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When your good friends wear Prada : a study of parasocial relationships, attractiveness, and life satisfaction

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WHEN YOUR GOOD FRIENDS WEAR PRADA:
A STUDY OF PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, ATTRACTIVENESS, AND LIFE
SATISFACTION

A Thesis

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I dedicate this thesis to my family. Thank you for your endless love and belief in me.
"It takes a village to raise a child." - African Proverb
and I had a pretty great village.

For Dawn & Chris Higdon, Anne & David Landeche, Stacey & Russ Kreller, Michael & Mary Haydel, Leslie & Francis Braud, the late Laura Armstrong, and the late Shirley & Lester Haydel.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on how viewers' relationships with their favorite media characters can impact their outlook on their own lives. Through the examination of parasocial relationships (PSRs), attractiveness, and the traits of materialism and envy, this study looks at the consequences of such traits on one's life satisfaction. Overall, the theoretical model presented argues to make the connection from one's PSR to his or her life satisfaction. Using a sample of undergraduate students, participants were asked to complete a survey that examined individuals' relationships with their favorite fictional media character through the study of various characteristics, habits, and media uses. The results support that the stronger one's PSR and attractiveness to his or her favorite character the stronger one's traits of envy and materialism tend to be. Also, the stronger one's traits of materialism and envy the lower the individual's life satisfaction. However, the over arching link from PSR to life satisfaction was not made, leaving room for further rationales and research within the area of PSR research.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Television and the characters that it portrays often inundate lives. If the characters and plots are especially intriguing, people usually will commit to tuning into a show on a regular basis. Entertainment research indicates that strong connections formed with media personae elicit a feeling of comfort and relational stability that is similar to relationships that people foster in their real lives. The reasons behind why people form such fictional connections vary, but for the purpose of this study, I will examine the links between these relationships and the artificial values of mainstream celebrity culture. Particularly, I will explore the connections between the perceived relationship and attraction to characters with the attitudes of materialism and envy, and the consequences such attitudes present to individuals' life satisfaction.

The narratives that television provides and the characters that it creates serve as byproducts of the culture in which we live, a culture where fame and fortune are held in great esteem. This is somewhat due to the three-part relationship that exists between the media, the public, and the celebrity (Marshall, 1997). One cannot attempt to discuss the "fame intensive" culture in which we live without considering the role that the media play. The lives of celebrities facilitate gossip among social circles; therefore, if it is what people are talking about and proves to be profitable, the media often deem it "newsworthy" enough to cover (Furedi, 2010). Such cycle is a consequence of what Marshall (2010) calls "specular economy." According to Marshall, this is an economy where people have the tendency to become increasingly conscientious of how they are viewed by others, and the effect that this has on individuals' knowledge. Concern for how one is perceived by others is due to the increase of time spent focusing on external appearances. After all, initial judgments are often based on looks. Thus, given the nature of culture, media, and society, it is logical to surmise that society would

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evaluate fictional characters on TV in similar ways that it views coverage of celebrities. In other words, the qualities that attract individuals to made-up characters on TV are not unlike the superficial lure one might experience when desiring more information about celebrities.

Celebrities are worshiped for reasons research has yet to fully understand. Even individuals with no interest in celebrities or mainstream culture find themselves informed on topics that are of no relevance to any substantive issue. Knowing that a certain rap star cheated on his ex fashionista girlfriend last week and that this week he is dating a hotel heiress will not help solve the gun control problem. But, nevertheless, this is where we are as a society. It is all around us, from the crafted celebrity couple titles "Kimye" and "Brangelina" to people's fascination with Britney Spears walking out of a Starbucks. The intrigue of the ever-changing dating life of Taylor Swift has contributed to the popular celebrity gossip site TMZ acquiring as many as over 1.5 million visits a day since the start of January 2013 (Quantcast.com). However, the mere unintentional stumbling upon celebrity gossip does not satisfy those who feed off the lifestyles of the rich and the famous. These are the people who visit sites such as TMZ at least once a day, purposefully seeking out celebrity news. There are the obvious reasons for this obsession with notoriety such as the asset of money and the idea power. These enticements have the ability to draw people in, whether it is through envy or the overall desire to emulate them. This presents a troubling standard of evaluating one's own self-worth. Perhaps more disconcerting is the fact that people do not necessarily care whether celebrities have any sort of talent to earn these excessive luxuries. It is about what the famous faces and the standard of living those faces represent. They symbolize the epitome of comfortable existence, a grandiose existence where society simply enjoys the view.

Presently, celebrity adulation goes beyond the admiration of talent. Rather, it is more indicative of mainstream culture living comfortably in an illusionary state. As Boorstin pointed out, as a society, we have the means to make images more believable than ever before (1962). Therefore, the perpetuated state of illusionary bliss is appearing to be increasingly vivid and accessible. The content state of being between the realm of perfection and reality offers a world of safe and secure isolation. This realm offers the luxury of watching someone else's life happen. If the narrative of an individual's own life fails to satisfy, and if creating strife within his or her own relationships fail, one can cast celebrities in roles and observe from a safe distance with possibly less emotional entanglements. In other words, people are seeking to see aspects of their lives on a larger scale without the burden of actually having to live it. People have found gratification in being a detached observer, and this separation further encourages and allows audiences to reside in the safe space between reality and illusionary perfection.

This illusion, or celebrity, is not always credible. Boorstin claims that a star is "well-known for his/her well-knowness" (1962, p. 57). Regardless of their trustworthiness, there is a reason why it is difficult to remove oneself from the delusion of frivolous information. Sites such as TMZ and Perez Hilton and TV stations like E! and MTV do not captivate audiences because they are dependable news outlets. Instead, it is how their content, whether trivial or not, is on some level able to satisfy their viewers. That sense of satisfaction is where celebrities find their place in a consumer-driven society that is fascinated by anything bright and shiny. Marshall (1997) conveys the celebrity's place within a society as mentor for those desperate for guidance on how to establish his or her worth. By looking to celebrities for assistance, individuals are often placated when they are given artificial symbols of identity and happiness. "The dialectal reality is that the star is part of a system of false promise in the system of capital, which offers

the reward of stardom to a random few in order to perpetuate the myth of potential universal success" (Marshall, p. 9). The worth of a celebrity to many individuals is usually one of merely superficial value (Marshall, 1997). As a celebrity culture, the societal emphasis is usually put on the ephemeral replacing of values, which Marshall calls the "exchange value." Meaning, the dominance of consumerism throughout the minds of many is translated over into how they view celebrities. According to Furedi (2010), today's celebrity is a product of a cultural industry devoted to the constant invention and falsehood of substitutable celebrities. Those in the public sphere are not only fleeing and easily replaceable, but they represent a self-assessment of what an individual in the private sphere does not have, and specifically, what one needs to achieve the equal worth of the celebrity. As a consequence, the representation of celebrities has grown progressively negative. Though intertwined, the existence of both the symbol and the celebrity can lead to negative self-perceptions from fans and non-fans.

It is clear that in this time of celebrity obsession, individuals feel that they or their lives are lacking something substantive. For example, according to Garland (2010), those who willingly seek them out are more susceptible to feelings of loneliness, inferiority, and hopelessness. This is due to feeling a lack of idolization or attentiveness from society that they see celebrities accomplishing (Garland, 2010). This can manifest into a form of deconstructive envy with harmful consequences to one's self-perception. It is the visually appealing aspects of the renown that elicit signals of their celebrity status. As a result, it is easy to observe famous people and only see their clothing and accessories as opposed to the actual person. When this occurs, it is likely to equate high-end possessions with higher self-worth. This in turn could allow envy to manifest over meaningless possessions, and perhaps initiate a self-perception that

is damaging. This standard of evaluation may be similar to how audiences view his or her relationship with their favorite fictional TV character.

The intimate fictitious relationships, better known as parasocial relationships (PSRs), that we form with fictional characters on television are scripted to entice viewers in a similar way that individuals are drawn to the lives of celebrities, but the secure domain between actuality and flawlessness lacks self-fulfillment. The drama of celebrities' lives, the clothes they wear, and the places they go seem to captivate society more than the events in their own lives. Therefore, given the intent and cultural factors from which fictional characters are created, reasons for traits of envy and/or materialism are likely to be a result of an individual's PSR. Similarly to the appeal of celebrities, superficial characteristics are likely to contribute to lower life satisfaction due to the captivation of what one may perceive as the ideal perfection. Arguably, this may be evident in PSRs because of the strong parallels between fictional TV relationships and real life friendships.

PSR is based on the idea that people can come to view a media figure, whether fictional or not, as a close member of their inner circle (Tsay & Bodine, 2012). PSR research suggests that close engagement with media personae has a positive relationship with concepts such as enjoyment, gratification, identity, learning, loneliness, and social anxiety (Tsay & Bodine, 2012). This perceived close relationship is mainly attributed to a sense of perceived realism. This realism includes many features of interpersonal relationships such as familiarity, guidance, and admiration. Characteristics associated with those who have, or are likely to have, PSRs provide data for further research on participants' self-perception in regards to the media figure. Specifically, previous research has found a connection between individual personality differences and strength of PSRs. Therefore, it is likely that how one perceives of him or herself

is also associated with these relationships. I plan to examine the concept of self-perception by studying how certain attitudes are facilitated through one's level attractiveness and strength of his or her PSR.

Research suggests that attractiveness is a strong motive in the choosing of audiences' favorite characters (Tian & Hoffner, 2007). Considering someone is likely to form a PSR with his or her favorite character, it is likely, based on past research, that this character possesses a type of social or physical attractiveness. There is also the component of being attracted to a character's personality, which is known as social attraction. Both have been found to have a positive association with PSRs (Tian & Hoffner, 2007). Given the qualities of media's celebrity culture and the strong similarity between PSRs and interpersonal relationships, I argue that the strength of a PSR is based on certain dispositions, such as materialism, that contribute to what one finds attractive.

Materialism has been a topic of study in various disciplines, from psychology to consumer research. The concept of materialism at its core represents what a person values and why. Materialism is often correlated with lower self-esteem and lower self-worth (Chaplin & John, 2007). Mass media's contribution to skewing individuals' self-perceptions is one that warrants further examination. The consumption of popular media is almost inescapable. More importantly, it provides images of celebrities with expensive possessions that some think they must attain in order to achieve their ultimate worth (Kasser, 2002). This is the dominant thinking of those who place a higher value on materialistic possessions. Materialism is also dependent on personal histories, such as familial upbringing and how children perceive their worth from a young age. According to Kasser, if a person is taught from an early age that their self-worth is

garnered from material possessions and meeting unrealistic expectations that popular media set, then that person will continue to try to compensate for an insecurity through materialistic means.

It is ultimately an issue of comparison when one wishes to attain certain possessions that contribute or lead to a desired level of attractiveness. Such comparison can lead to detrimental attitudes towards one's self-concept. A key detrimental behavior that may arise is envy. The idea of an upward social comparison (Smith et al., 1999) argues that people compare themselves to those they perceive to be better or greater than them. Currently, the media culture is filled with endless opportunities to compare oneself with others. Online media, social media in particular, allow people to know an exuberant amount of information about those that they consider to be better than themselves. For my study, upward social comparison will be assumed when discussing perceived status of media figures. This type of envy can be destructive to self-perceptions and life satisfaction, especially if it is caused by a PSR that is continuously being fostered and maintained.

As Kasser (2002) noted, self-actualization and general well-being is negatively associated with materialism. Reeves et al. (2012) make note that those with a poor sense of self often seek solace or distraction in the world of celebrity personae. This in turn leads to lower self-esteem and higher dissatisfaction of self. The idea of advertisements and media in general is essentially telling people what is "beautiful" or "fashionable." This is allowing society determine what is attractive. The nature of attractiveness in a celebrity culture is meant to harness people's desire to be more than what they are. Ultimately, life satisfaction being dependent on this conceptual frame is not a desired result from a PSR.

Therefore, I propose that through this study, we will come closer to looking at an all-encompassing view of PSRs in the current celebrity-oriented culture, and its consequences for

other aspects of lives. This is important because without further researching the effects of PSRs across multiple disciplines, the effects may become too restrictive. By looking at the connection between attractiveness within PSRs, envy, materialism, and life satisfaction, I plan to display a theoretical and empirical connection that will provide insight into how and why people may or may not have issues of self-perception as related to the formation of close relationships with fictional media characters.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parasocial Relationships

Parasocial Interactions (PSIs) with media figures are based on a seemingly realistic relationship. Horton and Wohl (1956) coined the term "parasocial interaction" to describe an interaction that consumers have with media characters; one in which people feel "an apparently intimate, face-to- face association with a performer" (p. 228). This set the foundation for the main characteristics of PSIs such as intimacy, continuous existence, role adoption, and nonmutual, one-sided, and non-dialectical communication (Tsay & Bodine, 2012). Multiple PSIs build a foundation for a relationship. Thus a viewer's PSR with his or her favorite character is a result of multiple encounters that involve feeling a close connection with the character. Such encounters may include a viewer talking to the screen in response to something that his or her favorite character has done or is about to do, relating the events that happen in one's life to certain occurrences in the character's life, and possibly mirroring one's favorite character's habits or appearance. The repetition of these various acts is what forms individuals' PSRs with characters of their choosing (Tsay & Bodine, 2012). When a viewer only tunes to watch a character sparingly and he or she is not committed to that character's steady existence in his or her life, it is not a PSR. Instead, it is likely an interaction that is temporary and probably not as solid or steadfast as one where the character and viewer meet consistently on a weekly basis.

When individuals sit down to watch their favorite character, it is usually a scheduled part of their week. In the instance of movies, one who only views a movie that his or her favorite media character is in a few times is not really committed to the maintaining of the relationship. If an individual watches the movie repeatedly, it is likely an act of continuing the relationship with his or her favorite character. In a PSR, the attachment to that specific character is strong enough

for an individual to build viewing time into his or her own life and consider it a priority. Through committed time and exposure, viewers feel as if they know these characters as they know those in their social network. Just as with friends, viewers formulate opinions about characters that they maintain a PSR with (Rubin & Rubin, 1999). For my study, I will examine PSRs because they offer a stronger and more established connection to the media figure. Interactions could be fleeting and rare, and a PSR indicates a relationship based on commitment and time spent together (Eyal & Dailey, 2012). PSRs will provide a stronger connection with the attitudes I am examining and provide a stronger linkage to viewers' self-perceptions.

PSRs are not only similar to interpersonal relationships because of their explicit effects, the way in which viewers process relationships with media figures is said to be similar to the process people go through in their interpersonal relationships (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Parasocial processing (PSP) is another facet of PSRs that studies the affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to media characters (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). The cognitive response is comprised of the viewer's perceptions of the media figure's character and persona. This can also include an activation of past events or memories that relate to the character or something surrounding him or her (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). The affective component consists of viewers' feelings toward the character such as empathy or sympathy. The behavioral component consists of intent to act, verbal indicators and non-verbal signs such as gestures (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Another important aspect to PSP is direct address, if the character addresses the viewer directly. This act intensifies the perceived relationship from the viewer's perspective. There can be numerous reasons as to why an individual engages in a PSR with a character. These reasons can be a result of a greater internal struggle with identification and self-perception or perhaps a growing need to fulfill a relational void.

When one engages in a PSR he or she does not lose his or her own identity. Just as in real life relationships, a person does not lose his or her identity completely once engaged in the friendship. This is what makes PSR different from identification (Cohen, 2001). According to Cohen (2001), "identification is a mechanism through which audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside as if the events were happening to them" (p. 245). This is not to say that the formations of a PSR could not be due, in some part, to identification. However, it is not a major component because in order to have a PSR, one does not have to identify with the media figure. This distinction is important to the research I am proposing because the strength of a PSR should not be confused with a stronger identification between the character and audience. Identification is also different from wishful identification, which is the desire of a viewer to aspire or imitate the media character (Feilitzen & Linne, 1975). Wishful identification is often associated with PSRs, but it does not automatically mean identification as previously defined. Affinity is another quality that can be present in a PSR. Affinity is the term that describes the liking a viewer may have for a media character without necessarily identifying with them (Cohen, 1999). Turner's (1993) past research examined PSRs within the context of homophily. His results suggest that when the viewer perceives a similarity between themselves and the character the strength of the PSR increases. Concepts like identification, wishful identification, affinity, and homophily can serve as contributing factors to the formation of PSRs, but they do not always indicate that such a relationship is present.

According to past research, personality predictors related to PSRs are often qualities that involve a sense of timidity, reclusiveness, and/or nervousness. Additionally, loneliness has also been researched. However, results are mixed regarding its connection with PSRs. In particular, Schiappa et al. (2007) found that loneliness is not associated with PSRs. However, Eyal & Cohen

(2006) did find a relationship between loneliness and parasocial breakup, which is what happens when an individual's favorite character goes off the air (Cohen, 2003). Since then, it has been noted that loneliness does not necessarily cause people to seek comfort through media characters. However, results indicate that loneliness might describe the degree of dependence on media characters (Tsay & Bodine, 2012). In addition to loneliness, neuroticism is also linked to PSRs. In Tsay and Bodine's (2012) study, they explore the concept of neuroticism in relation to levels of PSR. "Neuroticism is conceptualized as being the counterpart for agreeableness, including such traits as irritability, anxiety, and negative affect toward others and social interactions in general" (Tsay & Bodine, 2012, p. 189). The results showed that neuroticism was positively associated with PSRs. Due to their negative stigmas; qualities such as neuroticism and loneliness are likely to lead to issues of self-perception.

Individuals' PSRs and attractiveness to their favorite characters are likely to cause seemingly negative traits. However, what triggers one to form a PSR in the first place is the attraction to one's favorite character. Media and the culture in which we live often indicate what is and is not attractive. PSRs are becoming increasingly maintained and encouraged through the celebrity-centered culture, and the dominant focus of a fame-centered culture is what is and is not attractive. Thus, this mind set perpetuates the choices we make, including how we choose and view our favorite media characters.

Attractiveness

Research argues that parasocial processing can be affected by attractiveness (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Attractiveness is a multidimensional construct that consists of social attraction, physical attraction, and task attraction (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). Social attraction is based on how suitable the media figure's personality, habits, and temperament appeal to the viewer.

According to McCroskey and McCain, physical attraction is based on the degree to which the viewer finds the media figure's outer appearance desirable. Task attraction is based on the viewer's perception of the media figure's success, competency, and reliability. For the purpose of the current study, I will primarily focus on the link between social and physical attractiveness and the strength of PSR in relation to other concepts that are often seen to incorporate attractiveness into their foundation. In Hoffner and Cantor's (1991) study, results indicate that in regards to motive for choosing one's favorite character, attractiveness was a leading indicator.

Most often people think of attractiveness in terms of physical appearance, but social attractiveness has been suggested to be a key component in interpersonal communication. When people are interpersonally attracted to one another, it furthers their two-way communication (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). Additionally, the more time the individuals spend communicating with one another, the more likely it is that they will influence each other's communication (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). It is also said that interpersonal communication often gives way to social attraction. The more an individual engages with another person that he or she is attracted to, it increases the likelihood of further engagement (McCroskey &McCain, 1974). This is essentially the same dynamic that exists in PSRs. If a viewer is socially attracted to a character and wishes to communicate with the character parasocially, it is likely the viewer will continue to watch the show allowing the attraction to persist. Though it is ultimately a form of one-way communication, the perceived sense of and perhaps wishful desire for face-to-face communication strengthens the probability of social attractiveness. Additionally, the viewer may start saying phrases or words that his or her favorite character says. Though fictional, through the viewer's eyes, the social attraction is very real.

In Cohen's (1999) study, physical attraction is the leading indicator as to why participants chose their favorite characters. In the study, physical attraction is seen as the main predictor of character preference in the adolescent years. Cohen (1999) also notes that physical attractiveness as a leading indicator of PSRs, differs with age. Though relationships, both fictional and non, involve a form of attraction, an individual in their adolescence will likely put more emphasis on physical attraction than a person of older age. This is arguably due to the obvious differences in lives and prospective, but also, as one ages they develop needs that go beyond physical attraction. Physical attraction may lead a viewer to continue the relationship for various reasons, but it could also lead to a growing social attraction. Just as in real relationships, the initial lure to something or someone is usually physical, but if the relationship is sustained, a deeper relationship is likely to form. However, attractiveness, in all of its forms, is directly related to the strength of a relationship. Whether the relationship is a PSR or an interpersonal relationship, attractiveness influences self-perceptions. If attraction leads to a stronger relationship, it may also lead to stronger desire to imitate behaviors or appearances of those media figures.

The desire to emulate media figures is partially a consequence of the culture in which we live. Due to the pervading power of consumerism, the aspiration is made readily accessible by industries' use of celebrities to lure customers. This aids in the fostering of individuals' PSRs by having television characters present in various aspects of everyday life. An example is the advertising industry. The seemingly most profitable strategy is to employ the assistance of celebrity endorsers. This tactic is, for the most part, based on the idea that celebrities, through their physical attractiveness and notoriety, will convince people to buy what he or she is selling (Kahle & Homer, 1985). This is just one example of how the physical attractiveness of those in

mainstream media are continuously invading the environment and more importantly, how it is forming individuals' standards of judgment and character preferences.

Character preference, just like people's preferences of some groups over others, is based on some form of attractiveness (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991). But, within the context of attractiveness, the draw to certain characters is not based on a sense of kinship or identification. Attraction can serve as both a cause and a consequence of a strong relationship; it does not require identification to be present. One is able to identify with a character without being attracted to them. A viewer can be attracted to a character and identify with him or her, but it is not essential. In fact, if a viewer is able to see aspects of him or herself in a character, it is possible for negative effects to occur (Cohen, 2001). It is possible that identification with a character that a viewer finds attractive may cause negative feelings toward oneself. Attraction can be fostered through spectatorship or observing from a distance, and identification involves a vicarious experience (Cohen, 2001). Therefore, identification is not included in the conceptual construct of attractiveness. This is also the same situation within interpersonal relationships. An attraction, of any kind, can be present without truly experiencing something through some one else's eyes. This is just another way that PSRs easily fit into the interpersonal dynamic of communication.

Based on the fact that PSRs can be seen as an alternative to face-to-face communication or as a supplement to already pre-existing relationships, the common thread that I wish to expand upon is the effects that PSRs have on the strength of certain behavioral dispositions, such as materialism and envy. Especially since such traits are often based, in one-way or another, on a standard of attractiveness. Arguably, with the importance placed on celebrity culture by both

media and media consumers, increased importance on traits based on attractiveness and materialistic values could be an outcome strongly associated with PSRs.

Materialism

When people in a society are driven to consume goods for the sake of status it is said to be a "consumer culture" (Belk, 1988; Rassuli & Hollander, 1986). Based on the environment today, I argue that we presently live in a culture that is full of materialism. From the field of advertising to consumer research, materialism has been a topic of cultural study. For the present research, I will discuss causes of materialism as well as consequences materialism may produce. Additionally, I will provide characteristics of materialists as described by past research, and how it connects with the PSR research.

Ultimately, to materialists, consumption is a value, and it provides meaning in their daily lives (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Acquisition centrality (Richins & Dawson, 1992) is a term used in consumer research to describe the high placement that possessions hold in the lives of materialists. This type of prioritizing can also be an attainment in pursuit of something bigger. In most cases this bigger entity is happiness. Acquisition as the pursuit of happiness (Richins & Dawson, 1992) is central to materialists because they see possessions as vital to their life satisfaction. According to Belk (1984), "the highest levels of materialism…possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction" (p. 291). Generally, most people desire happiness, but it's the means that people go through to achieve the desired end that set materialists apart. Materialists achieve their happiness through acquisition as opposed to personal relationships, goals, achievements, and experiences (Richins & Dawson, 1992). This possession-defined success is another characteristic that Richins and Dawson use to describe the nature of materialists. Success is measured by the

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quantity and quality of their possessions. However, success does not solely come from the possessions. It comes from the image that these possessions allow them to project. In the world of materialism, it is the possessions that allow people to give off an image that they deem desirable. This desired image is, in turn, a result of the consumer culture in which we live.

Research suggests that age and levels of self-esteem are dominant indicators of materialism. Chaplin and John (2007) found a connection between a drastic decrease in self-esteem around the ages of 12-13 and an increase in materialism around that same age range. However, the researchers do state that decreased self-esteem may be seen as a consequence instead of a cause of materialism (Chaplin & John, 2007). PSR's connection with materialism through the means of attractiveness is the link that I am particularly interested in.

Consumer research from the late 1970s found an association between materialism in adolescents and higher levels of television viewing (Moschis & Moore, 1979). However, current research takes a more psychological perspective on the concept. According to Kasser (2002), "psychologist and social scientists suggest that people who highly value materialistic aims are driven by unmet needs for security and safety" (p. 29). Research has found that feelings of insecurity can derive from a variety of sources such as upbringing, divorce, death, and familial socioeconomic status (Kasser, 2002). Parents who define their children's success in terms of materialistic habits are forming and fostering a sense of self within their children that effects how they define themselves in the long run (Kasser, 2002).

A study done by Kasser (2002) suggests that growing up in poverty and/or in poor neighborhoods may be related to fostering materialistic lifestyles. He suggests "poverty creates circumstances in which people worry about satisfying their basic sustenance and security needs, and in an attempt to fulfill these needs, a significant number of them become oriented to

materialistic goals" (p. 33). In this instance the conceptualization of materialism changes as an individual's circumstances change. With this process comes the development of self-perception within the context of the circumstances.

Reeves, Baker, and Truluck (2012) tried to bridge the gap between Cushman's (1990, 1995) empty self-theory and materialism. The empty self-theory states that in the last 50 years the idea of self-sufficiency and individualism has lead to a decreased sense of community engagement and self-esteem, and this, in turn, causes an increase in depression and social anxiety (Cushman, 1990; 1995). This research studies how celebrity worship is associated with materialism as well as how these characteristics contribute to the empty self-theory. This research falls in line with past materialism research that suggests materialists lack a clear sense of self thus leading them to find gratification through insufficient means (Reeves et al., 2012). Reeves et al. (2012) see this as people compensating for their own self-perceived deficiencies.

The common link between the previously discussed causes of materialism is that the reasons fail to support and satisfy needs for security, safety, and sustenance (Kasser, 2002), and as previously noted, when this sense of helplessness occurs, research shows that the collection of material possessions is what people cling to. Based on past research I conclude that the image that people may think they are attaining through material possessions may be a result of a self-perception problem, a relationship problem, or another type of insecurity. Regardless, there is the influence of a wider materialist promoting culture that imposes its perceptions of attractiveness on audiences. The media, both fictional and non, communicate what culture creates and manifests on people's willingness to attain the desired image.

PSR's association with attractiveness, both physical and social, is indicative of people's fascination and appeal with a world that perhaps is just outside their reach. The unattainable

image becomes that much closer to being attained when audiences are allowed to purchase possessions that are similar to the images that they find likable and attractive. I am proposing that people who have a strong PSR will have more materialistic tendencies due to the desire to attain an image of a higher status that their favorite character is likely portraying.

Envy

Envy is a common subjective emotion that people are likely to experience over the course of their lives. However, what makes envy uncommon is that it is a sentiment that is often felt and shown through actions, but rarely is it explicitly expressed. This is probably due to the shame or embarrassment that accompanies it (Cohen-Charash, 2009). Envy can persist over a long period of time. So much so, that it becomes a part of one's overall disposition. It can also be a state that one slips into when triggered by something or someone. The question of how this complex emotion is caused by media and its characters needs to be examined within the larger cultural framework. Envy, whether fostered by ones own self or the environment around them, creates a feeling of discontent. A feeling of discontent that may come from the desire to attain or achieve something one may not have. This dissatisfaction is as prominent within the concept of envy as it is in materialism. Such feelings are likely to affect one's self-perception and overall life satisfaction. In the present study, I examine envy that is destructive to viewers within the context of a PSR and the proposed variables, and I seek to explain a stronger level of PSR in those who have a tendency to be envious

"Envy involves two people and corresponds to the feelings aroused when one person desires another's advantage" (Smith et al., 1999, p. 1008). This is not to be confused with jealousy. Jealousy involves a larger social group in which one fears losing a relationship to an adversary (Smith et al., 1999). Envy, unlike jealousy, is embedded in the essential concept of

social comparison. One needs to be conscious of the other in relation to themself before he or she realizes that they desire something about the other. Social comparison happens on a daily basis, but within the context of my research, social comparison, specifically upward, can cause division. Arguably, viewers make comparisons between themselves and their media companions. (Fiske, 2010). This idea goes back to the concept of materialism and the aspiration to attain a certain image. Envy does have a negative affective component, which, in reference to this study, makes the desire to attain something that one may not possess stronger and more powerful. Envy can also be seen as a desire to attain a quality that certain possessions may elicit. If envy involves the feeling of lacking a certain quality or possession, it is probable that a feeling of inadequacy about one's self is not far-fetched (Cohen-Charash, 2009).

Past research suggests that envy consists of two affective parts, one being ill will and the other inferiority (Campos et al., 1983). In order for envy to occur, psychology research shows that an upward social comparison must occur that causes a sense of inferiority within someone. This inferiority is often due to a desire to have something that someone else has. This results in envy (Smith et al., 1999). However, inferiority alone does not complete the conceptual definition of envy. Without ill will, envy is said to be a nonthreatening emotion (Rawls, 1971). Research (Berkowitz, 1989; Campos et al., 1983) has suggested that there is an anger and resentment associated with an upward social comparison, thus causing the affective component of ill will. Therefore, envy can occur when one feels hostility due to lacking a certain possession or quality that someone who they deem superior has. However, arguably, all forms of envy may not cause ill will, and all ill will is not necessarily associated with envy.

For this study, one of my two forms of envy that I will study will be dispositional envy, which is a habitual form of envy. Dispositional envy is caused by an inferiority complex created

within oneself. Emotional pain and social discontent are also associated with dispositional envy. Therefore, in order for the audience member to be seen as having dispositional envy tendencies, they must possess a higher frequency and intensity of envy (Smith et al., 1999). This can include feeling a daily sense of envy that is caused by a myriad of instances. In other words, if an individual experiences envy towards his or her favorite character, it may be because he or she has an envious disposition as opposed to that character specifically extracting the emotion. However, when a particular situation, person, or idea consistently educes a feeling of envy, this is considered state-based envy. Perhaps one's favorite television character elicits a feeling of envy from the viewer, but otherwise, the viewer is not generally a very envious person. This would be an example of an individual's PSR causing a feeling of envy by specific exposure.

The appeal that engrosses people into a PSR with their favorite character is one, which I argue, has a basis of audience members' desire of perhaps something they do not have. This could be operationalized in the form of possessions that make the image more desirable and thought to be worth the unkind motives that accompany envy. Therefore, PSRs can be seen as facilitators of envy, if the upward social comparison and strong desire are present. If a viewer experiences dispositional or state-based envy through a PSR, this can have heavy consequences on the viewers' satisfaction with their own lives and relationships. Considering PSRs are similar to interpersonal relationships, harmful dispositions, such as envy, will likely decrease satisfaction with one's self. Arguably, these detrimental emotions will likely result in a skewed outlook of what in fact satisfies people's own expectations.

Life Satisfaction

According to Diener, Emmons, Larse, and Griffin (1985), "life satisfaction refers to a cognitive judgmental process" (p. 71). Past research indicates that the judgment of life

satisfaction is relative to what an individual perceives as the acceptable standard (Diener et al., 1985). The standard is often set by one's external environment. Therefore, allowing for an individual to make a comparison between themselves and the world around them. According to Judge et al. (1998), "the way in which people view themselves is more fundamental and, to a large extent, the source of the way in which people view others and their world" (p. 20). Past research has broken the concept of perception into two parts to better understand the basis of individuals' life satisfaction.

Core evaluations, according to Judge, Locke, and Durhan (1997) are judgments individuals render onto themselves, and external core evaluations are opinions that individuals form about their environment. These evaluations of one's life and external satisfaction can be related to a prior study by Ball, Trevino, and Sims (1994). Their results suggest that those individuals who refute the principle that moral acts produce good rewards have a more adverse view of life than those who think life is based on an impartial system of justice (Judge et al., 1998). An individual's outlook on the world is indicative of their inner beliefs and judgments, and one's perception of society around them is telling of how they will relatively assess themselves. Therefore, if a person indicates strong negative dispositional traits due to an outside factor, it is likely that the result will be detrimental to their self-perception.

Arguably, this suggests that the culture in which we live in plays a large part in how people perceive their lives. Kuppens et al. (2008) argue that cultural features are especially revealing in telling what standards judgments are based on regarding one's life satisfaction. The research examined cultural indicators serving as a moderating variable in determining the relationship between positive and negative emotions and life satisfaction (Kuppens et al., 2008). According to Kuppens et al. (2008), people in a more individualistic culture place more emphasis

on their personal qualities and capabilities. However, in a collectivist culture the people's self concept is based on their place within a larger societal group (Kuppens et al., 2008). Based on the research, it is logical to assume that culture can be linked to imposing ideas of negativity that result in negative ideas regarding one's self and life satisfaction.

Cultural influences on individuals are not the only indicators of one's life satisfaction. It can also be the influence of those close to them. Relationships often contribute to a person's overall outlook on life. Life satisfaction as a result of interpersonal relationships has been studied in terms of actor effects, partner effects, and similarity effects (Dyrenforth et al., 2010). Actor effects focus specifically on the connection between an individual's personality traits and his or her personal satisfaction (Dyrenforth et al., 2010). According to Dyrenforth et al. (2010), "emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are the personality traits with the most robust actor effects for relationship satisfaction" (p. 691). This coincides with other studies because positivity is contributing to relational satisfaction as well as self-satisfaction. Based on prior literature, I argue one cannot have fulfillment in a relationship without having contentment with oneself and vice versa. Personality attributes contribute to an individual's overall perception of their relationships, their culture, and their perception of their own satisfaction.

Presently, the media culture is serving as an indicator of how people view their life and themselves, and television plays a key role in that process. Television is commonly seen as the medium through which people encounter their favorite characters. Research in the field of television effects has suggested a negative correlation between life satisfaction and amount of television viewing (Shrum et al., 2010). If increased television viewing and materialism result in decreased life satisfaction, and repeatedly, the images portrayed in media include unrealistic

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standards of materialism often expressed through material possessions, perhaps viewers' PSR, within the narrative, are causing media to define their values (Shrum et al., 2010).

Given the similarities between PSRs and interpersonal relationships, I argue it is likely that the same evaluations of self and culture are included in determining how satisfied one is with his or her own life. This imposition of values is causing a decrease in life satisfaction. This is, in part, based on the likelihood to cause unpleasant emotions such as envy, which indicates a high sense of a self-manifested inferiority (Smith et al., 1999).

Through my hypotheses and research questions I examined the effects that PSRs and attractiveness have on materialism and envy, and the consequences that materialism and envy have on one's life satisfaction.

RQ1: What is the relationship between PSR and materialism?

RQ2: What is the relationship between PSR and envy?

The attractiveness that is likely to be included in a PSR gives way to many different consequences of such a relationship. Given the subjectivity and ubiquity of attractiveness in today's society, the desire to attain a specific image or possession is contributing to negative self-perceptions. Specifically, I examined the strength of PSRs and how they influence the dispositional variables of envy, materialism, and life satisfaction (see Figure 1).

H1a: There will be a positive relationship between attractiveness and materialism.

H1b: There will be a positive relationship between attractiveness and envy.

H2a: The relationship between PSR and life satisfaction is mediated by materialism.

H2b: The relationship between PSR and life satisfaction is mediated by envy.
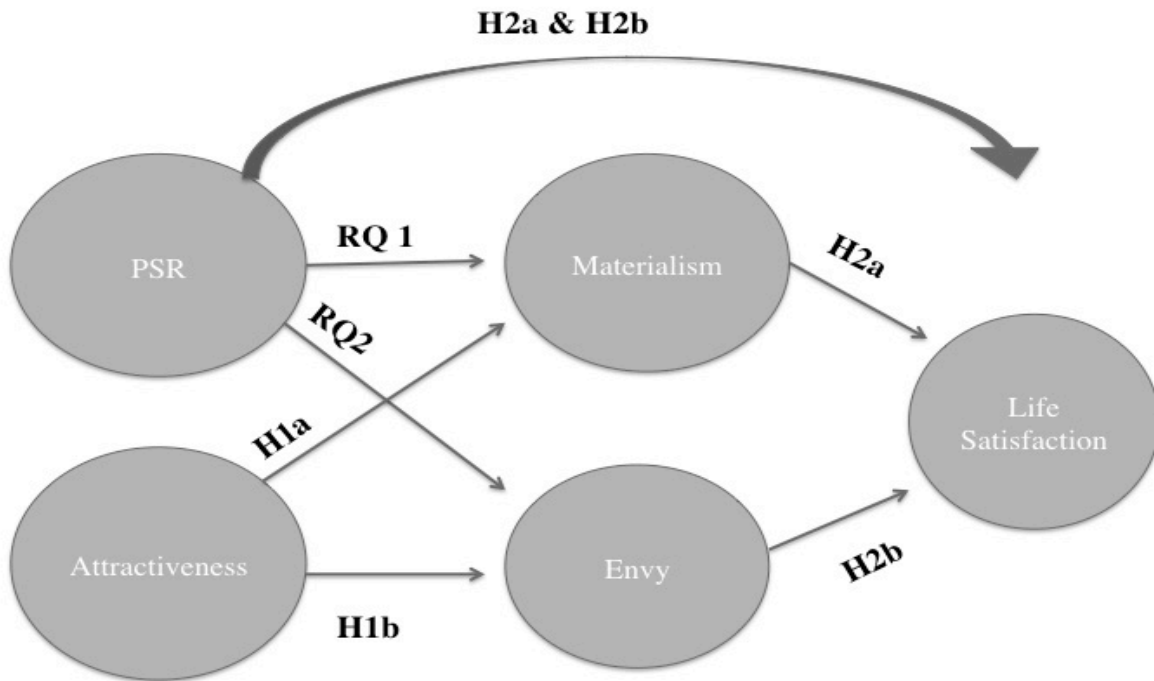
Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Relationships Presented. This is a theoretical model depicting connections discussed in research questions and hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Essentially, this study examines people's behaviors, traits, relationships, habits and outlooks. Therefore, a survey method of evaluation was chosen. PSR research is usually conducted in this manner because it is often assessing people's relationships and media habits, thus manipulation is not necessary. Since social desirability could easily be a factor within elements of PSR studies, such as this one, interviews and focus groups are not the most effective. Participants are more likely to answer self-evaluating questions honestly in an environment that presents the least amount of pressure and the most amount of anonymity.

Participants

My convenience sample consisted of 276 undergraduate students from Louisiana State University. They participated voluntarily and received extra credit for their participation. Of these participants, 53 (18.9%) were male and 228 (81.1%) were female. The age of participants ranged from 18-23 with the average being 19.71 years old ($SD = 1.28$) (See Table 1).

Procedures

To examine the research questions proposed, I conducted an online survey. First, participants answered questions about their own habits and traits of envy, materialism, and life satisfaction. Additionally, I asked participants to state their favorite fictional character from a TV show and use that character to answer questions about PSRs and attractiveness. Additionally, media usage questions were asked to better understand the extent of the participants' time and cognitive efforts on various media outlets. The survey presented the items randomly to avoid any unwanted effects due to order. The items were on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Percentage
Age	
18	20.9%
19	25.2%
20	27.3%
21	16.2%
22	9.7%
23	.7%
Gender	
Male	18.9%
Female	81.1%
Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	79.3%
African American	12.5%
Asian American	1.1%
Hispanic/Latino	2.9%
Native American	.4%
Middle Eastern	.4%
Other	3.6%
Class rank	
Freshmen	31.2%
Sophomore	31.9%
Junior	21.1%
Senior	15.8%

Measurements

      PSR. The scale that I used to measure PSRs is a modified version of Tsay and Bodine's (2012) 28-item scale. This scale is a refined version of Rubin et al.'s (1985) 20-item scale. The first dimension is "guidance" (α=.91). Example items from the guidance dimension included: *I feel good when I turn to my favorite media character for advice and I treat my favorite media character as a role model*. The second dimension is "face-to face desire" (α=.79). Example items from this dimension included: *If given the opportunity, I would contact my favorite media character and if I saw my favorite media character on the streets, I would talk to him or her*. The third and fourth dimensions of "intimacy" and "familiarity" were combined for this study and labeled "intimacy" (α=.72). Intimacy items included: *I have an intimate connection with my favorite media character or personality and when I am not watching my favorite media character or personality on TV, I seek information about him or her*. Familiarity items included: *I am familiar with the habits of my favorite media character and I have a good understanding of my favorite media character*. Due to the above dimensions being strongly correlated, an overall PSR index was computed with a Cronbach's alpha of .91.

      Attractiveness. The scale I used to measure attractiveness was the 7-point McCroskey and McCain's (1974) 30-item scale. However, I only used two of the three dimensions of attractiveness. Physical attraction (α=.82) and social attraction (α=.73) contributed to the 20-item scale that I used. Example items of physical attraction included: *I think he or she is very sexy looking; the clothes he or she wears are not becoming*. Example items of social attraction included: *I think he or she could be a friend of mine; we could never establish a personal friendship with each other*. Due to the above dimensions being strongly correlated, an overall attractiveness index was computed with a Cronbach's alpha of .88.

Materialism. I used Richins and Dawson's (2004) 15-item materialism scale. This 7-point scale assesses three main characteristics or indicators of materialism such as success, centrality, and happiness. Examples of success items included: *Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions; I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success*. Examples of centrality items included: *The things I own aren't all that important to me; I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical*. Examples of happiness items included: *My life would be better if I owned certain things that I don't have; I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things*. Additional items were created to broaden the scope of the measure, thus making it more applicable to the study. Examples of these items included: *I admire my favorite character because his or her life seems luxurious*; *I wish I could own things similar to my favorite media character so that I can impress people*. These items were averaged to create a measure of materialism with the Cronbach's alpha of .87.

Envy. I used the 8-item Dispositional Envy Scale (DES) developed by Smith et al. (1999). The 7-point scale included some of the following items*: I feel envy every day; It somehow doesn't see fair that some people have all the talent; It is frustrating to see some people succeed so easily; I am troubled by feelings of inadequacy*. Additional items were created to broaden the scope of the measure, thus making it more applicable to the study. Examples of these items included: *When I see my favorite media character, I often feel inferior to him or her*; *When I see my favorite media character, I am tormented by feelings of envy*. These items were averaged to create a measure of envy with the Cronbach's alpha of .87.

Life Satisfaction. The scale I used to measure life satisfaction is Diener et al.'s (1985) 5-item scale. The 7-point scale examines general life satisfaction. Examples of items included: *I*

am satisfied with my life; So far I have gotten the important things I want in life; I could live my

life over, I would change almost nothing. These items were averaged to create a measure of life

satisfaction with the Cronbach's alpha of .83.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Results for TV consumption indicated that 75% of the sample reported watching up to 5 hours of TV daily, and 69% reported watching up to 5 hours of TV daily from an online source, mobile device, or tablet. Other media habit questions resulted in showing minimal media usage influence on the participants' PSRs. Specifically, the results showed minimal indication of participants seeking out additional information about their favorite character or the actor/actress that plays the character. About 66% reported that they do not follow their favorite fictional character on Twitter (22% not having a Twitter account). About 55% of the participants do not follow the actor/actress that plays their favorite fictional character. Of the 12% that reported following his or her favorite character on Twitter, 3.2% answered that they do attempt to make contact with their favorite character. Perhaps more telling is the 5% of those who reported having a Twitter account indicated that they attempt to make contact with the actor/actress that plays his or her favorite character.

Only 21% of the sample reported using online sources such as blogs and discussion boards to seek additional information about his or her favorite character. Also, a little more than half of the sample said that they do not use social media for the purposes of being exposed to information about their favorite character or the actor/actress that plays them. Table 2 illustrates the means and standard deviations for each key variable.

Multiple, simple linear regression analyses were constructed to examine the accuracy and strength of the predictive relationships displayed in the research questions and hypotheses. RQ1 asked about the relationship between PSR and materialism. PSR had an mean of 4.43 (SD=.97), while materialism was only slightly above average with a mean of 3.84 (SD=.83) (See Table 2).

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Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Independent and Dependent Variables

	Mean	*Std. Deviation*
PSR	4.43	(.97)
Attractiveness	5.21	(.83)
Materialism	3.84	(.83)
Envy	3.01	(1.00)
Life Satisfaction	5.17	(1.06)

A simple linear regression analysis showed that PSR significantly predicted materialism, $F(1, 273)=7.82$, $p<.01$, Adjusted $R^2= .024$. In this instance, PSR accounts for 2.4 percent of the variance materialistic traits. The stronger the PSR, the stronger one's materialistic values. Thus, the strength of an individual's PSR was shown to be a strong predictor of the amount one values material worth ($\beta=.17$; Table 3a).

RQ2 asked about the relationship between PSR and envy. As shown in Table 2, Envy displayed the lowest average of all the variables ($M=3.01$; $SD=1.00$). The regression analysis showed that there is a strong relationship between one's PSR and envy, $F(1, 273)=10.93$, $p<.001$, Adjusted $R^2= .035$ (See Table 3a). In this case, 3.5 percent of envy expressed was caused by one's PSR. Therefore, one's PSR is a predictor of their level of envy ($\beta=.20$).

H1a argues that there will be a positive relationship between attractiveness and materialism. Among the variables presented, attractiveness received the highest average, and was moderately higher than materialism (See Table 2). This hypothesis was supported because attractiveness is shown to be a positive predictor ($\beta=.19$) for materialism $F(1, 273)=10.65$,

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Materialism, Envy and Life Satisfaction

	Adj R^2	β	F
a. Parasocial Relationships			
Materialism	.02	.17**	7.82
Envy	.035	.20***	10.93
Life Satisfaction	-.003	.027	.66
b. Attraction			
Materialism	.034	.19***	10.65
Envy	-.002	.035	.34
c. Materialism			
Life Satisfaction	.04	-.20***	11.41
d. Envy			
Life Satisfaction	.21	-.463***	74.34

Note: Predictor variables are listed at the beginning of each section; *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

$p<.001$, Adjusted R^2=.034. In this study, attractiveness accounted for 3.4 percent of the variance (β=.04; See Table 3b).

H1b suggested that there will be a positive relationship between attractiveness and envy. This hypothesis was not supported F=(1, 273)=.34, $p<.563$, Adjusted R^2=-.002. Attractiveness did not predict degree of envy (β=.03; See Table 3b).

H2a stated that the relationship between PSR and life satisfaction (*M*=5.17, *SD*=1.06; See Table 2) is mediated by materialism. H2a was not supported because the relationship between PSR life satisfaction was shown not to be significant F=(1, 273)=.20, $p>.05$, Adjusted R^2=.001 (See Table 3a). However, the analysis showed that there is a strong negative relationship (β=-

.20) between materialism and life satisfaction F= $(1, 273)=11.41$, $p< .001$, Adjusted $R^2=.040$.

Materialism accounts for 4.0 percent of the variance (See Table 3c).

H2b suggested that the relationship between PSR and life satisfaction is mediated by envy. Though the relationship between PSR and life satisfaction was not significant (See Table 3a), leaving H2b not supported, the analysis showed a strong negative relationship between envy and life satisfaction F= $(1, 273)=74.34$, $p< .001$, Adjusted $R^2=.211$ (See Table 3d). Thus, envy accounts for a sizable 21% of the variance. Also, according to this study, the more envious one is, the less satisfied with his or her life they are ($\beta=-.46$).

Results Summary

As shown in Figure 2, PSR positively predicted both materialism and envy, while attractiveness only predicted materialism. Though the mediation model did not exist, there are significant negative relationships between materialism and life satisfaction, and envy and life satisfaction.
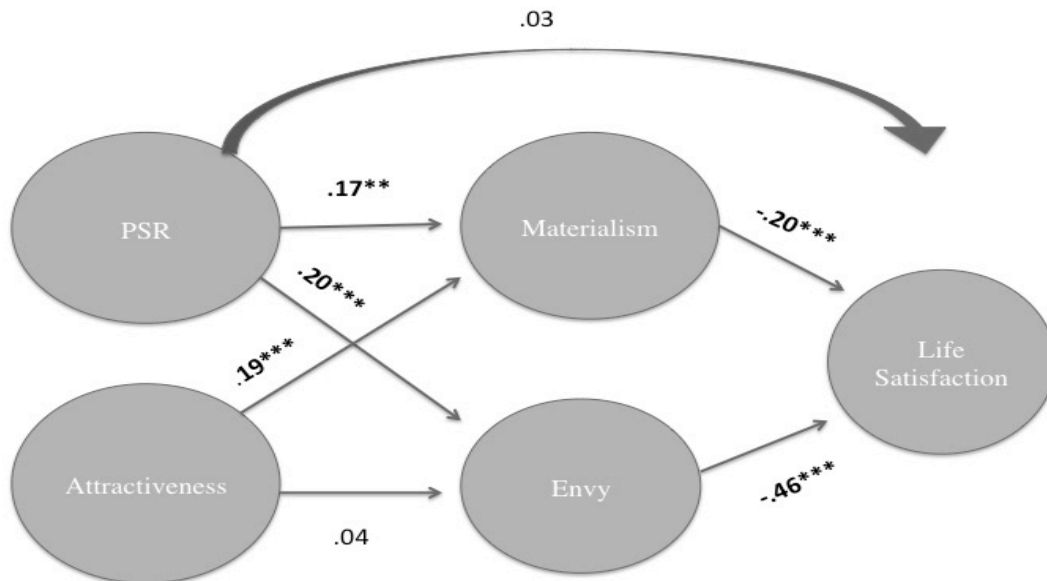
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Figure 2. Results of Predicted Relationships. This figure shows the beta weights, directions, and significances between relationships within the model.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

In a culture where images of celebrities are just as rampant off-screen as they are on-screen, it is important that the field of mass communication studies the impacts PSRs have on individuals' general well-being. With the development of new, faster, and more meaningful ways to come in contact with media characters, people have more opportunities to be easily enthralled and to become attached to characters on screen. The image that a favorite character represents in a viewer's life has more meaning than one may think. Studies, such as this one, give insight to specific negative repercussions that are likely to ensue as society becomes increasingly captivated with the idea of image in all of its forms.

Before participants began the section of the survey that assessed their PSRs and attractiveness to the characters, they were asked to state their favorite fictional TV character. It was indicated that this should not include game, reality, or reality based competition shows. Though some participants followed the instructions a large portion did not. The characters named included characters from movies as well as reality TV. Therefore, I chose to incorporate movies into the examination. This was an unplanned occurrence that I had to adjust for. I do not think this necessarily limited my results, nor changed the nature of my study. Instead, it broadened the scope of the research and contributed to the deeper knowledge of the participants by providing more telling evidence of what shows and characters the participants were really tuning into. This, in turn, makes the results applicable among various forms of media.

The majority of the results support past research and rationales. Though the analyses presented no significance to make the link from PSR to life satisfaction, the traits of envy and materialism both show significant relationships to PSRs and life satisfaction. Additionally, envy and materialism were shown to have an inverse relationship with life satisfaction, which can lead

one to infer many rationales based on the characteristics of the concepts. It is also important to note the role that attractiveness plays in the significance of the model. The conceptual link between attractiveness and materialism was supported and served as a point of comparison for other results found.

Attractiveness and Materialism

As expected, the stronger one's level of attractiveness the higher their level of materialism. Viewers' attraction to his or her favorite character led to higher materialistic tendencies. Considering physical attraction and materialism are both linked by the physicality of both concepts, the key area to discuss is how this resulting relationship is evident throughout media and culture. If the attraction a viewer feels to his or her favorite character leads to a higher level of materialism, this supports the claim that one's favorite media character, whether on purpose or not, is contributing to viewers feeling as if they have to live up to the image that is portrayed. This supports the three-part relationship Marshall (1997) discussed between the media, the public, and the celebrity (Marshall, 1997). All three entities influence each other, and this study's results indicate that there is definitely overlap between PSRs, attractiveness and materialism. The role that celebrity culture plays in this relationship is important because what is shown on TV is a reflection of the broader culture in which we live. Through these images, a distorted, and likely damaging, sense of self-worth is formed, resulting in a misplacement of values.

Attractiveness and Envy

Sometimes this focus on attraction can result in other damaging traits that have more of an emotional and internal focus. Envy, is more likely than materialism to manifest itself in emotional pain (Smith et al., 1999). Therefore, given the theoretical foundation for both envy and

attractiveness, an interesting outcome occurred in the relationship between attractiveness and envy that leads to other ways of looking at the relationship.

Surprisingly, attractiveness' relationship to envy was found to be not significant. In other words, the physical and social attraction toward one's favorite media character did not lead to envy. One reason for this could be that through social attractiveness, viewers experience an interpersonal connection with the character that possibly led to a feeling of empathy. The more two people willingly interact and converse, the more they are socially attracted to one another (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). As social attraction grows, it is likely the two people will become more comfortable with one another. After a certain level of comfort is reached, it is questionable that envy-inducing feelings, such as ill will and inferiority, will arise (Rawls, 1971). Viewers are attracted to the character, and at times feel inferior, but maybe the negative feelings that accompany envy do not surface because of the strong affinity he or she has for the character. Another explanation for participants' attraction to his or her favorite character not leading to envy could be that the physical attraction is seen as unattainable, or even impossible, for the participants themselves to achieve. The fascination with the unattainability could place the media character in a role of mentor or idol. Thus, instead of succumbing to the spiteful feelings of envy, they experience more wishful identification, the desire of a viewer to aspire or imitate the media character (Felitizen & Linne, 1975). In this instance, the viewer's strong admiration for the character could easily cause other harmful self-esteem issues.

An alternative explanation for attraction not leading to envy could be that the majority of participants have an envious disposition, and it was not specifically elicited in this state-based situation. The argument can be made that if someone has an envious nature, he or she constantly displays some level of envy. Just because the relationship between attractiveness and envy was

not statistically supported does not mean that the sample did not display any envy at all (See

Table 1). After all, the relationship between PSR and envy was highly significant. Maybe the

results involving attractiveness and envy indicate that maybe one person or thing is not enough

to elicit envy, and it is a continuing trait that one's PSR facilitates.

PSR and Envy

The link between PSR and envy showed to be a stronger and more significant one than

the relationship PSR has to materialism. Envy is a dominantly negative emotion with negative

consequences to one's perception of themselves and others (Smith et. al., 1983). According to

the results, the stronger one's PSR the more envious one is. The more one is invested in his or

her PSR, the more they are likely to have tendencies of envy. Arguably, individuals' PSRs

provide a perceived closeness and familiarity that surface level attraction may lack. According to

McCroskey and McCain (1974), social attractiveness is based on how conducive the media

character's habits, personality, and temperament appeal to the viewer. This form of attractiveness

includes interpersonal communication and social connections that further one's relationship.

Considering that PSRs led to materialism and envy and attractiveness only led to materialism, it

is possible that the physical aspect of attractiveness is what participants focused on. The items

that assessed the strength of participants' PSRs were more indicative of social attraction and

intimacy as opposed to physical characteristics. In this instance, it seems as if the main

difference between PSR and attractiveness that explains the differing relationships with envy lies

in the relational depth of the variable.

If, in fact, social attraction is the main basis for a PSR in this study, one is led to believe

that it is the actual personality of an individual's favorite character that leads to the positive

relationship between PSR and envy. In other words, across plots and the character's choices and

relationships, viewers are filled with envy. Through the feelings of dissatisfaction, spite, and inferiority, the character imposes harmful thoughts on to the viewer. This could cause the character to become a part of the viewer's life in a larger yet damaging way. Upward social comparison plays a major part in this relationship because viewers are comparing themselves to their favorite character that they view as being superior to them (Fiske, 2010). There are two major discrepancies within this idea. First, is the fact that there is a quality about the character that makes the viewer feel that he or she is lacking and is therefore inferior. That manifestation does not provide the best foundation for the viewer's emotional health. Secondly, by the viewer placing his or her favorite character superior to him or herself, it presents an unhealthy relationship. By placing another individual, especially a fictional character, above oneself strengthens the feeling of inferiority, thus increasing feelings of envy. Through dissatisfaction with oneself, envy surfaces within fictional relationships just as it does within real ones.

PSR and Materialism

Materialism is also a result of people's lack of satisfaction with their own life. Through the examination, it was found that PSRs have a positive relationship with materialism. PSRs' positive significant relationship with materialism supports the notion that people tend to be enthralled by the possessions and materials that their favorite characters possess. The results coincide with the idea that viewers, to some extent, have a desire to attain a certain image, and people tend to display some level of materialism when viewing media characters that possess luxurious materials. The basis for this assumption was the importance that both concepts place on attractiveness. In other words, it is likely one of the reasons an individual is attracted to a certain character is because of his or her clothing and material possessions. However, based on past literature, we know that the rationale does not stop there. Materialism is a pursuit for

happiness through acquisition of goods (Richins &Dawson, 1992). Materialists have been depicted as finding happiness through possessions, as opposed to relationships and other life successes. Additionally, materialism has been looked at as a result of one's upbringing. The people that are responsible for fostering an individual's sense of worth, such as family, friends, and other social networks, can easily influence the individual in a negative way, possibly leading to materialistic habits. This study places that argument within the context of PSRs. A strong PSR leads to materialism; therefore, since a PSR is a part of the viewer's larger social circle, the fictional relationship is capable of influencing one's perception of their own self-worth and in turn shaping his or her materialistic habits. On the other end of the model, higher levels of materialism led to lower life satisfaction. Though the full relational connection between PSRs and life satisfaction was not statistically supported, information found in this study regarding the extent of PSRs as well as their consequences is useful moving forward.

Materialism and Life Satisfaction

The strong and significant negative relationship between materialism and life satisfaction indicates that the more materialistic a person is the less satisfied they are with his or her own life. The first inference one may draw from this result is the importance of relationships in both materialism and life satisfaction. Materialism is based on an individual's close ties nurturing a sense of self within them from early on in life. With life satisfaction, one's relationships are a major piece within the concept itself. Life satisfaction is based on what one perceives as the adequate standard (Diener et al., 1985). Well, those in an individual's close social circles are the ones who begin to form what that person's standard is. As shown through results, what close social circles instill in someone from a young age is reflected though other aspects of life, causing a negative view on others, themselves, and the world around them.

Kasser (2002) noted that people who tend to value material possessions have less self-esteem and self-worth. The satisfaction an individual receives from materials acts as a replacement for other areas of their life that may be lacking. This idea can also relate back to what Reeves, Baker, and Truluck (2012) say about the link between materialism and the empty self-theory. Through the practice of celebrity worship, the authors note that increased independence and self-sufficiency of society has caused a decrease in self-esteem (Reeves et al., 2012). The results of this study partially support that claim by linking attraction to one's favorite character to materialism and on the other end of the model, linking materialism to lowered satisfaction of life. Though the direct connection to PSR cannot be made due to the lack of relationship between PSR and life satisfaction, there is valid importance to the connections made on both ends of the model that do contribute to the future media studies

Envy and Life Satisfaction

Specifically, the relationship between envy and life satisfaction supports the findings that envy's negative effects on one's self-perception carry through into his or her overall outlook on life. The dissatisfaction with ones life increases as envy increases. Since envy involves a feeling of insufficiency, it is likely that those feelings carry over and are reflected in an individual's view of his or her own life (Cohen-Charash, 2009). One may also infer, given the fact that attractiveness and envy were not connected, that envy and life satisfaction's relationship is significant due to the consistent pervasiveness of the trait itself. Perhaps dispositional envy dominated, and this consequentially caused a significant negative relationship with life satisfaction. This supports the point that envy, whether state-based or dispositional, is harmful to individuals' perception of themselves, as well as how they view others. Since the traits of envy and materialism were shown to have meaningful relationships with both PSR and life

satisfaction, there are inferences to be made as to why the two ends of PSR and life satisfaction were not statistically connected.

PSR and Life Satisfaction

Though parts of the model connected, the overarching link between PSRs and life satisfaction failed to relate. This result presents a number of ideas or justifications. Since life satisfaction encompasses a broad range of components, such as how people view their relationships, their life, and the cultural world around them (Dyrenforth et al., 2010; Kuppens et al, 2008), perhaps a variable that focused more on one's own sense of self would be more informative, as well as being a better conceptual fit with the other variables in the model. Considering the age of the participants, it is likely that the maturity needed to assess one's own life satisfaction is not ideal for undergraduate students. Given the results, I am led to think that all of the variables assessed the participants on a rather personal and distinct level, except the life satisfaction variable. Upon analysis, life satisfaction stood out as a global concept and as a concept that may not have been the most fitting for the stage in life of the sample. Nevertheless, given the past research that links PSR to qualities such as neuroticism and loneliness, this study's results indicate that it is possible to have a PSR that may cause unhealthy habits, but the consequences of those unhealthy traits may not be a direct link back to the PSR. Perhaps this is because PSRs are not strong enough to elicit a change in overall life satisfaction.

Another explanation for the unlinked relationship is that a large part of what life satisfaction is depends on one's relationship satisfaction (Dyrenforth et al., 2010). It could be true that one's PSR causes negative traits such as envy and materialism and for those traits to cause a decrease in life satisfaction, but that does not mean that the relationship is not satisfying to them. It is possible for a relationship to appear gratifying, yet unhealthy at the same time.

According to Dyrenforth (2010), some of the main factors that make up relationship satisfaction include emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. That doesn't mean a good relationship cannot lead to unhealthy acts, but the impact of these negative emotions on the grand scale of one's life satisfaction may not relate back to their relationships. Even though relationship satisfaction is a main part of life satisfaction, perhaps it is not as dominant when involving fictional relationships.

Given the theoretical background of all the concepts presented in the model, this study's findings coincide with the major links made in the past. Additionally, the results present findings that are unique and worthy of future study. This study gives way for more research into personal effects of PSRs with media characters in a continuously emerging field of media research.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One of the major limitations of this study is the gender skew within the sample. The small portion of males in the sample makes it hard to generalize to both genders. Due to its focus on physical appearances, possessions, and the dynamics of relationships, the nature of this study is geared toward females. Future studies similar to this should take that into consideration and perhaps focus solely on females. There are likely many nuances to be examined in this area within a sample of only females. This can include the types of characters women see as their favorite, as well as the gender of these characters. Likewise, how much of their favoritism is based on the physical appearance of the character and how this is a result or a cause of body image issues among women. Overall, studying female's PSRs in relation to materialism, envy, and life satisfaction can give information that is relative to studies about women's issues of self-perception and how the current celebrity culture influences it.

Additionally, the sample of participants used is not generalizable to a broader population, but given the focus and type of characteristics examined, I felt the typical age range of undergraduate students was appropriate. However, after examination I realized that including older people into my sample or even studying older adults specifically might have changed my results in a positive way. Since many consider college the prelude to the actual real world, life satisfaction may be a loaded concept for undergraduates to accurately assess. Once an individual has left college, he or she enters, what some may consider, real life. They are faced with challenges that are unlike the problems they faced in college. Therefore, how satisfied he or she is with their own life, may not have been an accurate concept for college students considering the placement of college in one's life maturation. Though the study is not able to be generalizable, it still contributes to the body of media effects knowledge. In the future, especially when studying PSRs and causalities of varying levels of life satisfaction, I recommend using a sample with a broader age range. An older audience may provide better knowledge in this area because they are likely more emotionally and intellectually developed. This allows them to better evaluate their own life and in turn express feelings about it.

Another possible reason for the non-significant relationship between PSR and life satisfaction is the use of the life satisfaction variable itself. For future studies such as this one that choose to use college students as participants, I recommend looking at self-esteem in addition to life satisfaction. Even though one's life satisfaction can be seen as both a result and a cause of one's self-esteem, it may result in better knowledge of the connections. Self-esteem provides a more personal examination of an individual's outlook on him or herself, opposed to life satisfaction, which takes into account a number of components when asking about one's overall life. Despite their overlap, self-esteem may be the intimate measure needed to target the

relationship between PSR and the negative effects on one's life caused by the consequences of materialism and envy.

Another variable that was not analyzed in this study, but could have very easily affected the results, is the differing economic status of the participants. Though it is commonly assumed and stereotyped that the life of an undergraduate college student is rather poor, it is likely that the income of some the participants differed from that of an average college student. Given that the survey examined one's level of materialism, it is possible that an individual who is more financially burdened will be less or more materialistic than someone who does not have as many bills to pay. As Kasser (2002) pointed out, lack of money does not mean one is necessarily less materialistic than one with more money. Vastly differing incomes change the way participants view and answer the questions because what he or she is attracted to may be more realistically attainable to one than the other. Therefore, because it is highly unlikely that all of the participants have the same level of income, and since the survey did not assess the differing levels of income, it is valid for this to be included as a limitation. Future research concerning individuals' levels of materialism should include at least one item regarding their financial situation. This will allow for a better description of the sample as well as provide more information about the materialism displayed.

Perhaps the biggest possible limitation is that one person's "favorite character" may not achieve the same level of admiration as another's. One person may watch his or her favorite character repeatedly, thus gaining more insight into the persona of the character. Another person may tune into the character only once a week. The varying levels of fandom, liking, and repeated exposure were not taken into consideration in this study. Fandom, although not a necessity for one to develop a strong PSR, is an interesting concept to study in relation to PSRs and its

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behavioral consequences. Additionally, fandom could give insight into the extremes people go to in order make contact with their favorite characters, thus effecting one's life satisfaction. By not taking fandom into consideration, it is easy to discount a possible higher level of affinity that an individual may have for his or her favorite character.

It is possible for future research to include items that measure one's level of exposure and liking. This will allow researchers to examine the varying levels of exposure in relation to the strength of the PSR. The issue of exposure also relates to participants' exposure to celebrity news. This could have affected the results because one may have more knowledge of who the character is outside of the show than others, thus affecting the extent of the PSR. Future studies within the context of celebrity culture and PSRs should evaluate participants' knowledge of this culture and more importantly, if they purposefully consume it and how they consume it. Also, it would be beneficial for future research to ask more media habit questions. This will give insight to the varying degrees of one's fandom and liking, thus telling more about an individual's PSR.

Genre of TV or film could also play a part in the different consequences of a PSR. Certain genres don't emphasize the materialistic aspects as much as others. Since the survey asked participants to state the name of their favorite character, I know the characters come from a variety of genres. It is easy to assume that if one's favorite character is Blair Waldorf from *Gossip Girl* that he or she will have more exposure to elaborate material possessions than if their favorite character was Christina Yang from *Grey's Anatomy*. This could also influence the level of envy displayed and also the different reasons it exists. Especially if a character from *Gossip Girl* is compared to a character from *2 Broke Girls*, a show where the whole premise lies within the fact that the two main characters are poor. The environment that characters are portrayed in and the situations they are put in determines a lot of how the viewer perceives him or her. So,

genre more than likely played a part in one's traits of materialism and envy toward his or her favorite character. Future research could also do a similar study that takes into account specific genres and how certain ones relate with the other variables presented in this study.

Conclusion

Through the analysis, this study supports PSRs positive connection to materialism and envy, as well linking tendencies of materialism and envy to lower life satisfaction. Additionally, this study lends support to the relationship between attractiveness and materialism, while leaving room for further PSR research in the area of envy and attractiveness. Specifically, these findings prompt future media effects studies to research the connection between people's PSRs and their overall emotional well-being.

Presently, media is what people seek to be informed and entertained. In that process, individuals gain a cultural perspective, and in turn, how one views culture influences how they view themselves. One may argue it has always been this way, but one thing is for certain, the access to media content has never before been as easy, open, or widespread. The more ways people are able to view their favorite characters the more likely it is that their exposure will increase. More importantly, it intensifies the image of the character in the viewer's life. Media characters, through whichever means they are shown, will continue to be a reflection of who we are and who we want to be. However, who we should be – that is up to us.

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APPENDIX

Part I: Behavioral Variables

Please answer the following questions.

1. I wouldn't be any happier if I could afford to buy more things. (Materialism)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

2. It somehow doesn't seem fair that some people seem to have all the talent. (Envy)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

3. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions. (Materialism)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

4. No matter what I do, envy always plagues me. (Envy)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

5. I have all the things I really need to enjoy life. (Materialism)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

6. In most ways, my life is close to ideal. (Life Satisfaction)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

7. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned. (Materialism)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

8. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have. (Materialism)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

9. I feel envy everyday. (Envy)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

10. It bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things that I like. (Materialism)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

11. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing. (Life Satisfaction)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree

5 – Somewhat agree
6 – Agree
7 – Strongly agree

12. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes. (Materialism)
       1 – Strongly disagree
       2 – Disagree
       3 – Somewhat disagree
       4 – Neither agree or disagree
       5 – Somewhat agree
       6 – Agree
       7 – Strongly agree

13. The bitter truth is that I generally feel inferior to others. (Envy)
       1 – Strongly disagree
       2 – Disagree
       3 – Somewhat disagree
       4 – Neither agree or disagree
       5 – Somewhat agree
       6 – Agree
       7 – Strongly agree

14. I like to own things that impress people. (Materialism)
       1 – Strongly disagree
       2 – Disagree
       3 – Somewhat disagree
       4 – Neither agree or disagree
       5 – Somewhat agree
       6 – Agree
       7 – Strongly agree

15. So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life. (Life Satisfaction)
       1 – Strongly disagree
       2 – Disagree
       3 – Somewhat disagree
       4 – Neither agree or disagree
       5 – Somewhat agree
       6 – Agree
       7 – Strongly agree

16. I don't pay much attention to the material objects other people own. (Materialism)
       1 – Strongly disagree
       2 – Disagree
       3 – Somewhat disagree
       4 – Neither agree or disagree
       5 – Somewhat agree
       6 – Agree
       7 – Strongly agree

17. It's so frustrating that some people succeed so easily. (Envy)
       1 – Strongly disagree

2 – Disagree
3 – Somewhat disagree
4 – Neither agree or disagree
5 – Somewhat agree
6 – Agree
7 – Strongly agree

18. I like a lot of luxury in my life. (Materialism)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

19. I usually buy only the things that I need. (Materialism)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

20. Feelings of envy constantly torment me. (Envy)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

21. I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know. (Materialism)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

22. I am satisfied with my life. (Life Satisfaction)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

23. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure. (Materialism)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

24. I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects a person owns as a sign of success. (Materialism)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

25. Frankly, the success of my neighbors makes me resent them. (Envy)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

26. The things I own are all-important to me. (Materialism)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

27. The conditions of my life are excellent. (Life Satisfaction)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

28. The things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life. (Materialism)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree

4 – Neither agree or disagree
5 – Somewhat agree
6 – Agree
7 – Strongly agree

29. I am troubled with feelings of inadequacy. (Envy)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

30. I enjoy spending money on things that aren't practical. (Materialism)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

Please state the name of your favorite fictional (not reality) TV character in the space below. This does not include game, reality, or reality-based competition shows. Please keep this character in mind when answering the following questions.

Part II: Relationship with Media Figure and Measure of Attractiveness

To answer the following questions, please think of your favorite fictional (not realistic) character from a television show. This does not include game, reality, or reality-based competition shows.

31. I would be happy to meet my favorite media character in person. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

32. I don't like the way he or she looks. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

33. My favorite character makes me feel inadequate because I own fewer things by comparison. (Materialism)
 1 – Strongly disagree
 2 – Disagree
 3 – Somewhat disagree
 4 – Neither agree or disagree
 5 – Somewhat agree
 6 – Agree
 7 – Strongly agree

34. I feel good when I turn to my favorite media character for advice. (PSI)
 1 – Strongly disagree
 2 – Disagree
 3 – Somewhat disagree
 4 – Neither agree or disagree
 5 – Somewhat agree
 6 – Agree
 7 – Strongly agree

35. I have an intimate connection with my favorite media character. (PSI)
 1 – Strongly disagree
 2 – Disagree
 3 – Somewhat disagree
 4 – Neither agree or disagree
 5 – Somewhat agree
 6 – Agree
 7 – Strongly agree

36. He or she would not fit into my circle of friends. (Attractiveness)
 1 – Strongly disagree
 2 – Disagree
 3 – Somewhat disagree
 4 – Neither agree or disagree
 5 – Somewhat agree
 6 – Agree
 7 – Strongly agree

37. When I am not watching my favorite media character on television, I seek information about my favorite character. (PSI)
 1 – Strongly disagree
 2 – Disagree
 3 – Somewhat disagree
 4 – Neither agree or disagree
 5 – Somewhat agree
 6 – Agree
 7 – Strongly agree

38. I think he or she would be a good friend of mine. (Attractiveness)
 1 – Strongly disagree
 2 – Disagree

     3 – Somewhat disagree
     4 – Neither agree or disagree
     5 – Somewhat agree
     6 – Agree
     7 – Strongly agree

39. I find him or her very attractive (physically). (Attractiveness)
     1 – Strongly disagree
     2 – Disagree
     3 – Somewhat disagree
     4 – Neither agree or disagree
     5 – Somewhat agree
     6 – Agree
     7 – Strongly agree

40. I seek guidance from my favorite media personality or character. (PSI)
     1 – Strongly disagree
     2 – Disagree
     3 – Somewhat disagree
     4 – Neither agree or disagree
     5 – Somewhat agree
     6 – Agree
     7 – Strongly agree

41. We could never establish a personal friendship with each other. (Attractiveness)
     1 – Strongly disagree
     2 – Disagree
     3 – Somewhat disagree
     4 – Neither agree or disagree
     5 – Somewhat agree
     6 – Agree
     7 – Strongly agree

42. If I saw my favorite media character on the streets, I would talk to him or her. (PSI)
     1 – Strongly disagree
     2 – Disagree
     3 – Somewhat disagree
     4 – Neither agree or disagree
     5 – Somewhat agree
     6 – Agree
     7 – Strongly agree

43. I feel I know him or her personally. (Attractiveness)
     1 – Strongly disagree
     2 – Disagree
     3 – Somewhat disagree
     4 – Neither agree or disagree
     5 – Somewhat agree
     6 – Agree
     7 – Strongly agree

44. I would be comfortable with my favorite media character if we met in person. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

45. I think my favorite media character is handsome or pretty. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

46. I sometimes wish I were more like him or her. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

47. I have a good understanding of my favorite character. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

48. He or she is not very good looking. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

49. If given the opportunity, I would contact my favorite media personality or character. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree

6 – Agree

7 – Strongly agree

50. I admire my favorite character because his or her life seems luxurious. (Materialism)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

51. He or she wears neat clothes. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

52. I use advice that I learn from my favorite media character. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

53. It would be difficult to meet and talk to him or her. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

54. I am comfortable learning from my favorite media character. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

55. My favorite character makes me feel badly about myself because he or she always seems to come out on top, and that doesn't usually happen for me. (Envy)
    1 – Strongly disagree

2 – Disagree
3 – Somewhat disagree
4 – Neither agree or disagree
5 – Somewhat agree
6 – Agree
7 – Strongly agree

56. He or she would be pleasant to be with. (Attractiveness)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

57. I look up to my favorite media character. (PSI)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

58. He or she is personally offensive to me. (Attractiveness)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

59. I treat my favorite media character as a role model. (PSI)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

60. He or she is well groomed. (Attractiveness)
      1 – Strongly disagree
      2 – Disagree
      3 – Somewhat disagree
      4 – Neither agree or disagree
      5 – Somewhat agree
      6 – Agree
      7 – Strongly agree

61. I admire my favorite character because his or her fashion sense is much better than mine. (Envy)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

62. I see my favorite media character as a close friend. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

63. He or she is very sexy looking. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

64. My favorite media character teaches me important lessons. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

65. He or she is repulsive to me. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

66. I am happy turning to my favorite media character. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree

5 – Somewhat agree
6 – Agree
7 – Strongly agree

67. The clothes that he or she wears are not becoming. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

68. When I see my favorite media character, I often feel inferior to him or her. (Envy)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

69. I am familiar with the habits of my favorite media character. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

70. He or she is somewhat ugly. (Attractiveness)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

71. My favorite media character makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends. (PSI)
    1 – Strongly disagree
    2 – Disagree
    3 – Somewhat disagree
    4 – Neither agree or disagree
    5 – Somewhat agree
    6 – Agree
    7 – Strongly agree

72. I wish I could own things similar to my favorite media character so that I can impress people. (Materialism)

1 – Strongly disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Somewhat disagree
4 – Neither agree or disagree
5 – Somewhat agree
6 – Agree
7 – Strongly agree

73. I would like to have a friendly chat with him or her. (Attractiveness)
       1 – Strongly disagree
       2 – Disagree
       3 – Somewhat disagree
       4 – Neither agree or disagree
       5 – Somewhat agree
       6 – Agree
       7 – Strongly agree

74. When I see my favorite media character, I am tormented by feelings of envy. (Envy)
       1 – Strongly disagree
       2 – Disagree
       3 – Somewhat disagree
       4 – Neither agree or disagree
       5 – Somewhat agree
       6 – Agree
       7 – Strongly agree

Part III: Media Use

75. What is your average daily amount of concentrated television viewing (doing nothing but watching TV)? This does not include watching TV shows from your computer, tablet, or mobile device.
       Up to 2 hours
       3-5 hours
       Over 5 hours
       I do not watch television.

76. What is your average daily amount of TV viewing from an online source, mobile device, or tablet?
       Up to 2 hours
       3-5 hours
       Over 5 hours
       I do not watch TV on the above listed devices

77. Do you follow your favorite fictional TV character on Twitter?
       Yes
       No
       I do not have a Twitter account

78. Do you follow the actor/actress that plays your favorite fictional TV character on Twitter?
       Yes
       No
       I do not have a Twitter account

79. Do you use social media for the purposes of being exposed to information about your favorite fictional TV show or character?
>Yes
>No
>I do not have a Twitter account

80. Do you use Twitter for the purposes of being exposed to information about your favorite fictional TV show or character?
>Yes
>No
>I do not have a Twitter account

81. Do you attempt to make contact with your favorite fictional TV character on Twitter?
>Yes
>No
>I do not have a Twitter account

82. Do you attempt to make contact with the actor/actress that plays your favorite fictional TV character on Twitter?
>Yes
>No
>I do not have a Twitter account

83. Do you use online sources such as blogs and discussion boards to seek additional information about your favorite fictional TV character?
>Yes
>No

84. How many days a week do you seek celebrity news, including television (ex: E! News, TMZ), print (magazines), online (Perez Hilton, TMZ) and radio?
>0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Part IV: Demographic Information

85. What is your gender?
>Male/Female

86. What is your age?

87. What is your ethnicity?
>White/Caucasian, African American, Asian American, Native American, Hispanic/ Latino, Middle Eastern, Other_____

88. What is your year of study?
>Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior

89. Please enter your MEL I.D. number.

VITA

Kristen Higdon is from Destrehan Louisiana. She attended St. Mary's Dominican High School in New Orleans. Her undergraduate degree is in political communications with a minor in political science from Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication. Shortly after, she returned to Manship in hopes to receive her master's degree. After graduation, Kristen plans to pursue a career in strategic communications.