

THERE GOES THE WEEKEND:  
UNDERSTANDING TELEVISION BINGE-WATCHING

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## ABSTRACT

Binge-watching, the act of consuming multiple episodes of a TV show in a short period of time, is changing the experience of watching television. The current study investigated how different methods and speeds of watching a TV show affected the media watching experience. In particular, this study sought to determine if binge-watching could affect the outcomes of media consumption, particularly (a) transportation into the narrative, (b) enjoyment, (c) narrative engagement, and (d) identification with the characters in the narrative.

Personality traits may affect how a person experiences media content and this study investigated whether personality traits—such as transportability and fantasy empathy—can affect the relationships between binge-watching and the outcomes associated with narrative consumption. Additionally, individuals may have different levels of motivations—eudaimonic or hedonic—that could predict how a person likes to consume TV content, whether it is all at once via a binge, or, contrastingly, dispensed over a larger amount of time.

Results indicated that both transportability and fantasy empathy were predictors of how a person will choose to watch TV, and that both outcomes of transportation and character identification were altered by the pace at which a person consumes a TV show, particularly when personality traits were taken into account. Narrative engagement was decreased when a person binge-watched old episodes of a TV show followed by new episodes as they came out, and enjoyment was dependent upon increased character identification. Eudaimonic motivations for

entertainment consumption and age were also significant predictors of how a person would choose to watch a TV show.

This study also discusses binge-watching as a part of the evolution of TV and the changing media environment that currently exists. Transportation theory is applied to binge-watching, integrating existing media communication theories into behaviors that result from new technology. Binge-watching is discussed in the context of society and content production, particularly how a new generation of TV watchers is utilizing the various types of content available to them to customize and personalize their TV content choices and experiences.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

$a$	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
$\beta$	Beta: the slope as calculated in a regression
$F$	F statistic as calculated for an Analysis of Variance
$M$	Mean: the sum of a set of measurements divided by the number of measurements in the set
$OR$	Odds ratio in a logistic regression
$p$	Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value
$r$	Pearson product-moment correlation
$SD$	Standard deviation: the value of variation from a mean within a set of data
$\chi$	Chi square value
=	Equal to

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, media streaming giant Netflix has advertised that it is possible to watch full seasons of TV shows through their online service. Likewise, Hulu Plus advertises on cable TV that subscribing to their streaming service would allow viewers to watch full TV series online. In order to spend money on advertising telling viewers that they can watch more (and different) TV online, these streaming services seemingly have found an audience that places a higher value on binge-watching, or the practice of watching many episodes of a given program in succession. Netflix added 2.25 million subscribers in the first quarter of 2014 (“Trefis Team,” 2014), and with \$4.4 billion in total revenue in 2013 (“Bloomberg Businessweek,” 2014), they plan on investing \$200 million on advertising in 2014 (Kleinman, 2014). This money will be spent enticing new subscribers by touting the availability of full seasons of popular or critically-acclaimed TV series. A subscription allows viewers access to both original content produced by Netflix itself (i.e. *House of Cards*, *Orange is the New Black*), and content produced by cable and broadcast networks (i.e. *The Office*, *Lost*) that is distributed through Netflix.

However, companies like Netflix and Hulu are not driving change in viewer behavior as much as they are reacting to desires already found through earlier releases of DVD box sets and broadcast television marathons. Changes in the availability of content through many different mediums have allowed viewers to have increasing control over the content and speed at which they watch TV. Viewers have increasing access to digital video recorders (DVRs) allowing them to record hundreds of hours of TV content, including entire seasons of various TV shows.

Streaming services such as Amazon Prime, Hulu, and HBOGo—which hosts only HBO content—have given viewers the power to make choices about which TV they want to watch and, most importantly, at what pace. The decreasing prices of box sets of TV seasons and full series have also shifted the TV viewing experience, and viewers have discovered that they can watch TV shows that they had heard about, but did not have the chance to watch when they originally aired. These changes have integrally altered the TV viewing experience to a model where viewers can customize which shows they watch, regardless of whether the show is airing on TV, and choose from a much larger selection of programming. This dramatic shift in the way that people consume TV programs is a result of the proliferation of media availability and content options, as “what is striking about the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the many ways new media alter the nature of narrative experience” (Biocca, 2002, p. 97). A confluence of circumstances is allowing TV viewers to be active participants in the selection of what they watch, how they watch, and the pace in which they wish to consume it.

As viewers began to use new technologies to watch TV in different ways, they discovered that they had access to huge amounts of new content that they had never seen before. Not only could they re-watch episodes of their favorite TV shows that may have been off the air for years, they were able to discover new TV shows and watch the entire series in a relatively small amount of time, sometimes watching many episodes back to back; people could consume full seasons in a matter of hours, and a full series could be watched in a matter of days. Binge-watching, the act of watching many episodes in rapid succession is a relatively new phenomenon that has nonetheless received attention from both scholars and the popular press because of the potential impact such consumption has on media habits, behaviors, and beliefs (Conlin &

Sharples, 2014; Eidler, 2013; Goldstein, 2013; Kleinman, 2014; Paskin, 2013; Seward, 2013; Spak, 2013; Watercutter, 2013).

Binge-watching, defined by streaming service Netflix as the consumption of “2-6 episodes of the same TV show in one sitting” (“Netflix declares,” 2013, para. 2), quickly became beloved by viewers. Alternate definitions of binge-watching may encompass viewing experiences that may have been more broken-up in terms of individual sittings, but where viewers still watched an entire season or series in a matter of days. Binge-watching viewers were afforded the opportunity to immerse themselves in the narrative world of the TV show without having to exit that world at the end of every episode, as they would have had to if they were watching the TV series as it was originally designed to be viewed, airing on TV week-by-week. This runs contrary to the old model of how networks distributed new episodes over many months, interspersing new content with reruns and stretching a full season to make 22 episodes last the better part of a year.

In order to capitalize on the growing trend of binge-watching, online streaming services have begun producing their own original content which is released a full season at a time. These TV shows, such as *House of Cards* and *Orange is the New Black* (both from Netflix), are hour-long, serial dramas with a linear narrative, making them ideal for binge-watching. Netflix’s original content has been nominated for 31 Primetime Emmys (Schaefer, 2014), a distinction that not only recognizes the quality of content, but delineates an online-only content producer as one that produces “primetime” content. By producing quality content (evidenced by Emmy nominations) rivaling the dramas that appear on cable networks such as HBO or AMC, online services have been shifting towards a model of TV production where cliffhangers at the end of

episodes draw viewers immediately into the next episode, rather than creating suspense that cannot be resolved for a full week.

Content producers may be offering full seasons online or in box sets because they recognize the power of binge-watching; people who binge-watch may be more involved with the storylines they see and may enjoy the content more, and may therefore be more likely to remain a paying subscriber who regularly uses streaming services to binge-watch full TV series. Binge-watching also allows viewers who have never watched a TV show to become new fans, even years into the run of a TV show. In June 2014, HBO consecutively aired six full seasons of their vampire drama *True Blood* in anticipation of the show's season-seven premiere. This marathon of episodes—70 hour-long episodes to be exact—was designed not only to give viewers a chance to refresh their memory about events taking place in the narrative, but to allow viewers who had heard about *True Blood* to join in and watch the new season as it aired. It would be nearly impossible for a viewer to watch all 70 hours of content in one sitting; viewers could, however, DVR the episodes and binge-watch them as they pleased. This notion of using binge-watching to “catch up” to new episodes has proven successful for many lesser-known series. While the ratings arc for a program tends to decline in final years, some shows build larger audiences via binge consumption, resulting in cases such as *The Walking Dead*, which has consistently increased its audience with each consecutive season premiere, largely because of widespread availability of earlier episodes via online outlets and marathons.

In order to fully understand the effect that binge-watching is having on the TV production industry, communication researchers must address binge-watching from a media effects perspective. Binge-watching allows viewers to start watching a TV show when they want to, and only stop when they choose. Viewers are no longer at the mercy of TV networks telling

them that they must wait a week to see the next new episode of a TV show. How does this control over the pacing of a TV show change the TV watching experience for viewers? If one viewer faithfully watched *Breaking Bad* every week that a new episode premiered, it would have taken more than five-and-a-half years to view the entire narrative arc of the series. However, if another viewer binge-watched the entire series, which ended in September, 2013, they would be able to consume the same narrative arc in a matter of days. Surely, these two TV viewing experiences are not the same. The binge-watching viewer was able to fully immerse him or herself into the narrative world of Walter White, whereas the narrative experienced by the traditional viewer was interrupted at the end of every hour-long episode. In its first season, *Breaking Bad* averaged only 1.2 million viewers per episode, but by the series finale in 2013, 10.3 million viewers were tuning in (Kissell, 2013). *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan believes that binge-watching “allowed fans to catch up on his acclaimed AMC show and join it in later seasons” (Watercutter, 2014, para. 2), accounting for this dramatic increase in viewership. Viewers no longer had the excuse that they did not want to jump in on a narrative halfway through the life of a TV show. With the option to watch better TV programming, viewers seem to be choosing to do so. As such, selecting television programming to consume has shifted to the benefit of later-adopters, who can wait years to hear what programs are worth their time and attention.

The experience of being completely immersed in a story is known as transportation. Transportation theory states that the more a person is transported into a narrative, the more that he or she will enjoy the narrative content and engage with the characters in the story (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, Brock & Kaufman, 2004). Transportation is a mindset, or a state, and “the experience of being transported into an elaborately simulated place is pleasurable in itself”

(Murray, 1997, p. 98). It is a desired state that consumers of content seek to achieve through becoming immersed in a narrative (Green et al., 2004). Transportation can take place through a variety of mediums, as “narrative texts, whether in the form of a novel, a play or a film, create an imaginary and closed world and invite us to forget ourselves and to become involved with the story” (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010, p. 403). By binge-watching a TV show, viewers have an increased opportunity to be transported into a narrative world.

Descriptions of a TV binge and the immersive experience of transportation are very similar. People who describe the experience of binge-watching state that they lose track of time, spending hours upon hours lost in the story (Paskin, 2013)—and without commercial interruptions to break narrative flows. The creators of transportation theory state that to be fully transported into a narrative world is to “fail to observe events going on around them, and feel that they are completely immersed in the world of the narrative.” (Green, 2004, p. 247). They also state that increased control over the pacing of the narrative should increase transportation (Green et al., 2004).

One of the primary components of transportation theory is that for transportation to occur, media consumers must have the ability to stay engaged in a narrative as long as they choose, or until the narrative is completely over (Green et al., 2004). Being removed from a narrative world, such as by the ending of a single episode, decreases transportation. Therefore, enjoyment is lessened if a person is involuntarily removed from a narrative world. Well-constructed TV programs provide viewers with a narrative world in which to become consumed, and series that run for multiple seasons provide a much longer time-span to become transported into than a single episode, or a movie that ends after two to three hours. Thus, TV shows that are available to binge-watch online provide viewers with the perfect opportunity for transportation.

If 61 percent of Netflix subscribers truly binge-watch with regularity (“Netflix declares,” 2013), then it is important to understand the potential benefits viewers gain from controlling the pacing of a narrative. The application of transportation theory is appropriate in this situation because it describes a desired state for media consumers. An industry survey conducted by Netflix found that people who were regular binge-watchers reported that binge-watching was more enjoyable than watching TV at a normal pace (“Netflix declares,” 2013). Because Netflix itself has a vested interest in reporting higher enjoyment through the use of their service, these results need to be tested through empirical research. This greater enjoyment may also be the result of the greater number of options for watching TV, as people will be more satisfied if they have expanded choices. Increased transportation could be the mechanism that bolsters the enjoyment reported by binge-watchers.

While TV shows are designed with a story arc, the ability of the audience to binge-watch changes the narrative structure of the episodes. Cliffhangers no longer force people to wait a week for a resolution; binge-watchers can instantly view the next episode, making some aspects of a narrative obsolete. Moreover, binge-watchers are instantly gratified with being able to start a new episode. Binge-watchers may also choose to stop a narrative TV show when they choose, and resume the story when they are in the mood to do so, ensuring that the viewer has the optimal TV viewing experience. The story itself may remain constant between TV watching experiences, but if the dosage of the narrative changes, the outcomes of the TV watching experience could change as well.

The current study approached binge-watching from several perspectives. First, this research examined whether enjoyment, transportation (Green & Brock, 2000), narrative engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009), and character identification (Cohen, 2001) are

increased for the viewer when they binge-watch. The opportunity for viewers to spend such a large amount of time engrossed in a single narrative may allow viewers to become more enthralled by a storyline, enjoying it more and feeling a stronger affinity towards the characters that inhabit the narrative world.

Second, this study determined whether people who have different motivations for entertainment consumption (Oliver & Raney, 2011) are more likely to binge-watch, or whether these different types of people experience the outcomes of binge-watching--such as enjoyment--differently. Individuals with eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption seek “an experiential state characterized by the perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience” (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, p. 76). These types of viewers may be more drawn to the serial-dramas typical of binge-watching. Conversely, individuals with hedonic motivations, or motivations towards seeking pleasure from a media experience, may choose to binge-watch more frequently because it indulges their hedonic natures.

Third, this study investigated whether different personality traits affect a person’s capacity to enjoy or be transported by binge-watching. Relevant personality traits include transportability (Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004) and fantasy empathy (Davis, 1980; 1983). Such variables are relevant because the ability for a person to be transported into a narrative world is “determined by features of both the reader and the narrative” (Dal Cin et al., 2004, p. 186).

This research assumes that, although it is not truly interactivity, the increased control over the pacing of a narrative during binge-watching could demonstrably change the narrative experience of the viewer, as “longer exposure to the story material, and perhaps more active thought about the story message, should lead interactive narratives to have a greater impact on

attitudes” (Green & Jenkins, 2014, p. 491). Binge-watching, in turn, has the potential to change the structure of the narratives that have been designed by TV content producers, which could alter the way TV shows are produced and marketed, as networks are competing to offer their content as full seasons on Netflix or Hulu Plus (Paskin, 2013). Netflix itself is challenging the traditional TV content producers by creating their own TV shows for viewers to binge-watch. In a changing media landscape, the ability of viewers to completely customize their TV viewing experience must be better understood as such individualized consumption will inevitably grow in the years to come.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

*“Entertainment is a central part of the human experience” (Oliver & Raney, 2014, p. 361)*

Media research, according to Lang (2013), is in a period of stagnation and paradigm shift. She asserts that the field of media theory lacks a cohesive direction. This is troubling for media theorists, as a lack of theory is one of the primary indicators of a state of paradigm shift in science (Lang, 2013). To start moving away from a pre-paradigmatic state towards a state of full application of media theory, it is necessary to understand the changing mass media environment in the context of communication theory. One of the primary areas of media research has been media effects, or the study of audience reactions to media content. Responses to media entertainment are psychologically complex (Vorderer, 2011), and:

Recent scholarship in entertainment psychology has been undergoing something of a theoretical metamorphosis. This growth of scholarship reflects not only a recognition of entertainment fare that does not quite fit the characterizations of entertainment as enjoyable or pleasurable but also an acknowledgment of the changing nature of entertainment itself brought about by technological developments (Oliver & Raney, 2014, p. 362).

It is no surprise that audiences make media selections based on what entertains them, and “it is the media that provide their users with an ever-increasing variety of opportunities to be amused, to have fun and pleasure, to be delighted and enlightened, in short, to be entertained” (Vorderer, 2003, p. 131). While there is no one specific entertainment theory (Vorderer, 2003),

there are many other, separate theories attempting to explain why and how audiences are entertained by media content. Recently, many of these theories have seen research focusing on changes in technology that shape entertainment, as “our field has a basic belief in technological determinism, a conceptualization of technology as an agent for change in society, making this a fundamental assumption of mass communication research” (Lang, 2013, p. 13).

Entertainment through media can take many forms, from books, movies, and television, to video games and sporting events. One common attribute that many of these forms of entertainment share is that they contain narratives; a good story “transports the reader to the story world. No longer in this place and time, in this body, or even (sometimes) in this universe, we travel to the place of elsewhere, where strange and exciting things occur” (Oatley, 2002, p. 41). Stories provide the audience the opportunity to lose themselves in the narrative or, in other words, to be transported by the narrative.

### **Transportation Theory**

*“Why are narratives—from Jesus’ parables to modern-day soap operas and romance novels—thought to have such an enormous impact?” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 316)*

Transportation theory attempts to describe the phenomenon of a person being “swept up into the world of a story so completely that they forget the world around them” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 317), predicting the outcomes of a person becoming so immersed into a fictional world created by a narrative (Gerrig, 1993; Green & Brock, 2000; Green & Brock, 2002; Green 2004; Green et al., 2004; Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010). The term “transportation” refers to an audience member’s ability to “lose themselves” in the story, and become completely absorbed in a narrative world (Gerrig, 1993). Transportation into a narrative has been linked to enjoyment (Green et al., 2004), as well as increased liking of the story protagonist (Green & Brock, 2000;

Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010), and increased personal beliefs that are consistent with those presented in the narrative (Green & Brock, 2000). Transportation has been defined “as an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings, focused on story events” (Green & Donahue, 2009, p. 241).

### **History of Transportation Theory**

Research on transportation theory stems from the work of Gerrig (1993), who states that “a narrative serves to transport an experiencer away from the here and now” (p. 3). In his attempt to describe the experience of being transported into a story, Gerrig applies the definition of physically being transported from one place to another in order to better understand how a media consumer can travel as a result of involvement with a narrative. He describes the

Elements of a literal experience of being transported: 1. Someone (‘the traveler’) is transported 2. by some means of transportation 3. as a result of performing certain actions. 4. The traveler goes some distance from his or her world or origin 5. which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible. 6. The traveler returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey (Gerrig, 1993, p. 10).

Transportation is “a process that is differentially influenced by reader, text, and context attributes” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 323). In the study of media effects, *reader* should be interpreted as media consumer (Gerrig, 1993), *text* should be understood as media content, and *context attributes* should be understood as the method by which a person consumes narrative content, particularly binge-watching. Much research on transportation theory (Gerrig, 1993; Green et al., 2004) has acknowledged that while the literature uses the term *reader*, it should be understood that consumers involved with any type of media can become transported as long as a narrative is present.

While the study of transportation theory has primarily focused on narratives existing in more traditional media such as books, television, and film, the original developers of the theory have stated that “the transforming power of transportation might be especially prominent with interactive media” (Green et al., 2004, p. 322), particularly where the viewer or user has the ability to control the pacing of the narrative, such as being able to binge-watch a TV show. Indeed, the initial description of transportation theory stated that “transportation is not confined to the reading of written material. The term ‘reader’ may be broadly construed to include listeners or viewers or *any recipient* of narrative information” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 323; Gerrig, 1993; Green, 2005). Likewise, researchers have stated that “the concept of transportation into a narrative was originally developed to capture individuals’ emotional and cognitive absorption into written narratives (Green & Brock, 2000), but has since been adapted for visual narratives such as movies and television shows” (Greenwood, 2008, p. 416).

Transportation theory was originally developed to explain the persuasiveness of fictional narratives (Green & Brock, 2000; Green & Brock, 2002), particularly how “transporting narratives—even fictional ones—can have an impact on individuals’ real-world beliefs” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 318). An example of how beliefs could change as a result of a fictional narrative could be a person watching a movie where the lead character is afflicted with a chronic illness, and the viewer then supporting funding for the research of that illness. Beliefs that are changed by narratives as a result of transportation may be specific or general “e.g., ‘The world is unjust’” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 323), and belief changes occur as a result of the “imagery-driven juxtaposition with new information” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 323). Persuasion through fictional narratives differs from traditional, rhetorical persuasion in that “rhetorical persuaders sometimes include stories...but the bulk of rhetorical persuasion consists of arguments,

reasoning, claims, evidence, and so forth” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 320). Transportation has also been shown to correlate with an individual’s prior knowledge on the topic that they are being transported into, as well as the perception of realism, and increased story-consistent beliefs (Green, 2004). The basic premise of transportation theory in relation to persuasion is that “other things equal, high transporting narratives should be more influential than low transporting narratives” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 335).

Since the first investigation of transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000), this theory has evolved past simply describing how people are persuaded by narratives, to encompass concepts such as enjoyment (Green et al., 2004). In the case of binge-watching, transportation theory will be applied and understood as how increased transportation into a narrative changes the experience of a story, rather than how transportation can explain the beliefs of individuals resulting from transportation into a story.

### **Evaluation and Criticism of Transportation Theory**

Testability is an essential part of a useful social science theory and refers to the ability of a theory to be tested empirically (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004). A scale created early in the lifespan of this theory is a useful tool for measuring transportation. Developed by Green and Brock (2000), the 11-item transportation scale makes transportation theory especially testable, whether transportation itself is the independent or dependent variable.

Falsifiability is the ability of a theory to make a prediction strong enough to be proved wrong (Shoemaker et al., 2004). Because transportation theory makes a direct prediction, it would be possible to falsify this theory. However, the prediction made by this theory (that enjoyment increases with transportation) relies on measurement of the concept enjoyment, which is multidimensional and difficult to measure. Previous literature (Oliver & Raney, 2011) has

stated that enjoyment must be at least conceptualized as hedonic and eudaimonic (nonhedonic) in order to fully understand its complicated nature.

Explanatory power is the ability of a theory to explain communication phenomenon (Shoemaker et al., 2004). Transportation theory only explains an individual's response to media content when there is a narrative present (Green et al., 2004). It is not useful in explaining situations without a narrative (Mar & Oatley, 2008). While explanatory power may be low, the predictive power—the ability of a theory to predict the outcomes of communication (Shoemaker et al., 2004)—of transportation theory is high. Transportation into a narrative world is a key component of an individual's ability to enjoy media content (Green & Brock, 2002; Green et al., 2004). Interruptions and withdrawals from a narrative world are a key complaint of individuals who did not enjoy media content (Green et al., 2004); therefore, transportation theory is able to predict that content will not be enjoyable without transportation.

Valuable social science theories must have a scope wide enough to be applicable in many different communication situations (Shoemaker et al., 2004). While this theory makes a strong prediction about enjoyment as a result of media consumption, it is only useful when describing a narrative (Green et al., 2004). Transportation theory cannot be applied to situations where there is no narrative content present, and lacks relevance in media conditions outside of narrative content. One primary criticism of transportation theory is that it has not been investigated in contexts other than fictional narratives (increasingly a problem with the rise of reality television), and that transportation theory would be more useful if it was not purely considered an entertainment theory (Mar & Oatley, 2008). This criticism states that transportation theory should be expanded outside the realm of entertainment theory—possibly to encompass

immersion into news stories—in order to better understand how transportation can affect cognitive processing, and how transportation can affect persuasion (Mar & Oatley, 2008).

Any theory that has been developed over time must be a part of the cumulative nature of science, where newer research is built upon existing concepts, allowing knowledge to build over time (Shoemaker et al., 2004). Transportation theory is built upon an older concept known as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), in which an individual becomes lost in a task that they are completing. Transportation is conceptualized as the flow state one can achieve through narrative content (Green & Brock, 2002). Transportation theory is also one of many theories describing media enjoyment. However, because it is a relatively new theory, there has been less opportunity for development than some other, more established communication theories.

Theories must also be formally developed (Shoemaker et al., 2004). Transportation theory has been linked to other, existing entertainment theories pertaining to enjoyment, making it somewhat formally developed. Conversely, this theory has only been theoretically advanced by a small number of theorists. Transportation theory would benefit from outside opinions and a stronger theorization and criticism from other researchers.

The final two criteria for evaluating theories are heuristic value and aesthetics (Shoemaker et al., 2004). Heuristic value is the ability of the theory to generate more research, while aesthetics is the beauty and attractiveness of the theory to researchers. Many new hypotheses may be generated from transportation theory, including hypotheses about character traits and types of media content. Because there are narratives present in many aspects of mass communication, this theory is applicable to many new areas of research. Transportation theory describes enjoyment as a result of transportation into a narrative world, a concept that is beautiful and interesting to many people, including individuals who have little other interest in

communication theory. This theory describes the enjoyable experience of becoming lost in a story.

Another criticism of transportation theory is that it may not have a blanket effect on all people; differing personality traits within an individual may affect their ability to become transported into a narrative (Green et al., 2004). Additionally, these personality characteristics could affect whether an individual is more likely to become transported into different types of narratives, such as written stories and books, or visual narrative content such as television and movies (Green et al., 2004).

### **Binge-Watching**

*“Entertainment experiences can now be personalized to meet our immediate wants and needs”*

*(Raney & Oliver, 2014, p. 567)*

Binge-watching, a relatively recent phenomenon, is the act of continuously consuming multiple episodes of a TV show, allowing viewers to have a different experience than if they watched a TV show at a normal pace. Binge-watching a narrative TV show takes place at an accelerated speed compared to watching a TV show as it airs. When asked about the speed of their narrative consumption, binge-watchers stated of themselves that “roughly half watched an entire season in a week, and that roughly 25% polished off 13 episodes in two days” (Spak, 2013, para. 1). Binge-watching is achieved through a variety of outlets: online streaming services, such as Netflix or Hulu Plus, DVD box sets, or even a DVR. Netflix itself has defined binge-watching as the consumption of two-to-six episodes in a single sitting (“Netflix declares,” 2013), although binge-watching may constitute a number of media experiences. This statement provides the most basic operational definition of binge-watching, yet it is one that communication researchers could use to study and understand the experience of binge-watching.

Even if a person's TV watching experience falls outside this narrow definition, binge-watching occurs when a person consumes a full TV season or series in a relatively small amount of time. Binge-watching should be considered an experience that is achievable regardless of the content that is consumed. Viewers may consume the exact same content without binge-watching, but it is the act of continuously consuming content that defines a binge. It is consistent access to content that delineates binge-watching from regular TV watching; the number of episodes is relatively unimportant, as long as viewers have had the opportunity to continue watching, and have elected to do so.

Developers of transportation theory have stated that the ability to control the rate at which a person consumes a narrative and can remain engaged with it should result in increased transportation and enjoyment (Green & Brock, 2000; Green et al., 2004). Indeed, descriptions of immersion into a TV show associated with binge-watching and descriptions of a transporting experience are much the same, as viewers report that they "may stay up late into the night because [he or] she does not realize how much time has gone by" (Green & Donahue, 2009, p. 241).

Binge-watching should, therefore, result in an increased transportive experience, with increased enjoyment, increased character liking, and increased story-consistent beliefs (Green & Brock, 2000). Rather than "seeing activity in their physical surroundings, transported readers see the action of the story unfolding before them. These readers react emotionally to events that are simply words on a page" (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 317). Binge-watchers have an increased opportunity to immerse themselves in a TV show because of their ability to watch entire seasons or series. Binge-watching is:

Now the culturally sanctioned activity of high-achieving, culturally literate adults who...occasionally permit themselves to forgo showers and fresh air to watch TV all day and night long. It is also a major marketing strategy for certain quality-television purveyors with a reputation for being innovative (Paskin, 2013, para. 3).

The primary reason that binge-watching may allow viewers to become more transported is their ability to start and stop watching episodes of a TV show whenever they want.

Individuals may also slow down their viewing experience by prolonging and saving the last episodes of a TV show they are engrossed in; this still demonstrates the ability of the viewer to control the pace of the narrative and increase their engagement. Through binge-watching, the viewing experience of the audience is no longer interrupted at the end of every episode, allowing viewers to allot more of their cognitive resources to concentrating on the story and engrossing their emotions and thoughts on what is happening in the world of the TV show. This not only increases transportation, but narrative engagement as well:

If resources are shifted away from comprehension then mental model construction and therefore engagement should suffer. Any process unrelated to the narrative may have that effect (e.g., noise, hunger, job stress). Thus, a negative component of narrative engagement is distraction—the presence of thoughts that are unrelated to the narrative (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009, p. 326).

Initial research on the relationship between binge-watching and transportation found that when people describe their TV-watching experience as a binge, they also reported increased transportation into the narrative of the TV show (Conlin & Sharples, 2014). This same study found that different methods of watching a TV show changed the experience of transportation, where people who watched old episodes of a current TV show in a binge, and then watched new

episodes as they aired live experienced the most transportation into a narrative (Conlin & Sharples, 2014). However, the sample used in this study was from an undergraduate population and skewed heavily towards young, white females. Additionally, this study (Conlin & Sharples, 2014) was unable to account for personality traits or motivations that may affect the outcomes of binge-watching at the individual level.

One of the unique aspects of the binge-watching experience is the ability to truly control the pacing of a narrative, whether it is actively choosing to watch the next episode, or electing to leave the narrative world and continue watching at a later time when the viewer is primed and ready to continue watching the narrative that they are enjoying. As binge-watching takes up a large amount of time, “no matter how good a show is, there comes a point when I have seen too much of it” (Paskin, 2013, para. 8). When a person has indeed seen too much, they can stop watching and pick it up again later. This is not a negative attribute of binge-watching, as it allows viewers to control the pacing of a narrative in an ideal way, so that they can watch exactly as much of a narrative as they want to, never too much or too less. Binge-watchers are not trapped inside a narrative world, but instead are actively choosing to be a part of it, although “ideally, individuals should be able not only to become engaged in a narrative world but also to know when to return from the narrative world to real life” (Green, 2005, p. 66). Being able to control the pacing of a TV binge allows viewers to pick and choose, and completely customize their viewing experience, not only what content they choose to watch, but how they watch it.

Binge-watching is an extension and iteration of the overall change that is taking place in media consumption. No longer are viewers relegated to watching the programming that a network chooses to air during primetime. They can now choose not only the time at which they watch a TV show, but the content of the TV shows as well. This change in media consumption

behaviors is part of the larger arena of media customization, where consumers are increasingly able to pick and choose their media habits. This shift is particularly evident in younger generations, where “thirty-four percent of millennials surveyed watch mostly online video or no broadcast television” (Beaujon, 2013, para. 1).

### **High-Dosage Media Entertainment**

The phenomenon known as *fear of missing out*, or FOMO, occurs when a person has “pervasive apprehension that others might be having a rewarding experiences from which one is absent” (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013, p. 1841). This uneasiness with being left out of a cultural conversation has left viewers scrambling to keep up with the latest popular TV shows, as viewing certain well-reviewed programs is almost a requirement of popular culture. FOMO may be the reason that the 2014 SuperBowl was the most-watched TV event of in history (Brown, 2014), as people are afraid of missing out on a live sporting event that has a finite ending and a defined outcome. FOMO has changed viewers’ media consumption habits, as they are more and more frequently taking part in high-dosage media entertainment. Before viewers had the opportunity to start watching a TV show whenever they wanted, they could potentially miss out on programming that their friends or the general public were talking about.

In the changing media world where the rules of pacing no longer apply to the narratives playing out in TV shows, a new understanding of the dosage of media consumption should be proposed. Binge-watching should be understood as a form of high-dosage media entertainment. High-dosage media entertainment can be conceptualized as the opportunity for a viewer to consume a large amount of the same storyline or group of characters in a single sitting. This includes several variations of entertainment content, such as marathon programming, DVD box

sets of TV shows, or even movie sequels. These forms of content share some similarities, yet there are some differences.

Marathon programming is the practice of a network or cable news channel scheduling large blocks of an existing TV show, where episodes air consecutively, in order. This usually occurs before a season premiere of a TV show, or when there is some other occasion to celebrate a specific TV show. Some viewers may use this as an opportunity to watch episodes that they have never seen before, but the content itself is not new to the audience. Viewers also do not have the ability to control when the episodes air; marathons begin at a certain time and end at another, and the viewer must watch during those hours or miss portions of the narrative. By using a DVR to record the episodes in a marathon, viewers may shift marathon programming into binge-watching. However, a marathon of episodes by itself does not allow viewers to control the pace of the narrative.

DVD box sets share some of the same qualities as marathon programming. While DVDs of a TV show offer viewers a chance to watch entire seasons or a full series, it may be unlikely that an individual would spend the money to purchase DVDs of a TV show that they had never seen before. It would be more likely for someone to purchase DVDs of their favorite TV show that they may watch them at their discretion. This still qualifies as high-dosage media entertainment, but can only be considered binge-watching if the viewer has never seen the content before. DVD box sets are primarily consumed by people who already watched the TV show, or whose FOMO forced them to watch in order to become part of the cultural conversation. While some people may never commit to binge-watching a TV show because they may have FOMO surrounding not being able to watch every episode instantly, others may binge-watch because they have FOMO on shows that have become popular in later seasons. FOMO

may also overcome an individual's desire to watch at their own pace, and instead force them to watch a TV show faster than they would normally desire to do.

Another form of high-dosage media entertainment can occur when a person watches several movies that, together, are part of a franchise. This provides many hours of content that contain the same story and characters, thus allowing the viewer to become immersed and transported into a narrative world. The eight movies that make up the wildly successful *Harry Potter* franchise would allow viewers to have over 20 hours of content to watch in a short amount of time. However, the narrative structure of movie franchises and TV series are still different. Movies rarely end on a cliffhanger, and even if there are multiple movies in a franchise, they are generally much shorter in length even than a single TV season.

There is some disagreement on how binge-watching differs from regular TV viewing, particularly marathon programming found on cable networks (Paskin, 2013). Forms of high-dosage media entertainment have existed for years, but recent scholarship indicates that "binge-watching is fundamentally different from these experiences" (Conlin & Sharples, 2014, p. 8). The three primary differences between binge-watching and other forms of media consumption are control, availability, and originality. The control over the pacing of a narrative separates binge-watching from other types of viewing experiences; control offers a greater ability for the viewer to be transported into the narrative world. A marathon generally refers to the broadcasting of sequential episodes by a TV network, whereas binge-watching is the act of watching many episodes by the viewer. If an individual can choose to watch the next episode at the conclusion of the first, and not have to wait a week for the next episode, they surely become more involved and transported with the storyline and the characters in the TV show. This ties into the availability of TV content.

## Hour-Long Serial Dramas

When it is discussed in the popular press, binge-watching has become closely associated with hour-long, scripted TV dramas (Paskin, 2013). Programs such as *Downton Abbey* or *Mad Men* have become staples of binge-watchers in the several seasons that they have been airing. This is a result of content producers offering increasingly complex, serial dramas that may have been difficult for viewers to drop in on. In serial dramas, such as hour-long programming common to binge-watching, “storylines develop and are resolved over multiple episodes, [which] allows viewers to build strong relationships with characters” (Eden et al., 2014, p. 507). One of Slate’s TV critics argues that even though binge-watching has been linked with well-written programming, it is little different than watching hours upon hours of a reality TV program (Paskin, 2013). She states that “I like to tell myself that I watch a show like *Orange is the New Black* in 24 hours just because it’s great, but I think it might be just because it’s on” (Paskin, 2013, para. 4). However, programs like *Orange is the New Black* are never *just on*. This specific TV show, along with other programs that people binge-watch, must be actively sought out by the viewer. There is no network or cable channel telling them what to watch. Instead, viewers must purposefully select a TV show to binge-watch, and must consciously elect to continue watching consequent episodes.

An example of an hour-long drama that is not only designed for binge-watching, but benefitted greatly from its viewers being able to binge-watch, is *Breaking Bad*. An hour-long drama that aired on cable network AMC for five seasons,

*Breaking Bad* is a show that revolves around addiction. Not just the plot, mind you, but the way its fans consume it. There are no casual users. Once you start watching it,

suddenly you find yourself sifting through each new episode and plot point with the rigor of a junkie looking for a lost crystal in the carpet (Watercutter, 2013, para. 1).

*Breaking Bad* premiered to a modest audience in early 2008, but by the time the series finale aired in 2013, it had gained a vast audience of loyal viewers, and was listed by the Guinness Book of World Records as the highest-rated cable TV show of all time (Janela, 2013). The show consistently increased its audience in Seasons 3 through 5 (the final season), a feat previously considered impossible without viewers who binge-watched early seasons that were available online. Binge-watching *Breaking Bad* was possible through streaming services, like Netflix, and “it was those services that, according to *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan, allowed fans to catch up on his acclaimed AMC show and join it in later seasons” (Watercutter, 2013, para. 2). Gilligan believes that without the ability to binge-watch old episodes, the audience for *Breaking Bad* would never have increased, and the show would not have found the overwhelming success that it enjoyed in later seasons (Watercutter, 2013).

Hour-long, serial dramas are ideal for binge-watching, as they present viewers with a linear narrative that continues from the first episode through the rest of the TV show. Unlike sitcoms with compartmentalized plotlines that begin and end with each episode, hour-long dramas often feature a single plotline that is elaborated upon with each consecutive episode, and it may become difficult for viewers to tell where one episode ends and the next begins. Hour-long dramas often feature cliffhangers at the end of an episode which leaves viewers wanting more; if the viewer is binge-watching, they have the opportunity to immediately resolve the suspense created by the cliffhanger by instantly moving on to the next episode. This is how binge-watching occurs: a linear narrative that lures viewers to continue watching, and a streaming service that allows the viewer an uninterrupted viewing experience.

## Original Content

In order to capitalize on the phenomenon of binge-watching, streaming service Netflix began creating its own original content, and releasing full seasons at once in order to create an ideal setting for binge-watching to occur. Not only is this original programming designed to be binge-watched, it is both beloved by viewers and well-received by critics. Netflix is not simply producing programming quickly in order to benefit financially from viewers' changing media habits, they are producing quality content that rivals more established networks and cable channels, as "Netflix's ambition to challenge HBO as a destination for quality original programming will require fabulous craftsmanship" (Leonard, 2014, para. 14). The effectiveness of this strategy is evident in that "TV series accounted for about three-fourths of titles viewed" (Snider, 2014, para. 2)

Netflix is confident it is creating content that viewers will want to binge-watch, as they are using data from existing media content to decide how and what type of TV shows they want to create:

Netflix's data indicated that the same subscribers who loved the original BBC production [of *House of Cards*] also gobbled down movies starring Kevin Spacey or directed by David Fincher. Therefore, concluded Netflix executives, a remake of the BBC drama with Spacey and Fincher attached was a no-brainer, to the point that the company committed \$100 million for two 13-episode seasons (Leonard, 2014, para. 4).

Creating TV content that viewers cannot wait to binge-watch requires that Netflix "premieres its original programs in one full swoop, releasing all episodes of a season at once, rather than parceling them out" (Seward, 2013, para. 2). This allows viewers to immediately binge-watch the entire season, rather than waiting for a new episode each week. However,

streaming services have remained silent on the actual numbers of viewers consuming their original programming (Collins, 2013; Rogowsky, 2013; Kleinman, 2014), although “the Emmy nods for *House of Cards*...make it clear Hollywood has accepted streaming series as viable programming” (Collins, 2013, para. 2). Instead of releasing the number of viewers, Netflix touts the number of subscribers it has (Kleinman, 2014). When the second season of *House of Cards* premiered in early 2014, 668,000 viewers had binge-watched the entire 13-episode, 11-hour season within the first 72 hours of its release, although this represents only 2.2 percent of Netflix’s subscribers (Kleinman, 2014).

### **Outcomes of Narrative Consumption**

#### **Transportation**

Increased transportation should result in loss of connection with the actual world in favor of immersion in a narrative world (Gerrig, 1993; Green & Brock, 2002), as well as a loss of “public self-awareness” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 325; Duval & Wicklund, 1972), and a change in the individual as a result of being transported into a narrative world. When a person is transported:

Parts of the world of origin become inaccessible. In other words, the reader loses access to some real world facts in favor of accepting the narrative world that the author has created. This loss of access may occur on a physical level—a person transported by a story may not notice others entering or leaving the room, for example. More important, however, is the psychological distance from reality. While the person is immersed in the story, she may not be thinking of real-world facts that contradict the assertions made in the narrative (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 325; Gerrig, 1993).

Fictional narratives evoking imagery on the part of the consumer are the primary domain of transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2002; Green & Donahue, 2009). The concept of imagery is important to narrative transportation, as previous studies indicated that imagery and story involvement were positively correlated (Green & Brock, 2002; Nell, 1988).

Transportation theory has found a new application in the changing landscape of TV consumption. Researchers who developed this theory (Green et al., 2004) stated that transportation theory should be applied to situations where consumers had increased access to interactivity with content, such as controlling the pace at which they consume a narrative. While the concept of binge-watching was relatively unknown in 2004 (viewers could watch a marathon of episodes on TV but were still unable to control pacing), these theorists described an ideal situation that now occurs when person binge-watches a TV show. Thus, transportation theory should be applied to binge-watching, expanding the utility of the theory and allowing for a strong theoretical base for the study of binge-watching. Researchers have stated that although reading a book provides the user (reader) with the ability to imagine the settings, characters, and plotlines in a narrative, the visual images associated with film and television may change the experience of transportation, depending on the characteristics of the user and the characteristics of the medium (Green et al., 2004).

Research applying transportation theory in recent years has focused on enjoyment as a primary concept involved in the theory, stating that “enjoyment can benefit from the experience of being immersed in a narrative world through cognitive, emotional and imaginary involvement as well as from the consequences of that immersion, which include emotional connections with characters and self-transformations” (Batat & Wohlfiel, 2009, p. 372). Becoming transported into a narrative world not only affects a person’s experience with a narrative world, but it also

affects the identity and self-perception of the individual (Slater, Johnson, Cohen, Comello & Ewoldsen, 2014). Scholarship on how people craft an identity through stories and transportation proposes that:

When we become absorbed or transported into a narrative, when we become emotionally and imaginatively identified with a character or characters, we are momentarily relieved of the task of maintenance of our personal and social identity. We are no longer confined to the roles, unrealized potentials, or limitations of that identity. We have temporarily expanded the boundaries of the personal and social self (Slater et al., 2014, p. 444).

Based on the idea that transportation is increased when an individual has continual access to a narrative (Green et al., 2004), the following research question regarding binge-watching and transportation (Conlin & Sharples, 2014) is proposed.

RQ<sub>1</sub>: Will the manner in which a person watches a TV show affect transportation into the narrative?

### **Character Identification**

Binge-watching may provide audiences with an increased ability to be transported into a narrative world, as well as to form moral evaluations about the characters that live there. Krakowiak and Oliver (2012) found that “bad” or morally ambiguous characters in lead roles did not decrease transportation. In this case, audiences may experience transportation as a result of attempting to form judgments about characters. Antiheroes, such as advertising executive and main character Don Draper in AMC’s *Mad Men*, require complicated narratives to endear audiences to them in light of their moral pitfalls. These types of characters and narratives require elaborate plotlines taking place over an entire season; if a viewer did not watch the entire narrative arc from start to finish, they would lose the details and subtle plot points necessary to

identify with complicated antihero characters. TV shows that are commonly binge-watched often feature complicated characters, such as Walter White in *Breaking Bad*, or the Lannisters of *Game of Thrones*. Previous TV plot formats contained static characters, making it easier for a viewer to casually watch a TV show, jumping in and out of the narrative and missing episodes. This is not the case with TV shows that people like to binge-watch, where hour-long dramas contain antiheroes and complicated characters.

Transportation may also foster an increased sense of character identification, where the viewer identifies with the emotions and experiences of the characters in the narrative (Cohen, 2001). Because “identification requires that we forget ourselves and become the other” (Cohen, 2001, p. 247), increased transportation may result in increased identification with narrative characters. Identification results in “feelings of affinity, friendship, similarity, and liking of media characters” (Cohen, 2001, p. 249), an outcome of transportation described by Green and Brock (2000).

Based on the idea that “one common feeling we experience when we become deeply absorbed in a story is that we come to care deeply about the characters” (Tal-Or & Cohen, 202, p. 403), and that watching a narrative at an increased pace would also foster increased transportation—or absorption—into the narrative, the following research question is proposed:

RQ<sub>2</sub>: Will the manner in which a person watches a TV show affect character identification?

### **Narrative Engagement**

Study of entertainment theory has resulted in literature about a concept known as narrative engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Narrative engagement is based on the idea that when a person consumes a narrative, they form a mental model of the story, setting, and

characters in their mind (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; Graesser, Olde, & Klettke, 2002; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2004; Zwann, Langston, & Graesser, 1995). Research on narrative engagement has resulted in the idea that “these models, representing settings, characters, and situations, are created by combining information from the text with knowledge the reader or viewer already possesses about life in general as well as about the specific topic and genre of the narrative” (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009, p. 322). A mental model of a narrative is also described as “a microworld that includes a spatial setting, agents in pursuit of goals, and causal chains of events that unfold chronologically” (Graesser et al., 2002, p. 258.)

The mental model constructed by the media consumer must constantly evolve and update as the story presented in the narrative progresses (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; Zwann et al., 1995). Narrative engagement is a result of a media consumer being able to fully construct a mental model of the narrative they are consuming (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). A mental model is the “mental microworld of what the story is about...the spatial setting and the chronological sequence of episodes in the plot” (Graesser et al., 2002, p. 234).

Narrative engagement, as explicated by Busselle & Bilandzic (2009) can be subdivided into four dimensions: (a) narrative understanding, (b) attentional focus, (c) emotional engagement, and (d) narrative presence. The first dimension, narrative understanding, is defined as the “ease in construction models of meaning” (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009, p. 341), or the simplicity of understanding or comprehending the events, characters, and settings in a narrative (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Attentional focus, the second dimension, is related to flow, where a person is not aware that they are expending resources to focus on a narrative, but instead are able to focus their attention with little effort (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). The third dimension is emotional engagement, unpacked as the ability to feel connection to and emotion towards

characters, although there is no specific emotion that must occur (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). This connection towards characters is a related outcome of increased transportation, as outlined by transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000). The fourth and final dimension of narrative engagement is narrative presence, which is the experience “that one has left the actual world and entered the story” (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009, p. 341), and that the individual is in entirely new surroundings, otherwise known as transportation (Green et al., 2004).

Like transportation, narrative engagement should be increased if a person has the ability to remain fully immersed in a narrative world, and the storyline is not interrupted. However, narrative engagement can be studied alongside transportation. The authors who developed and explicated narrative engagement have stated that, in relation to the measure of transportation developed by Green & Brock (2000), “we do not see our scale and subscales as redundant with other scales, but instead as measuring a more fundamental set of engagement sensations that may be confounded with other constructs in other scales” (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009, p. 342).

Binge-watching may allow people to experience a higher level of narrative engagement as a result of increased engagement possibility with the narrative through the control of pacing. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

RQ<sub>3</sub>: Will the manner in which a person watches a TV show affect narrative engagement?

### **Enjoyment of Media Content**

*“After all, if individuals did not enjoy media, why would they willingly devote the majority of their leisure time to this specific activity?” (Oliver & Nabi, 2004, p. 285)*

Enjoyment, the pleasurable experience that results as an outcome of consuming media content that one delights in, has been studied as one of the primary goals of media consumption,

and one of the main reasons that people decide to consume entertainment media. Transportation theory attempts to explain the mechanisms contributing to enjoyment, such as how narrative content is specifically related to enjoyment, and “transportation research has been focused almost exclusively on the attitudinal or enjoyment consequences of transportation” (Greenwood, 2008, p. 416). The relationship between transportation and enjoyment is that “narrative experiences that are more engaging should result in greater enjoyment” (Buselle & Bilzandic, 2009, p. 326), and therefore factors that increase transportation should also increase enjoyment of media content.

Enjoyment has been conceptualized as an attitude (Nabi & Krmar, 2004) or a pleasurable experience. More recently, media scholars have broken enjoyment into two different concepts (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010), separating the pleasurable experience of enjoyment (hedonic enjoyment) from the appreciation that occurs when an experience is more meaningful than pleasurable (eudaimonic enjoyment). Enjoyment occurs in both of these cases (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Despite the descriptions of enjoyment as both appreciation and pleasure, scholars agree that enjoyment is a primary motivation for media consumption.

There is some consensus on the idea that enjoyment is the sought-after outcome of media consumption; regardless of the type of media content, researchers generally agree that audiences are seeking enjoyment as the main form of fulfillment after consuming media content (Nabi, Stitt, Halford, & Finnerty, 2006; Oliver & Raney, 2011). Enjoyment must be the goal of the media consumer, “that is, if a person chooses to view or continues to view some media offering, it is assumed that, by definition, the person is in some way enjoys the activity” (Oliver & Nabi, 2004, p. 285).

Researchers have noted that “media enjoyment is a complex experience, reflecting much more than pleasure or delight” (Oliver & Nabi, 2004, p. 286), and therefore a more complex definition of enjoyment is needed if it will be continually used in communication research. The nature of the term enjoyment has confounded communication researchers for some time (Raney, 2002; Nabi & Krcmar, 2004; Oliver & Nabi, 2004). There is little disagreement that enjoyment is the goal of a media user when he or she makes a decision about what media content to consume, but there is substantial disagreement on what the term enjoyment precisely means. Enjoying media content traditionally means finding pleasure and happiness in it; enjoyment and happiness are tied together in people’s consciousness. However, enjoyment does not always result as the outcome of an experience with happy, upbeat content. Watching sad or scary media content can also result in enjoyment (Oliver, 1993), revealing the sometimes paradoxical nature of media enjoyment. This paradox of enjoyment does not decrease the value of understanding “how powerfully we can be transported to narrative worlds even under unfavorable circumstances” (Gerrig, 1993, p. 10).

Ideas about enjoyment exist in the public consciousness, supporting the idea that enjoyment should be a complex and multifaceted concept. Many people could describe some of their media choices as a “guilty pleasure;” reality programs in particular can often be associated with a feeling of guilt mingled with enjoyment (Nabi et al., 2006). Researchers state that “entertainment consumption is frequently referred to as a guilty pleasure—an activity that, although enjoyable, is not particularly enriching” (Oliver & Raney, 2014, p. 361). The term binge-watching instantly harkens connotations of overindulgence and guilt. The social factors identified by Denham (2004) may play a part in this feeling of guilt mingled with enjoyment. Because reality programming—or any other gluttony and excess of media content—can

sometimes be seen as trashy, low class, or uninformative, audiences may feel reluctance in admitting that they enjoy the content. This is not to say that all media consumption causes feelings of guilt, but rather that if a person feels they have overindulged in media, or have consumed media that is socially undesirable, they may feel guilt associated with their media consumption.

Transportation and enjoyment have been shown to be highly positively correlated (Bilzandic & Busselle, 2006; Green et al., 2004; Hall & Bracken, 2011), yet these two concepts are not the same. Transportation facilitates enjoyment, but enjoyment can occur in contexts other than narrative consumption, and without the consumption of a narrative or storyline. Similar to enjoyment, transportation is a desired state (Green & Brock, 2000; Green & Brock, 2002; Green et al., 2004). Transportation is necessary for the enjoyment of a narrative, and the interruption of a narrative can also detract from transportation; if a person is removed from the world they are transported to, their transportation is disrupted, thus decreasing enjoyment (Green et al., 2004). However, the inverse has not been found to be true, as enjoyment is not immediately necessary for a person to be transported (Green et al., 2004).

By immersing themselves in the narrative, the audience transports themselves into that world, and “one key element of an enjoyable media experience is that it takes individuals away from their mundane reality and into a story world” (Green et al., 2004, p. 311). In relation to entertainment and media content, enjoyment does not have a solely pleasurable and hedonic connotation. Enjoyment, in this theoretical model, is an outcome resulting from media experience whether the audience member experiences happiness or not. Transportation theory attempts to explain “a) the phenomenological experience of enjoyment through immersion in a

narrative world, b) enjoyment through beneficial consequences of media exposure, and c) the circumstances under which enjoyment is enhanced or reduced” (Green et al., 2004, p. 312).

Scholars suggest that when a media consumer complains they did not enjoy a movie or book, it is because they were not transported into the narrative, “they ‘just couldn’t get into it” (Green et al., 2004, p. 314). In the case of narrative films, interrupted transportation can also affect enjoyment:

having one’s attention unexpectedly diverted from a narrative in which one is engrossed—for instance, by fellow theatergoers talking audibly during a movie—is often sufficient to arouse one’s ire, likely due to the fact that one was abruptly seized from the world to which one had been transported. Enjoyment is surely disrupted in these situations (Green et al., 2004, p. 314).

In the case of television programming, the interruption occurring at the end of each episode often diverts the viewer’s attention. Binge-watching removes this interruption, allowing the viewer to remain transported. Transportation theory provides an explanation to the multifaceted nature of enjoyment in that:

the enjoyment of a transportation experience...does not necessarily lie in the valence of the emotions evoked by a narrative, but in the process of temporarily leaving one’s reality behind and emerging from the experience somehow different from the person one was before entering the milieu of the narrative (Green et al., 2004, p. 315).

While feeling sad, under the traditional definition, does not seem to be enjoyable, the experience of sadness can affect the enjoyment of media content. Similar to the concept of transportation, involvement in media content can affect the reaction of the viewer. Involvement relates to the perception of reality that a viewer has while consuming media content (Ahn, Jin &

Ritterfeld, 2012). The relationship between feeling sad and becoming “involved” in a narrative can seem to go against common sense. Instead of a viewer feeling more sadness because they perceive a narrative to be realistic, viewers perceive a story to be realistic if they feel sad (Ahn et al., 2012). The paradox of enjoyment relates to involvement in that the experience of sadness contributes to involvement, and involvement contributes to the perception of realism. It could be concluded that realism facilitates enjoyment, syllogistically establishing that sadness contributes to enjoyment.

In order to better understand the relationship between binge-watching and enjoyment, the following research question is proposed:

RQ<sub>4</sub>: Will the manner in which a person watches a TV show affect enjoyment?

RQ<sub>5a</sub>: To what extent does transportation moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and enjoyment?

RQ<sub>5b</sub>: To what extent does character identification moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and enjoyment?

RQ<sub>5c</sub>: To what extent does narrative engagement moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and enjoyment?

### **Flow and Media Content**

Enjoyment can transpire surrounding a number of experiences, including everyday tasks and activities that require concentration, effort, and attention. Flow, a state described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1997), refers to the experience of being so completely involved in an activity that an individual loses track of time, responsibilities, or the outside world. Flow, therefore, is defined by the absorption that occurs within a set, defined space: “most flow experiences occur with activities that are goal directed, bounded by rules, and require mental

energy and appropriate skills” (Sweetser & Wyeth, 2005, p. 3). Transportation “might be conceived as a special case of a flow experience” (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010, p. 405) that can only occur as a result of an experience with narrative content.

Flow has been a subject of interest in many past investigations of transportation theory (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; Green & Brock, 2002; Green & Donhue, 2009; Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010), revealing that transportation is a dimension of flow “just as people may arrange their lives to experience flow, individuals may seek out narratives that transport them to other worlds. People plan for and protect experiences in which they expect to be transported” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 326).

Binge-watching allows viewers to achieve a flow state, which is a desired result of participation in any activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The relationship between flow and enjoyment has been investigated (Sherry, 2004; Green & Brock, 2002), with researchers finding increased flow resulted in increased enjoyment and transportation. While there are many other opportunities for individuals to achieve a flow state outside of media consumption, binge-watching may provide a relaxing and fulfilling way to experience flow by allowing viewers to have continuous access to the content that they are enjoying. Flow, enjoyment, and transportation are all desired states resulting from media consumption, and binge-watching may allow individuals to experience these concepts in ways not previously possible or plausible. When users become immersed in a narrative world, they are experiencing flow. Flow is therefore critical to a person’s experience of enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Enjoyment and flow are intertwined (Sherry, 2004); enjoyment is sought by a person who attempts to achieve the flow state.

One particular aspect of flow potentially influencing enjoyment is control (Fang & Zhao, 2010; Grodal, 2000; Sweetser & Wyeth, 2005). The control element of binge-watching refers to the ability of the viewer to regulate the pacing of the narrative or storyline. Transportation is the state of flow that a person experiences when they are immersed specifically in a narrative. Transportation cannot be experienced outside of narrative content, whereas flow can be achieved in any number of experiences and any number of mediums.

Media flow is somewhat like transportation in that it involves “focused concentration, loss of self-consciousness, a sense that one is in control of the situation, distortion of temporal experience, and the experience of the activity as intrinsically rewarding” (Sherry, 2004, p. 336). Sherry (2004) also asserts that flow depends on the media consumer’s ability to interpret the content that they are consuming, and that enjoyment is dependent upon the consumer’s experience of flow. Therefore, if a person experiences flow (like transportation) even though the content contains sad or tragic storylines, they can experience enjoyment.

Transportation is related to flow and enjoyment in this way: transportation is the particular experience of flow that results from narrative content, and transportation facilitates enjoyment. Transportation can be conceptualized as the narrative element of flow because of the similarities existing between the description of the flow state and transportation: “individuals who are transported are fully concentrating on the story. They often lose track of time or fail to notice events occurring around them because of their focused involvement in the world of the narrative” (Green et al., 2004, p. 315). Because transportation cannot occur without a narrative, flow and transportation are not the same, but transportation is the flow state achieved during the consumption of a narrative.

## Personality Traits

### Transportability

One of the primary criticisms of transportation theory is that it cannot describe which personality traits pre-dispose a person to facilitate transportation into a narrative (Green et al., 2004; Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004). Despite this criticism, the developer of transportation theory has stated that “research has also documented reliable individual differences in the tendency to become transported” (Green, 2005, p. 56).

Transportability is the personality trait corresponding with the ability of a person to become transported into a narrative (Dal Cin et al., 2004; Greenwood, 2008). Those higher in transportability--regardless of the content or other factors associated with their media experience--may be more likely to be able to be transported into a storyline (Dal Cin et al., 2004). The transportation scale, by Green and Brock (2000), “although originally designed as a state scale to assess degree of media immersion following exposure to a specific program” (Greenwood, 2008, p. 416), has been adapted into a separate scale to capture the trait of transportability (Dal Cin et al., 2004). Researchers contend that “some individuals seem to be readily and deeply transported by narratives, whereas others do not seem to experience the same level of transportation” (Dal Cin et al., 2004, p. 183), where people more easily predisposed toward transportability score higher on the scale (Dal Cin et al., 2004).

The basic assumption surrounding transportability is that “other things being equal, transportability should predict who is persuaded by narrative appeals, such as those high in transportability should be more persuaded by a narrative than those low in transportability” (Dal Cin et al., 2004, p. 183). Transportability allows an individual to become more transported into

most narratives, and “individuals who are more transportable are more likely to become transported into any particular story” (Green & Jenkins, 2014, p. 490)

To assess the trait of transportability, Dal Cin, Zanna, and Fong (2004) adapted the transportation scale developed by Green and Brock (2000) into a 20-item scale designed to measure transportability. Transportability should moderate other effects that are caused by variables that affect transportation (Dal Cin et al., 2004).

Thus, transportability, as a personality trait, should ably predict how people who watch TV shows in different ways react to media content. Personality traits should shift the states resulting from interaction with TV content. As a result, the following set of research questions are proposed:

RQ<sub>6a</sub>: To what extent does transportability moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and transportation?

RQ<sub>6b</sub>: To what extent does transportability moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and character identification?

RQ<sub>6c</sub>: To what extent does transportability moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and narrative engagement?

### **Fantasy Empathy**

The term empathy refers to “the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another” (Davis, 1983, p. 113). Empathy is trait where, if a person possesses empathy, they may respond to many types of stimuli, where outcomes are varying emotions or better understanding of the emotions of others (Hall & Bracken, 2011). Transportation theory predicts that increased transportation into a narrative world should result in increased character liking (Green & Brock, 2000), which relates to the fantasy empathy that an individual feels for the

characters in the narrative. If a person is able to feel empathy towards the emotions a character is experiencing, they may be more likely to feel an affinity towards that character. Thus, trait-like fantasy empathy may mediate the relationship between transportation and character liking.

Recent research on transportation theory has focused on how transportation relates to empathy and realism, uncovering that transportation was positively correlated with fantasy empathy and enjoyment (Hall & Bracken, 2011). Hall and Bracken (2011) also investigated the relationship between transportation and personality traits, and concluding that “the fantasy empathy scale may also capture a trait-like tendency to become transported into mediated narratives” (Hall & Bracken, 2011, p. 97), whereas people who scored higher on fantasy empathy also were more likely to be transported into a narrative (Hall & Bracken, 2011).

Research on empathy as a personality trait reveals four dimensions to empathy: (a) personal distress, (b) empathic concern, (c) perspective-taking, and (d) fantasy empathy (Davis, 1980; Davis, 1983; Hall & Bracken, 2011). Of particular interest is fantasy empathy, defined as the likelihood of a person to react to seeing another person experience emotion (Davis, 1980; Davis, 1983). The measure of fantasy empathy “appears to tap the tendency to imaginatively transpose oneself into fictional situations” (Davis, 1980, p. 11). People who have higher fantasy empathy “tend to display greater physiological arousal (palmar sweating) to a filmed depiction of another’s emotional experience” (Davis, 1983, p. 115). A person with high fantasy empathy may react to seeing another person’s emotions even if they are fictional, such as a person who is consuming narrative content (Hall & Bracken, 2011).

Recently, researchers have investigated whether trait empathy can affect a person’s ability to be transported into a narrative (Hall & Bracken, 2011). Results showed that “audience members with a relatively strong tendency to imagine themselves into the place of others or to

become involved with fictional characters are more likely to feel transported into a film narrative and thus to experience more enjoyment” (Hall & Bracken, 2011, p. 93). The scholars also demonstrated that fantasy empathy was positively related to transportation into a narrative, providing an impetus for the following research questions to assess the multiple relationships between fantasy empathy and outcomes of narrative consumption:

RQ<sub>7a</sub>: To what extent does fantasy empathy moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and transportation?

RQ<sub>7b</sub>: To what extent does fantasy empathy moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and character identification?

RQ<sub>7c</sub>: To what extent does fantasy empathy moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and narrative engagement?

Additionally, as enjoyment is the primary perceived outcome of entertainment consumption, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ<sub>8a</sub>: To what extent does transportability moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and enjoyment?

RQ<sub>8b</sub>: To what extent does fantasy empathy moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and enjoyment?

### **Motivations for Entertainment Consumption**

Enjoyment, as one of the primary motivations for consuming media, has been conceptualized as two distinct concepts: hedonic enjoyment and eudaimonic enjoyment, or appreciation (Lewis, Tamborini, & Weber, 2014; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Raney, 2011; Rieger, Reinecke, Frischlich, & Bente, 2014). This multifaceted view of enjoyment is necessary because “the view on recipients as solely seeking hedonically pleasant states is too narrow to

capture the complex reality of media entertainment” (Rieger et al., 2014, p. 458). While the more traditional understanding of enjoyment as a pleasurable experience is associated with hedonic enjoyment, eudaimonic enjoyment can be conceived of as appreciation, as “entertainment experience consists of more than mere pleasure and is characterized by mixed affect and more complex experiences such as feeling inspired, touched, or moved” (Rieger et al., 2014, p. 457).

Recent studies have worked to expand the understanding of enjoyment by suggesting that not only can a viewer experience hedonic and eudaimonic enjoyment as the outcomes of media consumption, but also there are hedonic and non-hedonic motivations associated with enjoyment (Tamborini, Grizzard, Bowman, Reinecke, Lewis & Eden, 2011). Scholars suggest that there are three basic needs that, when satisfied, result in psychological satisfaction: autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Eudaimonic enjoyment (or appreciation) may help to satisfy these needs. The need of relatedness might be satisfied through the viewing of sad or tragic media content; a viewer might begin to relate with a media character if they see that the character is experiencing similar emotional situations as themselves. Therefore, “enjoyment and appreciation, which have been proposed to be two separate responses, may both be understood as the satisfaction of similar needs distinguished by intuitive versus rational processing” (Tamborini et al., 2011, p. 1039).

Some scholars (Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, Grizzard, & Organ, 2010) suggest that this understanding of enjoyment accounting for intrinsic needs is more complete because:

Prior explications that fail to clearly denote any of the essential qualities of the construct and instead either a) provide simple tautological definitions of enjoyment as pleasure, b)

do not explicitly define enjoyment as need satisfaction, or c) define enjoyment as the satisfaction of needs that are not theoretically linked (Tamborini et al., 2010, p. 769).

Not only are there two sides to enjoyment, there are multiple motivations for consuming entertainment (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Individuals can be hedonically motivated, where they seek entertainment to experience pleasure. Other people can be eudaimonically motivated, seeking entertainment to appreciate content (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Raney, 2011). Eudaimonic motivation refers to the desire “to engage in sad, poignant, or dramatic entertainment media” (Rieger et al., 2014, p. 458), while hedonic motivations are satisfied by more lighthearted, pleasurable media content (Oliver & Raney, 2011).

Oliver and Raney (2011) predicted that different motivations for consuming entertainment media would result in different experiences with different types of media, as well as different choices of media content and experiences. Individuals who scored highly on their hedonic motivations scale were more likely to choose entertainment because they were seeking fun and pleasure, while individuals who scored highly on their eudaimonic motivations scale were more likely to choose entertainment because they were seeking meaningfulness or truth (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Hedonic motivations refers to an individual being more likely to make entertainment choices based on a pleasurable experience, while eudaimonic motivations refers to an individual being more likely to “use entertainment as a means of contemplating human poignancies and meaningful life questions” (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, p. 57). Both of these motivations represent different dimensions of enjoyment, where hedonic enjoyment is pleasurable, and eudaimonic enjoyment is appreciation (Oliver & Raney, 2011). These two aspects of enjoyment may be experienced simultaneously or separately. Additionally,

individuals may have a different experience when they binge-watch depending on whether they have primarily hedonic or eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption.

While viewers may seek TV shows providing them with eudaimonic enjoyment and meaningfulness, they may also experience increased hedonic enjoyment through the act of binge-watching. Regardless of the content they consume, viewers may experience increased enjoyment when they have full access to multiple episodes of a TV show. Viewers who may have only sought dramatic TV programming for its eudaimonic benefits may also experience hedonic enjoyment when they can continuously consume episodes and therefore be transported into a narrative world, thus increasing the overall experience of enjoyment. Binge-watching may contribute to a multidimensional experience of enjoyment, where both hedonic and eudaimonic motivations are fulfilled.

People with different motivations for entertainment consumption may prefer to watch TV in different ways, whether it is live on TV, time-shifted within seven days, or on demand (which includes binge-watching). Consequently, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ<sub>9a</sub>: At which pace do people with stronger hedonic motivations prefer to watch TV?

RQ<sub>9b</sub>: At which pace do people with stronger eudaimonic motivations prefer to watch TV?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHOD

To assess the relationships between the variables described above, this study employed a survey, as this method allows researchers to ask respondents about their actual experiences of watching TV without relying on an artificial experience, akin to one created by an experiment. While such media effects research could be stronger in an experimental setting, binge-watching takes place over a large amount of time, and this would be a difficult authentic experience to replicate in an experiment. The survey in this study took place entirely online, where the survey software Qualtrics was used to customize and tailor the survey to the respondent. All continuous variables described below were measured using a nine-point Likert scale, where lower numbers represent a lower presence of each variable.

#### **Sampling**

Respondents were recruited using Qualtrics Panels, a tool that allows researchers access to generalizable samples. Compensation for time spent taking the survey is offered to respondents in the form of points on their Qualtrics account, which they can redeem for monetary gift cards. Respondents are recruited either by identifying themselves on the Qualtrics website, or being recruited by Qualtrics through external lists purchased by Qualtrics. Respondents received approximately four dollars in compensation for their responses (J. Hill, personal communication, January 8, 2013). Although this is a non-probability, convenience sampling method, it allowed for a national sample.

## Instrument Construction

A full copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix A. After respondents agreed to participate in the study, they were first asked to answer questions about personality traits and motivations for entertainment consumption: transportability, fantasy empathy, and hedonic and eudaimonic motivations (independent variables). The order of these measures was randomized to control for potential fatigue. Once they answered personality and motivation questions, respondents were shown questions about their preferred methods of watching TV (dependent variable).

Next, respondents were presented with a list of 15 TV shows and asked to indicate which of the 15 they have watched *most or all of the episodes of*. The TV shows were chosen for the list based on the following criteria: each show was an hour-long drama, where the overall storyline continued from episode to episode; the TV show must have had at least 20 episodes available for the audience to have watched; the show must have received high ratings and some critical acclaim. Additionally, these TV shows appeared on lists of TV shows that are the “best to binge-watch” from popular press outlets (Glennon, 2013; Jancelewicz, 2014). This method of selection is appropriate given that this study hopes to measure the experience of watching TV rather than the experience of watching a particular TV show; a viewer’s ability to be transported into a narrative does not depend on “what it is in the narrative with which a reader or viewer is engaged” (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010, p. 406). The resulting list comprised of the following TV shows (in alphabetical order): *Breaking Bad*, *Downton Abbey*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Game of Thrones*, *Homeland*, *House of Cards*, *Lost*, *Mad Men*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Sons of Anarchy*, *The Sopranos*, *The Walking Dead*, *The West Wing*, *The Wire* and *True Blood*.

From there, respondents were asked to answer questions about their experience with one of the TV shows they had indicated they watched. Using Qualtrics, only one of the TV shows that respondents indicated they watched was randomly selected for the respondent to answer questions about. Respondents were directed to think about their particular experience of watching the TV show, answering questions about how they watched the TV show (independent variable), as well as transportation, enjoyment, narrative engagement, and character identification (dependent variables). At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were asked to respond to demographic questions such as age, sex, and education, and thanked for their time and participation.

### **Independent Variables**

The primary independent variable in this study is *how* an individual watched a TV show; this variable is associated with binge-watching. Respondents were asked to specify how they had watched the particular show that they were assigned to answer questions about. They were presented with a list of pre-determined options and asked to state which option *best describes* how they had watched the TV show. The options were developed by exhausting the combinations of different paces (week-by-week, all at once, and all at once followed by week-by-week) and mediums (DVD or Blu-Ray, DVR, streaming, and live) to create a list that was comprehensive of most of the ways that people watch full TV series. The options presented to respondents was as follows:

1. Watched week-by-week using a DVR to record the episodes
2. Watched week-by-week as the episodes came on TV, live or within seven days
3. Watched old episodes all at once on DVD or Blu-Ray, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days

4. Watched old episodes all at once on DVR, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days
5. Watched old episodes all at once online, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days
6. Watched the entire series all at once on DVD or Blu-Ray
7. Watched the entire series all at once using a DVR to record the episodes
8. Watched the entire series all at once, online using a streaming service such as Netflix or Hulu Plus
9. Watched a marathon of episodes as they came on TV
10. Other

If a respondent chose “other” as their method of watching the TV show, they were excluded from the sample.

The personality trait of transportability was measured using the 20-item scale developed by Dal Cin, Zanna, and Fong (2004). This scale was adapted from the original transportation scale by Green and Brock (2000) to represent a trait (transportability) rather than a state (transportation). The transportability scale features 20 statements that individuals respond to by indicating their level of agreement with. Statements contained within the scale include “when reading for pleasure, I get mentally involved in the story” and “when reading for pleasure, I have vivid images of the characters” (Dal Cin et al., 2004). The authors of this scale have stated that the word “reading” may be replaced with the word “watching” when the scale is being used to assess transportability in to visual media, such as television or movies (Dal Cin et al., 2004).

Fantasy empathy was measured using the seven-item scale developed by Davis (1980). Fantasy empathy is only one of four dimensions of trait empathy, and the response items for

fantasy empathy are seven of the original 28 items for trait empathy (Davis, 1980; Davis, 1983). However, it is appropriate to use the fantasy empathy dimension as its own measure, as the original 28-item measure “reliably assesses four separate, and relatively independent, qualities of the individual” (Davis, 1980, p. 16). The seven fantasy empathy items feature statements to which a person responds with a level of agreement. Statements include “I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel” and “after seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters” (Davis, 1980).

Motivations for entertainment consumption were measured using the 12-item scale developed by Oliver and Raney (2011). Six of these items were designed to indicate hedonic motivations, and six of these items were designed to indicate eudaimonic motivations. Therefore, this scale encompasses two individual variables: hedonic motivations and eudaimonic motivations. The six items for hedonic motivations included statements such as “for me, the best movies are ones that are entertaining.” Items for eudaimonic motivations included statements such as “my favorite kinds of movies are ones that make me think” (Oliver & Raney, 2011).

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables measured in this study were preferred method of watching TV, transportation, enjoyment, narrative engagement, and character identification. Each was measured using a nine-point Likert scale. Each question in the dependent variable scales featured the particular name of the TV show that the respondent is answering questions about.

To measure which methods of watching TV are preferred by each individual, respondents were shown three different methods of watching a TV show and asked to indicate how much they enjoyed each method of watching. The three options presented to respondents were consistent with the options present on Nielsen surveys (“More of what we want,” 2014). The

options were: (a) live viewing; (b) time-shifted within seven days; and (c) video on demand. Respondents were instructed as to what each of these options means: live viewing indicates that a viewer watched a TV show as it aired; time-shifted within seven days means that the viewer watched each episode of a TV show within seven days of its original air date; video on demand refers to a viewer watching episodes, seasons, or full series of a TV show at any time, according to their own pace.

The measure for transportation was the 11-item scale developed by Green and Brock (2000). This scale originally featured 15 items—11 general transportation questions, and four story-specific questions. This study employed the 11 general items, as multiple different stories (TV shows) were measured, thus making it impossible to generalize four story-specific questions. This scale featured questions such as “I wanted to learn how the narrative ended.” Some of the questions featured wording such as “while I was reading the narrative” (Green & Brock, 2000). For the purpose of this study, which focused on narratives that were seen on TV, the word “reading” was changed to “watching.” Additionally, the phrase “the narrative” was replaced by the specific name of the TV show that individuals were responding to, resulting in questions that were worded as “while I was watching [the TV show].” For example, the transportation scale on the page for *Breaking Bad* featured the distinct question “while I was watching *Breaking Bad*, I could easily picture the events in it taking place.” Three of the 11 items were reverse-coded.

Enjoyment was measured using a scale consistent with previous research on media consumption. Researchers wishing to measure enjoyment have regularly employed a multi-faceted method using eight dimensions to determine the extent to which media content has been enjoyable (Bilandzic & Busselle, 2006; Hall & Bracken, 2011; Nabi, Finnerty, Domschke, &

Hull, 2006; Oliver, 1993; Perry, Jenzowsky, Hester, King, & Yi, 1997). These studies have asked respondents to “evaluate how well a series of relevant attributes describe” (Hall & Bracken, 2011, p. 94) their experience with communication content. The eight attributes assessed using this method are then combined into a single score representing the respondent’s level of enjoyment. Individuals should state how “enjoyable, boring, entertaining, dull, pleasurable, interesting, captivating, and well-made” (Hall & Bracken, 2011, p. 94) a specific piece of media content is. Questions will be stated as such: “I found watching [TV program] to be enjoyable” and “I found watching [TV program] to be pleasurable” (Hall & Bracken, 2011).

Narrative engagement was measured using the 12-item scale developed by Busselle and Bilandzic (2009). While the full scale is intended to measure narrative engagement, it may also be used to measure four different dimensions of narrative engagement: (a) narrative understanding, (b) attentional focus, (c) emotional engagement, and (d) narrative presence. Each of these four concepts is measured using three items within the full 12-item scale. Six items within the narrative engagement scale were reverse-coded. Items included “I had a hard time recognizing the thread of the story” and “I felt sorry for some of the characters in the story” (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009).

Character identification was measured using the scale developed by Cohen (2001). The 10-item scale is designed to be directed towards the main character in the narrative, and refer “to a specific character in a specific TV show” (Cohen, 2001, p. 256). For each of the TV shows included in the survey, the 10-item measure was adapted to the specific narrative. The character identification scale featured statements which respondents could indicate their level of agreement with on a nine-point Likert scale. Statements included “I think I have a good understanding of [character name]” and “When [character name] succeeded I felt joy, but when [he or she] failed,

I was sad” (Cohen, 2001). In order to accurately measure how the respondents felt about a specific character, the questions in the scale will be directed at the specific lead character in the narrative. The following table displays each TV show that respondents may answer questions about, as well as the lead character and the actor that portrays that character:

*Table 3.1*

*Narrative-specific Lead Characters and Actors*

TV Show	Lead Character	Actor Name
<i>Breaking Bad</i>	Walter White	Bryan Cranston
<i>Downton Abbey</i>	Lady Mary Crawley	Michelle Dockery
<i>Friday Night Lights</i>	Eric Taylor	Kyle Chandler
<i>Game of Thrones</i>	Tyrion Lannister	Peter Dinklage
<i>Homeland</i>	Carrie Mathison	Claire Danes
<i>House of Cards</i>	Frank Underwood	Kevin Spacey
<i>Lost</i>	Jack Shephard	Matthew Fox
<i>Mad Men</i>	Don Draper	Jon Hamm
<i>Orange is the New Black</i>	Piper Chapman	Taylor Schilling
<i>Sons of Anarchy</i>	Jax Teller	Charlie Hunnam
<i>The Sopranos</i>	Tony Soprano	James Gandolfini
<i>The Walking Dead</i>	Rick Grimes	Andrew Lincoln
<i>The West Wing</i>	President Bartlet	Martin Sheen
<i>The Wire</i>	Detective Jimmy McNulty	Dominic West
<i>True Blood</i>	Sookie Stackhouse	Anna Paquin

## Analysis

Data was entered in SPSS, and in order to evaluate the research questions proposed in this study, the following statistical analyses were employed:

*Table 3.2*

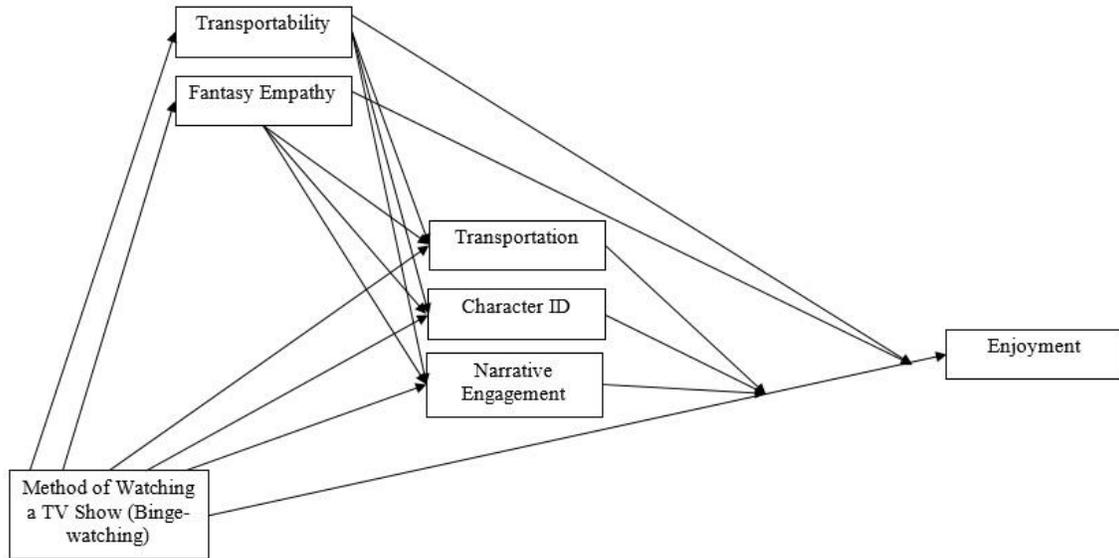
*Statistical Analyses*

Research Question	Independent Variable	Moderating Variable	Dependent Variable	Test
RQ <sub>1</sub>	Categorical		Continuous	One-way ANOVA
RQ <sub>2</sub>	Categorical		Continuous	One-way ANOVA
RQ <sub>3</sub>	Categorical		Continuous	One-way ANOVA
RQ <sub>4</sub>	Categorical		Continuous	One-way ANOVA
RQ <sub>5a-c</sub>	Categorical	Continuous	Continuous	ANCOVA/GLM
RQ <sub>6a-c</sub>	Categorical	Continuous	Continuous	ANCOVA/GLM
RQ <sub>7a-c</sub>	Categorical	Continuous	Continuous	ANCOVA/GLM
RQ <sub>8a-b</sub>	Categorical	Continuous	Continuous	ANCOVA/GLM
RQ <sub>9a-b</sub>	Continuous		Continuous	Linear Regression

The following model represents the proposed model that will be tested using the above research questions:

Figure 3.1

Proposed Model



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### **Description of the Sample**

Three-hundred ninety individuals responded to the survey, and each of these respondents completed every question of the instrument via forced-response questions. Of these 390, respondents who indicated they had never watched any of the TV shows offered in the survey were excluded ( $N = 8$ ), and an additional three respondents were excluded because they failed reliability checks (e.g., entering the same response option for every question). Consequently, 379 acceptable respondents were included in the analysis.

There were 163 male respondents (43 percent of the sample) and 216 female respondents (57 percent of the sample). The mean age of respondents in this sample was 47 years old ( $SD = 14.23$ ). Ages ranged from 19 years old to 76 years old, and were relatively normally distributed within this range (skewness =  $-.01$ , kurtosis =  $-1.06$ ). Respondents represented individuals from 40 of the 50 states. Four respondents (1.1 percent of the sample) indicated they had no high school degree, 50 (13.2 percent) replied that they had a high school diploma or equivalent, 139 (36.7 percent) said they had some college education, 102 (26.9 percent) indicated they had an undergraduate degree, 9 (2.4 percent) had completed some graduate work, and 75 (19.8 percent) respondents said they had a graduate degree. 2010 U.S. Census data indicates that the median age for residents is 37.2 years old, and that 49.2 percent of the population is male, while 50.8 percent is female (“2010 Census Briefs”). This sample is slightly older and more female than the

general population, but the age of the respondents roughly mirrors the median age of the American population.

### Independent Variables

The following table (Table 4.1) represents the number of people in the sample indicating they had watched “most or all of the episodes” of each of the TV shows, as well as the number who ultimately responded to questions about each TV show. Thus, Table 4.1 ensures that the responses to each individual TV show are representative of the number of people who stated they had watched each show.

*Table 4.1*

*Individual TV Show Responses within the Sample*

TV Show	Stated they had Watched		Responded to Questions	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<i>Breaking Bad</i>	129	34.0	25	6.6
<i>Downton Abbey</i>	91	24.0	27	7.1
<i>Friday Night Lights</i>	70	18.5	18	4.7
<i>Game of Thrones</i>	101	26.6	24	6.3
<i>Homeland</i>	79	20.8	21	5.5
<i>House of Cards</i>	66	17.4	14	3.7
<i>Lost</i>	118	31.1	36	9.5
<i>Mad Men</i>	83	21.9	18	4.7
<i>Orange is the New Black</i>	85	22.4	25	6.6
<i>Sons of Anarchy</i>	82	21.6	14	3.7
<i>The Sopranos</i>	118	31.1	34	9.0

<i>The Walking Dead</i>	138	36.4	46	12.1
<i>The West Wing</i>	87	23.0	32	8.4
<i>The Wire</i>	59	15.6	15	4.0
<i>True Blood</i>	79	20.8	30	7.9
Total	1385	Mean number of shows per person = 3.65		

To assess the manner in which a person watched a TV show, the ten options offered to respondents were condensed into four subcategories that were appropriate for analysis. These four methods of watching were *all-at-once*, *half-and-half*, and *week-by-week* and *other*. The *all-at-once* category contained people who had watched an entire TV series from start to finish with control over the pace of the distribution of the narrative the entire time. The *half-and-half* category was for respondents who indicated they had binge-watched old episodes of a TV show, then watched week-by-week as new episodes came out. Finally, the *week-by-week* category contained respondents who indicated they had watched episodes of a TV show as they were aired for the public each week. The *other* category was for people who did not select one of the other methods of watching, and instead responded “other.” Table 4.2 displays the way that the methods of watching were collapsed into categories, as well as the number of individuals whose responses were assigned to each of the four (including other) primary categories:

Table 4.2

*Methods of Watching within the Sample*

Category	Method of Watching	Frequency	Percent of Sample
<i>All-at-once</i>		83	21.9
	Watched the entire series all at once on DVD or Blu-Ray	18	4.7

Watched the entire series all at once using a DVR to record the episodes	3	0.8
Watched the entire series all at once, online using a streaming service such as Netflix or Hulu Plus	51	13.5
Watched a marathon of episodes as they came on TV	11	2.9
<i>Half-and-half</i>	43	11.3
<hr/>		
Watched old episodes on DVD or Blu-Ray, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days	24	6.3
Watched old episode on DVR, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days	9	2.4
Watched old episodes online, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days	10	2.6
<i>Week-by-week</i>	239	63.0
<hr/>		
Watched week-by-week using a DVR to record the episodes	60	15.8
Watched week-by-week as the episodes came on TV, live or within seven days	179	47.2
<i>Other</i>	14	3.7
<hr/>		

The respondents who chose the “other” option ( $N = 14$ ) were excluded from analysis associated with the research questions, as there was no way to determine how they had watched the TV show that they answered questions about.

### **Reliability and Normality of Continuous Variables**

The 20-item scale for transportability featured three reverse-coded items, which were then recoded to match the direction of the other items prior to reliability analysis. The reliability for this scale was (Cronbach’s alpha)  $\alpha = .90$ , indicating a high level of acceptability. No items would have increased reliability had they been removed; therefore all 20 items were included when the scale variable was calculated. Normality was assessed for the transportability variable, and a histogram with a normal curve revealed that the variable was visibly normal. Skewness was  $-.35$  and kurtosis was  $.03$ , both of which were within the normal ranges of  $[-1, 1]$  and  $[-1, 2]$ , respectively. Thus, the transportability variable was reliable and normal, and appropriate for use in multivariate analysis.

The scale for fantasy empathy featured seven items, two of which were reverse-coded. These items were recoded to reflect the direction of the rest of the scale. An initial reliability analysis revealed that the reliability ( $\alpha = .75$ ) was below the acceptable level of  $\alpha = .80$ . One item (one of the reverse-coded items) was removed from the scale to improve reliability. After removing this item, reliability was an acceptable  $\alpha = .80$ . These remaining six items were combined to form the variable for fantasy empathy. Normality was then assessed for this variable, with a histogram and normal curve revealing that the data was visibly normal. The skewness for this variable was  $-.38$  (within the  $[-1, 1]$  range) and the kurtosis was  $-.11$  (also within the  $[-1, 2]$  range), establishing that the fantasy empathy variable was normal.

Six items were used to measure hedonic motivations, and none of these items were reverse-coded. Reliability analysis revealed that the scale was reliable,  $\alpha = .85$ . None of the items needed to be removed to improve reliability; therefore, all six items were combined to form the hedonic motivations variable. An analysis of normality indicated that the variable was normally distributed (histogram and normal curve were visibly normal), and that both skewness (-.62) and kurtosis (.69) were within the acceptable ranges of [-1, 1] and [-1, 2]. The variable for hedonic motivations was therefore reliable and normally distributed.

The scale for eudaimonic motivations also featured six items and, again, none of these items were reverse-coded. Reliability analysis revealed that the scale was reliable,  $\alpha = .92$ ; therefore, all six items were combined to form a variable for eudaimonic motivations. Skewness for this variable was -.54 (within normal, [-1, 1]), and kurtosis was .39 (within normal, [-1, 2]), and a visual review of the histogram and normal curve also revealed that the variable was normally distributed. The variable for eudaimonic motivations was normally distributed and acceptable for multivariate analysis.

Transportation was assessed using 11 items, three of which were reverse-coded. These three items were recoded to reflect the direction of the rest of the scale. An initial analysis revealed that the reliability for these 11 items was below the acceptable level of  $\alpha = .80$ . Two items (both of which were reverse coded) were removed from the scale to improve reliability; a subsequent reliability analysis showed that reliability had improved to an acceptable level:  $\alpha = .82$ . The remaining nine items were combined to form the variable for transportation. To ensure that the variable was normally distributed, a histogram and normal curve were analyzed, showing that the variable was visibly normal. Additionally, skewness was -.16 and kurtosis was

also -.16, both of which were within the normal range of [-1, 1] and [-1, 2], respectively. Thus, the variable for transportation was ready for use in multivariate analysis.

Character identification was measured using a 10-item scale, none of which were reverse-coded. Reliability for this scale was  $\alpha = .93$ , which was acceptable. A single variable was computed for character identification, and normality was assessed for that variable. A histogram and normal curve indicated that the variable was normally distributed. Skewness was -.35 and was within the normal range of [-1, 1] and kurtosis was .23, which was also within the normal range of [-1, 2]. The variable for character identification was deemed normal and acceptable for use in multivariate analysis.

The scale for narrative engagement consisted of 12 items, six of which were reverse-coded. These items were recoded to reflect the direction of the rest of the scale. An initial reliability analysis revealed that the entire scale had a reliability of  $\alpha = .71$ . Three of the items were then removed from the scale, all of which were reverse-coded. The secondary reliability analysis was  $\alpha = .84$ , meaning the remaining nine items were combined into a single reliable variable for narrative engagement. The normality of this variable was then assessed, and a histogram and normal curve demonstrated that the variable was relatively normally distributed. Additionally, the skewness was -.27 which was within the normal range of [-1, 1], and the kurtosis was -.48, which was also within the normal range of [-1, 2]. Thus, the variable for narrative engagement was ready for use in multivariate analysis.

Finally, the scale for enjoyment contained eight items, two of which were reverse coded. These two items were recoded to reflect the direction of the rest of the items in the scale. Reliability for these eight items was  $\alpha = .89$ ; therefore, all eight items were combined into a single variable for enjoyment. This single variable was then assessed for normality, and a

histogram and normal curve were visibly normal. The skewness was -.47 (within the normal range of [-1, 1]) and the kurtosis was -.35 (within the normal range of [-1, 2]). Therefore, the enjoyment variable was acceptable for use in multivariate analysis.

### **Relationships between Variables**

Before assessing the research questions posed in this study, statistical tests were conducted to evaluate the relationships between the proposed independent and moderating variables. The following table represents the relationships between the two personality trait variables of transportability and fantasy empathy with the four outcome variables of transportation, character identification, narrative engagement, and enjoyment. Additionally, relationships are displayed between the three variables of transportation, character identification and narrative engagement and the primary dependent variable: enjoyment.

*Table 4.3*

*Univariate Relationships between Independent and Moderating Variables*

Predictor	Outcome	Pearson's Correlation	Significance	Percent of Variance Explained
Transportability	Transportation	.77	<.001*	59.1
	Character Identification	.64	<.001*	41.0
	Narrative Engagement	.12	.009*	1.5
	Enjoyment	.18	<.001*	3.2
Fantasy Empathy	Transportation	.73	<.001*	52.8
	Character Identification	.54	<.001*	28.9

	Narrative Engagement	.01	.39	0.0
	Enjoyment	.03	.31	0.1
Transportation	Enjoyment	.18	<.001*	3.3
Character Identification	Enjoyment	.43	<.001*	18.3
Narrative Engagement	Enjoyment	.75	<.001*	56.9

*\*denotes statistical significance at the .05 level*

To understand the relationships between the primary predictor variables in the analyses, (a) method of watching, and (b) personality traits (transportability and fantasy empathy), a pair of ANOVA tests were employed. Method of watching was compared to these personality traits to ensure that there was independence between these variables. However, both ANOVA tests were significant:  $F(2, 362) = 3.14, p = .04$  for transportability, and  $F(2, 362) = 3.77, p = .02$  for fantasy empathy, meaning that there was an unpredicted relationship between method of watching and both personality traits. The following table displays the means for both transportability and fantasy empathy compared to method of watching.

*Table 4.4*

*Method of Watching and Personality Traits*

Method of Watching	Transportability	Fantasy Empathy
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
<i>All-at-once</i>	5.99 (1.09)	5.56 (1.41)
<i>Half-and-half</i>	6.47 (0.85)	6.22 (1.27)

<i>Week-by-week</i>	6.03 (1.16)	5.60 (1.44)
Percent of Variance Explained	1.7	2.0
Significance	.04*	.02*

*\*denotes statistical significance at the .05 level*

Additional post-hoc tests revealed that in both continuous variables (transportability and fantasy empathy) there were higher levels of each personality trait in the *half-and-half* group, and no significant differences in either personality trait between the other two groups, *all-at-once* and *week-by-week*. To better understand the relationships between these variables as well as the reason why increased personality traits were found only in one group (and in the same group in both variables), an additional analysis was performed to determine if these personality traits would predict whether a person was more likely to watch *half-and-half* than any other method of watching. Because there was no significant difference between the groups *all-at-once* and *week-by-week*, they were collapsed into a single group in order to compare it to the *half-and-half* group.

Binary logistic regression was used to assess the relationship between transportability and method of watching. The model was acceptable after five iterations, an acceptable amount by the majority of statistical standards. Additionally, a Hosmer and Lemeshow test was not significant,  $p = .22$ . The model explained between 1.8 and 3.4 percent of the variance. The relationship between the personality trait transportability and method of watching was significant,  $OR(377) = 1.48$ ,  $p = .01$ , indicating that as transportability increases, the odds of a person watching a TV show *half-and-half* increases.

Binary logistic regression was also used to assess the relationship between fantasy empathy and method of watching. This model was also acceptable after five iterations. The

Hosmer and Lemeshow test was not significant,  $p = .66$ , and the model explained between 2.1 and 4.1 of the variance. The relationship between these two variables was significant  $OR(377) = 1.41$ ,  $p = .01$ , indicating that as fantasy empathy increases, the odds of a person watching a TV show *half-and-half* increases.

## Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ<sub>1</sub>) asked whether the manner in which a person watches a TV show would affect transportation into the narrative. An ANOVA was used to assess this research question. The Levene's test was not significant,  $p = .44$ , indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated. The mean transportation for people who watched a TV show *all-at-once* was 5.45 ( $SD = 1.19$ , on a scale of one through nine, where nine was the highest transportation), the mean for *half-and-half* was 6.30 ( $SD = 1.11$ ), and the mean for *week-by-week* was 5.60 ( $SD = 1.27$ ). There was significance within the model,  $F(2, 362) = 8.42$ ,  $p = .001$ , accounting for 4.4 percent of the variance. Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed that there were significant differences between *all-at-once* and *half-and-half* ( $p = .001$ ), with people watching *half-and-half* experiencing increased transportation. Additionally, there was significance between *half-and-half* and *week-by-week* ( $p = .002$ ), where people who watched *half-and-half* experienced increased transportation. Thus, the answer to RQ<sub>1</sub> is that people who watch old episodes all at once, then watch new episodes as they air (operationalized here as *half-and-half*) are more likely to experience increased transportation than are people watching in traditional (*week-by-week*) or binge (*all-at-once*) methods.

Research Question 2 (RQ<sub>2</sub>) asked if the manner in which a person watches a TV show would affect character identification. A one-way ANOVA was used to assess this research question. A Levene's test was not significant ( $p = .20$ ), meaning that the assumption of

homogeneity of variance was not violated. People who watched a TV show *all-at-once* had a mean character identification of 6.23 ( $SD = 1.20$ , nine is the highest character identification), whereas people who watched *half-and-half* had a mean character identification of 6.98 ( $SD = 1.24$ ), and people who watched *week-by-week* had a mean character identification of 6.44 ( $SD = 1.36$ ). There was significance within the model,  $F(2, 362) = 4.30, p = .01$ , accounting for 2.3 percent of the variance. Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that people watching *half-and-half* had higher character identification than people watching *all-at-once* ( $p = .01$ ), and people watching *half-and-half* also had a greater character identification than those watching *week-by-week*, ( $p = .04$ ). Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>2</sub> is that people who watched old episodes all at once and then watched new episodes as they came out each week had higher character identification than did people who watched a TV show in either of the other consumption methods.

Research Question 3 (RQ<sub>3</sub>) asked whether the manner in which a person watches a TV show would affect narrative engagement. A one-way ANOVA assessed this research question. A Levene's test was significant,  $p = .03$ , indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated. People watching a TV show *all-at-once* had a mean narrative engagement of 6.47 on a scale of one through nine, where nine was the highest narrative engagement ( $SD = 1.31$ ); people watching *week-by-week* had a mean narrative engagement of 6.48 ( $SD = 1.33$ ); people watching *half-and-half* had a mean narrative engagement of 5.47 ( $SD = 1.59$ ). The ANOVA revealed that there was significance within the model,  $F(2, 362) = 10.52, p = .001$ , and Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that watching *half-and-half* significantly lowered narrative engagement compared to people who watched *all-at-once* ( $p = .001$ ), and *week-by-week*, ( $p = .001$ ). This model explained 5.5 percent of the variance. Thus, the answer to RQ<sub>3</sub> is

that watching old episodes all at once then watching new episodes each week significantly decreased narrative engagement.

Research Question 4 (RQ4) asked if the manner in which a person watches a TV show affects enjoyment. A Levene’s test showed that the assumption of homogeneity had not been violated ( $p = .84$ ). Enjoyment was measured on a scale of one through nine. The mean enjoyment for people watching *all-at-once* was 7.57 ( $SD = 1.19$ ). For people watching *half-and-half*, the mean enjoyment was 7.08 ( $SD = 1.18$ ), and for people watching *week-by-week* the mean enjoyment was 7.54 ( $SD = 1.18$ ). However, these differences were not significant  $F(2, 362) = 2.95, p = .054$ . Thus, the answer to RQ4 is that the manner in which a person watches a TV show does not affect enjoyment.

Collectively considering the first four research questions, the following table displays the levels of each dependent variable.

Table 4.5

Method of Watching Compared to Dependent Variables

Method of watching	Transportation	Character Identification	Narrative Engagement	Enjoyment
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
<i>All-at-once</i>	5.35 (1.19)	6.27 (1.24)	6.47 (1.31)	7.57 (1.19)
<i>Half-and-half</i>	6.30 (1.11)	6.98 (1.20)	5.47 (1.59)	7.08 (1.18)
<i>Week-by-week</i>	5.60 (1.28)	6.44 (1.36)	6.48 (1.33)	7.54 (1.18)
Percent of Variance Explained	4.4	2.3	5.5	1.6
Significance	<.001*	.01*	<.001*	.054

\*denotes statistical significance at the .05 level

Research Question 5a (RQ<sub>5a</sub>) asked to what extent transportation would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watched a TV show and enjoyment. Initially, the relationship between method of watching and enjoyment was not significant  $F(2, 362) = 2.95, p = .054$  (see Table 4.5), but the relationship between transportation and enjoyment was significant,  $r(377) = .18, p = .001$  (See Table 4.3). Additionally, the two predictors (how a person watched and transportation), were significantly related to each other  $F(2, 362) = 8.42, p = .001$  (see Table 4.4). A Levene's test for this ANCOVA/GLM analysis was not significant ( $p = .65$ ). When transportation was added as a moderator between watching and enjoyment, neither how a person watched a TV show  $F(2, 364) = 1.66, p = .19$ , nor transportation  $F(1, 364) = .84, p = .36$  were significant predictors of enjoyment. Additionally, the interaction term resulted in no significance,  $F(2, 362) = 2.83, p = .06$ . Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>5a</sub> is that transportation does not moderate the relationship between how a person watched a TV show and enjoyment, and that transportation is only a significant predictor of enjoyment when method of watching is not taken into account.

Research Question 5b (RQ<sub>5b</sub>) asked to what extent character identification would moderate the relationship between how a person watched a TV show and enjoyment. Initial tests indicated that how a person watched a TV show was not a significant predictor of enjoyment,  $F(2, 362) = 2.95, p = .054$  (see Table 4.5), but that character identification was a significant predictor of enjoyment  $r(377) = .43, p = .001$  (see Table 4.3). The relationship between method of watching and character identification was also significant  $F(2, 362) = 4.30, p = .01$  (see Table 4.5). A Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated,  $p = .36$ . An ANCOVA and GLM indicated that while how a person watched a TV show was not a significant indicator of enjoyment  $F(2, 364) = .44, p = .65$ , character identification remained a

significant predictor of enjoyment  $F(2, 362) = 31.63, p = .001$ , and explained 8.1 percent of the variance in the model. However, there was no significance in the interaction term  $F(2, 362) = 1.29, p = .28$ . Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>5b</sub> is that while there is no interaction between character identification and how a person watches a TV show to predict enjoyment, character identification itself is a predictor of enjoyment.

Research Question 5c (RQ<sub>5c</sub>) asked to what extent narrative engagement would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and enjoyment. How a person watched a TV show was not a significant predictor of enjoyment  $F(2, 362) = 2.95, p = .054$ , but narrative engagement was a significant predictor of enjoyment  $r(377) = .75, p = .001$ . Method of watching was also a significant predictor of narrative engagement  $F(2, 362) = 10.52, p = .001$ . See Tables 4.3 and 4.5 for univariate results. A Levene's test was not significant,  $p = .68$ . An ANCOVA and GLM test indicated that there was no interaction between narrative engagement and method of watching to predict enjoyment  $F(2, 362) = 1.61, p = .20$ . However, narrative engagement was a significant predictor of enjoyment ( $p = .001$ ) explaining 45.2 percent of the variance. The answer to RQ<sub>5c</sub> is that narrative engagement does not moderate the relationship between how a person watches TV and enjoyment, but that narrative engagement itself is a predictor of enjoyment.

Research Question 6a (RQ<sub>6a</sub>) asked to what extent transportability would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and transportation. Both method of watching  $F(2, 362) = 8.42, p = .001$  and transportability  $r(377) = .77, p = .001$  were significant predictors of transportation. However, the relationship between method of watching and transportability was also significant,  $F(2, 362) = 3.14, p = .04$ . An ANCOVA and GLM were used to assess the relationship posed in this research question, and a Levene's test was not

significant in this analysis,  $p = .83$ . There was no significant interaction between how a person watched a TV show and transportability on transportation into the narrative  $F(2, 362) = .73, p = .48$ , but transportability was shown to be a significant predictor of transportation ( $p = .001$ ) explaining 40.6 percent of the variance in the model. Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>6a</sub> is that transportability does not moderate the relationship between how a person watches a TV show and their transportation, but that an increased amount of the transportability personality trait is a predictor of increased transportation.

Research Question 6b (RQ<sub>6b</sub>) asked to what extent transportability would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and their character identification. Both transportability  $r(377) = .64, p = .001$  and method of watching  $F(2, 362) = 4.30, p = .01$  were significant predictors of character identification (see Tables 4.3 and 4.5). Additionally, an ANOVA showed that method of watching was a significant predictor of transportability,  $F(2, 362) = 3.14, p = .04$ . An ANCOVA and GLM were used to evaluate this research question, with an initial Levene's test not significant,  $p = .06$ . While there was no significance in the interaction term  $F(2, 362) = 2.07, p = .13$ , transportability was shown to be a significant predictor of character identification ( $p = .001$ ) explaining 26.4 percent of the variance in the model. Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>6b</sub> is that while transportability did not moderate the relationship, it was a significant predictor of character identification.

Research Question 6c (RQ<sub>6c</sub>) asked to what extent transportability would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watched a TV show and narrative engagement. Both transportability  $r(377) = .12, p = .01$  and method of watching  $F(2, 362) = 10.52, p = .001$  were significant predictors of narrative engagement (See Tables 4.3 and 4.5). An ANOVA also indicated that method of watching was a significant predictor of transportability,

$F(2, 362) = 3.14, p = .04$ ; (see Table 4.4). A Levene's test for this ANCOVA and GLM was significant,  $p = .047$ . The analysis revealed that while neither of the predictor variables (transportability [ $p = .67$ ] and method of watching [ $p = .09$ ]) was a significant predictor of narrative engagement, there was significance in the interaction term between the two variables  $F(2, 362) = 3.90, p = .02$ . The answer to RQ<sub>6c</sub> is that transportability mediated the relationship between how a person watched a TV show and narrative engagement, where people with higher transportability were likely to experience less narrative engagement when watching old episodes of a TV show at once, followed by new episodes each week.

Research Question 7a (RQ<sub>7a</sub>) asked to what extent fantasy empathy would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and transportation. Fantasy empathy  $r(377) = .73, p = .001$  and method of watching  $F(2, 362) = 8.42, p = .001$  were both significant predictors of transportation. Additionally, method of watching was a significant predictor of fantasy empathy  $F(2, 362) = 3.77, p = .02$ . The Levene's test for this ANCOVA/GLM analysis was not significant,  $p = .13$ . There was no significance in the interaction term for method of watching and fantasy empathy  $F(2, 362) = .139, p = .87$ ; however, fantasy empathy was a significant predictor of transportation,  $p = .001$ . Fantasy empathy explained 39.3 percent of the variance in the model. The answer to RQ<sub>7a</sub> is that fantasy empathy predicts both how a person watches a TV show and how much transportation they will experience, but there is no moderation in the relationship.

Research Question 7b (RQ<sub>7b</sub>) asked to what extent fantasy empathy would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and character identification. Both fantasy empathy  $r(377) = .54, p = .001$  and method of watching  $F(2, 362) = 4.30, p = .01$  were significant predictors of character identification (see Tables 4.3 and 4.5), and

method of watching was also a significant predictor of fantasy empathy  $F(2, 362) = 3.77, p = .02$ ; (see Table 4.4). A Levene's test for this ANCOVA/GLM was significant,  $p = .01$ . While the interaction of method of watching and fantasy empathy was not a predictor of character identification  $F(2, 362) = 1.22, p = .30$ , fantasy empathy was a significant predictor of character identification ( $p = .001$ ) accounting for 20.8 percent of the variance in the model. Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>7b</sub> is that fantasy empathy predicts how a person will watch a TV show, and fantasy empathy also predicts increased character identification, but there is no interaction between the variables.

Research Question 7c (RQ<sub>7c</sub>) asked to what extent fantasy empathy would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and narrative engagement. Fantasy empathy was not a significant predictor of narrative engagement  $r(377) = .01, p = .39$ , but method of watching predicted narrative engagement  $F(2, 362) = 10.53, p = .001$ . Method of watching was also a significant predictor of fantasy empathy  $F(2, 362) = 3.77, p = .02$ . An ANCOVA/GLM was used to evaluate this research question, with an initial Levene's test that was not significant,  $p = .32$ . The interaction term was significant  $F(2, 362) = 6.19, p = .002$ , explaining 3.3 percent of the variance in the model. Additionally, the method of watching a TV show was also a significant predictor of narrative engagement ( $p = .04$ ), explaining 1.8 percent of the variance in the model. Thus, the answer to RQ<sub>7c</sub> is that there is an interaction between fantasy empathy and how a person watches a TV show to predict narrative engagement, whereby people who have higher fantasy empathy are more likely to watch a TV show *half-and-half*, but are then less likely to experience narrative engagement.

Research Question 8a (RQ<sub>8a</sub>) asked to what extent transportability would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watched a TV show and enjoyment.

Transportability was a significant predictor of enjoyment  $r(377) = .18, p = .001$ , but the method of watching was not a significant predictor of enjoyment  $F(2, 362) = 2.95, p = .054$ . Method of watching was, however, a significant predictor of transportability  $F(2, 362) = 3.14, p = .04$  (see Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 for these relationships). A Levene's test for this ANCOVA/GLM was not significant  $p = .85$ ; however, there was also no significance in the interaction term  $F(2, 362) = 1.67, p = .19$ . Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>8a</sub> is that transportability does not moderate the relationship between method of watching and enjoyment, and that transportability is only a significant predictor of enjoyment when accounting for method of watching.

Research Question 8b (RQ<sub>8b</sub>) asked to what extent fantasy empathy would moderate the relationship between the manner in which a person watches a TV show and enjoyment. Fantasy empathy was not a significant predictor of enjoyment  $r(377) = .03, p = .31$  (see Table 4.3), and method of watching was also not a significant predictor of enjoyment  $F(2, 362) = 2.95, p = .054$  (see Table 4.5). Method of watching was, however, a significant predictor of fantasy empathy  $F(2, 362) = 3.77, p = .02$  (see Table 4.4). A Levene's test for this ANCOVA/GLM was not significant,  $p = .53$ . However, there was also no significance in the interaction term  $F(2, 362) = 1.61, p = .20$ . Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>8b</sub> is that the only relationship between fantasy empathy, method of watching, and enjoyment is that fantasy empathy predicts how a person will watch TV.

Research Question 9a (RQ<sub>9a</sub>) asked at which pace people with stronger hedonic motivations would prefer to watch TV. Multiple linear regressions were used to assess this research question. Results indicated that increased hedonic motivations were a significant predictor of a person enjoying watching TV live, as it is released to the public  $\beta = .49, t(377) = 6.51, p = .001$ , accounting for 10.1 percent of the variance in the model. Increased hedonic

motivations were also a significant predictor of a person enjoying watching TV within seven days of an episode's public release  $\beta = .31, t(377) = 5.12, p = .001$ , and explained 6.5 percent of the variance in the model, but was not a significant predictor of a person enjoying watching TV on demand  $\beta = .03, t(377) = .32, p = .001$ . Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>9a</sub> is that a person with increased hedonic motivations for entertainment consumption is likely to enjoy watching TV live or within seven days of the episode becoming available.

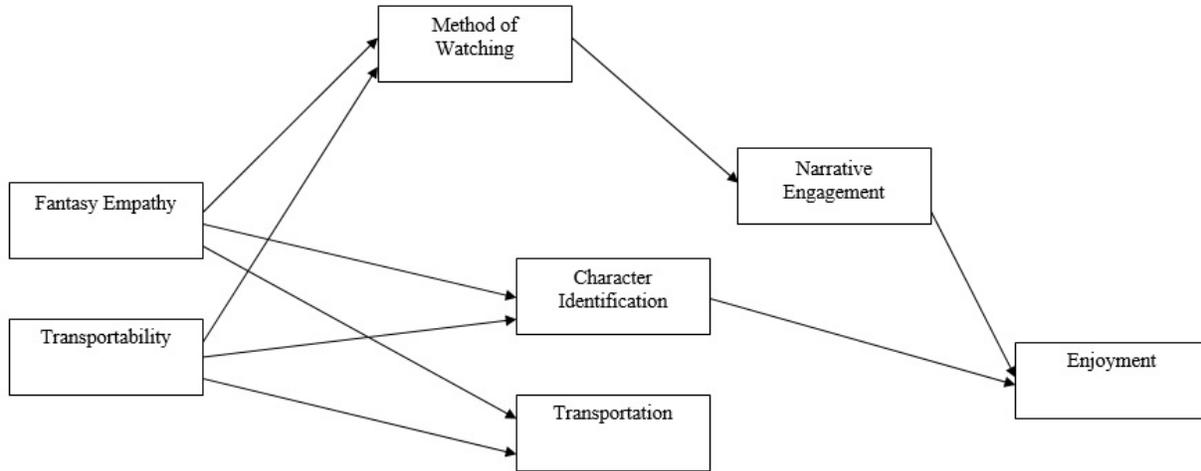
Research Question 9b (RQ<sub>9b</sub>) asked at which pace people with stronger eudaimonic motivations would prefer to watch TV. Multiple linear regressions were used to assess this research question, indicating that increased eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption were a predictor of both enjoying watching TV live  $\beta = .40, t(377) = 5.82, p = .001$ , and enjoying watching TV within seven days of an episode becoming available  $\beta = .31, t(377) = 5.56, p = .001$ . This explained 8.2 percent and 7.6 percent of the variance, respectively. However, increased eudaimonic motivations was not a significant predictor of enjoying watching TV on demand  $\beta = .15, t(377) = 1.94, p = .053$ . Therefore, the answer to RQ<sub>9b</sub> is that a person who has increased eudaimonic motivations will be more likely to enjoy watching TV live, or within seven days of a new episode airing.

### **Model Building and Additional Analysis**

The analysis of these research questions resulted in a model which displays which variables were significant predictors of the various outcomes, and the relationships that existed after all variables were entered into the model.

Figure 4.1

Model after Analysis of Research Questions



To better understand how the data in this study would fit into a single model, additional analyses were performed in order to examine unexpected variable relationships. Primarily, both hedonic and eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption were compared to the three groups defining how a person watched a TV show: *all-at-once*, *half-and-half*, and *week-by-week*. The same binary variable used in the previous logistic regressions was utilized again, where the *half-and-half* group was compared to the other responses.

Using a binary logistic regression, the relationship between hedonic motivations and the method of watching was assessed. The model was acceptable after five iterations, and a Hosmer and Lemeshow test was not significant ( $p = .28$ ) however the model only explained between 0.3 and 0.6 percent of the variance. The relationship between hedonic motivations and how a person watched a TV show was not significant,  $OR(377) = 1.15, p = .29$ . This means that hedonic motivations were not a significant predictor of how a person watched a TV show.

A second binary logistic regression analyzed the relationship between eudaimonic motivations and how a person watched a TV show. The model was acceptable after five iterations, and a Hosmer and Lemeshow test was not significant,  $p = .49$ . This model explained between 1.2 and 2.3 percent of the variance. The relationship in this model was significant,  $OR(377) = .1.29, p = .046$ , meaning that as eudaimonic motivations increased, people were more likely to have watched a TV series *half-and-half*.

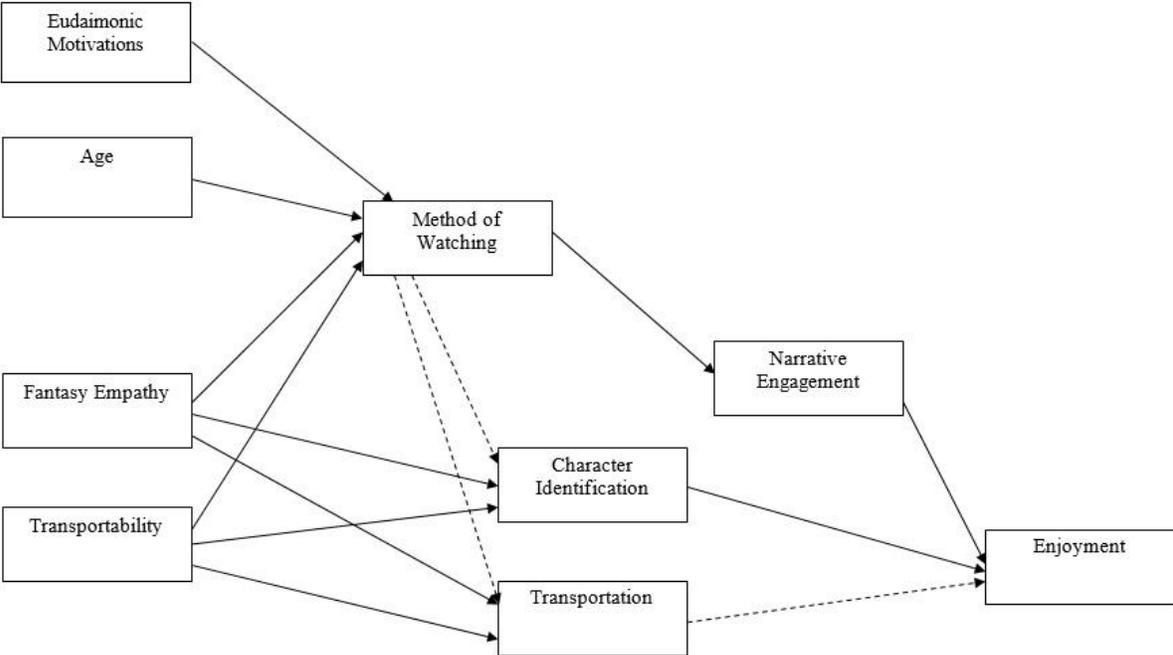
To determine whether age would predict how a person would watch TV, several analyses were performed. An initial ANOVA test revealed that there was a significant difference in the age of the people who were in each of the three groups for how a person watched a TV show  $F(2, 362) = 13.29, p = .001$ . The mean age for people in the *all-at-once* group was 44.36 years old ( $SD = 14.90$ ); for people in the *half-and-half* group, the mean age was 39.05 years old ( $SD = 10.73$ ); the mean age for people in the *week-by-week* group was 49.64 ( $SD = 13.69$ ). There was a significant difference between *all-at-once* and *half-and-half*  $p = .01$ , and a significant difference between *half-and-half* and *week-by-week*  $p = .001$ . Subsequently, a logistic regression was performed, using age as a continuous predictor. The model was acceptable after 5 iterations, and a Hosmer and Lemeshow test was not significant,  $p = .09$ . This model explained between 4.5 and 8.8 percent of the variance, and the model was significant  $OR(377) = .95, p = .001$ . This means that as age increased by one year, people were less likely to watch a TV show *half-and-half*. This is possible because in regards to an odds ratio (in this case, .95) “a value less than one indicates that as the predictor increases, the odds of the outcome occurring decrease” (Field, 2005, p.226).

After completing these analyses, the significant predictors (eudaimonic motivations and age) were added to the model. Additionally, the dotted lines in the following model indicate

relationships that were significant in univariate analysis, but lost their significance once other variables were added to the analysis. These relationships warrant further analysis in future research. The following model displays the significant univariate relationships demonstrated in the results, as well as the two significant interactions (see RQ<sub>6c</sub> and RQ<sub>7c</sub>).

Figure 4.2

Final Model after Additional Analyses



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

*“Enjoyment should be understood as a private lived consumption experience that depends on a holistic tapestry of interrelated factors and, subsequently, should be studied in its entire complexity” (Batat & Wohlfiel, 2009, p. 376)*

#### **Core Findings**

Binge-watching is part of the changing media environment resulting in varying personal experiences of media consumption. The entangled factors that may contribute to an individual’s experience of television watching were investigated in the present study with results indicating that the outcomes of narrative consumption relied on several unexpected and interrelated elements. First, personality traits—transportability and fantasy empathy—were the strongest predictors of any type of outcome, including how an individual will choose to watch a TV show. These traits outweighed any other variable included in the model; heightened transportability and fantasy empathy explained large amounts of the variance in transportation and character identification, regardless of how a person had watched a TV show. Second, method of watching TV was significantly predicted by age and personality traits, rather than itself being a predictor of other factors. Third, outcomes such as transportation and character identification were not predicted by method of watching, which only predicted narrative engagement and, in turn, enjoyment. Fourth and finally, increased eudaimonic motivations for entertainment also predicted how a person would watch a TV show.

The results demonstrated in this study may indicate that fear or missing out on a cultural conversation seems to be more important than the desire to control the pace of the narrative, or the enjoyment that results from being able to remain completely immersed in a narrative world. People who binge-watch old episodes of a TV show in order to catch up to current episodes may be doing so out of a desire to want to be part of the cultural conversation that comes along with watching new episodes of a TV show at the same time as friends. Reacting to plot twists and character developments while trying to avoid social media spoilers for people who have not seen the TV show (or at least the newest episode) may be an enjoyable experience, particularly after a person has become attached to characters and narrative worlds through binge-watching existing episodes. This cultural conversation that take place at the modern water cooler of social media in turn creates new watchers out of people who want to be a part of the discussion. This may even be amplified in people with increased transportability and fantasy empathy, who seem to be more frequently watching a TV show *half-and-half*. This process is how TV shows like *Breaking Bad* gained an audience that grew with every season, as people quickly binged on episodes in order to be able to watch the new ones as the premiered. There seems to be a perfect storm between binge-watching existing episodes of a quality TV show and the pleasurable, enjoyable outcomes associated with being able to talk about the show with friends and acquaintances.

### **Personality Traits**

The first—and one of the most interesting—findings of this study was the role of personality traits in predicting other variables. The results of this study support the role of personality traits in transportation asserted by Green (2005), who stated that individual personality traits play a role in a person's likelihood to become transported. Not only was this

true, but transportability was one of the strongest and most influential variables included in this analysis. This study proposed that transportability would moderate the relationship between how a person watched a TV show and their experience of transportation and other outcome variables, but method of watching was insignificant in the face of the transportability personality trait. This supports previous research (Dal Cin et al., 2004; Greenwood, 2008) outlining the importance of understanding transportability. Respondents higher in transportability were more likely to be transported into a narrative, and were also more likely to choose to binge-watch existing episodes of a TV show in order to catch up and watch new episodes as they aired. These people seem to be seeking the experience of being transported into a narrative world, and being able to continue watching new episodes that come out each week.

Similar to transportability, the personality trait fantasy empathy played an important role in the results of this study. Fantasy empathy refers to the ability of an individual to experience and relate to the emotions of a character that they see in a narrative (Davis, 1983; Hall & Bracken, 2011). Fantasy empathy was a significant predictor of character identification, supporting the idea that higher fantasy empathy should result in the increased ability to feel the emotions of characters. This specific personality trait also predicted how a person would choose to watch a TV show; people with increased fantasy empathy were more likely to watch *half-and-half*. These people may be seeking the experience of binge-watching a TV show that is still airing, so that they can then experience the emotions of and identify with a fantasy character while sharing the experience of watching with friends and peers as new episodes are released. Hall and Bracken (2011) predicted that there would be a significant correlation between transportation and fantasy empathy, which was wholly supported in this study. Fantasy empathy was a significant predictor of transportation into a narrative.

## Method of Watching TV

The second core finding of this study was that how a person watched a TV show was not a significant predictor of the proposed outcome variables; rather, method of watching TV was predicted by age and personality traits. One of the primary assumptions of transportation theory—and, thus, the primary assumptions of this study—was that control over the pacing of a narrative would result in increased transportation, and, consequently, increased enjoyment (Green et al., 2004). These assumptions are partially supported; at first glance, transportation and character identification did increase for people binge-watching existing episodes of a TV show in order to catch up to new episodes. Enjoyment, however, was not significantly different between the groups. Upon closer inspection, it was revealed that the only reason that transportation and character identification were greater in the *half-and-half* group was because there was an increased presence of both fantasy empathy and transportability (personality traits) in these groups. Additional analyses indicated that people with increased amounts of these personality traits were more likely to watch a TV show *half-and-half*, demonstrating that control over the pace of the narrative may play a role in transportation, but that personality traits were a more important factor in determining the outcomes of narrative consumption.

Perhaps one of the more interesting findings in this study was the significant differences between the *half-and-half* group and the other groups on opposite ends of the pace of consumption spectrum: *all-at-once* and *week-by-week*. The *half-and-half* group, while it does not represent the full binge-watching experience that is exemplified by the *all-at-once* group, still includes people who binge-watched at least part of the episodes in a TV series. It is, therefore, still representative of the experience of binge-watching, and may even be a more remarkable experience than binge-watching an entire series. This particular group had individuals with both

the highest transportability and fantasy empathy, as well as the highest transportation and character identification. Oddly enough, this group also had the lowest narrative engagement and enjoyment. The *half-and-half* group had the youngest respondents in it, indicating that all of these other factors may be related to age and a person's willingness to engage with new technologies. This may also be a result of young people being able to mix and match technologies in order to watch *half-and-half*; older people may know how to watch a full series on a streaming service, but may be unlikely to search out episodes from different sources.

This also supports research on fear of missing out (FOMO), demonstrating that younger people—especially males—tend to be higher in FOMO (Przybylski et al., 2013). According to the work done by Przybylski and colleagues (2013), fear of missing out (FOMO) is the “fears, worries, and anxieties people may have in relation to being in (or out of) touch with events, experiences, and conversations happening across their extended social circles” (Przybylski et al., 2013, p. 1842). FOMO was also associated with increased social media use (Przybylski et al., 2013), which may also indicate that people with higher FOMO may also be more likely to watch TV online. People with higher FOMO may be more likely to seek engagement in the cultural conversation created by a popular serial drama, thus increasing their likelihood to binge-watch old episodes and then watch new episodes as they come out each week. This would allow them to participate in conversation with their peers about TV shows that are currently airing, but that they did not watch live from the first episode. The ability to binge-watch existing episodes of a TV show and then participate in cultural conversation as new episodes come out may be the sought-out experience that binge-watchers desire. The results in this study demonstrate that the people who engage in *half-and-half* binge-watching seem to have the most different and

distinctive experience of watching TV, perhaps because they are able to be a part of cultural conversation with others after they have had the experience of binge-watching.

### **Outcomes of Narrative Consumption**

The third core finding of this study was the role of outcomes of narrative consumption within the larger model of TV watching. Respondents scored very highly in transportation, enjoyment, and character identification throughout the sample; on a scale of one through nine, levels of transportation and character enjoyment were between five and six, and enjoyment was over seven for each of the groups. Although these outcomes were more strongly related to personality traits than how a person watched a TV show, this does not indicate that these outcomes are not affected by the experience of watching TV. Rather, it may be more representative of the fact that this entire study was based on narrative, serial dramas in which people stated they had watched all of the episodes. This particular experience may be highly enjoyable; to see characters become fully developed and to see a narrative span dozens of hours and come full circle at the conclusion of the series is an experience that should not be overlooked because other factors may have been involved. For instance, enjoyment may not have been significantly different between groups simply because there was such high enjoyment within the sample—and, thus, little opportunity for enjoyment to vary—even between methods of watching. The types of complex narratives and storylines present in serial dramas are less likely to take place in sitcoms or reality TV. By simply asking people to respond to questions about hour-long dramas, this study only included responses about an experience that is fulfilling in itself.

The results here support the ideas asserted by Green and Brock (2002), who stated that transportation would be influenced not only by the story itself and the way that it is consumed, but also by the attributes of the consumer. In the current study, the characteristics and

personality traits of the consumer were the most important factors in predicting how a person would watch a TV show, bolstered as well as their consequent transportation, character identification, narrative engagement, and enjoyment. This also supports the idea that differing personality traits would affect the likelihood of becoming transported into a narrative, and especially that different types of narratives would be more appealing to different types of people (Green et al., 2004).

Perhaps one of the more interesting aspects of these results is the fact that unlike transportation and character identification—which increased in the *half-and-half* group—narrative engagement was decreased for people who binge-watched old episodes of a TV show, then caught up with new episodes. Additionally, this was the only variable where the method of watching the TV show interacted with transportability and fantasy empathy, indicating that an increased presence of these personality traits resulted in decreased narrative engagement, particularly in the *half-and-half* group. This may indicate that people who are deeply absorbed in a narrative, such as those binge-watching, are more emotionally affected rather than cognitively affected. They may be unable to cognitively engage with a narrative if they are fully absorbed in the narrative world, as cognition is related to reflection. This reflection on the narrative world may not be possible when a person is binge-watching, as they are absorbed in the narrative world, and move through the plot at a rapid pace. This may also indicate that the ability to connect on a cognitive level with a TV show is decreased when a person watches a large amount of the TV show. This may, in turn, decrease the possibility of retention of the storylines presented in favor of emotional reactions, such as character identification.

## Motivations for Entertainment Consumption

The fourth core finding in this study was the role that motivations for entertainment consumption—particularly eudaimonic motivations—played in predicting how a person would watch a TV show. Increased eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption resulted in a person being more likely to binge-watch old episodes of a TV show, then watch new episodes as they premiered. Eudaimonic motivations refers to a person being motivated to consume entertainment media in order to reflect and appreciate the content (Oliver & Raney, 2011). People seeking this type of entertainment seem to be more likely to desire *half-and-half* viewing. Perhaps this is because they would like to be able to appreciate content that others are also interested in and watching, hearing good reviews of a TV show via word-of-mouth and thus seeking to be part of the experience of others. Serial dramas with complicated antiheroes may provide the perfect opportunity for people to appreciate sad or tragic storylines that are part of a complicated narrative, as “bad characters were equally as cognitively enjoyed as were good characters and [morally ambiguous characters]” (Krakowiak & Oliver, 2012, p. 130). This relationship may disappear when other content types are introduced, and, similar to overall enjoyment, may be a remnant of a high degree of enjoyment after watching serial dramas.

Both hedonic and eudaimonic were also significant predictors of a person saying that they would enjoy watching TV in different ways, including watching TV on demand, live, or within seven days of an episode premiering. Increased hedonic motivations for entertainment consumption predicted that a person stated that they would enjoy watching TV live or within seven days of an episode premiering. This is somewhat expected; people with hedonic motivations may be more likely to seek the instant gratification (see Oliver & Raney, 2011) that results from being able to watch a TV show as soon as it is available, just as they seek other

types of media consumption that result in a pleasurable experience. However, this same result was apparent for people with increased eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption. These people also stated that they would most enjoy watching TV live or within seven days of it premiering.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The current study employed transportation theory in order to understand whether increased control over the pacing of a narrative in a serial TV drama would result in increased transportation, and, consequently, increased enjoyment. Transportation theory predicts that increased access to a narrative—and fewer interruptions—should result in the increased ability of the media consumer to become absorbed, immersed, and transported into a narrative world (Green & Brock, 2000; Green & Brock, 2002; Green et al., 2004). There was an initial indication that watching a TV show *half-and-half* would result in increased transportation. However, by adding additional personality trait variables to the model, transportation was only altered by how a person watched a TV show because personality traits predicted how a person would watch a TV show; increased amounts of transportability and fantasy empathy resulted in increased transportation without having to go through how a person watched a TV show. Transportation theory should be applied in a changing media environment, where narratives are becoming more and more complex, and are available through more mediums where people have increasing control over how they consume narratives.

While these results seem to dispute the basic premise of transportation theory, they should not be interpreted as contradictory to the theory. Instead, these results should help to build transportation theory into a more dynamic and applicable theory, where personality traits play a strong role in a person's experience of both transportation and enjoyment. One of the

foremost criticisms of transportation theory is the lack of understanding of how personality traits play a role in transportation (Green et al., 2004; Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004). The results of this study emphasize the problems stemming from this lack of understanding, simultaneously contributing to future research on transportation theory by establishing personality traits as primary predictors of transportation.

Entertainment theory, as a whole, attempts to explain why people enjoy the entertainment media that they consume, and which factors contribute to overall enjoyment. It also seeks to identify why people make entertainment choices as well as how their choices contribute to increased enjoyment. In this case, transportation theory and other entertainment theories can begin to account for identification with a fictional character as a serious contributing factor to overall enjoyment. Character identification was one of the only variables directly contributing to an individual's enjoyment of a TV series, and, thus, should become a more important variable in the study of transportation theory. This is particularly important when considering that many of the characters analyzed in this research were antiheroes, or characters exhibiting complicated morality and psychopathy, which resulted in actions that create interesting and investing storylines yet are convoluted to interpret. Characters such as Walter White and Frank Underwood—both of whom are antiheroes—were present in some of the most-watched TV shows within this sample. The role of the serial TV drama in antihero narratives is important to understand, as it seems that character identification—even with these morally ambiguous characters—is a strong predictor of enjoyment, even in the light of other important factors. This may be a first step in understanding “how appealing antiheroes are and why they are appealing” (Jonason, Webster, Schmitt, Li, & Crysel, 2012, p. 197). Perhaps audiences enjoy these complicated characters when they have adequate time to understand the characters and their

choices. The role of characters and antiheroes must be investigated more directly in the context of transportation theory.

Transportability should be measured in any study undergirded in transportation theory. This particular personality trait predicted a considerable amount of the variance in both transportation (59 percent) and character identification (41 percent). Although it appeared that transportation and character identification increased as a result of a person binge-watching existing episodes of a TV show, it was only because people with high transportability were more likely to watch TV in this way. The same is true for fantasy empathy; the personality trait associated with a person's ability to feel the emotions of a character in a narrative predicted huge amounts of variance in transportation and character identification. As such, it seems to play an integral role in determining which types of people will choose to watch TV shows at a particular pace.

The results of this study reaffirm the strong testability (Shoemaker et al., 2004) of transportation theory, even if this particular analysis did not fully support the premise of the theory. The scale used for transportation accurately measured the construct it was purported to measure, and the results were reliable. This analysis also contributes to the cumulative nature of social science theory (Shoemaker et al., 2004), where these results build upon and expand the utility of the theory. The heuristic value (Shoemaker et al., 2004) of transportation theory has also been increased through this study, as future research will be able to be generated based on new information regarding personality traits and the role of other contributing variables to transportation and enjoyment.

## Practical Implications

*“Millennials officially spend a majority of their time watching TV either online, on-demand, or via DVR, leaving only 41% of their time allocated for live TV” (D’Onfro, 2014, para. 1)*

The TV industry is in a state of change. Not only is the content shifting in the way that it is produced, but physical TV sales are falling as people increasingly watch more of their entertainment content online (Williams, 2014). This may be the result of a younger audience who is more comfortable consuming their TV content on laptops, tablets, and other nontraditional screens (D’Onfro, 2014; Williams, 2014). The current study supports the idea that younger people are more likely to watch TV content via nontraditional mediums, including online streaming and the use of a DVR. People who were in the *half-and-half* group were significantly younger than people watching TV live as it aired; this age difference seemed to also correlate with other results, such as an increase in transportability and fantasy empathy. There seems to be a disconnect between the falling sales of actual TV sets (Williams, 2014) and the content that once dominated the discussion on television:

Many millennials who have ditched their TVs still actually love television. They may, in fact, watch more of it than ever since unplugging, thanks to the relatively newfound ability to catch up on their latest shows on their phones or tablets anywhere, at any time. ‘I can sit on the couch and watch the new season of *Orange is the New Black* in a weekend,’ said Andrew Wojtek, a 26-year-old museum event producer who lives in Harlem. ‘I can watch while I’m travelling on planes or trains, and staying in hotels. I can watch something on a break in the park or in a coffee shop while wasting time to meet up with a friend (Williams, 2014, para. 18).

Netflix and other content producers should also continue to create programming that generates considerable cultural conversation, prompting people who have FOMO to seek out TV shows that they hear that others are watching. The plot lines in a serial drama may become so interesting to audiences that a single event within a TV show can go viral, such as the “Red Wedding” episode of *Game of Thrones*. Viewers recorded and shared their reactions (Schillaci, 2013), prompting an increase in viewers for the TV show, which, at the end of the 2013 season, was “averaging a cumulative haul of 13.4 million viewers after combining originals, repeat broadcasts, DVR, HBO Go and On Demand” (O’Connell, 2013, para. 5). Millennials have also been known to watch a TV show for the purpose of having a communal experience, rather than for the actual programming content (Williams, 2014). People who have stronger FOMO might be more likely to binge to attempt to catch up to the present narrative arc that a TV show is airing; these same people might have stronger transportability and fantasy empathy. They may also enjoy this type of activity more and, therefore, be more likely to want to be a part of a cultural conversation. Young people with high transportability, fantasy empathy, and FOMO are likely to want to be part of a cultural conversation that involves watching the same TV shows that others are watching, particularly if they can consume them at a rapid pace.

In addition to producing content designed to be binge-watched, media outlets should also consider allowing their existing programming to be offered through streaming services. Netflix, HBO, and other quality content producers have already been doing so by creating longer story arcs lasting multiple episodes and/or entire seasons, releasing an entire season at once. Venerable broadcast network CBS joined the list of content producers allowing people to stream their content through a subscription service in late 2014 just one day after HBO announced a similar

subscription service (Steel, 2014). This ushered in a change for viewers and media producers alike, as:

A new era of à la carte television arrived in earnest this week—seemingly all at once and more quickly than any industry executives and television fans had expected. And with it, the virtual monopoly that cable, satellite and telecommunications companies have had over TV programming is dissipating (Steel, 2014, para. 1).

This increase in watching options allows new audiences to be built as people discover a show that others have been watching and talking about--and decide to watch for themselves. This has been observed by *Arrested Development* creator Mitch Hurwitz, who believes that “streaming services not only kept the fandom alive for his show, but helped it grow even after it went off the air” (Watercutter, 2013, para. 4). In 2013, Season 4 of *Arrested Development* premiered all at once, exclusively available on Netflix for people to binge-watch, seven years after the series was originally cancelled. This again may be tied to FOMO, where people who are high in FOMO may have heard others talk about how much they enjoyed *Arrested Development*, and did not want to lose out on that experience, thus increasing the audience for a show that is not even airing. A similar situation occurred in late 2014, as the one-season HBO program *The Comeback* was picked up for additional episodes, “largely owing to HBO GO” (Nussbaum, 2014, para. 1). The results of the current study demonstrate that people who watch old episodes of a TV show all at once, then new episodes as they came out had the strongest character identification and transportation. These people form strong bonds with the characters they see, becoming loyal watchers and followers as new episodes premiere, and can thus be subject to targeted advertising.

## **Limitations**

This study, while valuable, presented several limitations. First, previous researchers studying the concept of enjoyment have stated the difficulty of measuring such a complicated and multifaceted experience (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). The measurement of enjoyment in this study was no different, the lack of significant predictors of enjoyment may illuminate this flaw. There was a very high level of enjoyment within the sample, particularly compared to other outcome variables, such as transportation and character identification, yet enjoyment was difficult to connect to other constructs in the model. Enjoyment, as predicted by how a person watched a TV show, was not significant--even with a relatively high sample size. Perhaps a measure with more potential variation to counter these high-skewing scores, or a multidimensional measure, would provide more conclusive results in this area.

A second limitation was the measurement of how a person watched a TV show. On a simple level, the order of the options in which people could choose should have been randomized. The list they were presented with started with "Watched week-by-week as the episodes came on TV, live or within 7 days." This single option accounted for 179 of the response options, which was almost half (47 percent) of the sample. This may be because people read this first option and chose it without reading the other options, as this first option is a basic way that any person could have stated they watched TV. Without reading the other options, they may not have realized that there were many varied response options representing different speeds and mediums for watching a full TV series. In future research, the options for responding to this type of question should be randomized to ensure that people have an equal opportunity to read any response option first. This would spread the error of people choosing the first option they read throughout the sample, rather than concentrating it on a single response option.

Another limitation exists within the sample itself. The current study utilized a national, generalizable sample to draw conclusions about TV watching experiences. However, the average age of the respondents in this study was 47 years old, which is representative of the adult population, but may not have been representative of the average binge-watcher. Studying children, teenagers, and young adults may garner different results. Younger people may be more comfortable with technology, and, therefore, be more likely to watch TV in differing ways. The results of this study indicated that age was a significant predictor of how a person would watch TV; consequently, future research should consider utilizing people from a younger sample (including teens) in order to better understand binge-watching.

In a similar vein, there was a strong difference between the number of people constituted within each of the three groups used to assess how a person had watched TV. The majority of participants were in the *week-by-week* group, with a much smaller portion of the sample was in the *half-and-half* group (slightly more than 11 percent). The people in the *half-and-half* group was an average of 10 years younger than people in the other groups. After considering that they came from a sample that was somewhat older, this is not surprising that this group—representing the changing ways that people watch TV—was demonstrably different in terms of increased transportation, character identification, and other important variables.

The final primary limitation of this study is the lack of experimental data resulting in the inability to infer any causal relationships. The two primary advantages to any experimental design are control and causation. Using an experiment, researchers can control the experiences of the participants, showing that any observed effect is caused by the stimulus presented in the study. In the case of binge-watching, being able to show that continuous consumption of a TV narrative caused an increase in transportation, character identification, enjoyment—or any other

dependent variable of interest—would be very valuable to social science researchers.

Additionally, the ability to control the binge-watching experience would allow researchers to ensure that participants have experienced a media binge.

### **Directions for Future Research**

The current study reveals multiple questions for future research, providing a useful heuristic for the understanding of changing media habits and high-dosage media consumption. Future research should address people's underlying motivations for watching an entire TV series in a relatively small amount of time. Perhaps cultural pressure and FOMO play a strong role in people's choices to binge-watch. Both FOMO and the likelihood to binge-watch are found in a younger population (Przybylski et al., 2013). Przybylski and colleagues (2013) proposed a scale for measuring FOMO, which should be employed in the study of why people choose to engage in binge-watching. This study of FOMO should also extend to include the role that peer pressure plays in TV watching choices. People with higher FOMO may also be more susceptible to make entertainment choices based on the recommendations of others in their peer groups.

Another area of interest to entertainment scholars is the individual sittings that, when added together, constitute an experience of binge-watching. In order to better explicate control over the narrative that binge-watchers are afforded, research must address each of these individual instances of watching TV. Investigation must determine how often an individual starts and stops watching a TV show along with their reasons for wanting to continue at the end of each episode. Research should also address how many episodes people choose to watch in a single sitting, what exactly constitutes each individual sitting, and how long a single sitting lasts. Motivations for wanting to consume an entire TV series must also be investigated, as well as motivations for stopping a binge at a specific time. Physiologically, an entire TV series cannot

be consumed in a single sitting, and must be segmented. Researchers should determine how people choose to start and stop watching episodes of a TV show.

Another robust avenue for future research is whether people choose to prolong and/or delay watching the last episodes in a binge because they know the series will be coming to an end and wish to savor the experience. The results in this study demonstrated that watching new episodes after a binge was the group that had the strongest TV watching experiences, with the highest character identification and transportation, and lowest narrative engagement. This may indicate that there is some kind of desirable tension created by waiting for the very last episodes in an enjoyed TV show. These concepts could support the general assertion that control over the pacing of the narrative is a desirable state.

Future research should also address the complicated relationship between how a person watched TV and narrative engagement as it was the only variable significantly predicted by how a person watched TV once other variables were included in the model, and was the only outcome variable that decreased if a person watched *half-and-half*. Subsequent research should investigate concepts related to narrative engagement, such as reflection, and address other cognitive outcomes of the TV watching experience. Perhaps the overwhelming amount of information that occurs during a binge-watching experience does not allow for accurate cognitive processing. Alternatively, cognitive resources may be devoted to character identification or transportation rather than narrative engagement, as these variables occurred inversely to each other during the experience of watching TV.

Consequent studies of the outcomes of TV watching—and in particular, binge-watching—should seek to better understand the role of enjoyment in TV watching, and whether the results demonstrated here and in other studies of media entertainment should be reevaluated

in terms of the measurement of enjoyment. The overall high level of enjoyment reported by respondents in this study may be a result of several things, including the actual measure of enjoyment itself. This particular way of measuring enjoyment may result in high reported levels of enjoyment because of the way that questions are asked, or because the questions are not evaluating enjoyment in the way that researchers seek to measure it. Or, it may be that the enjoyment found here is because of the overall high quality of the TV shows that were used in the study. Additionally, the high scores of enjoyment may be because people have the increased opportunity to choose which programming content they want to watch, resulting in a better match between user preferences and TV content. Future research should better address what enjoyment really means, and the multifaceted concepts that play a role in enjoyment and the measurement of enjoyment.

Finally, this study better describes the results presented in earlier work (Conlin & Sharples, 2014), where including personality traits in a model for binge-watching explains why people react differently to watching TV shows at different paces. However, further research could clarify these conflicting results, particularly because of the different samples used in these two studies. Age seems to play an important role in how someone will choose to watch TV and their consequent enjoyment, and these two studies used very different samples. The average age in the current study was 47 years old, whereas in the earlier study (Conlin & Sharples, 2014) the majority of respondents were between the ages of 17 and 24 through the utilization of a college sample.

## Conclusions

*“Clearly, we enjoy many activities that are explicitly designed to prompt experiences of narrative worlds: novels, newspapers, movies, television programs, history books, representational artworks, and so on” (Gerrig, 1993, p. 7)*

The landscape of television is changing. People have access to almost limitless choices for the content they consume, and “viewers have more options to pay only for the networks or programs they want to watch—and decide how, when, and where to watch them” (Steel, 2014, para. 3). No longer relegated to waiting for a new episode each week that airs on a traditional TV set, audiences can watch on their tablets, laptops, or smartphones. Even when choosing to watch on a TV, they can use DVDs, Blu-Rays, and DVRs to control the speed at which they watch endless hours of TV content. The changing availability of content--both in genre and medium--is most appealing to people who are high in transportability and fantasy empathy. These people are more likely to desire transportation into a narrative and may seek out highly transportive experiences, such as binge-watching a TV show that they have been hearing about. They then have the opportunity to become part of a cultural conversation as they watch new episodes at the same time as their friends. These people also form strong identification with the characters they see on TV, affecting their experience of enjoyment of the narrative. This is more common for younger people, as age was a significant predictor of a person choosing to binge-watch old episodes of a TV show and to watch new episodes live.

This method of watching may produce a stronger reaction from audiences than even binge-watching an entire series for several reasons. First, there may be a form of tension created by an audience member becoming fully immersed in a binge of the initial episodes, followed by being forced to wait for new episodes to premiere. If a person binge-watches an entire series,

they are finished with the narrative at the conclusion of their binge, causing them to be removed from the narrative world with no chance of returning unless re-watching previous episodes, generally a more hollow experience. Second, this binge-watching may also occur in a solitary way; it may be unlikely that people binge-watch at the same time as others, and, therefore, are cut off from discussing plotlines, characters, and other features of the narrative experience with their peers. However, if they binge-watch to catch up to new episodes of a TV show, they can then participate in the excitement of watching new episodes premiere at the same time as the rest of a mass audience. Consequently, media consumers can post their reactions to social media and talk about the new episode with their friends—while still avoiding spoilers—creating an intimacy among watchers that others may, in turn, want to join. This seems to create a cycle where more and more people want to binge-watch old episodes of a TV show. A snowball effect would then occur, whereby an enjoyable TV show increasingly gains an audience over the course of its run, resulting in peak audiences for the final seasons of TV shows like *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, and *True Blood*.

In an age where physical TV sales are falling (Williams, 2014), there seems to be little indication that people are enjoying TV content any less. Observers state that:

Certainly, the problem is not TV programming. In an age of almost infinite variety, when no one thinks twice about checking to see what's on Channel 762, TV is arguably more central to American culture than in the heyday of Uncle Miltie. Premium-cable dramas like *True Detective* generate as much critical buzz as Best Picture Oscar nominees.

Network ratings powerhouses like *The Voice* dominate the water cooler (Williams, 2014, para. 17).

People seem to be more frequently choosing to watch quality, scripted dramas that create an intricate and astonishing narrative world for the watcher to enter. They are transported to this world through the connections they form with characters, resulting in enjoyable, intense experiences that people continue to seek. It has been noted that “characters in novels, as well as people in real life, often testify to being transported when they have been astonished by the depth of an experience” (Gerrig, 1993, p. 8).

Transportation theory attempts to define and predict the experience of traveling to a narrative world (Green & Brock, 2000; Green & Brock, 2002; Green et al., 2004). The current study proposes that certain people will be drawn to experience transportation through binge-watching old episodes of a TV show in order to catch up to live episodes. People with elevated transportability and fantasy empathy are more likely to seek out this experience, as are people with stronger eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption and younger people who have increasing comfort with new technology. This method of watching may also decrease narrative engagement, a cognitive reaction to TV content. Perhaps this is because the emotional experience of being absorbed in a narrative allows people to temporarily suspend disbelief and stop worrying about the details that they may be more likely to focus upon in the real world rather than the narrative world. This loss of narrative engagement also apparently prompts increased enjoyment.

The complicated relationships involved in the outcomes of the TV viewing experience are amplified by the fact that many relationships disappeared when other factors, such as personality traits, were taken into account. It is difficult to separate all of these factors in any single study; consequently, simply stating that TV watching results in transportation—and, consequently, enjoyment, would be naïve and limiting. Such relationships are much more

complicated than that, emphasizing the need for greater understanding of high-dosage entertainment consumption, particularly when considering that “entertainment can best be described as a combination of the different experiences a user can have at the same time” (Vorderer, 2003, p. 148).

Without question, binge-watching is taking a central role in the changing ways people are consuming TV content: “binge-watching is an epidemic, one not limited to college campuses or even high schoolers experimenting for the first time. People everywhere with real careers, mortgages, and grown-up lives have been afflicted” (McHenry, 2014, para. 1). The act of binge-watching emphasizes the desire of audiences to be transported for a prolonged amount of time into a fictional, narrative world where they can forget their daily responsibilities and participate in the journey of the characters they encounter. Entertainment television is becoming increasingly important to audiences and content producers alike. Audiences enjoy the ability to absorb themselves in a storyline occurring over a span of many episodes, rather than having to end their transportation at the end of a movie or a single episode. By giving audiences what they want, content producers create loyal fans who purchase merchandise, consumer advertising, and create buzz about the TV show, inspiring people who have not been watching to do so in the form of binge-watching to enter into the cultural conversation. Entertainment is changing in response to technology; audiences are responding to that change, and new narrative worlds are being created by content producers and enjoyed by audiences the world over.

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## APPENDIX A

### **Survey Instrument**

The following measurements appear in the order that they will be presented to respondents. The order of the scales for transportability, fantasy empathy, sensation-seeking, and motivations will be randomized. Likewise, measurements for transportation, enjoyment, narrative engagement, and character identification will be randomized. The symbol (R) indicates scale items that are reverse-coded.

#### **Transportability Scale**

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

When watching TV shows for pleasure:

1. I can easily envision the events in the story.
2. I find I can easily lose myself in the story.
3. I find it difficult to tune out activity around me (R).
4. I can easily envision myself in the events described in a story.
5. I get mentally involved in the story.
6. I can easily put stories out of my mind after I've finished watching them (R).
7. I sometimes feel as if I am part of the story.
8. I am often impatient to find out how the story ends.
9. I find that I can easily take the perspective of the characters in the story.
10. I am often emotionally affected by what I've watched.

11. I have vivid images of the characters.
12. I find myself accepting events that I might otherwise have considered unrealistic.
13. I find myself thinking what the characters might be thinking.
14. I find myself thinking of other ways the story could have ended.
15. My mind often wanders (R).
16. I find myself feeling what the characters may feel.
17. I find that events in the story are relevant to my everyday life.
18. I often find that reading stories has an impact on the way I see things.
19. I easily identify with characters in the story.
20. I have vivid images of the events in the story.

### **Fantasy Empathy Scale**

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

1. When I am watching an interesting TV show, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.
2. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a TV show.
3. I am usually objective when I watch a TV show, and I don't often get caught up in it (R).
4. After watching a TV show, I have felt as though I was one of the characters.
5. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.
6. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me (R).
7. When I watch a good TV show, I can very easily put myself in the place of the leading character.

### **Hedonic Motivations**

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

1. It's important to me that I have fun when watching a TV show.
2. TV shows that make me laugh are among my favorites.
3. I find that even simple TV shows can be enjoyable as long as they are fun.
4. I like TV shows that could be considered "silly" or "shallow" if they can make me laugh and have a good time.
5. For me, the best TV shows are ones that are entertaining.
6. My favorite kinds of TV shows are happy and positive.

### **Eudaimonic Motivation**

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

1. I like TV shows that challenge my way of seeing the world.
2. I like TV shows that make me more reflective.
3. I like TV shows that focus on meaningful human conditions.
4. My favorite kinds of TV shows are ones that make me think.
5. I am very moved by TV shows that are about people's search for greater understanding in life.
6. I like TV shows that have profound meanings or messages to convey.

## Preferred Method of Watching TV

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

1. I enjoy watching TV live, as it comes on the air.
2. I enjoy watching a TV show within 7 days of it coming on the air.
3. I enjoy watching a TV show on my own time schedule, known as "video on demand."

## TV Show Selection

Please select which of the following TV shows you have watched most or all of the episodes of:

1. *Breaking Bad*
2. *Downton Abbey*
3. *Friday Night Lights*
4. *Game of Thrones*
5. *Homeland*
6. *House of Cards*
7. *Lost*
8. *Mad Men*
9. *Orange is the New Black*
10. *Sons of Anarchy*
11. *The Sopranos*
12. *The Walking Dead*
13. *The West Wing*
14. *The Wire*
15. *True Blood*

### **Method of Watching the TV Show**

Which of the following methods of watching BEST DESCRIBES how you watched [the TV show]?

1. Watched week by week using a DVR to record the episodes.
2. Watched week by week as the episodes came on TV, live or within seven days.
3. Watched old episodes on DVD or Blu-Ray, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days.
4. Watched old episode on DVR, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days.
5. Watched old episodes online, then watched new episodes as they came on TV, live or within seven days.
6. Watched the entire series at once on DVD or Blu-Ray.
7. Watched the entire series at once using a DVR to record the episodes.
8. Watched the entire series at once, online using a streaming service such as Netflix or Hulu Plus.
9. Watched a marathon of episodes as they came on TV.
10. Other.

### **Transportation Scale**

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

1. While I was watching [the TV show], I could easily picture the events in it taking place.
2. While I was watching [the TV show], activity going on in the room around me was on my mind (R).

3. I could picture myself in the scene of the events in [the TV show].
4. I was mentally involved in [the TV show] while watching it.
5. After finishing [the TV show], it was easy to put it out of my mind (R).
6. I wanted to learn how [the TV show] ended.
7. [The TV show] affected me emotionally
8. I found myself thinking of ways [the TV show] could have turned out differently.
9. I found my mind wandering while I was watching [the TV show] (R).
10. The events in [the TV show] are relevant to my everyday life.
11. The events in [the TV show] have changed my life.

### **Enjoyment Scale**

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

1. I found watching [the TV show] to be enjoyable.
2. I found watching [the TV show] to be boring.
3. I found watching [the TV show] to be entertaining.
4. I found watching [the TV show] to be dull.
5. I found watching [the TV show] to be pleasurable.
6. I found watching [the TV show] to be interesting.
7. I found watching [the TV show] to be captivating.
8. I found [the TV show] to be well-made.

## **Narrative Engagement Scale**

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

1. At times, I had a hard time making sense of what was going on in [the TV show] (R).
2. My understanding of the characters in [the TV show] is unclear (R).
3. I had a hard time recognizing the thread of the story in [the TV show] (R).
4. I found my mind wandering while [the TV show] was on (R).
5. While watching [the TV show], I found myself thinking about other things (R).
6. I had a hard time keeping my mind on [the TV show] (R).
7. During [the TV show], my body was in the room, but my mind was inside the world created by the story.
8. [The TV show] created a new world, and then that world suddenly disappeared when the show ended.
9. At times during [the TV show], the story world was closer to me than the real world.
10. The story in [the TV show] affected me emotionally.
11. During [the TV show], when a main character succeeded, I felt happy, and when they suffered in some way, I felt sad.
12. I felt sorry for some of the characters in [the TV show].

## Character Identification

The following response items will be measured on a one-through-nine Likert scale, where “one” means “strongly disagree” and “nine” means “strongly agree.”

Think about your experience watching [the TV show], particularly [character name], played by [actor name], while you respond to the following statements:

1. While viewing [the TV show], I felt as if I was part of the action.
2. While viewing [the TV show], I forgot myself and was fully absorbed.
3. I was able to understand the events in the program in a manner similar to that in which [character name] understood them.
4. I think I have a good understanding of [character name].
5. I tend to understand the reasons why [character name] does what [he or she] does.
6. While viewing the show I could feel the emotions [character name] portrayed.
7. During viewing, I felt I could really get inside [character name]’s head.
8. At key moments in the show, I felt I knew exactly what [character name] was going through.
9. While viewing [the TV show], I wanted [character name] to succeed in achieving [his or her] goals.
10. When [character name] succeeded I felt joy, but when [he or she] failed, I was sad.

## APPENDIX B

### IRB Approval

Office for Research  
Institutional Review Board for the  
Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA**  
RESEARCH

August 20, 2014

Lindsey T. Conlin  
Office for Graduate Studies  
College of Communication & Information Sciences  
The University of Alabama  
Box 870172

Re: IRB # EX-14 CM-094 "Binge-watching: Narrative Outcomes"

Dear Ms. Conlin:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your protocol has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46.101(b)(2) as outlined below:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:  
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your application will expire on August 19, 2015. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure Form. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



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Box 870 27  
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Carpantito T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP  
Director & Research Compliance Officer  
Office for Research Compliance  
The University of Alabama

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**UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS  
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

**I. Identifying information**

	Principal Investigator	Second Investigator	Third Investigator
Names:	Lindsey T. Conlin	Andrew Billings	
Department:	C&IS	TCF	
College:	C&IS	C&IS	
University:	University of Alabama	University of Alabama	
Address:	478 Reese Phifer Hall	432b Reese Phifer Hall	
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E-mail:	ltconlin@crimson.ua.edu	acbillings@ua.edu	

Title of Research Project: Binge-watching: Narrative Outcomes

Date Submitted: 8/4/2014  
Funding Source: Reagan Endowed Chair funds

Type of Proposal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Revision	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal Please attach a renewal application	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt
Please attach a continuing review of studies form					
Please enter the original IRB # at the top of the page					

UA faculty or staff member signature:

**II. NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION** (to be completed by IRB):

Type of Review: \_\_\_\_\_ Full board \_\_\_\_\_ Expedited

**IRB Action:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Tabled Pending Revisions	Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved Pending Revisions	Date: _____

Approved-this proposal complies with University and federal regulations for the protection of human subjects.

Approval is effective until the following date: **8-19-15**

Items approved:

<input type="checkbox"/> Research protocol	(dated _____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Informed consent	(dated _____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment materials	(dated _____)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	(dated _____)

Approval signature Date **8/20/2014**

## Binge-watching: Narrative Outcomes

Lindsey Conlin, Primary Investigator, Doctoral Student

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called *Binge-watching: Narrative Outcomes*

This study is being done by Lindsey Conlin, a graduate student at the University of Alabama. Ms. Conlin is being supervised by Dr. Andrew Billings, who is a professor of Communication at the University of Alabama.

This study is being done to find out whether people who watch TV shows at different paces have different experiences.

This study is different because it is looking at personality traits and motivations that have not been studied in the context of TV watching. This knowledge is important and useful because it will help to understand which types of people are affected in different ways by watching TV. The results of this study will help communication researchers understand how viewers are affected by the pacing and control that viewers have over television content.

You have been asked to be in this study because you are a television viewer. About 250 other people will be in this study. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do these things:

- Answer questions about your personality traits and motivations
- Answer questions about a specific TV program that you watch

If you are under the age of 19, you are not eligible to participate in this study.

It should take you no longer than 30 minutes to complete this study. The only cost to you from this study is the amount of time that it takes you to complete. You will be compensated for being in this study through your Qualtrics Panels account.

There is little or no risk foreseen if you take part in this study. Researchers will have no access to your name or identifying information. Nothing that you report can be traced back to you.

Your privacy will be protected because you will be able to complete this study in your own time, and at your own leisure. None of the researchers will be able to tell who you are, and what you have revealed in the study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

The alternative to being in this study is not to participate. Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time.

UA IRB Approved Document  
Approval date: 8-20-14  
Expiration date: 8-19-15

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (the IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

If you have questions about the study later on, please contact Lindsey Conlin at [ltconlin@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:ltconlin@crimson.ua.edu), or her faculty supervisor, Dr. Andrew Billings, at [acbillings@ua.edu](mailto:acbillings@ua.edu). If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email the Research Compliance office at [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu).

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it.  
I may keep a copy of this consent form for my records.

UA IRB Approved Document  
Approval date: 8-20-14  
Expiration date: 8-19-15