbullying has utilized adolescents and young adult samples and has identified several individual and behavioral characteristics of cyberbullying perpetrators. Chief among these characteristics are factors related to gender. With respect to the prevalence of cyberbullying, Bauman (2010) found no gender differences in cyberbullying perpetration between men and women. However, a study by Zhou and colleagues (2013) discovered that men engaged in cyberbullying more than women. Kellerman and colleagues (2013) found that male cyberbullying perpetration was more likely to be motivated by humor than was female cyberbullying perpetration, while female cyberbullying perpetration was more likely to be motivated by retaliation. Görzig and Ólafsson (2013) reported that women are more likely than men to engage in cyberbullying when compared to traditional face-to-face bullying.

However, a study by Pyżalski (2012) revealed more nuanced gender perpetration differences, with women being more likely than men to bully known associates online and male cyberbullying perpetrators being more likely to bully strangers. In sum, prior research on gender and cyberbullying perpetration suggests that

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the relationship between gender and cyberbullying perpetration is unclear, but female cyberbullying perpetration is motivated by relational factors, while male cyberbullying perpetration is motivated by humor and thrill-seeking.

The literature has also found that age is positively associated with cyberbullying perpetration (Smith et al., 2008). Few studies have examined the connection between race and cyberbullying perpetration, with the exception of Low and Espelage (2013), who found that African Americans perpetrated cyberbullying more than their White counterparts. Other individual and behavioral factors found to be associated with cyberbullying perpetration include delinquent and antisocial behavior, substance use, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, a lack of satisfaction with life and emotional control, and moral disengagement (Buelga et al., 2015; Cappadocia et al., 2013; Hemphill et al., 2015; Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012; Pyżalski, 2012; Sticca et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2006; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).

Additionally, research confirms that social factors such as relational aggression, poor parent–child relationships, poor parental monitoring, physical and sexual abuse, perceived peer and parental approval of cyberbullying, family conflict, and association with antisocial peers are associated with a higher likelihood of cyberbullying perpetration (Bastiaensens et al., 2016; Cappadocia et al., 2013; Hemphill et al., 2012; Hemphill et al., 2015; Low & Espelage, 2013; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Furthermore, a negative relationship appears to exist between academic achievement and cyberbullying perpetration (Zhou et al., 2013). In other words, individuals who experience difficulties in achieving their academic goals are more likely to engage in cyberbullying.

Research has also established a significant and positive relationship between traditional bullying perpetration and cyberbullying perpetration (Hemphill et al., 2015; Kwan & Skoric, 2013; Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012). While these two types of aggressive acts share features, researchers have found distinct similarities and differences. For instance, cyberbullying perpetrators spend more time online and engage in riskier online behaviors than traditional bullying perpetrators (Görzig & Ólafsson, 2013). However, both cyberbullying and traditional bullying are predicted by lower levels of morals and empathy and higher levels of depression and substance use (Low & Espelage, 2013; Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012).

Finally, a considerable amount of research has aimed to understand the link between technology use and cyberbullying perpetration (Bauman, 2010; Chen et al., 2017; David-Ferdon & Hertz, 2007; Heirman & Walrave, 2008). This line of research has confirmed that increased access to communicative technology accommodates cyberbullying perpetration (Bauman, 2010; Chen et al., 2017). Heirman and Walrave (2008) have elucidated this relationship, arguing that cyberbullying perpetrators' power to attack others online can be attributed to the anonymity, accessibility, privacy, and portability afforded to them by technology. In other words, technology allows cyberbullying perpetrators to effectively and more easily bully others with diminished consequences or loss of reputation. By contrast, face-to-face bullying is more likely to have consequences, and the number of available victims is limited. We now describe the methods used in the current study to examine the relationship among differential identification with ARD characters, frequency of ARD viewing, and cyberbullying.

Materials and Methods

The current study used quantitative data obtained from self-administered surveys to explore the relation-

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ship between differential identification, ARD viewing frequency, and aggressive online practices (i.e., public shaming, airing dirty laundry, flaming, and trolling). To test for differential identification, we had to heavily sample African Americans, as one of the central propositions of this theoretical framework is that viewers share the same ethnic and racial background as the characters they watch as a basis for their identification.

Setting

Research participants were students enrolled in face-to-face criminal justice courses at a historically Black college university located in the Southeastern region of the United States. A total of 210 students were recruited through a two-step process. First, we asked course instructors to allow them to visit their class during instruction time to administer the survey. Second, if permitted, we read aloud the survey description to the class before asking students for their voluntary participation. Student volunteers were then directed to a link to a self-administered online survey that could be accessed using computers in the classroom or students' personal laptops or cell phones. Students below the age of 18 and students who reported that they had taken the survey in another class were not permitted to participate. Completion of the survey took approximately 15 minutes. There were no incentives provided for participation.

Assessments and Measures

The survey contained 28 items intended to collect information on students' cyberbullying behaviors (i.e., public shaming, airing dirty laundry, flaming, and trolling). Additional questions were included to measure the study's primary predictor variables (frequency of ARD viewing and ARD character identification) and controls (age, gender, and race).

Dependent variables. Public shaming is defined as the act of humiliating and/or defaming someone online. This can include publicly mocking, teasing or putting down another person's image or content or purposely posting images or video to humiliate or embarrass another person (Kota et al., 2014). For this study, public shaming was measured using an 8-item composite measure. Participants reported how frequently they engaged in public shaming behaviors using a Likert scale (e.g., I post rumors about others online, I tease others about the images they post online). These items were adapted from a 16-item cyberbullying questionnaire developed by Calvete and colleagues (2010). The items used to create the composite were coded so that higher scores reflected greater frequency of public shaming behavior (Cronbach's α =.818).

Airing dirty laundry is defined as the act of sharing or tricking others into sharing private secrets. Such secrets could include sensitive or embarrassing information or images online (Willard, 2007). Airing dirty laundry was measured using a 6-item composite measure. Participants reported how frequently they shared others' private information using a Likert scale (e.g., I share others' secrets without their permission online, I share others' private images without their permission online). These items were also adapted from Calvete and colleagues' (2010) cyberbullying questionnaire. The items used to create the composite were coded so that higher scores reflected greater frequency of airing dirty laundry (Cronbach's α =.922).

Flaming is defined as the act of fighting others online, to include debating issues in an offensive manner, being purposely argumentative, or aggressively attacking others online (Willard, 2007). Flaming

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was measured using a 9-item composite measure. Participants reported how frequently they engaged in flaming using a Likert scale (e.g., I insult others online, I attack others' appearance online, I aggressively challenge others' political ideas online). These items were adapted from Buss and Perry's (1992) aggression scale. Items used to create the composite were coded so that higher scores reflected a greater frequency of flaming behavior (Cronbach's α =.868).

Lastly trolling is defined as the act of purposely aggravating others online with the intent of annoying or provoking them to elicit an emotional response (Willard, 2007). Trolling, was measured using a 5-item composite measure. Participants reported how frequently they engaged in trolling using a Likert scale (e.g., I post comments that are controversial to get a reaction from others online, I enjoy making someone angry with my online comments). These items were adapted from Buss and Perry's (1992) aggression scale. The items used to create the composite were coded so that higher scores reflected greater frequency of flaming behavior (Cronbach's α =.813).

Lastly, a composite measure consisting of public shaming, airing dirty laundry, flaming and trolling was computed to measure cyberbullying. All items used for the composite were coded so that higher scores reflected a greater frequency of cyberbullying (Cronbach's α = .866).
Independent variables. To measure the predictor variable of interest, frequency of viewing ARDs, participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always) how often they watched 12 shows that meet the definition of an ARD; this approach is modeled after prior studies on the same topic (Bell-Jordan, 2008; Coyne, Robinson, & Nelson, 2010; Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2018; Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2017; Scharrer & Blackburn, 2018). Based on previous studies indicating that docuseries are prone to depict verbal and physical altercations (Chory-Assad, 2004; Coyne et al., 2008, 2016; Glascock, 2014, 2015) and to portray African American women as hyperaggressive characters (Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2018), the list of ARDs used in the current study met the following criteria: 1) contained a majority-Black cast; 2) were rated TV-14 by TV parental guidelines for containing inappropriate language, sexual content, suggestive dialogue, violence, and/or aggression; and 3) were still in syndication in the fall of 2018. The ARDs used included docuseries from the Basketball Wives, Black Ink Crew, Growing Up Hip Hop, Love and Hip Hop, Married to Medicine, Real Housewives franchises (See Table 1). Participants' scores for viewing of these 12 ARDs were combined to create a composite measure of the frequency of viewing ARDs (Cronbach's α =.922).

The second independent variable of interest explored the extent to which participants identified with ARD characters based on the previously listed 12 ARDs. Identification with ARD characters was measured using a 6-item Likert measure adapted from a range of studies on identification. Participants were provided with a series of six statements about identification with ARD characters and were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: My favorite reality TV character reminds me of myself, I want to meet my favorite reality character, I agree with my favorite reality character's behavior, I wish I could handle my problems similar to the way my favorite reality TV character handles theirs, Reality TV characters portray the same kind of friendships I see in real life, Reality characters' behaviors are very similar to people in the real world.

These items were modified from a range of studies covering the topic of identification (Cohen, 2001; Godlewski & Perse, 2010; Stratton, 1967). Item responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. The index was coded so that higher scores

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reflected higher levels of ARD character identification. The items were summed to create an index for ARD character identification (Cronbach's α =.857).

Table 1. Study Docuseries and their Television Parental Guideline Ratings

Docuseries name	Rating
Basketball Wives	TV14
Black Ink Crew	TV14
Black Ink Crew: Chicago	TV14
Growing Up Hip Hop	TV14
Growing Up Hip Hop: Atlanta	TV14
Love & Hip Hop: Atlanta	TV14
Love & Hip Hop: Hollywood	TV14
Love & Hip Hop: Miami	TV14
Love & Hip Hop: New York	TV14
Married to Medicine	TV14
Real Housewives of Atlanta	TV14
Real Housewives of Potomac	TV14

Control variables. Public shaming is defined as the act of humiliating and/or defaming someone online. This can include publicly mocking, teasing or putting down another person's image or content or purposely posting images or video to humiliate or embarrass another person (Kota et al., 2014). For this study, public shaming was measured using an 8-item composite measure. Participants reported how frequently they engaged in public shaming behaviors using a Likert scale (e.g., I post rumors about others online, I tease others about the images they post online). These items were adapted from a 16-item cyberbullying questionnaire developed by Calvete and colleagues (2010). The items used to create the composite were coded so that higher scores reflected greater frequency of public shaming behavior (Cronbach's α =.818). The final control variable was technology use, which was measured by asking students to provide the frequency with which they used technology to socialize with others.

Data analysis

Following data collection, SPSS 26 was used to analyze the data using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. The data were examined for violations of the assumptions of OLS, and all assumptions were met. Missing cases were removed from analysis using listwise deletion. OLS models were computed to determine whether there was a positive correlation between the frequency of viewing ARDs and ARD character identification and four types of cyberbullying: public shaming, dirty laundry, flaming, and trolling. Additionally, another model was computed to examine the relationship between frequency of viewing ARDs, the extent of ARD character identification and overall cyberbullying.

Results

Two hundred and forty undergraduate students were in attendance in class and able to complete the

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survey. Of the 240 students present, 210 students volunteered to participate, resulting in an overall response rate of 87.5%. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the study variables. The average age of participants was roughly 21, with the age of participants ranging from 18 to 58 years old. The majority of the sample consisted of female respondents (78.6%). The sample predominantly consisted of African American students (89%), followed by Latinx (5.2%) and White (3.8%) students.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for ARD Viewing, ARD Identification, Controls, and Cyberbullying (N=210)

	Mean or %	SD
Age	21.70	5.42
Gender		
Male	21.40	
Female	78.60	
Race		
White	3.80	
Black	89.00	
Latinx	5.20	
Native American	1.40	
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.50	
ARD Viewing	12.79	10.92
ARD Identification	3.26	0.96
Public Shaming	0.16	0.34
Dirty Laundry	0.07	0.29
Trolling	0.07	0.20
Flaming	0.21	0.40
Cyberbullying	0.52	1.09

Notes: SD = Standard deviation

Regression analyses were calculated to examine the association among the frequency of viewing ARDs, differential identification, and cyberbullying (i.e., public shaming, airing dirty laundry, flaming, and trolling). Table 3 presents the results of the regression analyses considering this study's central theoretical variables (i.e., frequency of viewing ARDs and differential identification with ARD characters), statistical controls, and cyberbullying indicators. All regression analyses were conducted at the <.05, <.01, and <.001 significance levels.

Table 3 displays the results of the public shaming regression model. Regarding the control variables employed, women tended to be less likely to engage in public shaming than men in the sample (β = -.13; p < .05). In reference to the two main predictor variables, the frequency of viewing ARDs was associated with higher incidences of public shaming (β = .01; p < .001). However, ARD identification was not associated with public shaming. The variables in this model explained 13% of the variation in public shaming (R^2_{adj} = .129).

The next regression model examined the predictive relationship among the frequency of viewing ARDs, ARD identification, and airing dirty laundry. As seen in Table 2, again, women were less likely than men to engage in airing dirty laundry (β = -.13; p < .05). In addition, a higher frequency of viewing ARDs was associated with higher incidences of airing dirty laundry online (β = .009; p < .001). Overall, the variables in this

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model explained 11% of the variation in airing dirty laundry online (R^2_{adj} = .111). ARD identification was not statistically predictive of airing dirty laundry online.

Table 3 displays the results regarding flaming and the predictor variables. This model revealed that a higher frequency of viewing ARDs was associated with higher incidences of flaming others online (ß = .01; p < .001). Interestingly, gender and identification with ARD characters were not statistically associated with flaming. Predictor variables in this model accounted for 11% of the variation in flaming behavior (R^2_{adj} = .114).

The next regression model revealed that a higher frequency of viewing ARDs was associated with more incidents of trolling behaviors online (ß = .005; p < .01). Similar to flaming, gender was not associated with trolling. However, unlike the preceding regression models, in this model, identification with ARD characters was negatively associated with trolling (ß = -.047; p < .01). Higher levels of identification with ARD characters were associated with a lower incidence of trolling online. The predictor variables in this model explained 11% of the variation in trolling (R^2_{adj} = .105).

Finally, we tested whether our predictor variables were associated with a composite measure consisting of the above-mentioned forms of cyberbullying in our model (e.g., public shaming, airing dirty laundry, flaming, trolling). Respondents' age, gender, race and identification were not significantly associated with overall cyberbullying. However, the frequency of respondents' ARD viewing was significantly associated with cyberbullying perpetration (ß = .039; p < .001). The predictor variables in this model explained 15% of the variation in cyberbullying (R^2_{adj} = .152).

Table 3. OLS Regression for ARD Viewing, ARD Character Identification, and Cyberbullying (N=210)

	Public Shaming	Dirty Laundry	Flaming	Trolling	Cyberbullying
(Constant)	0.327	0.273	0.272	0.183	1.047
	(0.180)	(0.163)	(0.217)	(0.107)	(.585)
Age	-0.003	-0.001	-0.002	0.000	-.007
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(.016)
Female	-0.134*	-0.131*	-0.085	-0.032	-.396
	(0.068)	(0.061)	(0.081)	(0.040)	(.221)
Black	0.001	-0.026	0.027	0.001	.007
	(0.082)	(0.074)	(0.099)	(0.049)	(.265)
ARD	0.011***	0.009***	0.013***	0.005**	.039***
Viewing	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(.008)
ARD	-0.043	-0.045	-0.041	-0.047**	-.171
Identification	(0.029)	(0.026)	(0.035)	(0.017)	(.095)
Adjusted R^2	0.129	.0111	0.114	0.105	.152

Notes: Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

*, **, and *** indicate significance at the 95%, 99%, and 99.9% level, respectively. Tolerance values are greater than .10 and VIF values are less than 5, so there appear to be no multicollinearity problems in the regression equations.

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Discussion

The predictor variables in this model explained 15% of the variation in cyberbullying (R^2_{adj} = .152). This study tested two core propositions of Glaser's (1956) differential identification theory as it relates to the relationship among the frequency of viewing ARDs, ARD character identification, and cyberbullying. The first proposition, which is an expansion of Sutherland's (1934) differential association theory, posits that people learn the values, attitudes, techniques, and motives for deviant and/or criminal behavior through frequent contact with individuals, real or fictional. The results of this study demonstrated that the frequency of viewing ARDs was positively associated with the frequency of cyberbullying perpetration and public shaming, airing dirty laundry, flaming, trolling and general cyberbullying. In short, this result supports Glaser's assertion that the frequency of contact with deviant individuals is predictive of the learning of deviant behavior. Thus, the results suggest that cyberbullying perpetration is yet another negative consequence of frequent viewing of ARDs.

The second proposition tested concerned identification with deviant others, whether known or unknown. Glaser (1956) argued that, in addition to frequent contact with deviant individuals, identification with individuals promoting deviant behavior results in a higher transmission of deviant values, attitudes, techniques, and motives for engaging in deviant or criminal behavior. Thus, we tested the hypothesis that identification with ARD characters is positively associated with cyberbullying. The results showed that identification with ARD characters was not associated with public shaming, airing dirty laundry, flaming or general cyberbullying. However, identification with ARD characters was positively associated with trolling others online.

An unanticipated finding that emerged from the results was that women were less likely than men to engage in two types of cyberbullying, public shaming and airing dirty laundry. Prior research has been inconclusive regarding the relationship between online aggressive behavior and gender. Nevertheless, some earlier research has confirmed that adolescent women are more likely to engage in cyberbullying than are men due to men's disposition to traditional bullying and women's disposition to relational or social forms of bullying, which include cyberbullying (Kellerman et al., 2013). Although the connection between gender and cyberbullying appears to be intuitive, this study's results contrasted with the hypothesis. This finding warrants further exploration.

Whereas this study found that identification with ARD characters is associated with at least one form of cyberbullying, further research is needed in this area. Future research can help determine whether cyberbullying is a learned behavior versus an innate behavior. Given that frequent viewing of ARDS and the level of aggression depicted in these programs was high, further research in this area is certainly worth exploring. Moreover, the transmission of values from media warrant further exploration, especially regarding college populations, as college is where a great deal of social learning and exploration occur. Prospective studies should examine each of the variables (i.e., viewing of ARDs and levels of aggression in ARDs) separately or in combination with others and should also explore these variables using other theoretical frameworks around aggressive and analogous conduct.

Although the findings of this study were noteworthy, several limitations should be mentioned. The current study did not compare face-to-face interactions with remote interactions on the Internet. Thus, this

study did not explore the central point of contention between Glaser's (1956) and Sutherland's (1934) theoretical arguments; specifically, face-to-face interactions are required for the transmission of values between persons. This study highlighted the frequency of viewing ARDs and identification with deviant individuals in the context of individuals who view ARDs. Our results were informative but should also be interpreted tentatively. Additionally, the current study results may have been impacted by the small sample size and reliance on a sample of college students majoring in criminal justice. Thus, the results of the study cannot be generalized to the larger population. Further, the model used for study did not include other possible factors that may be associated with cyberbullying.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the results of this study are important in adding to our understanding of the portrayal of Blacks on television and the related behavior and effects of Black television viewership. Namely, the study identified and used a dozen reality programs with predominately Black casts that were rated TV-14 for aggressive language or violent content. Though the criteria for inclusion in the study limited the number of television programs to sample from, it is noteworthy that we were able to include a substantial number of programs that met the criteria to be classified as having aggressive content among docuseries with predominately Black casts.

Reality television has historically depicted Blacks as violent and aggressive, enabling us to create a reliable composite measure for ARD viewership. While Whites are also depicted as aggression-prone on television programming, they are represented in a broader array of program genres than are Blacks. This diversity of depictions across television genres may help to ensure that aggressive behavior exhibited by Whites on television does not result in racial-ethnic stereotypes for the entire White population. The same cannot be said for Blacks.

Media, especially television programming, oftentimes is designed to shape society's values and norms (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Resultingly, Black viewers, who watch the most television (followed by Whites, Hispanics and Asian Americans), should be careful to not only limit their consumption of television programming, but also inspect the television programs they watch for harmful content that could influence their views of reality as well as their views of themselves (James & Lindsey-Warren, 2019). This point is all the more important when considering a genre like docuseries that purports to represent the real-life experiences of Blacks.

Boylorn (2008) recommends that Black consumers of reality television programming practice critical awareness of how "their experiences are depicted on reality television" (p.413) in order to diminish the impact of viewership on their identity. However, the findings from the current study suggest that Black viewers' identification with ARD characters are not associated with aggressive online behavior. Hence, further research is needed to identify other factors that may be associated with cyberbullying in relation to ARD viewership.

Formulating strategies for preventing cyberbullying is another area that has received considerable attention as of late. Some strategies for cyberbullying prevention are aimed at altering cyberbullying victims' behaviors to reduce harassment. These strategies include changing one's email address, blocking perpetrators from one's social media, or notifying authorities of the aggressive or harassing behaviors (Slonje, Smith & Frisén, 2013). Still, other strategies for reducing cyberbullying have utilized small groups, virtual peer support and educational programs to target cyberbullying perpetrators (Paul, Smith & Blumberg, 2012; Salmivalli, Kärnä & Poskiparta, 2011; Thompson & Smith 2011).

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Other strategies for preventing cyberbullying focus specifically on institutional responses. Suggested institutional policies and practices for reducing cyberbullying include adding cyberbullying to existing anti-bullying programming, implementing threat assessments for reported cases of cyberbullying and restricting students' use of the Internet and mobile communication devices (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Lastly, parents can help to reduce cyberbullying perpetration and victimization by monitoring their children's interactions with others online, limiting their children's online activity, and restricting their children's access to potentially harmful websites (Ang, 2015).

Conclusion

The aim of our investigation was to assess the connection among the frequency of viewing ARDs, identification with ARD characters, and cyberbullying typologies. The results appear to suggest that both the frequency of viewing ARDs and identification with the characters cast on docuseries programs are associated with cyberbullying perpetration. An unexpected finding was that women were less likely than men to engage in cyberbullying. These findings give credence to critics' concerns around docuseries—namely, that they transmit antisocial values to their viewers that inevitably manifest in antisocial behaviors. Thus, these findings make apparent the need for society at large to confront the onscreen representations of reality that regularly enter our homes through television.

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