

I Am What I Watch: Voyeurism, Sensation Seeking, and Television Viewing Patterns

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This article investigates the role of viewers' personality traits, sensation-seeking, and voyeurism in relation to reported consumption of voyeuristic program content in various television genres. A uses and gratifications approach was employed to identify factors predicting appeal of particular TV programs. The study combines two types of media research: survey and content analysis. Results were combined to create the Voyeurism Television Consumption Index (VTCI) for each genre of TV programming. Both sensation-seeking and voyeurism predict media selection, with voyeuristic personality a better predictor of VTCI across genres. Implications of the findings are discussed.

There has been a proliferation of reality-based television programming, programs that are popular worldwide (Moorti & Ross, 2004) and attract large audiences (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003). This study defines reality TV genre as programs that, 1) have a high reality claim, 2) stress the actions and emotions of non-actors, and 3) often use a combination of authentic (e.g., police, security or surveillance im-

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ages) and staged images (e.g., fictionalized reconstructions, post-factum interviews) (Biltereyst, 2004).

While the psychological appeal of reality television programming is of considerable importance and interest, few scholars have attempted to answer, "what is the appeal of this type of programming, to whom, and why?" (Nabi et al., 2003, p. 311). Yet, if viewers' attitudes play a significant role in the selection of media content (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), what kind of attitudes or personality factors contribute to exposure to and enjoyment of reality TV programs? As Nabi, Stitt, Halford, and Finnerty (2006) reported, voyeurism was a key distinguishing gratification factor between reality TV and fictional programming. Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) found that viewers with low mobility and low levels of interpersonal interaction were more likely to watch reality TV to fulfill voyeuristic and companionship needs. These findings suggest that voyeurism may be a strong motive for viewers watching reality TV.

Rather than contextualizing voyeurism solely as a gratification or motivating factor, the authors were interested in exploring it as a message content variable. Does reality TV differ from fictional programs in terms of voyeuristic content? This study combines results of a content analysis and a survey to calculate an individual's exposure to voyeurism television content (henceforth termed Voyeurism Television Consumption Index or VTCI), to investigate possible relations between individuals' media use (in particular, exposure to reality TV versus fictional genres of television) and personality characteristics (e.g., sensation seeking, voyeurism).

Reality Television

In the last 5 years, reality TV emerged as one of the most popular genres of television programming (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, & Smith, 2007). With its filming of real people as they live out events in their lives (see Nabi et al., 2003), reality TV significantly differs from fictional TV programs on some program content (e.g., Nabi et al., 2006). Prior research focused on audience gratification or motivation factors as a way of distinguishing reality TV from fictional TV programs and understanding the broad appeal of reality TV (e.g., Nabi et al., 2006; Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). Reiss and Wiltz (2004) examined the association between 16 human desires and values with reality TV viewing, and concluded that the motivation to feel self-important was most strongly associated with reality TV consumption. Nabi et al. (2003) reported that reality TV allows viewers to peek into other people's lives, and this gratification makes reality TV enjoyable. Papacharissi and Mendelson acknowledged voyeurism to be a motivating factor behind reality television appeal, and noted that:

This television format permits the production of programming that satisfies both overt and subliminal voyeuristic tendencies, which range from the direct involvement of audiences to participate in TV content (game shows) to the more detached observation of the daily interactions of "ordinary people" (as is the case with reality shows like *Big Brother*, or MTV's *The Real World*). (2007, p. 357)

Because gratifications and motivations for reality TV exposure and enjoyment have already been explored in prior research, this study examines the “curiosity” factor (i.e., voyeurism) that distinguishes reality TV from fictional TV programs.

Sub-Genres of Reality TV. Scholars have argued that the term “reality TV” consists of a very loose grouping of programs (see Nabi, 2007; Ouellete & Murray, 2004). As Nabi summarized, “In essence, reality programs are marked by ordinary people engaging in unscripted action and interaction” (2007, p. 373). To categorize reality programs into sub-genres, scholars provided classification based on range of reality programs, viewing frequency of reality-based programs, or concept mapping (e.g., Nabi, 2007; Nabi et al., 2006; Ouellete & Murray, 2004). For instance, Ouellete and Murray (2004) assessed the range of reality programming and identified six sub-genres: gamedocs (e.g., *Survivor*), dating programs (e.g., *Joe Millionaire*), makeover and lifestyle (e.g., *A Wedding Story*), docusoaps (e.g., *The Real World*), court programs (e.g., *Judge Judy*), and reality sitcoms (e.g., *The Osbournes*).

In a more recent study, Nabi (2007) used concept mapping and multidimensional scaling to examine the range and distribution of reality programs such that the types of programs audiences tend to see as more or less distinct might be identified. Nabi concluded that two characteristics most salient to audiences in relation to reality-based programming were romance and competition. Although Nabi acknowledged the presence of other sub-genres of reality-based programming, the boundaries between these sub-genres tended to be fluid (2007). Therefore, the authors focused on reality TV as a separate genre in itself. Although this approach was taken by prior researchers examining reality-based programming (e.g., Jagodozinki, 2003; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007), this study examines how personality factors relate to reality TV versus fictional programs on one particular type of content viewing, voyeurism.

Reality TV and Voyeurism. To examine media content, the authors operationalized voyeurism consistent with Calvert’s (2000, p. 23) definition of “mediated voyeurism” as the “consumption of revealing images of and information about others’ apparently real and unguarded lives, often yet not always for purposes of entertainment but frequently at the expense of privacy and discourse, through the means of the mass media and Internet.” Kavka (2004) observed that reality TV programs were dependent on voyeuristic elements such as the performance of intimate elements in public, and the transformation of ordinary events from unwatchable to something worth watching, suggesting that voyeurism was one key programming content that distinguished reality TV from fictional television programs.

This study explored the relationship between different personality predictors and the consumption of voyeuristic content (both in reality TV and other popular fictional television genres). A uses and gratifications approach provided a theoretical foundation for exploring this issue from viewers’ perspectives.

A Uses and Gratifications Approach

The uses and gratifications (U&G) perspective focuses on viewers' motives for making certain media choices and how these choices satisfy viewers' needs (Katz et al., 1974). More specifically, the U&G approach suggests that individuals are aware of their needs, evaluate various channels and content available to them, assess functional alternatives, and finally, select the media, interpersonal channel, or other activities that they believe will provide the gratification they seek, which may be in the form of selection, attention, and use (Katz et al., 1974). The U&G perspective generated varied research including studies on enjoyment (e.g., Nabi et al., 2006), typical gratifications sought (e.g., Nabi et al., 2006; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007), and influence of social factors and personality traits on media consumption (e.g., Krcmar & Greene, 1999; Nabi et al., 2003). This article elaborates on the assumption that viewers' choice of media is influenced by a host of personality traits.

Predictors in the U&G Framework

Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) reasoned that the U&G perspective supports the understanding of viewer motives and predisposition while placing reality TV on the larger spectrum of communication channels available to audiences. In order to tap into these predispositions, this research focused on two personality characteristics—sensation-seeking and voyeurism—that may play a role in predicting viewers' preferences for reality-based TV programming. Previously, these personality traits were studied separately in relation to media consumption (e.g., Krcmar & Greene, 1999; Nabi et al., 2003), but never simultaneously. Thus, the present study explores the relationship of sensation-seeking and voyeurism with reality, and other TV-program viewing.

Sensation-seeking. Sensation-seeking is a personality trait that regulates the tendency to seek varied, novel, complex, and intense experiences, and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of these experiences (Zuckerman, 1994). People vary in their levels of sensation-seeking and the level of arousal needed to maintain acceptable levels of interest (Zuckerman, 1979). Several studies showed a positive relationship between sensation-seeking and use of illicit drugs (e.g., Yanovitzky, 2002), as well as between sensation-seeking and sexual risk-taking (e.g., Hoyle, Fejfar, & Miller, 2000).

In addition to the role of sensation-seeking in predicting risk-taking behaviors, several researchers examined the relationship between sensation-seeking and media selection, particularly television (e.g., Perse, 1996). Sensation-seeking is linked to viewers' media choices and, for example, predicts exposure to action-oriented and violent media (e.g., Hoffner & Levine, 2007), X-rated movies (Hirschman, 1987), and a preference for stimulating messages (Palmgreen et al., 1995).

The activation model of information exposure (AMIE) (Donohew, Lorch, & Palmgreen, 1998; Donohew, Palmgreen, & Duncan, 1980) provides a framework to understand the relationship between sensation-seeking and media consumption. According to AMIE, attention is a function primarily of an individual's need for stimulation. When an individual enters an information exposure situation (such as a media-viewing situation), the expectation includes either maintenance of or achievement of an optimal state of arousal. Therefore, the model suggests that high sensation seekers (HSS) should demonstrate a need for messages that are novel, emotional, arousing, and highly sensory, while low sensation seekers (LSS) should demonstrate a need for messages with lower levels of these attributes (Donohew et al., 1980). The model adds that if a message meets an individual's level of need for stimulation, then attention will occur. If the message exceeds or fails to meet that level, then attention will not occur.

Because reality TV programs often depict people participating in arousing activities or leading exciting lives, reality TV programs may attract HSS by allowing such viewers to achieve their desired levels of psychological arousal. Doyle's analysis of the crime reality program *COPS* illustrates, for example, that the officers depicted in this program "describe the sensations and satisfactions of their work, encouraging the viewers to share them" (1998, p. 101).

Voyeurism. Voyeurism was operationalized from three different perspectives: first as an individual difference, or personality variable (e.g., Blazer, 2006); second, as a program content or message variable (e.g., Calvert, 2000; Kavka, 2004); and third, as a viewer gratification variable (e.g., Nabi et al., 2006). This study focuses on the first two conceptualizations of voyeurism (i.e., voyeurism as a message variable, and voyeurism as a personality variable) to explore possible relations between the two.

Voyeuristic personality was operationalized consistently with Blazer's definition, "one who seeks stimulation by visual means" (2006, p. 379). Although several earlier studies focused on viewers' personality characteristics (e.g., sensation seeking, aggression) and their relationship to media consumption, these empirical studies have largely ignored voyeurism (see Nabi et al., 2003, for a notable exception). In other words, voyeurism has not been explored in the individual-difference literature. It was proposed that those viewers higher in voyeurism enjoy viewing programs with higher voyeuristic content to satisfy their needs to observe others' lives. As Doyle (1998) argued, many people have voyeuristic inclinations, and these inclinations may contribute to the viewing of reality programs. Additionally, Blazer (2006) remarked that reality-based television was created to satisfy viewers' appetite for voyeurism. Therefore, higher voyeuristic tendencies may contribute to higher VTICs for reality TV but not fictional genres.

Possible Association Between Sensation-Seeking and Voyeurism. From the review of literature on sensation-seeking and voyeurism, it could be concluded that the

sensationalism, excitement, and novelty of reality TV programs that result in increase of psychological arousal may play a significant role in satisfying the need for both sensation-seeking and voyeurism (Nabi et al., 2003). There is no extant empirical research supporting or rejecting a possible link between sensation-seeking and voyeurism. However, voyeurism may be confounded with sensation-seeking because both voyeurism and sensation-seeking are related to arousal and sensationalism (Calvert, 2000).

Gender. Anderson and Dill (2000) demonstrated that gender is a strong predictor of the amount of media consumption. Similarly, Greene and Krccmar (2005), in their study of exposure to media violence, found that respondents' sex predicts exposure to specific shows and programs, such as violent programs. In addition, Nabi et al. (2003) reported that men were more entertained by reality-based programming than were women. Whereas it is well established that sensation-seeking effects are confounded with gender (Zuckerman, 1994), there is no research that examines if the relationship of voyeurism as personality variable and consumption of reality TV programs is confounded with gender.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Based on the prior discussion, the following hypotheses and research questions are forwarded:

- H₁: Reality TV has more voyeuristic content as compared to other TV genres.
- H₂: Controlling for overall TV-viewing, HSS viewers have higher VTCLs for reality-based TV programs as compared to VTCLs for other genres.
- H₃: Controlling for overall TV-viewing and sensation-seeking, those higher on voyeurism have higher levels of VTCLs for reality-based programming as compared to VTCLs for other genres.
- RQ₁: Is the relationship between VTCL (for each TV genre separately) and sensation-seeking affected by gender after controlling for overall TV-viewing?
- RQ₂: Is the relationship between VTCL (for each TV genres separately) and voyeurism affected by gender after controlling for overall TV-viewing?

Method

The study utilized a two-fold design, including a survey and a content analysis of television shows.¹ In the following section, a review of content analysis is followed by the survey data-collection protocol and measures.

Content Analysis

For the content analysis, a combination of a “message pool” approach and “exposure-based” approach was utilized to identify television programs. The “message pool” approach defines the population as the set of messages available via a given medium at a certain time. The “exposure based” approach focuses on defining the population as those messages most widely attended to by audience members (Neuendorf, 2006). To identify the appropriate widely viewed shows by university students aged 18–25, several pilot tests were conducted with undergraduate communication students enrolled at two U.S. universities. For the pilot tests, the authors made a list of all prime-time shows on all national and basic cable networks to form a list of shows, thereby utilizing the “message pool” approach. Two groups of students were additionally asked to list their favorite shows (in a free-response format). The results were combined to construct an initial list of 60 popular shows.

To further identify and refine the list of TV programs most often viewed by university undergraduate students, another group of students rated the 60 shows from the initial list for how often they watched them on a Likert scale from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Almost Always*). There was also a free-response question asking about their favorite shows, to capture any missed programs. Based on results of the pilot surveys, a list of the 33 most popular television shows among university undergraduates was created, making efforts to balance the range and type of programs. The final sample included two episodes of each television show, resulting in 66 television shows that were content-analyzed.

Unit of Analysis. The unit of analysis was a “nonbreak sequence or camera cut” (see Pardun, L’Engle, & Brown, 2005) measured in seconds. The mean was calculated for the two episodes of each show to establish the amount of voyeuristic content for a given program. Next, average voyeuristic content variables were computed for program genres by summing the scores of relevant programs. A higher score indicated greater voyeuristic content in a particular genre (see Table 1). Because programs varied in length, the scores were adjusted so that all shows were comparable to the predominant 1-hour-long programs.

Defining and Measuring Voyeuristic Content. A well-established procedure for content analysis was used (Krippendorff, 2004). The coding for voyeurism followed the definition developed by Calvert (2000) and captured instances of observing or attempting to observe (loosely defined) unsuspecting individuals. Seven separate variables were coded including: following someone; looking into windows (or through keyholes); anonymous contacts (e.g., letters or calls); eavesdropping (unsuspected listening in on conversations); reading or listening to another’s mail, e-mail, or phone messages; snooping through someone’s belongings (e.g., going through a purse, searching a car, or jacket pockets); and watching someone (including but not limited to recording such as photographing). These variables were summed to

create an overall voyeurism score for each show, and the scores were combined across program genres.

Reliability. Several undergraduate students were trained to carry out the content analysis. Training continued until coders demonstrated adequate interrater reliability (.80) for each variable. Each of the 66 episodes was independently coded by two coders. Percentage agreement indices, often used to assess reliability in content analysis studies (see Hardy, Jamieson, Romer, & Jamieson, 2006), were used to assess reliability. The interrater reliability for voyeuristic content coding had a minimum percentage agreement of .81, and differences were resolved by another coder, blind to hypotheses, resulting in 100% final agreement.

Defining and Grouping Television Shows. Television programs were grouped into specific genres to analyze voyeuristic content in particular categories of programming. Program categories were created based on a *a priori* groupings related to genre (see Ouellette & Murray, 2004; Signorielli, 2005). As a result, 6 groupings of fictional programs were created: political satire, situation comedies, sport, night-time soaps/drama, crime and action drama, and animated satire. In addition, there was a reality TV category. Political satire included two shows: *The Daily Show* and *Chappelle's Show*. Sport included one show, *Sports Center*. Situation comedies included five shows, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Friends*, *Seinfeld*, *That 70's Show*, and *Will & Grace*. Night-time soaps/drama included seven shows, *Desperate Housewives*, *ER*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *One Tree Hill*, *Sex and the City*, and *The OC*. Crime and action drama included six shows, *24*, *Alias*, *CSI*, *Law and Order*, *JAG*, and *Walker, Texas Ranger*. Animated satire consisted of three shows, *Family Guy*, *The Simpsons*, and *South Park*. The reality show category included nine shows, *America's Next Top Model*, *American Idol*, *COPS*, *Extreme Makeover*, *Fear Factor*, *Power Girls*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Real World*, and *The Apprentice*.

Survey

In the fall of 2005, after receiving university IRB approval and completing pilot studies, survey data were collected from a convenience sample of undergraduate college students enrolled in communication classes at a large northeastern university.

Participants and Procedure. Participants received extra credit for their participation in the study. To minimize social desirability bias, anonymity of the survey was stressed before administration. The survey took about 30 minutes to complete, and participants completed it outside of the regular class, after signing an informed consent form. After completing the survey, participants were debriefed.

Students younger than 18 or older than 25 ($n = 86$) were excluded from analyses, as their TV viewing patterns could deviate from a typical college population.

This resulted in a final sample of 674 participants, with 432 females (64.1%) and 240 males (35.6%) (2 people did not report gender), ranging in age from 18–25 years ($M = 19.81$, $SD = 1.19$). The sample reported ethnicity as predominantly Caucasian (60%), with 13% Asian/Pacific Islander, 7% African American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 4% Bi/multi racial, 3% Caribbean, 3% Asian American, and other groups less than 2% each.

Measurement Instruments

The survey measured students' levels of sensation-seeking, voyeurism, TV-viewing patterns, and demographics.

Sensation Seeking. Sensation-seeking was measured by the brief sensation-seeking scale (Hoyle, Stephenson, Palmgreen, Lorch, & Donohew, 2002) based on Form V of Zuckerman's (1994) scale. It is an 8-item Likert-type scale with 5-point responses ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). For instance, one item states, "I would like to explore strange places." Reliability for this scale was good ($\alpha = .76$), and principal component analysis (with varimax rotation) indicated a single component structure (eigenvalue = 3.07, 38.40% var.) with all items loadings greater than .5 after deleting one item ("I get restless when I spend too much time at home"). The seven items were summed and averaged to form a composite scale with a higher score indicating more overall sensation seeking ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.73$).

Voyeurism. Voyeurism was measured by 9 Likert-type items, with three items adopted from Nabi et al. (2003), and the remaining items created by the researchers. Sample items include "I like watching people when they don't know that they are being watched," and "I get satisfaction out of watching others when they are unaware." Responses for this scale ranged from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Reliability for this scale was good ($\alpha = .86$), and principal component analysis (with varimax rotation) indicated a single component structure (eigenvalue = 4.19, 46.51% var.) with all items loading greater than .59. Items were summed and averaged to form a composite scale with a higher score indicating higher levels of voyeurism ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.71$).

Overall Television Viewing. Television viewing was measured by asking how many hours and minutes participants watched TV on average separately for weekends and weekdays. These data were converted from hours to minutes, and combined to create overall television viewing (in minutes) by weighting television viewing on weekdays and weekends ($M = 189.98$, $SD = 172.06$).

Television Program Viewing. Program viewing was measured by asking participants to indicate from a list of 33 different TV programs how often they watch each of the programs (with 5-point responses ranging from *Never* to *Almost Always*).²

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Viewing and Exposure to Voyeuristic Content across Genre

TV Genres	Amount of Voyeuristic Content (in sec)		VTCl
	<i>M (SD)</i>	CI (95%)	<i>M (SD)</i>
Animated sitcoms	19.70 (28.20)	-50.35, 89.75	42.51 (22.46)
Crime/Action	71.38 (77.57)	-10.03, 152.78	115.79 (53.62)
Night-time soaps	25.38 (30.76)	-3.07, 53.83	50.24 (24.49)
Political satire	0.00 (0.00)	0.00, 0.00	0.00 (0.00)
Reality TV	56.74 (69.88)	3.03, 110.46	81.37 (26.52)
Situation comedies	13.01 (21.85)	-14.12, 40.13	29.05 (12.22)
Sports	0.00 (0.00)	0.00, 0.00	0.00 (0.00)

Responses were then summed and averaged across programs to form a composite score indicating the amount of TV program viewing for different shows and genres.

Linking Content Analysis with Individual Survey Data

To calculate a respondent’s VTCl, data from the content analysis were combined with that from the survey. First, for each TV program, the total amount of voyeuristic content was computed in seconds (across the two episodes). Next, the resulting score was multiplied by each participant’s self-reported viewing frequency for each program to get a voyeurism television viewing score for each participant. These scores were then summed and averaged across programs to get an indicator of VTCl for each genre of programs (see Table 1).

Results

Analyses

A zero-order correlation matrix for all variables is presented in Table 2. Confidence intervals were examined to explore H₁. In order to examine other proposed hypotheses and research questions, two sets of multiple regressions were performed with level of significance set at $p \leq .05$. No significant violations of assumptions (i.e., normality, linearity, and multicollinearity) were detected in any of the regression models.

Table 2
Zero-Order Correlations for All Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 VTCI	1.00					
2 Sensation seeking	.10*	1.00				
3 Voyeurism	.18*	.06	1.00			
4 TV viewing	.23*	-.05	.03	1.00		
5 Age	.01	-.02	-.01	.05	1.00	
6 Sex ^a	.13*	-.14*	.04	-.03	-.08	1.00

^aMale = 0, Female = 1.

* $p \leq .01$.

Hypothesis 1

H₁ proposed that reality TV had more voyeuristic content as compared to other TV genres. Results from the content analysis revealed that among all categories, crime/action ($M = 71.38$, $SD = 77.57$), and reality TV ($M = 56.74$, $SD = 69.88$) had the highest voyeuristic content compared with other TV genres, and political satire and sports have no instances of voyeurism (see Table 1). Based on confidence intervals (with $p \leq .01$), it was concluded that in terms of overall voyeuristic content, reality TV was significantly different from sports and political satire, but not from night-time soaps, animated sitcoms, crime/action, and situation comedies. Thus, H₁ was partially supported, and results revealed that reality TV has more voyeuristic content as compared to sports and political satire, but not other TV genres.

Hypotheses 2, 3 and Research Questions 1, 2

H₂ proposed that controlling for overall TV viewing, HSS viewers have higher VTCIs for reality-based TV programs as compared to VTCIs for other genres. Similarly, H₃ proposed that those higher on voyeurism have higher VTCIs for reality-based TV programs as compared to VTCIs for other genres. RQ₁ examined if the relationship between VTCI (for each TV genre) and sensation-seeking is affected by gender after controlling for overall TV viewing. RQ₂ examined if the relationship between VTCI (for each TV genre) and voyeurism is affected by gender after controlling for overall TV viewing.

Five multiple regressions were performed with overall TV viewing, sensation-seeking, voyeurism, participant gender, interactions between participant gender and voyeurism, and participant gender and sensation-seeking entered as predictor variables.³ The dependent variables in each of the five regressions were VTCIs for reality TV, situation comedies, night-time soaps, animated satire, and crime/action respectively.⁴

The first model was significant for reality TV VTCl, $Adj. R^2 = .08$, $F(6, 651) = 10.34$, $p \leq .001$. This model revealed that people with greater overall TV viewing, $\beta = .21$, $p \leq .001$, females, $\beta = .14$, $p \leq .001$, and higher scores on voyeurism, $\beta = .23$, $p \leq .001$ have a higher reality TV VTCl.

The second model was significant for situation comedies VTCl, $Adj. R^2 = .05$, $F(6, 651) = 6.26$, $p \leq .001$. This model revealed that people with greater overall TV viewing, $\beta = .08$, $p \leq .05$, females, $\beta = .13$, $p \leq .001$, higher scores on sensation-seeking, $\beta = .26$, $p \leq .001$, and the interaction between gender and sensation-seeking, $\beta = -.17$, $p \leq .01$ have a higher situation comedies VTCl. In order to explore the interaction effect, two linear regressions by gender were performed with overall TV viewing, sensation-seeking, and voyeurism as independent variables, and situation comedies VTCl as dependent variable. The results revealed that for male viewers, higher scores on sensation seeking, $\beta = .25$, $p \leq .001$ were related to situation comedies VTCl, $Adj. R^2 = .06$, $F(3, 232) = 5.93$, $p \leq .001$. However, for female viewers, sensation-seeking, $\beta = .06$, $p = .24$ was not related to situation comedies VTCl, $Adj. R^2 = .03$, $F(3, 418) = 4.47$, $p \leq .01$.

The third model was significant for night-time soaps VTCl, $Adj. R^2 = .21$, $F(6, 651) = 30.05$, $p \leq .001$. This model revealed that female viewers, $\beta = .44$, $p \leq .001$, have higher night-time soaps VTCl. The fourth model was significant for animated satire VTCl, $Adj. R^2 = .14$, $F(6, 651) = 19.20$, $p \leq .001$. The final model revealed that people with greater overall TV viewing, $\beta = .10$, $p \leq .01$, and gender (males), $\beta = -.33$, $p \leq .001$, have a higher animated satire VTCl. The fifth model was significant for crime/action VTCl, $Adj. R^2 = .03$, $F(6, 651) = 4.67$, $p \leq .001$. The final model revealed that people with greater overall TV viewing, $\beta = .17$, $p \leq .001$ have a higher crime/action VTCl.

For H_2 and H_3 , unstandardized regression coefficients were compared (see Nunally, 1978). H_2 was not supported. HSS viewers do not have a higher VTCl for reality TV ($B = 2.62$) as compared to VTCl for fictional TV programs. Results also reveal that H_3 was supported. People with higher scores on voyeurism have a higher VTCl for reality TV ($B = 8.30$) as compared to VTCl for situation comedies ($B = 1.09$), night-time soaps ($B = 4.18$), animated satires ($B = 2.43$), and crime/action ($B = 6.54$) after controlling for overall TV viewing and sensation seeking.

Additionally, for RQ_1 , the results reveal that the relationship between VTCl (for reality TV VTCl, night-time soaps VTCl, animated satire VTCl, and crime/action VTCl) and sensation-seeking is not affected by gender, after controlling for overall TV viewing. However, the relationship between situation comedies VTCl and sensation-seeking is affected by gender after controlling for overall TV viewing. In particular, male viewers who are HSS have higher situation comedies VTCl than LSS male viewers. For female viewers, sensation-seeking is not related to situation comedies VTCl. For RQ_2 , the results reveal that the relationship between VTCl (for reality TV VTCl, night-time soaps VTCl, animated satire VTCl, and crime/action VTCl) and voyeurism is not affected by gender, after controlling for overall TV viewing. Finally, the results also reveal that female viewers have higher reality TV VTCl, situation

comedies VTCl, and night-time soaps VTCl. Male viewers, on the other hand, have higher animated satire VTCl.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

This study utilized a U&G framework to examine if personality factors (sensation seeking and voyeurism) influenced college students' exposure to voyeuristic content in different television genres. U&G theory framed the research to allow for an exploration of how personality differences may be related to self-directed media exposure of a particular nature (voyeuristic media content). The study found additional support for U&G theory in that viewers have predispositions (as conveyed by personality differences), and these predispositions affect media selection and utilization. This study was the first to quantitatively study the amount of voyeuristic content in various show categories. In addition, it utilized novel viewing motivations measure, VTCl, which is influenced by both amount of viewing and exposure to voyeuristic content due to the fact that this is a multiplicative variable.

The results of this study support the established notion that audience personal characteristics are related to television viewing habits. Specifically, it was found that voyeurism positively predicted VTCl for reality TV, situation comedies, and night-time soaps. These results reveal the correspondence between the personality traits that media consumers exhibit and content of the shows they watch. It could be concluded that personality variables voyeurism and sensation-seeking (albeit to a lesser extent than voyeurism) are relevant in predicting choice of various types of TV shows, yet they are also affected by gender and overall TV viewing.

Sensation Seeking. HSS individuals reported viewing more situation comedies and animated satire. Contrary to prediction, sensation-seeking was unrelated to VTCl for different genres, such as crime/action and reality TV. From the perspective of AMIE, therefore, the results indicate that situation comedies and animated satire provide the needed stimulation to HSS, while other genres of television programs fail to meet the benchmark for captivating HSS viewers. These findings could be explained by the suggestion that reality TV encourages complacency and passivity (Williams, 2005), characteristics that are not typically associated with HSS viewers. Additional support for findings is provided by Perse (1996) and Krcmar and Greene (1999) who note that HSS viewers in general do not find TV viewing overall as an exciting and stimulating way to occupy time but rather use television more selectively.

Although the current study did not focus on the relationship between sensation-seeking and gender, the findings provide additional support that men score higher on sensation-seeking, consistent with prior research (e.g., Zuckerman, 1979). The results also suggest that males who are typically HSS report higher situation comedies

VTCI than males who are LSS. This finding suggests that situation comedies may be perceived as stimulating and arousing for male viewers. A recent meta-analysis concluded that higher sensation-seeking is related to enjoyment of fright and violence (Hoffner & Levine, 2007). Zuckerman's study (1996) additionally reports that HSS enjoy any type of content that contributes to arousal, such as suspense, destruction, action, violence, or death. Because particular motives or gratifications obtained as a result of watching voyeuristic content on different TV genres were not examined, no definitive conclusions could be drawn about why HSS male viewers report greater situation comedies VTCI. However, this is certainly an area for future research. Additionally, future research may delve into the particular program characteristics to examine their appeal for people who are HSS, for example, presence of verbal conflict, interruptions, swearing, or other visual or audio features or program content might explain the attraction.

Voyeurism. The present study found that people who score higher on voyeurism reported higher VTCI for reality TV programs as well as situation comedies and night time soaps, but not for animated satire or crime/action programs. These findings only partially supported predictions based on the results of the content analysis. The content analysis revealed that reality TV and crime/action have higher voyeuristic content than any other categories, which suggests that those who score higher on voyeurism should have higher VTCI and choose to watch reality TV and crime/action programs to satisfy their need for observing others. However, the present study revealed that people high in voyeurism have a higher VTCI for reality TV but not for crime/action programs. This finding is somewhat consistent with previous findings by Nabi et al. (2003) and Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007), who found that voyeurism is one of the factors predicting viewers' choices to view reality TV programs, albeit not a primary one. Future research should consider similarities and differences between reality TV and crime/action programs that may portray different types of voyeuristic content, such as legal (i.e., sometimes court sanctioned) eavesdropping or execution of search warrants as key components of story lines. There may be differences in quality of different voyeuristic content.

Gender. The present findings support the prediction that gender significantly affects viewing preferences. The differences in viewing preferences are consistent with gender stereotypes, with men more likely to prefer programs that are action oriented such as animated sitcoms, and women more likely to prefer reality TV programs, night-time soaps, and situation comedies (e.g., Krcmar & Greene, 1999; Tiggemann, 2005). This is consistent with findings by Greene and Krcmar (2005) that people who score higher on instrumental androgyny scale watch more violent programs.

There is no prior research examining the relationship between gender and voyeurism, and these findings should be replicated in future research. The pattern of the results in the present study are clear and consistent: female viewers scored higher on the voyeurism scale and reported less viewing of animated satire, but more viewing

of reality TV programs, night-time soaps, and situation comedies. These results support previous findings by Greene and Krcmar (2005) that those who scored higher on expressive androgyny watch less violent and action oriented programs.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the insights this study may offer of the possible predictors of media selection, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the present study utilized a convenience sample consisting mainly of second- and third-year undergraduate students. The use of a college student sample could be justified by the fact that reality TV programs are especially popular among young adults, and college students represent a significant percent of the reality-viewing audience (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007); however, this still limits the generalizability of the findings.

TV programming changes rapidly, and there are many new popular programs that were not analyzed in this study, yet the present study includes shows that were not included in previous studies (e.g., *24*, *Fear Factor*, *Extreme Makeover*, *America's Next Top Model*). In addition, participants were asked primarily about TV programs broadcast on public and basic cable channels, leaving out some other programs and shows (e.g., programs on Showtime and HBO channels). An even better study would include more shows and more episodes of each show, and measure many other variables that could predict or moderate media viewing choices. The results indicated that some of the regression models explained limited variance (Adj. R^2). This is a limitation of the present study, and additional predictors of media viewing should be included in future research. Finally, although reality TV was examined as a separate genre, sub-genres within reality TV were not examined. Future research should investigate voyeurism content in sub-genres of reality programming.

Findings from this study support the idea that viewers' personality characteristics need to be taken into consideration in media research. Future research should investigate the appeal of animated satire, political satire, and sport programs for sensation seekers as well as the appeal of reality TV program, situation comedies, and night-time soaps for those who scored higher on voyeurism. Although this study provides valuable information, not much is known about viewers' attraction to particular TV genres and how predictors of voyeurism and sensation-seeking affect television viewing patterns. More research that uncovers particular motives and gratifications that viewers high in voyeurism and sensation seeking obtain from viewing of voyeuristic content is needed.

Notes

¹The authors acknowledge that the method chosen for the present study does not come under the purview of traditional U&G study as it does not examine people's motives for media selection. However, in the interest of mapping the voyeuristic content of television programs and examining people's consumption of voyeurism in these programs as influenced

by personality factors, the decision was made to combine results of survey and content analysis to address the aforementioned issues.

²The two fake shows, *Beautiful* and *New York Court*, were included to assess validity of the self-report data. The sole participant who reported viewing them *Often* or *Almost Always* was excluded from analyses.

³In order to examine the interaction between sex (categorical variable with *male* = 0, *female* = 1) and sensation-seeking and voyeurism (continuous variables), the continuous variables were centered, and then product variables were created for sex with sensation-seeking and sex with voyeurism (see West, Aiken, & Krull, 1996).

⁴Regressions for political satire and sports categories were not performed because these categories had zero instances of voyeuristic content.

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