

REALITY TV AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP PERCEPTIONS

Kristin L. Cherry

Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to understand the relationship between viewer motives for watching reality TV, reality TV exposure, and interpersonal relationship perceptions. The interpersonal relationship perceptions that were examined included: attachment styles, love styles, and machiavellianism. Watching for positive outcomes was positively related to reality TV viewing and watching for interpersonal outcomes was negatively related. While controlling for overall TV viewing, reality TV was found to be positively associated with a game-playing and cunning view of relationships, and negatively related to an avoidant attachment style. Watching reality shows with traditional values was negatively related to a game-playing perspective of love, and watching half-hour network dating shows was positively related to this game-playing perspective. Watching reality shows that were filmed in a documentary style was positively related to a cunning view of relationships. Reality TV was found to mediate the relationship between motives and outcomes in three models: first, between interpersonal motives and machiavellianism; second, between positive outcomes and the avoidant attachment style; and third, between interpersonal motives and the avoidant attachment style. Interpersonal attraction and perceived reality were not found to moderate the relationship between motives for watching reality TV and interpersonal relationship perceptions. Focus group interviews further explained these findings.