EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF REALITY TELEVISION ON FINANCIAL BEHAVIOR

by

ERIKA M. RASURE

B.A., Stephens College, 2005
M.S., University of Missouri, 2007

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Family Studies & Human Services
College of Human Ecology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2015

Abstract

Viewership of reality television has been indicated to influence behaviors among individuals and groups, as existing literature has linked reality television viewership to an increase in the likelihood of demonstrating other non-financial behaviors. The literature notes increases in risky sexual and dating behavior, increases in tobacco, drug, and alcohol use, and increases in violent behavior. This dissertation examined the perceptions of the influence of reality television on financial behavior. Situational reality television programming was found to have the greatest influence on the financial behaviors of college students. Ten college students were interviewed using a phenomenological qualitative approach. There were four primary findings from this study. The first was that reality television has the ability to inform the financial behavior of college students. Second, an individual's connection to his or her social system has an influence on financial behavior. Third, reality television does have the ability to influence financial behavior change and fourth, reality television influences the meaning of money as perceived by the respondents. The results of this study provide valuable information to promote further inquiry as to how reality television and other forms of media influence financial behavior.

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Chapter 1 - Statement of the Problem

The exponential success of reality television has had a definitive impact on the evolution of values and culture within society. Calvert (2002) suggested that television viewers attempt to align their attitudes and beliefs with those observed in television programming. Similarly, reality television has, in effect, realigned the private and public as a form of mediated voyeurism (Calvert, 2002). According to Calvert (2002), mediated voyeurism "refers to the consumption of revealing images of and information about others' apparently real and unguarded lives, often yet not always for the purposes of entertainment but frequently at the expense of privacy and discourse, through the means of the mass media and Internet" (pp. 2-3). This is key as it suggests that widely accepted norms and values are evolving as a result of these relationships, and this evolution may not be for the better, as the lines have become blurred when it comes to the definition of reality.

According to Bandura, a vast amount of information about human values, a style of thinking, and behavior patterns is gained from the extensive modeling in the symbolic environment of the mass media (Bandura, 2001). Furthermore, Bandura (2001) added that televised representations of social realities reflect ideologies in their portrayal of human nature, social relations, and the norms and structure of society, giving the televised images the appearance of authenticity as to the true state of human affairs and interaction. Televised influence, according to Bandura (2001) is best defined in terms of the content people watch, rather than the sheer amount of television viewing. Bandura (1971) suggested that behavior is not only influenced by media directly, but also that an individual's connection to social systems mediates the relationship between media influence and behavior. For example, Sotiropoulous and D'Astous (2012) suggested that overspending can be attributed to social factors, specifically social norms and ties that interact with one another. Notably, the results of their findings confirmed that credit card overspending can be influenced by credit-related norms when individuals are in the context of shared social experiences, in which they feel as though they are expected to consume at the same level as referent others, but only if they are strongly connected to such individuals.

Given the lapse in perception of reality (Calvert, 2002) and the perceived connection to reality television characters as authentic, like close friends, (Bandura, 2001; Reiss & Wiltz, 2004; Christensen & Ivancin, 2006), it is possible that direct media influence from reality television viewership, coupled with shared referential social experiences, could influence financial behavior. However, to date, limited research has been conducted on the link between reality television viewership and financial behavior. Although the research is limited, reality television has been shown to have an effect on individual health behaviors among college students (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg & Smith, 2007; Ward, 2002; Ward & Rivadenrya, 1999; Hestroni, 2000; Segrin & Nabi, 2002). Risky health behavior has been identified in the literature as substance use, sexual and dating behavior, and striation of gender roles. Further, the literature indicated that media may play a role in how young adults develop their identities and, thus, demonstrate negative behavior that is a result of what they have viewed as a potential norm (Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009).

More specifically, this qualitative inquiry addresses the research question, *"what is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of reality television viewership on financial behavior by college students?"* The overarching goal of this study is to determine how reality television influences financial behavior by identifying the mechanisms and structure that contribute to the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of viewership. If other behavior can be attributed to reality television viewership, it is possible that financial behavior can be attributed to reality television viewership. According to Parotta and Johnson (1998), financial management refers to a set of behaviors related to the concepts of cash management, credit management, retirement and estate planning, risk management, general management, and capital accumulation. This research will be a valuable contribution to existing financial planning research as it will provide awareness of how reality television viewership may unconsciously lead to faulty impressions about the prevalence and normality of financial behaviors. Further, it will help provide insight as to how financial behaviors may be better developed in relation to social-referential comparisons through social networks.

Reality television viewership, as it has been studied in other non-financial arenas, implies an adoption of negative behavior models as a result of viewing this type of programming (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg & Smith, 2007; Ward, 2002; Ward & Rivadenrya, 1999; Hestroni, 2000; Segrin & Nabi, 2002). The impact of reality television viewership on financial behavior is generally unknown. Therefore, this study seeks to identify any associations between the undertones expressed in reality television programming and financial behaviors.

Reiss and Wiltz (2004) offered further insight as to the appeal of reality-based television programs to their regular viewers, applying Reiss' sensitivity theory. Sensitivity theory holds that people pay attention to stimuli that are relevant to the satisfaction of their most basic motives, and they tend to ignore stimuli that are irrelevant to their basic motives (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). Reiss and Wiltz found that people prefer television shows that stimulate the feelings they intrinsically value the most. For example, many reality television shows are produced to capture the progression of conditions, such as a weight loss journey (e.g., *The Biggest Loser*) and sobriety toward drug/alcohol abuse (e.g., *Intervention*), typically classified as intervention-style or makeover-style programming. Viewership of this type of reality television programming can ultimately provide a reminder about consequences of these behaviors, as many individuals may identify with the people they see on the reality television shows (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006). This identification may provide the inspiration and motivation individuals need to make changes in their own health behaviors. Alternatively, Christenson and Ivancin (2006) indicated that reality shows may provide inaccurate or unhealthy information to viewers—for example, showcasing multiple plastic surgeries or more rapid weight loss than most experts would recommend. Whatever the implications may be, there are certainly emotional and cognitive behaviors that can be observed in terms of reality-based programming and the subsequent impact of reality television on its dedicated viewership.

Hesitant to accept the sensitivity theory based explanation offered by Reiss and Wiltz (2004) as the sole explanation for reality television viewership, Nabi, Stitt, Halford, and Finnerty (2006) explored additional emotional and cognitive factors that incite reality television viewership. Nabi et al. (2006) indicated that while Reiss and Wiltz (2004) concluded that the attainment of feelings of self-importance is integral in predicting reality television viewership, it is vague as to whether these motivations differ from those directing viewership of other programming types. Secondly, given the lack of coherence among reality programs (Nabi et al., 2006), it is not clear how motivations and gratifications might differ across reality programs themselves. Nabi et al. (2006) found that voyeurism plays a role in whether a viewer decides to choose reality programming over fictional programming. However, it does not completely guarantee that the viewer is enjoying the reality programming, or as Reiss and Wiltz suggested, obtaining feelings of self-importance. Respondents indicated that they were more likely to relate to the reality television stars, identifying them as more “real” and true to self as compared to fictional television. Nabi et al. (2006) concluded that reality programming may be a less appealing programming choice to viewers not because it evokes negative emotions and cognitive reactions, but rather because of its more limited ability to evoke positive ones.

The theoretical assumptions and concepts of Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication (SCTMC) will be used as the guiding lens of this phenomenological study. The key assumptions of SCTMC include: (a) symbolizing capability, (b) self-regulatory capability, (c) self-reflective capability, and (d) vicarious capability. There are three core concepts modeled by SCTMC, which are central to this study. Specifically, they include the theoretical concepts outlined in Bandura’s dual path of communication: media influence, connection to social systems, and behavior change (Bandura, 2001). These concepts will be used in this study to facilitate a phenomenological inquiry as to how college students give meaning and structure to the information observed in reality television.

Definition of Concepts

Three concepts related to SCTMC are central to this study (Bandura, 2001). The first is media influence. Media influence is the medium by which social practices, norms, ideas, values, and behavior are being diffused to an audience (Bandura, 2001). The second is connection to social systems. This refers to the social networks and ties that most people have in their lives, including friends, family, colleagues, teammates, and fellow members of an organization or club. These networks often spread information about new ideas, thoughts, and behaviors. Similarly, these social systems also reinforce values and provide motivation to perform what has been adopted in thought or behavior (Bandura, 2001). The final concept is behavior change. This study is concerned with looking specifically at positive or negative changes in the financial behavior of reality television viewers. Financial behaviors are related to the concepts of cash management, credit management, retirement and estate planning, risk management, general management, and capital accumulation. Examples of financial behaviors include budgeting, savings behavior, credit card debt levels, contributing to retirement accounts, and spending patterns (Parotta & Johnson, 1998). In this study, the financial behavior most associated with change as described by the respondents is spending.

Primary and Secondary Research Questions and Interview Guide

Figure 1.1 displays the conceptual model based on SCTMC that will be used for this study. The model suggests that media influence can directly influence behavior change. The model also suggests that behavior change can be influenced indirectly through a socially mediated pathway. For example, one college student may view a particular reality television program. That viewer may then discuss the programming with another student, who is not a viewer of the program. The non-viewer may potentially adopt a change in behavior as a result of the information shared through the social system, not as a direct result of viewership. As a result, the overarching research question for this study is: *What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of reality television viewership on financial behavior by college students?*

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Model of Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication

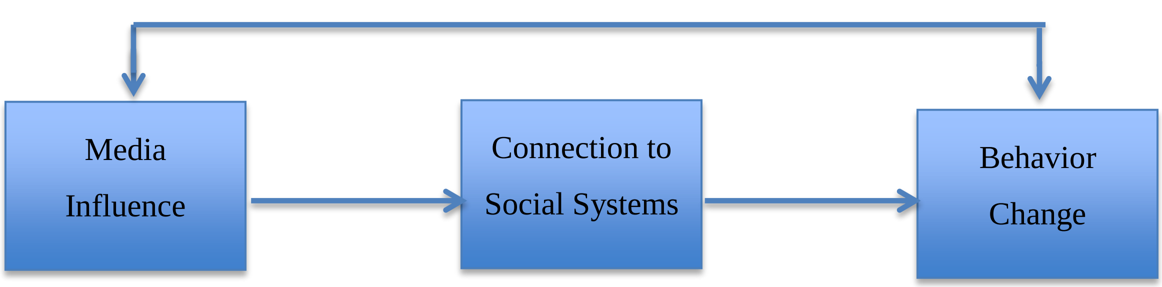

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Model of Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.). From Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research (p. 141), by A. Bandura, 2001. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Utilizing this conceptual model and a phenomenological approach, the following sub-research questions will be addressed in this study.

Sub-Research Question 1: *What financial behaviors do college students observe from watching reality television?*

Sub-Research Question 2: *How do college students' interactions with their social system in regards to reality television influence financial behavior?*

Sub-Research Question 3: *How are the financial behaviors of college students shaped as a result of reality television programming?*

Sub-Research Question 4: *How has reality television influenced college students' meaning of money?*

Summary

Previous research suggests that non-financial behavior outcomes are influenced by reality television, with many of the behaviors being negative. Similarly, in this study, it is expected that students will report, at least to some degree, how they have learned new ideas, behaviors, and values through modeling the influence of reality television (directly of their own accord or mediated through connections to social systems). Whether positive or negative, it is possible that students might make changes to their financial behavior based on the meaning and structure they have given to their reality television observations.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

In preparing to examine how reality television viewership might influence financial behaviors among college students, several areas in the literature relating to these concepts were reviewed. First, an introduction to reality television is presented, followed by a review of the literature addressing non-financial behaviors influenced by reality television viewership. Finally, literature examining college students as a population were reviewed. Although limited research can be found in the areas of financial behavior and reality television, a discussion on the financial behavior of college students is also included.

What is Reality Television?

Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt (2006) defined reality-based television programming as programs that film real people as they live out events in their respective lives. The authors asserted that this definition is characterized by many components, such as: (a) people portraying themselves (i.e., not actors or public figures performing roles); (b) filmed at least in part in their living or working environment rather than on a set; (c) without a script; (d) with events placed in a narrative context; and (e) for the primary purpose of viewer entertainment. More importantly, of other definitions offered in the existing limited literature base, this definition excludes programs captured by other genres, such as news programming, talk shows, and documentaries, as well as programs featuring re-enactments. Reality-based programming spans many categories of reality programming types. These categories include but are not limited to: (a) situational *(e.g., Keeping up with the Kardashians, House Hunters, Pawn Stars),* (b) makeover (e.g., *The Biggest Loser*), (c) documentary (e.g., *Intervention*), (d) talent (e.g., *American Idol, The Voice*), and (e) contest (e.g., *Big Brother, Dancing with the Stars, Amazing Race*).

Reality programs are cheaper to produce than a drama (e.g., *Law and Order*) or even a sitcom (e.g., *Modern Family*). As reality television is a cheap alternative to standard entertainment, Nabi (2003) concluded that reality-based television is a very real part, and for the time being, a permanent component of our media culture.

Non-Financial Risky Health Behaviors and Reality Television

Reality television encompasses not only the expression of how other individuals live, but also the social cognitive implications that have been shown by previous research to link reality television viewership to other non-financial behaviors. This section helps inform this study because although the behavior change observed is non-financial in nature, it provides a basis for pursuing research that explores relationships between reality television and other types of behavior change. Another observable type of behavior change could possibly be financial behavior change as a result of reality television viewership.

L'engle, Brown, and Kenneavy (2005) indicated that the majority of sexual content in the media portrays consequence-free and promiscuous sexual behavior between non-married people. Media users are more likely to adopt behaviors depicted by characters who are perceived as attractive and realistic and who are not punished, but rewarded, for their behavior. As a result, messages about sexuality in the media may be especially compelling to adolescents (L'engle et al., 2005). The reality television programs that show "real" people in dating situations may be detrimental to viewers who hope to create healthy intimacy in their own relationships and to make intelligent decisions about sexuality (L'engle et al., 2005). It seems possible that financial behaviors could also be adopted in a similar way.

Zurbriggen and Morgan (2006) found positive correlations between both men's and women's reality television viewing and their endorsement of gender stereotypical attitudes toward and beliefs about dating and relationships. Further, the majority of their sample of 18 to

24-year-old college students had watched reality dating programs and thus were exposed to the gender stereotypical attitudes that are prevalent on these programs. Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2011) found that reality television viewership is a significant predictor of girls' frequency of sexual conversations with peers and of boys' perceptions of the sexual experience levels of their peers.

Reality television shows contain messages about substance use, dating behaviors, sexual behaviors, gender roles, self-image, and finances, many of which are messages that may be contradictory or mixed. However, as often seen in reality television, these messages do not emphasize negative consequences, but rather seem to reward the characters in the television programming with fame or recognition (celebrity). Research shows there is the potential for people to adopt the attitudes and imitate the behaviors of celebrities (Blair, Yue, Singh, & Bernhardt, 2005). According to Yermolayeva and Calvert (2009), college students are a particularly vulnerable population to messages portrayed through media, as this is a crucial time during which their identities are formed and behaviors adopted. Reality television could potentially shape the financial behaviors of college students if behavior on reality television in general is imitated in real life and perceived to be without consequence.

Emotional and Cognitive Factors as Applied to Financial Behavior Beliefs and Norms

In the realm of financial management, existing research has indicated that when individuals are presented with information that encourages positive financial behavior, it can encourage continuance of not only the same behavior, but also the adoption of other positive financial management strategies in the future (Xiao, Sorhaindo, & Garman, 2006). Zurbriggen and Morgan (2006) indicated that individuals who watch reality programming for learning purposes (how to act in the real world) tend to adopt similar beliefs and values as those depicted.

Further, the authors suggested that those who claim to watch for entertainment purposes only fail to distance themselves appropriately from the programming and unknowingly “turn off their critical faculties,” leaving the individual exposed to potential impact (attitude or behavior) from the viewership activities. Further substantiating these claims by Zurbriggen and Morgan, Ward (2002) also surmised that even people who are watching for entertainment purposes may be affected in important ways by the content they are viewing.

While the general belief is that people learn best from experience (Hoch & Ha 1986), most research has suggested that learning from experience is difficult (Einhorn & Hogarth 1978; Hogarth & Hilgert, 2002). For example, Perry and Morris (2005) acknowledged that financial information can be obtained from formal education, informal sources, and negative personal experiences, but ultimately indicated that financial knowledge is positively associated with responsible financial management behavior. This is important because it seems to indicate that experiences alone are not necessarily enough to learn from, and that financial knowledge itself improves financial management behavior. It appears that without some financial knowledge, learning from experience can be difficult. Hogarth and Hilgert (2002) noted that friends, family, and the media were among the top sources for learning financial behavior for all households. Hogarth and Hilgert also indicated that households preferred to learn about money management through media sources (e.g., television, radio, magazines, and newspapers), informational videos, and brochures. Several studies concluded that both poor financial information and also unrealistic expectations (Taylor & Overbey, 1999), as well as a complete lack of information (O'Neill, Bristow, & Brennan, 1999), are contributing to a bleak financial future for many students. Hira and Mugenda (1998) recognized that financial beliefs and behaviors meet and are driven by sociopsychological needs as well as practical and financial ones. If we know that financial behaviors can be influenced by sociopsychological factors, including social connections (e.g., friends and family) and media sources (e.g., television, radio, magazines, internet), it makes sense to align this inquiry with that of social cognitive theory.

In existing financial planning research, self-efficacy, a concept from Bandura’s (2001a) Social Cognitive Theory, has been used with some regularity. For example, Bandura (1971, 1997) has pointed out that although a person may have been aware that it is important to save, without self-efficacy (the belief that they are capable of saving money), they have not been likely to do so. Bandura (1971) asserts that social modeling and social persuasion cultivate self-efficacy and thus, behavior. It appears that the combination of the social modeling of media influence, connection to social systems and persuasion, and the individual’s interpretation of those experiences may have a more collective influence on the financial behaviors of college students. This is why a phenomenological study, using the guiding lens of Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication, was selected for the research design.

In the context of Social Cognitive Theory and its extension from self-efficacy in existing financial planning literature, the objective of this study is to extend Social Cognitive Theory in its media context as described by Bandura’s (2001b) Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication. No study to date has been conducted on how reality television informs college students’ financial behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs. How these behaviors are being cultivated by the media is of particular interest. According to a study conducted by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert (2009), in addition to classic identity markers (e.g., religion, political ideology, and work) young adults also use media preferences to express their identity. Further, these media representations may promote the illusion that the negative behavior is without risk or consequence, through a process called media cultivation (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signoriell, 1986). If individuals prefer to obtain their financial information through media outlets (Hogarth & Hilgert, 2002), they may unknowingly be receiving messages that shape their financial identity and behavior, based on an observed standard of performance in a convoluted depiction of reality.

College Students and Reality Television

Aside from emotional and cognitive responses as described by Nabi et al. (2006) and the complex nature of learning financial behavior specifically (Hoch & Ha, 1986; Einhorn & Hogarth, 1978; Hogarth & Hilgert, 2003; Perry & Morris, 2005), Bandura (2001) stated that the media could have multiple effects on people. The first is that media can both teach new forms of behavior and create motivators for action by altering people's value preferences, efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and perception of opportunity structures. The second is that the media teach, but others (e.g., friends, family, peers, colleagues) provide the incentive motivation to perform what has been learned observationally. Third, the effect of the media could potentially be entirely socially mediated, meaning that people who have had no exposure to the media can be influenced by individuals who have had exposure to the media, and are thus acting as transmitters of media messages. Finally, Bandura concluded that within these different patterns of social influence, the media could serve to originate, as well as reinforce, influences on behavior.

Of particular relevance to this proposed study is research conducted among college-age respondents in regard to how reality television programs were viewed amongst the population (Leone, 2006; Wasylkiw & Currie, 2012). In Leone's (2006) study, college students were found to view reality television programs as harmful media material, likened to television violence or pornography. The students responded that they believe reality television negatively affects others more than it does themselves, characterizing the genre as socially undesirable or unworthy of viewership (Leone, 2006). This study chose reality based programming, specifically as it relates to the college age group, because the programs often depict young adults as materialistic and greedy, sexually promiscuous, selfish, and void of any true understanding of consequence to action. The literature points to negative non-financial behaviors being adopted in real-life from what is viewed on reality television, and it might follow that financial behaviors too might be shaped.

Similarly, a recent study titled "The 'Animal House' Effect: How University-Themed Comedy Films Affect Students' Attitudes" (Wasylkiw & Currie, 2012) measured college student participants' attitudes towards substance use and towards academics, using Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. The authors found that viewership of the film "Animal House" resulted in favorable attitudes towards substance use and negative attitudes towards academics among the undergraduate respondents. Additional research, as done in this dissertation, exploring not only attitudes but also the actual behavior of students in conjunction with their media consumption, might further contribute to understanding the influence of the media on behavior.

College Students and Financial Behavior

Prior research has suggested that the accumulation of student loans, credit card debt, and lack of financial planning for the future can be overwhelming for undergraduate students upon graduation (Holub, 2002). Muske and Winter (2001) noted the importance of educating college students in acquiring effective money management practices, including regular review of bank and credit card statements, budgeting, disciplined spending, financial record keeping, and planning for taxes, insurance, investment, retirement, and estate issues. Developing positive financial behaviors during the college years increases an individual's chances of attaining a better quality of life later in life (Worthy et al., 2010; Xiao et al, 2007; Xiao et al., 2009). Joo and Grable (2004) indicated that positive financial outcomes are related indirectly and directly with financial behaviors, such as managing credit card bills, maintaining a budget, and saving money. Further, Shim et al. (2009) found specifically that financial behaviors, such as savings and budgeting, were related to the financial well-being of young adults. Similarly, Robb (2011) indicated that greater financial knowledge is associated with more positive financial behavior outcomes.

Financial Attitudes

Problematic financial behavior by college students may affect their future financial outcomes. This is not unlike the "Animal House" study that found college students to have positive or favorable attitudes toward certain risky behaviors (e.g., substance abuse) and negative or non-favorable attitudes toward other behaviors (e.g., academics) (Wasylkiw & Currie, 2012). For example, college students who have favorable attitudes toward credit cards are more likely to own credit cards and use them more frequently (Xiao, Noring, & Anderson, 1995). Students with avoidant attitudes toward credit cards are less likely to engage in risky financial behaviors (Borden et al., 2008). Young adults and college students have been found to have favorable attitudes toward credit card use (Xiao et al., 1995; Joo, Grable, & Bagwell, 2003), indicating college students may be more likely to engage in risky financial behaviors. Hayhoe et al. (2000) found that students who had favorable attitudes toward credit card use were more likely to purchase clothes, entertainment, food, and travel away from home than students who did not view credit card use as favorably.

The Influence of Financial Knowledge on Financial Behavior

According to Lyons et al. (2006), students often have the responsibility of paying bills, budgeting, and using credit once they go to college. How a student manages these new financial responsibilities is influenced by prior financial knowledge and behaviors the student has acquired prior to being on his or her own. Existing literature points to parents as a significant source of financial information for college students which is explored further in this dissertation. Mentorship from parents is associated with better financial management among college students. (Norvilitis & MacLean, 2010; Hancock, Jorgensen, & Swanson, 2013; Bucciol & Veronesi, 2014; Xiao, Chatterjee, & Kim, 2014).

Many earlier studies have indicated that there is a relationship between financial education and financial behavior, meaning that financial education influences financial outcomes through financial behaviors (Lyons, 2008; Chen and Volpe, 1998; Cude et. al, 2006). For example, in a study of 924 undergraduates from 14 college campuses, Chen and Volpe (1998) found that students with higher financial knowledge were both more likely to keep financial records and more likely to make better financial decisions compared to students with less financial knowledge.

Financial Self-Efficacy

While students with more initial financial knowledge do report intending to engage in effective financial behaviors in the future (Borden et al., 2008), self-efficacy itself is a direct predictor of intention and behavior (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1971, 1997) has pointed out that although a person is aware that it is important to save, for example by knowledge acquired through financial education, without self-efficacy (the belief that they are capable of saving money), an individual is not likely to actually begin saving. Self-efficacy among individuals is often developed and reinforced as a result of social learning, observation, and social influences and persuasion (Bandura, 1971, 1997, 2001). Xiao, Chatterjee, and Kim (2014) indicated that economic self-efficacy results in more financial independence among young adults aged 18-23. Similarly, self-efficacy has been found to be a key determinant of financial behavior as it relates to risky credit card use and as it relates to overspending.(Sotiropoulos & D'astous, 2013; Xiao et al. 2011).

It has been the expectation of financial planning researchers that individuals who are exposed to financial education will acquire financial knowledge that will result in a financial behavior that improves financial outcomes. However, while a number of programs and initiatives have been developed and implemented to provide financial education to consumers of varying age ranges, the effectiveness of these efforts in terms of acquiring financial knowledge and improving financial behavior is not generally well-understood (Lyons et al., 2006). For example, Borden et al. (2008) presented similar results in their pilot study (N=93) of the Credit Wise Cats education program. Borden et al. (2008) found that a change in students' intentions to engage in more effective financial behaviors and less risky financial behaviors is indeed an indicator of program effectiveness in enhancing participants' future financial behaviors. While their findings suggested that the program increased both financial knowledge and responsible attitudes toward credit, they did not indicate any significant relationship between financial knowledge and actually engaging in effective or risky financial behaviors (Borden et al., 2008).

Depending on how the social and learning frameworks of a college student support the development of self-efficacy, financial knowledge and responsible attitudes toward financial behaviors are unlikely, as noted above by Borden et al., to be predictors of either successful or risky financial behavior. Thus, self-efficacy may play an integral role in identifying the cognitive motivation behind financial behavior change, especially given that self-efficacy is a function of social persuasion and social modeling through observational learning (Bandura, 1971, 1997, 2001), aside from financial knowledge and attitudes. According to Danes and Haberman (2007), financial knowledge and self-efficacy are the foundation for behavior change to occur, with both conditions needed to motivate individuals to take action and make changes in their financial behavior. While a student may have financial knowledge and understand consequences of a particular financial behavior, he or she may still adopt financial behaviors that are positive or negative in nature as a result of viewing reality television.

Not only do attitudes, financial knowledge, and self-efficacy appear to play a role in the financial behaviors of college students, but also the unique characteristics of the emerging adult. Worthy et al. (2010) indicated that emerging adults (e.g., college students) tend to take greater risks and display less stability in terms of their finances, emotions, relationships, and cognitive development. Further contributing to financial behaviors is the role that social system connection may play in addition to attitudes and personal characteristics. Sotiropoulous and D'Astous (2012) suggested that young adults tend to overspend with their credit cards as a result of their shared social experiences, including feeling pressure from their friends to spend.

Despite these studies, it is clear that there is no one explanation in existence of how college students acquire financial information and translate it into a specific financial behavior. As described by the literature, financial behaviors demonstrated by college students could be the result of development of financial attitudes, acquisition of financial knowledge through a formal course of study, a function of the characteristics of a college student as an emerging adult, a result of peer pressure, or the self-efficacy of an individual. It is possible that financial behavior change is also a result of the observations college students make in their day-to-day lives by way of media exposure, in addition to being mediated by their connections to their social systems. Observing reality television and messages received through connections to social systems may contribute to the self-efficacy of a college student's financial intentions and behaviors. There is no research that examines how media influence as a source of direct or indirect financial knowledge may influence financial behavior change among the college student population, which is why this study is timely and appropriate.

Theoretical Framework

Without confidence in one's own ability to accomplish a financial action, knowledge is not likely to give way to behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Bandura's concepts of Social Cognitive Theory are prevalent in existing financial planning literature, specifically as it relates to financial behavior. Similarly, individuals learn indirectly through observational learning, which can be the result of observing others including peers, the family system, and character portrayal on television, in magazines, and other sources of media (Bandura, 1971, 1986). Not only do people develop behaviors by observing the actions of others, but also individuals' beliefs and attitudes are formed by those observations. Bandura (2001) outlined a theoretical model specific to mass media, Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication, a supplement based upon the framework of Social Cognitive Theory, but focused specifically on media influence. The dual-path communication model of the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication suggests that behavior is not only influenced by media directly, but also by an individual's connection to social systems, which mediates the relationship between media influence and behavior change. The Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication will serve as the guiding theoretical lens for this qualitative inquiry. The concepts of Social Cognitive Theory will first be discussed, followed by the concepts of Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication.

Finally, the shared assumptions will be defined. The concepts of Social Cognitive Theory provide the foundation for understanding the ways in which media can influence behaviors as described by the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication.

Concepts of Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) offers insight as to how people acquire and maintain certain behavioral patterns, while also providing the basis for intervention strategies (Bandura, 1997). Without confidence in one's knowledge set, it is unlikely that behavior will give way to change. The concepts of Social Cognitive Theory are environment, personal characteristics, and behavior. The first concept, environment, refers to the factors that can influence a person's behavior (Glanz et al., 2002). These factors include physical factors of the environment (e.g., the size of room or temperature) and also social factors of the environment (e.g., family and friends). The second concept refers to personal characteristics, which are identified as the cognitive, affective, and biological events that influence a person (Bandura, 2001). The third concept of behavior refers to the knowledge and skill acquired to perform a behavior. Behavior is collectively the result of observational learning from watching the actions and outcomes of others' behavior in the environment, reinforcements of that person's behavior, expectations of the outcomes of a behavior, the value placed by a person on a behavior, self-efficacy, and self-control. According to Glanz et al. (2002), behavior is not simply the result of the environment and the person, just as the environment is not simply the result of the person and behavior, as evidenced below Figure 2.1. The model represents the triadic reciprocal causation in the causal model of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001).

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model of Social Cognitive Theory

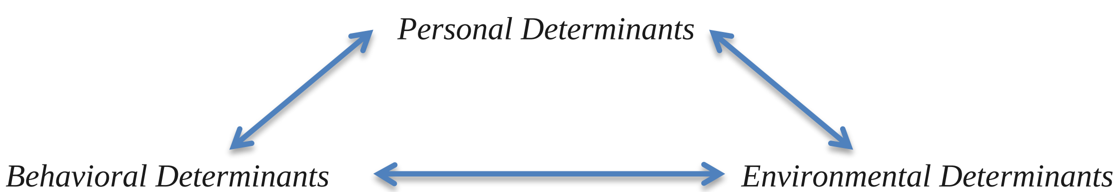

Figure 2.1. Conceptual Model of Social Cognitive Theory. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.). From Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research (p. 122), by A. Bandura, 2001. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Concepts of Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication

Deeply rooted in Social Cognitive Theory, the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication also has three major concepts as defined in Chapter 1. The first is media influence, or rather, how people acquire the knowledge regarding specific behaviors. The second is connection to social systems, in which the knowledge and adoption of the specific behaviors is spread and supported. The third is behavior, demonstrating that this information has been adopted in practice. Figure 2.2 suggests that when communication systems operate through a direct pathway, behavior is changed through informing, enabling, motivating, and guiding participants through media influence directly. However, it also assumes that when behavior change is desired, it can be accomplished by media influences through a socially mediated pathway.

Figure 2.2 Conceptual Model of Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication

Figure 2.2. Conceptual Model of Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.). From Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research (p. 141), by A. Bandura, 2001. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Assumptions

While Social Cognitive Theory and Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication differ conceptually, the two theories share key assumptions (Bandura, 1986, 2001). The first is that of symbolizing capability, which demonstrates an individual's capacity in terms of operating symbolically on information received by "giving meaning, form, and continuity to experiences" (Bandura, 2001, p. 122). In other words, the ability to learn from observing models of behavior. Second, self-regulation describes the internal standards and evaluative reaction to one's own behaviors, which can be both proactive and reactive control (Bandura, 2001). Third, self-reflective capability is the capacity of an individual to distinguish between accurate and faulty thought processes and act upon that knowledge, commonly known as self-efficacy. Finally, the concept of vicarious capability, also known as behavior modeling or observational learning, lends itself to intentionally or unintentionally observing actions and consequences based upon the models observed. Symbolizing capability, self-regulation, self-reflection (i.e., self-efficacy), and vicarious capability collectively result in behavior change. This study specifically aims to know how these assumptions give way to an observable change in financial behavior.

Summary

While the assumptions are nearly identical, for the purposes of the present study it makes more sense to approach this research using the conceptual model of SCTMC because it integrates media influence in terms of both a direct pathway and a socially mediated pathway, which is central to the purpose of this study. In Bandura's (2001) discussion of the social construction of reality and the cultivation of beliefs from media, he indicates that this type of heavy exposure to television, and the symbolic modeling thereof, could potentially make the images from television appear as the "authentic state of human affairs." Reiss and Wiltz (2004) came to a similar conclusion, indicating that viewers of reality television were more likely to relate to the reality television stars, identifying them as more "real" and true to self as compared to fictional television. In the direct pathway, media can promote financial behavior change by informing, enabling, motivating, and guiding viewers (Bandura, 2001). In the socially mediated pathway, media is used to connect social networks and communities that provide guidance, support, and even encouragement of the adoption of behaviors (Bandura, 2001). Bandura noted that when people begin to exchange and discuss information within their interpersonal networks, the media "set in motion transactional changes that further shape the course of change." Integrating SCTMC phenomenology will help to identify the pathways by which the symbolic communication of the media provides meaning and structure to the life experiences of college students in terms of financial behavior.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how reality television viewership influences financial behavior among college students, using the assumptions and conceptual model (i.e., media influence, connection to social systems, and behavior) of the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication as a guiding lens through the qualitative research process. The central research question asked: *What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of reality television viewership on financial behavior by college students?*

A qualitative, exploratory approach utilizing phenomenological methods guided the study to address the sub-research questions as guided by the conceptual model of SCTMC:

Sub-Research Question 1: *What financial behaviors do college students observe from watching reality television?*

Sub-Research Question 2: *How do college students' interactions with their social system in regards to reality television influence financial behavior?*

Sub-Research Question 3: *How are the financial behaviors of college students shaped as a result of reality television programming?*

Sub-Research Question 4: *How has reality television influenced college students' meaning of money?*

Qualitative Research

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined qualitative research as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification, one devoid of mathematical analysis that results in findings from data. Merriam (2009) stated that researchers conducting basic qualitative research are primarily interested in

"(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 23). The topic of this study lends itself well to qualitative research because of the understudied nature of the subject, in addition to providing some explanation of how students assimilate information received from reality television viewership into financial behavior. This study is concerned with exploring the experiences of students who observe the reality television phenomenon and the meaning college students give to these experiences.

Qualitative research methods focus on discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants, and exploring meaning, purpose, or reality (Hiatt, 1986). Inherent in this approach is the description of the interactions among participants and researchers in naturalistic settings with few boundaries, resulting in a flexible and open research process. These unique interactions imply that different results could be obtained from the same participant depending on who the researcher is, because results are created by a participant and researcher in a given situation (Harwell, 2011).

Merriam (2009) further indicated that qualitative research assumes that there are multiple meanings of individuals' realities, influenced by environment, personal interaction, and perception. People tend to give meaning to experiences, focusing on the process by which that meaning is obtained. Further, it is an inductive process as researchers often use qualitative studies to gather evidence in order to establish theories and hypotheses that previous research has neglected. In this study, a phenomenological approach will be used to gain access to the individual experiences of observing reality television on financial behavior.

Phenomenology

This study's primary goal was to explore how individuals experience reality television and apply those experiences to their financial behavior. In order to identify and capture the experience of the reality television phenomenon as it applies to financial behavior, phenomenological methods were used. Phenomenology, as a method of qualitative inquiry, specifically asks: “What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon by an individual or by many individuals?” (Patton, 2002, p. 132).

Collectively, the nature of the meaning, structure, and essence of lived experiences refers to understanding the social phenomena, or how the world is experienced, from the individual’s own perceptions of reality (Patton, 2002). Meaning is what is given to an experience in retrospective reflection (Patton, 2002). Structure refers to how individuals put together the phenomena experienced in a way to make sense of the world (Patton, 2002). Essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced (Patton, 2002). Specific to this study, phenomenological methods were appropriate in the analysis of the study because it was concerned with studying the essence of how the experience of reality television might contribute to financial behavior. In order to best describe the essence of the experience of reality television, research questions to participants were framed using the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication as a guide. It is common in qualitative research that a theory selected at the onset of the development of the project can be used as a theoretical lens from which questions may be framed (Spence, 1976).

These qualitative methods of data collection and analysis allowed the researcher to uncover a deeper understanding of the complexity that arose from the research questions that gave structure to the study (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological methods provided a basis for in-depth inquiry that helped describe how experiencing the phenomenon of reality television viewership may influence financial behaviors, giving meaning, form, and continuity to these experiences (Bandura, 2001). Further, the results substantiate additional inquiry into this yet unstudied topic, providing future contributions to financial planning literature.

Researcher Bias

Researcher bias in qualitative research can have an effect on the validity and reliability of the study. The importance of reflexivity requires the researcher to be particularly attentive and sensitive to her own viewpoints and the viewpoints of those whom she interviewed. As the researcher herself is a regular viewer of reality television, her particular knowledge of reality television comes from her viewership experiences and how the collective essence of those experiences has given meaning to her own behaviors. Her perspective has been shaped by the variety of reality television shows she watches, and the meaning she attaches to her own financial behaviors and attitudes.

As the researcher began noticing a variety of potential messages about financial behavior (e.g., excessive spending on *Keeping up with the Kardashians*) while viewing this type of programming, it became evident that it was possible that others were also noticing these types of behaviors portrayed in reality television. The researcher acknowledges that those behaviors may be interpreted much differently by someone of a different background, gender, age, etc. The researcher holds a Master's degree in Personal Financial Planning and also teaches finance courses and personal financial planning courses at the college level. Thus, the researcher understands that she is likely to be more sensitive to observing these types of financial messages, compared to someone who is less aware of financial concepts and someone who has less financial education. Similarly, the researcher recognizes that it is extremely important that the research design and implementation remain as free from that bias as possible.

Objectivity in its entirely pure form is impossible to achieve, and it is acknowledged that this study may be imperfect in some aspects. However, it is in the best interest of the study participants, and the best interest of the audience who reads the results, to strive for as much objectivity as possible. According to Patton (2002), "a researcher or evaluator operating from a reality-oriented stance worries about objectivity and how your own values and preconceptions will affect what you see, hear, and record in the field." The researcher's bias, however, is what prompted this study, and may be one of the greatest assets to the study itself as it formed the basis for the inquiry. The commitment to quality checks in this study, in addition to strict adherence to phenomenological methods, will increase objectivity and will ensure that biases remain are mitigated, and that potential limitations as a result of these biases are reported. Limitations do and will exist, and this study hopes to improve opportunities for future research into the subject by highlighting some of those conditions if they arise.

Sample

The units of analysis for this study were undergraduate college students. According to Leone (2006), college students are indicated to be heavy users of reality television, thus an appropriate population to study. Qualitative research is well-suited to purposeful sampling, and this study utilized criterion sampling to meet the needs of the research design. Purposeful sampling occurs when a certain sample is selected because researchers believe that the most information can be gathered by interviewing or observing the particular group, requiring the determination of selection criteria to obtain a sample of participants (Patton, 2002). Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002). As the study chose to employ criteria sampling, the selection and screening parameters for the sample of participants in this study included college students who were self-reported viewers of reality television. These two criteria were chosen specifically because prior literature has noted a relationship between reality television viewership and the behaviors of college students. College students, as studied in prior literature, are generally undergraduate students within the age range of 18 to 24. For this study, students were enrolled as freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors, and were between the ages of 18 and 24. Further, the researcher is an adjunct instructor at one of the two universities sampled, and further excluded students who had ever taken a class with her, who were currently enrolled in one of her classes, and who were a Finance or Personal Financial Planning major, to further reduce bias. According to Creswell (1998, p.64) the ideal sample size for a phenomenological study is 5 to 25 participants. Further, Creswell indicates that saturation can be attained at a relatively low level of participants. The initial target sample size for this study was 10 to 12 participants, in hopes that saturation would be achieved using Creswell's guidelines. Saturation occurs when new data collected does not contribute any additional or novel information to what is being studied. The researcher typically can observe when saturation begins to occur when data collected starts becoming repetitive and nothing new or different is being observed. Using criterion sampling techniques, the final sample size for this study was 10 participants.

Recruitment

Students enrolled at a large land-grant public university and a mid-size private liberal arts university located in two separate Midwestern states were targeted for recruitment. Faculty and staff familiar to the researcher through direct contact or referral at each university were asked by the researcher via email to send the invitation to participate in the study, along with the survey link for the screening assessment, to students enrolled in their courses to generate interest in participating in the study (See Appendix B). Additionally, the researcher visited three courses at the mid-size private liberal arts university to recruit directly to the students with the permission of the instructor. Faculty who chose to forward the invitation to participate to their students may have offered extra credit as an incentive to participate. In the instances known by the researcher where extra credit was given, it was only for completing the screening questionnaire, and not participating in the live interviews. The screening questionnaire for extra credit was open to all students in a course where extra credit was offered, and neither the instructor nor the researcher made mention of the screening criteria specific to the study. Each student had equal opportunity for extra credit regardless of whether or not they fit the criteria. The first page of the screening assessment was an electronic informed consent form, and gave the students the opportunity to acknowledge understanding and choose to continue or decline, based upon the information presented in the informed consent (see Appendix C). The informed consent outlined the entirety of the project, not solely limited to the screening questionnaire itself. Students were asked to provide contact information where they could be reached if they met the initial screening criteria for the study.

Screening Assessment

The invitation to participate was sent to faculty and staff at both universities over a three-month period. After the three-month solicitation period, the researcher sorted the screening questionnaires based on the criteria in order to move forward in conducting a live interview. Respondents who met the initial screening criteria were asked to complete a live interview with the researcher. The screening questionnaire also included demographic data (see Appendix C). Data collected included information about gender, ethnicity, major, employment, annual income, sources of income, debt, and exposure to personal financial education. The primary reason this demographic data was collected was to assist in purposeful sampling, the goal of which was to obtain a diverse sample for live interviews that could potentially deliver more rich responses based upon varied characteristics among respondents.

Interviews

After satisfying the required participation requirements based on the screening questionnaire, respondents were contacted via email or by text messaging to schedule an interview. Participants who did not respond to the initial contact to participate in a live interview were not contacted again. The researcher collected data for this study by conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 participants, lasting an average of about 20 minutes. While the interview questions (see Appendix A) were asked of all participants, semi-structured interviewing promotes asking questions beyond what is outlined in an interview guide (Babbie, 2010), and additional probing questions were asked as interviews were conducted in order to clarify responses or engage the participant in elaborating on a previous response. Interviews began with a review of informed consent and concluded with a debriefing outlining next steps and further communication to verify analysis results with each participant. Each interviewee was also informed that the session was being recorded for research purposes. The interviews were conducted over the phone with each participant and recorded using an application for the researcher's Android smartphone called "Audio Recorder." The application interface seamlessly and automatically transferred the audio recordings of interviews to the researcher's Dropbox account from the researcher's smartphone after each interview for secure private storage (for three years until IRB guidelines allows for permanent deletion), and the audio files were deleted from the researcher's smartphone. After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed professionally by TranscribeMe, a company that uses speech-processing technology in conjunction with human transcribers to guarantee 98% accuracy of transcribed audio files with their 2-tiered quality assurance process. Confidentiality is a priority with the selected company.

TranscribeMe's platform is built on Microsoft's Windows Azure cloud solution, which securely stored the information during the transcription process and segmented the audio, preventing any one transcriber from having full access to the recordings. After the transcripts were received by the researcher, data analysis commenced following the method of phenomenological research analysis prescribed by Colaizzi (1978), beginning with reading and re-reading the transcriptions to become familiar and comfortable with the content contained therein.

Data Analysis

Moustakas (1994) asserted that research should focus on the wholeness of experience and a search for essences of experiences. Moustakas viewed experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of a phenomenon with the person experiencing the phenomenon. Phenomenological inquiry, according to Moustakas, is bringing the essential meaning of the experiences to life. The data analysis process is the process through which the essences are revealed through careful methodology. Moustakas' method of qualitative inquiry is deeply rooted in Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis. The researcher selected Colaizzi's method of data analysis for phenomenological research for this study. The first step using Colaizzi's method is reading and re-reading the transcripts, which was done as transcripts were received. The next step is extracting significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon being studied. In an effort to streamline the extraction process in order to begin the process of building themes, the data analysis program NVIVO was used to organize, categorize, and manage the content. The third step is to assign a meaning to a statement. Formulating meanings for the statements is the foundation for the next step, which requires categorizing those formulated meanings into themes or clusters of themes. From this, the fundamental structure was apparent. The fundamental structure was described and summarized, and reported back to the respondents for verification.

Transcripts for each participant were assigned a respondent number, and identifying information, such as name, email address, and phone number, that were acquired during this process were not reported in the results and were kept confidential. This information, however, was necessary to comply with summary verification follow-up procedures.

Quality Controls

Patton (2002) stated that validity and reliability are two factors, which should concern any qualitative researcher while designing a study, analyzing results, and judging the quality of the study. Patton (2002), with regards to the researcher's ability and skill in any qualitative research, also stated that reliability is a consequence of the validity in a study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the criteria of qualitative paradigms in terms of credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability. In other words, dependability in qualitative research shares the same meaning with reliability in quantitative research. Validity itself is much debated in meaning, and many researchers have adopted rigor, trustworthiness, and quality checks as measures of validity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Merriam (1988) noted that there are six basic strategies that ensure internal validity in a qualitative study. These include triangulation, member checks, saturation, peer examination, collaboration, and consideration of researcher bias. This research study used all of these validity checks. Similarly, reliability can be achieved by utilizing triangulation and peer-review.

Triangulation in this study resulted from the use of investigator triangulation, to ensure increased confidence in reported results. This included using reflexive triangulation techniques to create ongoing awareness as to how the study might be influenced by the researcher, the participants, and the intended audience for the research (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). Triangulation was also accomplished by including other professional colleagues in the process to peer-review the transcribed data for accuracy and provide input during data analysis and reporting to ensure that the participants' reality was conveyed in data reporting as accurately as possible. This occurred via email and by phone conversations to discuss the information to ensure its accuracy as perceived by the researcher. Member checks occurred during the interviews to verify understanding of information conveyed during the process when required, and at the conclusion of the interview, to affirm accuracy of stated beliefs (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002). A summary transcript was provided to each participant to confirm information had been interpreted correctly. Each respondent was provided a transcript summary, and asked to check for inaccuracies. If any were found, they were asked to contact the researcher. One respondent indicated that there was an error in the meaning of one word. The researcher then corrected the meaning of the word to reflect what the respondent intended.

In order to meet the saturation expectations (Creswell, 1998), the sample had to be large enough that repeated observations would become evident and consistent amongst respondents. In addition to sample size, enough time had to be spent with each participant to obtain as much in-depth information about the phenomenon as possible. Saturation was achieved among the 10 respondents interviewed with an average 20 minute interview.

Chapter 4 - Results

This chapter presents the results of the interviews conducted with the 10 participants. There are four sections, beginning with an overview of the demographic data of the participants. The second, third, and fourth sections explore how reality television informs financial behavior, how college students' interactions with their social systems influence financial behavior, and the ways the behaviors of college students change as a result of reality television programming.

Sample

Invitations to participate in the study were sent to faculty and staff at two universities to forward to students. In total, 92 responses to the screening questionnaire were received over a three-month period. In order to meet the criteria for the study, respondents had to be self-reported viewers of reality television, between the ages of 18 and 24, not be a Finance or Personal Financial Planning major, and not be a previous or current student of the researcher. Of these 92 responses, 25 respondents were identified as ideal, meeting the criteria for this study. Nineteen of the students identified were students at a mid-size private liberal arts university, and six were students from a large public land-grant university. Each of the potential interview candidates was contacted via email or text message to explore interest in scheduling an interview with the researcher. Eleven of the 19 contacted from the private university expressed interest in being interviewed and were scheduled for interviews. None of the six contacted from the public university responded to the researcher. Of the 11 students from the private university, 10 interviews were successfully conducted. The 11th respondent did not answer at the scheduled interview time and did not return the call or respond to a voicemail message to reschedule. The screening questionnaire was sent out between August, 2014 and October, 2014. Interviews were conducted in October, 2014 after responses from the screening questionnaire were reviewed. No compensation was offered for participation in this study by the researcher. If extra credit was offered to students, it is unknown to the researcher which of the 92 screening questionnaire respondents it might have applied to as it was left up to the discretion of the faculty who passed along the invitation to participate to their students.

The demographic information was collected on all 10 participants. The overall demographic profile of the participants is presented in T able 4.1. All participants were from the liberal arts university. Fifty percent of the respondents were male, and 50% were female. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 23 years old and all participants were single. Six participants were seniors in college, and four were juniors. Four of the participants were Business Administration majors, two were Accounting majors, one was an Economics major, one was a Marketing major, one was a Sports Management major, and one was a Human Resource Management major. Seven of the respondents worked part-time and three did not work at all. One participant worked 1 to 10 hours per week, one participant worked 30 to 40 hours per week, two participants worked 20 to 30 hours per week, and three participants worked 10 to 20 hours per week. Three participants reported having no student loan balance and one participant was unsure of her balance. The six participants who did have student loans reported having loans between the ranges of $3,000 and $26,000. Nine participants reported having no credit card debt, and one participant reported having a credit card balance at any given time of $0 to $200. All 10 respondents reported not having any other additional debt.

Table 4.1 Overall Demographic Profile of Participants

Respondent	Gender	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Year in College	Major	Age	Employment Status	Hours Worked	Annual Income	Student Loans	Credit Card	Other Debt
1	F	White	Single	Senior	Business Administration	22	Part-time	20-30 hours	Less than 10k	12,000	0	0
2	M	White	Single	Junior	Business Administration	21	Part-time	10-20 hours	10k-25k	0	0-200	0
3	F	White	Single	Junior	Business Administration	20	N/A	N/A	Less than 10k	0	0	0
4	F	Black	Single	Senior	Accounting	22	Part-time	20-30 hours	Less than 10k	Unsure	0	0
5	M	White	Single	Senior	Economics	22	Part-time	10-20 hours	10k-25k	3000	0	0
6	M	White	Single	Junior	Accounting	20	Part-time	30-40 hours	10k-25k	0	0	0
7	M	White	Single	Senior	Sports Management	22	N/A	N/A	Less than 10k	3000	0	0
8	F	Pacific Islander	Single	Senior	Business Administration	23	N/A	N/A	Less than 10k	26000	0	0
9	M	Hispanic	Single	Junior	Marketing	22	Part-time	10-20 hours	Less than 10k	7500	0	0
10	F	White	Single	Senior	Human Resources	21	Part-time	1-10 hours	Less than 10k	3000	0	0

Open-ended questions were asked of each participant in regard to sources of income and exposure to personal financial education. Responses from the participants indicated income from job, student loans, and support from family as sources of income. Respondents reported receiving personal financial education from exposure in their college classes, parental guidance, information from a guest speaker, a high school personal finance class, and previous work as a financial advisor (Respondent 9 worked for two years as a financial advisor for a firm in California right after high school graduation).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The following section presents the structure of the method of analysis and the results of the analysis in evaluating the overarching research question: *What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of reality television viewership on financial behavior by college students?* The questions asked in the screening questionnaire and in the interviews were guided by the concepts of the theoretical framework of the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication. The analysis itself was also guided using the three concepts of media influence, connection to social systems, and behavior change and followed Colaizzi's method of phenomenological analysis.

As the interviews were completed, they were sent to a professional transcription company for transcription. As the transcripts were returned one-by-one, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts to obtain a general sense of what the respondent was conveying in the interview—the first step in the analysis process.

Next, the researcher extracted significant statements from each of the transcripts. Significant statements, according to Colaizzi (1978), are the foundation of theme building and are phrases or sentences related to the experiences of the respondents as it relates to the research questions. It is from these significant statements that themes begin to evolve and take shape. NVIVO 10 for Mac was used to facilitate and streamline the extraction. The statements were identified utilizing a line-by-line approach rather than using a search for specific words. Significant statements pertaining to media influence, connection to social systems, and perceived behavior change were extracted and coded, keeping the guiding lens of the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication in mind. After the significant statements were extracted, they were sent to a second researcher, a colleague of the primary researcher, to verify statements and reach consensus. Two hundred and fifty four significant statements were extracted from the 10 transcripts. For example, *"No one in my household will watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians because they think it's stupid"* was identified by the researcher as a significant statement. It was considered significant by the researcher because it relates to how the respondent feels that reality television is viewed by members of her social system. In her experience, the respondent feels that the people in her household do not watch a particular reality television program because the members of the household view it as stupid. This statement captures that perspective, and as such is considered significant. Table 4.2 provides examples of significant statements noted from the extraction process.

Table 4.2 Examples of Significant Statements

Significant Statement	Transcript No.
"No one in my household will watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians because they think it's stupid."	1
"One of his friends walked into the house and he was like, "Why are you watching this?" I'm like, 'Don't judge me, I don't know why I just did.' Maybe I'll change the channel, because I'm embarrassed to be watching it."	8
"Buying stupid stuff, just spending money not really on any particular thing."	5
"There's an appeal where you want to try to emulate these people because you're jealous or envious of what they have, so you're going to try to buy the same things they have, even though they might be a $1,000 pair of shoes or something stupid that you really shouldn't buy because they're not worth it, but you just want to try to be like the person or people."	2
"If you go out with friends you're going to spend more money, but it's a thing that you have to personally accept because sometimes it's necessary to spend money to have a memorable time or whatever."	6
"Money - I don't think money is happiness, but I feel like having enough money will make life easier…I don't think money is necessarily happiness, but I think money's important to have and not just to blow off like I like to sometimes. I think I just take advantage off blowing money now, because I'm just in college I really don't have that much responsibility when it comes to bills and stuff, which are so much now…"	10

These significant statements were then analyzed to determine the meaning of each significant statement. This process, according to Colaizzi (1978, p. 59) cautions that this step in the analysis is a "precarious leap" and requires "creative insight." Thus, the interpretation of the significant statement is left to the interpretation of the researcher. Each underlying meaning was coded into a category as they reflect an exhaustive description. It was during this step of the analysis that it became evident that the condition of saturation was becoming satisfied as formulated meanings began to appear consistent among all respondents. The second researcher also reviewed the formulated meanings assigned to the significant statements, finding them consistent. The significant statement, *"No one in my household will watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians because they think it's stupid"* was interpreted into a formulated meaning that suggested attitudes toward reality television shows are not favorable. Table 4.3 provides an example of how significant statements and their formulated meanings.

Table 4.3 Examples of the Process of Creating Formulated Meanings from Significant Statements

Significant Statement	Formulated Meaning
"No one in my household will watch Keeping Up with the Kardashians because they think it's stupid."	Attitudes toward reality television shows are not favorable.
"One of his friends walked into the house and he was like, "Why are you watching this?" I'm like, 'Don't judge me, I don't know why I just did.' Maybe I'll change the channel, because I'm embarrassed to be watching it."	Watching reality television can lead to an emotional response.
"Buying stupid stuff, just spending money not really on any particular thing."	Some people have money but spend without purpose.

"There's an appeal where you want to try to emulate these people because you're jealous or envious of what they have, so you're going to try to buy the same things they have, even though they might be a $1,000 pair of shoes or something stupid that you really shouldn't buy because they're not worth it, but you just want to try to be like the person or people."	People want to replicate what they see.
"If you go out with friends you're going to spend more money, but it's a thing that you have to personally accept because sometimes it's necessary to spend money to have a memorable time or whatever."	Sometimes people spend more because they feel like the experience will be worth it.
"Money - I don't think money is happiness, but I feel like having enough money will make life easier…I don't think money is necessarily happiness, but I think money's important to have and not just to blow off like I like to sometimes. I think I just take advantage off blowing money now, because I'm just in college I really don't have that much responsibility when it comes to bills and stuff…"	Money is recognized as important later in life but spending in college is viewed as consequence-free.

Formulating meanings for the statements is the foundation for the next step, which requires categorizing those formulated meanings into themes or clusters of themes. As previously mentioned, saturation was reached quickly during the data analysis process of extracting significant statements. These significant statements were clustered together to create the themes. A theme was considered a significant contribution, able to stand on its own, if two or more respondents had contributed a significant statement. In general, all respondents and their respective characteristics were considered in the themes. Each cluster of themes was coded to reflect all formulated meanings related to that group of meaning. Tables 4.4-4.7 present examples of how exploring each of the research questions was initiated from different clusters of themes and formulated meanings. A thematic map, a tool used to further organize the clusters of themes into narrower emergent themes organized by sub-research question was generated. The second researcher verified the accuracy of the thematic map with no disagreements.

All emergent themes were reviewed to formulate an exhaustive description, presented in the next section. After merging all of the themes, the whole structure of the phenomenon of *What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of reality television viewership on financial behavior by college students?* had been extracted. Validation of this exhaustive description (presented in the next section) was confirmed with the second researcher using the qualitative research protocol. There was no disagreement among the primary researcher and the second researcher. The exhaustive description was then reported back to the respondents for verification.

The following sections describe the results extracted from the methodology employed. The first section presents a summary of the college students as reality television viewers. The second section presents the ways in which reality television informs financial behavior from observations of the college students. The third section explores the influence of the connection to a college student's social system in regard to financial behavior. Section four is comprised of the perceptions of college students toward the influence of reality television on financial behavior changes, among their friends, family, and themselves.

Summary of the Reality Television Viewer

What Reality Television Shows Are They Watching?

Table 4.4 provides detail as to the types of reality television viewers the respondents are, in addition to the types of programs they watch. The students are classified as (a) active viewers of reality television (regular viewer of one or more reality programs), (b) passive viewers of reality television (irregular viewer of one or more reality programs), and (c) combination viewers of reality television (meaning that a respondent may regularly, or "actively" watch a particular program, but also may watch another show from time to time or observe on an irregular basis). The college students interviewed reported watching *Keeping up with the Kardashians, Bad Girls Club, House Hunters, Property Brothers, Love It or List It, Storage Wars, Big Brother, Survivor, American Idol, The Voice, Braxton Family Values, Jersey Shore, Teen Mom, Dating Naked, The Bachelorette/Bachelor, The Amazing Race, Pawn Stars, American Pickers, and Dancing with the Stars.* Respondents can be classified into four categories of viewership, (a) talent shows only (e.g., *Dancing with the Stars, American Idol, The Voice*), (b) situational shows only (e.g., *Keeping up with the Kardashians, The Jersey Shore, Storage Wars, (c)* contest shows *(e.g., The Amazing Race, Big Brother, The Bachelor*), and (c) combination of shows.

Table 4.4 Reality Television Classification Among Respondents

Respondent	Active	Passive	Active/Passive Combination	Talent	Situational	Contest	Combination
1	X				*Keeping up with the Kardashians, House Hunters, Property Brothers, Love It or List It*		
2	X				*Storage Wars*		
3	X			*American Idol, The Voice*		*Big Brother*	X
4	X				*Bad Girls Club, Braxton Family Values*		
5	X				*Dating Naked, Jersey Shore*		
6			X		*Pawn Stars, American Pickers, Keeping up with the Kardashians, The Jersey Shore, Dance Moms*	*Amazing Race, Bachelor, Bachelorette*	X
7	X			*Dancing with the Stars*			
8	X				*Keeping up with the Kardashians*	*Survivor, Big Brother*	X
9		X			*The Jersey Shore, Teen Mom*		
10	X					*Bachelor, Big Brother, Survivor*	

Where Are They Watching Reality Television Shows?

Most respondents indicated that they primarily watch reality television at home. While mostly watched at home, the respondents also shared where they also watched reality television. Respondents also reported watching reality television the dorm room, at a friend's house, or at a boyfriend or girlfriend's house.

Who Are They Watching Reality Television With?

Respondents indicated that they regularly watch reality television by themselves, or with friends or family. Two respondents reported regularly watching reality television alone. Three responded that they watched reality television primarily alone, but sometimes with friends or family. Five respondents reported watching reality television primarily with friends or family.

Why Are College Students Watching Reality Television?

College students, as deducted from participant responses, offered varying reasons for watching reality television. Two respondents, for example, indicated that they watch reality television because they relate to the show on some level. Four others indicated that they receive entertainment value from watching the shows, and three indicated the shows provide insight into another life. Interestingly, these statements supported what has been previously described in existing literature, regarding specifically voyeurism related to reality television show stars and/or situations (Calvert, 2002; Christenson & Ivancin, 2006; Nabi, Stitt, Halford, & Finnerty, 2006). For example, Respondent 2, a 21-year-old male Business Administration major, who typically only watches the reality television program *Storage Wars* on a regular basis revealed:

We also own a retail store, a consignment shop. So, our whole family watches it.

Respondent 1, a 22-year-old Senior who watches many reality television programs regularly expressed why she likes to watch reality television, specifically *Keeping up with the Kardashians:*

> Most of the time, it is because they're being dumb and it's funny. It's an insight to a different kind of life, I guess. I find Khloe Kardashian hilarious. But watching Kim Kardashian, she's a definite bimbo. I think it's funny. I know my sister watches Jersey Shore and she's only watching it for entertainment purposes.

Research Question 1 – What Financial Behaviors do College Students Observe from Watching Reality Television?

This section helps answer the sub-research question: *What financial behaviors do college students observe from watching reality television*? This section discusses the attitudes of college students toward reality television stars, the college students' perceptions of good and bad financial behaviors as viewed on reality television, and product endorsements noticed. Table 4.4 provides a visual demonstration of what is discussed. The table begins describing the formulated meanings of each developing theme cluster. The theme clusters are then identified, followed by the emergent theme. The emergent theme for this section is that reality television informs financial behavior in many ways. The theme clusters for this section include attitudes toward reality television stars, good financial behavior perceptions, bad financial behavior perceptions, and product endorsement perceptions.

Table 4.5 Examples of How the First Research Question, *What Financial Behaviors do College Students Observe from Watching Reality Television?*, was Explored from Different Clusters of Themes and Formulated Meanings

Examples of Formulated Meanings	Theme Clusters	**Emergent Theme**
• Reality stars/celebrities are: stupid, risky, "trashy", or "bimbos" • Respondents are embarrassed to admit they watch the shows; seemingly voyeuristic and judgmental • If respondents had that same kind of money, who is to say they would not spend it the same way the reality television stars do	Attitudes toward reality television stars.	Reality television informs financial behavior in many ways.
• Reality television stars give money to charity • Reality television stars use their fame for charity • Some reality television stars communicate real estate investment and business development savvy	Good financial behavior perceptions.	
• Reality stars spend excessively on nothing of importance or value • They buy what they do not need • Reality stars spend a lot of money on nothing in particular, like eating out and going to clubs	Bad financial behavior perceptions.	
• Name brands blurred out get attention • Respondents notice that products are featured prominently on shows and that celebrities endorse products outside of the shows • Shows market their own brand-specific merchandise	Product endorsement perceptions.	

Attitudes toward Reality Television Show Stars

Nabi et al. (2006) concluded that reality programming may be a less appealing programming choice to viewers, not because it evokes negative emotions and cognitive reactions, but rather because of its more limited ability to evoke positive ones. During the interviews, significant statements emerged revealing respondents' attitudes toward reality television celebrities, comprising the first theme. Interestingly, regardless of whether the respondent was an active or passive reality television viewer, or what type of programming the respondent preferred (talent, situational, contest, or combination), the statements remained consistent among respondents, indicating an overall negative attitude toward reality television show stars. Respondent 1, an active reality television viewer of more than one reality television program, offered the following insights:

> No one in my household will watch *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* because they think it's stupid. They think they're all bimbos, basically. I find it funny but my family thinks it's bad.

Although Respondent 2 is an active viewer of primarily only one reality television program, he shared a similar sentiment:

> Our family always thinks that they're kind of stupid, and that we would never risk our money like that.

Respondent 8, another active reality television viewer of more than one program, indicated a similar sentiment to that of Respondent 1, but offered additional insight as to the attitudes toward reality television show stars:

> I don't know them personally, but it's labeled as, "They might have a lot of money, but they're trash." That's how they're labeled as. They are not really famous for anything, like musicians or actors and actresses. They're literally reality stars, and that's how they got famous. So, it's like, "Why would you watch that trash?" Literally, that's what it is.

Respondent 8 indicated previously a general attitude towards reality television programming as “trash,” calling into question “why” you would watch that type of programming. Respondent 8 attempted an explanation of why, even though she considers the programming “trash” and is also embarrassed to be watching it, she continues to be an active viewer of reality television:

> One of his friends walked into the house and he was like, "Why are you watching this?" I'm like, "Don't judge me, I don't know why I just did." Maybe I'll change the channel, because I'm embarrassed to be watching it. It's like a *Jersey Shore* kind of thing. People are like, "Why would you watch that?" But they're watching it too. So, it's-- I don't know. You judge people, but you know you're watching-- I don't know, it's hard to explain.

Several researchers have attempted to explain what Respondent 8 was trying to convey. Nabi et al. (2006) found that voyeurism plays a role in whether a viewer decides to choose reality programming. Calvert (2002) suggested that reality television has realigned the private and public as a form of mediated voyeurism, meaning that people are fascinated by reality-based shows that appeal to voyeuristic tendencies. Mediated voyeurism is the result of a response felt by an individual that is multi-faceted. People, as Calvert proposed, may watch reality television because they identify with a leading character or they feel like the program is representative of some truth that appeals to the specific viewer (what is being presented in the reality television program is representative of truth in a mediated environment). Similarly, according to Nabi et al. (2006), some people may watch reality television because they like to observe the behaviors of those on the shows, especially behaviors that are considered by the viewer to be inconsistent with their own values/behaviors. The “shock value” appeals to viewers as they observe behaviors and reactions to situations that arise from the antics of the stars of the shows. Part of this, can be attributed to *social comparison* (Baruh, 2010), in which individuals will evaluate themselves in comparison to others. Baruh (2010) found that both voyeurism and social comparison were positively associated with watching reality television. Baruh further offered the idea that reality television program consumption is a “guilty pleasure” for many. While Respondent 8 seemed to view watching reality television as embarrassing (to herself), she also indicated that people are quick to judge her viewership, even though she believes that other people are also watching. People may not readily admit their reasons behind their reality television viewership to themselves or to others because it is possible that reality television in some way is considered a “guilty pleasure” by many people that satisfies some voyeuristic tendency and a means of comparison (Calvert, 2002; Nabi et al., 2006; & Baruh, 2010).

Another attitude toward the seemingly excessive spending of reality television stars was that it is relative based on their income. Both respondents (1 and 8) were Senior Business Administration majors, ages 22 and 23, and female. Interestingly, the two respondents indicated that the reality television stars might not necessarily be engaging or demonstrating negative financial behaviors in relation to their financial situations, meaning that if the respondents also had similar kinds of upbringing and financial resources that they themselves would not spend their money in similar ways. They offered:

Respondent 1:

> I'm used to my mom saying, "No. You can't have that." And I think people who, maybe not spoiled, but are used to having things in excess, aren't going to view the same things that I do as frivolous because they're used to having those things. I know that my friends watch different TV shows than I do, and I kind of think it has to do with the kind of families they come from. Because I think that your view of purchases or whatever, is kind of ingrained in you. Somebody who is more wealthy than my family might agree with what the Kardashians are doing when I disagree a lot.

Respondent 8:

> That’s how and what they spend their money on-clothing, shopping, $1,000 on a pair of sunglasses, stuff like that. Yeah. I can't say that if I had that amount of money that I wouldn't do stuff like that, but they have a different perspective on it. But it's crazy the things they can get with their money. Stuff I couldn't even imagine probably.

Good Financial Behavior Perceptions

Seven respondents interviewed shared interesting insights with the researcher in regard to the ways that the reality television celebrities and stars use their money in ways that would be considered good financial behavior, such as responsible saving or spending behavior.

Respondent 1 shared thoughts about the behaviors observed on reality television and offered the following:

> I think it's kind of a stupid thing to do (spend frivolously) if you have that much money. I mean, you can spend it a lot better ways helping other people than buying something you don't need.

The concept of helping other people resonated with respondents 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, and 10 as a good financial behavior. These respondents were representative of each type of viewer (active, passive, combination) and also reality show category preference (talent, situational, contest, combination) These respondents reported having observed on reality television donations being made to charity, by way of hosting charity events featured in the shows or donating winnings from a show. Respondents 8 and 10 indicated, however, that observing a star engaging in what would be considered a good financial behavior is rare, and if it is observed, it is related to charity.

Respondent 10, who typically watches *Big Brother, Survivor, The Bachelor/Bachelorette* indicated:

> Except to please themselves, I don't really know another way they use it for good. I know sometimes in *Big Brother*-- I know Frankie, if he had won that season that he would've gave it [to] charity. That's about it that I noticed.

Respondent 8, who watches not only *Big Brother*, but also *Keeping up with the Karshashians* regularly offered an interesting viewpoint, noting that it might not necessarily be the direct donation of money to a charity, but rather a utilization of fame to encourage others to be charitable:

> I know there's been a couple episodes where they've (the Kardashians) done a couple of…charity events. I know they did a few things like that. But I don't know, not very often do you see good come out. Maybe they'll do some type of charity event, but it's more they use their fame more than their money for good I think. That's the way I see it.

While the majority of respondents remarked on the commonality of charity as a good financial behavior viewed on reality television, some respondents indicated that they have observed good financial behaviors in the ways people choose to handle investments, either in real estate or business development. Other respondents, when asked the question, *What do you see reality television stars doing with their money that is good?* said the following:

Respondent 1, a female who watches a variety of reality programs regularly observed:

> But the majority of the shows that I watch on HGTV is people that are trying to be responsible and find the best deal that they can for their money. I think it's good that they're not being frivolous.

Respondents 2 and 6, both male Juniors, speak to the value of being savvy with investment and business development prospects. Respondent 2, a Business Administration major, who primarily watches *Storage Wars* said:

> On those kind of shows, they are always trying to make money, to earn a buck. Like spend however much they can on an unknown item, and then see how valuable it actually is. They're not afraid to throw around and risk a lot of money. They're trying to make money off their money.

Respondent 6, an Accounting major, addressed the reality television program *Pawn Stars*:

> The ones that I watch, obviously they're using money in the show turning their business. They're running their business efficiently, but they're probably not paying fair value, which they're not going to in the nature of their businesses. I haven't noticed them giving money unselfishly to charity or anything, but they're running a business so that's understandable. They're not stupid with their money, they research and they don't pay more than fair market value for their stuff, which is good.

Bad Financial Behavior Perceptions

When asked, about what interviewees see reality television stars doing with their money that is bad, overwhelmingly most respondents (seven of 10) observed excessive spending as the most noticeable bad financial behavior. These observations, again, were not limited to the type of reality television viewer or the category of reality television watched, representative across all respondents.

Respondent 3, a female who watches *American Idol, The Voice, and Big Brother* with regularity shared the following observation, regarding bad financial behavior in reality television programs:

> I would say generally spending it pretty freely. Not a lot of saving, and spending on a lot of luxury items, I suppose…nice clothes, purses, shoes, that kind of stuff, or cars.

Respondent 6, a male, who regularly watches *Pawn Stars and American Pickers*, but also has passively watched *The Bachelor/The Bachelorette, The Amazing Race*, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *Dance Moms, and Jersey Shore* said:

> Just spending it all the time on everything…especially with that Kardashian show, they buy anything and everything they want and with the other popular shows, it's like-- *Teen Mom*, or some other shows I guess, they're buying-- they're going out and partying a lot, or they're buying things they don't necessarily need. That adds to the drama of the show.

Respondent 1, a female who often watches *Keeping up With the Kardashians, House Hunters, and Love It or List It* stated:

> Well, blowing it on stupid stuff, basically…they mostly just buy clothes and dumb things. They have enough stuff but they keep buying the same things over and over again even though they have what they need. I think it kind of depends on which show. Because I know that some episodes of House Hunters, it's like really rich people that are buying their third vacation home…I just want to say like, "You don't need this. It's not necessary."

Two different respondents, Respondent 1 and Respondent 8, referred to a specific example of excessive spending on *Keeping up with the Kardashians*. Respondent 1 mentioned:

> There was one episode of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* that Scott Disick bought an airplane or a helicopter just because he felt like it.

Respondent 8 shared the same observation:

> Just spending it like it's nothing. Like trying to buy a helicopter for their backyard. That's one episode that stands out [in] my mind. When Lord Scott got that newer place and he's buying a helicopter. Now all he would need is a pilot and they're really looking into it.

Respondents also observed less excessive behaviors, namely shopping, going out to eat, and going out to clubs. Respondent 4, a female Senior Accounting major, expressed her observations.

> On *Bad Girls Club*, you see them buying different things or going out to the club. And on the *Braxton Family*, you see them constantly maybe going out to eat or different things like that - shopping. Yes. It's just the ways that they're spending money, actually, that they can be spending it for some other…maybe not going out to eat for all of their meals. I think you can eat at home, and cook at home or something.

Similarly, Respondent 5, a male Economics major, who regularly watches *Jersey Shore and Dating Naked* offered this perspective:

> Buying stupid stuff, just spending money not really on any particular thing…just going out to eat and going out to clubs. That's about it.

Of particular interest to this section is that no respondents indicated observing bad financial behavior from any type of talent-based reality television program. The bad financial behaviors observed were from the situational-type programs, such as *Keeping up with the Kardashians.* Observations from contest-type shows, such as *The Bachelor* were similar to the situational-type shows where interviewees noticed items being purchased on the shows. This is Respondent 10 explains:

> *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*, they go on these extravagant dates and stuff. I was like, "Wow, that's awesome." And I'm not exactly sure where they get the money from, but they tend to go on extravagant things, and do extravagant dates, and be able to buy whatever, and they're always dressed nice. I know either the Bachelor or Bachelorette, they just have these very nice dresses and tuxes when they have their rose ceremony, so that's what I notice.

Product Endorsement Perceptions

A number of significant statements from the interviews were extracted regarding products endorsed or featured on reality television programming. Two primary categories emerged, including that of brand placement/endorsement, and program-specific merchandising. Interestingly, two respondents indicated that they had noticed products with the brand name blurred out, described succinctly by Respondent 1:

> Mainly, the only time that I notice is when it's blurred out. Does that make sense? I never really notice it unless they're calling attention to the fact that they're not showing it. I never notice products unless it's blurred out because, to me, in a reality TV show, those products should be there because it's supposedly supposed to be like real life, and I feel like when they blur it out, they're calling attention to it.

Respondents reported that certain products are endorsed by the celebrities featured on the programming. Respondent 8 said:

> They'll have celebrities have one of this and you can buy it at... And they tell you. I've looked them up before to see how much it goes for stuff like that. I have done that before. I've noticed a lot about the drinks they drink. I'll see a-- you'll see it reappear more than once. I can't think of a drink that's specific. I want to say vitamin water, or something. But you'll see them appear more than once, more than one time, when they are drinking it. I know they are doing that on purpose, "You're showcasing this drink on my show." It's obvious. I know what's going on. I've learned about it in school.

Similarly, respondents spoke to noticing how reality television celebrities endorse products at a highly commercialized level, as Respondent 9, a passive viewer of reality television who watches very irregularly shared:

> What's his name on Jersey Shores? I think it's Pauly D, the DJ. And that is, I would say, just like a huge part of the show. He comes out DJ'ing and clubbing every night on the show. So I guess mixing material, such as mixers and what not, promoting DJs...walk into Best Buy, you see a picture of Pauly D. They use him as a commercial to sell DJ products and headphones, and whatnot.

Students interviewed also indicated that the reality television shows themselves tend to market to consumers their own brand-specific merchandise related to the show:

Respondent 2:

> There's always a couple of things that they're trying to push on people. They're always merchandising things like the hats and t-shirts that will have the show's brand name on it, things of that nature. And then, they're always also trying to push just different things.

> Mainly just merchandising things. Things like shirts with Storage Wars or whatever, what have you.

Respondent 6:

> With Pawn Stars, I know they sell merchandise, and they-- my parents joked about getting some, but it's really tacky.

Research Question 2 - How do College Students' Interactions with their Social Systems in Regards to Reality Television Influence Financial Behavior?

This section helps answer the sub-research question of: *How do college students' interactions with their social systems in regards to reality television influence financial behavior?* It describes the influence of friends, family, employment and continued conversation about reality television on financial behavior. Table 4.5 provides a visual demonstration of what is discussed. The table begins describing the formulated meanings of each developing theme cluster. The theme clusters are then identified, followed by the emergent theme. The emergent theme for this section is that the social system influences financial behavior. The theme clusters for this section include the influence of friends on financial behavior, the influence of family on financial behavior, the influence of work on financial behavior, and conversations about reality television.

Table 4.6 Examples of How the Second Research Question, *How do College Students' Interactions with their Social System in Regards to Reality Television Influence Financial Behavior?*, was Explored from Different Clusters of Themes and Formulated Meanings

Examples of Formulated Meanings	Theme Clusters	**Emergent Theme**
• Student acknowledges that having a good time with friends means they have to spend money • Doing most anything with friends means they have to spend money • There is no negative connotation to spending money because everyone else does it	Peer pressure among friends influences financial decision-making and behaviors.	The social system has a significant influence on financial behavior.
• Family has reinforced the need to save • Siblings and parents play a role in sharing/learning • Family instills lessons that influence present-day financial behaviors	Family influences financial decision-making and behaviors.	
• Getting a job resulted in greater awareness of financial responsibility. • Once you start earning money it re-frames how one values money. • Too much money and not knowing what to do with it can be a bad thing.	Work experience influences financial behavior.	
• The negative behaviors viewed on reality television tend to be discussed. • Positive behaviors are rarely, if at all, mentioned.	People talk about reality television after they view it.	

Influence of Friends on Behavior

Numerous significant statements were found in the interviews related to the influence of friends on financial behavior, formulated into the concept of peer pressure. Sotiropoulous and D'Astous (2012) suggested that overspending can be attributed to social factors, specifically social norms and ties that interact with one another. Notably, the results of their findings confirmed that credit card overspending can be influenced by credit-related norms when individuals are in the context of shared social experiences. Specifically in situations in which they feel as though they are expected to consume at the same level as referent others, but only if they are strongly connected to such individuals. Every respondent interviewed indicated specifically that the element of peer pressure has an influence on how they spend their money. The responses from the participants supported this suggestion. Respondent 5, a 22-year-old male Economics major said:

> Say if they want to go out to a club or they want to go do something, I'm gonna spend money with my friends, to hang out with my friends, so whatever they feel like doing, I'll do it. I'm sure it goes the other way. Whenever they feel like doing a little bit with me too. So the trade-off and hanging out with your friends. Whatever they want to do.

Interestingly, of the five males interviewed, all responded with much more detail in regard to the influence of peer pressure on spending behavior. The five females interviewed also mentioned peer pressure as an influence, but did not detail to the degree of the males. For example, Respondent 4, a 22-year-old female Senior Accounting major said quite succinctly, and typical of the other four female respondents:

> Like they're suggesting things to do, they suggest some things that we should all do, participate in....let's go to the movies. Seeing a movie costs money though.

In contrast, the males went into significantly more detail about peer pressure that was typical among all male respondents. Respondent 6, A 20-year-old Junior Accounting major, who works part-time elaborated:

There's definitely peer pressure when you are wanting to go out, or you're wanting to all go get something to eat. Money is a necessary thing you are going to have to spend to enjoy those social settings, so it's not like I'm going to say yes every time typically. I'm an accounting major. Both my parents are accountants. I would say that I'm fairly responsible with my money. But if you want to go out and enjoy things with friends, you have to spend money. I would say I spend less money, or I am cognizant of how much I'm spending throughout the evening, but definitely other people are spending quite a bit of money. There's nights where I spend more than I wanted to, but typically it's not breaking my bank or anything, so... And there's definitely the peer pressure factor, to answer your question, that if you go out with friends, you're going to spend more money, but it's a thing that you have to personally accept, because sometimes it's necessary to spend money to have a memorable time…there is no negative connotation with going out and spending money, either on food or drinks, or on a girl or et cetera. I think this is an overall social pressure on young people. It's had a negative impact as far as just spending money, though like I said, I don't know if that is a total negative impact, because people do realize that it's to have a good time, or to be with friends, or to look for a mate, or what have you.

Interestingly however, two female respondents specifically indicated that sometimes their friends encourage them to spend money on things they do not want to spend money on. No males interviewed mentioned anything similar.

Respondent 1, a Senior Business Administration major indicated:

I'm very much an introvert, so I tend to not really go out that much. And so, sometimes I feel pressure from my friends to go out to bars and spend a lot of money on alcohol. And that's something I really hate doing. I turned 21 last year and I know it had never been an expense for me. And now, it kind of is because my friends want me to go out with them and drink alcohol, and I don't see the point of spending money on that.

Similarly, Respondent 8, also a Senior Business Administration major indicated:

I would say, for the most part, it's probably going out to bars and stuff. Usually, when I don't feel like spending money, they pull me in and I probably spend money I shouldn't on things I shouldn't be spending money on right now, like alcohol and things like that. Or if I happen to go to the mall with them, they're like, "We're just going to window shop." All of a sudden I have a pretzel and a Victoria's Secret bag in my hand. Things like that will happen. I'm like, "No, you guys, I really need to save for something," and I will visit the mall with them, and it's too late. They will get me like that and acting like, "We should get this." On Halloween we want to match outfits or something like, "Let's get a matching Halloween outfit and tell people let's go." They spend 80 bucks on a Halloween outfit where we could-- I've done a few of those little things that I'm not too bad, but it has happened.

While it is outside the scope of this dissertation, it appears that there might be some potential emerging themes related to gender differences in peer-pressure related spending at least among this sample interviewed. It may be that males have more to say on the topic in general, or an underlying explanation (such as perceived gender roles) may more heavily influence spending in conjunction with or in addition to peer-pressure. Females may be more hesitant to spend money on things that they do not want to spend money on because they may experience peer pressure differently than their male counterparts. In existing financial planning literature, gender has been linked to differences in financial risk tolerance, financial knowledge, investment decisions, and savings strategies (Grable, 2000; Chen & Volpe, 2002; Watson & McNaughton, 2007; Garrison & Gutter, 2010).

Similarly, financial socialization may also play a role in how college students develop their financial values, attitudes, and behaviors. Financial socialization is how young people acquire the standards, values, norms, skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to become functioning consumers in the marketplace (Lueg, Ponder, Beatty, & Capella, 2006; Rettig & Mortenson, 1986). As Fox, Bartholomae, and Gutter (2000) described, financial socialization occurs as skills are developed through life events and interactions. Parents, peers, schools and mass media facilitate these interactions, playing a significant role in consumer socialization (Moschis & Moore, 1984). As revealed as a potential theme in this dissertation, individuals may very well be socialized differently regarding money and financial behaviors depending on their gender (Garrison & Gutter, 2010), and may be susceptible to different peer pressures as a result.

Influence of Family on Financial Behavior

Family has been shown to play a significant role in the development and reinforcement of behaviors through observational learning (Bandura, 1971). Respondents were asked: *How does* *your family influence what you do with your money?* Each respondent interviewed indicated that their family structure had played a significant role in development of not only their behaviors with money, but also the attitudes that developed as a result of familial influence. It appears that family instills the concepts of saving, spending wisely, and investing. Respondent 1, a Senior Business Administration major, indicated that she felt her own mother's experience as one of eight children influenced what she was taught regarding financial behaviors, such as budgeting and saving for an emergency fund:

> My mom was one of eight kids. I'm only one of three, but she kind of carried on the whole saving your money and being very frugal to our family because she experienced having to stretch your money. My family is pretty well off, but my mom has always been very much so save your money in case of emergencies, always have a backup plan, that kind of thing.

Investing was also mentioned as being an important behavior influenced by family, as Respondent 2, a Junior Business Administration major explained:

> They'll (parents) tell me, don't waste it all, and you want to invest and save more than you just recklessly spend. But they don't necessarily influence what I buy as much.

Respondent 2 however, also indicated that while his parents have told him to invest and save his money, that his parents do not necessarily influence what he buys as much. Respondents 2 and 7 indicated that friends seem to have a greater influence on spending behavior than parents. Respondent 7, a male Sports Management Senior details this further:

> I'm not in contact with them as much as I am with my peers and my friends or fiancee, maybe not a lot. But I would say they might give me the money for school since I'm not working and I'm playing sports. I have to have a little bit of gas here and there. So they might influence me and say, "Don't spend this on blah, blah, blah," or, "Here's your money for gas." I would say they influence you a little bit and tell you what you should and shouldn't spend your money on and how to-- maybe they influence me to save a little bit here and there, put five or ten bucks away, each time I'm saving for something. I would say they probably influence me in a way different way than my friends, my peers.

When pressed further to make that distinction clear, he responded:

> I would say the age difference maybe. I'm not thinking of a specific word right now, but I'm trying to think. Maybe it's a peer pressure, maybe peer pressure or something like that. I don't know what exactly.

Collectively, the financial behaviors learned from family appear to be deeply rooted in what parents teach their children and the importance placed on certain behaviors, such as saving, and how they are cultivated and reinforced within the family unity. Further, the information provided from Respondent 2 and Respondent 7 provided an interesting perspective, as it could potentially shed some additional light on how people learn things from their family of origin, and how certain behaviors are reinforced, or not reinforced, as a result of external exposure in a child's social system, such as friends, much like the SCTMC indicates.

According to the respondents, family also imparts valuable financial lessons. Among many respondents, a common thread was that parents were teaching their children that it was not only important to save money, but also to understand the value of work. Respondent 3 is a student-athlete and attends school on scholarship, working over the summers. She elaborates:

> Both my parents are financial advisers. So from a young age we learned to save our allowance and save our money and then buy something that we really want. Other than that, I don't know. While I'm at school I don't work. So I just have a fund that I try to make last for the whole semester as the goal.

The college students in this study were also asked: *What lessons about money did you learn growing up?* In describing the specific lessons learned, the concepts of delaying immediate gratification, exercising diligence in maintaining good finances, and working to earn what you want emerged. Respondent 8 is a student athlete, who credits her father with encouraging her to push herself to reap rewards. Her father demonstrated this by teaching her lessons, especially where money was concerned, so she understood the value of hard work and results. Respondent 8, a Pacific Islander who has an athletic scholarship to school, describes her upbringing:

> I didn't get paid for doing chores as a kid. My dad said payment was food on our plate and a roof over our head. That was our payment. We had to pull weeds, everything any kid would never want to do, but if, let's say, there was something that-- we used to go to-- it's called Ice Palace back home. We used to have a field trip there most of the years in elementary. Kids would probably get money from their parents like, "Here's ten bucks-- buy a hot chocolate or some popcorn, something for fun, a snack for the field trip." But my parents would never just hand me money. I had to either work for it or do something for it. Like, "Go pull extra weeds or do this extra stuff to get the money. It was never just, "Here's ten bucks." I know as a kid I'd say, "That's not fair. So-and-so gets money or so-and-so can do this." My dad would say, "Well, life's not fair. People are saving lives and they don't get paid as much as reality stars. Life's not fair." So I know if I want to do well in life that I'm going to have to work a little extra harder. That's what I was taught as a kid—above and beyond.

Delaying gratification was also mentioned by respondents during the interviews. Delayed gratification means forgoing immediate reward in the present for a greater reward in the future. Respondents were taught by their parents not only how important it is to work hard for what you want, and save carefully, but also that sometimes if you want something you have to wait to get the biggest reward, staying on track. Respondent 2 describes this in terms of an allowance:

> "You get this a week to spend on things, so if you want a big bicycle, you can get that. But then, you're not going to able to use any money for several more weeks or however long." So, they taught me that if I want immediate gratification it'll cost me in the long run because I won't have as much money later on.

Not only do families teach important financial lessons, such as working hard and delaying gratification, a significant lesson learned was watching parents utilize good financial practices, and following a parent's lead in meticulously building a strong financial identity. Respondent 1, a Senior Business Administration major who works part-time, described how her credit and spending have been influenced by watching her mother:

> The only reason I have a credit card is because I want a good credit rating, so I really don't use my credit card very much. I use it and I pay it off because I want to have a good credit rating. My mom has always [been] very adamant on that fact. My mom. I mean, once a week, as I was growing up, she would balance a checkbook at the kitchen table. For a lot of years, my mom didn't work, and so she would be at home a lot. And now, she works, and so I don't see her as much. But my dad was always the one to bring in the

money, and she would always be the one to control the money and decide what to spend on.

Parents were not the only sources in the family cited for learning significant financial lessons. Siblings also played a role in lessons learned according to three respondents. Interestingly, all three respondents who mentioned learning lessons from siblings were all female. Even more interesting, the lessons they learned from their siblings were from their sisters specifically. Respondent 1found these lessons learned meaningful because it shaped how she approached her own finances after watching her sister struggle, deciding it was not something she wanted for herself:

> And probably the biggest (influence) was the mistakes of my older siblings. My sister, she's always been very bad with money. She would never save it. And so, my parents had to help her out a lot when she would get a flat tire or something would happen. I know my parents tried to tell her, "Save your money. Save your money." Seeing it happen and her panicking because she didn't have enough money to fix her car and having to go to my parents was like, I don't want to have to do that, so I try not to make the same mistakes that she has.

Differences between sisters, such as being a saver vs. a spender was evidenced by Respondent 3, a female Business Administration major:

> I think the saving was a big one for me. My older sister and I, we would always get the same allowance. She would save it and then buy a lot of things with it, and I would tend to spend it on one thing. I guess that was a big lesson.

Respondent 10, a Senior Human Resources major with a part-time job, mentioned that the lesson she learned from her sister helped her streamline her finances into a manageable process in addition to learning on her as she goes along:

> My sister kind of taught me 7, 20, 10. You spend 70, then you save 20, and you then you tithe on 10 sort of thing. That's another process I've learned. Kind of everything else, I just kind of learned on my own. Just doing it and experiencing it.

Three respondents also indicated how getting a job, in addition to family observations and lessons, influenced their financial behaviors:

Respondent 9, a Hispanic Senior, majoring in Marketing and working part-time discussed how his early entrepreneurial endeavors set the stage for his desire to make money and eventually foray into a career in personal financial planning:

> Growing up I was in middle school, I would sell candy and put money aside to buy stuff. Through that process, after I went into high school, I got a job. I started making more money. I always wanted to save money. So I got into financial services, and I got licensed. Then I graduated from high school. I did financial planning for almost two years.

It is not uncommon growing up, until you get that first job, and you are earning your first paycheck to value and understand money on a more intrinsic level. Respondent 6, a white Junior majoring in Accounting detailed this meaning further:

> Whenever you're a kid, I guess you don't really value money. You just see it as a thing that parents use to buy you the things you want. Whether that's on cars, or the newest toy, or whatever. But when you're going up through adolescence, maybe you understand a little bit more that things are a little pricey and stuff. I think that you only get a real realization of what money is, and how hard it is, and what kind of a scarce resource it can be, when you have your own job. For me, that was when I turned 16. You work for minimum wage, and my parents at least gave me a little responsibility as far as paying for my own things, paying for my own gas - small things that were definitely like regular expenditures, and that teaches you how to handle money.

Respondent 6 indicated that a first job can teach you how to handle money. Alternatively, Respondent 8 described her situation in which her making money resulted in her spending money carelessly:

> When I started making it (money), I was like, "Whoa, This is awesome!" I was eating out all the time. I was going out. I was shopping, buying cute clothes and bags and shoes. I saved up, but not the way I should have with the amount of money I was making. I was spending it too easily. I think after I experienced that, I realized that I'm not going to always be 19, 20-years-old, being able to spend it any way I want. That's when I started backing down more.

Together, these influences from family, siblings, and work represent aspects of the ways social systems build and reinforce financial behaviors. Values and attitudes begin to take shape, and those are translated into financial behaviors as financial identities are developed. Social networks all contribute to the learning process of individuals and reinforce those beliefs.

Conversations with Friends and Family about Reality Television

According to Bandura (1971), individuals learn from observations from their social networks of peers, family, and friends, in addition to the media. These networks often spread information about new ideas, thoughts, and behaviors, and tend to reinforce values (Bandura, 2001). Not only are college students, their friends, and their families watching reality television, but they are also discussing events on the programs after they have been viewed. In an effort to explore this perspective, college students who were interviewed were asked questions related to conversations they may have had with friends or family related to things that have happened on reality television they have watched. Nine of the 10 respondents indicated that they talk about what happened on the programs they watch. Respondent 5, a 22-year old Economics major who watches the *Jersey Shore* and *Dating Naked* offered the following insight:

> We talk about what we would do in the situation, is the situation even relevant, or if it would have happened if it wasn't being filmed on TV.

Respondent 2, who watches Storage Wars with regularity, offered a more specific example:

> We'll talk about if we would ever make that kind of a risk and buy something similar to how they bought it and expect to be able to actually make any money off of it, or whether or not we think it was a dumb decision when they made it.

Calvert (2009) described the appeal of reality television, in the context of mediated voyeurism as a “moment of truth” type of attraction. Meaning, people watch reality television for what Calvert calls the “pulse pounding moments” in which viewers can then speculate about what they would do if they were faced with the same types of heart-racing situations. It appears, from the college students interviewed, that this helps substantiate Calvert’s claims that people not only like to obtain some kind of truth or commonality by watching a particular reality program, but also tend to watch programs that require them to speculate their own reactions if the content of reality program in question became "their reality."

Research Question 3 – How are the Financial Behaviors of College Students Shaped as a Result of Watching Reality Television Programming?

This section helps answer the sub-research question: *How are the financial behaviors or college students shaped as a result of watching reality television programming?* This section discusses how reality television is perceived by the respondents to have an influence on their friends and how reality television has been perceived by the college students interviewed to change their own spending behaviors. Table 4.6 provides a visual demonstration of what is discussed. The table begins describing the formulated meanings of each developing theme cluster. The theme clusters are then identified, followed by the emergent theme. The emergent theme for this section is that reality television results in perceptions of behavior change. This means specifically that the theme clusters for this section include how reality television is perceived to influence friends and how reality television is perceived to have changed spending behaviors.

Table 4.7 Examples of How the Third Research Question, *How are the Financial Behaviors of College Students Shaped as a Result of Reality Television Programming?*, was Explored from Different Clusters of Themes and Formulated Meanings

Examples of Formulated Meanings	Theme Clusters	**Emergent Theme**
• Friends buy things because they want to have the things the stars on the shows have • Friends want to emulate, mimic, or replicate what is seen to be like the stars • The shows encouraged similar behavior because it was seen as normal, accepted by society, and the "thing to do"	How reality television is perceived to influence friends.	Reality television viewership results in perceptions of behavior change.
• College students can draw comparisons to the behaviors of reality television celebrities in their own spending behaviors • Reality television has the ability to encourage saving, but a greater ability to encourage spending • Even if you do not feel influenced by reality television yourself, you may be influenced by your friends that are	How reality television is perceived to have changed spending behaviors.	

How Reality Television is Perceived to have an Influence on Friends

In Leone's 2006 article, "Reality Television and Third-Person Perception" the students sampled for the study responded that they believe reality television negatively affects others more than it does themselves. All 10 college students interviewed for this study reported observing negative financial behaviors among friends that watch reality television. A striking similarity emerged among the responses in which the respondents reported that friends who are influenced by reality television are spending more money to outwardly portray similarities to the reality television stars. As many individuals may identify with the people they see on reality television shows (Christenson & Ivancin, 2006), it may make sense that they align their financial behaviors to mimic the celebrities.

In essence, most respondents suggested that their friends buy things because they want to have the same things the stars on the reality television shows have. The respondents elaborated: Respondent 4, is a female who primarily watches the programs *The Bad Girls Club* and *Braxton Family Values*, noticed a trend among her friends:

> Some of the reality shows, I think, some of my friends, they try to get things that the stars on the TV has. Like different purses or earrings and things. Because the stars have it.

Similarly, Respondent 2, a male who only watches *Storage Wars* with any regularity has noticed among his group of friends similar behavior, citing the appeal of wanting to be like the people of reality television shows as a motivating factor:

> I suppose, occasionally, you'll see a friend or family get one of those stupid $50 t-shirts, just because the people on reality shows will buy that kind of stuff. There's an appeal where you want to try to emulate these people because you're jealous or envious of what they have, so you're going to try to buy the same things they have, even though they might be a $1,000 pair of shoes or something stupid that you really shouldn't buy because they're not worth it, but you just want to try to be like the person or people.

When the reality television program *The Jersey Shore,* premiered on MTV, it featured the lifestyle colloquially known as the "Guido/Guidette" lifestyle. In the show, the defining characteristics of this lifestyle were known as "GTL," an abbreviation for lifestyle requirements known as "gym, tan, laundry." This, in essence, meant that to be attractive when you go out, you have to go to the gym, go tanning, and make sure you have fresh laundry. Respondent 5 is a male from New York and described this phenomenon as it related to his friends and the influence on their spending:

> They're buying all this crazy stuff, all these random weird shirts, all kinds of stuff…picked up on a trend out here. See I'm from New York, so the Jersey shore is like--I'm like close to it, I can relate to it…everybody started with getting into the shirts and getting into the whole Guido. Everyone goes to the gym, everybody works out, everybody cares about how they look, their appearance…we started to go to more clubs.

Another respondent described how a friend aspired so greatly to look like a reality television celebrity that she sought out opportunities to find ways to mimic her appearance. Respondent 8 indicated:

> I have one friend that if she sees something a celebrity wears, she will look it up or look up something similar - try to mimic an outfit or makeup or something. So like Kim Kardashian's makeup, how she does it, I know that influences her a lot to buy the certain brands that she buys to mimic the look.

These experiences captured by the respondents are meaningful because it evidences how reality television has an influence on individuals, because their spending patterns emerge as a result of wanting to emulate, mimic, or replicate the lifestyle or an individual being presented on the shows. As Calvert indicated (2009), reality television shows, like the Jersey Shore or *Keeping up with the Kardashians* are "intended" to provide a depiction into the real-life situations of real people. The truth presented in these shows, as Calvert described, is not entirely realistic, but contained in a mediated, or controlled environment. However, college students who watch reality television appear to embrace this depiction of spending behavior (e.g., spending money on makeup to look like Kim Kardashian, or spending a lot of money on a particular brand of shirt like the male characters on *The Jersey Shore*), as normal or generally accepted as part of society, because to them, it is reality. It is what they see on television, it is what their friends do, and thus, it must be what is accepted in society in terms of spending.

How Reality Television is Perceived to have Changed Spending Behaviors

A significant theme that emerged from the interviews with college students is that they all noticed that reality stars have very poor spending habits. According to the respondents, the most problematic behavior observed from watching reality television stars is that the stars tend to spend money freely or without thought, with little regard to a budget. Respondent 3, a female who typically watches *Big Brother, American Idol* and *The Voice* shared a similar sentiment in regard to her own spending:

> For example, I went to the mall this week and I bought something. I didn't really look at the price tags. I just found out how much they were when I got to the cash (register). It doesn't bother me to spend money. If I want something within reason I'll probably just buy it and not really think about it that much. My parents give me a couple grand each semester to spend…so I usually use that to do my shopping. But then I also have my credit card that my parents pay. But I don't really shop that much with that. That's more for groceries and gas and that kind of stuff. So yeah, my shopping money is money my parents gave me, mostly.

Respondent 3, a student-athlete on scholarship is supported mostly by her parents, but does work in the summer to contribute to her spending money. Her parents are successful and wealthy based upon her description, and money was never an issue growing up. Respondent 8, is also a student-athlete on scholarship, but with somewhat of a different background. She considers her upbringing to be “well-off” but her parents never just “gave” her money, like that of Respondent 3. Respondent 8 described learning a valuable lesson being self-supportive with her finances and learning to reign in her spending, something not typical of reality television stars with endless supplies of money:

> But definitely my first real job, I spent way too much money on things I did not need. I think when I got my tax return, and I saw how much I got and made and my mom saw how much I made. That wasn't even all that I took. I didn't even count all the tips I made. My mom said, "Wow, you made a lot of money. Where did it all go?" I thought about it and I'm like, "That's a good question. Where did it all go?" I think if anything, my savings have changed because I'm older now, and I've learned more about what I want in life - not just spending. I'm a person who's about to graduate from college. I'm not going to be a college student anymore. I can't really spend like a college student would. I think it's just because of my growth that my savings have become better than when I was 19 years old, 20 years old.

Spending behaviors, as described by Respondent 3 and 8, like that of the spending behaviors of reality television stars, can come with or without consequences. As Respondent 3 demonstrated, she is mostly supported by her family and has ample supply of money to spend primarily as she pleases, without any consequence, meaning the supply did not run out. Respondent 8, however, when she earned a lot of money, she spent it much like the same way the reality television stars do, except her consequence is that she had nothing of value to show for her expenditures, and certainly did not have an endless supply of money.

These comparisons that students can make in their own spending to that of reality television stars provides interesting insight as to the acknowledgement of poor spending habits that could potentially be reinforced by watching reality television. When asked how their spending or savings behaviors have been directly influenced by watching reality television, the following responses were given. Respondent 5, the regular viewer of *The Jersey Shore* indicated without hesitation that watching *The Jersey Shore* resulted in an increase in spending:

> It definitely became an increase in spending, with the club and expensive drink prices, expensive covers-- bring them on, expensive clothing. Everything is more expensive because that was the thing to do it. Everything's more expensive, so I started saving less. The first paycheck I got-- my first, like kind of big paycheck was about $500, and I spent probably $400 on new clothes. Probably not the smartest idea, but definitely started saving less.

Respondents even acknowledged that even though what is being presented on reality television is an altered view of reality, it did not stop him or his friends from emulating what they were seeing on television in terms of their spending behavior. Respondent 6, a male Junior Accounting major shared the following:

> I think you tend to think that you're supposed to spend money on luxury items. Especially with the Jersey Shore phenomenon that went on, a lot of younger people thought it was cool to outrageously spend money at bars or something. And I had several friends that I've seen with $100 bar tabs, and I'm just like, "Why did you do that, there's no reason to do that." I think it does have an effect as far as social learning. They'll care less about money because they see people on television doing that. Those people are some of the more popular people in modern culture, so they view it as okay. So I think it definitely has an effect. It's hard what you put into your mind. If you're watching that, and you think it's funny or you're getting some entertainment value out of it, then you don't think about that being negative in your life because you're just like "Well, this is funny or entertaining, so why don't I do that? People will like me."…At the end of the night you've had a good time, maybe you've talked to the girl you like or whatever. Then you go back up to the bar and it's a $150 tab, and you're going, "Oh, crap." Well-- well, that's what happens. Everyone does this, and that's what they see on reality TV so that's fine, that's not a big deal. That's just a necessary thing that everyone does and even if it's breaking my budget, it breaks their budgets too, but they just keep quiet. Fiscally, it gives you the impression that there is less actual responsibility than there is. Whether it's going out, whether it's buying expensive or extravagant things - like you'll see on the Kardashians or even on Pawn Stars, they'll buy some kind of ridiculous things for themselves - it gives you an altered view of reality that's not consistent with the average person.

Respondent 8 also provided an interesting observation. She indicated that while she does not necessarily feel that she is directly influenced by reality television, she has been influenced by friends who watch reality television and thus in turn has influenced her spending. Bandura (1971) suggested that behavior is not only influenced by media directly, but also that an individual's connection to social systems mediates the relationship between media influence and behavior. Respondent 8 demonstrated:

> I didn't work until probably my junior year. That was a year ago. I started working at... I don't like saying this, but I worked at Tilted Kilt for a while. That was the first time I actually had big bucks coming my way-- a lot more money than I was used to than the 50

> bucks every once in a while my parents used to give me. So I was a lot more willing to buy big item purchases that I shouldn't have. That friend that I was telling you about, that would buy the makeup. Any celebrities like Kim Kardashian, anyone you can think of, that those items that they use them, she would go look for that at Sephora. I wasn't really a big makeup person. But once I started working and had money, I spent probably close to 250 bucks on makeup because of her. Because she said like-- not because of her, but because she knew what she was talking about-- the good items to buy and stuff, "This is what they use." She shows me tutorials of makeup, like makeovers on YouTube. Kim Kardashian was actually one of the tutorials.

College students interviewed for this dissertation indicated that reality television is perceived, based upon their experiences, to have changed their spending behaviors. At the outset, college students can readily draw comparisons of their own financial spending behaviors to the similarities in the seemingly careless or free-spending behaviors of reality television stars. It appears across respondents that while reality television might potentially have the ability to encourage saving, it appears to a greater ability to encourage spending. Further, even if students do not feel influenced by reality television themselves, they acknowledge that they may be inadvertently influenced by friends that are.

Research Question 4-How has Reality Television Influenced College Students' Meaning of Money?

This section describes how reality television has influenced the respondents' meaning of money. Table 4.7 provides a visual demonstration of what is discussed. The table begins describing the formulated meanings of the theme cluster for this section, which is how reality television influenced the respondents' meaning of money. The emergent theme follows which indicates that reality television influences the meaning of money.

Table 4.8 Examples of How the Fourth Research Question, *How has Reality Television Influences College Students' Meaning of Money?*, was Explored from Different Clusters of Themes and Formulated Meanings

Examples of Formulated Meanings	Theme Clusters	**Emergent Theme**
• Outward appearances matter • If you lose the meaning of money you do not value it as much and spend more • Excess money should be spent to help others and not on frivolous things • Making poor life decisions can negatively influence your financial outcome • Making lots of money comes with lots of responsibility and if money is managed poorly it can disappear • Reality television does not give an accurate portrayal of what happens in real life, but some college students emulate that lifestyle in their spending	How reality television influenced the respondents' meaning of money.	Reality television influences the meaning of money.

How Reality Television Influenced Respondents' Meaning of Money

One of the themes that emerged from the interviews with the respondents is that reality television also had an influence on their meaning of money. The college students interviewed were asked to elaborate on how their meaning of money has been influenced by watching reality television. Respondent 10 suggested that it influenced her from a lifestyle perspective:

> Probably just growing up and watching that, you just want to be able to present yourself better in public. Having nicer things and not just being a scrub everyday. So, I think that kind of influences because how they carry themselves and they make sure they look decent and get good products. You know what I'm saying? And that perspective of looking nice, more so. Or even having a healthier lifestyle, whether you try to eat good and not just blow money on Taco Bell or something. They just spend it on healthier stuff, which is more expensive.

Respondent 1 and 2 spoke to how their meaning of the value of money evolved from their observations. Respondent 1 surmised that if she had an excess of money she would be inclined to help other people, rather than spend money frivolously. She explains:

> I don't think that they're spending their money correctly. And so, I think it has influenced the way I think it should be spent. So, instead of what they're doing with their excess of money, if I had that I would help other people.

Respondent 2 shared an interesting observation from his viewership of reality television and the influence it has imparted on him:

> Yeah, because that lets you know that people will always have more money than you, and that as you get more money you stop valuing it as much, you kind of just throw it around.

As mentioned earlier, many respondents felt that the reality television stars spent money freely with little consequence. However, other financial messages were received by three of the students interviewed, and these lessons learned by watching reality television seemed to serve as as a cautionary tale in fiscal responsibility. Respondent 10, a female, shared an example:

> …A show like *Teen Mom* kind of explains, like "Hey, if you put yourself in harder situations, or you don't go to college, or if you have a kid before, then you're going to put

> yourself in some financial stress and it's going to be harder to get out of it." Because I know a lot of people my age have kids, and I couldn't imagine, because they're doing their best that they can, but a lot of times they have to have help from their parents. When I get older and get married, I don't want help from my parents. At times I'm sure it'll be nice, but not always. I feel like a lot of kids that have kids are dependent.

Students also noticed that earning a lot of money can cause people to become careless with their money. Respondent 7 observed this kind of financial irresponsibility among famous and wealthy individuals:

> By reality TV, I've noticed some instances where some even athletes or some Hollywood people have lost all of their money and not managed it very well. That hits you and makes you realize that if these people aren't the best at managing their money, and that's important for me to do. It hits you and makes you realize that those people, with as much money as they are making, you can spend and you can mess it up.

While people can earn a tremendous amount of wealth as an athlete or a celebrity, the average person can also be at risk of mismanaging money if the conditions are right. Respondent 8 found herself in that position after she started making a lot more money than she was used to at her job, and then spending it carelessly and having nothing to show for it. Respondent 8 discussed:

> These people buy things that ordinary people can't buy in their lifetime probably, like helicopters. But in a way it almost makes me appreciate things more, to be honest. I'm happy when I can buy maybe a $50 jacket or top or something cute that I know I worked hard for, that I've done something to earn this money, to earn this product for. I don't know, there's something about, like my dad taught me, to work for something that you want. So I'd rather be doing that. Sure it'd be great to be making lots of money and buying big ticket items, but today most of these people that are famous, they end up in debt too, because they don't know how to handle their money. Like me, too much was thrown at me at one time working at Tilted Kilt.

These insights shared are meaningful because they represent how reality television has the power to influence an individual’s very thoughts about money and their perceptions thereof. What is even more astounding is that while some of the bad financial behaviors (e.g., increased spending) as mentioned previously in the dissertation were attributed to perceived changes in financial behavior as a result of watching television, the actual perceptions of how the influence of the meaning of money has been influenced by reality television, could in some aspects be considered positive (e.g., acknowledging that celebrities make bad financial decisions and do not want to make those same mistakes).

Summary

The results of this study have revealed that viewership of reality television among college students has an influence on many different aspects of a college student's life, as evidenced by the emerging themes. Table 4.8 presents a final thematic map that provides a summary of the reality television viewers interviewed in terms of what reality shows they watch, where they watch, who they watch with, and why they watch reality television. Further, each of the research questions with their emergent themes and theme clusters are described.

Table 4.9 The Final Thematic Map

Summary of the Reality Television Viewers	Research Question 1: What financial behaviors do college students observe from watching reality television?
Reality Television Shows Watched • *Keeping up with the Kardashians* • *Bad Girls Club* • *House Hunters* • *Property Brothers* • *Love It or List It* • *Storage Wars* • *Big Brother* • *Survivor* • *American Idol* • *The Voice* • *Braxton Family Values* • *Jersey Shore* • *Teen Mom* • *Dating Naked* • *The Bachelor* • *The Bachelorette* • *The Amazing Race* • *Pawn Stars* • *American Pickers* • *Dancing with the Stars* **Where Reality Television is Watched** • Home • In the dorm room • A friend’s house • A boyfriend/girlfriend’s house **Who Reality Television is Watched With** • Alone • With friends • With family • Sometimes alone, sometimes with friends/family **Why Reality Television is Watched** • Entertainment value • Interest in another person’s lifestyle • Relating to the premise of a show	**Emergent Theme: Reality Television Informs Financial Behavior in Many Ways** **Theme Clusters:** **Attitudes Toward Reality Television Stars** • Reality stars/celebrities are: stupid, risky, “trashy”, or “bimbos” • Respondents are embarrassed to admit they watch the shows; seemingly voyeuristic and judgmental • If respondents had that same kind of money, who is to say they would not spend it the same way the reality television stars do **Good Financial Behavior Perceptions** • Reality television stars give money to charity • Reality television stars use their fame for charity • Some reality television stars communicate real estate investment and business development savvy **Bad Financial Behavior Perceptions** • Reality stars spend excessively on nothing of importance or value • They buy what they do not need • Reality stars spend a lot of money on nothing in particular, like eating out and going to clubs **Product Endorsement Perceptions** • Name brands blurred out get attention • Respondents notice that products are featured prominently on shows and that celebrities endorse products outside of the shows • Shows market their own brand-specific merchandise

Research Question 2: How do college students' interactions with their social system in regards to reality television influence financial behavior?

Emergent Theme: The Social System Influences Financial Behavior

Theme Clusters:

Influence of Friends on Financial Behavior
- Peer pressure is a major motivator in spending money
- Sometimes people do not want to spend money but they do at the behest of their friends

Influence of Family on Financial Behavior
- Family generally instills the concepts of saving, spending wisely, and investing
- Parents and siblings both teach lessons about money

Influence of Work on Financial Behavior
- Getting a job changed money viewpoints and behaviors

Conversations about Reality Television
- Discuss negative occurrences on shows

Research Question 3: How are the financial behaviors of college students shaped as a result of reality television programming?

Emergent Theme: Reality Television Viewership Results in Perceptions of Behavior Change

How Reality Television is Perceived to Influence Friends
- Friends buy things because they want to have the things the stars on the shows have
- Friends want to emulate, mimic, or replicate what is seen to be like the stars
- The shows encouraged similar behavior because it was seen as normal, accepted by society, and the "thing to do"

How Reality Television is Perceived to have Changed Spending Behaviors
- College students can draw comparisons to the behaviors of reality television celebrities in their own spending behaviors
- Reality television has the ability to encourage saving, but a greater ability to encourage spending
- Even if you do not feel influenced by reality television yourself, you may be influenced by your friends that are

Research Question 4: How has reality television influenced college students' meaning of money?

Emergent Theme: Reality Television Influences the Meaning of Money

How Reality Television Influenced the Respondents' Meaning of Money
- Outward appearances matter
- If you lose the meaning of money you do not value it as much and spend more
- Excess money should be spent to help others and not on frivolous things
- Making poor life decisions can negatively influence your financial outcome

Research Question 4: How has reality television influenced college students' meaning of money?

How Reality Television Influencd the Respondents' Meaning of Money

- Making lots of money comes with lots of responsibility and if money is managed poorly it can disappear
- Reality television does not give an accurate portrayal of what happens in real life, but some college students emulate that lifestyle in their spending

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Using the Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication (SCTMC) as a guiding theoretical lens, this qualitative study was designed to explore the central research question of: *What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of reality television viewership on financial behavior by college students?* This chapter discusses how each emergent theme contributes to the development of literature on the subject. Implications are addressed as well as limitations of the study and directions for future research.

Summary of the Reality Television Viewer

The two primary screening criteria for this research were that respondents were required to be college students and viewers of reality television. From the sample selected, the researcher was able to put into context a typical profile of the college student who views reality television. The types of reality television programming watched among respondents varied. Some respondents watched a broad variety of reality television shows, whereas others watched one or two shows. Respondents watched alone, or with the company of others, or sometimes both. The college students interviewed also reported watching reality television at multiple locations, most often at home. Consistently, however, all respondents watched shows that appealed to them on some level. The most commonly cited reasons for watching reality television were that reality television provides entertainment value and that it satisfies the interest in looking at another person's lifestyle. These findings are interesting as they are consistent with previous research linking reality television to voyeuristic tendencies in viewers (Baruh, 2010). Baruh (2010) suggested that reality television might be viewed as a guilty pleasure, giving way to a "so bad it is good" attitude or mentality. This is a potential concern because as the voyeuristic tendencies are satisfied, students are bombarded with information that appears to influence not only dating behavior and substance use as noted in previous literature, but also, based on the results of this research, financial behaviors.

How Reality Television Informs Financial Behavior

A focus of this study was to explore what college students observe while watching reality television. What financial behaviors are observed? How does this information provide meaning and structure to what is considered good and bad financial behavior?

During the interviews, attitudes toward reality television stars in situational reality programs (e.g., *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *The Jersey Shore*) were markedly unfavorable. Reality television stars on these types of shows were characterized by the respondents as stupid or “trashy”. One respondent admitted to being embarrassed when it was discovered once by someone else that she was watching reality television. The college students interviewed maintain the attitude that the stars spend lavishly, without real evidence of necessity or value. However, two respondents indicated that perhaps if they were in the same position, those spending behaviors may be seemingly normal and natural and not excessive by definition.

When asked if they had seen the reality television stars do anything with their money that is good, there was a generally lackluster response, with most respondents having a difficult time pinpointing good financial behaviors. It was clear, however, that the respondents noticed that the reality television stars do give money to charity, which was seemingly viewed as a good financial behavior or use of their money. Similarly, respondents pointed out that reality television stars are able to use their fame or status for good financial purposes, namely using that fame to raise money for charities. Some reality television celebrities were credited with using good real estate investment strategies to grow their money or making good purchasing decisions to build their businesses featured on reality television programs. In terms of bad financial behavior, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that reality television stars spend frivolously and excessively on things they do not need and on nothing of value.

Also of importance to this study is that respondents noticed products when they were featured prominently on the shows they watched. Even more interesting, on the occasion a brand name was blurred out on a program, is that it created an opportunity to draw more attention to the brand that was blurred out. Respondents appeared very aware that the shows consistently use product placements and endorsements, though there was little indication from the respondents that they specifically purchased a product just because it was featured on a show in some way.

The findings revealed in this section help describe what college students observe in reality television programs from a financial perspective. Reality television, and the way it informs financial behavior, helps bring some meaning and structure as to how attitudes and information are translated into financial perceptions and how those perceptions might shape financial behaviors among the college students themselves.

Influence of the Social System on Financial Behavior

Bandura (1971) suggested that behavior is not only influenced by media directly, but also that an individual's connection to social systems mediates the relationship between media influence and behavior. These social systems also reinforce values and provide motivation to perform what has been adopted in thought or behavior (Bandura, 2001).

Based upon the results from the analysis, family and friends influence a college student's financial behavior in a number of ways. Among the social structure and system of friends, peer pressure was weighted heavily as a major influence cited by most respondents. It was also revealed during interviews that even if a student does not want to spend money on something, they are motivated to do so anyway because they feel that is what their friends want them to do.

Family generally instills the concepts of saving, spending wisely, and investing based on responses. Additionally, siblings serve as a source of influence in both negative and positive ways. Getting a job also changed money viewpoints and behaviors, with respondents citing learning a greater understanding of the value of money as a primary reason. Respondents also indicated that after viewing reality television, it is not uncommon to discuss the occurrences on the programs, specifically the negative and more dramatic events that take place. Based on the responses from the interviews, college students, in their conversations with friends and family focus on the perceived negative behaviors of the reality television stars, ultimately supporting the idea that reality television has a limited ability to evoke positive emotion among viewers (Nabi, Stitt, Halford, & Finnerty, 2006).

Perceived Behavior Changes as a Result of Watching Reality Television

The study explored how the financial behaviors of college students are shaped as a result of watching reality television. College students not only discussed how they felt reality television had influenced their friends' financial behaviors, but also how they felt reality television had influenced their own financial behaviors. First, the college students in this study were asked specifically how they felt reality television viewership has influenced behavior change in their friends. Respondents noticed some behavior changes in friends, notably that friends buy things because they either (a) want to have the things that the stars of the reality shows have or (b) wish to emulate, mimic, or replicate what they see to be, in a way, like the stars themselves. Respondent 6, a 20-year-old male, explored the social learning aspects of this kind of observed behavior among friends:

> I think that it's socially reinforced when you see the pop culture stars, whoever it is, Pauly D (of Jersey Shore) or whoever on television either buying ridiculous things, or spending money extravagantly, or being at three different clubs in a night and buying drinks the whole night, dancing with the girls and buying them drinks. When you observe that social

> behavior and you see that, one, they're getting paid to do that; two, that people tend to think that they're pretty cool, and trendsetters, et cetera. It teaches you to see them as a role model and use them as a model for your behavior at times. It doesn't mean in every part of your life, but when you're going out and everything, you want to model the crazy antics that you see on reality television because those are seen as fun, people enjoy them, people talk about them on Twitter all the time, or seen as entertainment value. Everyone wants to be popular so the social norm that's developed, I think, is to spend so much money that you're either really drunk and stupid and funny, or use that as something that makes you look superior to people in general so that you look like a - I don't want to say a television star - so that you look like a superior party, or what have you - an Alpha male or female.

Bandura (2001) cautions that televised representations of social realities reflect ideologies in their portrayal of human nature, social relations, and the norms and structure of society, giving the televised images the appearance of authenticity as to the true state of human affairs and interaction. This observation is important because it demonstrates the susceptibility of the demographic of college students to what is transmitted through the media.

Second, the students interviewed for this study shared the ways in which they feel watching reality television had influenced their own financial behavior. The greatest aspect of financial behavior that was seemingly influenced by reality television as gathered from the responses was spending behavior. The college students interviewed were able to draw comparisons to the behaviors of reality television celebrities in their own spending behaviors, such as spending frivolously on unnecessary things. Given the earlier findings of this study regarding the overwhelming strength of peer pressure on financial behavior in a social context, it appears that direct media influence from reality television viewership, coupled with shared referential social experiences, seems to influence financial behavior. Another finding emerged from the interviews, indicating that while reality television has a greater ability to encourage spending, it also possesses the ability to encourage saving. Respondent 1, a 22-year-old female shared an example:

> Sometimes when I watch HGTV shows, I think about the future and buying a house and how I don't have enough money to do that. I definitely think when I watch the home improvement shows that I kind of think into the future and how I'm going to have to pay for those things if I want them. And so, it encourages me to save more.

Further, it appears that even if you do not feel influenced by reality television yourself, you may unknowingly be influenced by your friends who are viewers. Respondent 8, a female 23-year-old Senior shared this meaningful observation:

> I want to say I'm more influenced by the people around me than television probably. But I'm sure that some of those people might be influenced by television. So maybe not knowing- that I'm influenced by television.

This supports Bandura's idea that the effect of the media could potentially be entirely socially mediated, meaning that people who have had no exposure to the media (e.g., a specific reality show program) can be influenced by individuals who have had the exposure to the media, themselves.

Given that people are more likely to identify with characters similar to themselves and, therefore, more likely to be influenced by them (Bandura, 1961), it is reasonable to expect college students to model their behaviors from individuals they observe from reality television. It is also reasonable that these behaviors can be transmitted by others (e.g., friends, family, peers, colleagues) directly or indirectly through a student's connection to his or her social system.

How Reality Television Influences the Meaning of Money

A meaningful finding that emerged is that college students live for today, and not tomorrow. Respondent 7 said it best:

> The age difference, we're a little-- college-- a little more careless, more in the moment rather than thinking about, "What's better for me tomorrow," or something or, "What am I going to need money for tomorrow?"

This idea of living for today, and not tomorrow, certainly applies to the meaning college students give to money. In general, the students acknowledged that going to college and getting a job have value, but also reiterated that money does not mean overall happiness with life. The college students interviewed reported that money, while a necessity to live and meet basic needs, also translates to being able to experience things. Most often reported was going out with friends, having adventures, and enjoying life. The responses indicated that sometimes the value of the experience is worth the money spent. It appears that overall financial responsibility is viewed as important, but more so in the future than in college.

Although reality television does not give an accurate portrayal of what happens in real life, some college students tend to emulate that lifestyle in their spending. Outward appearances in college matter, and obtaining that image appears to be of great importance according to respondents. Reality television reinforces the need to fit in, and in essence, compete with your peers. These findings support the suggestion that behavior is not simply the result of the environment and the person, just as the environment is not simply the result of the person and behavior (Glanz et. al, 2002), further supported by the model of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001). Personal determinants, behavioral determinants, and environmental determinants all play a role in how behavior emerges, and in the context of SCTMC, how the media further informs these interactions. Unfortunately, the pursuit of emulating the lifestyle of a reality television star appears that it leads college students to believe that their actions are without consequence, as Respondent 6 describes:

> I know a lot of friends that have massive student loan debt - and that's another issue altogether, and you don't see that in reality television - but it's something that they don't think about. They don't think about, "Oh when I graduate I'm going to have to pay a bunch of money." because it's not something that people in reality television ever worry about is money, or just a lot of times on television in general, so it's something they don't think about there. I personally have no credit card debt, but I know a lot of college

> students have once they get their hands on a credit card, which is rare anymore. I know girls that have problems with shopping that have credit card debt. That can just be a way for them to get things they want, or the things they perceive that they need to do to meet those social norms or to be like people on reality television. They all just use the card at free will, and they don't realize that it is money and that it's actually going to be a lot more money if you don't pay it immediately. I think some people just automatically try to find the means to do what they want, they don't think through the consequences. I think reality television has that consequences that there really are no consequences for their actions typically - fiscally or otherwise - so people don't think through those things when they don't observe that happening, and see that through social learning that those things do occur, those consequences happen.

The college students interviewed indicated that perhaps when you have so much money to spend, you lose the value and meaning of that money. Similarly, they viewed that if you do have excess money, instead of spending it on frivolous things that are not needed, it should be spent to help others. Remarkably, two important lessons from watching reality television were acknowledged: (a) making poor life decisions in general can negatively influence your financial outcome (e.g., teen pregnancy observed from watching *Teen Mom*) and (b) making lots of money comes with responsibility, and if not used wisely, it can disappear. Interestingly, a recent study (Kearney & Levine, 2014) was conducted to observe the influence of the reality television program *16 and Pregnant* (the precursor to the *Teen Mom* spin-off on MTV), on teen birth rates. The study ultimately indicated that teen pregnancy rates dropped as a result of viewership of this reality program, suggesting that consequences from poor life decisions are in fact recognized by viewers.

Based on the findings, watching reality television appears to have an influence on perceived financial behavior changes for the individuals interviewed and also has an observable influence on those within that person's social system. Moreover, an individual can belong to more than one classification of reality television viewer and/or classification of program viewership preference and still be influenced by reality television. Most importantly however, the research found that those who watch more situational type shows, such as *Keeping up with the Kardashians* and *The Jersey Shore* tend to be more influenced by reality television than viewers of talent-based reality programs (e.g., *American Idol, The Voice)* or contest-based programs (e.g., *Survivor, Big Brother).* This is evidenced by the examples given by the respondents in relation to their observations during the interviews. There were no consistent similarities found or references among viewers of the contest or talent-based programs, in terms of observed financial messages, but there was significant consistency among those who watched situational programming. It appears that it may be the platform of a particular reality television program that supports the transmission of financial messages in a different way. Talent-based programs, such as *The Voice* or *Dancing with the* Stars, do not depict the stars of the show in a situational way, meaning that their day-to-day lives and their respective behaviors, financial or otherwise, are not chronicled. This is a significant finding as it indicates that situational type programming has potentially the greatest influence on financial behavior, more so than other types of reality television programming. Further, the research found that college students watch reality television because they are interested in some aspect of a particular program, whether it is for entertainment purposes or from a more voyeuristic standpoint, in gaining insight into another type of lifestyle.

People are greatly influenced by their peers, family, colleagues, and the media (Bandura, 2001). This study indicates that college students are learning lessons about how money is spent from reality television and that those values are also being reinforced, motivated, and shared by their respective social systems. According to the interviewees, spending money in college is viewed as necessary to live the perceived preferred lifestyle experience of college, and college students will spend money in pursuit of that experience. It is multi-faceted as it is viewed as a matter of not only keeping up with their peers, but also not sacrificing or compromising any experience. College students are seemingly aware that it is important to save money, but justify their spending because they "live for today," rather than for tomorrow.

The results of this study suggest several implications. The first implication is that it appears that watching reality television may contribute to the perceptions that spending money like reality television stars is a normative financial behavior. Students recognize that certain spending behaviors are negative, yet spend anyway, with a major reason for the spending being peer pressure influence and the perceived need to gain value from a lived experience. Although more exploration is required, it is also possible that college students may be susceptible to the influence of friends who are influenced by reality television programs. One respondent (Respondent 8) in this study, indicated that she felt that a friend of hers who was heavily influenced by *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, influenced her indirectly. This could imply that an individual herself does not have to be a viewer or reality television at all to experience the effects of reality television on financial behavior change in her life if it is transmitted through her social system, as Bandura (1971) suggested is possible.

Thus, secondly, as college students might underestimate the effects of watching reality television, they may spend money without true understanding of potential future consequences. For example, a college student might be more likely to spend $1,500 to go on a spring break trip for the experience, rather than invest $1,500 into a Roth IRA, because of the perceived importance and meaning given to living the experience of the trip and less urgency placed on a retirement vehicle. Third, because college students tend to learn by observation and want to emulate behaviors, it should be recognized that some reality television celebrities are role models who lack substance and therefore the ability to communicate more positive financial messages.

A valuable theme of significance that emerged from the interviews was that the college students place a tremendous amount of value on the experience of living during their college years. The definition of the "experience" of college is tremendously broad as described by the respondents, although consistently the experience is referred to as "living in the moment," or "making memories" as described by Respondent 6, and "doing things, having fun and gaining experience (Respondent 5)" Spending money, it appears, is a consequence of chasing the experience. Respondent 10 shared her immediate plans in terms of chasing experiences:

> Me and her are getting a tattoo next week [laughter]. So we do a lot of fun things, because we just want to get out and just explore. I mean, granted, we like to just chill and hang out at our houses, but on the weekends or something, we want to go out and just get people and be like, "Have you been here? Have you done this?" And we're like, "Oh, no." Then we're most likely to go do it, just for the experience.

The value of these experiences is important, because if college students perceive the value of the experience to be great enough, they appear more likely to spend the money to engage in that experience as Respondent 5 explained:

> "I won't spend the money if I'm not gonna get the value out of it."

These experiences are doubly reinforced by messages portrayed in the media that, based on the interviews with the respondents, lend themselves to being seen as societal norms that are, for the most part, consequence-free. College students are aware that they spend excessively, and that it is in part due to reality television viewership, yet they continue the behavior because it is what their close social network of friends is doing. While college students appear ready to spend money freely in pursuit of experiences that make them happy while in college (e.g., going out to bars, buying new outfits to be more attractive to the opposite sex, spending money on a spring break trip), the majority of the students interviewed indicated that money, at its basic core, is simply a necessity, something you need to meet your basic needs, such as gas, clothes and food.

This sentiment was shared by most respondents. Respondent 2 indicated also that it also means "how much fun you're able to have at any one point in time." The value of money was also described as "a means to other things" by Respondent 6:

> I think money is a necessary means to do the things you want to accomplish, support people you care about. Everyone has to work and earn their way to provide, but it's not something that I would place a ton of value on…there are certain ways that you have to go about to finding money, whether that's work or investments or whatever it is, but it's not something I would see as permanent, that I need to keep as permanent. I don't need to permanently keep my wealth. It's just something-- I say that it's "a means to other things."

As Respondent 6 indicated, money is a means to other things, and as it is presented by the respondents in this dissertation, those other things appear to be achieving what you desire in life, being able to support your family, and reducing overall life stress. Respondent 10 explained further:

> Money-- I don't think money is happiness, but I feel like having enough money will make life easier. That's why I'm going to college, and getting a degree, is to get a decent job coming out of college, and not having to work at McDonald's for the rest of my life. Living on a McDonald's salary, and working full time there though, and just only getting that much money coming in a month, you're going to be stressed out more. And that's one thing that people fight about a lot, is money. So I don't think money is necessarily happiness, but I think money's important to have and not just to blow off like I like to sometimes. I think I just take advantage of blowing money now, because I'm just in college I really don't have that much responsibility when it comes to bills and stuff, which are so much now. That's kind of what it means to me.

Respondent 1 and Respondent 3, both female Business Administration majors, also acknowledge that in the present time, as college students, their financial responsibility is limited, but money does matter for the future. This is an important theme as it indicates that while college students may live for the "experiences" of college, and spend money in the pursuit of doing so, or even not bear a ton of financial responsibility in the present, it does not necessarily mean they do not understand just how important the role money plays in planning for the future. Respondent 1 explained in more detail:

> In my current time in my life, it's kind of whatever I want to spend it on, because my parents provide a lot for me. They pay my cellphone bill and I'm still driving one of their cars, so I don't have a lot of expenses right now. I do work 25 to 30 hours a week, but I put it all in savings because-- well not all of it, but I put the majority of it in savings because I'm the planner and I want to be able to buy my own car and pay off my student loans. Everything I have left, I just kind of-- whatever I want to buy. I figure in five years or ten years I'll be paying mortgage and all that stuff that my parents are currently paying. I try and not be too serious about my money, but I do save most of it.

As indicated previously, the respondents generally viewed money as a means to an end. The first idea that emerged was that money is needed to live, to pay bills, to enjoy life and perhaps decrease stress a little. As that theme developed, it became clear among the respondents that while it is important to consider the role money plays a role in the future, money does not necessarily equate to happiness. Respondents 7 and 8 described further the role of money and its meaning to them in the future and relation to happiness:

Respondent 7:

> You have to have it. I don't think you need to have a lot of it. I don't need a lot of it to be happy, but it means getting a house, getting a car, and starting a family, you could say. You can't really do that without plans. I would like to have saved a lot of money before starting a family, or it means just taking care of your family, and doing what you can to be happy and such stuff like that.

Respondent 8 indicated that while she might not have much money now, she expects that to change:

> … I know in the future, I think it will mean more because I'll have my own family to take care of. But I also don't want it to be everything in my life, because I know that some people think of it that way. But know money…we need money to survive in the world. But I want to be the way my parents raised me to be…you don't need all of the big things, and you don't need to buy everything brand new. You can save your money for certain big things and be happy, because that's what I'd rather be than in debt.

Implications

Better understanding of how college students acquire financial knowledge and choose to use it is key in promoting financial success. The results indicate that for financial educators to reach college students as a population, educators must understand the phenomenon of the experience of *being* a college student. Specifically, how that translates into encouraging students to practice better financial behaviors in the face of gaining experiences in college with friends and issues surrounding a college student's financial self-efficacy.

While students seem to understand the value of money and the role it plays in securing financial success in the future, they appear place tremendous value on spending money in order to gain experiences while in college. Even more concerning, the students tend to justify their spending by rationalizing the spending as a part of the experience of being in college. It appears that college students, in general, are aware that they are fully capable of and should be spending responsibly, but the influence from both reality television and their peer networks propagate a negating self-efficacy effect. The belief that they can spend responsibly (their financial self-efficacy) is undermined. While this is seemingly negative in terms of self-efficacy, it is however an encouraging sign that college students admit that they seem to know what they *should* be doing with their money, but are not doing so. Thus, providing more opportunities for college students to be exposed to financial information and guidance could potentially counteract the messages that are received through reality television and shared directly and indirectly through social systems.

The findings indicated that those who are influenced by reality television seem to want to mimic the lifestyles of the stars of the programs. Moreover, the desire to emulate the celebrities may be a result of feelings of entitlement, meaning the students are feeling the experience of some kind of deprivation, and feel they should have the same things (e.g., experiences and material items) as portrayed on the programs. Relative deprivation, is considered an aversive state, according to Callan, Shead, and Olson (2011). Going forward, the theoretical framework of relative deprivation may help provide insight as to why this also might explain some of the financial behaviors of college students as influenced by reality television. Potentially, this aversive state (Callan, Shead, & Olson, 2011) can lead to people being motivated to achieve the outcomes they feel they deserve in both positive and negative ways.

Similarly, the attitudes toward reality television celebrities were overwhelmingly negative. While some of these observations may be objective, the strong emotions elicited from respondents may indicate other emotional factors might be at play when making judgments toward reality television celebrities. While most respondents had negative attitudes, two did not, mentioning that spending behaviors, lavish as they may seem, may very well be appropriate given the celebrities' circumstances and level of wealth. Thus, it is possible that other emotions, namely envy, influence the attitudes of respondents toward reality television celebrities. The experience of envy may include feelings of inferiority, longing, resentment of the circumstances, and ill will toward the envied person, sometimes accompanied by guilt, denial, or awareness of the inappropriateness of the ill will (Parrott, 1991). While some mention by the respondents was made of reality television stars donating to charity or using their fame to raise money for charitable causes, no respondent made mention of a reality television celebrity using their fame for their own personal entrepreneurial empires. For example, Snooki and JWoww of *The Jersey Shore* fame using their Instagram accounts to give personal endorsements for products such as weight-loss products and waist-cinchers (paid endorsements) or Kim Kardashian marrying Kanye West (true love, strategic business move, or both?). Perhaps, it is possible that envy is a pervasive emotion, that clouds the attitudes of what it is that reality television stars are actually doing, which in this researcher's opinion, is strategically making business decisions to build their personal brands for a profit regardless of how they do it. Some people, might view these celebrities as being famous for nothing, and view them negatively like the respondents in this study. Other people, however, could view these celebrities as entrepreneurs who have good business sense that is worth learning from. If emotions, such as envy, are involved with the development of attitudes of good and bad financial behaviors, relative perspectives and the influence on financial attitudes and behaviors are worth consideration in future studies.

Innovative efforts, such as creating a component of a finance course or a campus financial seminar that addresses media influence and how students can overcome some of these negative behaviors, might in part lessen the potential financial damage that can be done in the college years and beyond. Colleges and universities could focus on opening peer-based financial counseling centers to provide college students with positive reinforcement and support in strengthening their personal finances. Financial planners and counselors, particularly those who work with clients who have children nearing college-age could offer to the families they work with sessions with the soon-to-be college student to strengthen the understanding of responsible financial management while in college. This could be especially helpful to the clients of financial planners and counselors who work in the niche area of college planning, and for existing financial planners who do not currently offer such a service to their clients it could be a value-adding benefit to their practices.

Limitations

The quality of the research is dependent on many variables that inevitably influence every aspect of a qualitative inquiry. The main goal of a qualitative inquiry is to gain specific, rich, and in-depth knowledge (Patton, 2002). Sample size guidelines for a phenomenological inquiry, according to Creswell (1998), require generally 5 to 25 participants in order to reach saturation. In this study, saturation was attained with 10 respondents. In qualitative research, a smaller sample size is expected and as a result may lack generalizability (Patton, 2002), which is an inherent limitation of qualitative inquiry. However, generalizability is generally not the focus of qualitative research, rather the goal is to obtain in-depth knowledge about a particular phenomenon regarding a specific population, In this research study, generalizability is limited to reality television viewers who are college students at a small, private university in the Midwest.

Qualitative study is subjective, in the sense that it is up to the researcher to draw conclusions from the data collected. Thus, one of the primary limitations is the researcher herself. The researcher's presence can affect the participants' responses, due to a number of biases that may become evident during the data collection process. This includes evidence of lack of objectivity, researcher bias, and interview bias. Participants' responses may be a direct reflection of those biases, and may not accurately represent the true essence of the participants' experiences. Every measure possible to reduce those biases in an effort to increase objectivity was implemented, including purposeful sampling, triangulation, and participant verification.

Additionally, there are several limitations that result from the survey design. The study is limited by the methodology used, as it employed one of many possible techniques. Notably, during the data analysis process, the interpretation of the meaning of the data was left up to the researcher, even using Colaizzi's (1978) method. As noted, the study is also limited to college students as the selected population specifically at a mid-size, private liberal arts university in the Midwest. It is possible that similar findings might be found in other populations. The college students interviewed could also potentially have been more diverse in some demographic categories, such as college major and ethnicity. Furthermore, none of the students interviewed had credit card debt or other kinds of debt (except for student loans in some situations), which could have an influence on responses. The sample was also relatively homogenous, with all respondents coming from a business school background. This however, could also be a potential strength to the study, as the respondents may have a background in business that might make them better versed of the financial information received from reality television than other populations. Business majors may have a higher relative financial acumen and higher relative financial health than their counterparts based upon their backgrounds, and thus may be more likely to identify good or bad behaviors than their non-business background counterparts. Homogeneity is a strength because the sample characteristics were very similar, adding more specificity to the sample. When conducting future research it will make it easier to compare with other groups.

Another limitation to the study may be that the respondents' knowledge of what constitutes a "good" or "bad" financial decision was not immediately clear, and that this is subjective based on their own perceptions and biases. Similarly, respondents may not have been completely forthright in responses because of the sensitivity of the topic.

Future Directions

This study contributes to the literature in the many ways. First, little if any qualitative research has been conducted exploring the influence of media on personal financial planning among college students or among other populations. Further study should not be limited to college students, but should also encompass varying groups to help gather more information about how outside media influences are impacting financial behaviors. Many different age groups could benefit from additional insight. Reality television is just one form of media influence, and it is possible that other forms of media influence financial behavior.

For example, while one college student might watch *American Idol* and *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, based on the results of this study it could be indicated that the student is more influenced by *Keeping up with the Kardashians* than *American Idol.* In other populations however, it is possible that situational reality television might have less influence than other reality television programs (e.g. home improvement type shows among a late-twenties home-buying population). More inquiry is needed to explore this possibility. Specifically, further inquiry that develops the distinction between perceived behavior change as a result of viewing reality television and how the perceptions of the meaning of money are influenced as a result of viewing reality television is needed. While the two topics on the surface seem similar, the results of this research produced seemingly contradictory results, indicating that it appears watching reality television results in negative behaviors, but also results in positive perceptions of the meaning of money. This is similar to the idea that college students, while they understand that fiscal responsibility is important, they choose not to always be fiscally responsible in order to pursue experiences. If individuals are being influenced by reality television content, what messages are they receiving on other platforms of media? Individuals' use of social networking sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook could be analyzed for financial message content, as could individuals' music listening preferences. Content analysis could also be performed. If reality television has the ability to influence the evolution of normative financial behavior, it is possible that other media may be able to do the same. Research exploring gender differences in spending in relation to peer-pressure and indirect reality television influence may be warranted based upon a possible theme uncovered during the analysis process.

Additionally, if this study were undertaken again, it would be beneficial to add a line of questioning that addresses how reality television may indirectly influence a respondent if a friend or family member watches and the respondent does not. One respondent in this study indicated so without prompting, which supports Bandura's (1971) idea that the media can indirectly influence an individual through the social system. What this means is that a person does not have to watch reality television themselves to be influenced by it. More research is needed to explore this possibility.

The qualitative results of this study could also be potentially translated into an inventory that is specific to identifying the money belief patterns of college students, not unlike the Klontz Money Script Inventory (KMSI). The KMSI helps to identify patterns that could potentially hinder financial success. Klontz et al. (2011) identified four categories of money, scripts which are: (1) money avoidance, (2) money worship, (3) money status, and (4) money vigilance. College students in this study acknowledge that they tend to overspend as a result of peer-pressure and a need to keep up with peers, buying what is popular or required to be a part of their social system. Money status may be a script that they identify with the most and could be expanded and built upon to create a modified inventory to pinpoint the scripts of college students. As Klontz et al. described (2011), individuals who have a money status script are typically young, single, less educated, and have less money, typical of most college students. These same individuals are at risk for disordered financial behavior, such as overspending or excessive risk taking, something evidenced by the sample studied in this dissertation. Taking this into consideration would be a good place to start toward he development of an inventory specific to the needs of college students based using the KSMI as a guide.   This would help predict the likelihood of certain financial behaviors among college students and help financial planners, counselors, therapists, and educators create better opportunities to financially educate students.

Finally, literature currently exists on the influence of reality television on other health indicators. This includes sex behavior, dating behavior, and substance use behavior. This study is the first to the author's knowledge to explore the influence of reality television on a non-health related behavior, more specifically to financial behaviors. Thus, it is the first to contribute to any research on the topic, qualitatively or quantitatively. However, the implications are similarly important, as this study generally supports what has been found in health-related inquiry, in that reality television has an overall negative influence on whatever behavior being studied. Future research is needed to explore further, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this is the first study known to the researcher that has explored how reality television influences financial behavior. While no research currently exists, this study does add to research that contributes to the overall understanding of the media's influence on individuals' behaviors. Ten participants were interviewed to help answer the primary research question of "*What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of reality television viewership on financial behavior by college students?"*

There were four key findings from this study. The first was that reality television has the ability to inform the financial behavior of college students. Meaning, that college students are, in fact, observing financial behaviors from reality programs viewed. Second, an individual's connection to his or her social system has an influence on financial behavior, both inside and outside the context of reality television. Reality television directly and indirectly influences spending behaviors within a social system, as does peer pressure and a need to "experience college." Third, reality television does have the ability to influence financial behavior change and fourth, reality television influences the meaning of money as perceived by the respondents.

The results of this study might serve as the foundation to move forward with more qualitative and quantitative inquiry into the influence of media on financial behavior, specifically reality television. As many respondents noted in the interviews, the behaviors seen on reality television are socially learned and accepted, and this study provides a basis for moving forward to examine this phenomenon more closely, as media evolves with reality television viewer habits. Further research exploring the behaviors of college students as influenced by media will serve to promote long-term financial wellness for students moving through their financial life-cycle, through the development of strategies to combat negative media influences on normative personal financial best practices.

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Appendix A - Semi-structured Interview Guide and Demographic Survey

Exploring the Influence of Reality Television on Financial Behavior

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Section I: Exploring how reality television informs financial behavior.

- What reality television shows do you watch regularly?
- When you watch those shows, what kinds of things do you see reality television stars doing with their money?
    - What are the stars doing with their money that is good?
    - What are they doing with their money that is bad?

Section II: Exploring how college students' interactions with their social system influence financial behavior.

- Who do you typically watch these shows with?
- Where do you watch these shows?
- Have you had conversations with friends or family about things that have happened on a reality television shows? What specifically do you talk about?
- Have you had conversations with friends or family about items that reality television stars have purchased, endorsed, or featured? What specifically?
- In what ways do you think watching reality television has influenced the way your friends manage or spend money?
- In what ways do you think watching reality television has influenced the way your family manages or spends money?
- How do your friends influence what you do with your money?
- How does your family influence what you do with your money?

Section III: Exploring the ways in which college students perceive their financial behaviors have changed as a result of reality television programming.

- How do you feel your spending changed as a result of watching reality television?
- How do you feel your savings changed as a result of watching reality television?
- How do you feel your credit card usage changed as a result of watching reality television?
- Have you ever noticed products featured on reality television?
    - Have you ever purchased products because they were featured on a program? If so, what specifically?
- Are there any other changes you have made from watching reality tv?
- Overall, how do you feel about these changes you have made in managing your money?
- How did you learn about money?
- What lessons about money did you learn growing up?
- What influences have had the greatest effect on your thoughts and beliefs about money?

- In summary, what does money mean to you?
    - How has this meaning of (insert participants words') been influenced by watching reality tv?

Appendix B - Demographic Screening Questionnaire

Exploring the Influence of Reality Television

Demographic Survey

- Are you male or female?

  Response Categories: Male or Female

- What is your ethnicity?

  Response Categories: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian / Pacific Islander; Black or African American; Hispanic American; White / Caucasian

- What is your marital status?

  Response Categories: Single, Married, Divorced, Widowed

- What year are you in college?

  Response Categories: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior or Senior

- What is your major? __(Open-Ended)__

- What is your age? __(Open-Ended)__

- Do you work?

  Response Categories: Part-Time, Full-Time, Not at All (full-time student).

- If you work, how many hours a week do you work?

  Response Categories: 1-10 hours, 10-20 hours, 20-30 hours, 30-40 hours, 40+ hours

- What is your annual income?

  Response Categories: Less than $10,000; $10,000-$25,000; $25,000-$40,000; Above $40,000.

- What are your sources of income (check all that apply):

  Response Categories: Income from job; student loans; support from family; support from college fund; other (please describe).

- How much credit card debt do you have? __Open-Ended__

- How much in student loan debt do you have? ___Open-Ended__

- How much other debt do you have? ___Open-Ended___

- Do you watch reality television? __________

  Response Categories: Yes or No

- How many hours a week do you spend watching reality television? __(Open-Ended)__

- How many different reality shows do you watch? __(Open-Ended)__

- What are the titles of the reality shows you watch? __(Open-Ended)__

- What types of formal personal finance education have you had?

  Response Categories (check all that apply):

  Attended a seminar, taken a high school course, taken a college course, attended a workshop, attended a church-affiliated seminar.

  Follow up question (please explain in detail): __(Open-Ended)__

- What is the best way to reach you to schedule an in-person interview if selected for the study?

  Response Categories: Phone or Email

  Follow up question (please provide your contact information where you can best be reached): ____(Open-Ended)____

Appendix C - Informed Consent

Exploring the Influence of Reality Television on Financial Behavior
Informed Consent for Research

Project Title: *Exploring the Influence of Reality Television on Financial Behavior*

Approval Date of Project: May 2014 **Expiration Date of Project: May 2015**

Principal Investigator: Kristy L. Archuleta, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, 785-532-1474

Co-Investigator: Erika Rasure, MS., PhD Candidate, 314-625-8686

What is it?

- The purpose of this study is to examine how financial behaviors might be influenced by reality television viewership among college students. By way of a questionnaire and an interview, college students will help provide information as to how reality television provides meaning and structure to their financial behaviors. No research currently exists on this subject, and the information gathered in this study will help provide a basis for developing a greater understanding of how media influences, such as reality television, might influence financial behaviors.

What will I have to do?

- Complete a screening questionnaire, providing demographic information and reality television viewership information.
- If selected, from the initial screening, complete an interview lasting between 30-45 minutes.
- Agree to be videoed and/or audio taped for research purposes only.
- Verify a summary of the interview for accuracy.

What are the benefits and risks?

- You will be helping to identify how reality television might influence financial behaviors.
- Answering questions about your perceptions, feelings, and experiences regarding financial behaviors or difficult issues can be distressing or upsetting.
- All information collected for research is confidential. Your questionnaires and interviews are securely stored.
- The reality television viewership research project is voluntary. You may choose not to complete the interview or may drop out of the project at any time.

Is it private?

- All information we collect for research is confidential. However, there are times we may need to break that confidentiality.

- Specifically, to share information with your instructor if you elect to receive extra credit for your course by participating in this study, if offered by your instructor.

Can I quit if I want to?

- The project is voluntary. You may choose not to complete the interview or may drop out of the project at any time. Simply notify the researcher of your desire to end your participation.

Who should I speak with if I have any questions?

- Should I have any questions about this project or its conduct, I can contact any of the following:
    - Erika Rasure, MS, Principal Investigator/Primary Contact, 316 Justin, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 314-625-8686.
    - Dr. Kristy Archuleta, Principal Investigator/Secondary Contact, 316 Justin, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-1474
    - Dr. Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, KSU, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-3224
    - Dr. Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice Provost for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 203 Fairchild Hall, KSU, Manhattan, KS 66506, 785-532-3224

Participant's Agreement and Responsibilities:

- I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits to which I may otherwise be entitled.
- I very that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand what my participation in this project entails and I know for no reason that I cannot participate in this project. I have had all my questions answered and hereby give my voluntary consent for participation in this project. My signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Participant Name:________________________________

Participant Signature______________________________ Date:________________

Witness to Signature______________________________

Appendix D - Invitation to Participate

Invitation to Participate: Exploring the Influence of Reality Television on Financial Behaviors

The purpose of this study is to examine how financial behaviors might be influenced by reality television viewership among college students. By way of a questionnaire and an interview, college students will help provide information as to how reality television provides meaning and structure to their financial behaviors.

No research currently exists on this subject, and the information gathered in this study will help provide a basis for developing a greater understanding of how media influences such as reality television, might influence financial behaviors.

If you are interested in participating, please follow the link below to the screening questionnaire. If you are selected for the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview conducted virtually.

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this study.

https://kstate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cCLDKaa9YZT8ofz