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**IS WATCHING OTHERS SELF-DISCLOSE ENJOYABLE?  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECTS OF DEPTH AND MODE OF  
INFORMATION DELIVERY IN ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA**

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## ABSTRACT

One of the ways in which relationships develop and become more intimate is through the exchange of personal feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and desires. This process of making the self known to others, or *self-disclosure*, has been extensively studied for decades in areas of psychology, sociology, and interpersonal communication. Considerable research has supported the positive associations between disclosure of personal information and relationship satisfaction, attainment of intimacy, and pursuit for relational longevity. If self-disclosure is conceptualized as a means through which closeness or familiarity is produced between partners (under the premise that the disclosure is not negative), can such a response be attributable to *mediated* forms of self-disclosure between a viewer and character on television? The present study empirically tests the effects of two particular dimensions of self-disclosure—depth (private vs. public information) and mode of information delivery (character-to-viewer vs. character-to-character vs. narrator-to-viewer). Findings support the prediction that a viewer’s overall enjoyment of witnessing the disclosure of a character’s personal information, identification, and transportation are functions of depth and mode of information delivery. Further, results suggest the important role of “character address” in heightening audience engagement. This study invaluablely provides a deeper understanding of the ways in which personal information exchange in the context of entertainment media helps to facilitate enjoyment through different paths of involvement. Implications for the similarity of interpersonal and mediated relationships, societal expectations of privacy, effective entertainment formats, and online self-disclosure are discussed.

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# Is Watching Others Self-Disclose Enjoyable? An Examination of the Effects of Depth and Mode of Information Delivery in Entertainment Media

## Introduction

One of the ways in which we learn and become knowledgeable about others is by witnessing the revealing of personal information. Self-disclosure is the “process of making the self known to others” (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). It is often described as the means through which unknown information is exposed by the self (discloser) to a recipient (disclosee) so that information becomes shared knowledge between both parties. An individual’s decision to self-disclose can influence not only the nature of his or her relationships with others, but also psychological well-being (Derlega & Berg, 1987). Because self-disclosure is conceptualized as the exchange of personal information, its role has principally been studied in the context of interpersonal relationships.

A vast body of research in psychology and interpersonal communication has documented the importance of self-disclosure with regards to its underlying motivations and outcomes (e.g., Fehr, 1996; Fehr, 1999; Homans, 1958; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Sanderson & Cantor, 2001; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), dimensions of breadth, depth, duration, accuracy, intention, and relevance (e.g., Altman & Taylor, 1973; Cozby, 1973; Wheelless & Grotz, 1976), and relational benefits and costs (e.g., Homans, 1958; Jourard, 1971a; Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990; Rawlins, 1992). Social penetration theory suggests that the development of a relationship occurs via the act of self-disclosure, using the metaphor of peeling an onion to describe the process (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Self-disclosure entails the peeling away of layers of an individual’s identity, consciously exposing pieces of one’s self-concept. Principally, the extent to which partners self-disclose is positively associated with the development of relational

closeness (Taylor, 1979). Self-disclosure is indeed a vital component of interpersonal processes, for it influences the selection of communicative partners, our perceptions of those with whom we interact, the structure and potential of our relationships, and our desire for relational longevity. Through the social penetration process, when individuals reveal their private domain by breaking down barriers of their personality structure, relationships become more meaningful and enduring.

Other theories of information exchange are grounded on the assumption that human beings want and expect reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). In any interaction, individuals are expected to have benefits returned to them if they themselves are providing these benefits to others. Self-disclosure carries potential relational expectations, influencing how personal information exchange is received and ultimately, reciprocated. For example, if perceived mutual benefits outweigh the cost of one's vulnerability, self-disclosure is expected to proceed. Therefore, this interpersonal process is often conceptualized as a means through which stable and true intimacy evolves. In addition to the enhancement of relational closeness, self-disclosure can also be attributed to maintaining balance in existing relationships (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Alberts, Yoshimura, Rabby, & Loschiavo, 2005).

Although the construct of self-disclosure has been extensively studied with respect to person-to-person interactions, this dissertation attempts to bridge the fields of interpersonal communication and mass communication. When applying the construct of self-disclosure to the media landscape, one of the ways we learn about characters on television is through observing them divulge their thoughts, feelings, or prior experiences. In both fiction and nonfiction contexts, we witness characters in sitcoms and dramas disclosing private feelings to other characters, and guests on talk shows speaking about their life-changing personal traumas and successes. Whether it is Rachel confessing her love to Ross on NBC's *Friends* or Oprah Winfrey

exposing her childhood struggles to the audience, self-disclosure is clearly prevalent in entertainment media. Although the amount or level of intimacy exchanged varies with the type of information disclosed (e.g., biography, feelings, attitudes, fears, etc.), the act of self-disclosure in entertainment programming is particularly distinguished by its mode of delivery. The most customary forms of self-disclosure occur when characters reveal personal information through conversation. However, over the past decade with the proliferation of reality-based television, the exposure of private information by characters directly to the audience is a frequent occurrence through statements made in “confessionals” (e.g., *The Real World*, *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, etc.). Self-disclosure is not only an important aspect in the interpersonal exchanges we experience on a daily basis, but also a common practice in the media environment. Observing characters self-disclose on television can have a bearing on our impressions of them and our evaluations of their judgments and actions. More substantially, these representations may even influence our involvement with program content and the degree to which we enjoy it.

To more comprehensively explore the construct of self-disclosure in its *mediated* form, the question of how viewers respond to portrayals of self-disclosure in entertainment media warrants greater attention. If it is the case that self-disclosure is a process through which relational closeness is enhanced (under the premise that the nature of the disclosed information is not negative), can this be translated to the ways in which viewers react to characters self-disclosing on television? Applying theories of information exchange and media entertainment, the present study examines the extent to which the depth of the disclosed information (public vs. private) and the mode of information delivery (character disclosing information to the viewer vs. character disclosing information to a character vs. narrator disclosing information to a viewer), drive audience enjoyment via processes of identification and transportation. Theoretically

motivated to explain the effects of mediated self-disclosure, this research extends the construct's role beyond interpersonal relationships. More specifically, delineating the ways in which self-disclosure is situated in the context of entertainment media can provide a deeper understanding of how personal information exchange heightens audience involvement with mediated texts.

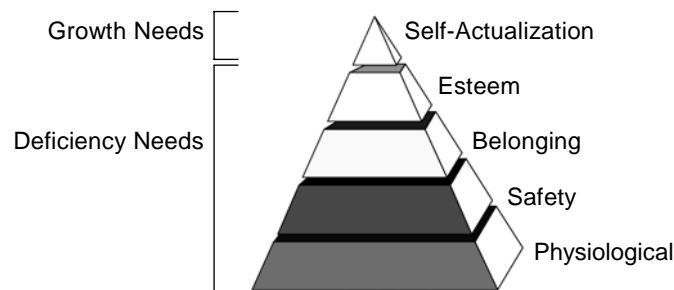
## Literature Review

Early attempts to explain the disclosure of information described the process of self-disclosure as a “social exchange” (Homans, 1958). Social exchange theory posits that interpersonal relationships are consciously formed and maintained, and that via a cost-benefit analysis, people will knowingly decide the amount of personal information to reveal. If the benefit of the relationship outweighs the perceived cost, future interactions will be anticipated and the relationship will persist. According to this theory, social change and stability are described as processes of negotiated exchanges. The norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) provides an insight as to why any relationship is perceived as a social exchange. Expected benefits are described as guiding the exchange of commodity or *information* in the context of self-disclosure.

Although the notion of *exchange* was originally applied to social behaviors in an economic context, its focus shifted in the direction of explaining how actions displayed in an interaction are contingent on perceived relational rewards (e.g., reactions from others) (Blau, 1964). In other words, the need for reciprocity gives way to certain relational expectations, such that people who give a lot to others will try to get just as much from them as possible, *and* people who receive a lot from others become pressured to give just as much to them (Homans, 1958). Taking into account these needs and expectations of social exchange, the process of self-disclosure has implications for the development of close relationships (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

One of the ways to explain motives for relationship development is through Maslow’s (1970) theory of motivation. Using a hierarchical structure of needs, he proposed that humans possess two categories of needs—growth and deficiency (see Figure 1). Individuals first engage in behaviors with the intent of gratifying deficiency needs before they are capable of satisfying

growth needs. For example, the need for belonging is characterized as a deficiency need that has to be achieved prior to the attainment of one's sense of self-worth. This sequence of physical and psychological needs establishes a valuable foundation for understanding a broad range of communication behaviors. To further explain the needs that are most fundamental to human growth, others argue that interpersonal attachment and the desire for social inclusion are essential motives governing communicative behaviors (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). These innate interpersonal needs may explain why self-disclosure is such a vital force in relationship development. If relational closeness is deemed desirable, one means through which intimacy can be attained is through the disclosure of personal information.



*Figure 1.* Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

### *Self-Disclosure*

To understand the role that self-disclosure plays in relational development, it is critical to examine the functions and dimensions of the process. Self-disclosure has a multitude of functions, including enhancing relational closeness (see Altman & Taylor, 1973; Sanderson & Cantor, 1997), attaining social validation and social control (see Archer, 1987; Miller & Read, 1987), reducing uncertainty within interactions (see Berger & Calabrese, 1975), and maintaining trust between partners (see Pennebaker et al., 1990). Furthermore, self-disclosure is a multi-

dimensional construct. Dimensions of breadth, depth, duration, intentionality, nature (negative-positive), accuracy, and relevance are commonly documented in interpersonal literature as important aspects of self-disclosure (see Altman & Taylor, 1973; Cozby, 1973; Wheelless & Grotz, 1976). The following sections detail the motivations and outcomes of the process, along with the ways in which self-disclosure varies along the aforementioned dimensions.

*Functions of self-disclosure.* Whereas self-disclosure can be largely motivated by one's need for belonging as previously noted (Maslow, 1970), it can also serve a variety of alternative functions (Archer, 1987; Miller & Read, 1987). Individuals may engage in self-disclosure for purposes of social validation. In this case, the revealing of personal information is intended as a way to receive feedback or confirmation from others, or to obtain help with problems. People may also be inclined to self-disclose to achieve social control. Some individuals are likely to selectively expose information in order to establish a good impression or to maintain friendships. These instances of deliberate self-disclosure used to favor the disposition of the self during social interactions serve to manage one's reputation and agency.

Another objective of self-disclosure is to strengthen one's ability to predict the thoughts and actions of others. Individuals who desire to enhance relational predictability are more likely to self-disclose and thus, establish expectations of reciprocal exchange (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Uncertainty reduction theory posits that in order to reduce our uncertainty about a situation, we communicate with others for knowledge gain. Therefore, one of the primary goals is to create the most predictable and controlled relationships. The motivating force behind self-disclosure is essentially to eliminate relational ambiguity, in which the communicator attains not only knowledge and certainty about the recipient, but also verification about his or her relationship with the recipient.



In addition to being motivated by the relief of uncertainty states, information management can also be governed by self-defense incentives (Deutsch, 1958; Loomis, 1959; Rubin, 1975). Instead of focusing on the content that people disclose, it is important to recognize what people avoid revealing. For example, protecting oneself and shielding one's vulnerability are significant predictors of avoidance behaviors, especially in close interactions such as friendships (Afifi & Guerrero, 1998). Another way to explain these avoidance behaviors is through the need to regulate interactions to alleviate the risk of vulnerability (Petronio, 1991). Depending on the degree of perceived risk, privacy boundaries can be more strictly enforced or loosely collapsed during communication. Vulnerability can come in the form of emotional or physical liability and reflects a building of trust (Jourard, 1971b). Increased communication can produce trust, however trust can also serve as an antecedent of one's willingness to self-disclose (Pennebaker et al., 1990).

Whereas self-disclosure can produce a number of relational benefits, the primary function of self-disclosure examined in this dissertation is the enhancement of relational closeness. As formerly noted, such a response is under the premise that the information disclosed is not deemed negative. First, in order to understand how self-disclosure operates in relationship development, it is critical to discuss the role of intimacy. Considerable research has supported the strong association between intimacy and relationship satisfaction (e.g., Reis & Shaver, 1988; Sanderson, Rahm, & Beigbeder, 2005). Individuals with a strong focus on intimacy are more likely to engage in high levels of self-disclosure and social support (Sanderson & Cantor, 1997; Sanderson & Evans, 2001; Sarason, Shearlin, Pierce, & Sarason, 1987). Recurring evidence for the positive relationship between motivation for intimacy and self-disclosure clearly suggests

that the exchange of personal information is largely facilitated by the pursuit for closeness and relational familiarity.

Social psychologists have proposed theories of relational development as early as the 1970s. The social penetration theory explains how intimacy is established between partners through the process of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973). In other words, its underlying assumption is that intimacy increases *only* if people proceed to self-disclose. As relationships grow, communication advances from relatively shallow to more personal levels of intimacy, making relational closeness a result of high social penetration. One of the goals of an interaction is to penetrate through one's public identity in order to understand and reveal one's private identity. In the early stages of a relationship, people are more likely to exchange non-intimate, impersonal information (peripheral level) than intimate, personal information (core level). Over time, individuals become increasingly more open and exhibit greater tendencies to take part in intimate disclosure. This pattern of self-disclosure based on temporal dimensions applies to virtually all types of interactions, from friendships to romantic relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Taylor & Altman, 1987). As a result of self-disclosure, relationships are strengthened due to deep penetration into an individual's personal and private matters, producing trust through exposure to one's vulnerabilities.

*Dimensions of self-disclosure.* Altman and Taylor (1973) and Cozby (1973) suggest that there are three basic parameters or dimensions of self-disclosure—breadth, depth, and duration. Breadth refers to the amount of information exchanged or number of self-relevant statements made by the discloser. In other words, it is the range of topics being disclosed in an interaction. Duration is the length of time the self-disclosure occurs or persists within an interaction. Although breadth and duration have been identified as important aspects of self-disclosure, depth

of information exchange has also been studied as a unit of analysis (e.g., Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983; Moon, 2000; Tidwell & Walther, 2002). In this case, self-disclosure is viewed as a message or message characteristic. Depth of self-disclosure is defined as the level of intimacy exchanged, or the amount of information available on each topic. It is the degree to which particular topics are exposed and deemed personal, or the route to which information is revealed closer to the core of one's self-concept.

Altman and Taylor (1973) have commonly used a three-layer categorization scheme to classify different levels of depth. Although exchange of personal information takes place, not all self-disclosure is equal. For example, disclosing one's birth month is not the same as disclosing one's age or place or residence. Furthermore, disclosing one's relationship status is not the same as disclosing one's sexual desires and fantasies. Guided by content analyses intended to assess the dimensions of depth of disclosure, self-disclosure can be classified into the following layers—peripheral, intermediate, and core (Altman & Taylor, 1973). In the peripheral layer, information is concerned primarily with biographic data (e.g., age, family, hometown, and occupation). In the intermediate layer, attitudes, values, and opinions are exposed. At the core, personal beliefs, needs, and fears are revealed and considered most private to the individual.

In an effort to investigate self-disclosure as a multi-dimensional construct, Wheelless and Grotz (1976) identified other dimensions of self-disclosure, including intention (awareness on the part of the communicator to disclose personal information), amount (frequency and duration of the disclosure), nature (negative versus positive in valence), control of depth (perceived control of the depth of information revealed), accuracy (honesty of the disclosure), and relevance (disclosure as related to the conversation). When assessing these dimensions, findings indicated that individuals who were more consciously motivated to disclose personal information and

actually had disclosed it, had a greater tendency to trust the recipient (Wheless & Grotz, 1976). For females, if the disclosure was perceived as more honest, it was considered less positive in nature. Such results suggest that self-disclosure varies not only in terms of breadth and depth, but also along other parameters, including intentionality, valence, control, and accuracy.

Expanding on the dimension of intentionality of self-disclosure, it is questionable whether or not people can accurately assess or are consciously aware of their interpersonal needs. As individuals seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs, they are likely to depend on perceived outcomes to determine whether the development of a relationship will be enjoyable. The theory of social exchange assumes that individuals can accurately determine the benefits of their actions by making rationale choices based on predictions of the outcome of self-disclosure. In this case, relational closeness serves as a function of self-disclosure under the premise that the exchange of information is expected to be systematically reciprocated. While heightened risks of vulnerability and distrust potentially support self-disclosure's premeditated nature, there could be instances in which self-disclosure is more *automatic* than systematic. Scholars have supported the notion that information exchange can occur without deliberation, in that it is not always a carefully scrutinized decision. In situations where psychological distress is immediately alleviated confirms the unintentional nature of self-disclosure (Archer & Berg, 1978; Cozby, 1972).

Although self-disclosure is identified as a multi-dimensional construct, a primary focus of this study's analysis of mediated forms of personal information exchange is the dimension of *depth*. Other aspects, such as nature (negative-positive), accuracy, and relevance of the disclosure are considered to help interpret the results of the study. Drawing from the functions

and dimensions of self-disclosure, the link between mediated self-disclosure and the experience of enjoyment are discussed in the following section.

*Viewing Mediated Self-Disclosure as “Enjoyable”*

Self-disclosure is evidently guided by a variety of motivational factors, each serving a distinct interpersonal function. For the purposes of this dissertation, the theoretical framework is directed by propositions of social exchange and social penetration, suggesting that self-disclosure is a process particularly associated with the enhancement of relational closeness. Intimacy is indeed manifested in the disclosure of personal information and has received considerable support in heightening relationship satisfaction. Satisfaction within a relationship can be attributed to feelings of pleasure, gratification, and a sense of interpersonal fulfillment. Taking into consideration the motivations and outcomes of intimate self-disclosure in an interpersonal context, the question remains—Are the ways in which we respond to self-disclosure in our own interactions with others attributable to presentations of self-disclosure in the *media*?

In order to address this question, it is important to acknowledge that in *both* interpersonal and mediated forms of information exchange, level of intimacy or depth is a prominent variable. For example, the disclosure of public information is likely to elicit less intimate responses than that of private information. With regards to mediated forms of self-disclosure (in this case, self-disclosure portrayed on television), the exchange of personal information exists not only between characters, but also between the character and viewer. Reality television, and most recently sitcoms (e.g., NBC’s *The Office*), employ a production format conducive to portraying characters divulging personal information to the audience. In such instances, characters are “speaking to the camera.” Furthermore, viewers can also learn about characters from a third party (e.g., narrator). It is expected that learning about a character’s personal information directly from himself or

herself results in a much different viewing experience than if a character's information was disclosed by someone else.

Since increasing relational closeness is deemed desirable and elicits pleasurable interpersonal responses (e.g., intimacy), experiences associated with viewer gratification should result from exposure to mediated forms of self-disclosure. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that relational satisfaction and perceived intimacy may translate to the construct of *enjoyment* when witnessing self-disclosures (generally positive in nature) of characters on television. Enjoyment has generally been defined as a favorable disposition toward media content (Raney, 2003; Zillmann & Bryant, 1994). Products we consider “entertaining” are often described as evoking some form of pleasure. This study posits that gratification sought from relationships in an interpersonal context is perhaps analogous to that derived from viewing intimate personal disclosures in a mediated environment. Such fulfillment or satisfaction could be explained in part by the experience of enjoyment. To investigate how self-disclosure operates in the media landscape, ultimately impacting a viewer's overall enjoyment, the goals of this dissertation are twofold: 1) To explain how two particular audience responses to media entertainment—identification and transportation—are associated with enjoyment, and 2) To examine the ways in which two facets of self-disclosure—depth of the disclosed information and mode of information delivery—operate in predicting audience enjoyment.

Entertainment scholars have used an array of terms to describe the construct of enjoyment—liking (Hoffner, 1996; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2000), attraction (Cantor, 1998; Krcmar & Greene, 1999), appreciation (Tamborini & Stiff, 1987), and preference (Weaver, 1991). Theories of enjoyment have explained this construct as a function of character disposition and story outcome (e.g., Raney, 2003; Zillmann & Bryant, 1986), empathy (e.g., Hoffmann,

1987; Oliver, 1993), and moral judgment (e.g., Bandura, 1990; Raney, 2002). Perry (2001) described enjoyment as the extent to which an individual rated his or her experience as amusing, imaginative, and interesting. More recently, Nabi and Kremer (2004) conceptualized enjoyment as an integration of affective, cognitive, and behavioral components. These authors proposed a tripartite model of media enjoyment, suggesting that the construct is functionally equivalent to attitudes. They argued that the three components of affect, cognition, and behavior are likely to interrelate and that each predicts enjoyment to varying degrees, depending on viewing motivations, viewing circumstances, etc.

Although several entertainment theories have attempted to tap into the conceptualization of *enjoyment* by predicting the key factors associated with this phenomenon, the present study focuses on two particular audience responses— identification (see Cohen, 2001) and transportation (see Gerrig, 1993). These two processes describe ways in which viewers become engaged with mediated texts (e.g., through experiences with characters and the narrative, respectively), and suggest that emotional and cognitive involvement can help facilitate program enjoyment. In an attempt to explore how mediated self-disclosure operates in one's viewing experience, ultimately predicting levels of enjoyment, the following sections offer explanations for how identification and transportation are antecedents of enjoyment.

*Identification.* Media characters play an integral role in our experiences with entertainment (Cohen, 2006; Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm, 2006; Zillmann, 2006). One of the many responses that viewers have with entertainment media is character identification. Identification is derived from a psychological attachment between the viewer and the character (Cohen, 1997; Cole & Leets, 1999). This active and imaginary state is a means through which audiences become involved with the fictional world. In their original conceptualization, Horton

and Wohl (1956) described identification as a process through which viewers put themselves in the position of a character, losing their own identities while vicariously participating in the character's experiences. Others (e.g., Rosengren & Windahl, 1972) similarly characterized it as an imaginative process through which someone sees himself or herself in the place of another person. In these conceptualizations, identification is clearly attributed as a *process* in which a viewer loses self-awareness temporarily (Cohen, 2006).

Whereas identification may entail identity adoption, the construct has also been examined in its *wishful* form, the extent to which a viewer desires to be like a character, or behaves similarly to a character (see Feilitzen & Linne, 1975; Hoffner, 1996). For example, children are more likely to identify with characters who they wish to be like, rather than with those who they are already like. Aggressive children report higher levels of homophily and identification with aggressive characters than non-aggressive children (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Moreover, traits of the character and viewer can also determine the extent to which identification is experienced. For example, male characters are generally more liked for their intelligence, whereas female characters are more liked for their physical appearance (Hoffner, 1996). Overall, women are more likely to hold stronger identification with characters than men (Cohen, 1997), and children are more likely to identify with television role models than adults (Bandura, 1965). These aforementioned findings indicate variations in the strength of identification as a function of both the viewer and the target character.

Although identification has been studied with respect to a viewer's wishful and homophily states, the explication of character identification for this dissertation is a process in which "an audience member imagines him- or herself being that character and replaces his or her personal identity and role as audience member with the identity and role of the character within



the text” (Cohen, 2001, p. 251). This imaginative process entails two dimensions— affective and cognitive. The most common form of affective identification is empathy, characterized as one’s ability to acknowledge and share the emotions of a character. For example, if a character is portrayed as experiencing agony, a viewer can emotionally identify with the character through feeling his or her pain, anxiety, or distress. Another aspect of identification involves the cognitive understanding of a character’s goals and motives. In other words, it is the extent to which a viewer is able to take on a character’s point of view, and understand the events in a manner similar to that in which the character understands them. Furthermore, the ability to comprehend the reasons why a character does what he or she does can be classified as cognitive identification.

Identification can be experienced to varying degrees, for the process itself is not static. Strong character identification occurs when a viewer empathizes with a character, genuinely cares for and experiences the character’s motives, goals, and outcomes, and almost disregards the role of audience (Cohen, 2001). Oatley (1994) describes the experience of identification as particularly mobile, in the sense that the audience is able to consistently move in and out of the process. Viewers may not entirely lose their identities as audience members, but rather suspend their roles temporarily. The boundary separating fiction and reality can be compared to a *semi-permeable membrane*, through which viewers are capable of emotionally and cognitively transitioning in and out via their identification with characters, imagining that they are indeed participating in the fictional world.

The importance of identification can be largely explained by its influence on message involvement (Cohen, 2001), suggesting that identification increases message elaboration and persuasion. Supporting the vital role of identification in the study of media effects, Liebes and

Katz (1990) found that when viewers were asked to report their reactions to program content, their evaluations and attitudes comprised mainly of references to characters. Evidence further confirms that identification with characters not only enhances a viewer's tendency to adopt and recall messages within the text (e.g., Basil, 1996; Maccoby & Wilson, 1957), but also promotes behaviors learned through these messages, such as acts of violence (e.g., Huesmann, Lagerspetz, & Eron, 1984). Therefore, the prominent role of identification in its influence on media reception has and continues to spark the interests of scholars who wish to further investigate it in the context of entertainment media.

Given the characteristics of identification, it can be inferred that character identification (e.g., when a viewer adopts the perspective of a character by experiencing empathy and cognitive appraisal) is associated with enjoyment. Media characters play a vital role in a program's overall appeal, for they are often mentioned as reasons for which the viewing experience was deemed enjoyable (see Cohen, 2006; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991; Vorderer & Knobloch, 2002). An explanation for the link between identification and enjoyment is derived from theories of audience activity. The uses and gratifications (U&G) perspective posits that a dimension of audience activity is *involvement* (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Involvement is conceptualized as the perceived connectedness and affective and cognitive interaction between the viewer and media content (Perse, 1990). According to U&G, greater involvement with media content should be considered more gratifying and associated with more positive outcomes, such as enjoyment. Individuals are assumed to be active selectors and users of media, seeking products that are intended to gratify particular social and psychological needs. When audiences become more involved, by identifying and interacting with characters, this can in turn facilitate more pleasurable experiences. Other scholars (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004) suggest

that an antecedent or prerequisite of enjoyment is the relationship that a viewer develops with mediated characters when exposed to program content. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the more a viewer identifies with a character, greater enjoyment will be experienced.

*Transportation.* In addition to identification with media characters, a viewer's ability to be absorbed into a narrative can also be imperative in predicting enjoyment. Although inducing suspense via withholding information has been found to produce positive affect (Brewer, 1996), the present study argues that when more information is accessible, viewers will experience greater enjoyment through engaging in the narrative world via *transportation*. Whereas identification is a response to media characters, transportation is a more holistic experience which assumes an immersion process, placing the viewer into the world of the narrative. According to Nell (1988), it is the feeling of "being lost in a story." In an attempt to compare the experience of transportation to traveling, Gerrig (1993) states:

Someone (the traveler) is transported, by some means of transportation, as a result of performing certain actions. The traveler goes some distance from his or her world of origin, which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible. The traveler returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey. (pp. 10-11)

When viewers are transported, absorption into the mediated text, attention, and focus are so intense that they are able to transition from the role of the audience into the narrative world. One of the effects of transportation is that the reader departs from his or her world of origin or *reality*, described as a "loss of access" to the real world, and accepts admission into the narrative world. Highly transported viewers are mentally involved in the narrative and furthermore, able to picture themselves in the scenes of the events. Indicators of transportation could be that viewers are not able to discern things occurring in their own surroundings, or may feel psychologically

distant from reality. Gerrig (1993) suggests that even if one is aware that the story is fictional, he or she may still experience strong emotions and motivations. As a result of the transportation process, this mental experience should change the viewer, whether they are changes in beliefs or attitudes.

According to Green, Brock, and Kaufman (2004), transportation “illuminates the experience of enjoyment...the benefits that might come from media exposure...and the conditions under which enjoyment is more or less likely to occur” (p. 324). The notions that people want to be entertained (Brock & Livingston, 2004) and that escapism is a way to experience enjoyment help to explain the link between transportation and enjoyment. In some cases, individuals who are transported into the narrative world have a greater tendency to feel a sense of release from the burdens and stresses of the real world. For example, consistent viewing of television has been found to reduce people’s self-discrepancies (Moskalenko & Heine, 2003). This relief from negative affective states could be deemed positive, or even enjoyable. Furthermore, transportation could engender enjoyment through the process of learning. In other words, a viewer may experience pleasure by simply being enriched with new knowledge or information (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004). In addition, a positive relationship between the two constructs was found in the context of short stories (Green, Brock, & Livingston, 2004; Green, Rozin, Aldao, Pollack, & Small, 2004), suggesting that transportation could contribute to a viewer’s overall enjoyment. Findings indicate that those who evidenced high levels of transportation, as well as enjoyment, also reported favorable recommendations of the story to others.

While transportation has been largely examined in the context of print narrative, it may also be applied to other forms of media. For example, the appeal of entertainment programs on

television (e.g., sitcoms and reality shows) is largely driven by plot and character outcomes. It is reasonable to posit that the more information an individual is provided during his or her viewing experience, the more likely absorption into the text will take place. For purposes of this study, the information being described is personal information about a character. Since involvement with mediated text is assumed to be a form of gratification (employing an active audience perspective), when more information about characters is accessible and known, enjoyment should likely result due to the facilitation of transportation.

*Dimensions of Mediated Self-Disclosure Predicting Enjoyment: Hypotheses*

Given that identification and transportation are expected to be associated with a viewer's overall enjoyment, this dissertation investigates the ways in which mediated self-disclosure operates in predicting such responses. Taking into consideration the substantial role of *intimacy* in explaining relational development, two particular dimensions of self-disclosure are applied to the context of media entertainment—depth of the information disclosed and mode through which information is delivered. The following sections address how viewing the disclosure of personal information as a function of depth and mode predict enjoyment via processes of identification and transportation.

*Depth of disclosed information.* Theories of social exchange and social penetration stress the enhancement of relational closeness as a product of self-disclosure. Similarly, other beneficial outcomes of self-disclosure can be associated with increased intimacy. Within dyads, particularly romantic relationships, self-disclosure can serve to enhance mutual understanding (Laurenceau et al., 1998). Furthermore, if self-disclosure is accepted by the recipient, it can improve the nature of the relationship. Increased self-disclosure has also been found to facilitate emotional involvement, particularly for romantic relationships (Rubin, Hill, Peplau, & Dunkel-

Schetter, 1980). If the process of disclosing personal information strengthens relational bonds and establishes intimacy between partners, could mediated forms of self-disclosure operate similarly?

As previously discussed, the construct of *identification* closely mirrors some of the outcomes of self-disclosure as documented in interpersonal and psychology research. The process of learning about a character is indeed an antecedent of identification, if the construct requires one to acknowledge and understand a character's emotions, goals, motives, and perspective. Although attainment of this knowledge (e.g., information about the character) can come in a variety of forms, one of the ways is through characters *self-disclosing* personal information. Social exchange and social penetration theories propose that self-disclosure produces greater relational closeness and intimacy, both of which are desired outcomes of an interaction. However, Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory assumes that there is a potential risk attached to revealing personal information, embedded in increased vulnerability (Petronio, 1991). In order to manage the disclosure and reception of private information, individuals create boundaries to reduce the threat of being vulnerable. If the disclosure of personal information is perceived as a privilege, in that the character is making himself or herself more vulnerable in the interaction, it is reasonable to expect that character identification is a likely response. In this case, perceived vulnerability is a presumed mediator in the relationship between depth of the disclosure and identification. In other words, the level of intimate disclosure is expected to facilitate emotional and cognitive engagement in the perspectives of characters via recognition of the characters' state of vulnerability. With greater character identification, enjoyment is likely to be facilitated due to heightened involvement. For these reasons, the following hypotheses are tested:

H1: The effect of depth of information disclosed on identification is mediated by perceptions of the character's vulnerability.

H1a: Depth of information disclosed is positively related to perceptions of the character's vulnerability.

H1b: Perceptions of a character's vulnerability is positively related to identification.

H2: Character identification is positively related to a viewer's enjoyment.

Additionally, depth of the disclosure is associated with the amount of information accessible to the viewer. While social penetration theorists view self-disclosure as a means through which relationships become more intimate, relational certainty is another explanation for the process (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). One of the goals for communication exchange may not be promotion-focused in order to heighten intimacy, but rather prevention-focused to lessen relational ambiguity. Specifically, the more an individual self-discloses to another, the more likely he or she will learn about the interaction, thus establishing certainty about the status and future of the relationship. In this case, self-disclosure should produce less uncertainty between the discloser and disclosee via the exchange and accessibility of personal information. Uncertainty reduction is highly associated with knowledge attainment, relational predictability, and relationship verification. Taking into account the motive to reduce uncertainty, it is reasonable to expect that disclosure of private information produces greater uncertainty reduction for the viewer than disclosure of public information. Therefore, the following relationship is expected:

H3: Depth of information disclosed is positively related to uncertainty reduction.

When viewers have greater access to information and reduced uncertainty, as previously noted, enjoyment is predicted to increase due to heightened absorption into the narrative. In other words, transportation is a presumed mediator in the relationship between uncertainty reduction and enjoyment. Thus, the following relationships are tested:

H4: The effect of uncertainty reduction on enjoyment is mediated by transportation.

H4a: Uncertainty reduction is positively related to transportation.

H4b: Transportation is positively related to enjoyment.

*Mode of information delivery.* Another facet of mediated self-disclosure that is likely to influence a viewer's level of enjoyment takes into consideration the role of the recipient. A rich body of research has documented variations in breadth and depth of self-disclosure as a function of the receiver involved (e.g., parents, friends, business associates, complete strangers, etc.). It is evident that individuals neither are equally honest nor have the same relationships with everyone. Theories of information management posit that people seek and reveal information based on their desires for a particular outcome and their efficacy in dealing with the outcome (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). These conditions with regards to the level of intimate disclosure may be contingent on the recipient of the interaction.

In contrast to actual interpersonal relationships, self-disclosure by characters in mediated content can operate in two ways. Self-disclosure can occur either between characters (character-to-character) or between the character and viewer (character-to-viewer). Character-to-character self-disclosures are prevalent in fictional programs, such as dramas, sitcoms, and soap operas, in which personal information is exchanged via conversation (e.g., *Lost*, *Seinfeld*, *Days of Our Lives*, etc.). These interactions may also be seen in nonfiction programs, such as talk or reality-based shows, in the form of conversations or formal interviews (e.g., *Oprah*, *Ellen*, *The Bachelor*,



*The Apprentice*, etc.). Character-to-viewer self disclosures are more readily seen on reality-based programs, in which characters expose personal information to the audience in the form of confessionals (e.g., *The Real World*, *Survivor*, etc.). More recently, NBC's sitcom, *The Office*, utilizes a similar format in which employees disclose either personal information or information about others to the camera in a private office room. Such instances support a growing trend toward the presentation of characters self-disclosing to viewers, rather than to other characters.

Provided that the mode of self-disclosure varies (recipient as another character versus viewer), does this dimension impact audience responses to mediated forms of self-disclosure? Regardless of how viewers obtain the information, there should be no variations in uncertainty reduction, being that information accessibility remains constant. However, with regards to character identification, mode of self-disclosure could predict variations in viewer involvement. In particular, when characters self-disclose to the audience, the direction of the exchange and privilege of information may facilitate audience members to respond more empathically, thus heightening program engagement. In other words, when self-disclosure is directed to viewers, they should be more likely to involve themselves emotionally and cognitively in the character's role, encouraging greater identification to take place. Therefore, identification should be higher when characters self-disclose to the viewer than when characters self-disclose to other characters. It is critical to note that the present study argues for the substantial role of self-disclosure in influencing one's mediated experience. Thus, while character-to-viewer self-disclosure is expected to induce greater identification than character-to-character self-disclosure, both of these modes are anticipated to engender greater identification than when self-disclosure does not occur. For example, if a narrator discloses personal information about a character to the viewer, the level of identification is predicted to be the lowest. Hence, having a narrator reveal information

about a character will serve as the control condition, in which no self-disclosure takes place. For these reasons, the following hypothesis is tested:

H5: Identification is greatest when a character self-discloses to the viewer, followed by when a character self-discloses to a character, and least when a narrator discloses to the viewer.

*Interaction of depth and mode on identification.* Whereas the proposed main effects provide an insight to the ways in which dimensions of self-disclosure (depth and mode) are independently associated with viewer responses, it is critical to investigate how these two facets interact with one another. Although uncertainty reduction is only expected to be impacted by the depth of disclosure, character identification is anticipated to be influenced by *both* depth and mode. In an effort to explain their combined effects, the present study argues that the association between mode of information delivery and identification varies depending on the level of intimate information revealed.

As formerly stated in H1, depth of information disclosed is expected to positively influence identification through perceptions of a character's vulnerability. The rationale is that as deeper information is exposed, the exchange of personal feelings, thoughts, and desires places the discloser (character) in a more vulnerable position. Since identification occurs when a viewer emotionally and cognitively engages in a character's perspective, empathy and understanding for the character is more likely to develop if the character's vulnerability is at stake. In this case, viewers must recognize and acknowledge the vulnerability of the discloser in order to engage in perspective-taking. Therefore, the disclosure of more intimate and personal information should result in greater identification when the mode of information delivery is controlled. However, when taking into consideration the recipient of the self-disclosure (character vs. viewer), this

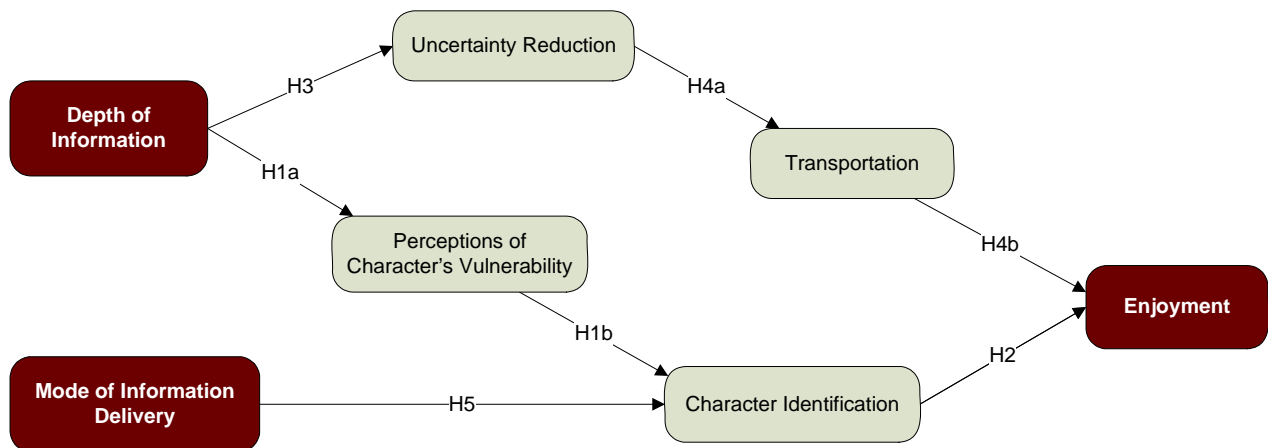
study expects that there will be a greater difference in identification between character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosures when private information is revealed, as compared to when public information is revealed. In other words, the effect of mode on identification is stronger when the disclosure is more intimate than when it is less intimate.

The notion of privileging private information to a target person further explains this presumed interaction effect between depth and mode of self-disclosure. CPM proposes that privacy is controlled through the ability to regulate and enforce particular rules (Petronio, 1991). Burgoon (1986) suggests that privacy resources can take on a number of forms. We can think about our bodies as private spaces, locations and social territories as owning rights, and the experience of witnessing certain emotions as a personal privilege. Therefore, information that is personally revealed is considered *owned* by the individual and attributed as private. CPM (Petronio, 1991) assumes that a person's right to control access to information is largely manifested in self-established rules which privilege others with permission for boundary access, while denying others this privilege. If more intimate information is considered to place the discloser at greater risk of vulnerability, it could also mean that greater privilege is given to the recipient. The notion that intimate self-disclosure privileges a person *more* than non-intimate self-disclosure, lends support for an interactive effect of depth and mode of information delivery. In the case of character-to-viewer self-disclosure, such privileging of information may facilitate even greater identification for private information, as compared to public information. However, if an individual is simply observing self-disclosure between characters, more intimate information should increase identification to a lesser extent because the viewer is not the primary recipient of the information. For these reasons, it is expected that when a person observes private character-to-viewer self-disclosure, identification should be stronger than all other conditions.

Therefore, the following interaction effect of depth and mode of information delivery on identification is proposed:

H6: The difference in identification between character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosure is greater for private than for public information, with private character-to-viewer self-disclosure having the greatest identification effect.

In sum, the proposed main effects are illustrated in a schematic diagram (see Figure 2). This diagram illustrates that both depth and mode are expected to produce greater viewer enjoyment through different routes. The first independent variable—depth of information—is predicted to increase identification through perceptions of a character’s vulnerability (H1). Increased identification should in turn facilitate enjoyment (H2). In addition, depth of information is expected to positively influence uncertainty reduction (H3). Uncertainty reduction is anticipated to drive enjoyment, mediated by transportation (H4). Lastly, the second independent variable—mode of information delivery—is expected to be associated with character identification, with viewers reporting the greatest identification for character-to-viewer self-disclosure, followed by character-to-character self-disclosure, and lastly narrator-to-viewer disclosure (H5).



*Figure 2.* Schematic diagram illustrating the main effects of depth of information and mode of information delivery on enjoyment.

## Pretest for Stimulus Development

Prior to examining the effects of depth and mode of information delivery on viewer responses, a pretest was conducted to test the efficacy of the manipulated independent variable—depth of information. This chapter details the experimental methods and results of this pretest. In addition to perceived depth of the disclosed information, three other dimensions of the information learned about a character were assessed—nature (negative-positive), accuracy, and relevance. These dimensions were informed by Wheelless and Grotz's (1976) research investigating the multi-dimensional construct of self-disclosure. The stimulus material (constructed from episodes of MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas*) incorporated four instantiations: two female characters and two male characters per experimental condition. Results from the pretest determined which character instantiations were used in the main study across all conditions.

### *Participants*

A total of 141 undergraduate students participated in the pretest. Participants were recruited from Communication courses at a large Northeastern University, with implied consent obtained prior to their participation. The sample was comprised of 34.8% males and 65.2% females, with ages ranging from 18 to 27 years ( $M = 20.69$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ). Participants consisted of 81.6% Whites, 8.5% Asians, 5.7% African Americans, 3.5% Hispanics, 1.4% American Indians, and 1.4% with no indication of race. Overall, participants reported watching a daily average of 1.38 ( $SD = 1.21$ ) hours of television between 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and 2.75 ( $SD = 1.43$ ) hours of television between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Among hours of general television viewing, they reported watching a daily average of .39 ( $SD = 0.65$ ) hours of reality television between 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and 1.18 ( $SD = 0.96$ ) hours of reality television between 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

Sixty seven percent of participants reported having seen MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas*. On a 7-point scale, anchored from 1(not at all) to 7(very often), participants had a mean frequency of 3.79 ( $SD = 1.96$ ) for general viewing of MTV's *The Real World* and 3.72 ( $SD = 2.23$ ) for viewing of the Las Vegas season.

### *Procedure*

Participants were asked to attend a lab session where they were randomly assigned to one of six conditions in a 2 (Depth of Information: Public, Private) X 3 (Mode of Information Delivery: Character-to-Viewer, Character-to-Character, Narrator-to-Viewer) between-subjects post-test only experiment. All participants were exposed to four characters in their respective conditions. The four instantiations consisted of two female and two male characters (see Table 1). Participants were informed both verbally and visually by computer that they would be watching a series of short video clips, each about a target person (the name of the person was provided in the questionnaire). In each condition, the order of the characters remained the same: female (Trishelle), male (Frank), female (Ariisa), and male (Steven). After viewing each clip, participants were asked to report their perceptions of the information learned about the target person with respect to its depth, nature, accuracy, and relevance. At the end of the questionnaire, participants reported their demographic information and media use habits.

Table 1

*Pretest Conditions*

| Depth of Information | <u>Mode of Information Delivery</u>  |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
|                      | Character-to-Viewer  | Character-to-Character   | Narrator-to-Viewer   |
| Public               | ( <i>N</i> = 24)<br>Character self-discloses public information to viewer<br><i>Clip 1: Female (Trishelle)</i><br><i>Clip 2: Male (Frank)</i><br><i>Clip 3: Female (Arissa)</i><br><i>Clip 4: Male (Steven)</i>  | ( <i>N</i> = 24)<br>Character self-discloses public information to character(s)<br><i>Clip 1: Female (Trishelle)</i><br><i>Clip 2: Male (Frank)</i><br><i>Clip 3: Female (Arissa)</i><br><i>Clip 4: Male (Steven)</i>  | ( <i>N</i> = 26)<br>Narrator discloses character's public information to viewer<br><i>Clip 1: Female (Trishelle)</i><br><i>Clip 2: Male (Frank)</i><br><i>Clip 3: Female (Arissa)</i><br><i>Clip 4: Male (Steven)</i>  |
| Private              | ( <i>N</i> = 24)<br>Character self-discloses private information to viewer<br><i>Clip 1: Female (Trishelle)</i><br><i>Clip 2: Male (Frank)</i><br><i>Clip 3: Female (Arissa)</i><br><i>Clip 4: Male (Steven)</i> | ( <i>N</i> = 21)<br>Character self-discloses private information to character(s)<br><i>Clip 1: Female (Trishelle)</i><br><i>Clip 2: Male (Frank)</i><br><i>Clip 3: Female (Arissa)</i><br><i>Clip 4: Male (Steven)</i> | ( <i>N</i> = 22)<br>Narrator discloses character's private information to viewer<br><i>Clip 1: Female (Trishelle)</i><br><i>Clip 2: Male (Frank)</i><br><i>Clip 3: Female (Arissa)</i><br><i>Clip 4: Male (Steven)</i> |

*Stimulus Material*

Twenty four video clips were edited from 28 episodes of MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas*. Each clip, approximately 60-90 seconds in length, contained disclosure of personal information about a particular person (see Appendix A). For each experimental condition, four instantiations were created, with two featuring a female character (Trishelle or Arissa) and two featuring a male character (Frank or Steven). The disclosure of personal information was manipulated in that the depth and mode of information delivery varied. Depth of information refers to the level of intimacy attached to the information revealed. Adapting Altman and Taylor's (1973) classification scheme, this study manipulated intimacy of information by exposing viewers to either a person's public (peripheral) or private (core) information. The least intimate form of disclosure occurs peripherally, in which information about a person's biography



(e.g., age, family, hometown, and occupation) is provided. Public information is characterized as information about oneself that is considered to be non-intimate, impersonal, unrevealing, and superficial. For example, “Frank is 22 years old and from Central Pennsylvania,” is characterized as public information. The most intimate form of disclosure occurs at the core, in which a person’s beliefs, needs, emotions, or fears are revealed. Private information is characterized as information about oneself that is considered to be intimate, personal, revealing, and deep. Therefore, information such as, “Frank thinks Emily is smart and he believes that she is the type of girl he would like to be with for the rest of his life,” is considered private.

For the manipulation of mode of information delivery (character-to-viewer vs. character-to-character vs. narrator-to-viewer), the first two conditions in which the character self-discloses information about himself or herself to either the viewer or another character served as treatments of self-disclosure. In the character-to-viewer self-disclosure clips, the scenes were generally focused on individuals speaking to the camera in a confessional room. In the character-to-character self-disclosure clips, personal information was revealed through conversation, directed toward another character or characters. The last mode condition in which the narrator (an unknown source) discloses personal information about a character to the viewer was constructed by using a series of close-up character shots, freeze frames, and text. Information about the character was typed on the screen throughout scenes with only the character shown, serving as the narrator-to-viewer control condition in which no self-disclosure occurs. Across the three modes of information delivery, the information was edited to remain comparatively constant for each character (see Appendix A for the transcriptions of all 24 instantiations). For example, in the private/character-to-viewer condition, Frank reveals his feelings about a girl named Emily to the viewer. In the private/character-to-character condition, Frank tells another

character about his feelings towards Emily. In the private/narrator-to-viewer condition, the viewer reads text on the screen about Frank's feelings for Emily.

### *Measures*

Following each clip, a series of 10-point semantic differential scales were employed to measure the primary dependent variable—perceived depth of the disclosed information, along with the nature, accuracy, and relevance of that information (see Appendix B). These items were informed by the multi-dimensional scales of self-disclosure, constructed by Wheelless and Grotz (1976). Perceived depth was assessed using five items—not intimate/intimate, personal/not personal, not revealing/revealing, private/public, and deep/superficial [Trishelle (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .70$ ), Frank (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78$ ), Arissa (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .73$ ), and Steven (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71$ )]. Nature of the information was measured by four items—negative/positive, not pleasant/pleasant, places him or her in a good light/places him or her in a bad light, and reflects negatively on him or her/reflects positively on him or her [Trishelle (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .74$ ), Frank (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$ ), Arissa (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ ), and Steven (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ )]. Accuracy of the information was assessed using four items—sincere/not sincere, dishonest/honest, accurate/inaccurate, and is not a true reflection of who he or she is/is a true reflection of who he or she is [Trishelle (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .65$ ), Frank (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71$ ), Arissa (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .64$ ), and Steven (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .75$ )]. Lastly, relevance was measured by four items—irrelevant to me/relevant to me, does not interest me/interests me, relates to me/does not relate to me, and does not matter to me/matters to me [Trishelle (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$ ), Frank (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ), Arissa (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ), and Steven (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78$ )]. At the end of the questionnaire, prior viewing of MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas* and frequency of viewing MTV's *The Real World* in general were reported.

## Results

The primary variable of interest, perceived depth of information, was examined using a 4 (Character: Trishelle, Frank, Arissa, Steven) X 2 (Depth of Information: Public, Private) X 3 (Mode of Information Delivery: Character-to-Viewer, Character-to-Character, Narrator-to-Viewer) mixed model repeated measures analysis of variance, with character as a within-subjects factor. This and all additional repeated measures analyses employed a multivariate approach using Wilks' criterion. The between-subjects analysis revealed a significant main effect for depth of information,  $F(1, 135) = 68.54, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .34$ . Respondents reported private information ( $M = 7.10, SE = .11$ ) to be greater in depth than public information ( $M = 5.81, SE = .11$ ). Furthermore, a marginally significant main effect for mode of information delivery,  $F(2, 135) = 2.52, p = .09$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ , was obtained. Character-to-viewer ( $M = 6.58, SE = .13$ ) and character-to-character ( $M = 6.58, SE = .14$ ) self-disclosures were perceived to be greater in depth than narrator-to-viewer ( $M = 6.21, SE = .13$ ) disclosures. The analysis yielded no significant Depth X Mode interaction on perceived depth,  $F(2, 135) = 1.65, p = .20$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$ .

The within-subjects analysis indicated a significant main effect for character,  $F(3, 133) = 17.34, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .28$ . Participants rated information disclosed by Arissa to be greatest in depth ( $M = 7.09, SE = .11$ ), followed by Trishelle ( $M = 6.41, SE = .11$ ), Steven ( $M = 6.25, SE = .12$ ), and Frank ( $M = 6.06, SE = .12$ ). In addition, significant two-way interactions between character and depth of information,  $F(3, 133) = 16.11, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .27$ , and between character and mode of information delivery,  $F(6, 266) = 2.93, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ , were found (see Tables 2-3 and Figures 3-4). Whereas participants perceived the disclosure of Arissa and Steven to be greatest in depth for public information, they perceived Trishelle and Arissa to be greatest in depth for private information. Regardless of the mode of information delivery,

Arissa's disclosure was perceived as most deep among all characters. For character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosures, following Arissa's perceived depth of information was Trishelle, whereas for the narrator-to-viewer condition, it was followed by Steven.

Table 2

*Perceived Depth of Information: Character X Depth of Information Interaction*

| Depth of Information |           | Character          |                     |                     |                    |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                      |           | Trishelle          | Frank               | Arissa              | Steven             |
| Public               |           |                    |                     |                     |                    |
|                      | <i>M</i>  | 5.38 <sub>aA</sub> | 5.10 <sub>aA</sub>  | 6.89 <sub>cA</sub>  | 5.86 <sub>bA</sub> |
|                      | <i>SE</i> | .15                | .16                 | .16                 | .17                |
| Private              |           |                    |                     |                     |                    |
|                      | <i>M</i>  | 7.45 <sub>dB</sub> | 7.03 <sub>bcB</sub> | 7.29 <sub>cdA</sub> | 6.64 <sub>aB</sub> |
|                      | <i>SE</i> | .16                | .17                 | .17                 | .18                |

$F(3, 133) = 16.11, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .27$

*Note.* Using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons, within rows, means with no lower case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ ; within columns, means with no upper case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ .

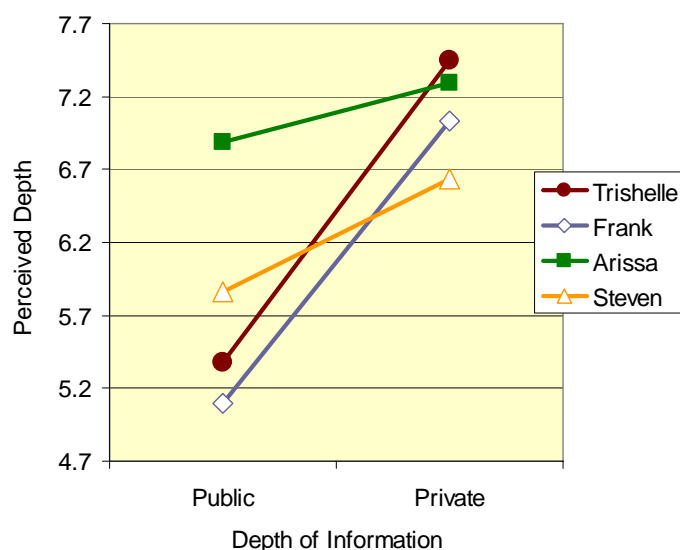


Figure 3. Character X Depth interaction on perceived depth.

Table 3

*Perceived Depth of Information: Character X Mode of Information Delivery Interaction*

| Mode of Information Delivery | Character           |                     |                    |                    |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                              | Trishelle           | Frank               | Arissa             | Steven             |
| Character-to-Viewer          |                     |                     |                    |                    |
| <i>M</i>                     | 6.42 <sub>aAB</sub> | 6.22 <sub>aB</sub>  | 7.37 <sub>bA</sub> | 6.32 <sub>aA</sub> |
| <i>SE</i>                    | .18                 | .20                 | .20                | .21                |
| Character-to-Character       |                     |                     |                    |                    |
| <i>M</i>                     | 6.76 <sub>bcB</sub> | 6.45 <sub>abB</sub> | 6.97 <sub>cA</sub> | 6.13 <sub>aA</sub> |
| <i>SE</i>                    | .19                 | .21                 | .20                | .22                |
| Narrator-to-Viewer           |                     |                     |                    |                    |
| <i>M</i>                     | 6.07 <sub>bA</sub>  | 5.52 <sub>aA</sub>  | 6.94 <sub>cA</sub> | 6.30 <sub>bA</sub> |
| <i>SE</i>                    | .18                 | .20                 | .20                | .21                |

$F(6, 266) = 2.93, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$

*Note.* Using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons, within rows, means with no lower case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ ; within columns, means with no upper case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ .

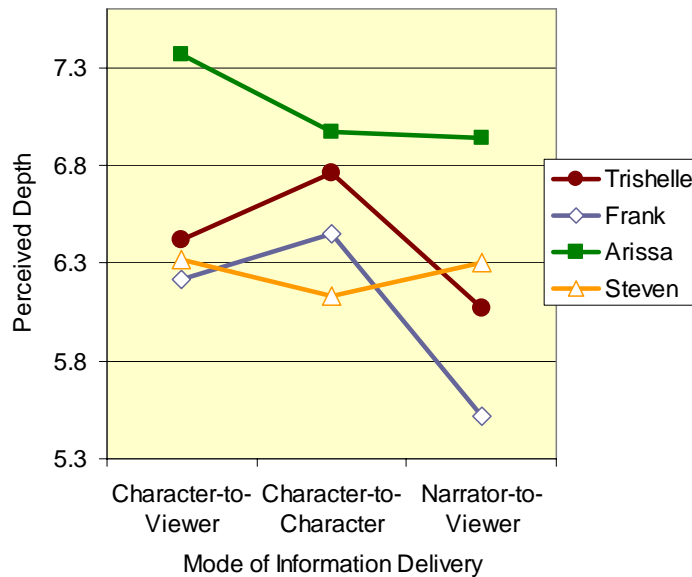


Figure 4. Character X Mode interaction on perceived depth.

The analysis also revealed a significant three-way interaction among character, depth of information, and mode of information delivery on perceived depth,  $F(6, 266) = 6.22, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .12$  (see Figure 5). Figure 5a indicates that for character-to-viewer self-disclosure, private information was perceived as greater in depth than public information for all characters. However, for character-to-character and narrator-to-viewer conditions (see Figure 5b and 5c), private information was rated as deeper than public information for *only* Trishelle and Frank. In these same mode conditions, differences in perceived depth between public and private information were not significant for Arissa and Steven (see Table 4 for a complete list of means). Informed by the results of the three-way interaction, public and private information for the instantiations of Trishelle and Frank across all three modes of information delivery were perceived as significantly different with regards to depth. The purpose of the pretest was to ascertain that the public information revealed would indeed be perceived as less intimate, as compared to the private information, regardless of mode of information delivery. Findings clearly support the efficacy of the manipulation for depth for two instantiations— Trishelle (female character) and Frank (male character).

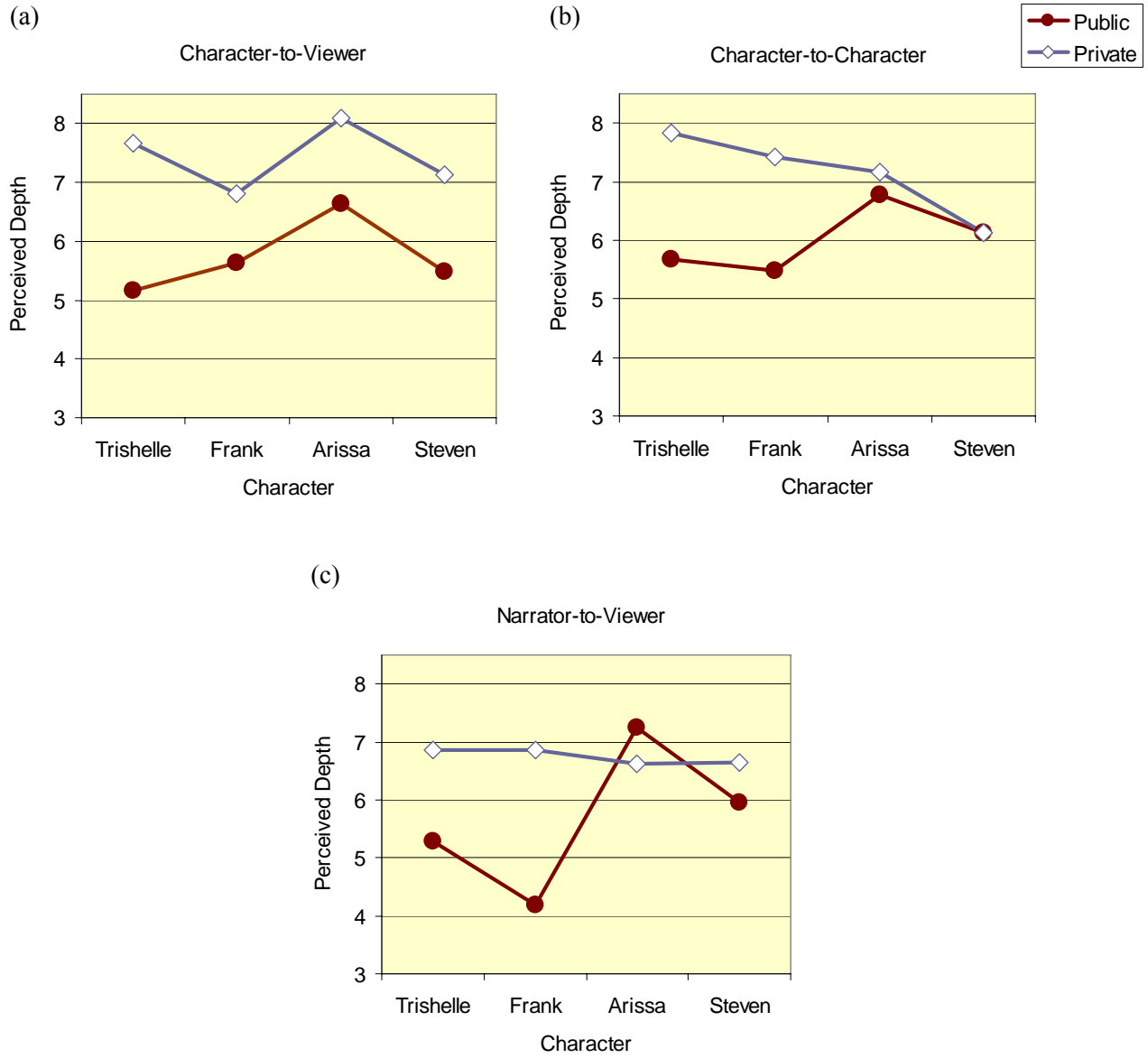


Figure 5. Character X Depth X Mode interaction on perceived depth.

Table 4

*Perceived Depth of Information: Character X Depth of Information X Mode of Information Delivery Interaction*

| Depth of Information   | Character |       |        |        |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|--------|--------|
|                        | Trishelle | Frank | Arissa | Steven |
| <b>Public</b>          |           |       |        |        |
| Character-to-Viewer    |           |       |        |        |
| <i>M</i>               | 5.17      | 5.63  | 6.64   | 5.49   |
| <i>SE</i>              | .26       | .28   | .28    | .30    |
| Character-to-Character |           |       |        |        |
| <i>M</i>               | 5.68      | 5.47  | 6.78   | 6.13   |
| <i>SE</i>              | .26       | .28   | .28    | .30    |
| Narrator-to-Viewer     |           |       |        |        |
| <i>M</i>               | 5.29      | 4.19  | 7.25   | 5.96   |
| <i>SE</i>              | .25       | .27   | .27    | .28    |
| <b>Private</b>         |           |       |        |        |
| Character-to-Viewer    |           |       |        |        |
| <i>M</i>               | 7.67      | 6.81  | 8.09   | 7.14   |
| <i>SE</i>              | .26       | .28   | .28    | .30    |
| Character-to-Character |           |       |        |        |
| <i>M</i>               | 7.83      | 7.43  | 7.17   | 6.12   |
| <i>SE</i>              | .28       | .30   | .29    | .32    |
| Narrator-to-Viewer     |           |       |        |        |
| <i>M</i>               | 6.86      | 6.86  | 6.62   | 6.65   |
| <i>SE</i>              | .27       | .29   | .29    | .31    |

$F(6, 266) = 6.22, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .12$

In addition to the analysis for the manipulation check, other tests were employed to inform our understanding of how information about each character was perceived in terms of its nature (negative-positive), accuracy, and relevance. The partial correlation matrix in Table 5 indicates the extent to which perceived depth is interrelated with perceived nature, accuracy, and relevance (controlling for gender of the viewer, frequency of viewing MTV's *The Real World*,



and prior viewing of MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas* season). Findings reveal significant positive correlations between perceived accuracy and each of the other dimensions—accuracy and depth ( $pr = .48, p < .001$ ), accuracy and nature ( $pr = .43, p < .001$ ), and accuracy and relevance ( $pr = .21, p < .05$ ). Findings suggest that the degree to which disclosed information is deemed accurate positively relates to how intimate, positive in nature, and relevant an individual assesses this information. To shed light on these interrelationships, a series of 4 (Character) X 2 (Depth) X 3 (Mode) mixed model repeated measures ANOVAs, with character as a within-subjects factor, were conducted for the dimensions of perceived nature, accuracy, and relevance.

Table 5

*Partial Correlations among Perceived Depth, Nature, Accuracy, and Relevance*

|                          | PD<br>( $N = 141$ ) | PN<br>( $N = 141$ ) | PA<br>( $N = 141$ ) | PR<br>( $N = 141$ ) |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Perceived Depth (PD)     | --                  | .03                 | .48***              | -.08                |
| Perceived Nature (PN)    |                     | --                  | .43***              | .13                 |
| Perceived Accuracy (PA)  |                     |                     | --                  | .21*                |
| Perceived Relevance (PR) |                     |                     |                     | --                  |

Note. All correlations control for gender of viewer, frequency of viewing MTV's *The Real World*, and prior viewing of MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas* season. Correlations are indicated as significant at \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Employing a mixed model repeated measures ANOVA on perceived nature yielded no significant main effects for depth,  $F(1, 135) = 1.61, p = .21$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .01$ , and mode,  $F(2, 135) = 2.27, p = .11$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . However, a significant two-way interaction between depth and mode was obtained,  $F(2, 135) = 9.65, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .13$  (see Figure 6). Participants rated public information to be most positive in nature for narrator-to-viewer disclosure ( $M = 6.34$ ,

$SE = .18$ ), followed by character-to-character self-disclosure ( $M = 6.00, SE = .19$ ), and character-to-viewer self-disclosure ( $M = 5.92, SE = .19$ ). In contrast, they rated private information to be most positive for character-to-viewer self-disclosure ( $M = 6.49, SE = .19$ ), followed by character-to-character self-disclosure ( $M = 5.92, SE = .20$ ), and narrator-to-viewer disclosure ( $M = 5.27, SE = .20$ ).



Figure 6. Depth X Mode interaction on perceived nature.

Findings also yielded a significant main effect for character on perceived nature of the disclosure,  $F(3, 133) = 23.07, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .34$ . Participants reported information about Frank to be most positive ( $M = 6.58, SE = .12$ ), followed by Arissa ( $M = 6.20, SE = .13$ ), Steven ( $M = 5.90, SE = .14$ ), and Trishelle ( $M = 5.28, SE = .12$ ). Significant Character X Depth,  $F(3, 133) = 14.67, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .25$ , and Character X Mode,  $F(6, 266) = 9.14, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .17$ , interactions were also obtained (see Figures 7-8). Results suggest that there were more pronounced character differences in the perceived nature of the disclosure for private information than public information. Furthermore, Frank and Arissa's information was perceived

as more positive for private than public information, whereas Steven and Trishelle's information was perceived as more positive for public than private information. In addition, while information about Frank and Arissa was rated as most positive in the character-to-character condition, information about Trishelle and Steven was rated as least positive in the respective condition.

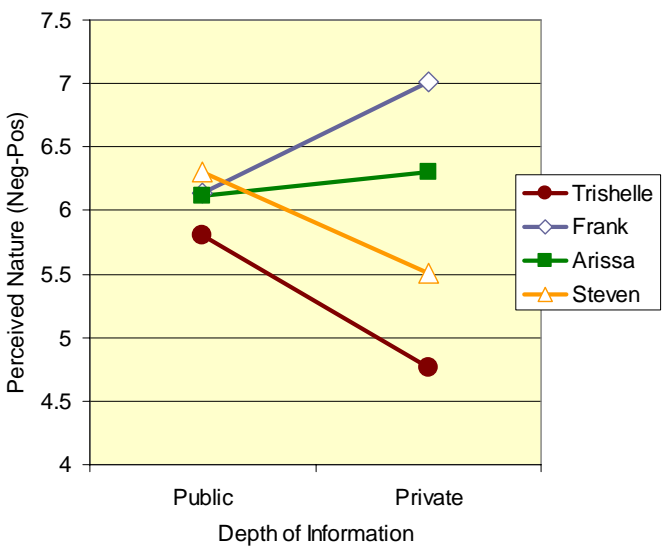


Figure 7. Character X Depth interaction on perceived nature.

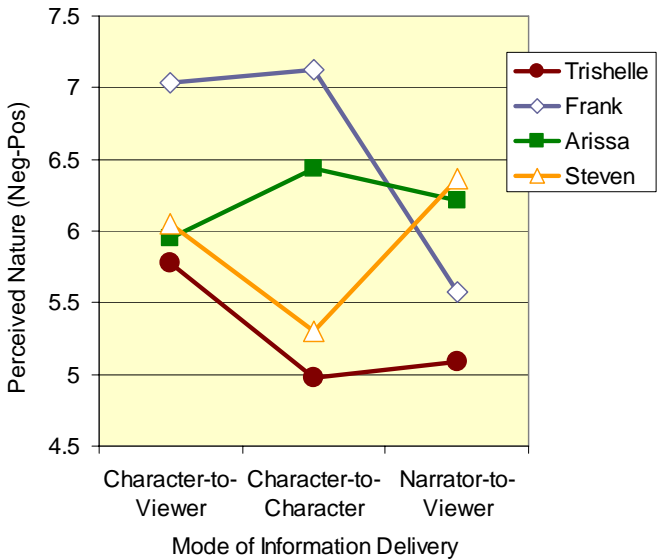


Figure 8. Character X Mode interaction on perceived nature.

The analysis also revealed a significant Character X Depth X Mode interaction on perceived nature of the disclosure,  $F(6, 266) = 9.29, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .17$  (see Figure 9). For the narrator-to-viewer condition, public information was evaluated as more positive than private information for all characters. However, for individuals exposed to character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosures, whereas Frank and Arissa's private information was perceived to be more positive than their public information, the opposite was true for Trishelle and Steven. Specifically, Trishelle and Steven's public information was rated as more positive than their private information for the self-disclosure conditions.

Conducting a mixed model repeated measures ANOVA on perceived accuracy of the disclosure revealed a significant main effect for mode,  $F(2, 135) = 8.67, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .11$ . Participants reported character-to-character disclosures ( $M = 7.05, SE = .15$ ) as most accurate, followed by character-to-viewer ( $M = 6.89, SE = .14$ ) and narrator-to-viewer ( $M = 6.24, SE = .15$ ). Neither a significant main effect for depth,  $F(1, 135) = 1.19, p = .28, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$ , nor Depth X Mode interaction,  $F(2, 135) = .79, p = .46, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$ , on perceptions of accuracy were found. The analysis however, revealed a significant main effect for character,  $F(3, 133) = 12.48, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .22$ , in that information about Arissa was perceived as most accurate ( $M = 7.19, SE = .11$ ), followed by Frank ( $M = 6.91, SE = .13$ ), Trishelle ( $M = 6.57, SE = .12$ ), and Steven ( $M = 6.23, SE = .14$ ). Furthermore, a significant Character X Mode interaction,  $F(6, 266) = 2.68, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$  was obtained (see Figure 10). Information about Steven was perceived to be least accurate across the modes of information delivery. The interaction also indicates that participants assessed the disclosed information of Trishelle, Frank, and Arissa as most accurate in the character-to-character condition, as compared to the other mode conditions.

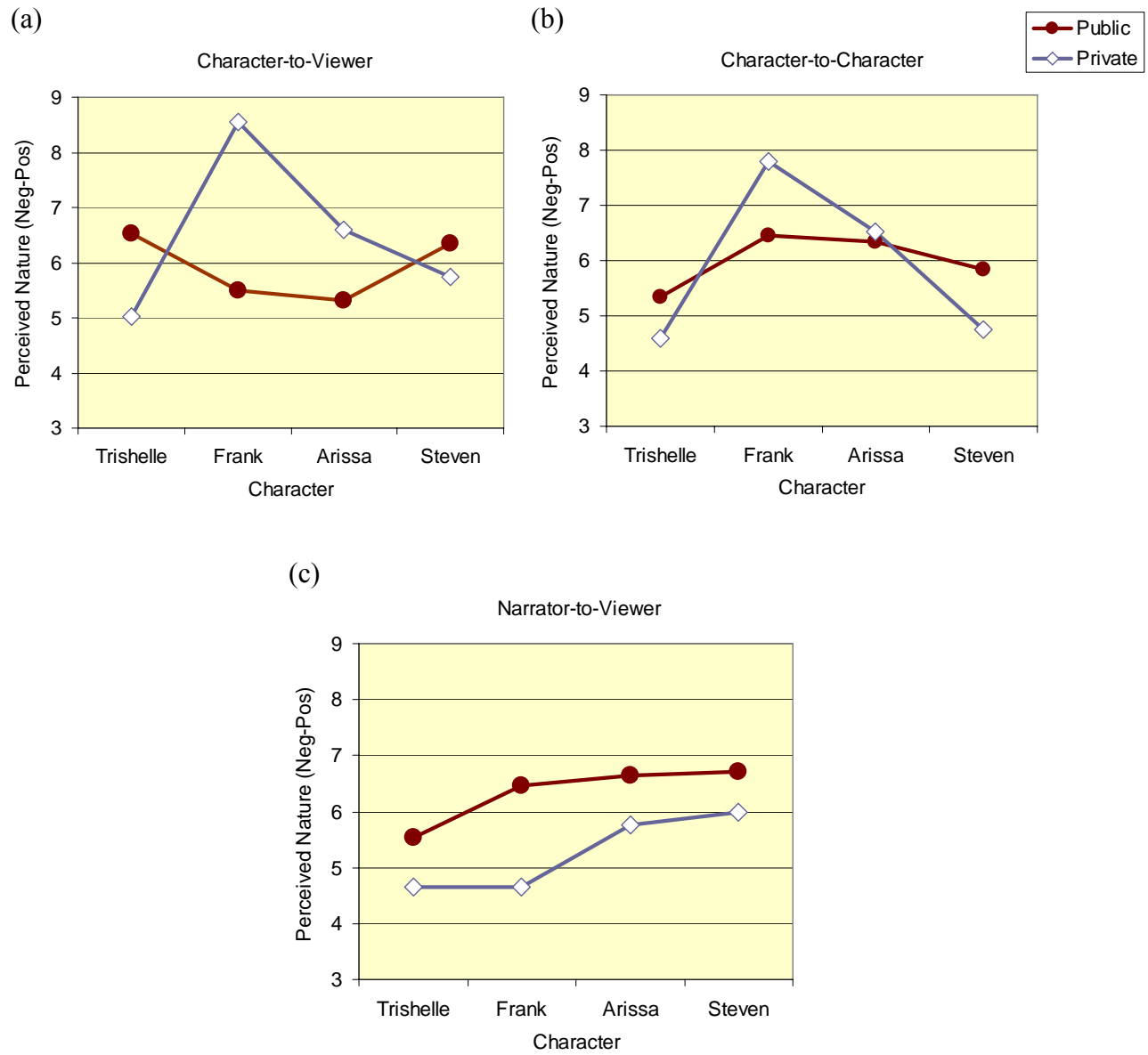


Figure 9. Character X Depth X Mode interaction on perceived nature.

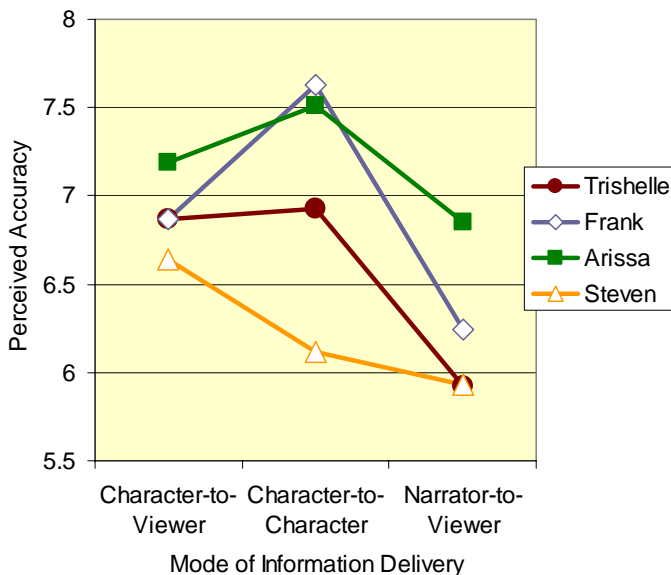


Figure 10. Character X Mode interaction on perceived accuracy.

For the last dimension, relevance, a mixed model repeated measures ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for mode,  $F(2, 135) = 4.86, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .07$ . Participants reported character-to-character self-disclosures to be most relevant ( $M = 4.21, SE = .22$ ), followed by character-to-viewer self-disclosures ( $M = 3.83, SE = .21$ ) and narrator-to-viewer disclosures ( $M = 3.28, SE = .21$ ). Neither a significant main effect for depth,  $F(1, 135) = .11, p = .74$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ , nor a Depth X Mode interaction,  $F(2, 135) = .11, p = .89$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ , were obtained.

The within-subjects analysis yielded a significant main effect for character on perceived relevance,  $F(3, 133) = 13.77, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .24$ , in that Arissa's personal information was perceived to be most relevant to viewers ( $M = 4.23, SE = .19$ ), followed by Frank ( $M = 4.01, SE = .18$ ), Trishelle ( $M = 3.68, SE = .17$ ), and lastly Steven ( $M = 3.17, SE = .15$ ). Furthermore, a significant Character X Mode interaction,  $F(6, 266) = 2.63, p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ , was found (see Figure 11). Results indicate that when a character self-disclosed to another character, the

information was perceived to be most relevant to the viewer, as compared to the other mode conditions for Trishelle, Frank, and Arissa. Information about Steven was evaluated as least relevant across all modes of information delivery. Additionally for all characters, when the narrator disclosed information to the viewer, the information was reported as least relevant, compared to when the information was personally disclosed by the character.

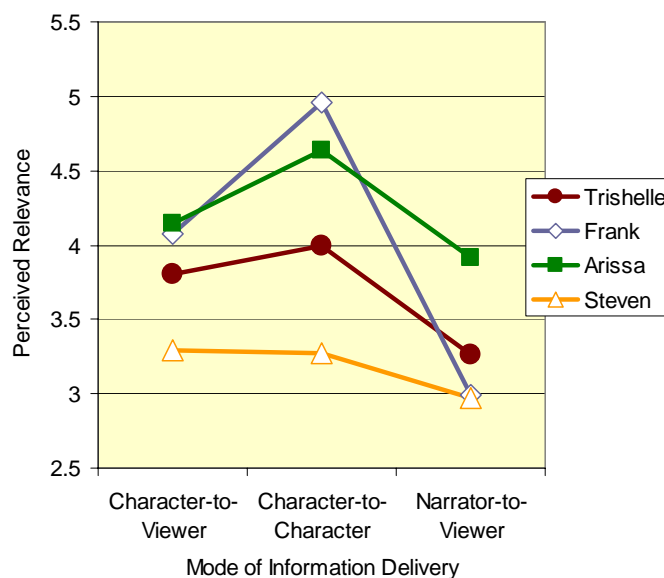


Figure 11. Character X Mode interaction on perceived relevance.

*Summary.* The analyses for the dimensions of depth, nature, accuracy, and relevance shed light on the perceptual similarities and differences of the disclosed information across the four characters. The goal of the pretest was to determine which of the four instantiations were most effective for the manipulation of depth of information. In light of the results, the chosen instantiations per experimental condition for the main study were the female character—Trishelle, and the male character—Frank. For both these characters, perceptions of depth were significantly higher for private information than public information for each mode of information delivery (character-to-viewer, character-to-character, and narrator-to-viewer).

However, in interpreting the results of the main experiment, it is important to acknowledge the differences in the perceived nature, accuracy, and relevance of the characters' disclosed information. These noteworthy differences help inform the findings of the full-experiment, discussed in the next chapter.



## Full-Experiment

Following the pretest, the two chosen instantiations guided the construction of the stimuli used in the main study. This chapter details the methodology employed to test the six proposed hypotheses and the results of the full-experiment.

### *Participants*

A total of 185 undergraduate students participated in the full-experiment. Participants, who did not take part in the pretest, were recruited from Communication courses at a large Northeastern University. Implied consent was obtained prior to their participation. The sample was comprised of 56.8% males and 43.2% females, with ages ranging from 18 to 29 years ( $M = 20.44$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ). Participants consisted of 81.1% Whites, 5.4% Asians, 7.0% African Americans, 4.3% Hispanics, .5% American Indians, and 3.2% with no indication of race. Overall, participants reported watching a daily average of 1.63 ( $SD = 1.36$ ) hours of television between 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and 3.06 ( $SD = 1.70$ ) hours of television between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Among the hours of general television viewing, they reported watching a daily average of .42 ( $SD = 1.11$ ) hours of reality television between 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and 1.11 ( $SD = 1.61$ ) hours of reality television between 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Fifty eight percent of participants reported having seen MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas*. On a 7-point scale, anchored from 1(not at all) to 7(very often), participants had a mean frequency of 3.49 ( $SD = 2.07$ ) for general viewing of MTV's *The Real World* and 2.91 ( $SD = 2.10$ ) for viewing of the Las Vegas season.

### *Procedure*

Participants attended a lab session in which they were randomly assigned to one of six conditions in a 2 (Depth of Information: Public, Private) X 3 (Mode of Information Delivery: Character-to-Viewer, Character-to-Character, Narrator-to-Viewer) between-subjects post-test

only experiment (see Table 6).<sup>1</sup> Subjects were informed both verbally and visually by computer that they would be watching a segment from a season of MTV's television program, *The Real World*, about a target person (the name was provided in the questionnaire). After viewing the clip, participants were asked to report their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the video. Responses for the following constructs were assessed—perceived vulnerability of the character, character identification, uncertainty reduction, and transportation. Following these items, participants also reported their overall enjoyment of the video. The same manipulation check items used in the pretest to assess depth, nature, accuracy, and relevance of the disclosed information were also included in the main study. Lastly, all participants reported demographic information and their media use habits.

Table 6

*Full-Experiment Conditions*

| Depth of Information | <u>Mode of Information Delivery</u>   |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
|                      | Character-to-Viewer   | Character-to-Character  | Narrator-to-Viewer  |
| Public               | ( <i>N</i> = 18)<br>Character self-discloses public information to viewer<br><i>Clip: Female (Trishelle)</i>  | ( <i>N</i> = 16)<br>Character self-discloses public information to character(s)<br><i>Clip: Female (Trishelle)</i>  | ( <i>N</i> = 17)<br>Narrator discloses character's public information to viewer<br><i>Clip: Female (Trishelle)</i>  |
|                      | ( <i>N</i> = 13)<br>Character self-discloses public information to viewer<br><i>Clip: Male (Frank)</i>        | ( <i>N</i> = 18)<br>Character self-discloses public information to character(s)<br><i>Clip: Male (Frank)</i>        | ( <i>N</i> = 12)<br>Narrator discloses character's public information to viewer<br><i>Clip: Male (Frank)</i>        |
| Private              | ( <i>N</i> = 16)<br>Character self-discloses private information to viewer<br><i>Clip: Female (Trishelle)</i> | ( <i>N</i> = 14)<br>Character self-discloses private information to character(s)<br><i>Clip: Female (Trishelle)</i> | ( <i>N</i> = 15)<br>Narrator discloses character's private information to viewer<br><i>Clip: Female (Trishelle)</i> |
|                      | ( <i>N</i> = 20)<br>Character self-discloses private information to viewer<br><i>Clip: Male (Frank)</i>       | ( <i>N</i> = 13)<br>Character self-discloses private information to character(s)<br><i>Clip: Male (Frank)</i>       | ( <i>N</i> = 13)<br>Narrator discloses character's private information to viewer<br><i>Clip: Male (Frank)</i>       |

### *Stimulus Material*

Results from the pretest supported the effective manipulation of two instantiations (female character–Trishelle and male character–Frank) with respect to perceived depth. Therefore, both these instantiations were used to construct the stimuli for the main study. Twelve video clips were edited in that each incorporated the introduction to MTV’s *The Real World: Las Vegas*, followed by several shots of the Las Vegas skyline, streets, fountains, people walking, and the Palm casino (the location of *The Real World* apartment). The last establishing shot, in which the camera pans across the outside of the apartment, is followed by the disclosure of personal information about the character. Each original pretest clip for Trishelle and Frank was added to the end of the video to represent the disclosure (see Appendix A for transcriptions). To establish a sense of program involvement and realism with the show, each video was approximately two minutes in length, and made to look like the start of an actual episode of MTV’s *The Real World*.

### *Measures*

Seven-point Likert-type scales from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) were employed to measure the dependent variables (see Appendix C). Rather than using the term “character,” the name of the target person (e.g., Trishelle or Frank) was incorporated in the questionnaire. After participants watched the video in their respective conditions, they responded to seven items assessing their perceptions of the vulnerability of the character. Measures for perceived vulnerability were informed by the work of Petronio (1991) and adjusted to fit the context of mediated disclosure. Examples of items for perceived vulnerability include: *The character put himself/herself out on the line*; *The character’s most inner thoughts and feelings were exposed*; *The character was able to manage his/her privacy*, etc. (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .68$ ).

Character identification is conceptualized as immersing oneself into the role of the character both emotionally and cognitively. Thirteen items measured dimensions of identification, such as empathy, understanding, motivation, and absorption (Cohen, 2001). Examples of items for character identification include: *I was able to understand the events in the episode in a manner similar to that in which the character understood them; I felt I could really get inside the character's head; I felt the emotions of the character; I wanted the character to succeed in achieving his/her goals*, etc. (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ ).

Measures for uncertainty reduction were adapted from Clatterbuck's (1979) Attributional Confidence Scale. The scale was comprised of six items assessing the extent to which viewers feel confident about predicting the behaviors, attitudes, feelings, and emotions of the character. Examples of items for uncertainty reduction include: *I am confident about my ability to predict how the character will behave; I am accurate at predicting the attitudes of the character; I am certain about the character's actions*, etc. (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ).

The degree to which the viewer experienced transportation, or rather mental involvement and immersion into the narrative, was measured by eleven items adapted from Green and Brock (2000). Examples of items for transportation include: *I was mentally involved in the narrative while watching it; I easily pictured myself in the scenes of the events in the episode; Activity going on in the room around me was not on my mind; The narrative affected me emotionally*, etc. (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .77$ ).

Following these items, participants reported their enjoyment of the video. Fourteen items were adapted from Krcmar and Renfro (2005) and Raney and Bryant (2002) to assess the degree to which they enjoyed the clip. Examples of items for enjoyment include: *I had a good time watching this video; I felt good when watching this video; This video was entertaining; I found*

*this video involving; I tried to predict what was going to happen when watching this video, etc.* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ ).

In addition, the same 10-point semantic differential scales from the pretest that measured perceptions of depth, nature, accuracy, and relevance of the information were included in the questionnaire for the full-experiment. Perceived depth was an index composed of five items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .69$ ). The item asking participants to rate the information from public to private appeared to lower the internal consistency of the scale, and was therefore deleted to form a perceived depth index with a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .74. For the remaining dimensions, the same twelve items from the pretest were used to assess perceived nature (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ ), perceived accuracy (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .61$ ), and perceived relevance (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$ ).

### *Results*

The following sections detail the results of the manipulation check for depth of information, the analyses conducted to test the proposed hypotheses, and supplemental analyses that help to inform the main findings.

*Manipulation check.* A 2 (Character: Trishelle, Frank) X 2 (Depth of Information: Public, Private) X 3 (Mode of Information Delivery: Character-to-Viewer, Character-to-Character, Narrator-to-Viewer) analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to test for the efficacy of the manipulation of perceived depth, controlling for frequency of prior viewing of MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas*. Due to the incorporation of *The Real World* introduction to the stimuli in the main study, the amount of exposure to the Las Vegas series was used as a control variable. The analysis indicated that prior viewing was not a significant covariate. However, a significant main effect for depth of information was revealed, showing that participants rated private information ( $M = 7.10, SE = .17$ ) to be greater in depth than public information ( $M = 5.55, SE$

= .17),  $F(1, 171) = 40.88, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .19$ . A significant main effect for character was also found, in that Trishelle's disclosure was perceived to be greater in depth ( $M = 6.61, SE = .17$ ) than was Frank's disclosure ( $M = 6.04, SE = .17$ ),  $F(1, 171) = 5.54, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$ . Lastly, a significant main effect for mode indicated that character-to-character self-disclosure was reported greatest in perceived depth, followed by character-to-viewer self-disclosure, and narrator-to-viewer disclosure,  $F(2, 171) = 3.72, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .04$  (see Table 7). The only significant difference in perceived depth was between the character-to-character and narrator-to-viewer conditions. The analysis yielded no significant interaction effects on perceived depth. Although perceived depth was found to be a function of character, the effects of depth and mode on perceived depth were the same for Trishelle and Frank.

Table 7

*Perceived Depth across Modes of Information Delivery*

|           | Mode of Information Delivery |                        |                    |
|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
|           | Character-to-Viewer          | Character-to-Character | Narrator-to-Viewer |
| <i>M</i>  | 6.24 <sub>ab</sub>           | 6.77 <sub>b</sub>      | 5.97 <sub>a</sub>  |
| <i>SE</i> | .20                          | .21                    | .22                |

$F(2, 171) = 3.72, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .04$

*Note.* Means with no subscripts in common differ at  $p < .05$  using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

Similar to the pretest, variations in the disclosed information across dimensions of nature, accuracy, and relevance were also assessed. A series of 2 (Character: Trishelle, Frank) X 2 (Depth of Information: Public, Private) X 3 (Mode of Information Delivery: Character-to-Viewer, Character-to-Character, Narrator-to-Viewer) ANCOVAs were employed for each dimension, controlling for frequency of prior viewing. Whereas the analyses did not reveal any significant

main or interaction effects for perceived accuracy and relevance, several differences were found for perceived nature. A significant main effect for character,  $F(1, 171) = 38.96, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .19$ , was obtained, with Frank's personal information ( $M = 6.58, SE = .15$ ) perceived as significantly more positive than Trishelle's personal information ( $M = 5.25, SE = .15$ ).

Additionally, a significant main effect for mode was found,  $F(2, 171) = 8.59, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .09$ , indicating that character-to-viewer self-disclosures were perceived as significantly more positive than the other mode conditions (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Perceived Nature across Modes of Information Delivery*

|           | Mode of Information Delivery |                        |                    |
|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
|           | Character-to-Viewer          | Character-to-Character | Narrator-to-Viewer |
| <i>M</i>  | 6.46 <sub>b</sub>            | 5.40 <sub>a</sub>      | 5.90 <sub>a</sub>  |
| <i>SE</i> | .18                          | .19                    | .19                |

$F(2, 171) = 8.59, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .09$

*Note.* Means with no subscripts in common differ at  $p < .05$  using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

Moreover, a significant Character X Depth interaction,  $F(1, 171) = 11.60, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ , indicated that whereas Frank's private information was perceived as more positive than his public information, Trishelle's public information was perceived as more positive than her private information (see Figure 12). A significant Character X Mode interaction,  $F(2, 171) = 6.66, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .07$ , revealed that although Trishelle's disclosure was perceived as more negative than Frank's disclosure, regardless of the mode of information delivery, the difference was significantly greater when the disclosure occurred between characters (see Figure 13). The analysis also yielded a significant Depth X Mode interaction,  $F(2, 171) = 9.95, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .10$ . In the case of self-disclosure, private information was perceived as more

positive than public information. However, when a narrator disclosed information about a character to the viewer, public information was viewed as significantly more positive than was private information (see Figure 14).

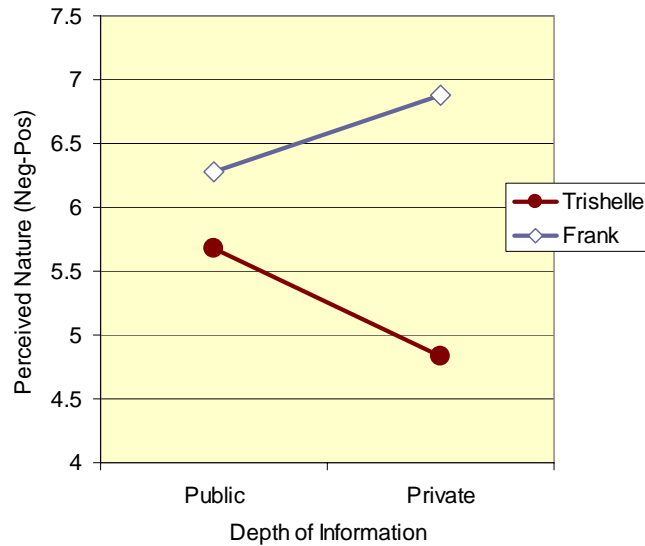


Figure 12. Character X Depth interaction on perceived nature.

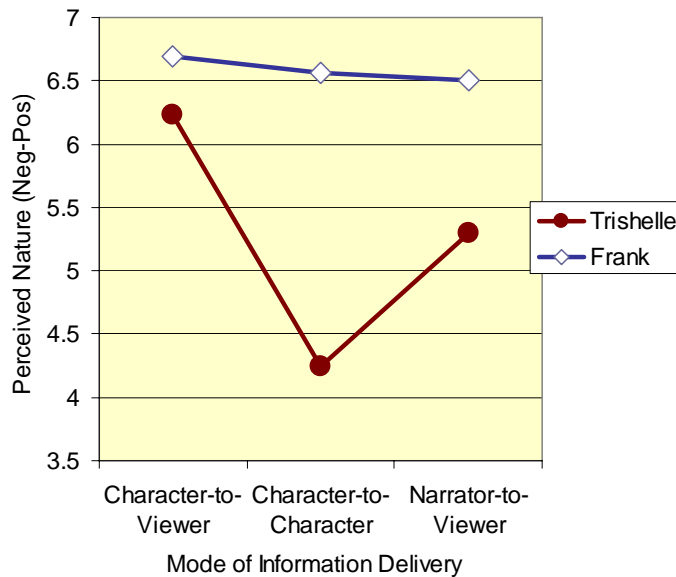


Figure 13. Character X Mode interaction on perceived nature.





Figure 14. Depth X Mode interaction on perceived nature.

Additionally, the analysis revealed a significant three-way interaction among character, depth, and mode on perceived nature,  $F(2, 171) = 8.35, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .09$  (see Figure 15). For the character-to-viewer self-disclosure condition, whereas Trishelle's public information was perceived more positively than her private information, the reverse was true for Frank. Furthermore, while in the character-to-character self-disclosure condition, private information was perceived as more positive than public information, the reverse was true for the narrator-to-viewer condition.

In summary, the manipulation check for depth of information was indeed effective. Findings indicate that when assessing perceived depth (the primary variable of interest), private information was reported as significantly greater in depth than was public information, regardless of mode or character. However, character differences in perceived depth *and* mode differences in perceived depth between character-to-character and narrator-to-viewer conditions should be noted, and will be elaborated on in the discussion. Furthermore, the character

interactions that surfaced with regards to perceived nature will inform the results of the hypotheses tests, reported in the next section.

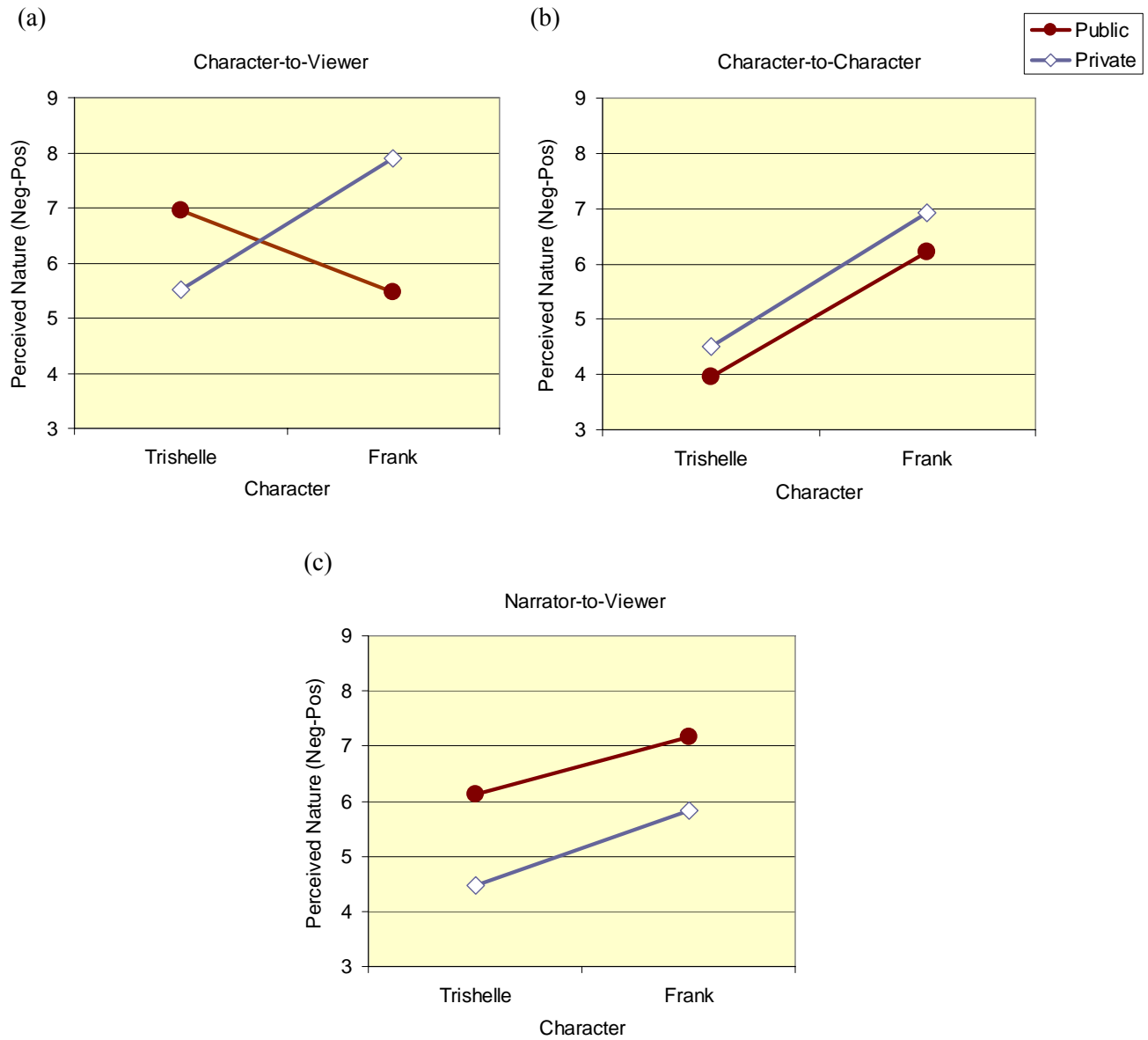


Figure 15. Character X Depth X Mode interaction on perceived nature.

*Hypotheses tests.* To test for the proposed effects of depth of information and mode of information delivery on the dependent variables—perceived vulnerability, character identification, uncertainty reduction, transportation, and enjoyment—a series of simple and multiple regressions and factorial ANOVAs were employed. Table 9 displays the descriptive statistics for these variables.

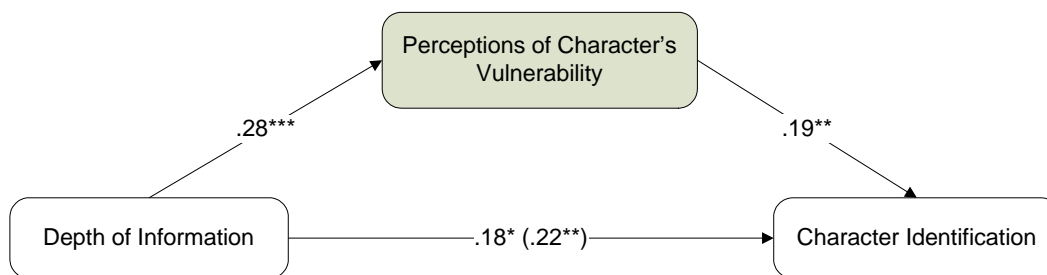
Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables (N = 185)*

| Variables                | M    | SD   | Skewness<br>(SE = .18) | Kurtosis<br>(SE = .36) |
|--------------------------|------|------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Perceived Vulnerability  | 4.56 | 0.90 | .10                    | -.11                   |
| Character Identification | 3.39 | 1.25 | .01                    | -.24                   |
| Uncertainty Reduction    | 3.14 | 1.40 | .14                    | -.83                   |
| Transportation           | 3.61 | 0.92 | -.22                   | .001                   |
| Enjoyment                | 3.73 | 1.21 | -.44                   | -.54                   |

H1 predicted that the effect of depth of information on identification is mediated by perceptions of the character's vulnerability. Depth of information is expected to be positively associated with perceived vulnerability of the character, which in turn is positively associated with identification. This hypothesis was tested by employing Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step criteria for supporting mediation (see Figure 16 for standardized  $\beta$  coefficients). To infer mediation—a) the independent variable must significantly predict the presumed mediating variable; b) the presumed mediator must significantly predict the dependent variable; c) the independent variable *alone* should significantly predict the dependent variable; d) when controlling for the presumed mediating variable, the effect of the independent variable on the

dependent variable should be reduced. Following these procedures, a set of simple linear regression analyses indicated that depth of information significantly predicted the presumed mediating variable—perceptions of character’s vulnerability ( $\beta = .28, t = 3.97, p < .001$ ), and that perceptions of character’s vulnerability significantly predicted the dependent variable—character identification ( $\beta = .19, t = 2.68, p < .01$ ). Next, when identification was regressed on depth of information *without* perceptions of character’s vulnerability, depth significantly predicted identification ( $\beta = .22, t = 3.09, p < .01$ ). The final criterion for mediation was confirmed by performing a multiple regression to demonstrate that the effect of depth on identification was reduced after controlling for the effect of perceived character’s vulnerability ( $\beta = .18, t = 2.44, p < .05$ ). To determine whether the drop in beta weight was significant, Sobel’s (1982) test was employed. The analysis revealed that the reduction in beta weight for depth of information when controlling for perceived vulnerability was marginally significant ( $z = 1.73, p = .08$ ). Therefore, results indicate that perceptions of a character’s vulnerability to some extent mediate the relationship between depth and identification, providing partial support for H1.



*Figure 16.* Mediation analysis for depth of information, perceived character’s vulnerability, and identification.

*Note 1.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

*Note 2.* Depth of information was dummy coded (0: Public, 1: Private)

*Note 3.* Number inside parenthesis is the standardized  $\beta$  coefficient when the dependent variable (character identification) is regressed on the independent variable (depth of information) alone, without including the mediating variable (perceptions of character’s vulnerability) in the equation.

To determine if character moderated these above relationships (refer to Figure 16), three sets of multiple linear regressions were employed to test for interactions with character.<sup>2</sup> First, perceived vulnerability was regressed on character and depth, yielding no significant Character X Depth interaction ( $\beta = -.12, t = -.99, p = .32$ ). Second, identification was regressed on character and perceived vulnerability, revealing a significant Character X Perceived Vulnerability interaction ( $\beta = -.22, t = -2.30, p < .05$ ). The interaction occurred because perceived vulnerability significantly predicted identification for Frank ( $\beta = .38, t = 3.82, p < .001$ ), however did not significantly predict identification for Trishelle ( $\beta = .00, t = 0.05, p = .96$ ). The regression slopes associated with this interaction are illustrated in Figure 17.<sup>3</sup> The third analysis regressed identification on character and depth, revealing no significant Character X Depth interaction ( $\beta = -.12, t = -0.93, p = .35$ ).

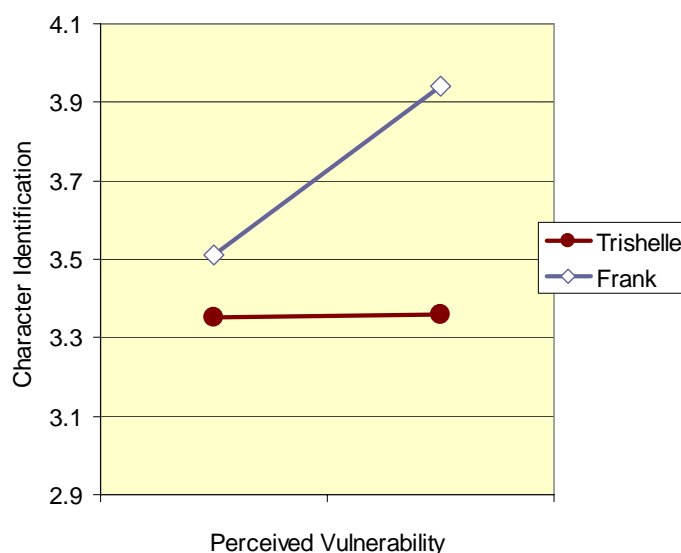


Figure 17. Character X Perceived Vulnerability interaction on identification.

H2 predicted that identification would facilitate a viewer's overall enjoyment. A simple linear regression was performed by regressing enjoyment on identification. The analysis showed that identification with the character significantly predicted enjoyment of the video ( $\beta = .50, t =$

7.86,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, the second hypothesis was supported. To determine if character moderated this relationship, a multiple linear regression was employed by regressing enjoyment on character and identification. The analysis revealed no significant Character X Identification interaction ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $t = .67$ ,  $p = .50$ ), indicating that the positive relationship of identification and enjoyment did not differ between characters.

H3 predicted that uncertainty reduction would be significantly greater for participants exposed to private information, as compared to those exposed to public information. A 2 (Character) X 2 (Depth) X 3 (Mode) factorial ANOVA was employed to examine differences in uncertainty reduction. Although no significant main effect was revealed for depth,  $F(1, 173) = 1.15$ ,  $p = .29$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .01$ , a significant Character X Depth interaction was obtained,  $F(1, 173) = 5.92$ ,  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$  (see Figure 18). Although uncertainty reduction did not significantly differ between Trishelle's public and private conditions, it did so for Frank. Participants reported greater uncertainty reduction for Frank's private information than his public information (see Table 10 for means). Therefore, these findings show partial support for H3, when taking into account character differences.

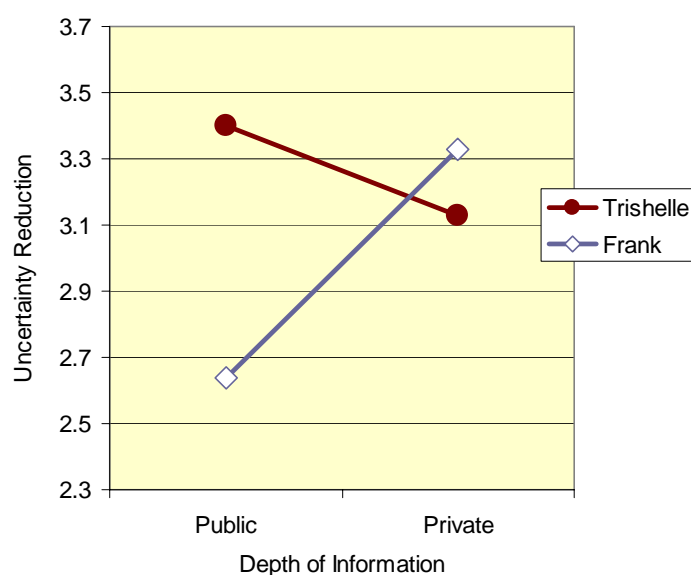


Figure 18. Character X Depth interaction on uncertainty reduction.

Table 10

*Uncertainty Reduction: Character X Depth of Information Interaction*

| Depth of Information |           | Character          |                    |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                      |           | Trishelle          | Frank              |
| Public               | <i>M</i>  | 3.40 <sub>bA</sub> | 2.64 <sub>aA</sub> |
|                      | <i>SE</i> | .19                | .21                |
| Private              | <i>M</i>  | 3.13 <sub>aA</sub> | 3.33 <sub>aB</sub> |
|                      | <i>SE</i> | .20                | .20                |

$$F(1, 173) = 5.92, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$$

*Note.* Using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons, within rows, means with no lower case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ ; within columns, means with no upper case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ .

Interestingly, the same analysis revealed a significant main effect for mode of information delivery on uncertainty reduction,  $F(2, 173) = 5.53, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$ . Participants reported greatest uncertainty reduction for character-to-viewer self-disclosures, followed by character-to-character self-disclosures, and narrator-to-viewer disclosures (see Table 11). More specifically, post hoc comparisons indicate that a viewer had significantly greater uncertainty reduction after witnessing a character self-disclose (regardless if the self-disclosure was directed to the audience or another character), as compared to being delivered the character's information by a narrator.

Table 11

*Uncertainty Reduction across Modes of Information Delivery*

|           | Mode of Information Delivery |                        |                    |
|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
|           | Character-to-Viewer          | Character-to-Character | Narrator-to-Viewer |
| <i>M</i>  | 3.39 <sub>b</sub>            | 3.32 <sub>b</sub>      | 2.65 <sub>a</sub>  |
| <i>SE</i> | .16                          | .17                    | .18                |

$$F(2, 173) = 5.53, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$$

*Note.* Means with no subscripts in common differ at  $p < .05$  using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

In addition, the analysis yielded a significant Depth X Mode interaction on uncertainty reduction,  $F(2, 173) = 3.08, p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$  (see Figure 19). The difference in uncertainty reduction between public and private information was greatest for character-to-character self-disclosure (see Table 12 for means). Specifically, participants who were exposed to a character self-disclosing to another character reported significantly greater reduced uncertainty for private information than for public information.

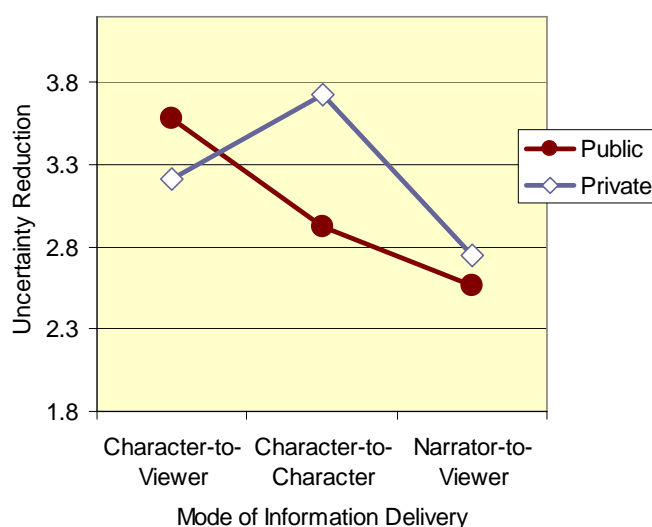


Figure 19. Depth X Mode interaction on uncertainty reduction.

Table 12

Uncertainty Reduction: Depth of Information X Mode of Information Delivery Interaction

| Depth   | Mode of Information Delivery |                        |                    |                    |
|---------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|         | Character-to-Viewer          | Character-to-Character | Narrator-to-Viewer |                    |
| Public  | <i>M</i>                     | 3.58 <sub>bA</sub>     | 2.92 <sub>aA</sub> | 2.56 <sub>aA</sub> |
|         | <i>SE</i>                    | .24                    | .23                | .25                |
| Private | <i>M</i>                     | 3.21 <sub>abA</sub>    | 3.73 <sub>bB</sub> | 2.75 <sub>aA</sub> |
|         | <i>SE</i>                    | .22                    | .26                | .25                |

$F(2, 173) = 3.08, p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$

Note. Using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons, within rows, means with no lower case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ ; within columns, means with no upper case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ .



H4 proposed that the effect of uncertainty reduction on enjoyment is mediated by the extent to which a viewer experienced transportation. Following the same procedure as H1, Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis (see Figure 20 for standardized  $\beta$  coefficients). A series of simple linear regression analyses indicated that uncertainty reduction significantly predicted the presumed mediating variable—transportation ( $\beta = .41, t = 6.08, p < .001$ ), and that transportation significantly predicted the dependent variable—enjoyment ( $\beta = .69, t = 12.83, p < .001$ ). Next, when enjoyment was regressed on uncertainty reduction *without* transportation, uncertainty reduction significantly predicted enjoyment ( $\beta = .29, t = 4.08, p < .001$ ). The final criterion for mediation was confirmed by performing a multiple regression to demonstrate that the effect of uncertainty reduction on enjoyment was reduced after accounting for the effect of transportation ( $\beta = .01, t = .13, p = .90$ ). To determine whether the drop in beta weight was significant, Sobel's (1982) test was employed. The analysis revealed that the beta weight for uncertainty reduction was significantly reduced when controlling for transportation ( $z = 5.39, p < .001$ ). Consistent with H4, findings clearly support the potent mediating effect of transportation in the relationship between uncertainty reduction and enjoyment.

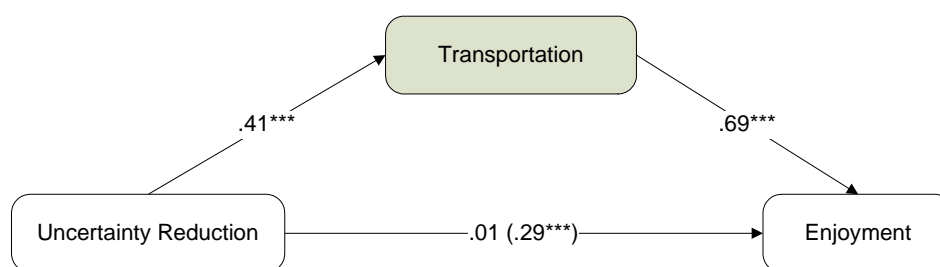


Figure 20. Mediation analysis for uncertainty reduction, transportation, and enjoyment.

Note 1. \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Note 2. Number inside parenthesis is the standardized  $\beta$  coefficient when the dependent variable (enjoyment) is regressed on the independent variable (uncertainty reduction) alone, without including the mediating variable (transportation) in the equation.

To determine if character moderated these above relationships (refer to Figure 20), three sets of multiple linear regressions were conducted to test for interactions with character. First, transportation was regressed on character and uncertainty reduction, yielding a significant Character X Uncertainty Reduction interaction ( $\beta = -.22, t = -2.23, p < .05$ ). This interaction occurred because uncertainty reduction was a stronger predictor of transportation for Frank ( $\beta = .55, t = 6.15, p < .001$ ), compared to Trishelle ( $\beta = .30, t = 3.08, p < .01$ ). The regression slopes associated with this interaction are illustrated in Figure 21.<sup>3</sup> The second analysis regressed enjoyment on character and transportation, yielding no significant Character X Transportation interaction ( $\beta = -.09, t = -1.16, p = .25$ ). Third, enjoyment was regressed on character and uncertainty reduction, revealing a non-significant Character X Uncertainty Reduction interaction ( $\beta = -.09, t = -.87, p = .38$ ).

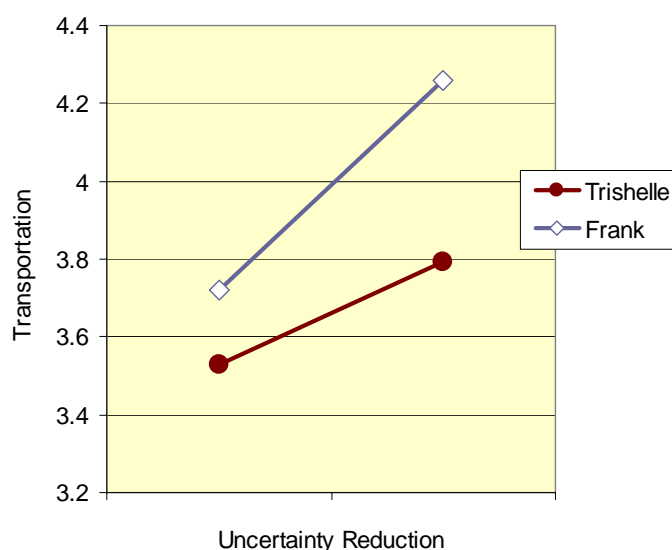


Figure 21. Character X Uncertainty Reduction on transportation.

To test the final two hypotheses, a 2 (Character) X 2 (Depth) X 3 (Mode) factorial ANOVA was employed to examine differences in character identification. H5 predicted that

identification is a function of the mode of information delivery. Character identification was expected to be greatest when a character self-discloses to the viewer, followed by when a character self-discloses to a character, and least when a narrator discloses to the viewer. The analysis revealed a significant main effect for mode of information delivery,  $F(2, 173) = 5.69, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$  (see Table 13). Although there was not a significant difference in identification between character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosures, participants in both these conditions experienced significantly greater identification with the character, compared to those in the narrator-to-viewer condition. Therefore, findings show partial support for H5. A significant main effect for depth,  $F(1, 173) = 10.10, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$ , was also obtained. Viewers experienced greater character identification when exposed to private information ( $M = 3.66, SE = .12$ ), as compared to public information ( $M = 3.11, SE = .12$ ).

Table 13

*Identification across Modes of Information Delivery*

|           | Mode of Information Delivery |                        |                    |
|-----------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
|           | Character-to-Viewer          | Character-to-Character | Narrator-to-Viewer |
| <i>M</i>  | 3.62 <sub>b</sub>            | 3.56 <sub>b</sub>      | 2.96 <sub>a</sub>  |
| <i>SE</i> | .24                          | .23                    | .25                |

$F(2, 173) = 5.69, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$

*Note.* Means with no subscripts in common differ at  $p < .05$  using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

The final hypothesis, H6, proposed an interaction effect between depth of information and mode of information delivery on identification. Specifically, the difference in identification between character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosures was expected to be greater for private information than for public information. In addition, participants were

expected to experience the greatest identification when viewing private character-to-viewer self-disclosures. The same analysis revealed a significant Depth X Mode interaction,  $F(2, 173) = 5.55, p < .01$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .06$  (see Figure 22). Interestingly, the results indicate that for public information, identification did not differ as a function of mode. However, for private information, identification was significantly greater when characters self-disclosed (see Table 14 for means). Furthermore, the difference in identification between public and private information was significant only in the case of character-to-character self-disclosure. Although a significant interaction effect between depth and mode was found, the nature of this effect does not show support for H6. Additionally, no significant character differences were revealed among these relationships.

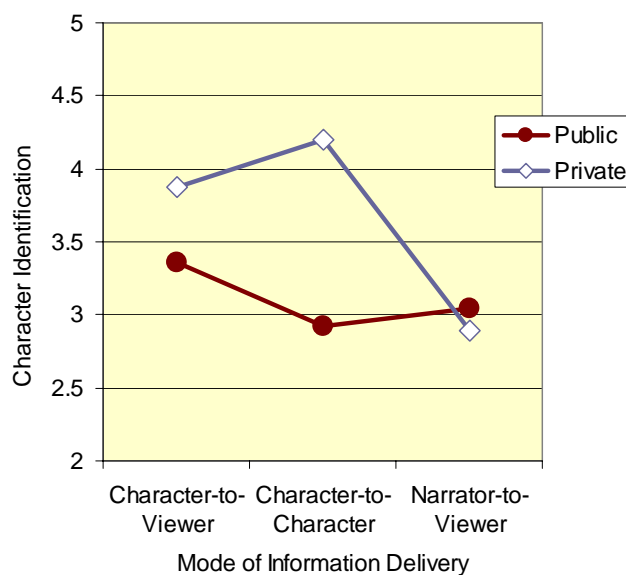


Figure 22. Depth X Mode interaction on identification.

Table 14

*Identification: Depth of Information X Mode of Information Delivery Interaction*

| Depth   | Mode of Information Delivery |                        |                    |                    |
|---------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|         | Character-to-Viewer          | Character-to-Character | Narrator-to-Viewer |                    |
| Public  | <i>M</i>                     | 3.36 <sub>aA</sub>     | 2.92 <sub>aA</sub> | 3.04 <sub>aA</sub> |
|         | <i>SE</i>                    | .21                    | .20                | .22                |
| Private | <i>M</i>                     | 3.88 <sub>bA</sub>     | 4.20 <sub>bB</sub> | 2.89 <sub>aA</sub> |
|         | <i>SE</i>                    | .20                    | .22                | .22                |

$F(2, 173) = 5.55, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$

*Note.* Using Holm's sequential bonferroni post hoc comparisons, within rows, means with no lower case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ ; within columns, means with no upper case subscript in common differ at  $p < .05$ .

For purposes of illustrating the significant effects of depth of information and mode of information delivery on the dependent variables, results from a series of simple linear regressions are shown (see standardized  $\beta$  coefficients in Figure 23). Since both character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosures were significantly different from narrator-to-viewer disclosures with regards to identification (the self-disclosure conditions did not differ), the mode variable was dummy coded (0: Narrator-to-Viewer, 1: Character-to-Viewer and Character-to-Character), along with the depth variable (0: Public, 1: Private).

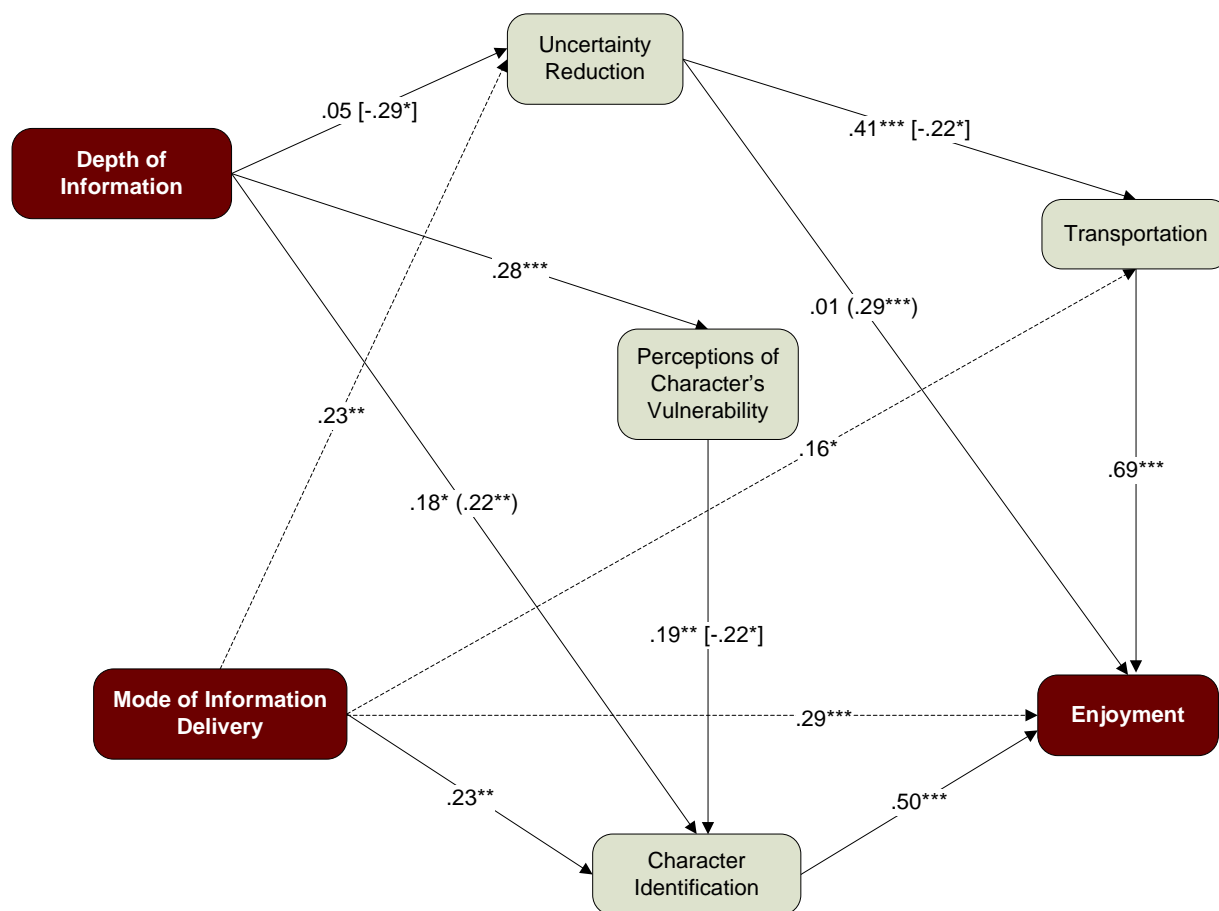


Figure 23. Diagram of hypothesized relationships.

Note 1. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Note 2. Solid lines represent hypothesized relationships. Dotted lines represent significant unpredicted relationships.

Note 3. Numbers inside parentheses are standardized  $\beta$  coefficients when the dependent variable is regressed on the independent variable alone, without including the mediating variable in the equation.

Note 4. Numbers inside brackets are standardized  $\beta$  coefficients for significant character character interactions, when the dependent variable is regressed on the independent variable and character.

*Supplemental analyses.* A series of supplemental analyses were conducted to inform the findings of the hypotheses tests. Bivariate correlations were performed to determine the interrelationships among the main dependent variables (see Table 15). Results indicate that identification, uncertainty reduction, transportation, and enjoyment are all strongly correlated. Although perceived vulnerability of the character was found to be positively associated with identification, uncertainty reduction, and enjoyment, it was only a near significant correlate with

transportation. Furthermore, although all variables were positively related to a viewer's overall enjoyment of the video, transportation appeared to have the strongest association with enjoyment, with perceived vulnerability having the weakest association with enjoyment.

Table 15

*Correlations among Dependent Variables*

|                               | PV<br>( <i>N</i> = 185) | CI<br>( <i>N</i> = 185) | UR<br>( <i>N</i> = 185) | T<br>( <i>N</i> = 185) | E<br>( <i>N</i> = 185) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Perceived Vulnerability (PV)  | --                      | .19**                   | .21**                   | .14 <sup>+</sup>       | .15*                   |
| Character Identification (CI) |                         | --                      | .52***                  | .62***                 | .50***                 |
| Uncertainty Reduction (UR)    |                         |                         | --                      | .41***                 | .29***                 |
| Transportation (T)            |                         |                         |                         | --                     | .69***                 |
| Enjoyment (E)                 |                         |                         |                         |                        | --                     |

Note. Correlations are indicated as significant at <sup>+</sup> $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

In the second week of the main study, additional items were included in the questionnaire to measure the construct—voyeuristic appeal. This variable was incorporated to determine whether individuals with a liking for or salacious interest in observing a person's intimate and private life on television were more likely to enjoy mediated forms of self-disclosure. Only a subset of the sample ( $N = 47$ ) responded to the additional five statements assessing voyeuristic appeal, measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The items included: *I enjoy watching people reveal private information on television*; *I like to see private information exposed on television*; *I do not find private information about others interesting*; *I like to observe the private lives of others on television*; and *I am not interested in watching private information exposed on television* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ ).

To determine whether voyeuristic appeal moderated the hypothesized relationships, a series of multiple regression analyses were performed. For H1, three sets of multiple linear

regressions were conducted. First, when perceived vulnerability was regressed on voyeurism and depth of information, a marginally significant main effect for voyeurism was obtained ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $t = 1.97$ ,  $p = .06$ ). This finding shows that individuals with greater voyeuristic appeal were more likely to perceive the character as being vulnerable. The analysis revealed no significant Voyeurism X Depth interaction ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $t = .50$ ,  $p = .62$ ). Second, when identification was regressed on voyeurism and perceived vulnerability, neither a significant main effect for voyeurism ( $\beta = .04$ ,  $t = .25$ ,  $p = .80$ ) nor a Voyeurism X Perceived Vulnerability interaction ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $t = -1.09$ ,  $p = .28$ ) was obtained. Likewise, when identification was regressed on voyeurism and depth of information, no significant main effect for voyeurism ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $t = .66$ ,  $p = .52$ ) or Voyeurism X Depth interaction ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $t = -1.08$ ,  $p = .29$ ) was revealed.

For H2, enjoyment was regressed on voyeurism and identification. Whereas the analysis did not yield a significant Voyeurism X Identification interaction ( $\beta = -.03$ ,  $t = -.19$ ,  $p = .85$ ), a significant main effect for voyeurism was found ( $\beta = .37$ ,  $t = 2.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Individuals with greater voyeuristic appeal were more likely to report enjoying the video.

For H3, when regressing uncertainty reduction on voyeurism and depth of information, only a marginally significant main effect for voyeurism was obtained ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $t = 1.79$ ,  $p = .08$ ). Individuals who are more appealed by voyeurism had a greater tendency to experience uncertainty reduction. The analysis yielded no significant Voyeurism X Depth interaction ( $\beta = -.02$ ,  $t = -.09$ ,  $p = .93$ ).

For H4, three sets of multiple linear regressions were conducted. First, when transportation was regressed on voyeurism and uncertainty reduction, neither a significant main effect for voyeurism ( $\beta = .10$ ,  $t = .65$ ,  $p = .52$ ) nor Voyeurism X Uncertainty Reduction interaction ( $\beta = -.17$ ,  $t = -1.11$ ,  $p = .27$ ) was found. Second, when enjoyment was regressed on



voyeurism and transportation, the analysis revealed a significant main effect for voyeurism ( $\beta = .34, t = 3.04, p < .01$ ), however no significant Voyeurism X Transportation interaction ( $\beta = .07, t = .62, p = .54$ ). Third, when enjoyment was regressed on voyeurism and uncertainty reduction, both a significant main effect for voyeurism ( $\beta = .52, t = 3.64, p < .01$ ) and a significant Voyeurism X Uncertainty Reduction interaction ( $\beta = -.38, t = -2.65, p < .05$ ) were obtained. Figure 24 illustrates the regression slopes associated with this interaction.<sup>3</sup> This interaction suggests that voyeuristic appeal acts as a buffer against the effect of uncertainty reduction on enjoyment under conditions of high certainty. Another interpretation of the interaction effect is that uncertainty reduction is a much stronger predictor of enjoyment for individuals with low voyeuristic appeal.

Lastly for H5, identification was regressed on voyeurism and mode of information delivery in its dummy form (0: Narrator-to-Viewer, 1: Character-to-Viewer and Character-to-Character). The analysis yielded a non-significant main effect for voyeurism ( $\beta = -.04, t = -.08, p = .94$ ) and a non-significant Voyeurism X Mode interaction ( $\beta = .12, t = .25, p = .81$ ).

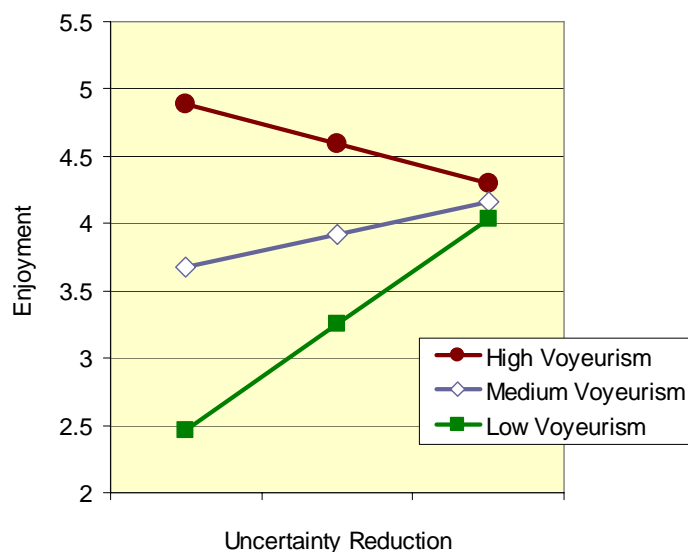


Figure 24. Voyeurism X Uncertainty Reduction interaction on enjoyment.

*Summary.* In general, results from the hypotheses tests indicate that perceived vulnerability partially mediated the relationship between depth of information and identification. A character difference was found in the relationship of perceived vulnerability and identification, with perceived vulnerability significantly predicting identification for the male character, but not for the female character. In addition, uncertainty reduction proved to be a function of both depth of information and character. For the male character, a viewer's uncertainty was significantly more reduced with private information than with public information. For the female character, public and private disclosures did not differ significantly in a viewer's uncertainty reduction. Moreover, transportation was revealed as a potent mediator in the effect of uncertainty reduction on overall enjoyment. However, a character effect was found in the relationship between uncertainty reduction and transportation, with uncertainty reduction being a stronger predictor of transportation for the male character than for the female character. Furthermore, character identification was a function of mode of information delivery, in that identification was greater when self-disclosure occurred than when it did not. Identification with characters also served as a strong predictor of a viewer's enjoyment. Findings also indicate an interactive effect of depth and mode of information delivery on identification, with viewers reporting the greatest identification when exposed to private character-to-character self-disclosures. For public information, character identification did not differ across modes.

In addition to the results of the hypothesized relationships, other significant findings should be noted. For example, mode of information delivery independently predicted uncertainty reduction, transportation, and enjoyment. Specifically, in the case when viewers witnessed characters self-disclose, greater reduced uncertainty, transportation, and enjoyment were experienced. Furthermore, supplemental analyses indicate that voyeuristic appeal was positively

associated with the enjoyment of observing the disclosure of a character's personal information. To some extent, the appeal of voyeurism also predicted perceived vulnerability and uncertainty reduction, however these relationships were only marginally significant. Lastly, uncertainty reduction was found to be a stronger predictor of overall enjoyment for those with low levels of voyeuristic appeal.

## Discussion

The present study applied the construct of self-disclosure to the context of entertainment media by empirically testing the effects of two particular dimensions—depth and mode.<sup>4</sup> Whereas depth of information exchange has received considerable attention in areas of psychology, sociology, and interpersonal communication, the mode through which information delivery occurs in entertainment programming is clearly distinctive from face-to-face relationships. In particular, the growing trend in the format of characters self-disclosing to the audience, evidenced in reality-based programs and sitcoms, motivated the examination of mediated forms of self-disclosure. In general, results of this study support the important roles of mediated self-disclosure and the depth of information exchange in a viewer's experience with entertainment content. Whereas information about characters on television can be learned indirectly from other characters, through the development of a narrative, or from words on a screen, witnessing characters “personally” exchange intimate information about themselves produces very distinctive audience responses.

First, the study provides evidence for the partial mediating effect of perceptions of a character's vulnerability on the relationship between depth of disclosure and identification. When the disclosed information was private, the character was perceived more to be putting himself or herself out on the line and neither guarding nor managing his or her privacy, as compared to when the information was public. The impression of the character being at risk of vulnerability indeed facilitated a viewer's identification with the character. Identification as a multidimensional construct involves the ability to share another's perspective, both in understanding the goals, motives, and behaviors of a person *and* in feeling the person's emotions (Cohen, 2001, 2006). This mediated relationship was expected on the basis of Petronio's (1991)

Communication Privacy Management theory, which explains interpersonal exchange as a function of the coordination of self-established privacy boundaries. Privacy management assumes that a risk of vulnerability is attached to self-disclosure and that boundaries are loosened and tightened depending on situational contexts. Therefore, as more intimate information is revealed, a viewer who is more likely to perceive the vulnerability of a character should have a greater tendency to share and adopt the character's perspective; this was clearly evidenced from the data.

To explain the partial mediating effect of perceived vulnerability, it is critical to note character differences. Viewers exposed to information about the female character (Trishelle) generally perceived her as more vulnerable than those exposed to information about the male character (Frank). A possible explanation is that the information disclosed by each character was not consistent (see Appendix A), for the study was limited by the use of existing video in a television series. Although each character's public and private information was significantly different in terms of perceived depth (supporting the depth manipulation check, with private information perceived as more "intimate, personal, deep, and revealing" than public information), the perceived nature of each character's disclosure varied. Results from the pretest and full-experiment indicated that Frank's private disclosure was reported as significantly more positive than Trishelle's private disclosure. Frank's private information consisted of affectionate and romantic feelings about a girl, whereas Trishelle's private information consisted of her father being an unsupportive figure in her life. Therefore, perceived vulnerability of the character could have been confounded with the perceived nature of the information, for Trishelle's disclosure was rated as both deeper and more negative than Frank's disclosure. These differences may have yielded an interaction effect between character and perceived vulnerability on identification.

Interestingly, perceived vulnerability was a significant predictor of identification for the male character, but not for the female character.

Although this character interaction may have resulted from aforementioned variations in content and perceived vulnerability, depth, and valence of the disclosure, another explanation could be derived from gender differences in the act and expectation of self-disclosure behaviors. Since only one male instantiation and one female instantiation were used per experimental condition in the main study, inferences on the basis of gender should be made with caution. It is critical to note that such differences between characters with respect to the information delivered may be confounded with gender. However, for purposes of interpreting the results, character gender differences may provide a valuable insight. Whereas self-disclosure is typically conceptualized as a process, some scholars have attributed it to a stable personality trait (Dindia & Allen, 1992). Particularly in personality research, sex differences in self-disclosure are predicted to impact the development and treatment of emotional distress. In general, women have a greater tendency to reveal more information in interpersonal exchanges than men (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard & Richman, 1963). Gender differences in the amount and degree of intimate disclosure have commonly been described as products of sex roles and expectations. Specifically, the stereotypical male is perceived as independent, assertive, competitive, insensitive, and unsympathetic. On the contrary, the stereotypical female is attributed as dependent, passive, non-aggressive, emotional, and interpersonally-oriented (see Bardwick & Douvan, 1971; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). These characteristics provide a strong rationale for expectations of self-disclosure control. In particular, it can be argued that men hold greater pressure to conform to expectations of emotional control and to restrain from disclosing private information to others, than do women (Rosenfeld, 1979). When applying such notions to

mediated forms of self-disclosure, if a male character exhibits highly intimate self-disclosure, such deviance could be more noticeable for the viewer because the action is inconsistent with the norm (e.g., men are reserved with their feelings). However, when a female character self-discloses private information, this behavior is more likely to be deemed acceptable and normal because it confirms with existing gender stereotypes (e.g., women are naturally emotional and dependent beings). Whereas Trishelle was perceived to be more vulnerable than Frank (perhaps driven by expectations of interpersonal dependency on the basis of stereotypical gender roles), vulnerability was found to be a significant predictor of identification for *only* Frank. A potential explanation is that not only is it less common for males to publicly disclose deep emotions to others (making Frank's emotional state more salient to the viewer), but also the intensity of his feelings for another woman provoked the audience to more likely empathize with him. Although a character difference was found in the relationship of perceived vulnerability and identification, the results suggest to some extent that with private disclosure, identification is further enhanced through the recognition and internalization of the vulnerable state of a character.

Whereas perceived nature differed between characters, other notable differences in this variable should be acknowledged with regards to depth of disclosure and mode of information delivery. First, character-to-viewer self-disclosures were reported as most positive across the modes of information delivery, showing support for the distinctive and potentially favorable effect of character address. When information was revealed directly from the character (regardless of recipient), it was generally perceived as reflecting more favorably on the character. Second, the data suggest that when a character self-disclosed, private information was rated as more positive than public information. On the contrary, when a narrator disclosed information about a character to the audience, private information was reported as significantly more

negative than public information. A possible explanation for these results is that an individual's privacy is expected to be disclosed by himself or herself, and *not* by someone else. The notion that one's privacy is considered "owned" by the individual, for personal information exchange privileges a recipient (Burgoon, 1986), lends support for the interaction between depth and mode on perceived nature. In other words, perceived appropriateness may explain why private information was rated as more favorable when self-disclosure occurred *and* why public information was rated as more favorable when disclosed by a third party. Such findings shed light on how depth and mode of information delivery impact not only viewer engagement, but also the valence of the given information.

In addition, this study found that identification was a function of not only depth, but also mode of information delivery. Surprisingly, character identification did not vary for public information, however it did for private information. When self-disclosure of private information occurred, regardless of whether the information was directed to the viewer or another character, identification was greater than when a narrator disclosed the information. Findings clearly bolster the argument that learning private information through a character's *self-disclosure* in the media environment operates differently from simply learning private information from another source (e.g., a narrator). Although the recipient of the self-disclosure in the private condition did not matter, in that the same level of identification was reported for character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosures, a striking difference in identification between public and private information was revealed for character-to-character self-disclosures. When participants watched a character reveal private information to another character, identification was greatest. This was contrary to the expected hypothesis that private character-to-viewer self-disclosures would most strongly increase identification.



An explanation for this finding could be linked to the nature of the reaction from the “other” character. In the character-to-character condition, a character was portrayed as divulging personal information to someone else. This recipient was generally portrayed in a neutral light, for his or her responses were mainly nonverbal and contained utterances of acknowledgement. It could be the case that the other character was perceived to be agreeing with the content or nature of the disclosure *or* that the viewer felt the disclosure was acceptable since no disagreement was expressed by the recipient. In contrast to the character-to-character condition, the other two modes placed the viewer as the *only* recipient of the disclosure. In these latter conditions, the viewer was subject to a multitude of interpretations, without the influence of another person’s response. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that additional response cues from the other character in the character-to-character mode condition led to perceived acceptability of the disclosure, making identification more likely to occur.

Another way to address the interactive effect of depth and mode on identification is to consider the emphasis on the role of the audience. For this study, identification was explicated as the loss of self-awareness, due to emotional and cognitive absorption into a character’s role. When the disclosure of personal information was targeted at the audience, the direction of the information exchange could have highlighted the viewer’s role as an audience member. In such a case, identification was perhaps limited in that it was less likely for those witnessing character-to-viewer disclosures to perspective-take, as compared to those in the character-to-character condition. When parsing out differences between identification and parasocial interaction, the latter often referred to as a “seeming face-to-face relationship” with a media personality, Horton and Wohl (1956) suggested that any features in mediated content that facilitate parasocial interactions are likely to hinder identification due to the weight placed on the role of the viewer.

Therefore, emphasis on the role of the audience in the character-to-viewer condition perhaps explains why private character-to-character self-disclosure produced the greatest identification effect.

The present study also found that depth of information was positively associated with uncertainty reduction for only the male character. For the female character, there was no significant difference in a viewer's uncertainty reduction between the public and private depth conditions. Aforementioned gender differences with regards to expectancies of self-disclosure may help to interpret these results. Because women are more likely to self-disclose than men (previously explained by sex role stereotypes and expectations), it is understandable why depth of information had no bearing on the degree to which viewers were able to predict Trishelle's attitudes, values, and behaviors. However, if a male character revealed highly intimate information, this disclosure may not only be more noticeable, but also serve as a sign of his character (e.g., openness to communicate with others, indifference to gender norms, emotional dependency, etc.). Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that private self-disclosure from a male character, as compared to a female character, is more likely to increase both a viewer's predictability in the character's emotions and actions *and* sense of feeling that he or she knows the character. For these reasons, the difference in uncertainty reduction between public and private information may have been more pronounced for Frank than for Trishelle.

Surprisingly, mode of information delivery also predicted uncertainty reduction. Although this relationship was not expected, character self-disclosures produced greater uncertainty reduction than narrator disclosures. Results indicate that feeling confident about or "knowing" a character was positively influenced by receiving the character's information directly from himself or herself, as opposed to simply learning about the character through a

narrator. It is possible that uncertainty reduction not only relies on the level of intimacy attached to the disclosed information, but also is impacted by the source of the information. Information which is personally delivered by the source may facilitate greater predictability of the character because the disclosure is perceived as controlled. For this reason, self-disclosure by characters could have produced more heightened uncertainty reduction for the viewer than the control condition. Furthermore, a significant depth and mode interaction was revealed, indicating that the effect of mode of information delivery on a viewer's reduced uncertainty was different for public and private information. For public information, an individual was more likely to express confidence in predicting the character's actions, feelings, values, and attitudes, if the self-disclosure was directed toward the audience. However for private information, uncertainty reduction was only significantly different between character-to-character and narrator-to-viewer conditions, with character-to-character self-disclosure eliciting greater reduced uncertainty. This latter finding is perhaps explained by the notion that if a character is willing to "publicly" self-disclose intimate information to other characters (aside from only the viewer), this conscious exchange of information serves as another indicator of the character's personality. In other words, when a character voluntarily provides highly personal information to others, a viewer may perceive this to be a reflection of the character's motivation for intimacy or openness in social interactions. Therefore, such a display may increase a viewer's certainty about the character, more so than if the character only self-disclosed to the viewer.

Another notable finding provides support for the mediating effect of transportation in the relationship between uncertainty reduction and enjoyment. In general, individuals were more likely to be mentally and emotionally involved in the events of the narrative *and* reported greater focus during the video with more reduced uncertainty about the character. In turn, transportation

was found to be a strong predictor of overall enjoyment. In support of mediation, fulfilling Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria, transportation was identified as a strong mediator in this relationship. In other words, one way a viewer with greater certainty about a character can experience enjoyment is by being transported into the narrative. However, a significant character difference was revealed for the association between uncertainty reduction and transportation. Specifically, the effect of uncertainty reduction on transportation was stronger for Frank than for Trishelle. Formerly noted, gender differences in norms and expectations of self-disclosure could account for the more pronounced influence of the male character. Moreover, supplemental analyses revealed that mode of information delivery was a significant predictor of transportation. In particular, exposure to characters self-disclosing made it more likely for a viewer to become transported than exposure to a narrator. This finding further confirms the important function of self-disclosure by characters, for it facilitates greater audience involvement and provides viewers with a more enjoyable experience.

In addition, data from a subset of the sample indicated that individuals interested in observing the private lives of others *or* being exposed to private information on television (e.g., appealed by voyeurism) were significantly more likely to enjoy the video. To a lesser degree, voyeuristic appeal was associated with perceived vulnerability of the character and uncertainty reduction. Interestingly, an interactive effect of voyeuristic appeal and uncertainty reduction was found on a viewer's overall enjoyment. The data suggest that uncertainty reduction was a stronger predictor of enjoyment for individuals with low levels of voyeuristic appeal. For people highly appealed by voyeurism, greater reduced uncertainty actually diminished enjoyment. These findings perhaps imply that individuals who are naturally drawn to witnessing the private information of others are more entertained by suspense than by the actual observation of one's

privacy. Although a portion of the sample responded to items assessing voyeuristic appeal, it is evident that one's interest in private exposures impacts not only involvement with entertainment content, but also the pleasure sought from witnessing personal disclosures on television.

#### *Theoretical, Societal, and Practical Implications*

The findings reported in this study have a number of implications for theory, society, and practice. First, this dissertation theoretically contributes to our understanding that interpersonal relationships are to some extent functionally equivalent to mediated relationships. In particular, the association between intimacy and relational satisfaction has largely been supported in interpersonal literature (see Reis & Shaver, 1988; Sanderson & Cantor, 2001; Sanderson et al., 2005). Heightened intimacy through the disclosure of personal information was originally proposed by Altman and Taylor (1973), suggesting that the revealing of layers of an individual's identity would gradually produce relational closeness. Guided by theories of information exchange and media entertainment, this study proposed that satisfaction within an interpersonal relationship as a result of self-disclosure (generally positive or not negative in nature) would translate to the *enjoyment* of witnessing characters self-disclose in entertainment programming. This comparison was indeed empirically supported.

Enjoyment from watching self-disclosure on television by engaging in identification and transportation could also be linked to the construct of parasocial interactions. Horton and Wohl (1956) were first to describe these interactions as relationships (that of friendship or intimacy) made by television viewers with media figures (e.g., presenters, actors, and/or celebrities). With regards to the nature of parasocial interactions, scholars have found that people tend to form relationships with television personalities whom they consider to be a companion or someone they know or desire to one day meet (Houlberg, 1984; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). Although

parasocial relationships were not examined in this study, the enjoyment of mediated self-disclosure could also be a result of a growing relationship between the character and viewer. This explanation describes the viewer's interaction with the character as *dyadic*. Rather than having a viewer take on the character's perspective or adopt the character's role emotionally and cognitively (explicated as identification for this study), it could be possible that the viewer develops a seeming "face-to-face relationship" with the media personality. Researchers have found that the number of times a media personality appears in a program and the use of invitational conversation styles and production techniques (e.g., close-up shots) enhance a sense of intimacy that encourages parasocial involvement (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Meyrowitz, 1982; Nordlund, 1978). These factors are suggested to provoke interactive responses from viewers and to boost the likeability and non-threatening nature of characters on television. Therefore, the effects of personal information disclosed by characters could inform parasocial interaction literature by providing support for the vital role of "character address" in enhancing character-to-viewer interactions.

In addition, this dissertation offers a richer understanding of the blurred distinction between reality and fiction. The present research suggests that boundaries between the real world and the fictional world may be hazy, evidenced by the distinctive effect of character-to-viewer address on audience's involvement with mediated content. If mediated relationships are indeed functionally equivalent to interpersonal ones, implications for our social interactions can be drawn. For example, to what degree are our beliefs, expectations, and values of privacy impacted by the disclosure of characters on television? If there is a growing trend toward more "interactive" viewing (evidenced by most recently, sitcoms adopting character-to-viewer disclosure formats), will such portrayals of personal information exchange influence our

perceptual boundaries of privacy? Andrejevic (2002) suggests that surveillance-based reality programming encourages acts of self-disclosure and personal expression, facilitating people to actively take part in the public discourse. Surveillance affords the general public and even viewers a sense of agency, in which they have control over content and production. Shows, such as *The Real World*, *Road Rules*, and *Big Brother*, allow people to become instant celebrities, not only democratizing access to the real, but also showing individuals that they are worthy of attention. Capitalizing on the notion of self-worth, these shows equate “self-disclosure with freedom and authenticity” (Andrejevic, 2002, p. 268). Such programs serve as a place where individuation occurs and contestants are able to use surveillance to differentiate themselves from the mass. Therefore, a concern lies in whether self-disclosure portrayed on television is more dramatically represented than that in real life. Heavy viewers of mediated self-disclosure may develop greater expectations for the revealing of private information *or* perceive highly intimate information to be more appropriate than public information. If private self-disclosures are becoming more common in the media environment, these recurring instances could shape and cultivate expectations of and boundaries for privacy. Consequently, a viewer’s conception of privacy could also be impacted by the degree to which he or she identifies with characters who self-disclose on the screen *or* is absorbed in the narrative. This trend toward a more interactive media experience may push the limits of privacy, influencing audience’s perceptions of self-disclosure deemed culturally acceptable in the real world. Such perceptual or attitudinal effects could have a bearing on an individual’s own self-disclosure behaviors, as well as his or her interpretation of the disclosure of others. On a much larger scale, if entertainment media is in fact expanding the boundaries of privacy, these concerns could have policy or legal implications for entertainment programming.

Despite the potential negative effects of self-disclosure in its mediated form, the exchange of personal information among characters could be beneficial in heightening viewer involvement. Recognizing the tensions between such implications, this study provides substantial support for the gratifying outcomes that self-disclosure produces for viewers. Thus, the current research offers practical implications for the entertainment industry. Results suggest that enjoyable experiences for a viewer can be induced by portraying characters self-disclosing personal information (generally positive in nature), rather than having personal information about a character delivered by a narrator. Furthermore, if programs incorporated character developments that are rich in nature, in which private information is more likely to be revealed than public information, stronger identification effects will occur. Such a format is predicted to heighten a viewer's overall enjoyment. Additionally, findings suggest implications for entertainment education. If greater audience interaction results from characters addressing more intimate information to viewers, the utilization of this feature could be particularly beneficial in the context of children's programming. In particular, a format that effectively considers the impact of depth and mode of information delivery on enhancing emotional and cognitive involvement could serve as a valuable tool for learning.

Additionally, findings from the current study hold implications for additional media outlets. In particular, the Internet has become a pervasive medium, affording users the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships and engage in high self-disclosure (Rheingold, 1993; Wallace, 1999). For example, social networking websites (e.g., facebook.com, myspace.com, and orkut.com), instant messaging services (e.g., AIM, Yahoo Messaging, and Google Chat), and electronic mail are presently the most popular ways for individuals to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. Results from this study suggest that viewers



were more likely to engage in a character's perspective and become absorbed in the narrative when personal information was delivered by the character and perceived more intimate. Such findings could be extended to self-disclosure in an online environment, since there are instances in which personal information can come directly from the individual source or from a third party. For example, in the case of social networking websites, information about an individual's personal hobbies, occupation, and relationship interests may be publicly disclosed by the profile user. In addition, profile pages may also contain testimonials posted by other users (e.g., comments made by friends about the user). Hence, the source or communicator of the personal information could either be the user himself or herself or a third party, analogous to the present research in which the source is either a character or narrator. Thus, implications of this study suggest that online intimate self-disclosure delivered by the actual source will not only be perceived as more acceptable and favorable, but also heighten identification and absorption, as compared to that posted by a third party. Furthermore, inferences about self-disclosure's impact on increasing relational closeness via the Internet could be made. If relational closeness is a product of personal information exchange, online self-disclosure may produce comparable or even greater positive outcomes, such as relational satisfaction, trust, and intimacy.

#### *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

This study is subject to a number of limitations and therefore, proposes several directions for future research. First, it is important to note that the objective of the study was intended to examine the disclosure of information *not* deemed negative. Given that social penetration theory proposes that self-disclosure heightens relational intimacy, the disclosures portrayed in the videos were not meant to contain information about anti-social attitudes, values, or behaviors of the character. Although Trishelle's private information was concerned with her father not being a

supportive parental figure, it was not interpreted to shed a negative light on her character per se. However, on a scale anchored from 1(not at all) to 10(very much), the positive nature of this disclosure ranged from 4.5 to 7. This result suggests that Trishelle's information may not have been construed as entirely neutral or positive, but somewhat negative. Furthermore, Frank's disclosure was generally perceived to be more positive in nature than Trishelle's disclosure. Future studies may consider more effectively controlling for perceived nature when manipulating depth of information across characters. Additionally, another area of exploration is to account for the effects of mediated self-disclosure of different valence—negative, neutral, and positive—to determine if enjoyment varies as a response to the perceived nature of the disclosure.

Additionally, another limitation lies in the construction of the stimuli for the pretest and full-experiment. The stimulus material was non-linearly edited from existing video (episodes from MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas*). Therefore, public and private information was different for each character, although information was edited to remain relatively consistent across the three modes of information delivery. Furthermore, to control for the content of information, the duration of each disclosure was relatively brief. Thus, one can make the argument that actual involvement due to the short duration of the video was not experienced. In other words, for viewers to fully experience identification and transportation, characters and narratives may need to be more developed to accurately capture audience involvement. Therefore, future studies should consider designing video stimuli that are lengthier for purposes of measuring high degrees of engagement. In addition, when having multiple instantiations, it is important to keep the information disclosed by each character consistent for each level of depth, to more accurately control for other dimensions of self-disclosure, such as accuracy, nature (negative-positive), and relevance. Future research could also extend the study of mediated self-

disclosure by manipulating other dimensions, for self-disclosure has been identified to vary along a number of parameters (e.g., intentionality, honesty, breadth, and duration).

Another notable limitation is that the pretest employed a mixed between-and-within subjects design. All participants watched the characters—Trishelle, Frank, Arissa, and Steven—in the same order across all conditions. Because the order of presentations did not vary, results may be subject to both order and spill-over effects. For example, when reporting perceived depth, nature, accuracy, and relevance, viewers may have assessed Steven’s information on the basis of comparing it to information about previous characters. In addition, because Trishelle’s disclosure was first presented, her information could have served as a baseline for constructing the impressions of other characters’ disclosures. Therefore, future studies should counterbalance the order of the presentations if testing for the effectiveness of multiple instantiations, or employ a between-subjects design for the pretest.

The current study is also subject to limitations in its conceptualization of identification. For this dissertation, identification was explicated as the degree to which a viewer entered the cognitive and affective state of the character. Using Cohen’s (2001, p. 251) definition, he states that identification occurs when “an audience member imagines him- or herself being that character and replaces his or her personal identity and role as audience member with the identity and role of the character within the text.” Another line of research examines identification in its wishful form. Rather than having a viewer experience the immersion of a character’s role, Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) argue that identification can occur even when a viewer *desires* to be like the character. This study did not take into consideration the wishful aspect of identification, which future research could incorporate when investigating the effects of mediated self-disclosure. Furthermore, identification based on *perceived similarity* may also provide

insight to the formation of mediated relationships. Turner (1993) found that regardless of media personality (e.g., soap opera characters, newscasters, and other television performers), the strongest predictor of parasocial interaction was attitude homophily. This was measured by the degree to which a viewer perceived the media personality to be similar to the self based on attitudes alone. Therefore, when studying the effects of depth and mode of information delivery, the construct of identification should be expanded to account for a viewer's wishful state, as well as homophily state.

Additionally, the study is limited in its measure of enjoyment. The present research primarily focused on general viewer enjoyment, asking participants to report the extent to which they found the video involving and entertaining, had a good time watching it, would consider watching future episodes, etc. Although these items tap into the experience of enjoyment, other outcomes should be considered for future research. For example, if enjoyment consists of affective, cognitive, and behavioral components, whereas identification and transportation may engender emotional and mental involvement that a viewer experiences, repeated viewing could explain how behaviors related to program choice might further facilitate enjoyment. It is reasonable to suggest that individuals who actively choose to watch a show on a regular basis to some extent are enjoying the program. Furthermore, if self-disclosure is a process that increases intimacy and relational satisfaction between interactants, it is possible that exposure to self-disclosure portrayals on television predicts viewer loyalty. For example, self-disclosure has been found to foster both mutual understanding and trust between partners (Laurenceau et al., 1998; Pennebaker et al., 1990). Such outcomes could be comparable to loyalty that a viewer experiences when establishing a relationship with a character. This character-to-viewer relationship would be considered dyadic and best characterized as a parasocial interaction.

Therefore, future research should take into account constructs, such as loyalty, commitment, and trust, for they may produce gratifying character-to-viewer interactions and enhance enjoyment. Additionally, it is important to note that self-disclosure as examined in the study explained only a portion of an individual's enjoyment experience. In particular, this dissertation focused on more affective and cognitive responses associated with enjoyment (e.g., identification and transportation). Moreover, the effects of self-disclosure were limited to only non-dyadic viewer responses. Both identification and transportation were explicated as processes involving the viewer to temporarily lose his or her role as an audience member. In the former case, the viewer would take on the perspective of the character *and* in the latter case, the viewer would become entirely immersed in the narrative world. In contrast, parasocial interactions would exemplify a dyadic relationship between the viewer and character. In such interactions, the viewer would still recognize himself or herself as a separate social entity, apart from the character on television. Therefore, future studies should certainly consider tapping into other areas of one's enjoyment experience, taking into account both behavioral involvement (e.g., repeated viewing) and dyadic responses (e.g., loyalty and parasocial interactions).

Another noteworthy limitation concerns the role of voyeuristic appeal. When testing this individual difference variable for its moderating effects, it could be the case that voyeurism *itself* mediates self-disclosure and enjoyment. In other words, when characters self-disclose, it is not the personal deliverance of the information that facilitates greater enjoyment, but rather the viewer's salacious engagement in witnessing any form of private information. Therefore, enjoyment could have been generated by the involvement and satisfaction of simply observing a character's intimate and private life exposed, and *not* by the act of self-disclosure. Future studies should consider examining voyeurism not as a moderating variable, but as a mediating variable

that explains an alternative path to the enjoyment of witnessing the revealing of private information.

In addition, although participants were randomly assigned to different experimental conditions (accounting for individual difference variables), future research should take into account the role of intimacy pursuit in delineating the effects of mediated self-disclosure. Nordlund (1978) suggested that some individuals who are unable to meet their social needs in person-to-person interactions turn to media as a functional alternative. In other words, people may resort to seeking social interactions with media personalities for interpersonal gratification. Although scholars propose that the pursuit of intimacy varies across individuals (Sanderson & Cantor, 1997; Sanderson & Karetsky, 2002), it is possible that heavy television viewers may either be using the medium as a functional alternative to achieve their intimacy goals with media characters, *or* have relatively weak focus on intimacy due to their lack of interpersonal contact. These propositions are, of course, made under the assumption that parasocial interactions are formed by those who seek interpersonal gratification. Therefore, future studies may consider examining the extent to which pursuit of intimacy is associated with television viewing, for this relationship could shed light on the ways in which mediated self-disclosure is ultimately perceived by the audience. If the pursuit of intimacy is associated with relationship satisfaction (see Sanderson & Cantor, 1997), the impact of mediated self-disclosure would perhaps be different for those who hold the goal of attaining intimacy as important to their sense of self and those who do not. Research that takes into account the roles of interpersonal needs and pursuits may provide a deeper understanding of the variations in mediated self-disclosure effects on viewer enjoyment.

As well as considering one's interpersonal needs and desires, future studies should also bear in mind other attributes of the viewer that may be consequential in responses to self-disclosure. For example, perceptions of mediated self-disclosure could be contingent on the gender of the viewer. If gender expectations in the act and appropriateness of self-disclosure exist, it is likely that males and females will react differently to mediated self-disclosure based on their motivation for interpersonal closeness. If females are stereotypically classified as interpersonally-oriented and emotional (more so than males), they will perhaps have a greater tendency to identify with characters who reveal more private information. Furthermore, reactions to self-disclosure could also vary on the basis of media habits. Viewers who are exposed to heavy doses of intimate self-disclosures may over time become desensitized to highly private information. Desensitization occurs when extended exposure to a particular stimulus helps to diminish the negative responses that the stimulus once evoked. This effect has been particularly supported in the case of repeated doses of media violence (e.g., Cline, Croft, & Courier, 1973; Thomas, Horton, Lippincott, & Drabman, 1977). Although portrayals of violence are perhaps more prone to sensitive reactions than those of private self-disclosures, desensitization could be applied to one's conception of privacy. For example, viewers with a regular diet of reality-based programs may become accustomed to highly opened forms of self-disclosure and feel less sympathetic to characters who are more reserved. Furthermore, it is expected that heavy television viewers may become less emotionally engaged due to desensitization, and over time experience shifting standards of privacy. Specifically, these individuals will perhaps experience diminished affective responses to self-disclosure among characters, providing support that media habit matters in how one perceives the exchange of personal information.

Findings from the current study may also be applied to other genres of television programming. Although the stimuli was constructed using footage from MTV's *The Real World*, acts of self-disclosure among characters are indeed prevalent across other genres including talk shows, sitcoms, soap operas, and news programs. More specifically, the format of characters addressing the viewer (e.g., confessionals) is not unique to reality-based programs, but also common in cases when talk show hosts and newscasters speak to the audience *and* when characters treat the camera as a person (e.g., *The Office*). Whereas the notion that self-disclosure (generally positive in nature) facilitates viewer engagement can be extended to genres that incorporate character-to-viewer and character-to-character self-disclosures, other variables of consideration are the intentionality and perceived realism of these disclosures. For example, perceptions of self-disclosure may differ depending on whether the program is fiction or nonfiction. Self-disclosure that is scripted and driven largely by entertainment incentives is expected to produce distinct audience responses, as compared to self-disclosure that is perceived to be more genuine or authentic. In particular, realistic forms of self-disclosure are perhaps more likely to predict identification than unrealistic ones. However, one can argue that if viewers are motivated by escapism, unrealistic forms of self-disclosure may encourage stronger identification and greater absorption into the narrative. Therefore, delineating the effects of mediated self-disclosure by taking into account the fictional nature of the program and intention behind the disclosure should be a direction for future research. Exploring these issues across genres could enhance our understanding of the similarities and differences of mediated forms of self-disclosure in varying program contexts.

Other avenues for future research should consider the effects of self-disclosure beyond the television medium. Findings have shown that people have a greater tendency to disclose



information to others in an online environment than in face-to-face interactions (Joinson, 2001; Parks & Floyd, 1996). Tidwell and Walther (2002) suggest that high levels of self-disclosure in computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a result of one's motivation to reduce uncertainty. Confirming that self-disclosure operates differently in a virtual environment, survey data indicate that not only are online responses less socially desirable (Joinson, 1999), but also one's willingness to discuss sensitive topics increases (Tourangeau, 2004). Taking into consideration these findings, future studies should direct their attention toward investigating perceptions of online self-disclosure, rather than examining only the nature of the behavior. For example, in the case of social networking sites, personal information can be expressed through a number of modalities (e.g., text, video, images, music, etc.). These formal features all reflect to some extent information about the person's personality, attitudes, and interests. The Internet clearly provides a forum through which self-disclosure is perhaps a more "creative" process, for one's personal information can be delivered through a series of modes. Therefore, it is expected that online self-disclosure elicits very different interpersonal effects as compared to self-disclosure by characters on television. For these reasons, investigating the impact of depth and mode of self-disclosure in a virtual environment could illuminate our understanding of how online personal information exchange varies with respect to face-to-face and parasocial interactions.

### *Summary*

This dissertation attempted to integrate both interpersonal and mass communication literatures to investigate the role of mediated self-disclosure in predicting viewer enjoyment. The findings provide substantial support for the distinctive effect of personal information delivery by a character, as compared to a third party (narrator). Furthermore, results suggest that the level of intimate disclosure positively influences audience involvement (e.g., identification and

transportation) with entertainment content. Although mediated relationships have received considerable attention in parasocial interaction literatures, it is important to acknowledge the effective format of “character address,” not only through visual cues, but rather through the exchange of personal information. Increased viewer involvement and enjoyment through heightened intimacy is indicative of the similarity between face-to-face and character-to-viewer relationships, suggesting implications for the development of both interpersonal and mediated interactions.

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## Appendix A

### Pretest Stimulus Material

Four instantiations (2 female characters and 2 male characters) for each of the 2 (Depth of Information: Public, Private) X 3 (Mode of Information Delivery: Character-to-Viewer, Character-to-Character, Narrator-to-Viewer) experimental conditions were edited for the pretest. Footage from MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas* was used to construct each instantiation. The transcriptions of the 24 instantiations are provided below.

#### Public Information/Character-to-Viewer

1. Trishelle (female):

“Hi, my name is Trishelle. I’m 22 years old and I’m from Cutoff, Louisiana. The good thing about coming from a small town is you become creative with what you do with your spare time. I’m excited to get a chance to live with people from other races. In Cutoff, Louisiana, there’s not that much diversity. I’m very excited about meeting new men because I’ve been seeing the same ones for the past five years.”

2. Frank (male):

“My name’s Frank. I’m 22 years old. Right now, I’m in between schools, so I’m applying for graduate school. A lot of my family went to Cornell. I’m probably not going to get accepted because I’m a loser (sarcastic expression). My hometown consists of cows, Amish people, and lots of people just like me.”

3. Arissa (female):

“My name’s Arissa. I’m 22 and I’m from Boston. I cannot wait to get out. I have \$14.00 in my pockets and don’t know when I’m going to get money again. Dario and I have been together for five and a half years.”

4. Steven (male):

“I’m Steven, from San Marcos, Texas. I’m 23 years old. I’m from everywhere. I’ve lived in like five states and been to like 24 schools. My wife’s name is Christy. Christy and I are currently still married.”

Public Information/Character-to-Character

## 5. Trishelle (female):

“Trishelle, nice to meet you. I’m from South Louisiana. *Other character: “Louisiana? Well you made a mission.”* I sure did. I just don’t have any black friends and like I want to get to know other people, but it’s like I’ve never had the chance to, you know what I’m saying? I’m excited to learn.”

## 6. Frank (male):

“I’m Frank, nice to meet you. *Other character: “Where are you coming from?”* I’m coming from Central Pennsylvania. No place big at all. I come from a really small town, so this is a bit of a change for me. There’s a lot of Mormons and Amish people all around where I live. *Other character: “Really?”* Like, when I’m in traffic, like it’s not cars, it’s a horse and buggy.”

## 7. Arissa (female):

“Arissa. I’m from Massachusetts. I have \$14.00 in my pockets. I’ve been working since I was 14. I’ve never been fired from a job. I know what it’s like to work, even if I don’t like my working environment. Dario and I have been together for five and a half years.”

## 8. Steven (male):

“I’m Steven. I’m from everywhere. I’ve lived like in five states. I’ve been to like 24 schools. I’m actually married right now. I got married at the Paris hotel in Las Vegas and we took 35 of our friends and family. It was like a big wedding.”

Public Information/Narrator-to-Viewer

## 9. Trishelle (female)

[B-roll and freeze frames of Trishelle]

Text on screen: “Trishelle, 22 years old, from Cutoff, Louisiana. Coming from a small town, she has become creative with what she does with her spare time. Her hometown is not very diverse. Trishelle is excited to meet new people, since she’s been seeing the same ones for the past five years.”

## 10. Frank (male)

[B-roll and freeze frames of Frank]



Text on screen: “Frank, 22 years old, from a small town in Central Pennsylvania. His hometown has cows and Amish people. Frank is in between schools and is currently applying to graduate school.”

11. Arissa (female)

[B-roll and freeze frames of Arissa]

Text on screen: “Arissa, 22 years old, from Boston, Massachusetts. She has \$14.00 in her pockets. She has been working since she was 14 years old. She has never been fired from a job and knows what it’s like to work. Arissa has been in a relationship with Dario for five and a half years.”

12. Steven (male)

[B-roll and freeze frames of Steven]

Text on screen: “Steven, 23 years old, from San Marcos, Texas. He has lived in five states. He has attended 24 schools. Steven’s wife is Christy. He married her at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas. They had a big wedding with family and friends.”

Private Information/Character-to-Viewer

13. Trishelle (female):

“Sometimes I don’t feel like my daddy cares about me, because I feel like he wasn’t there for me when my mom passed away. He should at least you know kind of be there to guide me and everything. And he wasn’t really there for me. I’m closest to talking with my sister Buffy. She’s the one who I think cares about me the most and she’s a lot like my mom in some ways I think, and she just wants to look out for me and she knows what’s best for me. I don’t think my daddy will ever accept me for who I am. I think that there’s a mold that he wants me to be and I’m just not living up to that.”

14. Frank (male):

“Emily’s very smart. She has lots of values and morals, but more than that, I just get along with her really well. Right when I see Emily, all those old feelings of ‘This girl is so great, intelligent, and right for me just come rushing back to me.’ Emily is probably one of the most intelligent girls I’ve ever met. She can see right into my personality and I love that.”

15. Arissa (female):

“When I got on a plane and came to Las Vegas, my whole life changed. Now, I’m starting to change and evolve without Dario. I’ve been too dependent on Dario for my happiness for six years and I can’t do that. I can’t continue to be dependent on him because he’s not going to hold my hand in life every step of the way. By not wanting to hurt Dario, I’m hurting myself. Hopefully, I will learn how to do things for myself. I’ve never given myself the chance to know that I would be okay by myself. I’m headed on a survival course I hope. A road of self-discovery.”

16. Steven (male):

“With my ex-wife, like I drew everything I needed from her. She was like my only real friend. Now, I’m learning to have lots of friends. I’m learning how to form relationships with women over again. Ten years down the road or something like that, we might get back together. I seriously see that. She’s like the perfect woman.”

Private Information/Character-to-Character

17. Trishelle (female):

“When I told my daddy that I made it, he said ‘I’ve never been so disappointed in you.’  
*Other character:* “*Oh, man.*” My dad hurts my feelings like so much. Sometimes he’ll be like, I tell him something and he’s like, ‘You are such a screw up.’ and I’m like ‘What?’  
 Sometimes I don’t feel like my daddy cares about me, because I feel like he wasn’t there for me when my mom passed away. He should at least you know kind of be there to guide me and everything. And he wasn’t really there for me.”

18. Frank (male):

“I’ve only known Emily for a month and a half before I came here. And it’s like, that’s not a long time, but the more I’m here, the more I’m like I wish she lived close to here so I could visit her. Emily like, she’s perfect. She’s really sweet. She’s the type of girl I’d like to be with for the rest of my life. I just need to talk to her. It’s like some drug that I just can’t get enough of.”

19. Arissa (female):

“My life is too crazy right now. I need to be just independent and like I feel even selfish for saying this. I’ve been too dependent on Dario for my happiness for six years and I

can't do that. I can't continue to be dependent on him because he's not going to hold my hand in life every step of the way. I'm not doing this for like anything else but, maybe so that you know if we come back together, then I will be focused and being like you know what, I did me for awhile and I know what it's like."

20. Steven (male):

"I'm actually married right now. I got married at the Paris hotel in Las Vegas and I was supposed to be divorced last month. But yeah, we would probably be together still if we didn't get married. Nobody is better than her. It's just being drilled into my head since I've been here. It's just like, nobody really compares to her."

#### Private Information/Narrator-to-Viewer

21. Trishelle (female)

[B-roll and freeze frames of Trishelle]

Text on screen: "Trishelle. After her mother passed away, she does not feel like her dad cares about her. She is closest with her sister, Buffy. She thinks Buffy cares about her the most and is a lot like her mom. Trishelle thinks that her dad should at least be there to guide her, but he isn't."

22. Frank (male)

[B-roll and freeze frames of Frank]

Text on screen: "Frank. He likes Emily. He wishes she lived closer, so he could visit her. He thinks Emily is perfect. She's the type of girl he would like to be with for the rest of his life. Every time Frank sees Emily, all of his old feelings for her rush back to him."

23. Arissa (female)

[B-roll and freeze frames of Arissa]

Text on screen: "Arissa. When she came to Las Vegas, her whole life changed. She is starting to change and evolve without Dario. She's been too dependent on Dario for her happiness and she can't continue like this. Arissa realizes she will have to learn how to do things for herself. She's heading on a road of self-discovery."

24. Steven (male)

[B-roll and freeze frames of Steven]

Text on screen: “Steven. He drew everything he needed from his ex-wife Christy. Christy was his only real friend. Now, Steven is learning to have lots of friends. He is learning how to form relationships with women over again. Steven sees himself getting back together with Christy. He views her as the perfect woman.”



Please rate the degree to which you think the information you learned about Trishelle is:

|                  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| irrelevant to me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | relevant to me |
| private          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | public         |
| not pleasant     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | pleasant       |
| deep             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | superficial    |
| accurate         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | inaccurate     |

Please rate the degree to which you think the information you learned about Trishelle:

|  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| places her in<br>a good light                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | places her in<br>a bad light          |
| does not interest me                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | interests me                          |
| is not a true<br>reflection of who<br>she is | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | is a true reflection<br>of who she is |
| relates to me                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | does not relate to me                 |
| reflects negatively<br>on her                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | reflects positively<br>on her         |
| does not matter to<br>me                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | matters to me                         |

Please click [here](#) to continue to the next part of the questionnaire.



Please rate the degree to which you think the information you learned about Frank:

|   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                                      |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| places him in<br>a good light               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | places him in<br>a bad light         |
| does not interest me                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | interests me                         |
| is not a true<br>reflection of who<br>he is | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | is a true reflection<br>of who he is |
| relates to me                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | does not relate to me                |
| reflects negatively<br>on him               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | reflects positively<br>on him        |
| does not matter to<br>me                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | matters to me                        |

Please click [here](#) to continue to the next part of the questionnaire.





Please rate the degree to which you think the information you learned about Arissa:

|  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| places her in<br>a good light                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | places her in<br>a bad light          |
| does not interest me                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | interests me                          |
| is not a true<br>reflection of who<br>she is | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | is a true reflection<br>of who she is |
| relates to me                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | does not relate to me                 |
| reflects negatively<br>on her                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | reflects positively<br>on her         |
| does not matter to<br>me                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | matters to me                         |

Please click [here](#) to continue to the next part of the questionnaire.



Please rate the degree to which you think the information you learned about Steven:

|   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                                      |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| places him in<br>a good light               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | places him in<br>a bad light         |
| does not interest me                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | interests me                         |
| is not a true<br>reflection of who<br>he is | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | is a true reflection<br>of who he is |
| relates to me                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | does not relate to me                |
| reflects negatively<br>on him               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | reflects positively<br>on him        |
| does not matter to<br>me                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | matters to me                        |

Please click [here](#) to continue to the last part of the questionnaire.

Part V. This final section of the questionnaire asks for general information about yourself and your media use.

#### A. Demographics

What is your gender?

Male    Female

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your race? (Please check all that apply)

American Indian or Alaska Native

African American

Asian or Pacific Islander

Caucasian

Hispanic

Other

What is your academic standing?

Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior    Graduate

What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. Media Use

How many days per week, if any, do you watch TV? \_\_\_\_\_ *days per week watching TV*

On average, how many hours of TV do you watch between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.?  
\_\_\_\_\_ *hours of TV viewing during an average day from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 pm*

On average, how many hours of TV do you watch between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.?  
\_\_\_\_\_ *hours of TV viewing during an average night from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 am.*

On average, how many hours of reality TV do you watch between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.?  
\_\_\_\_\_ *hours of reality TV viewing during an average day from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 pm*

On average, how many hours of reality TV do you watch between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.?  
\_\_\_\_\_ *hours of reality TV viewing during an average night from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 am.*

Have you seen MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas* prior to this study?

No    Yes

On a scale from "not at all" to "very often," please rate the following statements:

|   | Not at<br>all         |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       | Very<br>often         |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I watch MTV's <i>The Real World</i> .                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have watched MTV's <i>The Real World: Las Vegas</i> season. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

You have completed the questionnaire. Thank you for participating in this study.

Please click [here](#) to exit.

## Appendix C

## Full-Experiment Questionnaire

For the first part of the study, you will watch a segment from a season of MTV's television program, *The Real World*.

Following the video, you will respond to several questions pertaining to what you watched. Please read all questions carefully and respond as best you can.

Before you begin, please put on your headphones.  
When you are ready to start, please click [here](#).

---

Part I. You are about to watch a short segment from MTV's *The Real World* about a woman named Trishelle. When you are ready, click the arrow button to play the video.



After watching the video, please click [here](#) to proceed to the next section.

---

Part II. This next part of the study asks for your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the video.

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

| <i>Based on the video I just watched...</i>                   | Strongly disagree     |                       | Neither Agree nor disagree |                       |                       | Strongly agree        |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ...Trishelle put herself out on the line.                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...Trishelle controlled her private information.              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...Trishelle protected her privacy.                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...Trishelle's most inner thoughts and feelings were exposed. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...Trishelle guarded her privacy.                             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...Trishelle was able to manage her privacy.                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...Trishelle was at risk of being vulnerable.                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

| <i>Based on the video I just watched...</i>   | Strongly disagree     |                       | Neither Agree nor disagree |                       |                       | Strongly agree        |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ...I felt the emotions of Trishelle.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I shared the perspective of Trishelle.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I was able to understand the events in the episode in a manner similar to that in which Trishelle understood them. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I had a good understanding of Trishelle.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I felt that I could really get inside Trishelle's head.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I felt that I know exactly what Trishelle was going through.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I wanted Trishelle to succeed in achieving her goals.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...If Trishelle succeeds, I would feel joy, however if she fails, I would be sad.                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I imagined myself in Trishelle's place.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I understood the motivations for Trishelle's behavior.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I shared the goals of Trishelle.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I understood the reasons why Trishelle does what she does.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| ...I felt as if I was part of the action.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |







Please rate the degree to which you think the information you learned about Trishelle is:

|                  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| irrelevant to me | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | relevant to me |
| private          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | public         |
| not pleasant     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | pleasant       |
| deep             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | superficial    |
| accurate         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | inaccurate     |

Please rate the degree to which you think the information you learned about Trishelle:

|  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| places her in<br>a good light                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | places her in<br>a bad light          |
| does not interest me                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | interests me                          |
| is not a true<br>reflection of who<br>she is | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | is a true reflection<br>of who she is |
| relates to me                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | does not relate to me                 |
| reflects negatively<br>on her                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | reflects positively<br>on her         |
| does not matter to<br>me                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | matters to me                         |

The information I learned about Trishelle came from:

- Trishelle talking to the camera
- Trishelle talking to another character(s)
- the words on the screen

Part IV. This final section of the questionnaire asks for general information about yourself and your media use.

#### A. Demographics

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your race? (Please check all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native  
 African American  
 Asian or Pacific Islander  
 Caucasian  
 Hispanic  
 Other

What is your academic standing?

- Freshman     Sophomore     Junior     Senior     Graduate

What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. Media Use

How many days per week, if any, do you watch TV? \_\_\_\_ *days per week watching TV*

On average, how many hours of TV do you watch between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.?  
 \_\_\_\_ *hours of TV viewing during an average day from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 pm*

On average, how many hours of TV do you watch between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.?  
 \_\_\_\_ *hours of TV viewing during an average night from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 am.*

On average, how many hours of reality TV do you watch between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.?  
 \_\_\_\_ *hours of reality TV viewing during an average day from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 pm*

On average, how many hours of reality TV do you watch between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.?  
 \_\_\_\_ *hours of reality TV viewing during an average night from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 am.*

Have you seen MTV's *The Real World: Las Vegas* prior to this study?

- No     Yes

On a scale from "not at all" to "very often," please rate the following statements:

|   | Not at all            |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       | Very often            |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I watch MTV's <i>The Real World</i> .                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have watched MTV's <i>The Real World: Las Vegas</i> season. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

You have completed the questionnaire. Thank you for participating in this study.

Please click [here](#) to exit.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Two character instantiations were used per experimental condition for the main study. Participants in each condition were randomly assigned to a female character (Trishelle) or a male character (Frank). The two manipulated independent variables—depth of information and mode of information delivery—were treated as the primary predictor variables for the study. However, for all proposed hypotheses, character differences were tested. Such analyses yielded significant interactions with character for the following relationships: a) perceived vulnerability and identification, b) depth of information and uncertainty reduction, and c) uncertainty reduction and transportation. These character differences are detailed in the results section for the full-experiment.
- <sup>2</sup> All regression analyses examining interactions mean centered the continuous independent variables.
- <sup>3</sup> Regression slopes were calculated by employing the procedures of Aiken and West (1991) to interpret the interaction effect for the multiple regression analysis.
- <sup>4</sup> Self-disclosure examined in this dissertation pertains to the exchange of generally positive or non-negative information. Therefore, findings from the pretest and full-experiment should not be applied to all forms of self-disclosure.

## VITA

Mina Tsay

### Appointment

Assistant Professor, Department of Communication, University of Kentucky, August 2007.

### Education

Pennsylvania State University, Ph.D. in Mass Communications, August 2007.

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, B.A. High Honors in Communication Studies, April 2002.

### Research and Teaching

Psychological and social effects of media

Mass communication theories

Communication research methods

### Competitively-Selected Conference Presentations

Tsay, M., & Banjo, O. *A true test of friendship: Testing the interpersonal nature of parasocial interactions*. (2007, May). Poster presented at the 57<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA.

Tsay, M., Krakowiak, K. M., & Kleck, C. A. (2006, June). *Redefining reality TV: Exploring viewers' perceptions of nine subgenres*. Top Student Paper in Mass Communications Division. Paper presented at the 56<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany.

Tsay, M., & Nabi, R. L. (2006, June). *Testing a tripartite model of media enjoyment with participatory reality TV*. Paper presented at the 56<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany.

Koh, Y. J., & Tsay, M. (2006, June). *Are we polite because they're like us?: Social responses toward anthropomorphized computers*. Paper presented at the 56<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany.

Tsay, M. (2005, November). *Gender differences in moral disengagement: Justifying the wrong*. Poster presented at the 91<sup>st</sup> annual convention of the National Communication Association, Boston, MA.

Tsay, M., & Oliver, M. B. (2005, May). *Who survives?: Keeping viewers coming back*. Paper presented at the 55<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Communication Association, New York, NY.

Balakrishnan, B., Pierre, K., Tsay, M., & Vincent-Killian, J. (2004, August). *Gender differences in need for acceptance and the use of computer-mediated communication*. Paper presented at the 87<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Toronto, Canada.

Tsay, M., & Brady, M. (2004, August). *Cooperative learning in Communication*. First place 2004 Guido H. Stempel, III Student Research Paper Award. Poster presented at the 87<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Toronto, Canada.

Tsay, M. (2004, May). *Interpersonal needs for inclusion, control, and affection and Internet use*. Paper presented at the 54<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Communication Association, New Orleans, LA.

### Teaching

Pennsylvania State University, Fall 2005–Spring 2007.

Courses: COMM 100–The Mass Media and Society, COMM 304/404–Mass Communication Research, and COMM 413–The Mass Media and the Public.