Perceptions of nonconforming sexualities and genders on television talk shows

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PERCEPTIONS OF NONCONFORMING SEXUALITIES AND GENDERS ON TELEVISION TALK SHOWS

by

Violeta Oliver

Bachelor of Arts
The University of Toledo
1998

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Nonconforming Sexualities and Genders on Television Talk Shows

by

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GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer/Questioning) people often appear as guests on daytime television talk shows. Using cultivation analysis, the author explored television talk show viewers’ perceived realism of television talk shows and GLBTQ people. This quantitative study tested seven hypotheses. Support was found for the first two hypotheses, indicating that heavy viewers of television talk shows perceived television talk shows to be more realistic or true to life than light viewers. Support was not found for the other hypotheses. There was no significance difference between heavy and light viewers of television talk shows and their perception of the GLBTQ community. There was no significant difference between heavy and light viewers of television in general and their perceptions of the GLBTQ community.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview and Definition of Terms</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of Television Talk Shows</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of “Trash TV”</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief History: Daytime Television Talk Shows</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behind the Scenes</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why We Watch</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ Guests and Daytime Television Talk Shows</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk Show Viewing Effects</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivation Analysis</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Previous Research</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III METHOD</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Hypotheses</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV RESULTS</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item Reliability Analysis</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Variables</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests of Research Hypotheses</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Analysis</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V DISCUSSION</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths of Current Study</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX I SURVEY</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Daytime talk shows ... have become the stormtroopers of the right. Both the talk shows and the right wing erase the line between anecdotal and factual. Both focus attention on the individual, aberrant behavior of a small number of citizens and declare them representative of a group.

--Jill Nelson, Author of "Talk is Cheap," Nation 5 June 1995

Different voices have criticized daytime television talk shows. Critics often use the terms, "trash TV," "tabloid TV" (Keller), "freak shows" (Gamson Freaks), "shock talk" (Vatz and Weinberg), "daytime dysfunction" (Kurtz), "sleaze TV" (Tavener), and "sicko circuses" (Berkman) interchangeably when referring to these shows. These critics include journalists (Collins; Goodman; Grenier; Heath; Herbert; and Pfleger), scholars (Abt and Mustazza; Heaton; Keller; Kurtz; and Nelson and Robinson), parents (Glod), educators (Glod), and politicians (Bennet; Saltzman; Welles). Much of the criticism is aimed at the subject matter of the programs (Greenberg, Sherry, Busselle, Rampoldi-Hnilo and Smith 412). For example, the "dominance of sexual themes and [ . . . ] the open discussion of sexual practices, orientations and deviance...," is mentioned by media scholars (Greenberg, Sherry, Busselle, Rampoldi-Hnilo and Smith 412). Daytime talk shows with such subject matter often feature sex and gender outsiders as guests. The
The portrayal of many of these guests has also been attacked by critics (Gamson “Do Ask”; Meers).

Sex and gender outsiders are “people who live, in one way or another, outside the boundaries of heterosexual norms and gender conventions” (Gamson Freaks 5). These include, but are not limited to gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals (Gamson Freaks 5). The following terms have previously been used interchangeably to address this community: sex and gender outsiders (Gamson “Do Ask”); nonconforming sex and gender identities (Gamson “Publicity”); nonconforming genders and sexualities (Gamson “Publicity”); sex and gender nonconformists (Gamson “Publicity”); sex and gender deviants (Nelson and Robinson); and GLBTQ (MacGillivray and Kozik-Rosabal). For the purposes of this study, the term GLBTQ will be used when discussing sex and gender outsiders. GLBTQ stands for “gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer/questioning” (MacGillivray and Kozik-Rosabal par. 1).

The public visibility of GLBTQ people on talk shows, and the negative and positive effects of this visibility on both the guests and the audience, have been addressed in several studies (Gamson Freaks, “Do Ask” “Publicity”). However, viewers’ perceptions of the portrayal of GLBTQ people as guests on talk shows, and the implications these perceptions may have on these GLBTQ community deserves further study.

Significance of the Study

Daytime television talk shows have enjoyed high ratings and an audience of millions. In 1994, Ricki Lake was “being seen on 212 stations” across the nation (Shattuc...
In 1998, The Jerry Springer Show was the number one syndicated talk show program in the U.S. (Grenier 118). In May of 1999, Sally Jessy Raphael claimed to have four and a half million viewers, and Jerry Springer claimed to have more than six million (Vatz and Weinberg par. 14). These shows were so popular that “by 1995, many TV markets were running as many as fifteen ‘issue-oriented’ shows on any given day” (Shattuc 149). The Nielsen syndicated program ratings for April 1998 revealed that The Jerry Springer Show, Oprah, Montel Williams, and The Jenny Jones Show were in the top twenty of most watched television programs (Littleton 169). In more recent ratings, The Jerry Springer Show and Maury Povich have been among the top twenty shows in syndication for the week of July 24, 2000 (“Syndication” 33). However, ratings for all the tabloid daytime talk shows have generally been declining over the years. These programs have “lost 5.6 million homes since the 1998-99 season” (Purs par. 1).

Heath’s article, “Tuning in to Talk,” discusses the results of the 1997 Simmons Survey of Media and Markets. The results state:

Daytime talk audiences are 58 percent female, and almost half are aged 45 years or older. Blacks, those with household income less than $30,000, and adults who are not employed are more likely than average to be daytime talk viewers. More than six in ten viewers have less than one year of college, 45 percent are not employed, and 9 percent are employed part-time. (par. 25)

According to Frank N. Magid Associates Inc.’s research results, published in Tobenkin’s 1998 article “Why We Like to Watch Talk TV,”

Viewership of daytime talk shows is disproportionately black, young, low income, the research found. A total of 50% of respondents 18-24 said they
sometimes watched television from 10:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. The second-largest concentration of viewers was among older viewers, 55-64, 41% of whom answered the question in affirmative. That compared with 33% for those 25-34, 34% for those 35-44 and 32% for those 45-54. (33)

According to Henry Krajewski, the National Sales Representative for Fox 5, KVVU Las Vegas, local television talk shows are broken down into two parts, the day and the evening. The day-time talk shows includes early morning to 4:00 p.m. and the evening talk shows includes 4:00 p.m. to late evening. Viewers of the Jenny Jones Show consist of 18-24 year olds for the day-time and 25-49 year olds for the evening. The Jerry Springer Show is viewed by 18-24 year olds during the day, and 18-49 year olds in the evening. Ricki Lake is viewed by is 18-24 year olds during the day and 18-34 year olds in the evening. Viewers of the Montel Williams consist of 18-49 year olds during the day and 25-54 year olds in the evening. Maury Povich and Sally Jesse Raphael are geared toward an older audience. During the day, viewers of both programs consist of 24-49 year olds and 25-54 year olds for evening viewing.

A large percentage of topics on talk shows are based on GLBTQ people (Gamson Freaks 20). Incidentally, talk show topics are the leading factor driving weekday daytime talk show viewership (Tobenkin 33). According to a recent study, sexual orientation has been the topic for about 12 percent of talk shows in the 1994-95 season (Greenberg, Sherry, Busselle, Rampoldi-Hnilo, and Smith), and in the 1995-96 season (Greenberg, Sherry, Rampoldi-Hnilo, and Smith). Talk show topics include: “a woman who sold her baby to a homosexual couple; interracial homosexuality; a husband who admits he is gay” (Greenberg, Sherry, Rampoldi-Hnilo, and Smith 8); “sexaholic gay man”; and
"lesbians in need of make-overs" (Meers 48). Titles that involve GLBTQ people include: "Bisexual Confrontations," "Drag Queens," "Cross Dressing," "What is it Like to Pass as a Different Sex," "My Girlfriend is a Guy," (Vatz and Weinberg par. 2), "I’m Having a Bisexual Affair," (Chidley 69), "My Daughter is Living as a Boy," (Shattuc 146), "Secret Gay Affairs" (The Jerry Springer Show 1 Sept. 2000), and "Listen, Family, I’m Gay...It’s Not a Phase...Get Over It” (Shattuc 156).

**Purpose of the Study**

Gamson’s article, “Publicity Traps: Television Talk Shows and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Visibility,” studied the portrayal of GLBTQ people on television talk shows. He found that among GLBTQ individuals, “class division exists between those who seek queer difference and those who seek acceptable sameness” (17). Queer difference refers to those guests who are “loud-mouthed, freakish, radical, and obnoxious” (17). Acceptable sameness refers to those middle-class gay activists who are trying to show that GLBTQ people are “regular, civilized, and unthreatening people” (17). Mainstreaming activists, or those who seek acceptable sameness, are concerned that talk shows provide a distorted image of gay life (19). Gamson concludes that talk shows encourage viewers to separate ‘bad’ sexualities from ‘good’ ones (23).

There are several different views on the public visibility of sex and gender deviant guests on talk television. Brad Lamm, a gay guest on the Ricki Lake Show, said “the show played on stereotypes and created an atmosphere that was so anti-gay” (Meers 48). Neal Gabler, a cultural critic, argues that “sex and gender outsiders arguably reinforce perceptions of themselves as freaks by entering a discourse in which they may be
portrayed as bizarre, outrageous, flamboyant curiosities” (Gamson “Do Ask” 82).

William Waybourne, managing director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, says “In this culture, anytime you deal with stereotypes, we lose. The gay community does not have a reservoir of goodwill and positive images upon which to draw. People who see these images having nothing to balance them against” (Meers 49). On the other hand, Gamson believes that the public voice given to GLBTQ people opens opportunities for them formerly denied (“Do Ask” 83).

According to scholarly literature, there are many stereotypes that plague members of the sex and gender deviant community. Spalding and Peplau, utilizing heterosexual undergraduate students responding to a relationship analysis, discovered that many bisexual stereotypes still remain strong. The results indicated that bisexuals are perceived as “rejecting sexual monogamy,” in other words, they are seen as being promiscuous (618). Bisexuals were also “associated with greater sexual riskiness than heterosexuals,” or more likely to transmit STD’s (618). Partners of “bisexuals were seen as more sexually satisfied than partners of heterosexuals” (619). Keller and Glass state that “homophobic rhetoric depicts homosexuals, particularly gay men, as predatory creatures so desperate for physical contact that they will prey on any male who comes within reach” (142). Cruikshank states that ten to fifteen percent of our population consists of gays and lesbians. She explains that gays and lesbians are stereotyped as untrustworthy with children, perverted, sick, promiscuous and strictly being seen as “only sexual beings” (54). Cruikshank adds that gay men are often blamed for AIDS, and some individuals perceive them as “insatiable, sexual predators” (168).
Kate Bornstein, a transsexual and author of *Gender Outlaw*, also addresses some misconceptions of transgendered people. She writes that some individuals believe transgendered people are mentally ill, therefore certain transgendered people like transsexuals can be cured (62). In addition, she states that cross-dressers are often believed to be “both gay and prostitutes,” however most cross-dressers tend to have “mainstream jobs, careers, or professions, are married, and are practicing heterosexuals” (37). A study conducted by Docter and Prince supports the claim that most cross-dressers are heterosexual. Bornstein also explains that it is false to assume that most sexual reassignment surgeries consist mainly of anatomical males who want to become anatomically female. Instead, sex reassignment surgery is done equally as often on men as it is on women (16).

There are many different perceptions of GLBTQ people represented on talk shows. Studies have demonstrated that some stereotypes remain strong regarding certain GLBTQ members. However, a study assessing these claims, that the appearances of GLBTQ guests promote stereotypes does not exist. Stereotypes are “pictures in the head that shape perception of reality . . . and aid individuals in recognizing members of various social groups” (Ashmore and DelBoca qtd. in Workman and Freeburg par.6). In addition, “stereotypes tend to be extreme and negative” (McArthur qtd. in Workman and Freeburg par.6). For the purposes of this study, stereotypes will be defined as one’s belief that the extreme examples of GLBTQ guests on television talk shows are correct depictions of all GLBTQ people. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between talk show viewership and perceptions of GLBTQ people. For the purposes of this study, viewership will be defined as the subject’s estimate of the number of hours
spent watching television talk shows over both a week and a more recent period of time. Perceptions, for the purposes of this study, will be closely aligned to those advanced by George Gerbner et al., which will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2. As a primer, perception will be the covariance between exposure to television content and the adoption of television depictions of GLBTQ people.

Overview and Definition of Terms

More detailed explanations of several terms used thus far are necessary. This section will define daytime television talk shows and GLBTQ people.

Daytime Television Talk Shows

Himmelstein, author of the book, *Television Myth and the American Mind*, examines the television talk show genre. The programs relevant to this study are known as “new talk” (356). These programs are contemporary talk shows labeled as “trash TV” and include, *The Jerry Springer Show*, *Montel Williams*, *The Jenny Jones Show*, *Ricki Lake*, *Maury Povich*, and *Sally Jessy Raphael*. New talk programs have an “active” audience and eschew the sanctity of ‘expert’ opinion” (356). These shows “frequently center on sexuality, forms of personal abuse often involving violence, women’s feelings of insecurity or inadequacy in a male-centric social discourse, and alternative lifestyles considered by many to be taboo” (356). These talk shows consist mainly of:

A panel of guests who share their experiences with a studio audience and the millions of viewers at home; specialists that are often invited to interpret these experiences; a studio audience comments on the stage discussion and shares their
own stories; [...] and a host who preaches and prods all the above mentioned participants.” (356)

These programs, usually an hour in length, air throughout the day and evening hours, but most frequently in “the midmorning, lunchtime, or late afternoon” (356).

Shatucc’s work, *The Talking Cure: TV Shows and Women*, adds one more important element of daytime talk. The author states that daytime television talk shows are:

> Financed and distributed by syndicators and put together by independent producers. The shows are sold to local network affiliates and independent stations to fill the fringe schedule not dominated by network feed. [...] Their independence from networks, high profits, low production costs, and daytime placement allow them a latitude in content that normally would be censored on network television.” (8)

This final element is important because it partially explains how and why highly criticized subject matter appears on these programs. The daytime talk shows included in this study are *The Jerry Springer Show, Montel Williams, The Jenny Jones Show, Ricki Lake, Maury Povich*, and *Sally Jessy Raphael*.

**GLBTQ**

GLBTQ people include gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered, and queer/questioning people. MacGillivray and Kozik-Rosabal’s study, “Sex Discrimination in Education,” devotes a section to defining GLBTQ. The authors state that “GLBTQ or any ordering of these letters is currently the most inclusive term used to refer to
nonheterosexual people in all of their various identities…” (par. 6). For the purposes of this study, each letter of GLBTQ will be defined.

The “G” stands for gay. Even though the term homosexuality includes gay men and lesbian women, homosexuality “is not a preferred term for GLBTQ people because many consider it to be exclusionary and too clinical” (par. 6). Homosexuality refers to “the occurrence or existence of sexual attraction, interest and genitally intimate activity between an individual and other members of the same gender” (Sell par. 11). The term gay refers to gay men. Gay men are individuals who have a sexual, emotional, or physical attraction to other men. Bornstein adds that the “gay male model” consists of “two culturally-defined men involved with each other” (32).

The “L” stands for lesbian. Lesbian refers to “women who are affectionately (emotionally) and sexually attracted to other women” (MacGillivray and Kozik-Rosabal (par. 7). Bornstein adds that the “lesbian model” consists of “two culturally-defined women involved with each other” (33). In short, gays and lesbians have sexual, emotional, and romantic ties to members of the same sex.

The “B” refers to bisexuality. According to MacGillivray and Kozik-Rosabal, “bisexual people identify as being attracted to both sexes. Rarely is the attraction equal; rather, it varies depending on the specific circumstances” (par. 7). According to Frann Michel,

Bisexuality is the capacity or experience of feeling attraction to people of more than one gender, or of engaging in sexual activity with people of more than one gender (whether concurrently or serially), or the identification of oneself according to those feelings or experiences. (536)
Bornstein states that the “bisexual model” consists of “culturally-defined men and women who could be involved with either culturally-defined men or women” (33). Simply put, bisexuals have a physical and emotional attraction to both males and females.

The “T” stands for transgendered. According to MacGillivray and Kozik-Rosabal,

Transgendered is a broad term that has little to do with sexual orientation and more to do with gender identity. It refers to people whose gender identity as a man, woman, or somewhere in between does not correspond with their genetic sex (female or male). (par. 8)

Gagne and Tewksbury argue that “transgender is a term that refers to a spectrum of individuals who express gender in ways that deviate from the gender binary, and includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, and others” (par. 2). There are various identities associated with the term transgendered. A few of these include post-operative transsexuals, pre-operative transsexuals, transgenders, drag queens, out transvestites, and closet cases. Bornstein defines these terms.

Bornstein states that post-operative transsexuals are “those who’ve had genital surgery and live fully in the role of another gender” (67). Pre-operative transsexuals are “those who are living full or part-time in another gender, but who’ve not yet had their genital surgery” (67). Transgenders are “people living in another gender identity, but who have little or no intention of having genital surgery” (68). Drag queens are “gay men who on occasion dress in varying parodies of women” (68). Out transvestites are “usually heterosexual men who dress as they think women dress, and who are out in the
open about doing that” (68). Finally, closet cases are “transvestites who hide their cross-dressing” (68).

Queer and questioning are included under the “Q” in GLBTQ. According to MacGillivray and Kosik-Rosabal, “questioning refers to those individuals who are not comfortable claiming a sexual orientation identity, be they gay, straight, or somewhere in between” (par. 10). In other words, these individuals are not sure of their sexual orientation or are not ready to be placed in any type of category. The term queer is “being reclaimed by the younger generation of GLBTQ people and is considered to be more inclusive, in that it includes all nonheterosexual people, and it is also considered to be empowering” (par. 10). In addition, “anybody who challenges heterosexist logic and works to deconstruct rigid gender role stereotypes can be queer” (par. 10).

The following chapters will explore in detail the issues addressed thus far. Chapter II will provide a literature review of talk shows: the forms of television talk shows; characteristics of “trash TV”; brief history of daytime television talk shows; what occurs behind the scenes; why people watch; the portrayal of GLBTQ guests on talk shows; audience viewing effects; and cultivation analysis. Chapter III will discuss the methodology that will be employed. Chapter IV will interpret and examine the significance of the results. Finally, the last chapter will contain a discussion of the findings, implications, and what areas need to be addressed in future research.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Television talk shows have been studied and written about in books, scholarly journals, and in popular literature. For the purposes of this study, selected research and literature previously conducted on television talk shows will be grouped into eight categories: (1) forms of television talk shows; (2) characteristics of “trash TV”; (3) brief history of daytime television talk shows; (4) behind the scenes; (5) why people watch; (6) GLBTQ people and daytime talk shows; (7) talk show audience viewing effects, and (8) cultivation analysis.

Forms of Television Talk Shows

The forms of talk shows are explained in Himmelstein’s book, *Television Myth and the American Mind*. Television talk shows “fall into four major categories: News Talk, Entertainment Talk, Simulated Social Event Talk, and Sales Talk” (Timberg qtd. in Himmelstein 342). The majority of daytime television talk shows are categorized under News Talk. This category includes:

- (1) the ‘general interest hard news talk,’ of the expert panel, the magazine format on a single topic, the multiple-topic news magazine, and the one-on-one host/guest interview; (2) ‘general interest soft news talk’ on a single topic, the
Entertainment Talk refers to the “celebrity host/guest interview” (342). Simulated Social Event Talk includes “the academic seminar, the manipulated encounter, the ritualized encounter, and the forensic event” (342). Sales Talk includes “infomercials, the ‘spontaneous talk’ within commercials, and paid political advertising” (342).

All television talk shows have five characteristics in common. Among these are:

1. The host’s centrality and control of the show;
2. The programs’ topicality—talk occurs in the present tense;
3. The host’s private conversations in direct address with ‘millions of viewers as if they were one,’ creating a sense of intimacy;
4. The talk show’s ‘commodity function’ as a vehicle to hold its audience in the programming flow, which includes the advertising that makes the show possible;
5. A ‘conscious structuring and crafting of what seems spontaneous.’ (342)

All of these elements are found in “trash TV” talk shows, and all elements will be addressed throughout this literature review.

Characteristics of “Trash TV”

Keller examines what constitutes trash television. In this essay, the author includes both television talk shows and news magazines. The author argues that there are five characteristics of “trash TV”: content; confusion between news and entertainment; language; music; and re-creations. Keller claims that the content of these programs consists primarily of sex and violence. The second characteristic refers the difficulty for viewers to distinguish between what is news and what is entertainment. The third
characteristic, language, tends to be “sensational,” and it “attempts to tell the viewer how to react emotionally” (201). A few examples cited are the use of terms like “nightmare,” “living hell,” and “brutally murdered,” or talk show titles like “Priestly Passions and Sacred Vows” (201). Music can also control the viewers’ reactions. Music “is worth a thousand emotions, all of which are stimulated by television shows with that purpose rather than striving to evaluate facts in complex situations and issues” (201). Recreations make distinguishing between fact and fiction even more difficult. A viewer can never know if what they are seeing is actually the way it occurred or if it is someone else’s interpretation. For instance, in a news program the viewer is only given the facts and is not seeing what occurred by watching actors.

Brief History: Daytime Television Talk Shows

Daytime television talk shows were influenced by many radio talk shows (Heaton and Wilson; Himmelstein; Keller). Himmelstein addresses some of these influential radio programs. In the 1970’s, several popular radio programs, referred to as “Topless Radio,” aired across the country (356). These shows were geared toward women, with sex as the prime topic. Feminine Forum, hosted by Bill Ballance, was the first of these programs (356). It began on KGBS-AM in Los Angeles in the early 1970’s. Over a year after its premier, Feminine Forum had an estimated 400,000 listeners (357). There were “fifty to sixty stations around the country programming radio talk shows in this format” (357). According to Himmelstein:

The format was characterized by its focus on a single sexual topic each day; callers were not prescreened or pretaped, which would dampen spontaneity; only

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the caller’s first name was revealed in order to protect the caller’s privacy; the hosts were all men while the preponderance of the callers were women; and the target audience was described as ‘wives and mothers in their twenties’.” (357) Many of these elements are visible in contemporary daytime talk shows in that sexual topics are common, spontaneity is a necessity, and that a large portion of viewers are females.

In 1973, this type of radio talk caused so much concern that the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) “passed a resolution condemning ‘tasteless and vulgar’ program content” (357). Shortly after, “sex talk” was dropped by most programs, and Feminine Forum was changed to the Bill Ballew Show (358).

Television talk shows may have their roots in radio, but when it comes to daytime television talk shows, Phil Donahue can be considered to be the founding father. In 1967, Donahue “debuted as a phone-in talk show on WLWD-TV in Dayton, Ohio” (Munson 61). Heaton and Wilson claim that Donahue’s “alternative” talk show “instantly changed” daytime talk (17). He “aired topics that nobody would touch” (24). Donahue “broke new ground and forced an up-close look at homosexuality, transsexuality, emotional insecurities and aberrations of every degree” (Keller 197). Also, his audience and viewers consisted mainly of middle class females. Shattuc refers to Donahue as the “prototype feminine issues daytime talk show” (128). Donahue was also noted for making the audience, in the studio and at home, become active participants of his programs. The show “allowed women the opportunity to voice their opinions about everything from politics to sex, and even the politics of sex” (Heaton and Wilson 18). Donahue remained the top national talk show for eighteen years (Heaton and Wilson 17).
However, he retired in 1998 after his ratings began to decline due to the wave of new television talk shows. Several other talk shows appeared and disappeared during Donahue's run. They all closely followed Donahue's format.

Heaton and Wilson address the emergence of Oprah Winfrey. Winfrey was able to "outrank Donahue in the Chicago market" as the host of AM Chicago (24). Shortly after, the program was renamed the Oprah Winfrey Show, and it went national in 1986. Winfrey did the same topics as Donahue, but she had a "more therapeutic tone" (24). She created a sense of intimacy, a "desire to help," and even discussed "her own problems" (24). By 1987, her program "surpassed Donahue by becoming the first syndicated Talk TV show to be ranked among the top twenty syndicated shows" (26). Oprah has remained among the top daytime talk shows to this day. However, in 1994, when daytime talk shows came under attack, she changed her format and became a critic of the currently labeled "trash TV" shows (Heath par. 28). She stated in a TV Guide interview, "I understand the push for ratings caused programmers to air what is popular, and that is not going to change. I am embarrassed by how far over the line the topics have gone, but I also recognize my contribution to this phenomenon" (Shattuc 154).

Geraldo Riviera's television special, "The Mystery of Al Capone's Vault," led to his own talk show entitled Geraldo! in 1987. He was known for his use of sensationalism and confrontation. He "maintained his 20/20 investigator role, digging up dirt and jumping into the muck" (Heaton and Wilson 44). In one of his most famous episodes entitled, "Teen Hatemongers," Riviera had his nose broken by a chair after a fight broke out with neo-Nazis (Himmelstein 354). Some critics feared that this "sensational brand of journalism will spread like toxic waste" (Keller 198). Geraldo! is no longer airing.
The *Morton Downey Jr. Show* premiered in 1988 and was canceled in 1989 (Shattuc 22). Downey was known for his confrontational, loud mouthed style. He would tell his guests to shut up, and at times he would call them names, such as “bitch” and “punk” (Keller 198). Once, “he wrapped the American flag around his bottom, and told his Iranian guest to kiss it” (Shattuc 22). One major difference between this talk show and the rest was that his viewers consisted mainly of young white men (Shattuc 22). Due to his tactics, national advertisers boycotted the program, which led to its cancellation (Shattuc 22).

Shattuc’s book, *The Talking Cure*, discusses the influence of the *Ricki Lake* show. Ricki Lake, formerly an actress, began hosting her own talk show in 1993. The program attempted to attract a more youthful audience. In order to do so, the format was changed: “Adding more guests made for a faster pace and adding more people of color broadened appeal” (147). In addition, topics were more general and interviews were less in-depth. The program was a huge success in its first year. This success changed talk television: “Old shows became more confrontational, and new ones popped up ‘trying to out-Ricki Ricki’ in pace, number of guests, glitzy graphics, and anything else that bore the *Ricki Lake* signature” (148). Some early talk show programs, such as, *Maury Povich* (1991), *Montel Williams* (1991), *Richard Bey* (cancelled), *Jerry Springer* (1991), *Sally Jessy Raphael* (1987), and *Jenny Jones* (1991) “benefited greatly from Ricki Lake’s example as they changed to a more youthful, energetic program format and increased audience participation” (148). Other “Ricki elements” that are currently seen on these shows include “first-person topics, on-camera guest entrances and exits” (149). An example of a first-person topic is “You Act Like You Don’t Want Me...But I Know That
The Jennv Jones Show gained nationwide attention after a murder of one of its guests. Gamson’s book, *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity*, briefly discusses the Schmitz-Amedure affair (also known as the “Jenny Jones Murder”) that caused television talk shows to be further examined. Jonathan Schmitz and Scott Amedure were guests at a taping of a never-aired Jenny Jones Show in March of 1995. Schmitz was brought to the show expecting to meet a female who had a crush on him. Unknown to him, the show’s topic was same-sex-secret-crushes. Amedure revealed to Schmitz, a heterosexual, that he has a crush on him. After the taping of the show, Schmitz shot and killed Amedure. Schmitz claimed he was pushed over the edge by the humiliation of public suspicion of homosexuality (209). The defense claimed that The Jenny Jones Show and its producers were responsible for the murder (211). This defense caused many people to look at what occurs behind the scenes of these popular talk shows.

Jerry Springer, the former mayor of Cincinatti, began hosting his talk show in 1991. By 1998, The Jerry Springer Show was hugely successful. It was the first show to top Winfrey’s ratings in a decade (Grenier 118). The program even sold “hundreds of thousands” of videos, *Too Hot for TV*, featuring “back-to-back fights, cursing, and nudity censored from the show” (Collins par. 3). The success, some argue, is due to physical fights that often occur among panelists (Collins par. 3). It is very similar in format to the others, but his show has bodyguards and Springer does his “final thought” segment at the end of the program to address the guests and viewers about the day’s topic. However, the
program is arguably the most criticized talk show due to its violent content and “outrageous topics” (Vatz and Weinberg par. 3). For example, in 1998, the Rev. Michael Pfleger “organized a boycott, including 300 churches, synagogues, and mosques to try to pressure Springer into reducing the violence on his show” (Vatz and Weinberg par. 5). In 1999, Studios USA, the owner’s of the program did eventually “eliminate much of the fighting” (Schlosser “Springer Reups” par. 3).

Saltzman, in his article, “Why Ordinary Americans Like Daytime Talk Shows,” discusses the attack on television talk shows by politicians. William Bennett, former Secretary of Education, and Senators Joseph Lieberman and Sam Nunn launched a crusade through the Empower America campaign in 1995 against the “cultural rot” of television talk shows (63). They “attacked the shows for sleazy and tabloid sensationalism, making the abnormal seem normal, and setting up perverse role models” (63). These crusaders have attacked the shows by attempting to put pressure on advertisers to stop sponsoring such programs. The targeted programs were Jenny Jones, Sally Jessy Raphael, Jerry Springer, Montel Williams, Maury Povich, Geraldo, Charles Perez, Rolonda, Richard Bey, and Ricki Lake (Shattuc 142).

These politicians recognized that many talk show guests and topics were sensationalistic and abnormal, however, not all viewers may recognize the sensationalism and the misrepresentation of normalcy portrayed on these talk shows. This raises the question: are talk show viewers’ sense of reality shaped by this sensationalism and misrepresentation of normalcy?
Behind the Scenes

Many interesting facts have been discovered about what occurs behind the scenes of television talk shows. Researchers have studied how guests come to be on television talk shows, the staging and scripting of some episodes, and guests who are deceptive.

Collins' article, "Talking Trash" was featured in *Time* magazine. The author examines the guest aspect of the *Jerry Springer Show*. He states that most guests telephone the show’s producers via an 800 number that appears on the television screen. Usually, the program asks the viewing audience to respond if they have a similar story to the one that is appearing on the screen. For example, a graphic image will appear on screen along with a voice-over stating "If you have a loved someone who betrayed you please call us." After telephoning the producers, potential guests then have to go through interviews before they actually become guests. Others may be asked to be on the program because someone else they know had telephoned producers and would be appearing as a guest. However, Collins found that guests who are asked to be on the program versus volunteering are not always told what the topic will be. Collins claims that "this is typical since the show depends on surprises" (par. 7). *Jerry Springer's* executive producer stated "the show protects guests by giving them a standard list of 25 secrets that could be revealed. If the guest marks no to any of them, even if it's not their secret, then that guest is not used" (par. 10). Once individuals are secured as guests, they "get plane fare, a limo ride, a hotel room, and food vouchers" (Grenier 118).

Nelson and Robinson's study, "'Reality Talk' or 'Telling Tales'? The Social Construction of Sexual and Gender Deviance on a Television Talk Show," examines what occurs behind the scenes of talk shows. Nelson, who conducted an ethnographic
study, appeared as an “expert” guest panelist on an American nationally syndicated late-night television talk show in summer 1992. The topic of the program was about “male escorts and the women who employ them” (55). Although television talk shows claim to be spontaneous, Nelson found that a lot of staging occurs. Nelson states the producers directed her and other guests on how to dress, that she, the guests, and the host received interview scripts to follow, and that guests were not actually who they claimed to be, they were paid to portray a role. The authors discovered that the “scripted” show “actually reinforces and replicates culturally normative views of gender and sexuality” (55).

Schlosser’s article, “‘Jerry Springer’: Scraps or Scripts? Talk Show Under Fire for Allegations of Staging,” also addresses the issue of staging and scripting. The Jerry Springer Show’s producers were accused of encouraging or telling guests “to say certain things and to pick fights with other guests” (10). Extra, a television news magazine show, found in an investigative report that sixteen former guests of the show “admitted to acting or having been told what to do” (10).

Some talk show guests misrepresent themselves to viewers, and at times to hosts and program producers. According to a Washington Post article, “Truth and Trash,” on one episode of Jerry Springer, a husband told his wife that he was having an affair with the babysitter. Eventually, the guests admitted that everything said on the program was a hoax. These guests said “they had no problem getting through the show’s screening process and were coached, cajoled and misled to produce the most dramatic confrontation possible” (A-18).

Heaton and Wilson also examine “fakery” by guests. Jennifer and Uriel Soto “tricked three talk shows” (90). They appeared on Jerry Springer, on Ricki Lake as
married cousins, and on Jenny Jones’ program entitled “Men Who Don’t Want Their Wives to Dress Sexy” (90). Jerome Stanfield, a two time guest on Montel Williams, claimed he was a “HIV-positive serial rapist of prostitutes” (91). Stanfield turned himself in to the police and then retracted his statements. The police said they had “no evidence to suggest that Stanfield had committed those crimes” (91). Gwendolyn, a guest on Ricki Lake, lied about infecting “half of the New Orleans police force with AIDS” (91).

Kurtz’s book, Hot Air: All Talk, All the Time, also touches on this issue. The author claims that if a “guest’s tale wasn’t salacious enough, some talk show staffers try to embellish it” (64). One individual responded to Jenny Jones when they were looking for women who enjoyed watching pornography. She claimed that “the show’s producers talked her into saying she not only liked porno movies but also wanted to perform in them” (64).

As this section explains, scripting of shows, cajoling of guests, paying guests to play a role, or deception by guests often occurs on television talk shows. These tactics indicate that television talk shows may not be portraying “reality” accurately. The question raised here is do talk show viewers perceive these the programs and their guests to be believable or true to life thereby giving some viewers a false sense of reality?

Why We Watch

Criticisms, allegations, and controversy surround these programs, but why do viewers keep tuning in? There are many reasons why these programs have a large viewing audience.
Tobenkin’s Broadcasting & Cable article, “Why We Like to Watch Talk TV,” examines why people watch television talk shows. The article states that “talk show topics not the talk show hosts, are the leading factor driving weekday daytime talk show viewership” (33). This research was obtained from a survey conducted by an international research and consulting firm, Frank N. Magid Associates Inc. (33). The study found that out of the 1000 survey sampled responses, 73 percent said that a “talk show’s topic was ‘very important’ in helping them decide which show to watch” (33).

Dennis Prager, a former talk show host, wrote an article called “TV and Me: What My TV Talk Show Taught Me.” He claims there are also other factors that cause people to watch talk shows. These other factors are “eye candy” (par. 10), which means something to titillate the eye like a pretty woman, “more action,” which means animation, “good TV,” which means either sex or “fireworks,” and fireworks “refers to people arguing with, preferably shouting at, each other” (par. 13). Many of these currently popular talk shows feature sex and “fireworks.”

Saltzman’s article featured in USA Today, “Why Ordinary Americans Like Daytime Talk Shows,” also discusses why Americans watch these programs. He states, We live in an age where everyone on TV looks appealing and speaks and acts appropriately. There is no room on national television for the ugly, the fat, the inarticulate, the profane, or the unwashed masses. If you aren’t thin, if you can’t speak acceptable English, if you don’t act and look reasonably normal by TV’s standards, then TV has no place for you. (63)

Saltzman describes the way television standards are for mainstream television programs, and it shows that many people are not represented on national television. However,
television talk shows give these people a voice. The guests appear to be more representative of our society: “Daytime TV talk shows...dared to put on these faces of America...guests acted like people we know at work and bowling alleys, lunch counters, markets, and retail stores in communities across the country” (63).

To sum, it appears that viewers are attracted to talk shows due to their topics. Talk show topics often deal with sex and “fireworks” (Prager par. 13). Also, about 12 percent of talk show topics deal with sexual orientation (Greenberg, Sherry, Busselle, Rampoldi-Hnilo, and Smith). In addition, viewers are attracted to the appearance of guests who often are not represented on other mainstream programming, as GLBTQ people are not. These factors seem to indicate that many talk show topics may deal with GLBTQ people or issues. Since talk shows do deal with GLBTQ people or issues, some important questions are raised; do viewers receive much of their information about GLBTQ people from talk shows, and if so, do they perceive the information to be realistic or representative the GLBTQ community?

GLBTQ Guests and Daytime Television Talk Shows

Meers’ article, “Gawk Soup,” featured in The Advocate, discusses GLBTQ people on television talk shows. The article includes portions of interviews with gay activists, scholars, talk show guests, producers and hosts. Brad Lamm was one of two homosexuals who were guests on Ricki Lake’s episode entitled “I’m Angry Because People Think I’m Gay” (48). Lamm said “the show played on stereotypes and created an atmosphere that was so anti-gay” (48). For example, Lamm said, “Lake asked the girlfriend of an effeminate guy to get up and do his faggy walk” (48). Danny Bonaduce,
former talk show host, said “ninety percent of the population basically doesn’t know about homosexuality. Therefore it’s fascinating” (48). The author states that after the GLBTQ community has been “ignored by the media, gays and lesbians may actually be overrepresented on TV talk shows” (48). Meers states that Rick Rockwell, an associate professor of broadcasting at Northwestern University, said that talk shows are “focusing on the extreme portions of the gay community” (49).

Gamson’s article, “Do Ask, Do Tell,” which appeared in the Utne Reader, also discusses the GLBTQ guests and daytime talk shows. The article claims that “don’t tell’ is more than a U.S. military policy; it is also U.S. public policy, formally and informally on sex and gender nonconformity” (80). However, he found daytime television talk shows give these individuals a public voice. The article states that “for people whose desires and identities go against the norm, this is the only spot in mainstream media culture to speak their own terms or to hear others speaking for themselves” (80). In addition, the author discovered that at least on one talk show episode, “the homophobe is the deviant, the freak” (80). Gamson also examines the negative effects of being on talk shows. One negative effect is that some GLBTQ persons are portrayed as freaks. He states that although talk shows are exploitative, they do offer opportunities for those GLBTQ individuals who were once silenced.

Gamson’s book, *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity*, examines the portrayal of GLBTQ people. Research was collected from interviews, transcripts, videos, and focus-group data. The author found that gays have become a part of normal society because of all the attention they have received over the past few decades. He argues that homosexuals are often viewed as sympathetic;
however, other members of the GLBTQ community are not. For example, he claims that other “sex and gender nonconformists are shown as either ‘amoral outsiders’ or ‘immoral sexpots’” (135). Gamson discusses the sexual blurring caused by some GLBTQ individuals that cannot be defined as either male or female. He claims that topics on individuals who cause sexual blurring are intriguing to viewers because it causes them to question sexuality.

Heaton and Wilson’s book, Tuning in to Trouble, examines how sex and gender deviant stereotypes are reinforced by talk shows. The authors state that early on, talk shows brought “issues of sexuality into the mainstream,” and that the programs addressed prejudices (162). However, the current shows actually “reinforce stereotypes and sustain prejudices by representing outdated and exaggerated issues, bringing on hostile and backward opponents, and inviting fringe representatives of the gay community to appear” (162). The “overall picture of homosexuals created by the shows is that of a confused, dysfunctional, and predatory people in need of change” (163).

Scott’s book, Can We Talk?, discusses one particular episode of Jerry Springer which focused on gays and transvestites who wanted to be accepted by their family. The author states that “everything about the presentation of the subject, including the choice of guests, highlighted differences, showed hostility, and contributed to further antagonism toward gays” (303).

Generally, all these critics seem to agree that talk shows are not beneficial for the GLBTQ community. Instead, talk shows can be negative for the GLBTQ community and for the viewers of the programs. This negative impact raises many issues. For example, Meers states that “gays and lesbians are overrepresented on talk shows” (48). Does this
overrepresentation give some talk show viewers a false sense of reality? Gamson explains that GLBTQ people are often portrayed as freaks. Does this portrayal hurt the GLBTQ community because some talk show viewers may believe these portrayals to be realistic of all GLBTQ members? Finally, Heaton and Wilson found that talk shows actually reinforce GLBTQ stereotypes. Does this finding suggest that the reinforcement of stereotypes will negatively impact the GLBTQ community because it may falsely inform some talk show viewers? All these questions will be further explored.

Talk Show Viewing Effects

Heaton and Wilson also focus on talk show viewing effects. The authors claim that talk shows cause problems for viewers. Talk shows provide lessons in bad mental health by distorting normality, exaggerating abnormality, demonstrating how one can deny responsibility, and inspiring the copycat syndrome. These programs distort reality because "routine problems are exaggerated almost beyond recognition and extremely unusual problems are presented as though they are common" (130). They exaggerate abnormality by suggesting "that certain problems are more common than they actually are, thus exaggerating their frequency," and they "embellish the symptoms and outcomes of problems, thus exaggerating their consequences" (132). For viewers, these exaggerations cause them to believe "that the mildest of hints of a problem forewarn of something very serious and potentially disastrous" (133). Talk shows often feature guests who deny responsibility of their actions and put blame on someone else. For example, "alleged offenders almost always refute their accountability with revelations that they too were previously wronged or 'victimized,' and therefore are not responsible"
This causes viewers “to focus on what others have or have not done as the source of their problems: other people are responsible” (137). The authors also claim that talk shows can “inspire viewers to develop problems they do not have,” thus “copying the syndromes that are presented” on the programs (139). This is referred to as the copycat syndrome.

Also, talk shows provide the viewers with bad advice and no resolution to their conflict. Guests and viewers are taught to let out all their emotions, secrets, and such. The authors argue that “‘get it all out’ is really an invitation to ‘fight it out,’ and that invitation is extended to the viewers” (145). Guests on talk shows always try to get the last word in a confrontation. The authors argue that “if viewers accept this as a model for communicating it will only encourage the kind of self-centered and thoughtless behaviors that produce such problems, not solve them” (147). Additionally, talk shows often feature experts to help the guests with their problems, which “suggests (to viewers) that therapy is a singularly effective resolution applicable to any and all problems, as if ‘therapy’ were a ‘one size fits all’ technique” (150).

Finally, talk shows reinforce stereotypes that some viewers may already have concerning gender, race, and sexual orientation, and they reinforce invisibility of some marginalized groups such as the elderly, who do not commonly appear on these programs.

Talk shows have often been criticized because of the potential effect that they may have on child viewers. Glod, author of “‘Springer’ Mania: Too Hot for Parents and Teachers” featured in the Washington Post, explores this aspect. In 1998, the author reports 750,000 people, age 12 to 17, watch Jerry Springer. Glod states, that “some
child-rearing specialists say the show is no better or worse than other sleaze and violence featured on television” (A-10). Psychologist Robert Simmerman claims that programs such as Springer’s “erode a child’s sense of civility” (qtd. on A-10). Kathryn Montgomery, director of the Center for Media Education, said “programs like Springer’s are a negative influence on young viewers, even if they seem to shrug it off” (qtd. on A-10). She continues stating “we know that a lot of this is contrived, and teenagers will say they know it’s not real, but at the same time, somehow it gets internalized” (qtd. on A-10).

In short, Heaton and Wilson argue that talk shows promote stereotypes that viewers already have concerning sexual orientation, and Montgomery claims that information from talk shows sometimes gets internalized by teenagers even when they say they know the show is not real. These statements raise one important question; do some viewers accept stereotypes about the GLBTQ community that are promoted by talk shows even when those viewers claim that they do not believe that talk shows are real?

Cultivation Analysis

According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli, television is a powerful medium in society. It has “become the primary common source of socialization and everyday information (mostly in form of entertainment) of otherwise heterogeneous populations” (“Growing” 18). Signorelli and Morgan add that television’s “socially constructed version of reality bombards all classes, groups, and ages with the same perspectives at the same time” (114). In other words, television, which plays the role of storyteller and educator, is shared among all members of society. Due to this immense
influence, concern over television viewing effects and television content evolved. The Cultural Indicators project was one outcome of this concern.

The Cultural Indicators project, founded by George Gerbner in the late 1960's, originally focused on the "nature and functions of television violence," but eventually expanded to include a "wider range of topics, issues, and concerns" (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli "Growing" 21). In general, the project "provides a broad-based, empirical approach" for addressing questions regarding mass media effects on society and "to understanding the social consequences of growing up and living with television" (Signorelli and Morgan 111). Out of this project three research strategies were developed, among them was cultivation analysis.

According to Signorelli and Morgan's work, "Cultivation Analysis: Research and Practice," cultivation analysis is the "study of how exposure to the world of television contributes to viewers' conceptions about the real world" (112). Cultivation researchers "approach television as a system of messages, made up of aggregate and repetitive patterns of images and representations to which entire communities are exposed—and which they absorb—over long periods of time" (112). Cultivation analysis is "concerned with the more general and pervasive consequences of cumulative exposure to cultural media," although cultivation researchers tend to focus on television (119). In other words, cultivation analysis attempts to determine what happens to viewers' sense of reality when they are exposed to television as a whole, not on specific programs, genres, or the like over a long period of time.

Cultivation analysis tries to discover if those who watch more television are more likely "to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common and repetitive
messages and lessons of the television world, compared to people who watch less television but are otherwise comparable in terms of important demographic characteristics" (119). The theory assumes that “light viewers tend to be exposed to more varied and diverse information sources, while heavy viewers, by definition, tend to rely more on television for their information” (119). The theory’s goal is to discover whether “differences in the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of light and heavy viewers reflect differences in their viewing patterns and habits, independent of (or in interaction with) the social, cultural and personal factors that differentiate light and heavy viewers” (119). In general, the theory attempts to analyze only the contributions of television viewing (heavy and light viewing) to viewers’ conception of reality.

According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli’s work, “Growing Up With Television: The Cultivation Perspective,” cultivation is “not a unidirectional flow of influence from television to the audience, but part of a continual, dynamic, ongoing process of interaction among messages and contexts” (27). This dynamic process can cause variations in cultivation. Cultivation is “both dependent on and a manifestation of the extent to which television’s imagery dominates viewers’ sources of information” (27). This means that cultivation can vary, increase or decrease, depending on what other information a viewer obtains from other influences, sources or interactions. Cultivation can also vary due to personal experience. For example, the authors state that individual’s who live in “high urban crime areas,” get a “double dose” of violence by watching television, and therefore they have exaggerated perceptions of violence (27). Finally, mainstreaming causes variations in cultivation. The authors’ state “television’s role in our society makes it the primary channel of the mainstream of our culture” (28).
Mainstreaming means "that television viewing may reduce or override differences in perspectives and behaviors which stems from other social, cultural, and demographic influences" (118). In other words, pronounced differences in group membership, status and the like are much less influential on the attitudes and beliefs of heavy viewers. Simply put, it causes the population to become homogeneous.

Several studies utilizing cultivation analysis have been conducted (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli "Aging"; Signorielli "Marriage," Stereotyping; Signorielli and Lears; Morgan; Davis and Mares). At least one study pertaining to television talk shows utilized a variant of this theory.

Davis and Mares' study, "Effects of Talk Show Viewing on Adolescents," studied the effects of talk show viewing on adolescents' social reality beliefs. Using a variant of cultivation analysis, a survey was developed. It was administered to 288 high school students to evaluate three hypotheses about the effects of viewing talk shows: (1) viewers overestimate the frequency of deviant behaviors (talk shows make the abnormal seem normal), (2) viewers become desensitized to the suffering of others, and (c) viewers trivialize the importance of social issues. The authors' results found support for the first hypothesis, but not for the second or third. The authors discovered that talk show viewing was positively related to perceived importance of social issues.
Summary of Previous Research

Millions of people watch television talk shows daily. There are various reasons they watch: the topics; the “fireworks;” and the display of the average person have been cited. However, research demonstrated that television talk shows often stage or script or their episodes. In addition, evidence suggests that some guests misrepresent themselves. One can conclude that these types of behaviors may give the viewers an exaggerated or biased sense of reality.

GLBTQ individuals are often guests on talk shows, and their public visibility has been studied. Various scholars have stated both positive and negative consequences of their public visibility. For example, Gamson suggests that talk shows at least provide a voice to these individuals and it has helped homosexuals be viewed as sympathetic, whereas, Heaton and Wilson, Scott, and Meers argue that the programs promote stereotypes. These differing opinions raise many questions, in particular; do television talk shows shape a viewer’s conception of reality?

Chapter III will discuss the method of using cultivation analysis, the method employed in this study.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Cultivation analysis informed the theoretical framework used to assess the relationship between talk show viewership and audience perceptions of GLBTQ people. According to Signorielli and Morgan, cultivation analysis "begins with the message system analysis identifying and assessing the most recurrent and stable patterns in television content, emphasizing the consistent images, portrayals, and values that cut across most program genres" (119). This analysis can be achieved through content analysis or prior research and literature in this area. From this analysis, questions can be developed to evaluate people's perceptions of the world. Some of these questions may simply measure beliefs, opinions, attitudes, or behaviors. The survey also includes questions relating to perceptions of social reality, measures of television viewing, and demographic variables (See Appendix I).

Cultivation analysis focuses on assessing the messages and images found on television as a whole, not on specific programs, genres, or the like. However, Davis and Mares state in their study that other research "indicates that beliefs may sometimes reflect the pattern of genre viewing rather than overall television viewing" (72). Their study proposes that focusing on one genre and using a cultivation analysis is appropriate. But they do acknowledge the necessity of including questions regarding television talk show viewing and television viewing in general.
The issue of talk show viewing should not be immediately salient to survey respondents (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli; Davis and Mares). Questions regarding viewing were addressed only after the belief and attitude questions have been answered. For instance, Davis and Mares told their respondents that the survey was “about their opinions on different social issues,” instead of telling them that it was measuring television talk show viewing effects (417). This study followed their procedures.

Research Hypotheses

GLBTQ people often appear on highly rated, television talk shows. Their public visibility, and the effects of this visibility on both viewers and GLBTQ people have been discussed. However, an examination of the relationship between talk show viewership and perceptions of GLBTQ people is needed. This study tested the following hypotheses.

H1: Heavy and light viewers of television talk shows on a typical day will differ in terms of their perceived realism of television talk shows.

H2: Heavy and light viewers of television talk shows during the previous day will differ in terms of their perceived realism of television talk shows.

H3: Heavy and light viewers of television talk shows on a typical day will differ in terms of their perception of the GLBTQ community.

H4: Heavy and light viewers of television talk shows on the previous day will differ in terms of their perception of the GLBTQ community.
In keeping with the traditional use of cultivation analysis, the fifth and sixth hypotheses addressed viewers’ conceptions of GLBTQ people as a whole of television viewing, not concentrating strictly on talk show viewing.

H5: Heavy and light viewers of television on a typical day will differ in their perception of the GLBTQ community.

H6: Heavy and light viewers of television on the previous day will differ in their perception of the GLBTQ community.

The seventh hypothesis focused on the same-sex marriage issue, which appeared as Question No. 2 on Nevada’s ballot in November 2000. The ballot question read “Shall the Nevada Constitution be amended to provide that: “Only a marriage between a male and female person shall be recognized and given effect in this state?” (Nevada Secretary of State 1). Nevada “law upholds the definition of a marriage as being only between a male and a female,” however Nevada law “provides that a legal marriage that took place outside Nevada is generally given effect under the “Full Faith and Credit Clause” of the United States Constitution” (Nevada Secretary of State 1). The issue raised here is if same-sex marriages “become legal in another state...Nevada could be required to recognize such marriages entered into legally in another state” (Nevada Secretary of State 1). A “‘Yes’ vote means that the Nevada Constitution should be amended to provide that only marriages between a male and a female should be recognized and given effect in this state” (Nevada Secretary of State 1). A “‘No’ vote means that the Nevada Constitution should not be amended to provide that only marriages between a male and a female should be recognized and given effect in Nevada” (Nevada Secretary of State 2). The election results indicated that Question No. 2 was passed. The following hypothesis was
included in this study to discover if mainstreaming took place. Mainstreaming and Question No. 2 will be further discussed in the Chapter IV.

H7: Respondents who were aware of Question No. 2 and respondents who were not aware of Question No. 2 will differ in terms of their perception of GLBTQ people.

Procedures

This study used a respondent self-administered survey. Survey research was conducted after approval was granted on January 18, 2001 by the Social/Behavioral Committee of the UNLV Institutional Review Board. It was administered to UNLV undergraduates in basic communication courses. In order to ensure anonymity, the informed consent, attached to the actual survey, did not require a signature. After the respondents read the informed consent, those who chose to participate then began completing the survey. The survey had five parts (see Appendix I).

The first section asked respondents to answer questions regarding their beliefs, attitudes, or opinions about GLBTQ people in general. Responses to these questions ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). There were approximately two items for measuring perceptions of at least seven types of sexual orientations or preferences. Some items were reverse coded as a validity check. A few belief statements located in this section included: (1) Gay men did not cause AIDS; (2) Lesbians are promiscuous (have multiple sex partners); and (3) Transgendered people, those individuals who live their lives as members of the opposite sex, are mentally ill.

For the second part, questions were formulated about people's conceptions of social reality using an adapted version of the Perceived Realism Scale (Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher 282-285). Using a 5-point Likert scale, these questions simply measured beliefs, opinions, attitudes, or behaviors pertaining to television talk shows,
hosts, and guests including GLBTQ people. Some belief statements included in this section were: (1) I feel that daytime television talk shows present things that are real; (2) I believe that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people as guests on talk shows, present accurate depictions of themselves; and (3) I believe that these television talk show hosts present things that are real.

Quantitative assessments of the frequency of television viewing on a typical day and on the previous day and talk show viewing on a typical day and on the previous day were determined in the third part. Respondents were asked to indicate how many hours and/or minutes they spent viewing either television in general or talk shows. Since one of the questions in this section asked the respondent to indicate how many hours of television talk shows they viewed on the previous day, the survey was not administered on a Monday because talk shows air less frequently on weekends. Questions regarding viewing on the previous day were included because it may provide a more accurate measure of viewing time. It may be more accurate because viewing on the previous day is a recent activity that may be easily remembered by the respondents.

The fourth section asked respondents to indicate if they currently watch, have watched, or have never watched each of the following programs: The Jenny Jones Show, The Jerry Springer Show, Maury Povich, Montel Williams, Ricki Lake, or Sally Jessy Raphael.

The final section included questions pertaining to the respondents' demographics. These questions assessed age, sex, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and awareness of the same-sex marriage question, which appeared on Nevada’s ballot in November 2000.
Data Analysis

Initially, the distribution for the hours of television talk show viewing was statistically divided into thirds. The lower third was defined as light viewer, the middle third was defined as medium viewer, and the upper third was defined as heavy viewer. Then, for each respondent, the responses to the Perceived Realism Scale dealing with talk shows were averaged to form a mean index (Talk Show Scale). Given an adequate sample group, a *-Test was used to analyze the difference between the independent variables, heavy and light viewers, and the dependent variable, the mean index.

In addition, the distribution for the hours of television viewing overall was statistically divided into thirds. Again, the lower third was defined as light viewers and the upper third was defined as heavy viewers. For each respondent, the responses to the general belief statements regarding GLBTQ people were averaged to form a mean index (GLBTQ Scale). Given an adequate sample group, a *-Test was used to analyze the difference between the independent variables, heavy and light viewers, and the dependent variable, the mean index.

Also, a *-Test was used to analyze the difference between heavy and light viewers of television talk shows and the mean index of the responses to the GLBTQ Scale.

The relationships between talk show viewership and the respondents’ perceived realism of talk shows, hosts, and guests, including GLBTQ people was examined using correlation. Correlations were run on the items of the Perceived Realism Scale and the heavy viewers of talk shows on a typical day. In addition, correlations were run on the items of the Perceived Realism Scale and the heavy viewers of talk shows on the
previous day. This allowed for further analysis on perceived realism of television talk shows, hosts, and guests, independent of each other.

Sample

According to Shattuc, The Ricki Lake Show started the trend to attract a younger audience as opposed to an older female audience. This format proved successful, and shortly after, Jenny Jones, Jerry Springer, Maury Povich, Sally Jessy Raphael, and Montel Williams followed. By 1998, the largest concentration of talk show viewers were 18 to 24 years old (Tobenkin 33). A large percentage of college undergraduates are comprised of this age group. For the purposes of this study, college undergraduates were appropriate for sampling.

A total of 461 useable surveys were collected. The respondents consisted of college undergraduates who ranged in age from 17 to 79 years. However, 87.6% of the sample were 17 to 24 years old. Just over 50% of the respondents were male and 49.3% were female. In terms of race, 66.3% of the respondents reported being Caucasian, 13.1% were Asian/Pacific Islander, 7.3% were Latino/a, 6.4% were African American, 3.8% were other races, and 3.1% were Native American. Nearly 86% of the respondents reported being heterosexual, 11.9% asexual, 1.1% gay, 1.1% bisexual and .2% lesbian. The reported number of asexuals seemed high, but this response can be due to several reasons. First, respondents may have misinterpreted the term asexual as meaning not sexually active or abstaining from sex. This rational is likely since a large Mormon population (a faith which holds a strong belief in abstinence prior to marriage) exists at
the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. In addition, respondents may have also claimed to be asexual even though they may not actually be.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In general, the respondents watched an average of 2.5 hours of television a day. In regards to television talk show viewing, 59.6% percent reported watching five minutes or more of television talk shows on a typical day. The average of talk show viewing on a typical day was 1.8 hours. These results indicate that many people have watched or still continue to watch these programs: 10.6% currently watch Jenny Jones, whereas 73.8% have watched the show; 12.1% watch Jerry Springer and 82.8% claim they have watched it in the past; 10.2% watch Maury Povich and 67.3% have watched the show; 5.6% currently watch Montel Williams and 70.2% have in the past; 2.7% currently watch Ricki Lake and 72.7% have in the past; and 6.6% claim that they currently watch Sally Jessy Raphael, whereas 67.8% have watched the program at one time.

Item Reliability Analysis

An item analysis was necessary on the summated ratings scales. The “purpose of an item analysis is to find those items that form an internally consistent scale and to eliminate those items that do not” (Spector 29). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha “is a measure of the internal consistency of a scale” (Spector 31). An “alpha should be at least .70 for a scale to demonstrate internal consistency” (Spector 32). There were two summated ratings scales on the survey; the GLBTQ scale and the Talk Show scale.
The GLBTQ scale consists of fourteen questions regarding sociological ideals, beliefs, or truths pertaining to GLBTQ people. The questions were designed to measure respondents' beliefs of certain truths and stereotypes relating to GLBTQ members. On the initial item analysis of this scale, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .73. Even though the alpha of .73 satisfies the requirements for internal consistency, a closer analysis of the scale revealed that three questions were not internally consistent. This lack of consistency indicated that respondents did not interpret the questions similarly. These variables were: (1) Males tend to have surgery to become females as often as females undergo surgery to become males; (2) Partners of bisexuals are more sexually satisfied than partners of heterosexuals; and (3) The majority of the United States is made up of heterosexuals. Upon removal of these variables, the alpha increased to .81.

The Talk Show scale consisted of ten questions measuring the respondents' perceived realism of talk shows, hosts, topics, and guests, particular GLBTQ guests. On the initial item analysis of this scale, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha appeared as .91. This alpha demonstrates high internal consistency, therefore all the items on this scale were retained.

Time Variables

The survey included two variables measuring television viewing in general and two variables measuring television talk show viewing. For each variable, the hours of viewing reported were divided statistically into thirds after eliminating those respondents that reported watching zero hours. The lowest third was identified as the light viewers, the upper third was identified as the heavy viewers, and those in between were identified as medium viewers.
For the variable, "On a typical day, how many total hours of television do you watch," light viewers were those that watched 1 minute to 1 hour and 30 minutes and heavy viewers were those who watched for 3 hours or more. See Table 1.

For the variable, "How many total hours of television did you watch yesterday," light viewers were those that watched 5 minutes to 1 hour, and heavy viewers were those that watched over 2 hours and 30 minutes. See Table 1.

For the variable, "On a typical weekday, Monday through Friday, how many total hours of daytime television talk shows do you watch," light viewers were those that watched 5 minutes to 1 hour, and heavy viewers were those that watched over 2 hours and 20 minutes. See Table 1.

For the variable, "How many hours of these daytime television talk shows did you watch yesterday," light viewers were those that watched 5 minutes to 30 minutes, and heavy viewers were those that watched over an hour. See Table 1.

Table 1 Frequency of Light, Medium and Heavy Viewers

![Graph showing the frequency of light, medium, and heavy viewers for television and talk show viewing.]

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Tests of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The first $t$-Test analysis was run to determine if there were any significant
differences between heavy and light viewers of television talk shows on a typical day and
their perceived realism of television talk shows. The computed $t$ value fell within the
acceptable level in the comparison of heavy and light viewers of television talk shows on
a typical day and their perceived realism of television talk shows $t(218) = -3.16, p = .002$.
Therefore, support was found for the research hypothesis. Heavy and light viewers of
television talk shows on a typical day differed in terms of their perceived realism of
television talk shows. Heavy viewers of television talk shows on a typical day perceived
television talk shows to be more realistic or true to life than light viewers.

Hypothesis 2

The second $t$-Test analysis was run to determine if there were any significant
differences between heavy and light viewers of television talk shows during the previous
day and their perceived realism of television talk shows. The computed $t$ value fell within
the acceptable level in the comparison of heavy and light viewers of television talk shows
during the previous day and their perceived realism of television talk shows
$t(78.5) = -2.08, p = .040$. Therefore, support was found for the research hypothesis.
Heavy and light viewers of television talk shows during the previous day differed in
terms of their perceived realism of television talk shows. Heavy viewers of television
talk shows during the previous day perceived television talk shows to be more realistic or
true to life than light viewers.
Hypothesis 3

The third $t$-Test analysis was run to determine if there were any significant differences between heavy and light viewers of television talk shows on a typical day and their perception of GLBTQ community in general. The computed $t$ value exceeded the acceptable level in comparison of heavy and light viewers of television talk shows on a typical day and their perception of GLBTQ community in general. Therefore, no significant findings were found in the current analysis. Heavy and light viewers of television talk shows on a typical day did not differ in terms of their perception of GLBTQ community in general.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth $t$-Test analysis was run to determine if there were any significant differences between heavy and light viewers of television talk shows during the previous day and their perception of GLBTQ community in general. The computed $t$ value exceeded the acceptable level in comparison of heavy and light viewers of television talk shows during the previous day and their perception of GLBTQ community in general. Therefore, no significant findings were found in the current analysis. Heavy and light viewers of television talk shows during the previous day did not differ in terms of their perception of GLBTQ community in general.

Hypothesis 5

The fifth $t$-test analysis was run to determine if there were any significant differences between heavy and light viewers of television in general on a typical day and their overall perception of GLBTQ people. The computed $t$ value exceeded the acceptable level in comparison of heavy and light viewers of television on a typical day.
and their perception of GLBTQ community in general. Therefore, no significant findings were found in the current analysis. Heavy and light viewers of television on a typical day did not differ in terms of their perception of GLBTQ community in general.

**Hypothesis 6**

The sixth $t$-Test analysis was run to determine if there were any significant differences between heavy and light viewers of television in general during the previous day and their overall perception of GLBTQ people. The computed $t$ value exceeded the acceptable level in comparison of heavy and light viewers of television during the previous day and their perception of GLBTQ community in general. In the current analysis, heavy and light viewers of television during the previous day did not differ in terms of their perception of GLBTQ community in general.

**Hypothesis 7**

The seventh and final $t$-Test was run to determine if there were any significant differences between respondents who were aware of Question No. 2 on the Nevada ballot and respondents who were not aware of Question No. 2 on the Nevada ballot and their perception of GLBTQ community in general. No significant results were found. Respondents who were aware of Question No. 2 on the Nevada ballot and respondents who were not aware of Question No. 2 on the Nevada ballot did not differ in terms of their perception of GLBTQ community in general.

**Correlation Analysis**

Since significance was found with the first and second hypotheses, further analysis was necessary. Correlation analysis was used to discover what contributes to
talk show realism among heavy viewers of talk shows. First, correlations were run on heavy viewers of television talk shows on a typical day and the Perceived Realism Scale. Second, correlations were run on heavy viewers of television talk shows on the previous day and the Perceived Realism Scale.

Heavy Viewers of Television Talk Shows on a Typical Day

Heavy viewers of television talk shows on a typical day consisted of 91 cases, which is a sufficient amount to run correlations (Reinard 257). Selecting only the 91 cases of heavy viewers, correlations were run to discover if there was a linear relationship among those items found on the Perceived Realism Scale. Several relationships were discovered (see Table 2), however only those with a moderate to marked relationship will be discussed. The finding suggested that five groupings of significant correlations existed.

GLBTQ Relationships

Significant relationships were found between the GLBTQ relationships and other items on the Perceived Realism Scale.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society” and “Talk shows present GLBTQ as they really are” $r(91) = .72, p < .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of GLBTQ relationships increased, so did their presentation of GLBTQ guests.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society” and “Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live” $r(91) = .67, p < .01$. There is a
Table 2  Correlation Matrix of the Perceived Realism Scale Items and Heavy Viewers of Television Talk Shows on a Typical Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Talk show guests present things that are real.</th>
<th>Talk show hosts present things that are real.</th>
<th>Talk shows present things that are real.</th>
<th>GLBTQ portrayed on talk shows can be sure that the life style of all GLBTQ are really that way.</th>
<th>GLBTQ guests present accurate depictions of themselves.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk show guests present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td>.696** .000 .90</td>
<td>.674** .000 90</td>
<td>.460** .000 91</td>
<td>.511** .000 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk show hosts present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td>.672** .000 89</td>
<td>.357** .001 90</td>
<td>.441** .000 90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td></td>
<td>.327** .002 90</td>
<td>.376** .000 90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ portrayed on talk shows can be sure that the life style of all GLBTQ are really that way.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.496** .000 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests present accurate depictions of themselves.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig.(2-tailed) N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Table 2 Correlation Matrix - Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society.</th>
<th>Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live.</th>
<th>GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life.</th>
<th>Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are.</th>
<th>GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk show guests present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.585**</td>
<td>.476**</td>
<td>.614**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk show hosts present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.509**</td>
<td>.446**</td>
<td>.633**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.482**</td>
<td>.326**</td>
<td>.509**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ portrayed on talk shows can be sure that the lifestyle of all GLBTQ are really that way.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.650**</td>
<td>.575**</td>
<td>.378**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests present accurate depictions of themselves.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.513**</td>
<td>.586**</td>
<td>.576**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.672**</td>
<td>.501**</td>
<td>.718**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.457**</td>
<td>.651**</td>
<td>.595**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.608**</td>
<td>.505**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.641**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of
GLBTQ relationships increased, so did their perceived realism of how GLBTQ people
really live.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “GLBTQ guests
present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society” and
“GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life” $r(90) = .63, p \leq .01$. There is
a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of
GLBTQ relationships increased, so did their perceived realism of GLBTQ guests being
similar to other GLBTQ members.

**Talk Show Guests**

Many significant relationships were found between talk show guests and other
items on the Perceived Realism Scale.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show guests
present things that are real” and “Talk show hosts present things that are real” $r(90) = .70,
p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s
perceived realism of talk show guests increased, so did their perceived realism of talk
show hosts.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show guests
present things that are real” and “Talk shows present things that are real” $r(90) = .67, p \leq
.01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived
realism of talk show guests increased, so did their perceived realism of talk shows.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show guests
present things that are real,” and “GLBTQ guests discuss topics that are real in life” $r(91)$
= .61, \( p \leq .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk shows guests increased, so did their perceived realism of GLBTQ guests.

**Talk Show Hosts**

Significant relationships were discovered between talk show hosts and other items on the Perceived Realism Scale.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show hosts present things that are real” and “Talk shows present things that are real” \( r(89) = .67, p \leq .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk show hosts increased, so did their perceived realism of talk shows.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show hosts present things that are real” and “GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life” \( r(90) = .63, p \leq .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk show hosts increased, so did their perceived realism of GLBTQ as guests.

**Lifestyle of GLBTQ Guests**

Significant relationships were reported between the lifestyle of GLBTQ guests and other items on the Perceived Realism Scale.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “GLBTQ portrayed on talk shows can be sure that the lifestyle of all GLBTQ are really that way” and “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” \( r(91) = .67, p \leq .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the lifestyle
of GLBTQ guests increased, so did their perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ guests.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “GLBTQ portrayed on talk shows can be sure that the lifestyle of all GLBTQ are really that way” and “GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life” $r(91) = .65, p < .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the lifestyles of GLBTQ guests increased, so did their perceived realism of topics discussed by GLBTQ guests.

**Portrayal of GLBTQ**

Significant relationships were found between the portrayal of GLBTQ and other items on the Perceived Realism Scale.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” and “Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live” $r(91) = .65, p < .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ guests increased, so did their perceived realism of how GLBTQ people really live.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” and “GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life” $r(90) = .64, p < .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ guests increased, so did their perceived realism of GLBTQ guests being similar to other GLBTQ members.

Finally, there was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” and “GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are
real in life” \( r(91) = .61, p < .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ guests increased, so did their perceived realism of topics discussed by GLBTQ guests.

**Heavy Viewers of Television Talk Shows on the Previous Day**

Since the second hypothesis proved significant, further analysis of heavy viewers on the previous day and the Perceived Realism Scale was necessary. There were 52 cases of heavy viewers of television talks shows yesterday, which is a sufficient amount to run correlations (Reinard 257). Selecting only the 52 cases of heavy viewers, correlations were run to discover if there was a linear relationship among those items found on the Perceived Realism Scale. Several relationships were discovered (see Table 3), however only those with a moderate to marked relationship will be discussed. The findings suggested that four groupings of significant relationships existed.

**GLBTQ Relationships**

Significant relationships were discovered between GLBTQ relationships and other items on the Perceived Realism Scale.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “GLBTQ guests present relationships that realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society” and “GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life” \( r(51) = .72, p < .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of GLBTQ relationships increased, so did their perceived realism of GLBTQ being similar to other GLBTQ people.
Table 3  Correlation Matrix of the Perceived Realism Scale Items and Heavy Viewers of Television Talk Shows on the Previous Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Talk show guests present things that are real.</th>
<th>Talk show hosts present things that are real.</th>
<th>Talk shows present things that are real.</th>
<th>GLBTQ portrayed on talk shows can be sure that the lifestyle of all GLBTQ are really that way.</th>
<th>GLBTQ guests present accurate depictions of themselves.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk show guests present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.669** .000 52</td>
<td>.700** .000 51</td>
<td>.480** .000 52</td>
<td>.445** .000 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk show hosts present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.634** .000 51</td>
<td>.404** .003 52</td>
<td>.371** .007 52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.359** .010 51</td>
<td>.520** .000 51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ portrayed on talk shows can be sure that the lifestyle of all GLBTQ are really that way.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.496** .000 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests present accurate depictions of themselves.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig.(2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life.</td>
<td>Pearson corr. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Table 3  Correlation Matrix - Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society.</th>
<th>Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live.</th>
<th>GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life.</th>
<th>Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are.</th>
<th>GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk show guests present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.569**</td>
<td>.493**</td>
<td>.664**</td>
<td>.638**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig.(2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk show hosts present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.428**</td>
<td>.363**</td>
<td>.557**</td>
<td>.678**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.002 )</td>
<td>(.008 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows present things that are real.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.449**</td>
<td>.449**</td>
<td>.521**</td>
<td>.538**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.001 )</td>
<td>(.001 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(51)</td>
<td>(51)</td>
<td>(51)</td>
<td>(51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ portrayed on talk shows can be sure that the life style of all GLBTQ are really that way.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.582**</td>
<td>.536**</td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>.496**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.029 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests present accurate depictions of themselves.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.571**</td>
<td>.554**</td>
<td>.365**</td>
<td>.505**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.008 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>.616**</td>
<td>(.483^{* *} )</td>
<td>(.638^{* *} )</td>
<td>(.716^{* *} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>( .542^{* *} )</td>
<td>(.662^{* *} )</td>
<td>( .542^{* *} )</td>
<td>( .542^{* *} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>( .706^{* *} )</td>
<td>(.563^{* *} )</td>
<td>( .648^{* *} )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(52)</td>
<td>(51)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are.</td>
<td>Pearson corr.</td>
<td>( .648^{* *} )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>(.000 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(51)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society” and “Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live” $r(52) = .62, \ p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of GLBTQ relationships increased, so did their perceived realism of talk shows displaying how GLBTQ people really live.

Talk Show Guests

Significant relationships were found between talk show guests and other items on the Perceived Realism Scale.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show guests present things that are real” and “GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life” $r(51) = .71, \ p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk show guests increased, so did their perceived realism of GLBTQ guests being similar to other GLBTQ people.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show guests present things that are real” and “Talk shows present things that are real” $r(51) = .70, \ p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk show guests increased, so did their perceived realism of talk shows.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show guests present things that are real” and “GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life” $r(52) = .66, \ p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk show guests increased, so did their perceived realism of topics discussed by GLBTQ guests.
There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show guests present things that are real” and “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” $r(52) = .66, p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk show guests increased, so did their perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ.

**Portrayal of GLBTQ**

Several significant relationships between the portrayal of GLBTQ and other items on the Perceived Realism Scale were discovered.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” and “GLBTQ as guests discuss topics that are real in life” $r(52) = .71, p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ increased, so did their perceived realism of topics discussed by GLBTQ guests.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” and “Talk show hosts present things that are real” $r(52) = .68, p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ increased, so did their perceived realism of talk show hosts.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” and “Talk shows can let me see how GLBTQ people really live” $r(52) = .66, p \leq .01$. There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ increased, so did their perceived realism of how GLBTQ people live.
There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk shows portrays GLBTQ as they really are” and “GLBTQ as guests are similar to other GLBTQ in real life” \( r(51) = .65, p \leq .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ increased, so did their perceived realism of GLBTQ guests being similar to other GLBTQ people.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk shows portray GLBTQ as they really are” and “GLBTQ guests present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other GLBTQ in society” \( r(52) = .64, p \leq .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of the portrayal of GLBTQ increased, so did their perceived realism of GLBTQ relationships.

Talk Show Hosts

Significant relationships were reported between talk show hosts and other items on the Perceived Realism Scale.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show hosts present things that are real” and “Talk show guests present things that are real” \( r(52) = .67, p \leq .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk show hosts increased, so did their perceived realism of talk show guests.

There was a moderate to marked, positive interaction between “Talk show hosts present things that are real” and “Talk shows present things that are real” \( r(51) = .63, p \leq .01 \). There is a linear relationship between these two items. As respondent’s perceived realism of talk show hosts increased, so did their perceived realism of talk shows.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study focused on viewers' perceptions of GLBTQ people on television talk shows. As discussed in Chapter I, critics (Gamson Freaks; “Publicity;” “Do Ask;” Meers) had different feelings or reactions to the public visibility of GLBTQ guests on television talk shows. Some of these reactions can now be addressed in light of the results of this study.

As mentioned, television talk shows tend to have GLBTQ guests that are not representative of GLBTQ people in general. Gabler stated that “sex and gender outsiders arguably reinforce perceptions of themselves as freaks by entering a discourse in which they may be portrayed as bizarre, outrageous, flamboyant curiosities” (Gamson “Do Ask” 82). According to Gamson, mainstreaming activists believe that television talk shows provide a distorted image of gay life (“Publicity” 19). In addition, Gamson states that one negative effect GLBTQ guests on talk shows is that they are portrayed as freaks (“Do Ask”). Heaton and Wilson argue that talk shows reinforce stereotypes “by representing outdated and exaggerated issues, bringing on hostile and backward opponents, and inviting fringe representatives of the gay community to appear” (162).

The results of the first and second hypotheses support the claim that there is a significant difference between heavy viewers and light viewers of television talk shows and their perceived realism of television talk shows. In other words, heavy viewers were
more likely to believe that television talk shows, hosts, topics, relationships, and guests, particularly GLBTQ guests, are realistic or true of today’s society. These results may have many implications. Since, heavy viewers believe that GLBTQ are representative of GLBTQ in society, heavy viewers’ beliefs can further perpetuate the stereotypes which plague GLBTQ people. The belief in these stereotypes could play a part in the hate crimes targeted at GLBTQ members. In addition, television talk shows can make it more difficult for GLBTQ people to properly inform the general public, more particularly heavy viewers of talk shows, of the GLBTQ lifestyle.

Cultivation analysis, which was developed in the late 1960’s, focuses on assessing the messages and images found on television as a whole, not on specific programs, genres, or the like. However, Davis and Mares state in their study that other research “indicates that beliefs may sometimes reflect the pattern of genre viewing rather than overall television viewing” (72). It is arguable, given the results of the current study, that research utilizing genre viewing instead of overall television viewing is more fruitful. Many modern day factors exist which support the use of genre viewing instead of television viewing as a whole in cultivation research. For instance, cable or satellite television has offered the public highly-specialized or genre-based viewing choices. MTV focuses on music, the Food Network mainly airs cooking shows, the History Channel offers a variety of history programs, the Comedy Channel provides the viewer with comedic shows, the Game Show Network airs game shows and so on. With cable and satellite television being so popular, more viewers are choosing the option of viewing genres that are particularly of interest to them. Hence, framing the television viewing as a homogenous entity is not as realistic as it once was for cultivation analysis research.
The third and fourth hypotheses attempted to discover if there was a significant difference between heavy viewers and light viewers of television talk shows and their perception of GLBTQ people in general. No significance was found. These results are interesting because heavy viewers of television talk shows perceive talk shows and their content to be realistic. Therefore, one could assume that heavy viewers would believe in GLBTQ stereotypes that were posed in the scale measuring perceptions of GLBTQ people in general. However, viewers may have been aware and educated on many of the items that appeared on the GLBTQ scale. Over the past few decades, many GLBTQ issues have been openly debated, such as the belief that gay men caused AIDS, gays in the military, same-sex marriage, or adoption of children by GLBTQ people. These open debates may have educated respondents on many of the general or common misconceptions about the GLBTQ community. However, many other topics about the GLBTQ people have not been as openly discussed or debated, such as the private sphere or life of GLBTQ people. These types of topics do however often appear on television talk shows, such as GLBTQ lifestyle and relationship issues, therefore it is likely that television talk shows may help shape perceptions of these lesser known topics, as discovered in the first and second hypothesis.

The fifth and sixth hypotheses attempted to discover if there was a significant difference between heavy and light viewers of television in general and their perception of GLBTQ in general. No significance was found. This can be due to many factors, particularly mainstreaming. In cultivation analysis, mainstreaming means “that television viewing may reduce or override differences in perspectives and behaviors which stems from other social, cultural, and demographic influences” (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and...
Signorielli "Growing" 118). The sample used in this study consisted of individuals that had at least some college education. It is possible that education in general, liberal views associated with universities, and the presence and information provided by GLBTQ student organizations on campus may have been a factor in why no significance was found. These results are favorable toward GLBTQ people because it indicates that many misconceptions about GLBTQ people have been corrected.

Also, Gamson believes that the public voice given to GLBTQ people, particularly on television talk shows, opens an opportunity for them that was formerly denied ("Do Ask" 83). This opportunity may have contributed to people's desire to educate themselves on GLBTQ people. In addition, television programming in general may contain more positive and realistic portrayals of GLBTQ people. These are areas that need further research.

The seventh hypothesis attempted to discover if there were any significant differences between respondents who were aware of Question No. 2 on the Nevada ballot and respondents who were not aware of Question No. 2 on the Nevada ballot and their perception of GLBTQ community in general. Testing of this hypothesis was conducted to reveal if mainstreaming took place. During the time of survey administration, Question No. 2 was heavily publicized and controversial. Testing of this hypothesis was done under the assumption that those who were aware of Question No. 2 may have been more educated or at least aware or exposed to GLBTQ issues, whereas those who were not aware of Question No. 2 may have been less aware and exposed to GLBTQ issues. However, no significance was found, indicating that the appearance of Question No. 2 on the Nevada ballot did not have an effect on their perception of GLBTQ people.
Correlations were run on heavy viewers of television talk shows on a typical day and heavy viewers on the previous day against the Perceived Realism Scale. Significant linear relationships were expected to exist among those items. However, the purpose of running correlations was to discover what items contributed to respondents’ perceived realism. It would appear, in order of strength, that GLBTQ relationships, talk show guests, talk show hosts, lifestyle of GLBTQ, and the portrayal of GLBTQ guests contribute to the perceived realism of heavy viewers of television talk shows on a typical day. These elements suggest that they are more powerful than other elements in influencing viewers’ perceptions of reality. These results may also indicate the viewers generally trust talk show hosts and guests. In addition, respondents may tend to believe that the portrayal of GLBTQ guests, their relationships, and lifestyles are true to life because this may possibly be the respondents’ only experience with these GLBTQ issues. Similarly, for heavy viewers on the previous day, it appears in terms of strength that GLBTQ relationships, talk show guests, the portrayal of GLBTQ guests, and talk show hosts contribute to perceived realism. These four factors may be very powerful in shaping viewers’ perceptions of reality. Again, these results suggest that viewers tend to believe in the accuracy of what talk show hosts and talk show guests say, do, and represent.

Strengths of Current Study

The adapted version of the Perceived Realism Scale used in this study demonstrated high reliability. On the initial item analysis of this scale, the Cronbach’s
coefficient alpha appeared as .91. Future researchers of television talk shows and GLBTQ people can utilize this scale or an adapted version in their research.

The four time variables are another strength of the study. Asking respondents to estimate viewing can be troublesome because many viewers may not be aware of how much television they actually watch. Including a question regarding viewing on the previous day can supply the researcher with a more accurate response. However, for this study, results were the same when it came to analyzing estimated viewership and viewership on the previous day.

Limitations

This study contains limitations caused by the sample population and several survey items. The current study used a sample of college undergraduates enrolled in basic communication courses at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The majority of talk show viewers range in age from 18 – 24 (Tobekin 33) and the majority of respondents in this study ranged from 17 – 24, however, an older audience must be included in future research because they also constitute a large portion of viewers (Tobekin 33; Heath par. 25). In addition, all respondents in this study have at least some college education, but other research indicates that “more than six in ten viewers have less than one year of college” (Heath par. 25). Also, talk show viewers are “disproportionately black” (Tobekin 33; Heath Par. 25), however, only 6.4% of the sample utilized in this study consisted of African Americans. All these sampling issues contributed to the limitations of this study.
Several items on the survey proved to be problematic. Of the four time variables included in the survey, one presented a dilemma. The item asked, “On a typical weekday, Monday through Friday, how many total hours of daytime television talk shows do you watch?” The question was meant to discover how many hours a respondent watched on one typical weekday. However, answers ranged from 0 hours to 60 hours. Since only 24 hours exist in a day, this study assumed that many of the respondents misinterpreted the question as asking how many hours total during the week do they watch. Again, since there are 24 hours in a day, it possible, although unlikely, for a respondent to watch television talk shows for 24 hours a day. Any viewing above 24 hours is impossible. Therefore, responses of 25 hours or more were divided by five (one for each weekday) in order to obtain the amount of hours respondents viewed television talk shows on a typical weekday. Once divided, all those respondents fell in the upper third of viewing hours (heavy viewers).

The survey item pertaining to household income also posed problems. Heath stated that talk show viewers consisted mostly of “those with household income less than $30,000” (par. 25). The household income question was intended to discover the various incomes of the respondents. However, many respondents were confused by the question. They were not sure if they should include only their income or the income of their parents also. Since so many respondents had problems with this question, the responses were not used in analysis.

There were three questions removed from the GLBTQ scale because they demonstrated a lack of reliability. These variables were: (1) Males tend to have surgery to become females as often as females undergo surgery to become males; (2) Partners of
bisexuals are more sexually satisfied than partners of heterosexuals; and (3) The majority of the United States is made up of heterosexuals. Upon removal of these variables, the alpha increased to .81. These findings suggest that the questions were interpreted differently by the respondents. In order for these questions to have been included in the survey, they needed to be asked in a different and more effective manner. For example, the first variable could be written to read “More men than women undergo sexual reassignment surgery.” The second variable could be asked in the following manner, “Bisexuals sexually satisfy their partners more than heterosexuals sexually satisfy their partners.” The final variable could be restated as “Most Americans are heterosexual.” These newly suggested belief statements are clearly stated and more concise than the previous statements, which, if used, may reduce the chances for confusion to occur among respondents.

Future Research

Further research on television talk shows and GLBTQ members needs to be conducted. A more representative sample of the television talk show viewers, in terms of age, income, educational level, and race, should be used in research of television talk shows viewers and perceived realism. Furthermore, in addition to research focusing on television talk show effects, the ramifications of these effects on the GLBTQ population need to be investigated. Correlation analysis also uncovered many factors that contributed to the perceived realism of heavy viewers of television talk shows. Future research can study these factors and discover why these are so powerful in influencing viewers.
In terms of television viewing in general, further research, such as content analysis, is needed on the portrayal of GLBTQ people, especially with the rise of prime-time programming featuring GLBTQ characters. In addition, viewers' perceptions of these characters and the effects of these perceptions on the GLBTQ people also need to be studied.

Education has been mentioned several times in discussion of the results of this study. More research is needed on the power of educating people on GLBTQ issues and the effects of that education. Educational tools, such as pamphlets, lectures, seminars, courses offered and so on, should be studied in order to gain an understanding of which tactics are effective and which ones are not in eliminating stereotypes.
A Study in Media Portrayals

My name is Vicki Oliver. I am a graduate student at the Hank Greenspun School of Communication at UNLV. As part of my completion of a Master of Arts degree, I am conducting a study on media portrayals. The purpose of this study is to examine audience television viewing and television’s portrayal of individuals.

We are interested in your opinions, because your opinions are valuable to us. The survey consists of five parts, and will only take a few minutes of your time. Questions on the survey are likely to cause some participants to feel discomfort. The results of the study may benefit society by providing a greater understanding of media portrayals. If you choose to participate in this study, then go ahead by completing the attached survey. Once completed, return the survey the administrator. If you need extra time to answer the survey, then you can return it when completed to FDH 129. If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact Vicki Oliver at 895-3964. If you have any questions regarding the rights of research subjects, you can contact the Office of Sponsored Programs at 895-1357.

Please understand that your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to stop answering the survey at any time without penalty. The information you provide will be held in strict confidence by the researcher. All data will be reported in group form for research purposes only. This survey will be secured in a locked filing cabinet in FDH 425 for a three-year period, and then destroyed.

You may keep this top page, the informed consent, for yourself. By completing the attached survey, you are acknowledging your understanding of this study, and are agreeing to participate. Thank you for your participation.
PART I

Please indicate the degree to which you strongly agree, agree, are undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree to the statements below by placing an “X” in the appropriate box. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Gay men did not cause AIDS.
   [ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

2. Most cross-dressers are heterosexual (Cross-dressers are individuals who wear clothing, shoes and so on that are usually worn by members of the opposite sex).
   [ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

3. Bisexuals are as likely to transmit sexually transmitted diseases (STD’s) as heterosexuals.
   [ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

4. Lesbians are promiscuous (have multiple sex partners).
   [ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

5. Transgendered people, those individuals who live their lives as members of the opposite sex, are mentally ill.
   [ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

6. Males tend to have surgery to become females as often as females undergo surgery to become males.
   [ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

7. Heterosexuality is the only normal sexual orientation.
   [ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

8. Gay men are desperate for physical contact.
   [ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree
9. Cross-dressers are outrageous (Cross-dressers are individuals who wear clothing, shoes and so on that are usually worn by members of the opposite sex).
[ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

10. Partners of bisexuals are more sexually satisfied than partners of heterosexuals.
[ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

11. Lesbians would make good parents.
[ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

12. Transgendered people, those individuals who live their lives as members of the opposite sex, are normal.
[ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

13. Transsexuality is a disease (Transsexuals are those individuals who alter their body either by hormone therapy or surgery to become a member of the opposite sex).
[ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

14. The majority of the United States is made up of heterosexuals.
[ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

PART II

This part of the survey focuses on daytime television talk shows. Please complete this part of the survey even if you do not watch daytime television talk shows. Daytime television talk shows usually consist of one host, a panel of guests, a live studio audience, and are an hour long.

Please indicate the degree to which you strongly agree, agree, are undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree to the statements below by placing an “X” in the appropriate box. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. I feel that daytime television talk shows present things that are real.
[ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree

2. I believe that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people as guests on talk shows are similar to other gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people in real life.
[ ] strongly agree [ ] agree [ ] undecided [ ] disagree [ ] strongly disagree
3. If I see gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people portrayed on talk shows, I can be sure that the lifestyle of all gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people are really that way.
[ ]strongly agree [ ]agree [ ]undecided [ ]disagree [ ]strongly disagree

4. I believe that these daytime television talk show guests present things that are real.
[ ]strongly agree [ ]agree [ ]undecided [ ]disagree [ ]strongly disagree

5. I believe that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people as guests on talk shows, present accurate depictions of themselves.
[ ]strongly agree [ ]agree [ ]undecided [ ]disagree [ ]strongly disagree

6. I feel that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people as guests on talk shows, present relationships that are realistic portrayals of other gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people in society.
[ ]strongly agree [ ]agree [ ]undecided [ ]disagree [ ]strongly disagree

7. I believe that television talk shows can let me see how gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people really live.
[ ]strongly agree [ ]agree [ ]undecided [ ]disagree [ ]strongly disagree

8. I believe that these television talk show hosts present things that are real.
[ ]strongly agree [ ]agree [ ]undecided [ ]disagree [ ]strongly disagree

9. In my opinion, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people as guests on talk shows, discuss topics that are real in life.
[ ]strongly agree [ ]agree [ ]undecided [ ]disagree [ ]strongly disagree

10. I believe that television talk shows portray gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people as they really are.
[ ]strongly agree [ ]agree [ ]undecided [ ]disagree [ ]strongly disagree
PART III

Please answer the following questions by indicating the appropriate number of hours and/or minutes in the space provided.

1. On a typical day, how many total hours of television do you watch?
   ___ hours ___ minutes

2. How many total hours of television did you watch yesterday?
   ___ hours ___ minutes

3. On a typical weekday, Monday through Friday, how many total hours of daytime television talk shows do you watch?
   ___ hours ___ minutes

4. How many of hours of these daytime television talk shows did you watch yesterday?
   ___ hours ___ minutes

PART IV

This portion of the survey focuses on your viewing, if any, of certain daytime television talk shows.

Below are a number of specific daytime television talk shows. You may currently watch one or more of these shows. You may have watched one or more of these shows in the past. Or, you may have never watched any of these specific talk shows. Please indicate by marking an “X” in the appropriate category(ies) below whether you currently watch the program, have watched the program in the past, or have never watched the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talk Shows</th>
<th>Currently Watch</th>
<th>Have Watched</th>
<th>Never Watched</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Jenny Jones Show</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Jerry Springer Show</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maury Povich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montel Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ricki Lake</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sally Jessy Raphael</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART V

Please answer the following questions. Where necessary, please mark an “X” by the appropriate answer. Please be sure to mark only one answer.

1. Age _______

2. Sex  [ ] Male  [ ] Female

3. Your sexual orientation
   [ ] Heterosexual  [ ] Gay  [ ] Lesbian  [ ] Bisexual  [ ] Asexual

4. Please indicate your sexual orientation by circling the appropriate “X” on the scale below.
   Heterosexual  Bisexual  Homosexual
   X   X   X   X   X

5. Race  [ ] Native American  [ ] Asian/Pacific Islander  [ ] Caucasian
   [ ] Latino/a  [ ] African-American  [ ] Other

6. What was your 1999 household income before taxes?

   [ ] $0 - $4,999  [ ] 5,000 - 9,999  [ ] 10,000 - 14,999  [ ] 15,000 - 19,999  [ ] 20,000 - 24,999
   [ ] 25,000 - 29,999  [ ] 30,000 - 34,999  [ ] 35,000 - 39,999  [ ] 40,000 - 44,999  [ ] 45,000 - 49,999
   [ ] 50,000 - 54,999  [ ] 55,000 - 59,999  [ ] 60,000 - 64,999  [ ] 65,000 or above

7. Question No. 2 on the Nevada ballot this past election asked voters if the Nevada Constitution should be amended to provide that: “Only a marriage between a male and female person shall be recognized and given effect in this state.”

   Were you aware that Question No. 2 appeared on the ballot this past election?
   [ ] Yes, I was aware that it appeared.  [ ] No, I was not aware that it appeared.

Thank you for participating. When you are done with the survey, please raise your hand to indicate to your instructor/survey administrator that you are done.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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