

Me in TV: Reality Television, Narcissism and Infidelity

Carlos Flores, Joseph Salib, Raul Salcedo, Kris Munakash & Kelly Campbell

Introduction

“Suddenly we find that we are no longer the actors, but the spectators of the play. Or rather we are both. We watch ourselves, and the mere wonder of the spectacle entralls us.”

~ Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray

Narcissistic individuals have a strong desire for fame (Celedonia & Williams, 2006) and believe they are more attractive than they are judged to be by others (Bleske-Rechek et al., 2008). High narcissism is also a predictor of infidelity (Atkins et al., 2005; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Hunyady et al., 2008). Narcissism is not related to experience in the entertainment industry, suggesting that celebrities exhibit narcissistic tendencies prior to acquiring fame.

It is possible that individuals who enjoy watching the competitive (e.g., Survivor, the Apprentice) and the day-in-the-life (e.g., the Osbournes, Jon & Kate Plus 8, etc.) types of reality shows may be more narcissistic, which in turn could affect their expectation of committing infidelity. In addition, we believe that those who express a desire to participate in a reality show will be more likely to expect to commit infidelity.

This study explored whether watching and willingness to participate in reality television predicts narcissism, which in turn predicts infidelity expectations.

Method

Target Population

Individuals who are:
18 years of age and older
Currently involved in a romantic relationship

Recruitment

SONA (CSUSB student participation web site)
Web sites (e.g., Craigslist.org) and listservs

Online survey

Reality Television (written by the researchers)
Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988)
Infidelity (Campbell, 2008)
Demographic characteristics

Participants

1,028 Participants
153 Men; 875 Women
Mean Age: 25 years, SD: 8.14 (Range: 18 - 67 years)
43.5% Hispanic/Latino
36.9% European/White
76.4% Christian; 36.2% Fairly Religious

Results

Reality TV and Narcissism (Outcome Variable)

Factor	B	SE B	β
Enjoy RTV	-.099	.423	-.007
Willing to participate on RTV	4.350	.525	.255*

Reality TV and Infidelity Expectations (Outcome Variable) Step 1

Factor	B	SE B	β
Enjoy RTV	-.697	1.857	-.013
Willing to participate on RTV	11.909	2.265	.183*

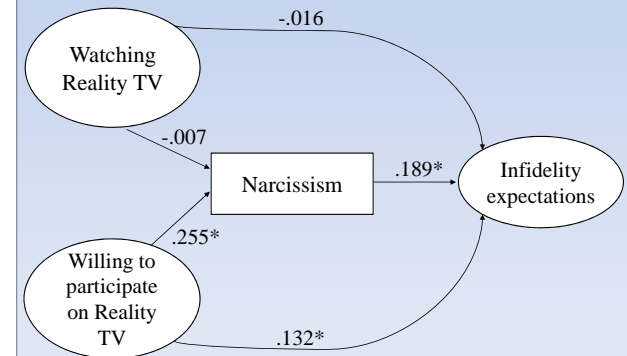
Reality TV, Narcissism, and Infidelity Expectations (Outcome Variable) Step 2

Factor	B	SE B	β
Enjoy RTV	-.852	1.826	-.016
Willing to participate on RTV	8.584	2.308	.132*
Narcissism	.748	.136	.189*

Note * $p < .001$

Figure

Reality TV, Narcissism, and Infidelity Expectations



Note * $p < .001$

Discussion

Results illustrated that watching and enjoying reality television does not predict narcissism or infidelity. However, a willingness to participate in reality television has a large effect on narcissism, which in turn has a medium effect on infidelity expectations. The willingness to participate in reality television also had a medium effect on infidelity expectations.

These findings have implications for relationships. Individuals whose partners either exhibit a willingness to participate in reality TV or are celebrities may be at risk of experiencing infidelity in their relationship.

Practitioners can use this information when working with celebrities, their partners, or anyone seeking a relationship with a person seeking fame.

Contact Information

Carlos Flores, cgflores@gmail.com
Joseph Salib, honeni.adonai@gmail.com
Raul Salcedo, 003573387@coyote.csusb.edu
Kris Munakash, krsmuni@gmail.com
Kelly Campbell, Ph.D., kelly@csusb.edu