

REALITY TV, RELATIONAL AGGRESSION, AND ROMANCE: THE EFFECTS OF
REALITY SHOW VIEWING ON RELATIONAL AGGRESSION AND RELATIONAL
QUALITY IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

by

Paulina Swiatkowski

Copyright © Paulina Swiatkowski 2018

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

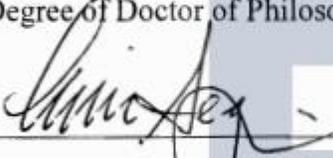
In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2018

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

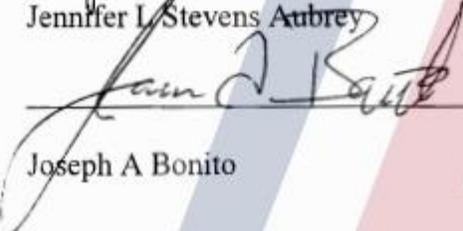
As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by *Paulina Swiatkowski*, titled *Reality TV, Relational Aggression, and Romance: The Effects of Reality Show Viewing on Relational Aggression and Relational Quality in Romantic Relationships* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


Date: (December 15, 2017)

Chris G Segrin


Date: (December 15, 2017)

Jennifer L Stevens Aubrey


Date: (December 15, 2017)

Joseph A Bonito

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.


Date: (December 15, 2017)



Dissertation Director: Chris G Segrin

ARIZONA

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of an advanced degree at the University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this dissertation are allowable without special permission, provided that an accurate acknowledgement of the source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotations from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the head of the major department or the Dean of the Graduate College when in his or her judgment the proposed use of the material is in the interest of scholarship. In all other instances, however, permission must be obtained from the author.

SIGNED: Paulina Swiatkowski

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without my advisor, Dr. Chris Segrin. Chris, thank you for all your guidance, endless feedback and advice, and generous patience over the past years. I appreciate the time you have dedicated to helping me through my doctoral work. You always knew when to push me to do better, when to step back to let me figure things out, and when to walk me through whatever challenges I faced. More importantly, you were also there to cheer me on and help me celebrate every victory. Because of you, I not only am a better scholar, writer, and teacher than I was when I began my doctoral studies, but I have also learned from you how to continue to figure my way and be creative not only in facing obstacles but finding new challenges to take on instead of settling for my comfort zone. You have truly inspired me to push beyond any limitations to grow personally and professionally.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Jennifer Aubrey and Dr. Joe Bonito, for their unwavering patience and support. I appreciate both of you taking an interest in my research despite it having minimal ties with your specific areas of expertise. Your feedback has helped me turn this dissertation into something more than I could have ever imagined it would be. You have challenged me to rise to the challenge and overcome my own limitations to consider my own questions from a variety of perspectives. Both of your voices were in my mind throughout this process, instrumental to asking myself how I can make my work better.

Finally, I would like to thank the other faculty and staff members in the Communication department. I cannot put into words how thankful I am for encouraging words, kind patience, and inspiring warmth, always willing to help in whatever way they could throughout the twists and turns of my doctoral journey. Thank you for sharing it with me and for making my time at Arizona a sincerely unforgettable experience.

On a personal note, I can never put into words how incredibly thankful I am to my parents for their support throughout my journey. You have been my sounding board, my bottomless ocean of love and support, my role models for a strong work ethic and perseverance, my inspiration when things seemed too difficult or impossible. You have made me into who I am today. You are the reason I work to better myself in every part of my life, to never settle for “good enough,” and to work hard to achieve any goal I set for myself. Kocham was, buziaki!

Finally, my friends (you know who you are), my family, and my love. All of you have been instrumental in my journey. I am truly blessed with friends who will listen and talk me through the tough times, but will also laugh with me and enjoy the best times. Some friends are old, some are new—you are all so appreciated and loved. I am truly blessed to have family who may not completely understand what I do or why I do it, but support me anyway. Some family is bound by blood, but many entered my life by the grace of God: my Polish “aunts” and “uncles” who have always supported me with their crazy and fun love, and my future in-laws who accept me and my wild dreams as one of their own. I am truly blessed to have a strong, clear-headed, logical love that helps me focus on my goal even in my darkest moments, when everything seems like it is too much. Christopher Alan, you are an incredibly patient, kind, understanding, supportive, and generous soul. Everyone has shown me so much kindness and support, have listened to me and embraced my highs and lows as if they were your own, and never gave up on my journey, even when I was not sure how things would progress. Knowing that our relationships remain strong despite distance is an incredible gift and I am so thankful that you have stuck by me through this (seemingly) unending journey. I am thankful to have you all in my life as I end such an important chapter in my life and begin to write another. I love you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of figure and tables _____	8
Abstract _____	10
Chapters	
I. INTRODUCTION _____	11
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE _____	12
<i>Relational Aggression</i> _____	12
<i>Media Effects</i> _____	18
<i>Cultivation Theory</i> _____	21
<i>Theory of Reasoned Action</i> _____	25
<i>Social Cognitive Theory</i> _____	28
<i>Social Comparison Theory</i> _____	33
<i>Research Hypotheses</i> _____	38
<i>Present Study</i> _____	43
III. METHOD _____	44
<i>Participants</i> _____	44
<i>Design and Procedures</i> _____	46
<i>Measures</i> _____	48
<i>Media Variables</i> _____	48
<i>Relational Variables</i> _____	50
<i>Psychological Variables</i> _____	53
<i>Data Analysis</i> _____	54
<i>Variable Change Over Time</i> _____	56

IV. FINDINGS _____	58
<i>Preliminary Analyses</i> _____	58
<i>Hypothesis Tests</i> _____	59
V . DISCUSSION _____	66
<i>Cross-Sectional Associations</i> _____	68
<i>Prospective Effects</i> _____	75
<i>Limitations</i> _____	87
VI. CONCLUSION _____	89
APPENDIX _____	103
1. Long Survey: Time 1 & Time 4 _____	103
2. Short Survey: Time 2 & Time 3 _____	126
REFERENCES _____	131

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURE 1: <i>Conceptual Model</i> _____	91
FIGURE 2: <i>CONSORT Flow Chart</i> _____	92
TABLE 1: <i>Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Female Interpersonal Variables with Media Variables</i> _____	93
TABLE 2: <i>Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Male Interpersonal Variables with Media Variables</i> _____	94
TABLE 3: <i>Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Female Interpersonal Variables with Male Media Variables</i> _____	95
TABLE 4: <i>Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Male Interpersonal Variables with Female Media Variables</i> _____	96
TABLE 5: <i>Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Aggression with Media Consumption, Control Time 1 Relational Aggression</i> _____	97
TABLE 6: <i>Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Victimization with Media Consumption, Control Time 1 Relational Victimization</i> _____	97
TABLE 7: <i>Tests of Indirect Effects from Media Consumption to Relationship Quality through Normative Beliefs</i> _____	97
TABLE 8: <i>Tests of Social Comparison as a Moderator Between Media Consumption and Relational Aggression</i> _____	98
TABLE 9: <i>Tests of Perceived Realism, Enjoyment, Identification, and Homophily as a Potential Moderator Between Media Consumption and Relational Aggression</i> _____	99
TABLE 10: <i>Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Satisfaction with Relational Aggression, Control Time 1 Relational Satisfaction</i> _____	100

TABLE 11: <i>Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Commitment with Relational Aggression, Control Time 1 Relational Commitment</i> __	100
TABLE 12: <i>Tests of Social Support as a Moderator Between Relational Victimization and Relational Quality</i> _____	100
TABLE 13: <i>Tests of Social Support as a Moderator Between Actor’s Relational Aggression and Partner’s Relational Quality</i> _____	101
TABLE 14: <i>Tests of Indirect Effects from Relational Victimization to Relational Quality through Self-Esteem</i> _____	101
TABLE 15: <i>Tests of Indirect Effects from Actor’s Relational Aggression to Partner’s Relational Quality through Partner’s Self-Esteem</i> _____	101
TABLE 16: <i>Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Satisfaction with Relational Victimization, Control Time 1 Relational Satisfaction</i> __	102
TABLE 17: <i>Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Commitment with Relational Victimization, Control Time 1 Relational Commitment</i> _	102
TABLE 18: <i>Intercorrelations Among Study Dependent Variables for Males and Females</i> __	102

ABSTRACT

Reality shows remain a prominent genre of today's media culture. More importantly, plot lines tend to be dominated by interpersonal relationship trajectories, which often include conflict such as relational aggression (Coyne, Robins, & Nelson, 2010). When relational aggression is included in analyses that compare the content of scripted and reality shows, researchers find that aggression is more likely to occur in reality shows than scripted shows (Coyne et al., 2010). Furthermore, reality shows are often described as "unscripted," portraying "real" people during their "ordinary" days (Riddle & De Simone, 2013). Relational aggression is link to physical violence and other poor social and psychological effects (e.g., Caetano, Vaeth, & Ramisetty-Mikler, 2008; Linder, Crick, & Collins, 2002) and, therefore, needs better understanding. Therefore, the present study's theoretical foundation in cultivation theory, theory of reasoned action, social cognitive theory, and social comparison theory sought to understand how reality shows influence adult viewers and their perceptions and behaviors within romantic relationships. Four-week longitudinal data from 117 dyads was analyzed for potential media effects and how those effects could influence relational aggression within relationships and relational quality. The results suggest minimal media effects but do support negative longitudinal effects of relational aggression on relational quality. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

Keywords: relational aggression, relational quality, satisfaction, commitment, reality television, cultivation theory, theory of reasoned action, social cognitive theory, social comparison theory

I. Introduction

Reality television shows are characterized by “non-actors enacting behaviors in a non-scripted narrative context for the purposes of entertaining viewers (Lauzen, Dozier, & Cleveland, 2006, p. 445). Although the distinction between who is considered an “actor” and who is a “real person” is somewhat blurry, researchers continually identified reality television as “unscripted shows [that] portray ordinary people rather than actors” (Riddle & De Simone, 2013, p. 237). Although there is a wide range of reality television subgenres, including competition (e.g., *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Biggest Loser*), romance/relationships (e.g., *Bachelor in Paradise* and *The Bachelorette*), lifestyle (e.g., *Toddlers and Tiaras*, *Real Housewives*), and celebrity-centered (e.g., *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, *Celebrity Apprentice*), the trajectories of close interpersonal relationships and romantic relationships appear throughout most of the shows, including conflict and aggression (Coyne, Robinson, & Nelson, 2010). The aim of this study is to better understand how such portrayals of interpersonal relationships in reality shows may influence viewer beliefs and behaviors.

Reality shows attract a large number of viewers. For example, the finale of season 20 of *The Bachelor* had 9.58 million viewers, the *American Idol* series finale had 12.94 million viewers, and Bravo’s *Real Housewives* franchise added two cities in 2016—*Real Housewives of Dallas* premiered with 1.075 million viewers and *Real Housewives of Potomac* premiered with 2.055 million viewers (Porter, 2016). To compare, season 13 of *Grey’s Anatomy* had 8.8 million viewers, season seven of *The Walking Dead* had 17 million viewers, and season six of *Game of Thrones* had 10.7 million viewers according to various reports from Variety.com. Although reality shows have been around for decades, especially the competition subgenre (*American Idol* aired 15 seasons, which is unheard of for most television shows), viewership numbers and the

constant production of new shows and spinoffs of existing shows indicate that they are still relevant to our society. Although ratings for reality television viewership seem to have a wide range, there seems to be a proliferation of reality shows. For example, there were 750 total unscripted series in 2014, 350 of which were new (Dehnart, 2016a). Some weeks, the list of top 20 broadcast network shows seem to be dominated by reality television shows (Dehnart, 2016b). This makes the genre, the conflict and aggression portrayed within the genre for entertainment value, and the potential effects on viewers an important area for research. Therefore, the primary aim of this investigation is to examine the reality show genre, the relational aggression the genre portrays, and the effects the genre and the portrayed relational aggression have on aggression within romantic relationships as well as the subsequent relational quality.

II. Review of Literature

Relational Aggression

Linder et al. (2002) define relational aggression as behavior that damages a relationship and disrupts the feelings of love and acceptance within a relationship. Two examples of relational aggression include threats to end the relationship if the partner does not conform to an individual's point of view or flirting with another person in hopes of making the relational partner jealous, which has been studied as a phenomenon distinct from verbal aggression and psychological aggression. Psychological aggression focuses on general thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, focusing on emotional, non-physical harm (Goldstein, 2011). Verbal aggression, a method of enacting psychological aggression, is an attack on a target's self-concept, rather than on the individual's opinion on a topic (Kinney & Segrin, 1998; Infante, 1986). There are verbal and psychological aggression occur within most relationships; however, what distinguishes relational aggression is the manifestation of these types of aggressive behaviors within

relationships via the manipulation of the aggression targets' relationships (Goldstein, 2011).

Archer and Coyne (2005) specify that relational aggression is similar to indirect and social aggression. Indirect aggression is mainly identified when the aggressor may remain anonymous to the victim because of the often "behind the back," or indirect, behaviors (p. 215). Social aggression includes "actions that cause interpersonal damage and are achieved by nonconfrontational and largely concealed methods that employ the social community" (p. 217).

The authors further argue that although indirect aggression is often achieved without the need for face-to-face interaction and social aggression focuses on damaging the victim's self-esteem and/or social status by manipulating the victim's acceptance within a group, relational aggression has a different end goal. In relational aggression, the end goal is the manipulation or disruption of interpersonal relationships by the people within those relationships. In a review of how the various types for non-physical forms of aggression (i.e., indirect, relational, and social aggression), Archer and Coyne (2005) explain the different ways aggression can manifest within dyads, including the manipulation of the relational partner to comply with the aggressor's requests by threatening to end the relationship or ignoring the partner until he or she complies with the request. Although the cost of engaging in aggression may be lower in a group or wider social context because of the increased ability for the aggressor to either hide his or her identity or even deny hostile intent, aggressors often engage in both direct and indirect hostile behavior within a dyad because of the increased reward that comes from coercing their partner: the ability to control the partner's behavior. Therefore, aggression within dyads manifests in different forms and with different goals than aggression enacted within a group or a wider social network, and although there are similarities between relational, social, and indirect aggression, this study

focuses on relational aggression because it focuses on the interdependent nature of the relational partners (Archer & Coyne, 2005).

Relational aggression has been linked to other relational variables. For example, there is a link between relational aggression and intimate partner violence (IPV) (Prather, Dahlen, Nicholson, & Bullock-Yowell, 2012; Wright & Benson, 2010). According to the World Health Organization (2002), IPV includes behaviors that cause physical, psychological, or sexual harm to individuals within romantic relationships. Relational aggression's link to IPV makes it a vital focus for research within the context of romantic relationships that would add to the current body of knowledge about aggression, including physical, verbal, and indirect aggression. Based on various published and unpublished works that varied in methods, age, and geographical region, resulting in 232 studies of youths between the 1-17 years old and 109 studies of adults 18 and over, Archer's (2004) meta-analysis reveals that research about aggression seems to focus primarily on children and early adolescents. The author clarifies that indirect aggression included social and relational aggression.

In their meta-analysis about peer victimization, Vitoroulis and Vaillancourt (2015) note that physical and verbal aggression seem to be more prevalent in younger ages and indirect and relational aggression seems to be more prevalent in older ages, emphasizing the need to better understand relational aggression in adults. However, many studies about relational aggression seem to focus on children (e.g., Dijkstra, Berger, & Lindenberg, 2011; Nelson, Coyne, Swanson, Hart, & Olsen, 2014; Pronk & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2010; Williams, Fredland, Han, Campbell, & Kub, 2009). Furthermore, many researchers have pointed out that there are many gaps in the research about relational aggression in adult relationships in general and romantic relationships specifically (e.g., Czar, Dahlen, Bullock, & Nicholson, 2011; Goldstein, 2011; Gross, Gross, &

Simms, 2010; Linder et al., 2002; Wagner & Abaied, 2016). For example, Goldstein (2011) calls for research to better understand predictors and consequences of relational aggression. Czar et al. (2011) specify that a major gap exists in that researchers need to include partner information because it is important to gain a better understanding of relational aggression. Oka, Sandberg, Bradford, and Brown (2014) found actor and partner effects that link relational aggression to physical aggression. Specifically, their study found that male relational aggression can be a sign of physical violence within the relationship as relational and physical aggression often occur together as opposed to physical and relational aggression acting as alternatives of each other. Also, the researchers found a pattern between female relational aggression and male physical violence. This suggests that although men and women may have different contributions to violence within the relationship, each partner does indeed play a different role in that pattern (for example, men are typically physically more powerful than women), and each role needs to be considered with respect to aggression (Oka et al., 2014). Their study emphasizes the need for a more thorough understanding of how relational aggression plays out in adult romantic relationship because of its link to physical aggression within relationships.

Research has found a correlation between perpetration and victimization of IPV (Caetano et al., 2008). This means that individuals within romantic dyads that exhibit IPV are often both the victims and the perpetrators. Therefore, although men and women may differ in the circumstances where they are at increased risk to engage in or be victims of IPV, it is not unheard of for IPV victims to also initiate IPV. This is especially important to note because Caetano and colleagues (2008) point out that in the general population, there is a slightly higher rate of female-to-male partner violence because moderately violent acts (e.g., slapping, grabbing, pushing) tend to be more common, though cases of male-to-female partner violence are more

likely to end in more severe injury and death as the violent acts themselves tend to also be more severe (e.g., kicking, choking, burning, use of a knife or gun). The interdependent nature of IPV and its link to relational aggression further supports the need to look at relational aggression in the context of the dyad.

However, the link to physical violence is not the only way relational aggression may negatively affect relationships and the individuals in them. Linder and colleagues (2002) point out that relational aggression and physical aggression are moderately correlated but that they are distinct constructs and relational aggression often occurs without the presence of physical aggression. In their study, the researchers found positive correlations between relational aggression and jealousy, ambivalence, and frustration (Linder et al., 2002). Furthermore, relational aggression within relationships is positively associated with poor individual adjustment socially and psychologically and has harmful effects on relationship quality (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Linder et al., 2002). However, much of the existing research seems to be focused on relational aggression within the context of friendships and children (e.g., Dijkstra et al., 2011; Pronk & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2010). For example, children who display more relational aggression within their friendships tend to have higher rates of exclusion and jealousy and have lower friendship quality and satisfaction than children who display less relational aggression (Grotperter & Crick, 1996; Linder et al., 2002).

Research that does exist about relational aggression as it relates to relational quality in romantic relationships suggests a negative correlation between levels of relational aggression within relationships and levels of relational quality. For example, relational aggression within romantic relationships seems to be associated with antisocial personalities and poor relational qualities such as jealousy, frustration, and clinginess (Linder et al., 2002). Relational aggression

has been linked to lower levels of relational quality and stability (Carroll et al, 2010), which is important because relational quality has been linked to individual physical health in both longitudinal studies and meta analyses that reviewed empirical (cross sectional and longitudinal) studies dealing with relational quality and physical health (Miller et al., 2013; Robles et al., 2013). Furthermore, Ybrandt and Armelius (2010) identified a link between relational aggression (identified as “peer aggression” in the study) and internalizing (somatic complaints, anxiety, depression) and externalizing problems (social withdrawal, attention problems, rule-breaking). The authors found that self-esteem is a contributing factor to the consequences of relational aggression. In general, lower self-esteem meant more problems. It is possible that this relationship between relational aggression and self-esteem could also impact the relational quality in romantic relationships. These findings are in line with Goldstein, Chesier-Teran, and McFaul’s (2008) findings that aggression in general and relational aggression specifically are multifaceted phenomena that put individuals at risk, noting a significant relationship between both relational aggression and victimization with mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Ybrandt and Armelius’ (2010) study found a stronger mediation effect for self-esteem between relational aggression and internalizing problems than externalizing problems. However, the externalizing problems cannot be ignored. The study helps to further explore the link between relational aggression, self-esteem, and externalizing problems to see how they manifest within romantic relationship via reports of relational quality.

Because relationship quality is a dyadic construct that can only be fully understood when information is gathered from both partners within the relationships, this study consists of data collected from both partners within heterosexual relationships. This data also helps clarify discrepancies within existing literature about whether there are gender differences with regard to

relational aggression (e.g., Murray-Close, Crick, & Galotti, 2006) or not (e.g., Carr-Jordan & Robinson, 2009; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001). However, relational aggression and how it is related to relational quality is only part of the equation. It is also important to keep in mind that there are factors that influence the likelihood of relational aggression occurring in romantic relationships. For example, Weber and Robinson Kurpius (2011) identified a positive link between relational aggression and self-esteem, as well, though the relationship seemed to point to low self-esteem predicting relational aggression. The longitudinal nature of this study can help clarify the link between self-esteem and relational aggression and in which direction the relationship manifests. It is possible that the relationship perpetuates a cyclical phenomenon in which high relational aggression leads to low relationship quality through self-esteem, which in turn further promotes relational aggression within the dyad. The researchers have noted that “self-esteem predicted perpetration of relational aggression” and that relationships that contain higher levels of relational aggression are also linked to women’s self-esteem (Weber & Robinson Kurpius, 2011), which begs the question whether relational aggression’s influence on self-esteem could lead to lower relational quality. This question is also part of the undertaking of the present study.

Media Effects

Media influence on relational aggression is an increasingly important research topic, though there has been a lack of research attention to how media influence on relational aggression manifests within dyads. This is especially true for adults, who may consume a different type of media and with a different perspective than children and adolescents. Furthermore, an individual’s beliefs of the prevalence of relational aggression in interpersonal relationships (i.e., viewing relational aggression as acceptable and therefore common within

relationships) predict levels of aggression within both romantic and platonic relationships for both men and women (Goldstein, 2011). Among the various predictors of relational aggression that researchers have already studied as previously mentioned, there should be no surprise that media should be considered as well. Coyne, Robinson, and Nelson (2010) point out that reality television shows are set up in such a way that they seem to naturally result in high amounts of relational aggression. Specifically, reality shows contain a large amount of character interaction and minimal plot lines. Plot lines that do exist focus on the storylines that emerge from the relational interactions among characters, which logically results in the genre's focus on relational aggression. Media content analyses often focus on physical aggression rather than relational aggression, which results in the research becoming saturated with claims that reality television shows do not contain much aggression (e.g., Smith, Nathanson, & Wilson, 2002). Coyne et al. (2010) looked at the frequency of physical and relational aggression in reality shows and scripted shows to further develop Smith et al.'s (2002) findings. Across 120 hours of television programming (60 hours of reality shows and 60 hours of scripted shows), the researchers found that overall aggression occurs in reality shows almost three times as often as in scripted shows. The most frequent types of aggression portrayed were gossiping, yelling/arguing, insulting, spreading rumors, giving dirty looks, and name-calling, which are all forms of relational aggression. Overall, the researchers conclude that there seems to be a great deal of relational aggression on television, especially in reality shows.

Coyne and colleagues found associations among individual consumption of violent media and relational aggression, though the studies were often cross-sectional and focused only on individuals rather than dyads (Coyne, Nelson, Graham-Kevan, Keister, & Grant, 2010; Coyne, Nelson, Graham-Kevan, Tew, Meng, & Olsen, 2011; Gentile, Coyne, & Walsh, 2011). Coyne,

Nelson et al. (2010) found that watching aggression on television predicted physical aggression for men and relational aggression for both men and women. These findings are in line with Coyne et al.'s (2011) findings that specifically looked at different types of aggression portrayed on television and how they relate to different types of aggression within romantic couples. However, these studies look at individual reports of perceived tendencies, whereas relational aggression is a phenomenon that occurs within the dyad, meaning that it should be evaluated with respect to the dyad from the perspective of both partners. Because relational aggression is a phenomenon that occurs within interpersonal relationships, research is more effective and creates a clearer picture of the phenomenon if it incorporates each partner's perspectives not only on their own aggression, but also views of each other's aggression. Previous research focuses on individual reports; however, the reports of relational variables such as relational aggression cannot be truly measured to present a clear picture of the phenomenon without the individual's partner. Data from both partners of a dyad, ultimately, provides a more thorough explanation of relational variables as they occur within the dyad.

It is important to look at data within the social and behavioral sciences with a larger perspective beyond just how the individual experiences various phenomena because the phenomena are often the result of contributions of more than just the individual. Kenny et al. (2006) identified various examples where data from both partners, for example, illustrate a more thorough understanding of variables such as relational satisfaction, self-disclosure, and attachment because such variables reflect the contributions by two people. Therefore, most of the variables an individual is asked to reflect on in the present study (i.e., relational quality variables like satisfaction and commitment) are often linked to the individual's relational partner. Therefore, perceptions of variables such as relational quality need to be considered through the

lenses of both the partner (i.e., the levels of relational aggression the partner reports) and the individual (i.e., the levels of aggression the individual perceives from his or her partner).

Keeping in mind that each partner often contributes to the dyad in different ways because each partner has his or her own perspective, experiences, and expectations, it is also important to note that a person builds an understanding of various phenomena, such as what it means to be in a relationship, based on cultural models such as those presented in the media. Therefore, this research will be grounded in various theoretical perspectives that will help better understand how reality television can potentially influence individual engagement in behaviors such as relational aggression within interpersonal relationships. Specifically, this study draws on cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009), the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Bandura et al., 1961, 1963), and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954; Gibbons & Buunk, 1999; Suls et al., 2002) to better illustrate the potential relationship between reality television consumption, relational aggression, and how each influences relational quality.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory (Gerbner et al, 1980; Morgan et al., 2009) addresses long-term effects of general television viewing on beliefs and perceptions. The concept of “cultivation” refers to “the independent contribution television viewing makes to audience members’ conceptions of social reality” (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009, p. 35). Specifically, cultivation theory claims that individuals who watch more television are likely to perceive the real world in a way that is similar to how television programming portrays it compared to individuals who watch less television.

More recent work on cultivation, however, looks at genre-specific effects (e.g., Eggermont, 2004; Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2007; Segrin & Nabi, 2002). For example, Segrin and Nabi (2002) found contradictory evidence when looking at general television viewing and genre-specific viewing. The researchers found that overall television viewing was not a good predictor for idealistic marriage expectations, such as “a great deal of romance, physical intimacy, passion, celebration, happiness, ‘love at first sight,’ physical beauty, empathy, and open communication” (Segrin & Nabi, 2002, p. 249), but individuals with television viewing habits that include a large amount of romantic genre programming that often focuses on marriage and close relationships (i.e. romantic comedies, soap operas) are positively associated with idealistic marriage expectations. These findings open the door for research to investigate whether certain characteristics of specific genres of television (e.g., aggression portrayed among reality show personalities) influence individuals’ perceptions of, for example, how common aggression is within romantic relationships. Violent scenes presented in reality television programming have a greater contribution to heightening aggressiveness than the same scenes presented as fantasy entertainment within a movie, suggesting that content-specific programming and how it is presented can affect beliefs (Atkin, 1983). For the study, Atkin (1983) had three versions of the same content prepared for study participants to be randomly exposed to. The three six-minute newscast stories were identical except for a single segment, two of which had a fight scene that was manipulated to be presented as either a regular news story or a movie promotion, with the third acting as a control with a commercial for a typical product in place of the fight scene manipulation. Both the news story and movie preview groups of participants displayed significantly more hypothetical situational aggression than the control group. The study also found that the group exposed to violence in the form of a regular news story also scored

significantly higher than the group exposed to the violent situation in the form of a movie preview. While news stories are not the same as reality shows, the most important element of this study is the difference in how information is presented. The findings support the idea that reality television may lend itself to stronger cultivation effects than scripted reality shows because of the reduced need for audiences to suspend reality to enjoy their viewing, especially among heavy viewers of reality shows.

Atkin's (1983) finding highlights the need to investigate the effects of reality television on relational aggression. The cultivation effect may be stronger for reality shows because of the characteristics that differentiate reality shows from scripted shows. For example, Nabi, Biley, Morgan, and Stitt (2003) identified various characteristics of reality television shows that make them distinct from other genres, including individuals portraying themselves rather than actors portraying other characters, who appear mostly within their work and/or living environments rather than on a set, and who are enacting what seem to be naturally-occurring narratives rather than a script. The authors also find that although viewers do not see reality shows as "real" as talk shows or entertainment news programs, viewers do identify reality television shows as more real than scripted dramas, comedies, and soap operas. Furthermore, viewers report that regardless of what the underlying premise of a specific show may be, reality shows in general are united by the idea that they portray individuals who behave in a manner that is not pre-determined by a script (Hall, 2006). The unscripted presentations and viewer perception that characters are presenting their personal beliefs and values may actually contribute to the enjoyment of watching reality shows, which could help explain why individuals are drawn to reality shows and why the effects they have on viewers would be different than scripted shows (Hall, 2006). Therefore, reality show viewers may not see the need to suspend disbelief like they would if they were

viewing a scripted series, which further illustrates that the reality show genre needs to be investigated separately from general television viewing.

The depiction of dating roles is one example of how reality television shows can affect beliefs. Zurbriggen and Morgan (2006) found that exposure to gender stereotypical attitudes in dating reality shows (e.g., *The Bachelor*, *Temptation Island*, etc.) was associated with audience endorsement of those stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about dating and relationships. Furthermore, the authors found that consumption of reality dating programming was a significant predictor of attitudes and beliefs about dating and relationships, regardless of whether viewers were watching the shows for learning (e.g., from others' mistakes) or entertainment purposes. With reality shows portraying significantly higher levels of relational aggression than non-reality shows (Coyne et al., 2010), it is vital to investigate the relationship between such content and the quality of viewer interpersonal relationships. If television viewing cultivates the way individuals see the world, then heavy reality television viewers would perceive relational aggression as a normal behavior within romantic relationships resulting in a wider cultivation differential. The cultivation differential is the difference between light viewers and heavy viewers in their perceptions of the real world, such that heavy reality show viewers would be more likely to see relational aggression as a common behavior within relationships, whereas light viewers would not (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). According to cultivation theory, the degree to which an individual perceives relational aggression as a normative behavior is a first-order cultivation effect, and a second-order effect would be the endorsement of relational aggression. Shrum (2009) notes that first-order judgments are estimates of prevalence or probability, which are memory-based judgments constructed by "recalling information from memory and constructing the judgment in real time" (p. 67). Second-order effects, on the other hand, are the attitudes and

values, which tend to be online, real-time judgments, which are “constructed by relying on information as it comes into memory storage from an outside source” (p. 67).

Theory of Reasoned Action

Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) theory of reasoned action (TRA) allows for an understanding of the process through which media exposure may affect personal behavior. Since its conception, TRA has been developed into the theory of planned behavior (TPB), which includes “perceived behavioral control as an additional determinant of intention and behavior” (Ajzen, 2016). Therefore, because one can assume that individuals tend to have volitional control over their own behavior, especially when the behavior in question does not require special skills or a noteworthy level of self-efficacy, Ajzen (2016) argued that perceived behavioral control becomes irrelevant and the theory reduces to TRA, which continues to be a useful foundation for research today (e.g., Doane, Kelley, & Peason, 2016; Sheldon, 2016). Cultivation theory assumes a more passive role of the audience in the effects the media has on individuals. TRA, on the other hand, focuses on an individual’s active role in making decisions about whether to engage in a behavior. According to the theory, the best predictor of an individual’s behavior is the behavioral intention, which is based on two preexisting cognitive elements: attitudes toward performing the behavior and the subjective norms about the behavior. Attitudes are the beliefs an individual holds about the behavior, its outcome, and the evaluation of the outcome, whereas subjective norms refer to how an individual perceives others’ attitudes about the behavior, especially people that are important to the individual (Park & Levine, 1999). More specifically, personal attitudes are influenced by an individual’s beliefs about the behavior and its likelihood that the behavior leads to a particular outcome. The evaluation of the outcomes helps an individual assess whether the behavioral outcomes will be positive or negative, which in turn helps the individual develop

an attitude about the behavior itself. Furthermore, subjective norms are comprised of normative beliefs, which are perceptions of what significant others will think of the individual performing the behavior, and motivation to comply, which is the desire to behave in a way that is similar to a reference group.

In their meta-analysis of TRA-based research, Sheppard, Hartwick, and Warshaw (1988) found that attitudes and subjective norms accurately predict an individual's intention to engage in behaviors and, in turn, actual engagement in the behaviors. The association between attitude and behavior has been supported across various topics dealing with the relationship between persuasive messages and a specific behavior, including parental and spousal violence, drug and alcohol use, cheating on romantic partners, marketing, advertising, business ethics, health, and the military to name a few (Hale, Householder, & Greene, 2003; Kim & Hunter, 1993; Reichert, Kim, & Fosu, 2007).

The TRA framework can be applied to the context of relational aggression within romantic relationships as follows: based on the representation of relational aggression in reality television often alongside the aggressor's fame and wealth, viewers may be more likely to believe that the behaviors depicted in the shows (i.e., aggression) may lead to fame and wealth. Such behaviors (i.e., aggression) seen alongside positive outcomes in many cases, resulting in positive personal attitudes toward aggression. Furthermore, if an individual sees reality show characters forming and nourishing relationships alongside expressed relational aggression (e.g., friends confiding in one another about aggressive behavior within their marriages), viewers may be inclined to believe that the interpersonal relationships outside of their romantic relationships will flourish if said romantic relationship contains relational aggression, which promote discussion within the friendships or familial relationships. If viewers perceive such discussion as

a way to develop bonds within other relationships, it may promote a positive attitude about relational aggression.

If consuming high amounts of reality shows influences viewers to perceive that relational aggression within a romantic relationship is a common behavior, as cultivation theory first-order effects suggest, this perception could also be explained as relational aggression being accepted as a social norm by viewers (Shrum, 2009). Furthermore, the desire to behave like the members of a reference group, which could be composed of family members, friends, coworkers, and so on, can be a factor to motivate an individual to comply with the behavioral norms established by the reference group. Reality stars may be seen as a reference group, in which case the more relational aggression the reality stars enact, the more normative the behavior appears to viewers, the more likely the viewers will intend to engage in relational aggression to be more similar to their reference group. In this case, intent to engage in relational aggression within the romantic relationship may be heightened in order to align with the group that perceived as benefiting in some ways from the aggressive behavior. For example, in reality shows, some relationships (i.e., relationships with friends and family members) may be portrayed as flourishing because characters may be driven to seek social support from those relational partners because of experiencing relational aggression in other relationship. The role of social support is especially important to consider in the present study because research has found that social support can act as a cross-domain buffer for conflict within relationships (Lepore, 1992). Specifically, the study found that “high levels of perceived social support in one social domain can buffer individuals from the adverse psychological effects of frequent social conflict in another social domain” (Lepore, 1992, p. 862). These findings suggest that the relationship between relational aggression and relational quality within a romantic relationship can be changed based on the levels of social

support the members of the dyad receive from external social networks such as family and friends.

Whereas cultivation theory is a more media-focused theory with very different roots from TRA, some conceptual elements of each overlap, especially with regard to beliefs and attitudes. Nabi and Sullivan (2011) have made the link directly. The authors argue that “whereas cultivation theory suggests that social reality beliefs relate to more global perceptions of the world, the TRA similarly argues that a set of salient behavioral beliefs predicts the more global construct of attitude toward that behavior” (p. 808). Ultimately, both theories focus on perceptions of what is true about the world, though TRA adds the benefit of providing a framework to help assess the likelihood of something happening.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Bandura et al., 1961, 1963) describes how people learn behavior through observation. People engage in a behavior based on the rewarding or punishing consequences that they observe as an outcome of other people’s behavior, via vicarious learning. Various internal processes influence our ability to learn vicariously including an individual’s attention to a behavioral model and whether or not the individual that is observing the model retains what he or she is observing. The more often an individual observes and rehearses a behavior, the more likely that person is to be able to perform the behavior. The ability to perform a behavior is easier if the symbolic conception of the observed behavior can be translated into action by matching the observation to a conceptual model the observer already possesses. If an individual can translate the new behavior that he or she observes onto a behavior that he or she has already performed because they are similar enough in their foundations, it becomes easier for the individual to learn the new behavior. An individual must also be able to

actually perform the behavior, which means that the individual must have the skills to respond to the behavior and the motivation to use those skills to perform the behavior. By applying an abstract understanding of the activity and adapting it to a preexisting set of skills, individuals engage in vicarious learning.

Bandura (1986) also claims that after the ability to perform a behavior is accounted for, motivation to perform the behavior must also be considered. He identifies three sources of motivation to engage in a behavior including a direct incentive, self-produced incentive, and vicarious incentives. People are more likely to engage in a behavior if they perceive the outcomes of that behavior as valued by others. Furthermore, behaviors that appear to be socially approved are particularly attractive, especially if they also line up with the individual's moral standards. Attention would also be heightened because characters in the media are often selected because they have attractive or interesting qualities or because they are depicted in extraordinary situations, which are typically perceived as entertaining, which heightens attention (Bandura, 2004; McGuire, 2002). For example, reality shows often present contestants facing incredible challenges (e.g., *Naked and Afraid*, *Survivor*), offer contestants the opportunity to rise to the top via talent (e.g., *Top Chef*, *So You Think You Can Dance*), or document privileged lifestyles (e.g., *WAGS*, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*). Such scenarios can present the characters in these shows as attractive models for viewers to learn from.

Bandura (1986) notes that modeling can occur in any context where observation of behavior can occur, which includes the media. For example, Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2008) investigated beliefs and attitudes may be influenced by movies with characters that are similar to viewers. Specifically, the authors investigated movies centered on the social world of teens and their portrayals of female characters as more likely to engage in and reward social aggression

than their male counterparts. The “mean girl” often portrayed in modern teen movies seems to influence viewers, both male and female, to hold negative stereotypical beliefs about female friendships, unfavorable attitudes about women in general, and perceptions that relational aggression may actually increase an individual’s popularity among his or her peers.

Similarly, television viewers observe the behaviors depicted in shows, interpret the behavior, and often adjust their own behavior as a result of the modeling. Because of the higher levels of relational aggression within reality shows as opposed to other genres (Coyne et al., 2010), viewers may be inclined to perceive relational aggression depictions as how interaction within a relationship should occur. Therefore, viewers form an abstract model for the behaviors they are watching and the consequences of those behaviors, at which point the behavior becomes normative and could even be perceived as an avenue to rewards, ranging from immediate attention to grander fame for the viewer if he or she engages in the behavior. Reality television shows provide a vast pool of models who may appear more similar to viewers than scripted shows because of the “reality” aspect of reality television. Furthermore, it appears that viewers choose to watch reality television because they like to watch the interpersonal interactions that occur in the lives of the “real” people in the shows (Nabi et al., 2003). This supports the idea that reality television serves as a resource for viewers to find models they could learn from about how to potentially behave within interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, there are various factors that could influence how likely modeling observed behavior will occur including program enjoyment, perceived realism of the program, identification with the characters in the program, and character affinity (i.e., homophily). These phenomena may influence the attention to the modeled behavior and motivation to engage in it. For example, Eyal and Rubin (2003) reiterate previous research that homophily can predict

media exposure because it allows for possible validation of the viewer's beliefs. An individual with high affinity for the characters in the show he or she is watching is more likely to pay attention to the characters. Also, if a viewer identifies with the show characters, he or she may also have increased desire to be more like the character, heightening the show's impact on the viewer (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Furthermore, Green, Brock, and Kaufman (2004) present enjoyment as "an individual's identification with and empathy toward fictional characters as well as their assessment of the actions of the characters and the themes inherent to the messages of a narrative" (p. 311). Therefore, by enjoying a show, viewers are associating themselves both with the characters in and messages of the show. Therefore, through the connection that viewers have with the shows through enjoyment, identification, and homophily, it is more likely that the viewer will pay attention to the characters as behavior models because of the perceived similarity between the viewers and the models (Bandura, 2004). To further build upon the Atkin (1983) study that found news media had greater effects on viewers than scripted, fantasy media, Poulito and Cowen (2007) emphasize perceived realism as an important element in the cognitive processes that viewers go through. Their study supports the premise that "fiction and documentary genres evoke distinct cognitive procedures" in that fiction calls for audiences to suspend beliefs about reality while documentaries encourage viewers to actively believe that what they are seeing is real (p. 255). When watching documentaries, viewers cognitively test what they see to how the content compares with what they know or believe to be real, which engages in a more logical and rational processing. Ultimately, reality shows are marketed as documentary-style shows about the lives of the individuals who are featured in the program. Therefore, it is possible that this formulated element of higher perceived realism may result in stronger media effects on viewers than other forms of media.

Humans are capable of higher learning through abstract modeling (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, it is possible that individuals watch situations between romantic partners in reality shows and modify their behaviors with their own partners. This abstract modeling allows viewers to learn vicariously by watching reality shows even if the circumstances within viewers' relationships are not the same as those in the relationships portrayed in reality shows because reality shows often feature high status individuals who have an abundance of money, are well-known in their communities and beyond, and are successful business professionals. For example, *Real Housewives* are often wealthy, the Kardashians have fame and various product lines, the cast of *Vanderpump Rules* are often featured in other media, such as advertising campaigns but connect because they all moonlight as waiters and bartenders. In reality shows, even if the cast is not famous yet, they may be promised fame as a result of being on shows like *Top Chef* or *America's Next Top Model*. Although the viewers and the models may not be alike, the viewers may aspire to be like the reality television "stars," which would entice the viewers to adopt the behaviors they see. Therefore, if the high-status dyads in reality shows have high levels of aggression within their relationships, viewers could internalize that this is how relationships should be and, therefore, they will expect, and possibly engage in, more relational aggression.

Humans do not just react to their environment but rather evaluate it, learn from it, and construct it. Furthermore, the motivation to engage in certain behaviors is partly influenced by the models that exhibit the behavior. Therefore, if individuals are exposed to more models of relational aggression, they are more likely to pay attention to them and to learn from them. Reality shows portray seemingly normal people that seem to have been raised to celebrity status, sometimes because of the shows themselves, often reaching celebrity status only temporarily. Furthermore, the individuals in the reality shows are often portrayed as being rewarded socially

or financially—some reality shows portray individuals winning prize money after a competition and other shows portray successful lives of their subjects, who are often doing the reality show because of their successful lives (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2010). However, some individuals who appear in the reality shows do not achieve social or fiscal reward through the shows, though the opportunity to appear on a reality television show may be a reward in itself. Various reality show cast members use their growing social media following that results from their appearance in the shows to start businesses or to become spokespeople for various products, further contributing to the potential rewards that reality shows present their viewers, both directly and indirectly. The production of the observed behavior (i.e., the relational aggression) is subject to the motivation presented within the observed context (i.e., reality show). Reality shows present viewers with the idea that attaining celebrity status is easier for the general public and is no longer reserved just for the elite, opening the door to potential financial reward and social prestige. Such rewards could provide enough motivation for viewers to engage in the relational aggression observed in the shows—by engaging in relational aggression, the individuals may perceive their chances of being on a reality show may increase because their lives appear more dramatic, which some audiences perceive as entertaining. This kind of viewer motivation will be assessed at both the micro and macro levels in the present study. For example, individuals may perceive that reality show characters are portrayed as being rewarded for using relational aggression and they may perceive that individuals who decide to appear in reality shows are rewarded by elevated social status.

Social Comparison Theory

As people observe modeled behaviors, they may be driven to evaluate those behaviors against their own abilities and opinions. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954; Gibbons &

Buunk, 1999; Suls et al., 2002) provides a theoretical foundation to better understand the process of such an evaluation and the motivation behind it.

Social comparison theory states that individuals are naturally driven to compare their own opinions and abilities against other people's opinions and abilities via three motivational factors: self-evaluation, or assessing one's achievements; self-improvement, or how one could better one's knowledge, status or character; and self-enhancement, or working to feel better about oneself (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999), which are often associated with lateral, upward, and downward comparison. Upward social comparison occurs when an individual engages in evaluating his or her own behaviors against those of someone who he or she perceives as superior, which often results in a decrease in the perceiver's self-concept. Downward social comparison occurs when an individual engages in evaluating his or her own behavior against that of someone whom he or she perceives as inferior, which often results in a build-up of the perceiver's self-concept. Lateral social comparison occurs when an individual compares him- or herself to a target for the sake of getting a better understanding of him- or herself and to increase self-knowledge (Smith & Insko, 1987; Thornton & Moore, 1993). The directionality of the social comparison depends on the perceived aim at the individual's self-image. Individuals whose self-image is threatened tend to engage in more downward social comparison, especially with comparison targets that are worse off than they are in an effort to protect themselves from other potentially negative impacts on their self-esteem (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Roeses & Olson, 2007). However, it is possible that individuals who look to enhance their self-image are more likely to engage in upward social comparison. Spencer, Fein, and Lomore (2001) found that individuals with high self-esteem did not perceive messages that threatened their self-image in the same way as individuals who had low self-esteem, so it is important to consider an

individual's self-esteem when trying to understand how upward social comparison—a behavior that typically hinders an individual's self-esteem—can impact the perceiver. Therefore, if the motivation behind comparison directionality can depend on the perceivers themselves rather than their targets such that when an individual is confident in who he or she is, there is no need to look to others to repair a self-image. Instead, the individual has freed mental resources that would otherwise be spent repairing the self-image via downward social comparison to look for ways to get better, thus engaging in upward social comparison instead.

Applied to reality television, social comparison theory can help explain why individuals may want to engage in behaviors they see in the reality shows, despite the shows' depictions of seemingly socially undesirable behaviors such as aggression, excessive drinking, and extramarital affairs. Viewers can take a *fly on the wall* perspective, allowing them to witness various behaviors such as these in which reality show characters engage (Blair, Yue, Singh, & Bernhardt, 2005; Flynn, Park, Morin, & Stana, 2015). Reality show stars are often depicted as wealthy, glamorous celebrities, lending them to being targets for upward comparison—viewers want to achieve these high-status characteristics, which would encourage them to engage in the behaviors in the shows as they are associated with the reality show celebrities and how they rose to fame. On the other hand, reality shows also offer viewers the opportunity for downward social comparison. As mentioned, reality shows are filled with behaviors that are typically seen as socially undesirable. Therefore, it is possible that some viewers engage in upward social comparison and others engage in downward social comparison even though both groups may be viewing the same shows, which would be in line with what has been previously suggested by research that also suggests that the same show can be perceived differently by different people (e.g., Lewis & Weaver, 2016).

Hall (2006) points out that the relatively unscripted nature of reality shows can heighten the likelihood that viewers can use the same target for multiple directions of social comparison. For example, seeing the cast of a reality show behave poorly could contribute to the viewer's "schadenfreude... whereas it is likely to contribute to a sense of inspiration when [the cast] does well" (Hall, 2006, pg. 208). Taylor and Lobel (1989) identify a trend within social comparison research that could illuminate why individuals may look to reality shows for behavioral models. Focused specifically on research with cancer patient samples, the authors note that patients prefer to make downward social comparisons but prefer to have upward contact. This means that although patients may compare their situation to those worse off than they are in an effort to make themselves feel better about their situation, they seek contact with individuals who are coping with cancer much better than they are or are even long-term survivors for both informational and emotional support. Therefore, social comparison theory can help illuminate why reality show viewers engage in downward social comparison (i.e., they watch characters engage in socially undesirable behavior), which allows viewers to feel better about themselves. However, reality shows sometimes present glamorous lifestyles, fame, and wealth, which could motivate viewers to associate with the characters by viewing their shows because the characters' high statuses makes them attractive targets for role models, showing how an individual can succeed despite interpersonal struggles. In fact, interpersonal struggles may be viewed as making the characters stronger, which could lead viewers to believe that relational struggles such as relational aggression could be necessary trials on the way to success. Therefore, it is possible that viewers are engaging in downward evaluations and upward contacts simultaneously while viewing reality television. Therefore, it seems that "the management of emotional needs is paramount under conditions of threat and that these needs are best satisfied by downward evaluation and upward

contacts” (Taylor & Lobel, 1989, pg. 572). It is possible that reality shows provide an opportunity to do both in the same target. If there is already instability (i.e., threat) for an individual, intra- or interpersonal (i.e., low commitment, low relational satisfaction), the individual may be more likely to adopt reality show behaviors such as relational aggression, which would in turn further deteriorate relational quality. This trajectory could be further explained based on the viewer’s reaction to the reality show. Hall (2006) noted both of the aforementioned occurrences when she conducted focus groups to find that reality show viewers are enthusiastic about reality show programming because they contain both elements that the viewers aspire to achieve and they can witness someone else’s misfortune. Elements of both aspiration and pity seem to be intensified because viewers identify with the cast members of reality shows, who are presented as real people because the claimed unscripted nature of the shows.

Smith (2000) has categorized four types of social comparison results based on the direction of comparison (upward or downward) and the assimilative, and contrastive processes that occur, which would depend on the target and whether the individual sees him- or herself as similar or different to the target. Positive results are often associated with upward assimilative comparisons (the individual looks up to a superior target as a role model for how he or she would like to be) and downward contrastive comparisons (the individual looks down on an inferior target and identifying the target as different or dissimilar from him- or herself). However, negative results are likely to occur with upward contrastive comparisons (the individual looks up to a superior target and feels as though he or she does not have the means to live up to the example the superior target sets) and downward assimilative comparison (the individual looks down on the inferior target and sees him- or herself as similar to the target). In an experimental

study evaluating emotional responses to reality shows, Lewis and Weaver (2016) found the association Smith (2008) described, such that individuals who were in the self-image threatening condition, within which the individuals were told that they performed extremely poorly on an assigned task, reported pride and sympathy. These emotions suggest viewers engage in downward social comparison to the cast members in the reality show they watched as part of the study, which the authors interpret as participants' efforts for self-protection and self-enhancement. The study also found that it is possible to simultaneously have contradicting comparisons toward the same target, which would support the notion that reality show viewers can experience both downward comparison and upward contact via the same target.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the idea that humans learn from observing others around them and their surroundings, within which the media is a dominant presence, the hypotheses and research questions of this study inquire about the relationship between watching reality television and the dynamic within romantic couples. Past research and the theoretical foundation for this study offers two main foci for this study: (1) the association between watching reality television and relational aggression within romantic relationships and (2) the association between relational aggression within romantic relationships and relational quality. The hypotheses and research question that follow address the different levels of the variables, to be described in detail shortly, and their proposed relationships to each other. The conceptual model (Figure 1) presents the proposed relationships among the variables, as stated in the hypotheses and research questions that follow.

The first focus for investigation in this study is on the association between watching reality television and relational aggression within relationships. Derived from the work in cultivation theory and social cognitive theory, the first hypothesis is as follows:

H₁ Reality television show viewing is positively associated with relational aggression within romantic relationships over time.

Based on the theoretical foundation in cultivation theory, the TRA, and social cognitive theory, this study seeks to understand whether watching increased amounts of reality television is associated with viewers viewing relational aggression within relationships as a normative behavior, which could be associated with increased perception of relationally aggressive behaviors within viewers' relationships. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this study predicts that viewing relational aggression as a normative behavior acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between watching reality shows and engaging in relationally aggressive behaviors within relationships.

H₂ Reality television show viewing over time will have an indirect and negative association with relational quality through perceptions of relational aggression as a normative behavior.

Furthermore, according to social comparison theory, how the viewer perceives the reality show cast members could affect the way they perceive the behaviors. Social comparison could behave as a moderating variable, which according to TRA, would influence both how the viewer understands various behaviors themselves as (un)desirable or the results of these behaviors as (un)desirable. Also, social comparison could influence the perspective the viewer takes when evaluating the model that is engaging in the behavior. Therefore, the third hypothesis of this

study predicts that social comparison acts as a moderator between watching reality shows and relationally aggressive behaviors.

H₃ Social comparison acts as a moderating variable between reality television show viewing and relational aggression within romantic relationships such that (a) viewers who engage in upward social comparison have increasingly positive attitudes toward relational aggression over time within relationships whereas (b) viewers who engage in downward social comparison have increasingly negative attitudes toward relational aggression over time within relationships.

There are various elements within the relationship between the show and the viewers that could influence the type of effect viewing the shows would have. Therefore, program enjoyment, perceived realism, identification, and homophily with show characters will be investigated as possible moderators between watching reality television and relational aggression within romantic relationships.

H_{4a} Perceived realism acts as a moderating variable between reality television show viewing and relational aggression within romantic relationships such that (a) viewers who are high in perceived realism engage in more relational aggression over time within relationships whereas (b) viewers who are low in perceived realism engage in less relational aggression over time within relationships.

H_{4b} Enjoyment acts as a moderating variable between reality television show viewing and relational aggression within romantic relationships such that (a) viewers who are high in enjoyment engage in more relational aggression over time within relationships whereas (b) viewers who are low in enjoyment engage in less relational aggression over time within relationships.

H_{4c} Identification acts as a moderating variable between reality television show viewing and relational aggression within romantic relationships such that (a) viewers who strongly identify with reality shows engage in more relational aggression over time within relationships whereas (b) viewers do not strongly identify with reality shows engage in less relational aggression over time within relationships.

H_{4d} Homophily acts as a moderating variable between reality television show viewing and relational aggression within romantic relationships such that (a) viewers who strongly associate with reality shows engage in more relational aggression over time within relationships whereas (b) viewers do not strongly associate with reality shows engage in less relational aggression over time within relationships.

The second focus of this study is the association between relational aggression and relational quality.

H₅ Relational aggression is negatively correlated with relational quality over time.

As with the relationship between watching reality television and relational aggression, there are various elements that are incorporated into what makes up the relationship between relational aggression and relational quality. It is also important to consider the psychological states of the individuals within the relationships, as they contribute to the dynamic within the dyad. Therefore, self-esteem and social support will be investigated as potential moderator for the relationship between relational aggression and relational quality. This is especially important to understand with respect to watching reality shows and within the context of social comparison theory and TRA. According to the theories, if individuals are watching reality shows via upward comparison, it is possible that relational aggression (a norm within reality shows) is a marker for viewers of a “correct” relationship according to social norms and should result in topics for

conversation among other social networks (i.e., friendships and family relationships). In this case, relational aggression could drive a romantic partner to seek council from social support agents within his or her social networks, which could cause the individual to evaluate the relational aggression as positive overall, despite the negative immediate behavior. However, relational aggression can manifest in a variety of ways, including requests to one's relational partner to stop contact with other members of social networks. Therefore, social support could influence the intensity of the association between relational aggression and relational quality.

H₆ Social support acts as a moderating variable between relational aggression and relational quality such that (a) individuals who report receiving high amounts of social support have a weaker association with relational aggression over time whereas (b) individuals who report low amounts of social support have a stronger association with relational aggression over time.

Self-esteem could influence the relationship between relational aggression and relational quality, as well. Again, relational aggression may manifest in various ways, including making demands for certain behavior with threats to end the relationship if the behavior does not occur. For example, an individual may demand that his or her partner stop meeting with friends or family members. Partners with high self-esteem may see this type of behavior as a threatening act and, as a result, evaluate relational satisfaction and commitment as low. However, partners with low self-esteem may see this type of behavior as attention and justify it (i.e., "My partner cares about me so much that they want all of my attention, which is why they are making such demands."), which could result in higher relational quality.

H₇ Relational aggression over time will have an indirect and negative association with relational quality through self-esteem.

Finally, it is important to remember that each dyad is made up of two individuals. Therefore, social and behavioral variables should be studied with the perspective of how a partner's behavior can influence the individual. Therefore, it is important to investigate how a partner's beliefs about and engagement in relational aggression could affect the relationship, as well. The following hypothesis proposes that there is a partner effect with regard to relational aggression and relational quality.

H₈ Individuals who report more relationally aggressive behaviors from the partner will report decreased relational quality over time than individuals who report fewer relationally aggressive behaviors from the partner.

The Present Study

According to Kelley's (1979) interdependence theory, satisfaction is the result of daily outcomes, which are the rewards and costs encountered as a result of interactions with partners. It is reasonable to assume that those interactions may be more rewarding on some days and may be more challenging, or costly, on other days. This would result in a fluctuation of the overall relational outcomes, which would result in a fluctuation in overall satisfaction. Therefore, a diary study is vital in order to better understand how some variables change from day to day and what may be causing these changes, as daily and weekly diaries can pick up changes when they actually happen. This ability to detect changes is a key benefit over standard cross-sectional analyses or longer term longitudinal data analyses that often have a longer period between assessments (Laurenceau & Bolger, 2005).

Previous research tends to rely on participant reports of overall television viewing as opposed to reporting viewing habits via diaries (e.g., Coyne, 2016; Coyne et al., 2012). However, diary methods allow researchers to examine events and experiences very closely to when and

how they happen (Bolger et al., 2003), allowing a more thorough investigation into the relationships between viewing habits, relational aggression, and relational quality. Diary data allow for minimal delay between when an individual experiences a phenomenon and when it is reported, which allows researchers to review data that are “truer” to individual experiences. Also, conducting a diary study with dyads allows researchers to measure the more immediate reactions of both members of the dyad to each other’s behaviors. For example, the partner engaging in relational aggression may perceive it as normal but the other partner may perceive it as an unusually high level of relational aggression, which could be influenced by how much reality television each partner watches. In this case, there may be a different relationship between watching reality television, relational aggression, and relational quality for one partner may be different than that of the other partner. For example, research suggests that females tend to report more victimization and males tend to report more perpetration during relational aggression within dyads (Orpinas, McNicholas, & Nahapetyan, 2015). The diary method is ideal because research shows that many dyadic variables, such as relational quality and relational aggression, can vary from day to day (e.g., Meyer, Robinson, Cohn, Gildenblatt, & Berkley, 2016; Orina, Collins, Simpson, Salvatore, Haydon, & Kim, 2011; Rauer, Pettit, Lansford, Bates, & Dodge, 2013).

III. Method

Participants

To qualify, both individuals in a couple were at least 18 years old, in a committed heterosexual romantic relationship with their current partner for at least six weeks (married, dating, or cohabiting), and each participant needed to have his or her own e-mail address. There were 450 participants in the first wave of the study. Of these individuals that participated in the

first wave, 422 made up intact couples. With a retention rate of 70.19%, 299 participants completed all four waves of the study, within these there were 117 complete heterosexual couples (see Figure 2 for participant breakdown in each wave). Although single individuals (participants whose partners did not provide any data) were dropped, any intact couples were retained for subsequent analyses, despite any missing data, resulting in 422 individuals total and 234 individuals with all four waves completed. The participants were recruited from a large Southwestern university and from a small private liberal arts Midwestern college. Only couples were recruited via students at the institutions in exchange for course credit—students who were not part of romantic couple were offered the opportunity to refer a couple (e.g., friends, parents, roommates) in exchange for credit. Individuals who wished to participate in the study were instructed to email the researcher for instructions. Participants were told that the study was about television viewership and couple behavior, specifying that both partners in the relationships needed to participate.

Although there was no age cap for participants, they had to be at least 18 years old to participate. Mean age was 26.25 years for women ($SD = 12.31$) and 27.09 years for men ($SD = 13.05$). The sample was mostly White (78.67% White, 10.19% Hispanic, 4.27% Other, 3.55% Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.37% African American, and 0.47% Native American) and educated (9.24% of participants reported working on a graduate degree, most of whom had completed at a master's or higher at the time of the study, 12.80% of participants reported having graduated with a bachelor's degree, and another 61.37% of participants reported being in progress in their undergraduate work). With respect to relationship status, most participants were either in a committed relationship, including seriously dating (63.03%), married (22.27%), or engaged (1.66%). The remainder of the participants (14.7%) reported meeting the minimum dating

requirement of at least three months to participate in the study, but reported that they were in a casual dating relationship. The mean duration of participant relationships was 69.93 months (approximately 5 years and 10 months, $SD = 107.55$).

Design and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between watching reality television, relational aggression, and relational quality within romantic relationships. To achieve this goal, a four-week diary survey design was conducted with a sample of undergraduate students from a large, public southwestern university and a small, private Midwestern college. Both partners in the volunteer couples agreed to participate in the four-wave diary study per an informed consent form approved by each institution's IRB (Instructional Review Board) process. Participants were emailed four times throughout the study, approximately once per week for four weeks. The entire data collection lasted for 12 weeks, though participants were only required to participate for four weeks within the data collection period. Each point of contact was via email that included a couple identification code and a link to one of the four surveys, where they first had to review and agree to the IRB approved consent form before proceeding to the survey. Although the participants were not formally debriefed after their participation, they had the contact information for the researcher, whom they were encouraged to contact with questions. Individuals did not need to live in the city or state in which the study takes place because those who are eligible to participate in the study were able to do so online via Qualtrics, an online survey system.

In their meta-analysis Shanahan and Morgan (1999) point out that cultivation relationships typically manifest at about an effect size of $r = .10$, which is in line with typically small effect sizes in media research. The meta-analysis included 5,799 different findings such as

F-tests and correlations. According to Shrum (1999) small effect sizes could be a result of a number of other influences, source-priming, involvement, or time pressure. For example, asking participants about questions relevant to their viewing habits could prime them to the purpose of the study and participants can vary in their motivation to answer questions for the study. Such a small effect size would require a very large sample size in order to have a power of at least .80. Therefore, I looked to various studies published in the field that conceptually related to the present study (e.g., Coyne et al., 2008, 2010; Lewis & Weaver, 2016; Nabi, 2009; Nabi et al., 2003; Segrin & Nabi, 2002). Based on the effect sizes of those studies and Shanahan and Morgan's (1999) conclusion that an effect size of .10 is typical for media research, an a priori power analysis was run in G*Power to determine a minimum sample size (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). With at least a .80 power, an α of .05, and three predictors for a multiple regression analysis, the goal for the present study was to collect at least a sample size of $n = 126$. Once the data were collected, the couples with complete data sets (i.e., each partner completed all four waves of the study) were analyzed.

Data were collected via a secure Internet-based system. Participants who agreed to take part in the study were instructed to email the researcher to receive a participation code that would identify the couples. Individuals were instructed to complete surveys separate from their partners. The first time they logged onto the system, participants completed informed consent, demographic information, and the initial survey. Individuals were then emailed the remainder of the surveys (2-4) approximately one week apart and were instructed to think about the items as he or she had experienced them within the past week.

Online data gathering methods allow for every submission to be time and date stamped (Ogolsky, Niehuis, & Ridley, 2009). This information was used to remove any entries that are

deemed invalid, such as duplicate entries (i.e., submitting data more than once in a single day). The time and date stamps also allow daily entries in which partners did not match (i.e., both did not make the same amount of progress through the study) to be identified and removed. Only the couples where both partners completed all four waves of assessment were retained in the final sample.

The first time participants logged into the first survey via the Qualtrics survey website, they completed the longest of the four questionnaires, as they were asked to provide baseline data. Participants reported on select variables, including demographic data, relational variables such as levels of satisfaction, commitment, and aggression, psychological variables such as self-esteem and a measure for social support. In the final wave of the study, participants reported on the same variables, though variables that do not change over time (e.g., demographics) were excluded from final data collection. Between the first and last wave, participants reported data via shortened versions of the surveys to monitor possible changes over time in relational quality, levels of relational aggression, self-esteem, and social support. The shorter surveys used to collect data at the intermediate times help increase participant retention.

Measures

Media Variables. Following are descriptions of media variables.

Viewing Habits. Consistent with previous research done on media and relational aggression by Coyne and colleagues (e.g., Coyne, 2016; Coyne et al., 2012) participants were asked to list their three favorite reality television shows and rate how frequently they view each program on a scale of 1 (*once a month*) to 5 (*more than once a day*). To ensure consistency, participants were offered the following conceptual definition for reality television shows: A reality show is an unscripted television show featuring non-actors interacting with each other or

facing challenges such as competing against each other for a prize. Participants were offered 22 examples of reality shows, including *The Bachelorette*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *Survivor*, *Project Runway*, *The Voice*, *Duck Dynasty*, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *What Not To Wear*, *The Biggest Loser*, *MasterChef*. To get a better understanding of the quantity of television viewing, participants were asked to report the number of hours of reality television that they have watched (i.e., “In the past week (not including today), how many hours of your television viewing have involved watching reality TV shows?”). Male ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 2.97$) and female ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 2.67$) participants both reported an average of just over two hours of watching reality television each week.

Perceived realism. The Perceived Realism Scale (Rubin, Perse, & Taylor, 1988) is made up of five items (e.g., “Reality television shows presents things as they really are in life,” “If I see something in a reality TV show, I can’t be sure it really is that way”) that participants responded to on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The second item in the scale (“If I see something in a reality show, I can’t be sure it really is that way”) was dropped from the final scale. The scale reliability analysis showed that with that item, the scale reliability was lower ($\alpha = .56$) than without the item ($\alpha = .71$). Therefore, for the final analysis, the scale was the mean of four of the items collapsed into a single scale with acceptable reliability.

Enjoyment. To assess enjoyment, participants were asked two questions (i.e., “How much do you enjoy reality television?” and “How entertaining is reality television?”), answered on a scale of 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very much*). Some research of media enjoyment has used single-item measures in the past (e.g., Knobloch & Zillmann, 2002; Krcmar & Kean, 2005). However, recent studies have produced more stable and reliable measures by incorporating an additional

item (e.g., Lewis & Weaver, 2016; Weaver & Wilson, 2009). This approach was adopted here ($\alpha = .95$).

Identification. The Identification Scale (Cohen, 2001) is made up of 10 items. It was edited to have participants reflect on the three reality television shows they identified (e.g., “While viewing reality shows, I feel as if I am part of the action, “I am able to understand the events in the show in a manner similar to that in which the characters understand them”). Participants responded to on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) ($\alpha = .92$).

Liking. Participants responded to two statements that inquire about their liking of reality shows (i.e., “I like reality television shows” and “I do not enjoy watching reality television shows”). These items help assess how attractive reality shows are to individuals by having them respond on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), mirroring the items from Behm-Morawitz and Mastro’s (2008) study ($\alpha = .80$). By including liking into the scale, the present study investigates the potential relationship between taking pleasure in watching reality television (i.e., enjoying it) and having pleasant feelings about reality television in general (i.e., liking it). Based on the measure’s alpha, it appears that liking and enjoyment are, in fact, strongly associated despite their fundamental differences.

Homophily. Participants responded to eight statements that inquire about their level of association with characters they see in reality shows (e.g., “Some of the people in reality shows share the same morals as me” and “Some of the people in reality shows are like me”) on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Homophily allows a better understanding for how participants view themselves as similar to those characters (Andersen & de Mancillas, 1978; Aubrey, Behm-Morawitz, & Kim, 2014) ($\alpha = .90$).

Relational Variables. Following are descriptions of relationship variables.

Relational Aggression. To measure relational aggression, participants responded to the Self-Report of Aggression and Social Behavior Measure (SRASBM, Morales & Crick, 1998) as reported in Linder et al. (2002). The subscales relevant to this study include the following: Relational Aggression (16 items; e.g., “I have threatened to break up with my romantic partner in order to get him/her to do what I wanted,” $\alpha = .95$), Relational Victimization (9 items; e.g., “My romantic partner tries to make me feel jealous as a way of getting back at me,” ($\alpha = .90$)). Participants were asked to respond to these questions using a scale of 1 (*not true at all*) to 7 (*very true*).

Physical Aggression. To measure physical aggression, participants responded to the Self-Report of Aggression and Social Behavior Measure (SRASBM, Morales & Crick, 1998) as reported in Linder et al. (2002). The subscales relevant to this study include the following: Physical Aggression (6 items; e.g., “I try to get my own way by physically intimidating others,” $\alpha = .98$), Physical Victimization (6 items; e.g., “My romantic partner has pushed or shoved me in order to get me to do what s/he wants,” ($\alpha = .77$)). Participants were asked to respond to these questions using a scale of 1 (*not true at all*) to 7 (*very true*).

Normative Beliefs about Relational Aggression. To assess participants’ beliefs about the acceptability of relational aggression in addition to other forms of aggression, Huesmann and Guerra’s (1997) Normative Beliefs About Aggression Scale (NOBAGS) was adapted according to Werner and Nixon’s (2005) described alterations. Specifically, the original instrument contains two subscales that make up 20 items. General Approval of Aggression measures beliefs about the acceptability of using aggression in general. Approval of Retaliation measures beliefs about the acceptability of using aggression in response to a provocation. Furthermore, Huesmann and Guerra (1997) conceptualized items in the scale as different according to the severity of the

provocation and the severity of the response. The focus of this study is participant normative beliefs about relational aggression, rather than their beliefs as a function of the severity of provocation or response. Therefore, only the General Approval of Aggression subscale was used. Furthermore, because the NOBAGS contains items assessing physical and verbal aggression only, several items were created to mirror the scale's original items to assess participant normative beliefs about relational aggression, as well. The revised measure contains 12 items, addressing normative beliefs about physical (e.g., "It is generally wrong to get into physical fights with others."), verbal (e.g., "It is wrong to insult other people."), and relational (e.g., "It is wrong to try to make someone jealous when you're mad at him or her.") aggression. Participants were asked to respond to these questions using a scale of 1 ("*it is perfectly OK*" or "*it is really wrong*") to 4 ("*it is perfectly OK*" or "*it is really wrong*"), per the instructions of the original scale's creators ($\alpha = .88$).

Relational Quality. Relational quality was measured in this study through relational satisfaction and relational commitment. Relational satisfaction refers to the attitude regarding the quality of the relationship whereas commitment refers to the psychological attachment between relational partners in their intentions to continue their relationship (Goodboy, Myers, & Members of Investigation Communication, 2010). The Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1988) inquires about relational commitment. This measure is made up of seven items (e.g., "I want our relationship to last for a very long time," "I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner") with a scale of 0 (*do not agree at all*) to 8 (*agree completely*) ($\alpha = .87$). The Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983) inquires about relational satisfaction. Although couples have been together for at least six weeks, per the study participation requirements, there are numerous stages a relationship may be in (e.g., dating, cohabitation, marriage). Therefore, the

references specific to marriage in the first item were changed to refer to romantic relationships. This measure is made up of six items (e.g., “We have a good relationship,” “My relationship with my partner makes me happy”) that participants responded to on a scale of 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*) ($\alpha = .96$).

Psychological Variables. Following are descriptions of psychological variables.

Social Comparison. Social comparison theory is widely used in research (e.g., Gibbons & Buunk, 1999; Lewis & Weaver, 2016; Taylor & Lobel, 1989) including in the context of media research (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick & Romero, 2011; Yang & Oliver, 2010). Researchers tailor their social comparison scales. Social comparison theory and social cognitive theory emphasize that individuals are naturally driven to seek out models, especially those similar to themselves, which makes learning and comparison inevitable, personal, and specific. Therefore, measures need to reflect the individualistic nature of comparison, as has been established by example in previous research. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, social comparison was measured via an adaptation of Gibbons and Buunk’s (1999) Scale of Social Comparison Orientation. The original scale had 11 items focused only on lateral comparison and asked participants about comparing themselves with general others. This scale was used as the foundation to create scales gauging participant comparisons to reality show cast members in the form of upward social comparison (11 items; e.g., “I like to know what people on reality TV shows would do when faced with a situation that is similar to situations I face because they have a lot of experience handling such scenarios well,” ($\alpha = .97$)) and downward social comparison (8 items; e.g., “I pay a lot of attention to how well I do things compared with how people on reality TV shows do things because they set an example of how I should not do things,” ($\alpha = .94$)) on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Social Support. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) was used for measuring social support in this study. This measure is made up of 12 items (e.g., “My family really tries to help me,” “I can count on my friends when things go wrong”) that participants responded to on a scale of 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*). The measure assesses social support from various sources including family, friends, and significant other. Data were collected for all three sources of social support ($\alpha = .95$).

Self-Esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) was used to measure participant self-esteem. This measure is made up of 10 items (e.g., “I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others,” “I am able to do things as well as most other people”) that participants responded to on a scale of 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*) ($\alpha = .89$).

Data Analysis

The conceptual model (Figure 1) presents the proposed relationships among all the variables, as stated in the hypotheses and research questions. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS 24.0 to answer H_1 , H_5 , and H_8 . The remaining hypotheses were tested with the SPSS PROCESS module to examine for potential mediating and moderating relationships among the proposed variables. Specifically, H_2 and H_7 were tested via the PROCESS module for indirect effects whereas H_3 , H_{4a-d} , and H_6 were tested for potential moderation effects via PROCESS.

Existing research suggests that there are sex differences—men tend to engage in both physical and relational aggression whereas women tend to engage primarily in relational aggression. Therefore, each of the analyses was conducted once for male participants and then again for female participants and in some cases, variables for one partner were used to predict

the outcomes for the other. Because data were collected from heterosexual couples, dyadic membership was distinguished by participant sex. Furthermore, the analyses were conducted with the Time 1 version of the independent variable, the Time 4 version of the dependent variable, with the Time 1 version of the dependent variable as the covariate to test longitudinal effects for the variables in question, with the exception of reality television consumption. For example, if relational aggression acted as the dependent variable, the Time 1 version of relational aggression acted as the covariate in the analyses while the Time 4 version of relational aggression acted as the dependent variable. This allowed to control for original reports of relational aggression, measuring just the change between Time 1 and Time 4, thus testing for potential longitudinal changes. The corresponding Time 1 variables were entered as covariates into the regression models with their respective Time 4 dependent variables in order to test for prospective main effects. Reality show consumption was averaged for each participant based on how many waves he or she completed to better identify participants as they ranged across the spectrum between heavy viewers and light viewers.

When appropriate, each analysis was run a second time without the covariate to see if there was a change in the significance for the relationships between the variables. Analyses were conducted without covariates to verify whether the construct stability was a factor in the results as some of the variables in this study could remain fairly stable between participants' Time 1 and Time 4 reports. If this is the case, the Time 1 covariate would account for a great deal of the Time 4 variance in the dependent variable, leaving little residual variance in the Time 4 dependent variable to be explained by the other variables in the model. This creates an extremely conservative circumstance for testing the effects of independent variables and, therefore, the

models were re-analyzed without the covariate to further investigate the potential effects of the independent variables under less conservative circumstances.

Finally, each participant's reality television consumption was averaged based on how many waves he or she completed for an overall consumption variable. The average reflected the number of waves each participant completed. Therefore, if a participant completed all four waves of data collection, his or her average reflected this in the computation. If the participant completed only three of the four waves, his or her average reflected this, and so on. Therefore, each individual's reality show consumption score was expressed as a weekly average regardless of how many waves of the study he or she completed.

Variable Change Over Time. A one-way repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the null hypothesis that there is no change in the study's main dependent variables (i.e., reality TV consumption, relational aggression, relational quality) when measured at the study's interwave intervals (i.e., Time 1, Time 2, Time 3, Time 4). The results of the ANOVA for male reality TV consumption indicate a non-significant time effect, Wilks' Lambda = .97, $F(2.51, 319.20) = 0.82$, *ns*. The results of the ANOVA for female reality TV consumption indicate a non-significant time effect, Wilks' Lambda = .98, $F(2.82, 437.59) = 0.93$, *ns*. Thus, there is not sufficient evidence to reject the null for reality TV consumption, suggesting that participant reality show viewing remained consistent throughout the data collection.

The results of the ANOVA for male relational aggression indicate a significant time effect, Wilks' Lambda = .89, $F(2.75, 348.94) = 4.45$, $p < .01$. Follow up pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments indicate that the Time 4 measure is significantly lower than Time 2 and 3, $p < .05$. The results of the ANOVA for female relational aggression indicate a significant

time effect, Wilks' Lambda = .77, $F(2.78, 428.45) = 14.44$, $p < .001$. Follow up pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments indicate the Time 4 measure is significantly lower than the other measurement points, $p < .001$. Thus, the participants reported a significant decrease in relational aggression by the fourth measurement wave.

The results of the ANOVA for male relational satisfaction indicate a significant time effect, Wilks' Lambda = .34, $F(2.81, 356.72) = 70.74$, $p < .001$. Follow up pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments indicate that the Time 4 measure is significantly lower than Time 2 and 3, $p < .001$, and that Time 1 is significantly higher than Time 4, $p < .05$. The results show male relational satisfaction significantly decreasing over time. The results of the ANOVA for female relational satisfaction indicate a significant time effect, Wilks' Lambda = .43, $F(2.92, 452.76) = 65.68$, $p < .001$. Follow up pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments indicate that the Time 4 measure is significantly lower than Times 2 and 3, $p < .001$, and that Time 1 is significantly lower than Times 2 and 3, $p < .001$. There is no significant difference between Times 1 and 4 and Times 2 and 3, suggesting fluctuation female relational satisfaction.

The results of the ANOVA for male relational commitment indicate a significant time effect, Wilks' Lambda = .73, $F(2.49, 316.01) = 16.54$, $p < .001$. Follow up pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments indicate that the Time 1 is significantly higher than Time 2 and 3, $p < .001$, and that Time 4 is significantly higher than Time 2, $p < .05$, and Time 3, $p < .001$. The results show male relational commitment significantly fluctuates over time. The results of the ANOVA for female relational commitment indicate a significant time effect, Wilks' Lambda = .64, $F(2.64, 409.85) = 29.99$, $p < .001$. Follow up pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments indicate that the Time 1 is significantly higher than Time 2 and 3, $p < .001$, and that

Time 4 is significantly higher than Time 2 and 3, $p < .001$. The results show female relational commitment significantly fluctuates over time.

IV. Findings

Preliminary Analyses

To begin analyses, I conducted correlations between the variables for this study. The variables were divided into two categories for the correlations: media-related variables (perceived realism, enjoyment, identification, liking, homophily, social comparison, and average reality show consumption) and interpersonal variables (relational aggression, physical aggression, normative beliefs about aggression, relational satisfaction, relational commitment, self-esteem, and social support). There were two sets of correlations analyses to identify the relationships between the study's variables.

First, the correlations were conducted within gender for individual level correlations. Table 1 presents the correlations for the media-related and interpersonal variables within females. As summarized in the table, there are numerous significant correlations between the two sets of variables. Social Comparison had the highest quantity of significant relationships and the strongest correlations with the interpersonal variables. Table 2 presents the correlations for the media-related and interpersonal variables within males. As summarized in the table, there are numerous significant correlations between the two sets of variables for males, as well. Social Comparison had the highest quantity of significant relationships and the strongest correlations with the interpersonal variables, even more so than for females.

Next, correlation analyses were conducted between genders for dyadic level correlations. Table 3 presents the correlations for male media-related and female interpersonal variables. As summarized in the table, there are numerous significant correlations between the two sets of

variables, though fewer than in the within gender correlations. This time, Social Comparison is the only media-related variable that has significant relationships with the interpersonal variables. Table 4 presents the correlations for female media-related and male interpersonal variables. As summarized in the table, there are some significant correlations between the two sets of variables, but again there are fewer than in the within gender correlations. There are also fewer significant correlations than in the male media-related and female interpersonal variables. Social Comparison is significantly correlated with fewer interpersonal variables, but is still the most significantly correlated variable.

Hypothesis Tests

The hypotheses results are presented out of order because they are grouped by individual-level focus (H_2 , H_3 , H_{4a-d} , H_6 , and H_7) and actor-partner focus (H_1 , H_5 , and H_8). The first set of results will address the individual-level variables, though some variables presented an opportunity for actor-partner analyses, as will be demonstrated in the following results summaries. H_2 predicted a negative, indirect relationship between relational aggression and relational quality through perceptions of relational aggression as a normative behavior. To examine H_2 , I conducted a mediation analysis according to Preacher and Hayes' (2004) strategy. These hypotheses were tested in the PROCESS module in SPSS to generate bias-corrected confidence intervals for estimates of the indirect effects based on 2000 bootstrap samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The analysis for H_2 includes average reported reality show consumption, as the predictor variable, Time 4 relational quality as the criterion variable, and perceptions of relational aggression as a normative behavior as the mediator. The Time 1 version of the relational quality variable used as the dependent variable was present in each analysis as a covariate, as well. This analysis was conducted four times. First, the analyses were run both at

the individual level, where all of the variables were analyzed exclusively for the males or for the females, and then again at the dyadic level, allowing potential partner effects to be explored. Within each level, the analyses were run once for relational satisfaction and once for relational commitment, as they are indicators of relational quality. As detailed in Table 7, there were no significant indirect effects, though the analyses did identify some significant and nearly significant direct relationships between the predictor and mediating variables and then again between the mediating and dependent variables. This means that although there are some significant relationships between normative beliefs about relational aggression and relational quality, the normative beliefs do not mediate any relationship between watching reality shows and relational qualities like relationship satisfaction and relationship commitment. Based on these analyses, H_2 was not supported.

H_3 , H_{4a-d} , H_6 , and H_7 , were examined through moderation analysis to assess a potential relationship between the proposed independent, dependent, and moderating variables in SPSS PROCESS. To test whether the effect of the predictor variable differs systematically as a function of the proposed moderator variables, the arithmetic product of the predictor variable and the moderator variable is added to the model (Hayes & Matthes, 2009). This analysis was conducted for H_3 , which predicted that social comparison would act as a moderator of the relationship between watching reality shows and relational aggression within romantic relations. Average reality television show viewing was treated as the predictor variable, Time 4 relational aggression as the criterion variable, and the Time 4 version of the social comparison variables (upward, downward) as the moderating variable, with the Time 1 version of the criterion variable acting as the covariate. Table 8 has a summary of all of the analyses conducted to test H_3 . To summarize, although there are some significant main effects, there were no significant

interactions. Although some of the relationships became significant once the covariate was removed from the analysis, H_3 is not supported. There was so much construct stability in the Time 1 and Time 4 versions of the variable that putting in Time 1 version as a covariate consumed most of the Time 4 variance available to be explained by the main effects and moderator. The analysis was also run at the dyadic level with actor predictor and moderator variables and partner criterion variables, also reflected in Table 8. Again, the analyses show no significant relationships between actor predictor, actor moderator, and partner criterion variables with the covariate variables in the analyses. Once the covariates were removed, five of the hypothesized relationships became significant. Specifically, social comparison motivated by wealth and downward social comparison moderated the association between male reality television consumption and male relational aggression. This suggests that when men watch reality shows and look to characters because of the wealth the characters possess or because they want to feel better about themselves, they also seem to engage in more relational aggression. Furthermore, once the covariate is removed, the analyses suggest that females report more relational victimization (i.e., more relational aggression from their partners) when males watch reality shows and engage in social comparison motivated by wealth, wanting to be like the people in the reality shows (i.e., upward social comparison), and wanting to make themselves feel better via downward social comparison. However, overall, H_3 is not supported. There was so much construct stability between Time 1 and Time 4 of the variable that putting in Time 1 as a covariate consumed most of the Time 4 variance available to be explained by the main effects and moderator. The analysis was also conducted to investigate actor-partner effects. For example, female reality television consumption acted as the independent variable, male relational victimization was included as the dependent variable (i.e., male perception of female relational

aggression), and female social comparison acted as the moderator. Including partner perceptions of actor relational aggression adds a better understanding to how an actor's media habits may influence partner's perceptions of the relationship.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that the relationship between watching reality shows and relational aggression would be moderated by how the shows influenced the viewers. Specifically, the moderators explore viewer perceptions of how real the shows are, viewer enjoyment of the show, viewer identification with the individuals portrayed in the shows, and how much they connect with the individuals portrayed in the shows. The results for the analyses for H_{4a-d} are summarized in Table 9, which includes results for both individual level and actor-partner analyses. For H_{4a} the analyses were conducted with average reality television viewing as the predictor variable, Time 4 relational aggression as the criterion variable, and Time 4 perceived realism as the moderating variable. For H_{4b} the analyses were conducted with average reality television viewing as the predictor variable, Time 4 relational aggression as the criterion variable, and Time 4 enjoyment as the moderating variable. For H_{4c} the analysis was conducted with average reality television viewing as the predictor variable, Time 4 relational aggression as the criterion variable, and Time 4 identification as the moderating variable. Finally, for H_{4d} the analysis was run with average reality television viewing as the predictor variable, Time 4 relational aggression as the criterion variable, and Time 4 homophily as the moderating variable. At the individual level, there were no significant interaction effects. Only two main effects became significant when the criterion variables were removed to further investigate potential relationships between the variables. On the actor-partner level, the interaction effect for H_{4d} was positive significant for female reality TV consumption, female homophily, and male relational victimization ($R = .6460$, $R^2 = .42$, $F(4, 112) = 18.26$, $p < .001$). The analysis of simple slopes

(Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that when females report low levels of homophily (-1 SD), there is a nearly significant, negative relationship between female average reality show consumption and male relational victimization ($b = -.17, t(112) = -1.84, p = .07$). When females report average levels of homophily, there is no significant relationship between average female reality show consumption and male reported relational victimization ($b = -.03, t(112) = -.67, ns$). Finally, when females report high levels of homophily (+1 SD), there was a significant, positive relationship between female average reality show consumption and male relational victimization ($b = .0989, t(112) = 1.9460, p = .05$). The overall model suggests that males feel more relationally victimized when their female partners consume more reality television and associate with the characters in the shows. Therefore, there is some evidence to support H_{4d} .

Next, H_6 predicted that social support would act as a moderator for the relationship between relational aggression and relational quality. To answer H_6 , two sets of analyses were run. For the first set, actor Time 1 relational victimization acts as the predictor variable, actor Time 4 relational quality acts as the criterion variable, actor Time 1 relational quality acts as the covariate, and actor Time 4 social support acts as the moderating variable. By including relational victimization as the predictor variable, the analyses focus on the actor's perception of his or her partner's relational aggression within the relationship. The results are summarized in Table 12. Although each moderator main effect is significant, only the relationship between male relational victimization, male social support, and male relational satisfaction had a significant interaction ($R = .8175, R^2 = .6684, F(4, 127) = 50.1728, p < .001$). When males report low levels of social support (-1 SD), there is a significant, negative relationship between male relational victimization and male relational satisfaction ($b = -.3030, t(124) = -2.3559, p < .05$). When males report average levels of social support or high levels (+1 SD), of social support,

however, there is no significant relationship between male relational victimization and male relational satisfaction ($b = -.1099$, $t(124) = -1.1072$, ns ; $b = .0832$, $t(124) = .5589$, ns). The second set of analyses, summarized in Table 13, were between the actor's Time 4 social support, actor's Time 4 relational quality, actor's Time 1 relational quality as the covariate, and partner's Time 1 relational aggression. This allows both the actor and partner to be represented to further investigate the potential relationships between the variables. This analysis revealed significant moderator main effects, again, but this time there were no significant interactions. Therefore, there is some evidence to support H_6 .

Next, H_7 predicted that self-esteem mediated the relationship between relational aggression and relational quality. Again, to answer H_7 , two sets of analyses were run. For the first set, actor Time 1 relational victimization acts as the predictor variable, actor Time 4 relational quality acts as the criterion variable, actor Time 1 relational quality acts as the covariate, and actor Time 4 self-esteem acts as the mediating variable. Although the paths from the predictor to the mediator and then from the mediator to the criterion variable are significant with one exception, as presented in Table 14, there is only one overall significant indirect effect—for male variables, with relational satisfaction specifically. The second set of analyses was for actor Time 4 relational quality and actor Time 4 self-esteem with partner Time 1 relational aggression as the predictor variable and actor Time 1 relational quality as the covariate. As presented in Table 15, the individual paths were also at least marginally significant. Furthermore, the indirect effects were significant once the covariates were removed from the analyses for two of the models—for female relational aggression with male self-esteem and commitment and for male relational aggression with female self-esteem and satisfaction. Therefore, again, there is only partial support for H_7 .

Next, the following results address potential actor-partner effects based on H_1 , H_5 , and H_8 . First, a hierarchical multiple regression was run in two steps to answer H_1 , which asked whether greater reality television show viewing was associated with more relational aggression within romantic relationships. The first stage was to investigate actor's average reality show consumption relationship with actor's Time 4 relational aggression. The first step contained Time 1 relational aggression in order to better investigate change over time because this way, the influence of Time 1 relational aggression is controlled in the analysis and, therefore, the change of relational aggression over time can be more uniquely and clearly investigated. The second step contained reality show consumption. Although the regression models for both males and females were significant, as demonstrated in Table 5, the R^2 change values in both models were not significant probably because of the construct stability of relational aggression over the four-week subject participation. The second stage was to investigate actor's average reality show consumption ties to partner's Time 4 relational victimization, potentially illustrating dyadic effects. Again, the overall models are significant for both males and females, though the R^2 change values between step 1 and step 2 of the models were not significant. Therefore, the data suggests that there is no relationship between watching reality television and relational aggression so H_1 is not supported.

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were also run to answer H_5 , which predicted a negative relationship between relational aggression and relational quality. Table 10 and Table 11 summarize the results for the relationships between Time 4 relational aggression and Time 4 relational quality, expressed as relational satisfaction and relational commitment. The models were significant with negative beta coefficients for both relational satisfaction and relational commitment for both men (relational satisfaction: $\beta = -.201$, $t(208) = -3.432$, $p < .001$; $R = .620$,

$R^2 = .384$, $F(1, 208) = 64.785$, $p < .001$; relational commitment: $\beta = -.161$, $t(208) = -2.571$, $p < .05$; $R = .588$, $R^2 = .346$, $F(1, 208) = 55.014$, $p < .001$) and women (relational satisfaction: $\beta = -.192$, $t(207) = -2.985$, $p < .05$; $R = .509$, $R^2 = .260$, $F(1, 207) = 36.283$, $p < .001$; relational commitment: $\beta = -.116$, $t(207) = -2.057$, $p < .001$; $R = .655$, $R^2 = .429$, $F(1, 207) = 77.606$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H_5 is supported.

Finally, H_8 predicted that individuals will report decreased relational quality when their partners report increased relationally aggressive behaviors. Table 12 and Table 13 summarize the analyses between Time 4 actor relational victimization and the Time 4 relational quality variables, relational satisfaction and relational commitment, for H_8 . This set of analyses further investigates the actor-partner effects by identifying the relationship between a partner's perception of actor's relational aggression and how that influences his or her levels of satisfaction within the relationship and level of commitment to the relationship. Again, the relationships were significant with negative beta coefficients for both relational satisfaction and relational commitment for both males (relational satisfaction: $\beta = -.166$, $t(208) = -2.667$, $p < .05$; $R = .609$, $R^2 = .37$, $F(1, 208) = 61.204$, $p < .001$; relational commitment: $\beta = -.13$, $t(208) = -2.093$, $p < .05$; $R = .582$, $R^2 = .339$, $F(1, 208) = 53.363$, $p < .001$) and females (relational satisfaction: $\beta = -.18$, $t(207) = -2.678$, $p < .05$; $R = .504$, $R^2 = .254$, $F(1, 207) = 35.156$, $p < .001$; relational commitment: $\beta = -.116$, $t(207) = -2.101$, $p < .05$; $R = .655$, $R^2 = .429$, $F(1, 207) = 77.764$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H_8 is supported.

V. Discussion

The present study examined relationships between watching reality television shows, relational aggression, and relational quality. Specifically, it was predicted that watching more reality television shows would lead to increased relational aggression within romantic

relationships, which would in turn lead to lower relational quality. As previously discussed, past research suggests a complex relationship between reality show consumption, relational aggression, and relational quality. Unfortunately, there are many studies that investigate the proposed variables among various demographics but the research is limited with respect to adults in general, and dyads specifically because research about actor-partner effects in general is still limited. More importantly, many studies are cross-sectional in nature, thus addressing the correlational nature of the proposed variables while not being able to address issues of causality.

To address these and other gaps in the literature, the present investigation includes data from intact adult dyads across four waves of data collection throughout the span of approximately one month of participation. The results indicate that, controlling for actor Time 1 relational aggression, watching reality television does not seem to have an effect on actor Time 4 relational aggression. Similar results were also evident for the relationship between watching actor's reality television and partner's relational victimization, suggesting no actor or partner effects.

The results do indicate a significant relationship between Time 1 relational aggression and Time 4 relational quality, controlling for Time 1 relational quality. There also appears to be a relationship between Time 1 relational victimization and Time 4 relational quality, controlling for Time 1 relational quality, suggesting partner effects. Thus, this study confirms the previously established relationship between relational aggression and relational quality in a longitudinal context, which illustrates a prospective effect by controlling for Time 1 relational quality and, thus, showing that Time 4 relational quality is significantly predicted by relational aggression above and beyond Time 1 relational quality's prediction. This relationship suggests that over time, the more relational aggression within a relationship, the lower the relational quality.

Considering the results in relation to past research, the study also presents an opportunity for further investigation into potential media effects on the relational variables.

Cross-Sectional Associations

To begin, the significant correlations between the variables used in this study are consistent with past research (e.g., Archer & Coyne, 2005; Linder et al., 2002; Oka et al., 2014). For example, in Table 1, the significant media-related variables are all positively associated with relational aggression, physical aggression, and normative beliefs for females. Furthermore, they are negatively associated with relational satisfaction, relational commitment, self-esteem, and social support. Previous research (e.g., Roloff & Solomon, 2002; Stoeber, 2012) suggests that relational satisfaction and relational commitment, while correlated, should be treated as distinct variables. The present study's findings support past research—although relational commitment and relational satisfaction are both negatively and significantly correlated with upward social comparison, relational commitment has a stronger negative correlation with upward social comparison for females. This suggests that if a viewer's self-comparison is motivated by a desire for self-improvement, the viewer may see his or her relationship as a factor that could be changed to become more like the characters in the reality shows. It is possible that viewers make comparisons with others to better understand how to improve their circumstances. Social relationships are critical elements of esteem, belongingness, and love, which is why people may compare their relationships to what they see from others (i.e., relationships within social networks, media models) to improve their own lives is a logical behavior. Engaging in upward social comparison leads to a reflection of how to improve one's knowledge, status or character (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). When engaging in upward social comparison with the context of relationships, individuals seek ways to improve themselves via their relationships. The results

show that upward social comparison is associated with lower relational satisfaction and commitment, possibly because the evaluation process alerts those within the relationships of where the relationship falls short to what could be, based on the target of the evaluation (i.e., relationships within social networks, media models). Speaking with respect to first- and second-order cultivation effects, Potter (1991) suggests that the information learned from models such as those in television (first-order effect) form the attitudes about the modeled behavior (second-order effects). Therefore, when looking to media models for how relationships should manifest in an effort for improving circumstances, for example, a person may adapt his or her expectations and beliefs for how relationships should develop over time and, as those beliefs fail to manifest in actual, real world interactions, the person's reports of relationship satisfaction and commitment would be lower.

There were some unexpected correlations, however. For example, there are significant, positive correlations between social support and perceived realism, enjoyment, and identification as well as self-esteem and perceived realism. Taken into consideration with past research, these correlations suggest that viewers learn from media. Coyne et al. (2010) explain that reality shows tend to follow platonic and romantic relationship trajectories of the characters, which includes conflict and relational aggression. Often, the shows portray relational aggression by showing characters gossiping about one another to other characters on the show. Such gossip exchange occurs both in dyads and in small groups, typically with characters that the aggressor perceives as his or her friends. The positive relationship between social support and perceived realism, enjoyment, and identification suggest that the more viewers relate to reality shows, the more they seek social support and feel as though they have access to their social networks for support. Although the gossip may be motivated by negative intentions about the victim (i.e., the person

that is the subject of the gossip), according to social cognitive theory, humans are capable of abstract learning and applying concepts of one situation to another one with different circumstances. Therefore, it is possible that reality show portrayals of characters engaging in relationally aggressive behavior (via gossiping with other characters) may demonstrate to viewers the importance of social support networks, thus making them more inclined to seek social support in a variety of circumstances. Cultivation theory can also help explain the potential for more perceived access to social support because, again, first-order effects suggest that heavy television viewers are more likely to perceive the real world to emulate what they see in the shows (Potter, 1991). Therefore, reality show viewers who relate more strongly to what they are watching may believe that social support (a phenomenon often portrayed in reality shows via their focus on relationship dynamics for main plot development) is a natural and abundant element of the social world.

Table 2 investigates the same sets of variables as just described, but for males. Again, significant correlations are what would be expected of the variables. The significant media-related variables are all positively associated with relational aggression, physical aggression, and normative beliefs but are negatively associated with relational satisfaction, relational commitment, self-esteem, and social support. As with females, relational commitment and relational satisfaction are both negatively and significantly correlated with upward social comparison, though relational commitment has a stronger negative correlation with upward social comparison for females. The main difference in these correlations between males and females is in the correlations between social comparison and both social support and self-esteem.

Analyses demonstrate significant negative correlations between male social comparison and self-esteem and social comparison and social support with one exception. The positive

significant relationship between self-esteem and social comparison motivated by fame suggests that males with high self-esteem are likely to look to reality shows to learn how to become famous. This is consistent with Wade's (2000) findings that male self-esteem depends more on social status (as opposed to female self-esteem relying more heavily on physical attractiveness). Furthermore, research suggests that when threatened by upward social comparison to someone more successful, the comparer's opportunity to repair the mismatch between him- or herself and the target of the comparison dictates how the comparer will be influenced by the threat of a more successful target (Johnson, 2012). When presented with an opportunity to repair the self-view (i.e., the comparer perceiving him- or herself as less successful than the comparison target during upward comparison), the comparer has a positive response to the comparison. In the present study, the positive association between social comparison motivated by fame and self-esteem, taken with Johnson's (2012) explanation, suggest that when men look to models in reality shows because of the fame the reality show characters have, they may not be threatened by the unmatched fame levels because the men see reality show fame as attainable. As previously mentioned, key features of reality shows are that they are "unscripted" and that they portray "real" people during their ordinary lives (Riddle & De Simone, 2013). Therefore, this "real" element may make fame via reality show stardom more attainable for male viewers, according to the present study. Therefore, the significant relationship between self-esteem and fame-motivated social comparison is consistent with past findings, though future research should further investigate the potential relationship. There were no unexpected correlations for males.

An interesting difference between the female correlations (Table 1) and the male correlations (Table 2) lies in the media variables' relationships with the aggression variables. Results show that female relational aggression is positively associated with perceived realism

and homophily, while both physical and relational aggression are positively associated with identification. The analyses for male participants show significant correlations among both physical and relational aggression and perceived realism and identification. This is consistent with past research suggesting that males often exhibit both relational and physical aggression, while females most often exhibit relational aggression (Oka et al., 2014). Furthermore, research shows that relational and physical aggression often occur together as opposed to being alternatives and that men and women often contribute differently to aggression within relationships, which supports why the male and female analyses exhibit different correlations among the variables (Oka et al., 2014). Cultivation theory, theory of reasoned action, and social cognitive theory all help explain this association. As previously established, cultivation theory and theory of reasoned action have overlap with respect to external sources shaping a person's attitudes. However, while cultivation theory can help explain perceived similarities between the real world and the world portrayed in the media, TRA better explains the active process behind an individual's subjective norms about a behavior (comparable to cultivation theory's first-order effects) and attitudes (comparable to cultivation theory's second-order effects). More importantly, TRA better predicts individual behavior by directly addressing behavioral intention, a vital element of the present study which is influenced by both individual attitudes and subjective norms and missing from cultivation theory. With reality show plot lines focused on relational aggression, it is no surprise that those who relate more strongly with the shows and characters will, according to social cognitive theory, pay more attention to the behaviors enacted by the media models and be more motivated to mirror those behaviors both literally through relational aggression, and abstractly through physical aggression. With males being more likely to engage in more dangerous forms of physical aggression (i.e., choking, burning) than females

(i.e., slapping, pushing), the connection for men is especially important, though physical aggression and relational aggression are interdependent in both males and females and, therefore, should continue to be investigated among both sexes (Caetano et al., 2008).

The correlation analyses to look for potential associations between male media-related variables and female relational variables (Table 3) and vice-versa (Table 4) were, again, what would be expected based on past research—social comparison has positive correlations with aggression variables and negative relationships with relational quality variables and social support. Male social comparison variables are negatively correlated with female relational quality and social support and positively correlated with female aggression and victimization. This suggests that if men look to reality show characters for self-evaluation (through both upward and downward comparison), it is possible that they seek partners that fit the characteristics of they see in the shows, which would explain why male social comparison is positively correlated with female reports of relational aggression. However, the negative correlation between male social comparison and female relational quality and social support suggest that although males may seek mates that exhibit behavior like those portrayed in reality shows (i.e., relational aggression), it does not guarantee that the female will be happy in the relationship and that she may not feel as though she is able to find support from social networks.

It is also possible that when males engage in self-evaluation by comparing themselves to others (regardless of the direction), they may also alter their behaviors within already existing relationships. By looking to others, especially those in the media, for cues of how relationships should play out and how partners should behave with each other, males may begin to behave differently than they did at the start of the relationship. This, in turn, could upset the female partner who may not be expecting her partner to change the dynamic of the relationship and,

therefore, may lower her relational quality because she finds herself in a different relationship—possibly in a new dynamic that she originally tried to avoid. Furthermore, past research has established a relationship between perpetration and victimization of violence, which means that if one partner reports being aggressive within a relationship, there is a good chance that the other partner will report being aggressive within the relationship, as well (Caetano et al., 2008). If a male partner begins to engage in behaviors he learns from media models, which could include relational and physical aggression, the female partner's relational quality may lower and, in turn, she may engage in aggression, as well.

Furthermore, female social comparison variables are negatively correlated with male relational quality, self-esteem, and social support, but positively correlated with normative beliefs about aggression. These results suggest that females looking to reality show characters for self-evaluation (through both upward and downward social comparison) is associated with lower male relationship quality, self-esteem, and social support. The results are consistent with past research that suggests the importance of self-esteem in romantic relationships, which can influence the quality of the relationships, including how partners interact and rely on each other as mates (Erol & Orth, 2016; Goldstein et al., 2008; Ybrandt & Armelius, 2010). Specifically, the correlations suggest that when an individual engages in social comparison with reality show characters, it is possible that the females are including their relationships as subjects of social comparison, which has been associated with lower self-esteem and lower relational quality in past research (LeBeau & Buckingham, 2008).

As with males, when females seem to subject their relationships to social comparison, they set unrealistic expectations for their partners which not only has a detrimental effect on how satisfied with and committed to the relationship the males are, but also how secure he is with

himself. Research shows that when black men are forced to conform to masculinity norms (i.e., social dominance, aggression, muscularity, and not seeking help), their self-esteem suffers (Mahalik, Pierre, & Wan, 2006). While this study was primarily composed of white participants, men are stereotypically expected to engage in masculinity norms, especially when these norms are dominant in the media because shows like reality TV, for example, are constructed to emphasize aggression (Coyne et al., 2010). Mahalik et al.'s (2006) study also helps explain why female social comparison is negatively associated with lower social support for men. If males are expected to fulfill masculinity norms such as negative attitudes toward seeking help because that is what females expect based on media models, then males may be motivated to disassociate with their peers because it does line up with what it means to be masculine. Therefore, there are concurrent associations between the variables, as predicted.

Prospective Effects

Although there are many correlations among the variables of the present study that are consistent with past research with respect to relationship research and media effects research, the results do not show any significant media effects, but do show significant effects among relationship behaviors. Specifically, the results offer no significant relationships between watching reality shows and relational aggression or the normative beliefs about aggression.

There are, however, significant relationships between relational aggression and relational quality.

Upon further investigation to answer the study's hypotheses, the relationships among the variables became more perplexing. Beginning with the study's focus on media effects, the findings for H_1 were surprising. The hypothesis was developed based on past research that found connections between individual consumption of violent media and relational aggression (Coyne, Nelson, Graham-Kevan, Keister, & Grant, 2010; Coyne, Nelson, Graham-Kevan, Tew, Meng, &

Olsen, 2011; Gentile, Coyne, & Walsh, 2011). However, the regression analysis to test the variables in the question did not reveal a significant relationship between watching reality television and relational aggression.

To further investigate this finding, the analyses were run again without the covariate—the Time 1 version of the dependent variable—to determine whether there was any association among the variables regardless of any potential longitudinal effects. Due to a high degree of construct stability, the Time 1 covariate accounted for a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable. By removing the covariate, the potential effects between watching reality shows and relational aggression were tested under less conservative circumstances. There was a significant positive relationship between male reality show viewing and male relational aggression, a modest but positive relationship between female watching reality shows and male relational victimization, and modest but positive relationship between female watching reality shows and female relational aggression. Based on these results, it appears that there may be a relationship between watching reality shows and relational aggression, but it may not be one that lasts over time. Therefore, the results suggest concurrent effects but do not show evidence of longitudinal effects. Rather than cultivating that relational aggression is a social norm, it is possible that participants engage in the behaviors immediately after consuming the media. Taking into consideration TRA and social cognitive theory, it is possible that when watching reality shows, individuals will see the relational aggression in the context of the wealth and fame, making the behavioral models appealing to viewers, which would promote a more positive attitude toward relational aggression displayed by the individuals in the shows. This could motivate the individuals to perform the behavior (i.e., engage in relational aggression). However, outside of the context of the reality shows, relational aggression is not typically seen as a positive

behavior (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Therefore, it is possible that interpersonal relationships with friends, family, and coworkers counteract the effects of watching reality shows, especially because media effects tend to be small in general (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999; Shrum, 1999). Therefore, future research should investigate this potential relationship between media effects on an individual and what role his or her interpersonal relationships play in mitigating those effects.

Given the lack of significant outcomes for H_1 , it is no surprise that the other hypotheses in this study predicting media effects were also not supported. Namely, there were no significant results with respect to normative beliefs about aggression acting as a mediator between reality show consumption and relational aggression (H_2), social comparison acting as a moderator between reality show consumption and relational aggression (H_3), and the viewer's relationship with the shows (i.e., perceived realism, enjoyment, identification, homophily) acting as a moderator between reality show consumption and relational aggression (H_{4a-d}). The analyses did reveal some significant relationships within the main effects. Specifically, there seems to be a positive relationship between normative beliefs about aggression and relational quality. The analyses for H_2 suggest that there is no indirect effect of reality show consumption on relational quality through normative beliefs. However, a post hoc regression analysis revealed a significant, negative relationship between normative beliefs about aggression and relational quality. Werner and Nixon (2005) suggest that individuals who perceive aggression as an acceptable or normal behavior within relationships may have heightened awareness of negative emotional cues in their environment, "interpret those cues as intentionally hostile, and access aggressive retaliatory responses from memory" (p. 231). In this case, it is possible that with the increased likelihood to encode negative emotions, individuals will also perceive their relational quality as lower than those who do not perceive aggression within relationships as a normal or acceptable behavior

and, therefore, may not be as sensitive to negativity within relationships. This reduced sensitivity to negativity due to less normative beliefs about aggression within relationships may help individuals focus on the positive elements of the relationship rather than dwelling on minor inconveniences, thus perceiving their relationships as being higher quality, resulting in increased relational satisfaction.

Next, H_3 predicted that social comparison would act as a moderator of the relationship between watching reality shows and relational aggression within romantic relationships. Similar to the results of H_2 , the results for H_3 were overall not significant with no moderation effects, though there were some significant main effects that offer reason for further investigation. As demonstrated in the initial matrices, social comparison has a strong correlation with relational aggression, which is consistent with past research and the theoretical foundation of this study. Post hoc regression analyses revealed that although none of the individual motivations for social comparison (i.e., fame, wealth, upward, downward) predicted relational aggression better on their own, holding the others constant, for males, each of the motivations was individually a significant predictor of relational aggression. The results were similar for females, though social comparison motivated by fame did positively predict relational aggression above and beyond the other motivations for social comparison. Gibbons and Buunk (1999) explain that social comparison occurs based on a variety of circumstances. Though the authors acknowledge that social comparison is often random and fairly automatic, individuals with more uncertainty tend to be at greater likelihood for social comparison. Based on the data, the various motivations for social comparison are positively correlated with watching reality shows and not engaging in social comparison is positively correlated with self-esteem. It is possible that individuals who watch reality shows are more likely to engage in social comparison because reality shows tend to

focus on “everyday” lives of the characters, which could be more relatable to viewers and, therefore, could cause them to pay more attention to the modeled behaviors of reality show characters. As previously mentioned, social comparison is positively correlated with media engagement variables such as perceived realism and identification. The viewer perceptions of the shows being “real” and “unscripted” potentially offers a more relatable element to the shows and, therefore, makes viewers perceive the reality stars as more attainable targets for comparison. However, because of the relationally aggressive plot lines of the shows (Coyne et al., 2010) and reality stars’ fame and wealth may still present unrealistic goals for most viewers and, therefore, could potentially lead to lower self-esteem in viewers. Therefore, it seems that there could be a relationship to further explore in future research. As past research indicates, self-esteem can mediate the effect between relational aggression and other variables such as anxiety and rule-breaking (Ybrandt & Armelius, 2010). With social comparison’s significant, positive main effect with relational aggression, in light of past research, it is possible that self-esteem could play a role in the findings in the H_3 results.

The final hypotheses focused on media effects, H_{4a-d} , were concerned with how viewer perception of the reality shows may moderate the proposed relationship between reality show consumption and relational aggression. The specific moderator variables include perceived realism, enjoyment, identification, and homophily, which are all ways that perceptions of reality shows could impact viewing and, therefore, how viewing may influence perceptions of relational quality. There was a single significant interaction among all of these variables: female homophily significantly moderated the relationship between female reality show consumption and male relational victimization. This finding suggests that when a female associates with the characters she is watching in the reality shows, her partner perceives increased relational

aggression aimed at him, which he reported as relational victimization. According to social cognitive theory, an observer is more likely to look to a model a behavior if the model resembles the observer. Homophily, or to what degree an individual associates with similar others, has been found to encourage behavioral imitation in studies about media effects in video games, especially when the characters in the video games are customized to look like the player (Williams, 2011). Therefore, because the “reality” feature of the shows may cause reality show viewers to perceive show characters to be more “like” the viewers, resulting in more homophily for females. Regardless of whether they realize it is happening or not, the females then engage in more relational aggression, which is detected by the male partner as relational victimization. The surprising element of this set of hypotheses is that although homophily proved significant in one set of analyses, none of the analyses with identification as a moderator were significant. Research has shown homophily and identification to be correlated (Eyal & Rubin, 2003) and that greater homophily may lead to greater identification (Dorr, 1981). According to past research, the main distinction between homophily and the other variables is that homophily focuses on interacting with individuals who they believe are similar to themselves and, therefore, may be able to predict reality show consumption (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Specifically, the research suggests that though the other variables may predict whether or not an individual will be influence by what he or she sees on the shows, homophily is a stronger predictor of media selection, which is why it is also a strong predictor for variables like identification but may not necessarily mean that greater homophily results directly in greater identification (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Therefore, more research needs to be conducted to better identify and understand the specific ways that the proposed moderators in H_4 function within media effects in the context of interpersonal relationships.

Next, the findings for the hypotheses focused on relationship processes were more in line with what was predicted based on past research. For the first of these hypotheses, *H₅*, past research suggested that relational aggression would be negatively correlated with relational quality. The findings supported this hypothesis. More importantly, the presence of the Time 1 version of the criterion variable in the analysis suggests that relational aggression predicts changes in relationship quality over time, a prospective main effect. With relational quality operationalized in this study as relationship satisfaction and relationship commitment, the results of *H₅* suggest that relational aggression has a negative impact on both satisfaction within the relationship and commitment to the relationship. The findings fit Linder and colleagues' (2002) definition of relational aggression, as disrupting the relationship. Indeed, individuals that reported more relational aggression also reported being less satisfied with their relationships and a lower commitment to them. Per Werner and Nixon's (2005) study, it appears that individuals who are more in tune with negative elements of their relationships exhibit more aggression and are less satisfied with their relationships, which in turn would logically lead to a lower commitment to those relationships. This notion is supported by Gottman's (1994) observations that relationships that are unhappy and heading toward dissolution become increasingly characterized by actual and perceived negativity within the relationship, which can eventually overwhelm any positivity within the relationship. It makes sense that an individual may be dissatisfied in a relationship where he or she engages in relational aggression, which can include behaviors such as withholding physical affection, threats to end the relationship, and flirting with others or even actual infidelity (Linder et al., 2002). Generally speaking, lower relational satisfaction would logically lead to lower relational commitment to stay within the relationship, which is consistent with the present study's findings. Future research should further investigate

the association between relational aggression and relational quality and investigate what factors could lead to relational aggression in order to better understand how to prevent relational aggression and its association with relational quality.

The complimentary hypothesis to H_5 in this study was H_8 , which predicted that individuals report decreased relational quality when their romantic partners report increased relationally aggressive behaviors. Again, the results for this study support the hypothesis. More importantly, controlling for the reports of Time 1 relational quality suggest that the findings last over time, suggesting that an individual's relational aggression predicts his or her partner's relational quality. The longitudinal nature of the data supports the causal relationship between relational victimization and relational quality. More specifically, the results suggest that when an individual perceives relationally aggressive behavior from his or her partner directed toward him or herself, the individual's reports of relational satisfaction and relational commitment are lower. Again, this is consistent with past research, suggesting that higher levels of intimate partner aggression is associated with lower perceived relationship satisfaction among romantic partners, including newlyweds in Panuzio and DiLillo's (2010) longitudinal study, supporting the notion that aggression within romantic relationships is an antecedent to lower relational quality.

The next hypotheses further investigated the relationship between relational aggression and relational quality. Specifically, H_6 predicted that social support would act as a moderator between the two main variables. Although there were no significant interactions between partner's reported relational aggression and an individual's reported relational quality, there was a significant interaction for social support between an individual's reported relational victimization and relational satisfaction. There was a positive interaction between male relational victimization and social support on male reported relational satisfaction. Once the covariates (the

Time 1 version of the Time 4 variable) were removed, however, there were many main effects between relational aggression/victimization and social support that became significant, which is in line with past research that suggests that individuals are likely to seek social support when faced with relational aggression (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991). Furthermore, past research has shown that social support from one social domain can buffer negative effects from a different social domain (Lepore, 1992), which is partially supported by the findings for H_6 . Lepore's (1992) research also suggests that individuals who have diverse social support resources may be more resilient when facing negative events within their social domains, which helps explain why the moderator main effect (i.e., the effect of social support on relational quality) was significant throughout the analyses for H_6 . But the present study's result that only male social support significantly moderates the relationship between male relational victimization and male relational satisfaction signifies that the variables need further investigation. It is possible that the type of social support may be a factor as to why the results are significant for men but not for women.

Frydenberg and Lewis (1991) found that males and females seem to seek social support differently. Specifically, the researchers found that females seem to be more accepting of sympathy and are more willing to discuss distress with their social support systems, and males are more likely to seek advice from social support systems, though whether that advice was acted upon is a different matter. Therefore, it is possible that if males indeed seek out social support because of perceiving relational aggression from their partners, the males then enact any advice provided by the social support systems. The act of exchanging advice could result in productive discussions with the social support systems, resulting in helpful suggestions that could help the male experience more relational satisfaction, despite feeling relationally victimized. As

previously discussed, social support can act as a cross-domain buffer for conflict within relationships (Lepore, 1992). Therefore, it is possible that although a negative behavior (i.e., relational aggression) motivated the male's need for social support, the act of receiving social support from friends may have buffered the negative event within the romantic relationship, resulting in the overall positive effect. It is also possible that when a male seeks social support, his networks may offer an opportunity for upward social comparison by suggesting that they would not stand for relationally aggressive behavior if put into that position within their own romantic relationships. In this case, the male may be triggered to perceive lower relational quality than originally observed. Future research should investigate the conditions under which social support may increase or decrease perceptions of relational quality. Research also suggests that females tend to seek social support more readily and, most often, for emotional support (Salomon & Strobel, 1997). This further supports the differences in how social support manifest in males and females.

Furthermore, it is possible that the relationship with male relational commitment was not significant because although it is correlated with relational satisfaction, they do not ultimately mean the same thing. Roloff and Solomon's (2002) research found that individuals who would like to preserve their romantic relationships (i.e., they are committed to their partner and, in turn, are committed to the relationship) act in ways that do so. Specifically, the research suggests that relational commitment is positively associated with confronting a partner about complaints in the relationship, which means that an individual can be unsatisfied with a relationship but still be committed to making the relationship work. The opposite is also true—a person may be satisfied within a relationship but may not feel a strong commitment to it. When applied to the present study, Roloff and Solomon's (2002) study suggests that regardless of whether or not an

individual seeks social support as a result of relational aggression from his or her partner, that does not increase the likelihood of wanting to confront the problem with the partner. Instead, it is possible that, as previously mentioned, males receive advice from their social support systems that may reframe or buffer the relational aggression, which could influence the level of satisfaction males feel within romantic relationships, but not necessarily the level of commitment to the relationships because of the lack of confrontation.

Finally, the last hypothesis of this study to investigate the relational processes was *H₇*, which predicted an indirect effect of relational aggression to relationship quality through self-esteem. Despite the analyses showing many direct effects between the variables, self-esteem did not help explain the relationship between relational aggression and relational quality. It is possible that although relational aggression has been associated with lower self-esteem (Ybrandt & Armelius, 2010) and mental health issues like anxiety and depression (Goldstein, Chesier-Teran, & McFaul, 2008), individuals may not make that connection themselves. In other words, although relational aggression may affect an individual's self-esteem and an individual's self-esteem influences his or her relational quality, it is possible that an individual may not make the connection him- or herself. Furthermore, the scale used in the present study did not pick up very strong levels of relational aggression in the study participants. Therefore, it's possible that the levels of relational aggression were not high enough to affect the self-esteem processes. It is also possible that there may be another factor at play. For example, Knee and colleagues (2008) identified a phenomenon called relationship-contingent self-esteem (RCSE). This concept may illustrate why a traditional self-esteem scale may not completely capture the phenomena occurring within relationships. The authors explain that RCSE is an "unhealthy form of self-esteem that depends on one's relationship and represents a particular kind of relationship

investment... RCSE specifically involves having one's self-regard hooked on the nature, process, and outcomes of one's relationship" (Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook, 2008, p. 609). Therefore, future research should investigate the potential mediation effects using the RCSE scale.

An important element of this study to note is that there seems to be much more construct stability within some variables than was predicted based on past research. Based on the analyses conducted, it appears that relational aggression and relational victimization especially are stable across time. Such construct stability brings into question the duration of the interwave intervals previously mentioned in the discussion about H_1 . Specifically, the results suggest that there may not be a cultivated effect of watching reality television on relational aggression based on the nonsignificant findings of H_1 , H_2 , and the significant findings about media effects on relational aggression in past research (e.g., Coyne, 2016; Coyne et al., 2010, 2012). It is important to note that, as previously discussed, past research primarily focuses on adolescent-age samples (e.g., Coyne, 2016), while the present study focused on emerging adults. The different sample demographics could have contributed to the inconsistency between past research and the present study.

Furthermore, it is possible that the attack pattern of the media effect in previous research was more immediate to the exposure and the decay pattern for the participants in this study was also faster than normal. Although the study was founded in cultivation theory as one of the elements of the theoretical foundation, it is possible that reality television has a more immediate effect on the viewer that weakens over time because of other variables. However, had the time between data collection waves been shortened, the construct stability would have manifested even more strongly because a construct like relational quality, for example, would change more

over the course of a year than over the course of a week. However, because of the benefits of a diary study (i.e., being able to measure potential effects closer to when they actually occur), the participants were asked to participate once per week for four weeks to better gauge how variables may interact. Ultimately, research needs to be done with an interwave interval that is long enough to allow for real change to occur in the criterion variables so that the changes can be modeled and explained statistically. However, too much time between measurement intervals may also allow potential effects to heighten and dissolve before accounting for them with measurement, which is possibly what occurred in this study. More research would need to be conducted at varying interwave intervals to identify the best option for assessing the relationships proposed in this study.

Finally, many of the participants averaged approximately two hours per week of reality show viewing. Future investigations should include participants with a greater range of reality show viewing to possibly identify whether there is a quantity threshold that must be researched before the media effects proposed by the present study become significant. It is possible that the present study did not capture an accurate range of reality show viewing quantities to thoroughly investigate the proposed media effects. Furthermore, future research also needs to identify complete reality show consumption habits including other television genres, movies, books, radio, and social media use. Not only would a greater range of reality show viewing help identify a potential threshold at which media effects become significant, but including other forms of media would help identify how they may interact with the form of media in question—reality television shows. Specifically, it is possible that a diverse media diet may offset some of the proposed effects of reality show viewing on relational aggression and, in turn, relational quality.

Limitations

Although this study does offer some contributions to the field, it is not without its limitations. First, not only could the sample have been more representative of the general population based on the demographics, it was also not a random sample. As a result of successfully enrolling in a degree program at an institution of higher education (i.e., college or university), those with the most profound relational problems or impoverished social skills were likely not included in the population from which the sample was drawn, many of whom were enrolled in courses about communication at the time of this study. Though this was somewhat helped by allowing students to refer couples to the study if the students themselves did not fit the study requirements, it is still not the case that this allowed for a completely representative sample. Students most likely referred their friends or family members, whom would probably have similar characteristics to the students themselves. Furthermore, the study only gathered data from couples in romantic relationships but did not follow up to see how the couples played out—identifying which couples remained intact and which couples dissolved their relationships would have added depth to the understanding of the students, which should be explored by future researchers.

Next, because the data were gathered from romantic couples, the data for some of the variables were correlated within the dyads. It is often the case that data within dyads are dependent on each other. The intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) capture the interdependence between the data. The ICCs of this study's dependent variables (see Table 18) suggest that the data are nonindependent, requiring statistical tests such as multilevel modeling (MLM) or actor-partner interdependence modeling (APIM), which would more appropriately deconstruct and model the dyadic interdependence, assuming enough dyads were included in future samples with all four waves of measurement completed. Unfortunately, the number of

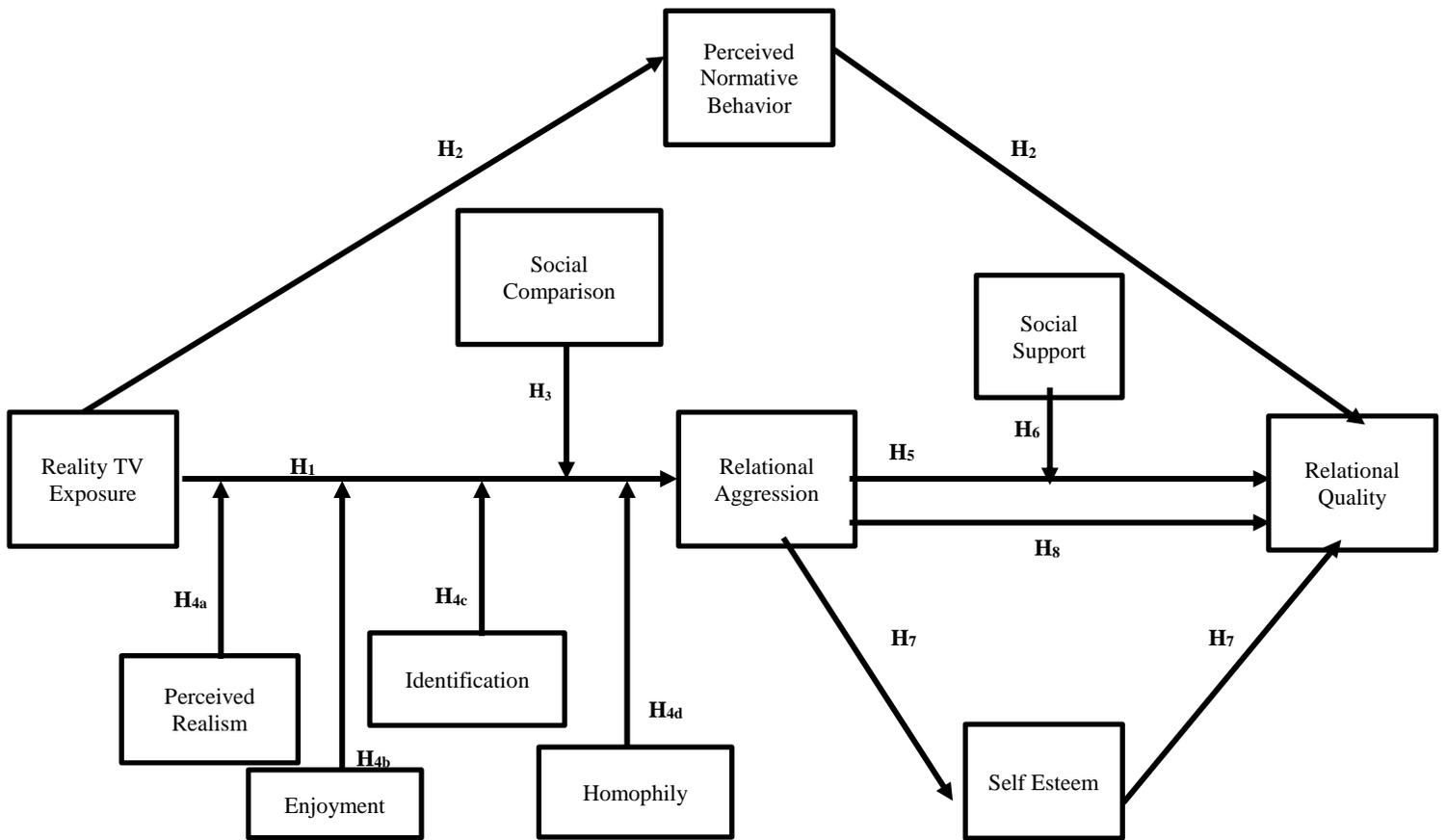
dyads was not large enough analyze the data with such techniques or models and the number of participants in the present study fell short of the necessary power to detect some of the effects. Therefore, future research should both investigate these hypotheses in the context of more intact dyads with MLM and APIM analyses and also with a larger sample of individuals to potentially have enough power to detect media effects. Because analyses that take into account the nonindependent nature of the data could not be performed, the unique effects of some variables, with the dyadic partner effects parceled out, could not be estimated. Multilevel modeling would take the nature of the data—that it is nested within dyads and internally constructs a covariance—as would SEM. More specifically, Actor-Partner Interdependence models would better identify both how the individual’s variables relate to each other, but also how the individual and his or her partner’s variables relate to both the individual’s and the partner’s variables. Therefore, future research would benefit from larger sample sizes that would allow for better statistical analyses.

Finally, it appears as though many of the variables exhibit construct stability over time and at least somewhat of a restricted range. And although some of the variables—especially the relational aggression and reality show consumption—manifested with low means and small standard deviations, the study still produced significant findings despite these limitations. This makes the significant effects documented in this study all the more remarkable given the less than ideal conditions under which they were tested. Therefore, although this study does offer some contributions to the social scientific fields, it also leaves many questions unanswered that future research could help answer.

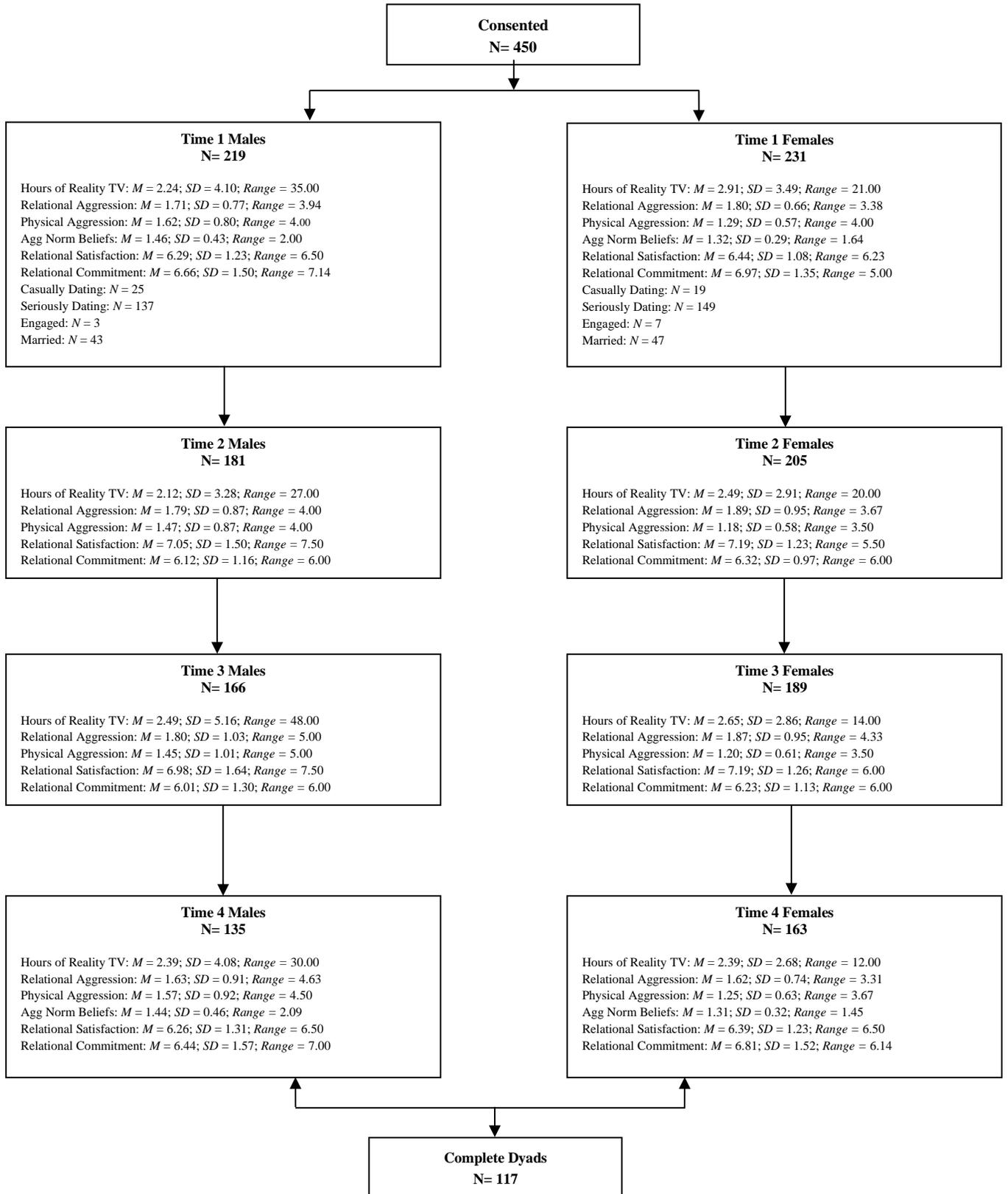
VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study examined the relationship between watching reality television shows, relational aggression, and relational quality. Data collected from dyads in romantic relationships were analyzed to investigate whether watching more reality shows would lead to increased relational aggression within romantic relationships and if that subsequently would result in lower relational quality. Past research has established a complicated relationship among these variables and this study has further demonstrated this complicated relationship. This study's results indicate minimal media effects of watching reality television shows on relational aggression, which is not in line with most of the past research. Further research should be done to better understand whether the small media effects some past research has found indeed exist or whether the findings of this study are more accurate. However, the present study also confirmed past research findings about the connection between relational aggression and relational quality also shows that there are partner effects and other potential interaction variables that warrant further investigation by future research. Most importantly, this study helped establish a longitudinal relationship between the relational aggression and relational quality.

FIGURE 1:
Conceptual Model



**FIGURE 2:
CONSORT Flow Chart**



TABLES

Table 1
Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Female Interpersonal Variables with Media Variables

		Female													
		Perceived Realism	Enjoyment	Identification	Liking	Homophily	Social Comparison- Fame	Social Comparison- Wealth	Social Comparison- Down	Social Comparison- Up	Social Comparison- No	Average Reality TV Consumption	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Scale Range</i>
	Relational Aggression Total	.17*	0.12	.25***	0.08	.19*	.42***	.38***	.37***	.32***	-.13	0.14	1.60	.74	1-7
	Relational Aggression Toward Partner	0.14	0.09	.18*	0.05	0.15	.33***	.30***	.30***	.28***	-.16*	0.11	1.59	.83	1-7
	Physical Aggression	0.05	-0.01	.18*	0	0.09	.37***	.32***	.28***	.29***	-.15	.23***	1.23	.61	1-7
Female	Relational Victimization Total	.19*	0.11	.19*	0.09	.16*	.36***	.33***	.34***	.31***	-.07	0.1	1.94	.95	1-7
	Relational Victimization From Partner	0.1	0.02	0.14	-0.02	0.13	.34***	.26***	.25***	.27***	-.14	.22***	1.58	.87	1-7
	Physical Aggression Toward Partner	.03	-.03	.09	-.01	.06	.29***	.26***	.25***	.27***	-.13	.22***	1.18	.64	1-7
	Normative Beliefs About Aggression	.12	.13	.18*	.16*	.19*	.39***	.35***	.37***	.35***	-.14	.06	1.30	.31	1-4
	Relational Satisfaction	0.04	0.06	-0.01	0.02	-0.08	-0.19*	-.17*	-.13	-.21***	.24***	.00	6.41	1.22	1-7
	Relational Commitment	-0.01	0.05	-0.08	0.05	-0.14	-0.28***	-.31***	-.15	-.27***	.24***	.01	6.82	1.53	1-8
	Self-Esteem	.16*	.00	.14	-.07	-.02	-.16	-.15	-.13	-.13	.21***	-.09	3.89	.67	1-4
	Social Support	.29***	.18*	.18*	.02	.04	-.17*	-.10	-.09	-.12	.28***	-.03	5.85	.92	1-7
	<i>M</i>	2.94	2.38	2.80	3.44	3.00	1.77	1.82	2.01	1.85	3.50	2.53			
	<i>SD</i>	.52	1.15	.74	1.00	.76	.79	.84	.74	.76	.94	2.54			
	<i>Scale Range</i>	1-5	0-4	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	# of Hours			

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Table 2
 Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Male Interpersonal Variables with Media Variables

		Male														
		Perceived Realism	Enjoyment	Identification	Liking	Homophily	Social Comparison-Fame	Social Comparison-Wealth	Social Comparison-Down	Social Comparison-Up	Social Comparison-No	Average Reality TV Consumption	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Scale Range</i>	
Male	Relational Aggression Total	.25***	.15	.25***	-.00	.20*	.43***	.44***	.45***	.44***	-.01	.25***	1.61	.91	1-7	
	Relational Aggression Toward Partner	.21*	.18*	.23***	.02	.18*	.43***	.42***	.44***	.44***	.02	.28***	1.58	.96	1-7	
	Physical Aggression	.26***	.10	.18*	-.02	.11	.43***	.51***	.41***	.45***	.02	.23***	1.57	.93	1-7	
	Relational Victimization Total	.22*	.04	.17	-.07	.09	.32***	.40***	.35***	.35***	.04	.12	1.98	1.12	1-7	
	Relational Victimization From Partner	.15	.02	.13	-.09	.06	.33***	.38***	.32***	.34***	.05	.11	1.82	1.07	1-7	
	Physical Aggression Toward Partner	.24***	.15	.17*	.02	.12	.42***	.41***	.37***	.45***	.02	.29***	1.38	.91	1-7	
	Normative Beliefs About Aggression	.19*	.16	.19*	-.02	.21*	.29***	.26***	.31***	.24***	.08	.14	1.43	.45	1-4	
	Relational Satisfaction	.07	.08	.00	.13	.02	-.19*	-.18*	-.16	-.16	.04	-.15	6.25	1.33	1-7	
	Relational Commitment	.07	-.02	.00	.01	.01	-.30***	-.28***	-.25***	-.24***	.19*	-.17*	6.43	1.58	1-8	
	Self-Esteem	-.09	-.08	-.14	-.03	-.15	.34***	-.29***	-.34***	-.37***	.18*	-.30***	3.99	.70	1-4	
	Social Support	-.01	-.02	-.09	.01	-.10	-.27***	-.18*	-.21*	-.22*	.17*	-.25***	5.76	1.00	1-7	
	<i>M</i>		2.81	1.55	2.59	2.66	2.91	1.90	1.98	2.10	1.95	3.60	2.14			
	<i>SD</i>		.60	1.16	.82	1.11	.83	.88	.97	.88	.87	1.01	2.98			
<i>Scale Range</i>		1-5	0-4	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	# of Hours				

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Female Interpersonal Variables with Male Media Variables

		Male													
		Perceived Realism	Enjoyment	Identification	Liking	Homophily	Social Comparison- Fame	Social Comparison- Wealth	Social Comparison- Down	Social Comparison- Up	Social Comparison- No	Average Reality TV Consumption	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Scale Range</i>
Female	Relational Aggression Total	.04	.00	.05	-.06	.03	.18	.25***	.22*	.21*	.05	.13	1.60	.74	1-7
	Relational Aggression Toward Partner	-.01	.02	.05	-.07	.02	.21*	.29***	.25***	.23*	.07	.13	1.59	.83	1-7
	Physical Aggression	.07	.01	.01	.00	-.04	.11	.20*	.21*	.19*	-.08	.13	1.23	.61	1-7
	Relational Victimization Total	.04	.03	.01	-.06	.00	.11	.17	.16	.11	.02	.08	1.94	.95	1-7
	Relational Victimization From Partner	.13	.05	.05	-.06	.03	.22*	.28***	.26***	.24*	-.05	.14	1.58	.87	1-7
	Physical Aggression Toward Partner	.12	-.04	.01	-.02	-.02	.10	.18*	.17	.18	-.11	.09	1.18	.64	1-7
	Normative Beliefs About Aggression	.01	.04	.01	.04	.02	.18	.21*	.17	.16	-.09	.12	1.30	.31	1-4
	Relational Satisfaction	-.08	.05	-.07	.15	-.05	-.30***	-.36***	-.29***	-.33***	-.06	-.09	6.41	1.22	1-7
	Relational Commitment	-.12	.01	-.14	.06	-.14	-.31***	-.35***	-.27***	-.32***	.06	-.11	6.82	1.53	1-8
	Self-Esteem	.12	.05	.06	-.00	-.01	-.07	-.11	-.08	-.08	.00	-.06	3.89	.67	1-4
	Social Support	-.01	.04	-.05	.01	-.01	-.30***	-.35***	-.28***	-.33***	-.05	-.14	5.85	.92	1-7
	<i>M</i>	2.81	1.55	2.59	2.66	2.91	1.90	1.98	2.10	1.95	3.60	2.14			
	<i>SD</i>	.60	1.16	.82	1.11	.83	.88	.97	.88	.87	1.01	2.98			
<i>Scale Range</i>	1-5	0-4	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	# of Hours				

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Male Interpersonal Variables with Female Media Variables

		Female														
		Perceived Realism	Enjoyment	Identification	Liking	Homophily	Social Comparison- Fame	Social Comparison- Wealth	Social Comparison- Down	Social Comparison- Up	Social Comparison- No	Average Reality TV Consumption	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Scale Range</i>	
Male	Relational Aggression Total	-.02	.01	.04	-.02	.02	.18	.18*	.14	.11	-.13	.21*	1.61	.91	1-7	
	Relational Aggression Toward Partner	-.03	-.01	.02	-.05	-.02	.10	.10	.06	.05	-.10	.20*	1.58	.96	1-7	
	Physical Aggression	.00	-.03	-.02	-.07	-.01	.15	.18*	.14	.13	-.09	.23***	1.57	.93	1-7	
	Relational Victimization Total	-.04	-.05	-.01	-.08	.01	.12	.12	.09	.05	-.05	.15	1.98	1.12	1-7	
	Relational Victimization From Partner	-.06	-.02	-.03	-.05	-.00	.11	.13	.05	.06	-.07	.14	1.82	1.07	1-7	
	Physical Aggression Toward Partner	-.04	.01	-.03	-.02	-.01	.11	.11	.09	.07	-.10	.26***	1.38	.91	1-7	
	Normative Beliefs About Aggression	.10	.18	.13	.08	.08	.25***	.23*	.28***	.20*	-.12	.13	1.43	.45	1-4	
	Relational Satisfaction	-.04	-.02	-.10	-.06	-.09	-.28***	-.27***	-.17	-.25***	.24*	-.09	6.25	1.33	1-7	
	Relational Commitment	.01	.02	-.07	-.02	-.11	-.30***	-.32***	-.23*	-.29***	.24***	-.13	6.43	1.58	1-8	
	Self-Esteem	-.08	-.07	-.11	-.06	-.19*	-.35***	-.31***	-.31***	-.28***	.10	-.25***	3.99	.70	1-4	
	Social Support	-.12	-.01	-.18	-.04	-.16	-.36***	-.32***	-.31***	-.32***	.11	-.19*	5.76	1.00	1-7	
	<i>M</i>		2.94	2.38	2.80	3.44	3.00	1.77	1.82	2.01	1.85	3.50	2.53			
	<i>SD</i>		.52	1.15	.74	1.00	.76	.79	.84	.74	.76	.94	2.54			
<i>Scale Range</i>		1-5	0-4	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	# of Hours				

* $p < .05$ *** $p < .001$

Table 5

Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Aggression with Reality TV Consumption, Control Time 1 Relational Aggression

Predictor	Relational Aggression			
	Male		Female	
	DR ²	b	DR ²	b
Step 1	.43***		.56***	
Step 2	.01		.01	
T1 Relational Aggression				
Total Reality TV Consumption		.10		.08
Total R2	.44***		.57***	
n	132		156	

Note: *p < .05. ***p < .001.

Table 6

Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Victimization with Reality TV Consumption, Control Time 1 Relational Victimization

Predictor	Relational Victimization			
	Male		Female	
	DR ²	b	DR ²	b
Step 1	.34***		.47***	
Step 2	.00		.00	
T1 Relational Victimization				
Actor Total Media Consumption		.06		.01
Total R2	.35***		.47***	
n	132		157	

Note: *p < .05. ***p < .001.

Table 7

Tests of Indirect Effects from Reality TV Consumption to Relationship Quality through Normative Beliefs

Covariate	IV	Mediator	DV	IV→M	M→DV	Indirect effect	Indirect effect c.i.	Standardized indirect effect (β)
Individual Level Analyses								
T1 Rel. Sat. M	M RTV Consump.	T4 Normative Beliefs M	T4 Rel. Sat. M	.02 (p = .06)	-.33 (p = .07)	-.01	-.03 - .00	-.03
T1 Rel. Sat. F	F RTV Consump.	T4 Normative Beliefs F	T4 Rel. Sat. F	.01	-.47 (p = .08)	-.00	-.03 - .00	-.01
T1 Commit. M	M RTV Consump.	T4 Normative Beliefs M	T4 Commit. M	.02	-.19	-.00	-.02 - .00	-.01
T1 Commit. F	F RTV Consump.	T4 Normative Beliefs F	T4 Commit. F	.01	-.55*	-.00	-.03 - .01	-.01
Dyadic Level Analyses								
T1 Rel. Sat. F	M RTV Consump.	T4 Normative Beliefs M	T4 Rel. Sat. F	.01	-.36	-.00	-.04 - .00	-.01
T1 Rel. Sat. M	F RTV Consump.	T4 Normative Beliefs F	T4 Rel. Sat. M	.00	-.60*	-.00	-.03 - .01	-.01
T1 Commit. F	M RTV Consump.	T4 Normative Beliefs M	T4 Commit. F	.01	-.15	-.00	-.03 - .01	-.00
T1 Commit. M	F RTV Consump.	T4 Normative Beliefs F	T4 Commit. M	-.00	-.65*	.00	-.02 - .02	.00

Note: Table values are unstandardized regression coefficients unless otherwise noted. M = male, F = female, RTV = Reality TV. * p < .05.

Table 8
Tests of Social Comparison as a Moderator Between Reality TV Consumption and Relational Aggression

IV	Moderator	DV	Covariate Effect (b)	IV Main Effect (b)	Moderator Main Effect (b)	IV * Moderator Int (b)	Model F	Model R ²
Individual Level Analyses								
M RTV Consumption	T4 SC Fame M	T4 Rel Agg M	.62***	-.00	.28*	.03	16.34***	.51
F RTV Consumption	T4 SC Fame F	T4 Rel Agg F	.789***	.01	.10+	.03	29.80***	.58
M RTV Consumption	T4 SC Wealth M	T4 Rel Agg M	.55***	.02+	.27*	.06+	16.93***	.53
F RTV Consumption	T4 SC Wealth F	T4 Rel Agg F	.81***	.02	.03+	.01	29.35***	.57
M RTV Consumption	T4 SC Upward M	T4 Rel Agg M	.58***	.00	.28*	.06	17.17***	.53
F RTV Consumption	T4 SC Upward F	T4 Rel Agg F	.83***	.02	.01+	-.01	31.38***	.57
M RTV Consumption	T4 SC Downward M	T4 Rel Agg M	.59***	.01	.27*	.04+	15.41***	.52
F RTV Consumption	T4 SC Downward F	T4 Rel Agg F	.79***	.02	.08	.01	31.09***	.57
Dyadic Level Analyses								
M RTV Consumption	T4 SC Fame M	T4 Rel Vict F	.68***	-.01	.03	.03	13.46	.48
F RTV Consumption	T4 SC Fame F	T4 Rel Vict M	.55***	.01	-.11	.09	10.95***	.33
M RTV Consumption	T4 SC Wealth M	T4 Rel Vict F	.65***	-.00	.08	.04+	15.54***	.49
F RTV Consumption	T4 SC Wealth F	T4 Rel Vict M	.55***	.01	-.08	.06	10.08***	.32
M RTV Consumption	T4 SC Upward M	T4 Rel Vict F	.63***	-.02	.11	.08+	17.09***	.51
F RTV Consumption	T4 SC Upward F	T4 Rel Vict M	.55***	.01	-.10	.08	12.33***	.33
M RTV Consumption	T4 SC Downward M	T4 Rel Vict F	.65***	-.01	.10	.05+	15.38***	.49
F RTV Consumption	T4 SC Downward F	T4 Rel Vict M	.54***	.01	-.07	.07	10.91***	.33

Note: Table values are unstandardized regression coefficients unless otherwise noted. M = male, F = female, RTV = Reality TV. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$. + = effect becomes significant when covariate is removed. The T1 version of the DV is run as the covariate in each analysis.

Table 9

Tests of Perceived Realism, Enjoyment, Identification, and Homophily as Potential Moderators Between Reality TV Consumption and Relational Aggression

IV	Moderator	DV	Covariate Effect (b)	IV Main Effect (b)	Moderator Main Effect (b)	IV * Moderator Int (b)	Model F	Model R ²
Individual Level Analyses								
M RTV Consumption	T4 Perc Realism M	T4 Rel Agg M	.70***	.01	.08	.00	24.50***	.44
F RTV Consumption	T4 Perc Realism F	T4 Rel Agg F	.83***	.00	-.02	.01	49.11***	.57
M RTV Consumption	T4 Enjoyment M	T4 Rel Agg M	.71***	.02	-.01	.01	15.74***	.44
F RTV Consumption	T4 Enjoyment F	T4 Rel Agg F	.83***	.03	-.02	-.02	31.01***	.57
M RTV Consumption	T4 Identification M	T4 Rel Agg M	.69***	.02	.11+	-.00	15.59***	.44
F RTV Consumption	T4 Identification F	T4 Rel Agg F	.80***	.01	.09+	.04	29.42***	.57
M RTV Consumption	T4 Homophily M	T4 Rel Agg M	.70***	.02	.05	-.00	15.52***	.44
F RTV Consumption	T4 Homophily F	T4 Rel Agg F	.82***	.01	.05	.02	30.95***	.57
Dyadic Level Analyses								
M RTV Consumption	T4 Perc Realism M	T4 Rel Vict F	.72***	-.14+	-.11	.05+	25.62***	.48
F RTV Consumption	T4 Perc Realism F	T4 Rel Vict M	.62***	-.13	-.40*	.07	16.81***	.38
M RTV Consumption	T4 Enjoyment M	T4 Rel Vict F	.72***	.01	-.05	-.00	12.25***	.47
F RTV Consumption	T4 Enjoyment F	T4 Rel Vict M	.53***	.01	-.01	.05	9.76***	.32
M RTV Consumption	T4 Identification M	T4 Rel Vict F	.71***	-.00	-.01	.01	13.11***	.47
F RTV Consumption	T4 Identification F	T4 Rel Vict M	.54***	.03	-.14	.01	10.96***	.32
M RTV Consumption	T4 Homophily M	T4 Rel Vict F	.71***	-.00	-.03	.01	13.01***	.47
F RTV Consumption	T4 Homophily F	T4 Rel Vict M	.51***	-.03	.05	.18*	18.06***	.37

Note: Table values are unstandardized regression coefficients unless otherwise noted. M = male, F = female, RTV = Reality TV. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$. + = effect becomes significant when covariate is removed. The T1 version of the DV is run as the covariate in each analysis.

Table 10
Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Satisfaction with Relational Aggression, Control Time 1 Relational Satisfaction

Predictor	Relational Satisfaction			
	Male		Female	
	DR ²	b	DR ²	b
Step 1	.35***		.23***	
Step 2	.04***		.03*	
T1 Relational Satisfaction				
Relational Aggression		-.20***		-.19*
Total R2	.38***		.26***	
n	208		207	

Note: *p < .05. ***p < .001.

Table 11
Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Commitment with Relational Aggression, Control Time 1 Relational Commitment

Predictor	Relational Commitment			
	Male		Female	
	DR ²	b	DR ²	b
Step 1	.32***		.42***	
Step 2	.02*		.01*	
T1 Relational Commitment				
Relational Aggression		-.16*		-.12*
Total R2	.35***		.43***	
n	208		207	

Note: *p < .05. ***p < .001.

Table 12
Tests of Social Support as a Moderator Between Relational Victimization and Relational Quality.

IV	Moderator	DV	Covariate Effect (b)	IV Main Effect (b)	Moderator Main Effect (b)	IV * Moderator Int (b)	Model F	Model R ²
T1 Rel Vict M	T4 Social Support M	T4 Rel Sat M	.60***	-.11+	.34*	.19*	50.17***	.67
T1 Rel Vict M	T4 Social Support M	T4 Rel Commit M	.62***	-.10+	.33*	.10	46.88***	.58
T1 Rel Vict F	T4 Social Support F	T4 Rel Sat	.50***	-.05+	.60*	-.13	21.06***	.54
T1 Rel Vict F	T4 Social Support F	T4 Rel Commit F	.75***	-.08+	.45*	.02	54.11***	.61

Note: Table values are unstandardized regression coefficients unless otherwise noted. M = male, F = female. * p < .05. *** p < .001. + = effect becomes significant when covariate is removed. The T1 version of the DV is run as the covariate in each analysis.

Table 13
Tests of Social Support as a Moderator Between Actor's Relational Aggression and Partner's Relational Quality.

IV	Moderator	DV	Covariate Effect (b)	IV Main Effect (b)	Moderator Main Effect (b)	IV * Moderator Int (b)	Model F	Model R ²
T1 Rel Agg F	T4 Social Support M	T4 Rel Sat M	.60***	-.28+ (p = .06)	.42*	-.00	49.98***	.65
T1 Rel Agg F	T4 Social Support M	T4 Rel Commit M	.63***	-.11+	.40*	-.06	48.68***	.57
T1 Rel Agg M	T4 Social Support F	T4 Rel Sat F	.47*	-.18	.57*	.10	17.00***	.54
T1 Rel Agg M	T4 Social Support F	T4 Rel Commit F	.74***	-.16	.40*	.28	50.05***	.64

Note: Table values are unstandardized regression coefficients unless otherwise noted. M = male, F = female. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$. + = effect becomes significant when covariate is removed. The T1 version of the DV is run as the covariate in each analysis.

Table 14
Tests of Indirect Effects from Relational Victimization to Relationship Quality through Self-Esteem

Covariate	IV	Mediator	DV	IV→M	M→DV	Indirect effect	Indirect effect c.i.	Standardized indirect effect (β)
T1 Rel Sat M	T1 Rel Vict M	T4 Self Esteem M	T4 Rel Sat M	-.30***	.31*	-.09	-.20 - .02	-.10
T1 Rel Commit M	T1 Rel Vict M	T4 Self Esteem M	T4 Commit M	-.23***	.33*	-.08	-.20 - .01	-.07
T1 Rel Sat F	T1 Rel Vict F	T4 Self Esteem F	T4 Rel Sat F	-.19*	.27*	-.05	-.18 - .01	-.04
T1 Rel Commit F	T1 Rel Vict F	T4 Self Esteem F	T4 Commit F	-.19*	.16+	-.03	-.14 - .04	-.03

Note: Table values are unstandardized regression coefficients unless otherwise noted. M = male, F = female. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$. + = effect becomes significant when covariate is removed. The T1 version of the DV is run as the covariate in each analysis.

Table 15
Tests of Indirect Effects from Relational Victimization to Relationship Quality through Self-Esteem

Covariate	IV	Mediator	DV	IV→M	M→DV	Indirect effect	Indirect effect c.i.	Standardized indirect effect (β)
T1 Rel Sat M	T1 Rel Agg F	T4 Self Esteem M	T4 Rel Sat M	-.25*	.33*	-.08	-.23 - .01	-.06
T1 Rel Commit M	T1 Rel Agg F	T4 Self Esteem M	T4 Commit M	-.18+ (p = .05)	.36*	-.07+	-.22 - .00	-.04
T1 Rel Sat F	T1 Rel Agg M	T4 Self Esteem F	T4 Rel Sat F	-.15*	.24*	-.04+	-.15 - .01	-.03
T1 Rel Commit F	T1 Rel Agg M	T4 Self Esteem F	T4 Commit F	-.14+ (p = .06)	.14+	-.02	-.11 - .02	-.01

Note: Table values are unstandardized regression coefficients unless otherwise noted. M = male, F = female. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$. + = effect becomes significant when covariate is removed. The T1 version of the DV is run as the covariate in each analysis.

Table 16
Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Satisfaction with Relational Victimization, Control Time 1 Relational Satisfaction

Predictor	Relational Satisfaction			
	Male		Female	
	DR ²	b	DR ²	b
Step 1	.54***		.32***	
Step 2	.07***		.06*	
Total R2	.60***		.36***	
n	211		210	

Note: *p < .05. ***p < .001.

Table 17
Heirarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Time 4 Relational Commitment with Relational Victimization, Control Time 1 Relational Commitment

Predictor	Relational Commitment			
	Male		Female	
	DR ²	b	DR ²	b
Step 1	.52***		.53***	
Step 2	.03*		.03*	
Total R2	.55***		.56*	
n	211		210	

Note: *p < .05. ***p < .001.

Table 18
Intercorrelations Among Study Dependent Variables for Males and Females

		Male			
		Relational Aggression	Relational Victimization	Relational Satisfaction	Relational Commitment
	Relational Aggression	.45***	.46***	-.41***	-.37***
	Relational Victimization	.42***	.50***	-.38***	-.30***
Female	Relational Satisfaction	-.47***	-.45***	.70***	.48***
	Relational Commitment	-.40***	-.38***	.51***	.37***

Note: N = 117. Intraclass correlations between males and females are provided on the diagonal in bold font. * p < .05 *** p < .001

APPENDIX

Long Survey: Time 1 & Time 4

A reality show is an unscripted television show featuring non-actors interacting with each other or facing challenges such as competing against each other for a prize. Examples of reality shows include *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Bachelor in Paradise*, the *Real Housewives* shows (e.g., *Orange County*, *New Jersey*, *Atlanta*), *Dancing with the Stars*, *Survivor*, *Sister Wives*, *Project Runway*, *America’s Next Top Model*, *The Voice*, *Duck Dynasty*, *Shahs of Sunset* *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *Extreme Makeover*, *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding*, *What Not To Wear*, *The Biggest Loser*, *MasterChef*, *Say Yes to the Dress*, *Cake Boss*, *Below Deck*, *Million Dollar Listing*.

1. **In the past week (not including today)**, how many hours of your television viewing have involved watching reality TV shows? _____ hours

2. Please list your three **favorite reality TV programs** and rate them on how frequently you view each of the programs on a scale of 1 (*once a month*) to 5 (*more than once a day*)

○ _____
1 2 3 4 5

○ _____
1 2 3 4 5

○ _____
1 2 3 4 5

A **genre** is a category within which a book, movie, television show, or music style may fall into. For example, television show genres may include drama (e.g., legal, medical, adventure, political), comedy (e.g., sitcom, sketch, satire), news, sports, animated series, and soap opera.

3. Please list your three favorite TV programs in general and the genre each show falls into. Then rate how frequently you view each of the programs on a scale of (*once a month*) to 5 (*more than once a day*). If the shows you listed in the previous question are the same shows you would list here, please select “Same as Above” for each option and move to the next page.

○ Show: _____
○ Genre: _____

1 2 3 4 5
_____ **Same As Above**

- Show: _____
- Genre: _____

1 2 3 4 5
 _____ **Same As Above**

- Show: _____
- Genre: _____

1 2 3 4 5
 _____ **Same As Above**

Relational aggression is a mean and sometimes indirect type of aggression that hurts relationships or friendships. Examples include gossiping, spreading rumors, backstabbing, destroying relationships, social exclusion, giving dirty looks, leaving mean phone messages, “stealing” another person’s friend, or ignoring the person you are mad at, among others.

4. Please rate your three favorite reality TV programs on how much relational aggression is portrayed in each of the programs on a scale of 1 (*not relationally aggressive*) to 5 (*extremely relationally aggressive*)

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

5. Please rate your three favorite TV programs in general on how much relational aggression is portrayed in each of the programs on a scale of 1 (*not relationally aggressive*) to 5 (*extremely relationally aggressive*). If the shows you listed in the previous question are the same shows you would list here, please select “Same as Above” for each option and move to the next page.

1 2 3 4 5
 _____ **Same As Above**

1 2 3 4 5
_____ **Same As Above**

1 2 3 4 5
_____ **Same As Above**

Physical aggression is behavior intended to harm another person through physical means. Examples include shooting, stabbing, punching, biting, etc.

6. Please rate your three favorite reality TV programs on how much physical aggression is portrayed in each of the programs on a scale of 1 (*not physically aggressive*) to 5 (*extremely physically aggressive*)

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

7. Please rate your three favorite TV programs in general on how much physical aggression is portrayed in each of the programs on a scale of 1 (*not physically aggressive*) to 5 (*extremely physically aggressive*). If the shows you listed in the previous question are the same shows you would list here, please select “Same as Above” for each option and move to the next page.

1 2 3 4 5
_____ **Same As Above**

1 2 3 4 5
_____ **Same As Above**

1 2 3 4 5

_____ **Same As Above**

Perceived Realism

For each statement, please indicate your level of agreement.

8. Reality shows present things as they really are in life.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. If I see something in a reality show, I can't be sure it really is that way.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10. Television lets me see how other people live.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. Reality shows do not show life as it really it.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

12. Reality shows let me see what happens in other places as if I were really there.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Enjoyment

13. How much do you enjoy reality television?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very Much
0	1	2	3	4

14. How entertaining is reality television?

Not at all		Somewhat		Very Much
0	1	2	3	4

Identification

For each statement, please indicate your level of agreement.

15. While viewing reality shows, I feel as though I am part of the action.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16. While viewing reality shows, I forget myself and am fully absorbed.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

17. I am able to understand the events in the show in a manner similar to that in which the people in the reality show understand them.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

18. I think I have a good understanding of the people in the reality show.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

19. I understand the reasons why people on reality shows do what they do.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

20. While viewing reality shows, I can feel the emotions the people portray.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

21. During viewing, I feel I could really get inside the people's heads.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

22. At key moments in the reality show, I feel I know exactly what the people are going through.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

23. While watching reality shows, I want some of the people to succeed in achieving their goals.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

24. When some of the people in reality shows succeed, I feel joy, but when they fail, I feel sad.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Liking

25. I like reality television shows.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

26. I do not enjoy watching reality television shows.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Homophily

27. Some of the people in reality shows share the same morals as me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

28. Some of the people in reality shows are like me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

29. Some of the people in reality shows think like me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

30. Some of the people in reality shows have attitudes that are about the same as mine.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

31. Some of the people in reality shows have goals similar to mine.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

32. Some of the people in reality shows see things the same way I do.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	---------	-------	----------------

90. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.

Do Not Agree At All 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Agree Somewhat 4
Agree Completely 8

91. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.

Do Not Agree At All 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Agree Somewhat 4
Agree Completely 8

91. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.

Do Not Agree At All 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Agree Somewhat 4
Agree Completely 8

92. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.

Do Not Agree At All 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Agree Somewhat 4
Agree Completely 8

93. I feel very attached to our relationship—very strongly linked to my partner.

Do Not Agree At All 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Agree Somewhat 4
Agree Completely 8

94. I want our relationship to last forever.

Do Not Agree At All 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Agree Somewhat 4
Agree Completely 8

95. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

Do Not Agree At All 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Agree Somewhat 4
Agree Completely 8

Social Comparison

96. I often look to people on reality TV shows because they are glamorous.

Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Neutral 3 Agree 4 Strongly Agree 5

97. I often look to people on reality TV shows because they know what to do to become famous.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

98. I often look to people on reality TV shows because they have experience in what to do to become wealthy.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

99. I often look to people on reality TV shows because they know how to behave to get famous.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

100. I often look to people on reality TV shows because they are good models for how to get rich.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

101. I often compare to what people on reality TV shows do because they set an example of how to get famous.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

102. I often look to people on reality TV shows because they set an example of how things should not be done.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

103. I often look to people on reality TV shows to see how well I do things because they set an example of how I should not do things.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

104. I often look to people on reality TV shows to find out how well I have done something because they are models for poor quality work.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

105. I often look to people on reality TV shows to compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) because they do not do well socially.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5

106. I am not the type of person who compares often with people on reality TV shows (reversed).

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral/Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

107. I often look to people on reality TV shows to compare what I have accomplished in life because they have not accomplished very much.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral/Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

108. I often look to people on reality TV shows about mutual opinions and experiences to because their opinions and experiences are often bad/poor quality and it makes me feel better about my own.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral/Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

109. I often look to people on reality TV shows to find out what they think when they are faced with similar problems as me and I can learn from how poorly they handle such problems.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral/Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

110. I often look to people on reality TV shows when faced with a situation that is similar to situations they face because they have a lot of experience handling such scenarios poorly.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral/Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

111. I often look to people on reality TV shows to gauge how well-informed I am about something because they are not very well-informed and it makes me feel better about how well-informed I am.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral/Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

112. I *never* consider my situation in life relative to that of people on reality TV shows (reversed).

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral/Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

113. I often look to people on reality TV shows because they set a good example of how things are done.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral/Agree Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Neutral 3 Agree 4 Strongly Agree 5

122. I often look to people on reality TV shows to gauge how well-informed I am about something because they are well-informed and it provides a goal how well-informed I should be.

Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Neutral 3 Agree 4 Strongly Agree 5

123. I *never* consider my situation in life relative to that of people on reality TV shows (reversed).

Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Neutral 3 Agree 4 Strongly Agree 5

Social Support

For each statement, please indicate your level of agreement.

124. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.

Very Strongly Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree 6 Very Strongly Agree 7

125. There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows.

Very Strongly Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree 6 Very Strongly Agree 7

126. My family tries to help me.

Very Strongly Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree 6 Very Strongly Agree 7

127. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.

Very Strongly Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree 6 Very Strongly Agree 7

128. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.

Very Strongly Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree 6 Very Strongly Agree 7

129. My friends really try to help me.

Very Strongly Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree 6 Very Strongly Agree 7

130. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.

Very Strongly Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Disagree 3 Neutral 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree 6 Very Strongly Agree 7

- 1 2 3 4
140. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4
141. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4
142. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4
143. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4
144. I certainly feel useless at times.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4
145. At times I think I am no good at all.
- Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4

Demographics

146. What is your Sex? _____
0 – female
1 – male
147. For females: Are you pregnant? Yes or No
148. What is your age? _____
149. How would you describe your race or ethnicity?
a. Caucasian or White
b. American Indian or Alaska Native

- c. Hispanic or Latin American origin
- d. African-American or Black
- e. Asian or Pacific Islander
- f. mixed race/ethnicity (Please describe _____)

150. What level of education have you attained? Please check the best answer:

- 0 – Less than high school
- 1 – Some high school
- 2 – Graduated from high school
- 3 – Some college or associate's degree
- 4 – Graduated undergraduate
- 5 – Some graduate school
- 6 – Master's degree
- 7 – Degree such as MD or PhD

151. What state did you grow up in?

Alabama
Alaska
Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming

152. What year did you graduate high school in? _____
153. What is your sexual orientation?
 Heterosexual Gay Lesbian Other _____
154. Do you have any children currently? _____yes _____ no
- 154.1 If yes, how many biological? _____, step-children? _____, adopted?

155. What is your marital status currently?
 Single
 Married
 Live together but not legally married
 Divorced and single
 Divorced and remarried
 Widowed
 Other _____
156. Are you in a monogamous relationship with your partner? Yes _____ No _____
157. How long have you and your partner been in a relationship?
 _____ years _____ months
158. How involved are you with your partner?
 1 – casually dating
 2 – seriously dating
 3 – engaged
 4 – married
159. Do you and your partner live together?
 Yes No
160. If you and your partner live together, for what amount of time?
 _____ years _____ months
161. If you and your partner live together, do you:
 Live together weekends or three to four days a week but keep separate residences;
 Live together everyday but keep separate residences; or
 Live together everyday and put both possessions in one residence
 Other
162. If you are NOT currently in a relationship or are dating multiple people, how long has it
 been since your last exclusive relationship?
 _____ years _____ months

163. Please enter the code that was sent to you in an email (the same email that had the link to this survey).

164. Which of the following best describes your role in this study?
- a. I am student who is participating in this study for course credit.
 - b. I was referred to this study

if 164a.:

Please fill out the information below so we can attribute your participation for course credit and for you to be entered into the drawing for the Amazon Gift Card:

Your Name:

Email Address:

Partner's Name:

Course Name/Number:

Instructor Name:

If 164b.:

Please fill out the information below so we can attribute your participation to whoever referred you (e.g., if you were referred by a college student, he or she may be receiving course credit) and for you to be entered into the drawing for the Amazon Gift Card:

Your Name:

Email Address:

Partner's Name:

Information for the Person Who Referred You (provided to you in the email with the study code/link, if applicable):

Name:

Course Name/Number:

Instructor Name:

Short Survey: Time 2 & Time 3

Viewing

1. **Last week**, how many hours of your television viewing have involved watching reality TV shows? _____ *hours*

Perceived Realism

2. Reality shows present things as they really are in life.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5
3. Reality shows let me see what happens in other places as if I were really there.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

Enjoyment

4. How much do you enjoy reality television?
Not at all Somewhat Very Much
0 1 2 3 4

Identification

5. While viewing reality shows, I feel as though I am part of the action.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5
6. I think I have a good understanding of the people in the reality show.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5
7. When some of the people in reality shows succeed, I feel joy, but when they fail, I feel sad.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

Homophily

8. Some of the people in reality shows are like me.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5
9. Some of the people in reality shows think like me.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5
10. Some of the people in reality shows see things the same way I do.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5
11. Some of the people in reality shows don't share my beliefs.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | 7 | | | | | |
20. When my romantic partner didn't invite me to do things with our friends because s/he was mad at me.
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| Not at All True | | | | Sometimes True | | |
| Very True | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | 7 | | | | | |
21. My romantic partner didn't pay attention to me because s/he was angry with me.
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| Not at All True | | | | Sometimes True | | |
| Very True | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | 7 | | | | | |

Physical Victimization

22. My romantic partner pushed/shoved me to get what s/he wanted.
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| Not at All True | | | | Sometimes True | | |
| Very True | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | 7 | | | | | |
23. My romantic partner tried to get his/her own way by physical intimidating me.
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| Not at All True | | | | Sometimes True | | |
| Very True | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | 7 | | | | | |

Relational Quality- Satisfaction

24. The degree of happiness, everything considered, in your relationship.
- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Very Unhappy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Perfectly Happy | | | | | | | | | | |

25. We have a good relationship.

Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Very Strongly Agree					
1	2	3	4	5	6
7					

Relational Quality- Commitment

26. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.

Do Not Agree				Agree		Agree
At All				Somewhat		Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5	8
				6	7	

27. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.

Do Not Agree	Agree	Agree
--------------	-------	-------

At All 1 2 3 Somewhat 4 5 6 7 Completely 8

Social Comparison

101. I often look to people on reality TV shows to compare how well I do things because they set a good example of how things are done.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

102. I often look to people on reality TV shows to compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) because they do well socially.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

103. I am not the type of person who compares often with people on reality TV shows (reversed).

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

104. I often look to people on reality TV shows to compare what I have accomplished in life because they have accomplished a lot.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5

Social Support

105. I can talk about my problems with my family.

Very Strongly Disagree Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
Very Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6
7

106. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.

Very Strongly Disagree Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
Very Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6
7

107. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.

Very Strongly Disagree Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree
Very Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6
7

Self Esteem

108. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4

109. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

110. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

References

- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Ajzen, I. (2016). *Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved from <http://people.umass.edu/aizen/faq.html>
- Andersen, P. A., & de Mancillas, W. R. (1978). Scales for the measurement of homophily with public figures. *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 43, 169–179.
- Archer, J. (2004). Sex differences in aggression in real-world settings: A meta-analytic review. *Review of General Psychology*, 8, 291-322. doi: 10.1037/1089-2680.8.4.291.
- Archer, J., & Coyne, S. M. (2005). An integrated review of indirect, relational, and social aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 9, 212-230.
- Atkin, C. (1983). Effects of realistic TV violence vs. fictional violence on aggression. *Journalism Quarterly*, 60, 615-621.
- Aubrey, J. S., Behm-Morawitz, E., & Kim, K. (2014). Understanding the effects of MTV's 16 and Pregnant on adolescent girls' beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions toward teen pregnancy. *Journal of Health Communication*, 19, 1145-1160. doi: 10.1080/10810730.2013.872721
- Bandura, 2004. Social cognitive theory for personal and social change by enabling media. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 75-96) Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social

- psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1173-1182.
- Behm-Morawitz, E., & Mastro, D. E. (2008). Mean girls? The influence of gender portrayals in teen movies on emerging adults' gender-based attitudes and beliefs. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(1), 131-146.
- Blair, N. A., Yue, S. K., Singh, R., & Bernhardt, J. M. (2005). Depictions of substance use in reality television: a content analysis of *The Osbournes*. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 331, 1517–1519.
- Buunk, A. P., & Gibbons, F. X. (2007). Social comparison: The end of a theory and the emergence of a field. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 102, 3-12.
- Busching, R., Gentile, D. A., Krahé, B., Möller, I., Khoo, A., Walsh, D. A., & Anderson, C. A. (2013). Testing the Reliability and Validity of Different Measures of Violent Video Game Use in the United States, Singapore, and Germany. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, doi:10.1037/ppm0000004
- Caetano, R., Vaeth, P.A.C., & Ramisetty-Mikler, S., 2008. Intimate partner violence victim and perpetrator characteristics among couples in the United States. *Journal of Family Violence*, 23, 507–518. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/S10896-008-9178-3>.
- Carr-Jordan, E., & Robinson Kurpius, S. E. (2009, April). *The impact of parental attachment on parent-adolescent relationships, adolescent self-esteem and relational aggression*. Paper presented at the annual American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
- Carroll, J. S., Nelson, D. A., Yorgason, J. B., Harper, J. M., Ashton, R. H., & Jensen, A. C.

- (2010). Relational aggression in marriage. *Aggressive Behavior*, 36(5), 315–329.
doi:10.1002/ab.20349.
- Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass Communication & Society*, 4, 245-264.
- Coyne, S. M. (2016). Effects of viewing relational aggression on television on aggressive behavior in adolescents: A three-year longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology*, 52(2), 284-295.
- Coyne, S. M., Linder, J. R., Nelson, D. A., & Gentile, D. A. (2012). “Frenemies, fraitors, and mean-em-aitors”: Priming effects of viewing physical and relational aggression in the media on women. *Aggressive Behavior*, 38, 141-149. doi: 10.1002/ab.21410.
- Coyne, S. M., Nelson, D. A., Graham-Kevan, N., Keister, E., & Grant, D. M. (2010). Mean on the screen: Psychopathy, relationship aggression, and aggression in the media. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48(3), 288-293.
- Coyne, S. M., Nelson, D. A., Graham-Kevan, N., Tew, E., Meng, K. N., & Olsen, J. A. (2011). Media depictions of physical and relational aggression: Connections with aggression in young adults' romantic relationships. *Aggressive behavior*, 37(1), 56-62.
- Coyne, S. M., Nelson, D. A., Lawton, F., Haslam, S., Rooney, L., Titterington, L., Trainor, H., Remnant, J., & Ogunlaja, L. (2008). The effects of viewing physical and relational aggression in the media: Evidence for a cross-over effect. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44, 1551-1554. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2008.06.006
- Coyne, S. M., Robinson, S. L., & Nelson, D. A. (2010). Does reality backbite? Physical, verbal, and relational aggression in reality television programs. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 52, 282-298. doi: 10.1080/08838151003737931

- Crick, N. R., & Bigbee, M. A. (1998). Relational and overt forms of peer victimization: A multiinformant approach. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 66*, 337-347.
- Critchfield, K. L., Levy, K. N., Clarkin, J. F., & Kernberg, O. F. (2008). The relational context of aggression in borderline personality disorder: Using adult attachment style to predict forms of hostility. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 64*, 67-82. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20434.
- Czar, K. A., Dahlen, E. R., Bullock, E. E., & Nicholson, B. N. (2011). Psychopathic personality traits in relational aggression among young adults. *Aggressive Behavior, 37*, 207-214. 10.1002/ab.20381
- Dehnart, A. (2016a). The number of reality shows on cable TV last year. Retrieved from <https://www.realityblurred.com/realitytv/2016/01/total-reality-show-unscripted-tv-2015/>
- Dehnart, A. (2016b). Reality TV dominating ratings right now. Retrieved from <https://www.realityblurred.com/realitytv/2015/07/reality-tv-ratings-domination/>
- Dijkstra, J. K., Berger, C., & Lindenberg, S. (2011). Do physical and relational aggression explain adolescents' friendship selection? The competing roles of network characteristics, ikgender, and social status. *Aggressive Behavior, 37*, 417-429. doi: 10.1002/ab.20402.
- Doane, A. N., Kelley, M. L., & Pearson, M. R. (2016). Reducing cyberbullying: A theory of reasoned action-based video prevention program for college students. *Aggressive Behavior, 42*, 136-146. doi: 10.1002/ab.21610
- Dorr, A. (1981). Television and affective development and functioning: Maybe this decade. *Journal of Broadcasting, 25*, 335-345.
- Erol, R. Y., & Orth, U. (2016). Self-esteem and the quality of romantic relationships. *European Psychologist, 21*, 274-283. doi: 10.1027/1016-9040/a000259.
- Eyal, K., & Rubin, A. M. (2003). Viewer aggression and homophily, identification, and

- parasocial relationships with television characters. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* , 47, 77 – 98.
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41, 1149-1160. doi: 10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7, 117–140. doi:10.1177/001872675400700202.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Flynn, M. A., Park, S., Morin, D. T., & Stana, A. (2015). Anything but real: Body idealization and objectification of MTV docusoap characters. *Sex Roles*, 72(5-6), 173-182. doi:http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.hope.edu/10.1007/s11199-015-0464-2
- Frydenberg, E., & Lewis, R. (1991). Adolescent coping: The different ways in which boys and girls cope. *Journal of Adolescence*, 14, 119–133.
- Gibbons, F. X., & Buunk, B. P. (1999). Individual differences in social comparison: Development and validation of a measure of social comparison orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 129–142. doi:10.1037/0022.3514.76.1.129.
- Goldstein, S. C. (2011). Relational aggression in young adults' friendships and romantic relationships. *Personal Relationship*, 18, 645-656. Doi:10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01329.x
- Goldstein, S. E., Chesir-Tran, D., & McFaul, A. (2008). Profiles and Correlates of relational aggression in young adults' romantic relationships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37, 251-265. doi: 10.1007/s10964-007-9255-6.

- Goodboy, A. K., Myers, S. A., & Members of Investigating Communication. (2010). Relational quality indicators and love styles as predictors of negative relational maintenance behaviors in romantic relationships. *Communication Reports, 23*, 65-78. doi:10.1080/08934215.2010.511397
- Gottman, J.M. (1994). *What predicts divorce? The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Green, M. C., Brock, T. C., & Kaufman, G. F. (2004). Understanding media enjoyment: The role of transportation into narrative worlds. *Communication Theory, 14*, 311-327. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2004.tb00317.x
- Grotpeter, J. K. & Crick, N. R. (1996). Relational aggression, overt aggression, and friendship. *Child Development, 67*, 2328-2338.
- Hale, J. L., Householder, B. J., & Greene, K. L. (2003). The theory of reasoned action. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 259-286). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hall, A. (2006). Viewers' perceptions of reality programs. *Communication Quarterly, 54*, 191-214.
- Hayes, A. F., Matthes, J. (2009). Computational procedures for probing interactions in OLS and logistical regression: SPSS and SAS implementations. *Behavior Research Methods, 41*, 924-936. doi: 10.3758/BRM.41.3.924
- Jensen, A. C., Pond, A. M., & Padilla-Walker, L. M. (2015). Why can't I be more like my brother? The role and correlates of sibling social comparison orientation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 44*, 2067-2078. doi: 10.1007/s10964-015-0327-8.
- Johnson, C. (2012). Behavioral responses to threatening social comparisons: From dastardly

- deeds to rising above. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 6/7, 515-524. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2012.00445.x
- Kelley, H. (1979). *Personal relationships: Their structure and processes*. New York: Wiley.
- Kenny, D. A., Kashy, D. A., & Cook, W. L. (2006). *Dyadic Data Analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kim, M., & Hunter, J. E. (1993). Attitude-behavior relations: A meta-analysis of attitudinal relevance and topic. *Journal of Communication*, 43, 101-142. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1933tb01251.x.
- Knee, C. R., Canevello, A., Bush, A. L., & Cook, A. (2008). Relationship-contingent self-esteem and the ups and downs of romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 608-627. doi: 10/1037/0022-3514.95.3.608
- Knobloch-Westerwick, S., & Romero, J. P. (2011). Body ideals in the media: Perceived attainability and social comparison choices. *Media Psychology*, 14, 27-48. doi: 10.1080/15213269.2010.547822
- Knobloch, S., & Zillmann, D. (2002). Mood management via the digital jukebox. *Journal of Communication*, 52, 351-366.
- Krcmar, M., & Kean, L. G. (2005). Uses and gratifications of media violence: Personality correlates of viewing and liking violent genres. *Media Psychology*, 7, 399-420.
- Laurenceau, J., & Bolger, N. (2005). Using diary methods to study marital and family processes. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19, 86-97.
- Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., & Cleveland, E. (2006). Genre matters: An examination of

- women working behind the scenes and on-screen portrayals in reality and scripted prime-time programming. *Sex Roles*, 55, 445-455. doi:10.1007/s11199-006-9100-5.
- LeBeau, L. S., & Buckingham, J. T. (2008). Relationship social comparison tendencies, insecurity, and perceived relationship quality. *Journal of social and Personal Relationships*, 25, 71-86. doi: 10.1177/0265407507086806.
- Ledermann, T., Macho, S., & Kenny, D. A. (2011). Assessing mediation in dyadic data using the actor-partner interdependence model. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 18, 595-612. doi:10.1080/10705511.2011.607099.
- Lepore, S. J. (1992). Social conflict, social support, and psychological distress: Evidence of cross-domain buffering effects. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63, 857-868. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.63.5.85.
- Lewis, N., & Weaver, A. J. (2016). Emotional responses to social comparisons in reality television programming. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 28, 65-77. doi:10.1027/1864-1105/a000151.
- Linder, J. R., Crick, N. R., & Collins, W. A. (2002). Relational aggression and aggression in young adults' romantic relationships: Associations with perceptions of parent, peer, and romantic relationship quality. *Social Development*, 11(1), 69-86. doi:10.1111/1467-9507.00187
- Mahalik, J. F., Pierre, M. R., & Wan, S. S. C. (2006). Examining racial identity and masculinity as correlates of self-esteem and psychological distress in black men. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 34, 94-104. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-1912.2006.tb00030.x
- McGuire, W. J. (2002). Input and output variables currently promising for constructing

- persuasive communication. In R. E. Rice & C. K. Atkins. (Eds.), *Public communication campaigns* (3rd ed., pp. 22-48). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Meyer, D., Robinson, B., Cohn, A., Gildenblatt, L., & Berkley, S. (2016). The possible trajectory of relationship satisfaction across the longevity of a romantic partnership: Is there a Golden Age of parenting? *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy of Couples and Families*, 24, 344-350. doi: 10.1177/1066480716670141.
- Miller, R. B., Hollist, C. S., Olson, J., & Law, D. (2013). Marital quality and health over 20 years: A growth curve analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 75(3), 667–680. doi:10.1111/jomf.12025.
- Morgan, M., Shanahan, J., & Signorielli, N. (2009). Growing up with television: Cultivation processes. In J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (pp. 34-50). New York: Routledge.
- Murray-Close, D., Crick, N. R., & Galotti, K. M. (2006). Children's moral reasoning regarding physical and relational aggression. *Social Development*, 15, 345-372.
- Nabi, R. L., Biely, E. N., Morgan, S. J., & Sitt, C. R. (2003). Reality-based television programming and the psychology of its appeal. *Media Psychology*, 5, 303-330.
- Nabi, R. L., & Sullivan, J. L. (2001). Does television viewing relate to engagement in protective action against crime?: A cultivation analysis from a theory of reasoned action perspective. *Communication Research*, 28, 802-825. doi: 10.1177/009365001028006004.
- Nelson, D. A., Coyne, S. M., Swanson, S. M., Hart, C. H., & Olsen, J. A. (2014). Parenting, relational aggression, and borderline personality features: Association over time in a Russian longitudinal sample. *Development and Psychopathology*, 26, 773-787. doi: 10.1017/S0954579414000388.

- Norton, R. (1983). Measuring marital quality: A critical look at the dependent variable. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *45*, 141-151.
- Ogolsky, B., Niehuis, S., & Ridley, C. (2009). Using online methods and designs to conduct research on personal relationships. *Marriage & Family Review*, *45*, 610-628. doi: 10.1080/01494920903224202
- Oka, M., Sandberg, J. G., Bradford, A. B., & Brown, A. (2014). Insecure attachment behavior and partner violence: Incorporating couple perceptions of insecure attachment and relational aggression. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, *40*, 412-429. doi: 10.1111/jmft.12079
- Orpinas, P., McNicholas, C., & Nahapetyan, L. (2015). Gender differences in trajectories of relational aggression perpetration and victimization from middle school to high school. *Aggressive Behavior*, *41*, 401-412. doi: 10.1002/ab.21563
- Orina, M. M., Collins, W. A., Simpson, J. A., Salvatore, J. E., Haydon, K. C., & Kim, J. S. (2011). Developmental and dyadic perspectives on commitment in adult romantic relationships. *Psychological Science*, *22*, 908-915. doi: 10.1177/0956797611410572.
- Panuzio, J., & DiLillo, D. (2010). Physical, psychological, and sexual intimate partner aggression among newlywed couples: Longitudinal prediction of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Family Violence*, *25*, 689-699. 10.1007/s10896-010-9328-2
- Park, H. S., & Levine, T. R. (1999). The theory of reasoned action and self-construal: Evidence from three cultures. *Communication Monographs*, *66*, 199-218.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases

- in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879
- Potter, W. J. (1991). The relationship between first- and second-order measures of cultivation. *Human Communication Research*, 18, 92-113.
- Pouliot, L., & Cowen, P. S. (2007). Does perceived realism really matter in media effects? *Media Psychology*, 9, 241-259. doi: 10.1080/15213260701285819.
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2004). SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 36, 717-731.
- Prinstein, M. J., Boergers, J., & Vernberg, E. M. (2001). Overt and relational aggression in adolescents: Social-psychological adjustment of aggressors and victims. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 30, 479-491.
- Pronk, R. E., Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (2010). It's "mean," but what does it mean to adolescents? Relational aggression described by victims, aggressors, and their peers. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 25, 175-204. doi: 10.1177/0743558409350504.
- Rauer, A. J., Pettit, G. S., Lansford, J. E., Bates, J. E., & Dodge, K. A. (2013). Romantic relationship patterns in young adulthood and their developmental antecedents. *Developmental Psychology*, 49, 2159-2171. doi: 10.1037/a0031845.
- Reichert, T., Kim, J., & Fosu, I. (2007). Assessing the efficacy of Armed-Forces recruitment advertising: A reasoned-action approach. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 13, 399-412.
- Robles, T. F., Slatcher, R. B., Trombello, J. M., & McGinn, M. M. (2013). Marital quality and

- health: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140, 140–187.
doi:10.1037/a0031859.
- Roeses, N. J., & Olson, J. M. (2007). Better, stronger, faster: Self-serving judgment, affect regulation, and the optimal vigilance hypothesis. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2, 124-141.
- Roloff, M. E., & Solomon, D. H. (2002). Conditions under which relational commitment leads to expressing or withholding relational complaints. *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13, 276-391.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rubin, A. M. (1981). An examination of television viewing motivations. *Communication Research*, 8, 141-165.
- Rubin, A. M., Perse, E. M., & Taylor, D. S. (1988). A methodological examination of cultivation. *Communication Research*, 15, 107-134.
- Rusbult, C. E., Martz, J. M., & Agnew, C. R. (1988) The investment model scale: Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships*, 5, 357-391.
- Salomon, A., Strobel, M.G., 1997. Social network, interpersonal concerns and help-seeking in primary grade school children as a function of sex, performance and economic status. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 12, 331–347.
- Segrin, C., & Nabi, R. L. (2002). Does television viewing cultivate unrealistic expectations about marriage? *Journal of Communication*, 52, 247-263. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02543.x

- Shanahan, J., & Morgan, M. (1999). *Television and its viewers: Cultivation theory and research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheldon, P. (2016). Facebook friend request: Applying the theory of reasoned action to student-teacher relationships on Facebook. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 60, 269-285. doi: 10.1080/08838151.2016.1164167
- Shepperd, B. H., Hartwick, J., & Warshaw, P. R. (1988). The theory of reasoned action: A meta-analysis of past research with recommendations for modifications and future research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, 325-343.
- Shrum, L. J. (1999). The relationship of television viewing with attitude strength and extremity: Implications of the cultivation effect. *Media Psychology*, 1, 3-25. doi: 10.1207/s1532785xmep0101_2
- Shrum, L. J. (2009). Media consumption and perceptions of social reality. In J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (pp. 34-50). New York: Routledge.
- Smith, R. H. (2000). Assimilation and contrastive emotional reactions to upward and downward social comparisons. In J. Suls & L. Wheeler (Eds.), *Handbook of social comparison: Theory and research* (pp. 173-200). New York: Plenum.
- Smith, R. H., & Insko, C. A. (1987). Social comparison choice during ability evaluation: The effects of comparison publicity, performance feedback, and self-esteem. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 13, 111-122. doi:10.1177/0146167287131011.
- Smith, S. L., Nathanson, A. I., & Wilson, B. J. (2002). Prime time television: Assessing violence during the most popular viewing hours. *Journal of Communication*, 52(1), 84-111.
- Spencer, S., Fein, S., & Lomore, C. (2001). Maintaining one's self-image vis-à-vis others: The

- role of self-affirmation in the social evaluation of the self. *Motivation and Emotion*, 25, 41-65.
- Stefanone, M. A., Lackaff, D., & Rosen, D. (2010). The relationship between traditional mass media and “social media”: Reality television as a model for social network site behavior. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 54, 508-525. doi: 10.1080/08838151.2010.498851
- Suls, J., Martin, R., & Wheeler, L. (2002). Social comparison: Why, with whom, and with what effect? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 11, 159–163. doi:10.1111/1467-8721.00191.
- Taylor, S. E., & Lobel, M. (1989). Social comparison activity under threat: Downward evaluation and upward contacts. *Psychological Review*, 96, 569-575.
- Thornton, D., & Moore, S. (1993). Physical attractiveness contrast effects: Implications for self-esteem and evaluations of the social self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 19, 474–480. doi:10.1177/0146167293194012.
- Vitoroulis, I., & Vaillancourt, T. (2015). Meta-analytic results of ethnic group differences in peer victimization. *Aggressive Behavior*, 41, 149-170. doi: 10.1002/ab.21564.
- Wade, T. J. (2000). Evolutionary theory and self-perception: Sex differences in body esteem predictors of self-perceived physical and sexual attractiveness and self-esteem. *International Journal of Psychology*, 35, 36-45.
- Weaver, A. J., & Wilson, B. J. (2009). The role of graphic and sanitized violence in the enjoyment of television dramas. *Human Communication Research*, 35, 442-463. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.2009.01358.x
- Weber, D., & Robinson Kurpis, S. (2011). The importance of self-beliefs on relational

- aggression of college students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26, 2735-2743. doi: 10.1177/0886260510388287
- Williams, K. D. (2011). The effects of homophily, identification, and violent video games on players. *Mass Communication and Society*, 14, 3-24. doi: 10.1080/15205430903359701
- Williams, J. R., Fredland, N., Han, H., Campbell, J. C., & Kub, J. E. (2009). Relational aggression and adverse psychosocial and physical health symptoms among urban adolescents. *Public Health Nursing*, 26, 489-499. doi: 10.1111/j.1525-1446.2009.00808.x.
- World Health Organization, 2002. The World Health Report 2002: Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life. *World Health Organization*.
- Wright, E., & Benson, M. (2010). Relational aggression, intimate partner violence, and gender: An exploratory analysis. *Victims and Offenders*, 5, 283-302. doi: 10.1080/15564886.2010.509649
- Yang, H., & Oliver, M. B. (2010). Exploring the effects of television viewing on perceived life quality: A combined perspective of material value and upward social comparison. *Mass Communication and Society*, 13, 118-138. doi: 10.1080/15205430903180685
- Ybrandt, H., & Armelius, K. (2010). Peer aggression and mental health problems: Self-esteem as a mediator. *School of Psychology International*, 31, 146-163. doi: 10.1177/0143034309352267
- Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The multidimensional scale of perceived social support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52, 30-41.
- Zurbriggen, E. L., & Morgan, E. M. (2006). Who wants to marry a millionaire? Reality

dating television programs, attitudes toward sex, and sexual behavior. *Sex Roles*, 54, 1-17. doi: 10.1007/s11199-005-8865-2