A CUT AND PASTE IDENTITY: AN INVESTIGATION OF REALITY TV'S ROLE IN POSTMODERN
IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ORDINARY PEOPLE AS
CELEBRITIES

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the construction of the identity of the participants within the reality TV programmes (*Style Her Famous, My Celebrity Home* and *How Do I Look*) as well as examined the representation of that identity as reflected in the change in participants from the beginning to the end of the program.

Drawing on literature from fields such as postmodernism and its influence on culture, identity constructions and ordinary people as celebrities, an analysis of the three American reality TV shows *Style Her Famous, My Celebrity Home* and *How Do I Look* was conducted. An in-depth content analysis with specific reference to comparative analysis further aided this study. A total of 18 episodes (six episodes for each programme) were collected and thoroughly analyzed where the ‘cut and paste identity’ of ordinary people as ‘celebrities’ constituted the hermeneutical key of the study. The episodes and programs have been scrutinized and have been systematically classified to enable an analysis of the observations.

This study attempted to not only describe, but also to foster change in the representation of the identity of the participants of the above mentioned reality TV programmes.

The study found that reality television plays a role in shaping the postmodern identity of ordinary people as celebrities. The study also found that the participants involved in the above mentioned programmes found it easy to make someone else’s identity their own. It appeared that the postmodern mind is easily influenced and willing to adopt an identity especially that of a celebrity.

The participants involved in these programs claimed this identity as their own and then believed that the new identity was in fact who they ‘really are’ but in actual fact it is a beginning of a new sameness with somebody else. Hence the participants possessed a ‘cut and paste identity.’
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs a sense of belonging is one of the basic needs of every human being. (Maslow 1970:20, 21)

For the postmodern mind this sense of belonging is demonstrated in the pursuit of an identity that is different yet acceptable within the postmodern society. The media plays a role in shaping the identity that the postmodern mind seeks.

Recently an increase in the number of reality television shows has aided the postmodern mind in ‘finding that identity’, finding out who they ‘really are’. The media to a large extent gives direction to what is acceptable, what is worthy of pursuit and what is not. The media’s role in helping ordinary people find their identity through a sense of belonging cannot be over emphasized.

It is the media that creates icons and establishes standards and norms. This study examined the three American reality television programmes namely; Style Her Famous, My Celebrity Home and How Do I Look within the theoretical framework of postmodernism and identity construction. This lead to a better understanding of the representation of the identity as reflected in the change in the participants of the above mentioned programmes from the beginning to the end of the programme.

1.2 Postmodernism and its influence on culture

Olivier describes postmodern culture (postmodernity as) “reject(ing) the validity of attempts to universalize about nature and society, and emphasizes particularity more than universality.” (Olivier 2007: 36, 37)
Hardt and Negri’ suggests that the postmodern culture “is what they call ‘informatization’-the fact that all facets of social life are subjected to ubiquitous information technology, which supersedes all previously decisive features of modern culture, such as industrialization and the primacy of science.” (Hardt and Negri 2001:280)

A one word definition of Olivier’s take on postmodernism would be ‘particularity’ which could be interpreted as the ‘individual’ for the purpose of this study. Hardt and Negri’s take on postmodernism would be ‘social life which is subjected to ubiquitous information technology’ which in this study would represent the three American reality television shows namely *Style Her Famous* and *My Celebrity Home* and *How Do I Look*. When these two definitions are combined the following concept is created; “The individual’s social life which is subject to reality TV.”

Smith and Wood (2003) state that reality TV shows “promise a window to the soul.” (pg. 13) The individual is subjected by these reality TV shows in such a way that the individual’s identity is constructed through viewing the participants of these reality TV shows. (pg. 13) Culture which is an important aspect of the social life of the individual “relies on the media to create a false sense of community through vicarious experience instead of a real sense of community through shared experience. The media create a false sense of intimacy by turning public and private inside out.” (Smith and Wood 2003: 13)

They further state that if identity should be defined it could be described as telling us who we are and where we are placed in time and space. “(The identity of the individual) is then mediated first by community, then reconstructed via the media and finally recovered through play” (those individuals who participate in these reality TV shows). (Smith and Wood 2003:14) Concepts such as culture, identity and reality TV which play a role in understanding the concept of the postmodern individual will be defined and discussed later in chapter two of this study.
Famously, Lyotard (1984: xxiv) remarks: “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity to metanarratives”….in contemporary society and culture…The grand narrative has lost its credibility and that ‘(m)ost people have lost their nostalgia for the lost narrative.” (1984: 37) According to Hassard,

“The postmodern (perspective) concerns knowledge of localized understandings and (accepts) the plurality of diverse language forms. Thus postmodernism sees the fragmentation of grand narratives and the discrediting of all meta-narratives.” (1993: 9)

In relation to the quote above, postmodern culture understands its local culture and at the same time accepts the plurality of diverse cultures and ‘sees the fragmentation of grand narratives and the discrediting of all meta-narratives’, a ‘meta-culture’ (the author’s own construction) within the local culture does not exist. In other words by not possessing one’s own culture but accepting a diverse plurality of cultures as your own, the individual takes on a “cut and paste culture”.

1.3 Identity Constructions in a Postmodern Culture

In order to define identity in a postmodern culture”, Schater (2005: 375) makes mention of various theorists who have agreed on ‘integrating context into identity theory’ which plays a part in the construction of the identity of an individual. They state that within classical identity theory it has always been accepted that an individual’s culture influences the content of his or her identity (values, attitudes, symbols, commitments etc). Therefore individuals who differ in culture also differ in cultural practices and beliefs.

Central to Schater’s study is Erickson’s interpretation of the ego identity status paradigm. According to Erickson, various cultural contexts may cause the content of identity to differ however, the theoretical applicability of the structural concepts of identity is deemed as universal. This includes concepts such as “sameness and continuity, identity commitment, identity and achievement,” while the same could be said of the developmental course of identity from identity diffusion to identity achievement. (Schater 2005: 378)
Schater states that this Ericksonian theory has been considered to be a modernist depiction of the structural elements of identity. The Ericksonian viewpoint describes identity as an

“invigorating sense of sameness and continuity regardless of specific content. (t)his sense is described as unfolding epigenetically from within and according to an innate timetable. ..(t)he preferred course of development described is one in which incompatible childhood identifications lead to a period of crises.....which ideally then leads to a choice, which in turn allows identity closure, and thus to an adulthood of stable commitment....The theory strongly emphasizes personal choice and separation as precursors of a mature personal autonomous identity. Basically, this is a description of one universally desirable developmental trend toward an identity structure characterized by self-consistency, stability, and autonomy.” (Schater 2005: 379)

Conversely Schater discusses Ericksonian theory in the light of postmodernity by stating that postmodernity is referred to as “the sociological context in which identity develops, (it is also) referred to as a theory of knowledge used to examine and deconstruct scientific theories that discuss identity.” (Schater 2005: 380)

Within the context of postmodernity Schater explains that there is the view that postmodernity creates a new context for the development of adolescent identity. This context which constantly changes is the starting point to an individual’s maturity. The constant change of context brings about instability in the individual’s new identity. The identity of the individual is now highlighted instead of that of the community and the “influence of technology as a representation of reality has diminished confidence in reality.” (Schater 2005: 380) He states that some claim that the resultant identity is a fragmented one and forms a ‘multiplicity of selves.’ (Schater 2005: 380)

Following cultural psychology’s argument Schater further argues that “identity’s basic structure and its developmental course are contingent on the ongoing interaction between the individual and his or her social context and thus may vary across different cultural or other such macro systemic contexts.” (Schater 2005: 378) He says that if we can accept this we may find diverse possible mature structures of identity. (Schater 2005: 378)
Medina describes identity as a “multifaceted phenomenon that requires a pluralistic or multidimensional logic (because it is) bound up with difference and all identity categories are intrinsically heterogeneous and...unstable (for they keep within themselves the source of their own instability, always having a process of destabilization up their sleeve no matter how rigidly fixed they become).” (Medina 2003: 657)

Central to Medina’s argument is Wittgenstein’s description of familial identity which is described as heterogeneous - diverse and unstable - subject to fluctuation. If identity is already in itself unstable and intrinsically heterogeneous, postmodern society has added to the ‘fragmentation’ and confusion of the identity of the individual. (Medina 2003: 657,658)

In his article City Limits: Crime, Consumer Culture and the Urban Experience Hayward states that in the last few decades of the twentieth century the traditional means of self expression and identity has been overtaken by a new way of self expression and identity and that is through the celebration of consumer goods. (2004:248) The reality TV shows which forms part of this study will illustrate the extent of which postmodern masternarratives are in support of capitalist commodification.

According to Lifton (1995), in Greek mythology there is a character called Proteus who had the ability to change into different forms as was required by his situation. He could change from a wild boar to a lion to a dragon to a fire or to a flood. His form never remained fixed but depended on the role he needed to play. (pp. 130-135) This is typical of the postmodern man and woman and their search for their own identity. This change is not permanent but changes with the need. The identity of an individual in the postmodern culture can be compared to a patient on her way to plastic surgery. Because she is not satisfied with her body, she requests that the surgeon give her the buttocks of Beyoncé, the breasts of Pamela Anderson, the lips of Angelina Jolie and the toes of Christina Aguilera.

This individual no longer has her own identity instead the surgeon cut away the body parts she had and ‘pasted on’ what she desired to have.
When the postmodern individual searches for his or her identity in order to be ‘somebody’ by identifying with the image of a popular icon which changes from time to time depending on his or her need, this individual’s identity can be called a ‘cut and paste identity’.

**1.4 Identity constructed by the media: Reality TV and its representation of Ordinary people as celebrities**

**1.4.1 Defining Celebrity**

According to the Oxford dictionary, celebrity means “the state of being well known.” A person who is a celebrity is therefore well known be it male or female. Collins (2008) gives a number of other definitions of the word celebrity he states;

> Celebrity is distinctly a capitalist phenomenon coinciding with changes in communication technology that enabled new forms of social mobility, the democratization of the consumption of cultural goods, and the production of secular notions of popular culture….Celebrity is the democratization of fame, but more importantly, it is fame commodified. That is, it is a symbolic form whose transmission and reception within a commercial media system renders it a cultural commodity. Celebrity is established by its visibility as a function of its reproducibility, or its exposure to audiences, who subjectively participate in the discursive construction and maintenance of celebrity through their reception. (Collins 2008: 90)

This can be seen in the three American reality TV programmes *How Do I Look*, *My Celebrity Home* and *Style Her Famous*. Reality TV allows ordinary people to appear on international television. The ordinary people in the reality TV programme become the centre of attention since they are the main participants of the program. Hence these ordinary people become internationally well-known (celebrities) for the remainder of the program.

Fame in these three reality TV programmes can be seen as commodified because the participants of each program becomes well known simply because they are willing to drastically bring about a change in their homes, in their wardrobes as well as their looks in accordance with their favourite celebrity’s homes, clothing, looks and hairstyles.
When Collins states that celebrity is the democratization of fame, fame commodified it could also be suggested that the celebrity status itself is democratized. Celebrity status is now accessible to anyone and everyone including ordinary people. This celebrity status however comes at a price. The price is that in order for ordinary people to become celebrities they have to buy into the capitalist consumption of goods. This gives reference to the media’s support of capitalist commodification.

In the case of these three reality TV programmes the ordinary people or participants of the show have to buy into the lifestyles of their favourite celebrities by changing their looks (in the case of How Do I Look and Style Her Famous) and their homes (in the case of My Celebrity Home) in order to be associated with all the attributes of fame and achievement of their favourite celebrities.

Hence as Collins stated above, celebrity is reproduced since the participants of the reality TV shows are ordinary people who have through their reception of the media chosen their favourite celebrity and by their reception and participation in these reality TV shows they themselves become celebrities and in turn maintain the discursive construction of ‘celebrity’.

1.4.2 A short history of Reality TV

Sue Collins in her article “Making the Most out of 15 Minutes: Reality TV’s Dispensible Celebrity”, gives a short history of reality TV. She quotes Raphael (2004) and states that due to Hollywood’s economic environment characterized by rising costs of network program production, network debts, competition for advertising revenues, new audience measuring techniques etc.; reality TV surfaced in the late 1980’s as a strategy to cut costs.

Reality TV did not require acting talent or scripts thus it helped producers to sidestep Hollywood agents’ commission fees and helped them prepare for potential strikes. These shows could be produced at a faster pace than the regular fictional shows. “Reality shows gained currency in this environment of relative financial scarcity and labour unrest.” (Collins 2008: 96)
This resulted in low-end production values and the disappearance of higher-priced stars and union talent. While reality TV was a cost-cutting strategy it also claimed on ‘representing the real’. (Collins 2008: 96)

These three reality TV shows are just that; they ‘represent the real’. The changes in the looks or homes of the participants of the reality TV shows make these participants believe that they too can live like a celebrity and that their make-over makes them/their homes look exactly like their favourite celebrity’s.

1.4.3 The increase in Reality TV shows and its impact on culture and society

In order to understand ‘celebrity’, Turner coins the term ‘the demotic turn’ which refers to the ordinary person as he or she “turn(s) themselves into media content through celebrity culture, reality TV, DIY websites, talk radio etc.” (Turner 2006: 153)

Turner used this term as a means to understand the rapid increase of celebrity across the media since the 1980s “as well as the celebrity’s colonization of the expectations of everyday life in contemporary western societies, particularly among teenagers and young adults. Where there was a crossover between certain aspects of reality TV and the production of celebrity, (he) was concerned to argue for the importance of recognizing how celebrity was being constituted in such formats.” (Turner 2006: 153,154)

He also noted that reality TV shows were aimed at the recognition of self. In summary to Turner’s discussion about the mass production of celebrities through reality TV, he states that with the increase in celebrity production which has led to a significant relationship between the media and culture, the media which instead of becoming a mediator has now become an author of cultural identities. (Turner 2006: 154)

This has impacted the social and cultural sphere of society as well as contributed to the cultural construction of identity and desire.
Not only does the media “grow their own celebrities but they control how they are marketed before and during production.” (Turner 2006: 154) Reality TV augments the illusion that what the audience is watching is exactly what is happening in reality thus exploiting reality. This ‘reality’ becomes apart of the audiences’ everyday lives. (Turner 2006: 155)

Halbert accurately describes the extent to which CBS retains control and power over the participants of the Reality TV show “Survivor” in labour and image, and thus its circulation:

_Essentially, CBS controls their ability to appear in public and in what type of venue, their ability to talk about the show, and their life stories. CBS owns their public identities and the rights to disclose their private identities. CBS owns the telling of the experiences that made them who they are. Everything a Survivor cast member could communicate to the public might be construed as the property of CBS. Additionally, CBS owns these rights throughout the universe forever._ (Collins 2008: 98)

This study would like to suggest that Reality TV further confuses the already fragmented identity of the individual in a postmodern society and at the same time owns and determines the cultural construction of the individual’s identity and desire. In doing that, Reality TV is homogenizing and globalizing a specific identity and culture which is contrary to the definition of postmodernism.

The individual in the postmodern world who seeks to establish an identity is bombarded by the media from all sides. It is virtually impossible not to be influenced by the values, the icons, the heroes and celebrities that the media creates. This impacts the individual’s identity and propels him into a search for a new identity. This new identity is a blend of the different influences that the postmodern society offers through borrowing from various cultures and thus ends up being an identity that is not brand new but rather a combination of different elements from the different cultures.

### 1.5 Justification and significance of the study

An increase in reality TV programmes over the past couple of years to name a few programmes such as _Survivor, Big Brother, My Celebrity Home, Style Her Famous, How Do I Look,_
So You Think You Can Dance, Idols, SA’s Got Talent etc have brought about an increase in the study of the construction of the identities of ordinary people as celebrities within these programmes.

It is difficult to overlook the emphasis and the role the media plays in shaping or constructing the identity of the participant or ordinary person who is viewed as a celebrity within these reality TV programmes. The change in the participants of the reality TV programme from the beginning of the programme to the end of the programme is significant.

The fact that the participants of these three reality TV shows are so easily able to adopt and make someone else’s identity their own suggests that the postmodern individual is easily influenced and willing to adopt an identity other than his or her own.

According to Turner, “(t)he function of the media has mutated as it has increasingly directly participated in the construction of cultural identity as one of its primary spheres of activity.. (and what makes this study significant is that) we need to reconsider our understanding of what kind of cultural apparatus the media has become”…( and the role it plays in the construction of the identity of the postmodern individual within reality TV) (2006: 154)

The media suggests that the reason why ordinary people need to become celebrities is to be able to reach the ultimate ‘sweet life’, the lavish and glamorous lifestyle of a celebrity. The media seems to create this ‘false’ desire in the ordinary person. Once this desire is met or is attempted to be met it is only then that the ordinary person is able to find his/her identity and find out who he/ she ‘really’ is. The media also suggest that it is only when the ordinary person who found his/her identity by imitating that of a celebrity’s fulfills their most basic need which is to belong.
1.6 Problem Statement

The participants involved in the above mentioned programmes seem to be willing to make someone else’s identity their own. It appears that the postmodern mind is easily influenced and willing to adopt an identity especially that of a celebrity.

For example the participants of Style Her Famous are willing to change their looks as to those of their favourite celebrity, while in the programme How Do I Look the participants who are chosen are not fashion conscious and are at first resistant to the change that awaits them. These participants are in a sense stripped of their identity when their clothes are taken away from them and they are given a new identity after their makeover. After trying on a few outfits this ‘new’ identity is eventually accepted by the participant.

In the programme My Celebrity Home, participants change the interior of their homes to that of their favourite celebrity’s in order to be associated with all the attributes of fame and achievement of their favourite celebrity. These reality programmes seem to suggest that if the participants change their looks and homes they too can be identified with fame, success, achievement and wealth, therefore they can be celebrities too.

Their participation in reality TV programmes consolidates their celebrity status. This identity while it is intended to be different ends up being the same as that of the celebrity. The participants involved in these programs claim this identity as their own and then believe that the new identity is in fact who they ‘really are’ but in actual fact it is a beginning of a new sameness with somebody else.

Postmodernism which is defined as incredulous to metanarratives (Lyotard 1984: xxiv) is in fact contrasted in the above mentioned reality TV programmes. These programmes all have an ideal of what the participant should look like or what his or her home should look like, (like his or her favourite celebrity’s) hence a metanarrative exists. The participants’ favourite celebrity’s identity is pasted onto their ‘identities”, hence they possess a cut and paste identity.
1.7 Research aim

The aim of this study is to examine the construction of the identity of the participants within the reality TV programme (Style Her Famous, My Celebrity Home and How Do I Look) as well as look at the representation of that identity as reflected in the change in participants from the beginning to the end of the program.

1.8 Research Question

What role does reality television play in constructing the postmodern identity of ordinary people as celebrities?

1.9 Research Objectives

- To identify the change in the participants of the reality TV programmes (including programmes such as My Celebrity Home, Style Her Famous and How Do I Look) from the beginning of the programme to the end of the programme
- To determine the thematic nature of each episode within each programme in order to compare and identify the common themes found in the three American Reality TV programmes
- To identify the role of the media and its influence in the construction of the identity of the participants involved in the reality TV programmes
- To test whether the participants of each episode of each programme found it easy to adopt the identity of their favourite celebrity’s as their own

1.10 Research Design and Methods

This research proposed to analyze and evaluate the representation of the identity of participants in American Reality TV programmes namely Style Her Famous, My Celebrity Home and How Do I Look.
Qualitative designs have formed part of this study. Qualitative designs have been analyzed on the basis of grounded theory. The research paradigm of comparative analysis has further aided the study as the existing international research on this topic has been compared and applied to the data collected.

The underlying paradigm of this study is qualitative, or interpretative, where the ‘cut and paste identity’ of ordinary people as ‘celebrities’ constitutes the hermeneutical key of the study. This study attempts to not only describe, but also to foster change in the representation of the identity of the participants of the above mentioned reality TV programmes.

The data which are the episodes of the above mentioned reality TV programmes, have been collected and thoroughly scrutinized. Themes within all the episodes have been chosen and analyzed. A comparative analysis of each episode and each programme has been used and linked to the theme of a ‘cut and paste identity of ordinary people as ‘celebrities’.

The data of this research is two fold: primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to the collection of episodes for each reality TV programme. Secondary data refers to the published studies and texts dealing with postmodernism, identity construction and reality TV programmes with ordinary people as celebrities.

The data has been collected on the following basis: Six programmes from each reality TV programme (Style Her Famous, My Celebrity Home and How Do I Look) have been recorded. The programs have been scrutinized and have been systematically classified to enable analysis of the observations.

Validity and reliability principles have been implemented by accurate referencing of media selected and proper references to other academic work. It is up to the reader to judge whether the conclusions drawn are indeed valid references from the actual media analyses. These three reality TV programmes were chosen since each programme touches on the identity of the individual in a postmodern culture.
1.11 Delimitations of study

This study was delimited to the analysis of three American Reality TV programmes namely, *My Celebrity Home*, *Style Her Famous* and *How Do I Look*, including six episodes of each programme which were broadcast during the year 2010. Therefore the data which has been collected and analyzed has only formed part of three reality TV programmes. The research of this study was conducted in a limited time span therefore the sampling size of the data collected was adjusted accordingly.

The research was based on quantitative design (six episodes of each program) but primarily this study was based on a qualitative design, which according to Du Plooy (2007:83) is rooted in observations, questions and deductions based on assumptions and may run the risk of being based on subjective reasoning. This study is aided by an extensive literature review of international research on this topic in order to limit faulty assumptions.

1.12 Definition of terms

The following terms relating to this study will be defined in order to avoid possible misunderstanding.

1.12.1 Postmodernism

For the sake of this study postmodernism according to Kevin Hart “can mean different things in different contexts…it is to do with taking things out of their contexts, fragmenting them, focusing on surfaces rather than depths, and well, playing with them… It’s about collage and pastiche, parody and irony.” (2004:8, 14)

1.12.2 Culture

According to Eagleton, “(c)ulture can be loosely summarized as the complex of values, customs, beliefs and practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group (2000: 34).
For the sake of this study, the specific group of people refers to celebrities. (Kidd 2002:5,6) states “culture means the way of life of a group of people. In other words- how they live their lives. The patterns of social organization and the ‘normal’ ways in which we are expected to behave in society touch(es) all aspects of our daily lives.”

1.12.3 Identity

Medina describes identity as a “multifaceted phenomenon that requires a pluralistic or multidimensional logic (because it is) bound up with difference and all identity categories are intrinsically heterogeneous and…unstable (for they keep within themselves the source of their own instability, always having a process of destabilization up their sleeve no matter how rigidly fixed they become).” (Medina 2003: 657)

1.12.4 Celebrity

For the sake of this study the definition of celebrity is taken from the perspective of ordinary people who become celebrities when they participate in reality TV programmes. According to Turner a celebrity is “the individual with no particular talents…..(and has) an especially short lifecycle as a public figure. (In sum, celebrities in this sense are) ordinary people (who have) been ‘discovered’, suddenly extracted from their everyday lives and processed for stardom.” (Turner 2006: 156)

1.12.5 Reality TV

The ‘(r)eality’ of reality TV is of course a construction. (W)hat has become significant is the way these formats have exploited the reality effect of television’s ‘liveness’ that is, the fore grounded liveness (as in, what we are watching is happening right now!) enhances the illusion that what is being watched is real or genuine, thus challenging the competing suspicion that it is only being staged and produced for the camera.” (Turner 2006:155)
1.13 Conclusion

The following chapter will provide an overview and analysis of the available literature related to the topic of this research and will expand on the topics touched on in this chapter namely, postmodernism and its influence on culture, identity constructions in a postmodern culture and reality TV and its representation of ordinary people as celebrities.
CHAPTER 2: THE POSTMODERN INDIVIDUAL

2.1 Introduction

Academic research on postmodernism is vast. As such, the theoretical framework for this research study will be a discussion on the various definitions of postmodernism. Included in this discussion is Doyle’s (2006) interpretation of Jean-Francious Lyotard’s definition of *The Postmodern Condition* as well as Salerno’s (2004) interpretation of Jean Baudrillard’s view on the postmodern world which ties in with the definition of the real. The common features which contribute to the understanding of the phenomena of postmodernism will also be included in this discussion. The focus of this study is on the postmodern individual therefore the following chapter will introduce key concepts related to this study through the discussion of existing literature related to postmodernism, identity, celebrity, culture, and reality TV.

By drawing on the collection of literature from researchers and developers within these fields, this chapter attempts to provide an overview of the individual who lives in a postmodern culture as well as identify certain key factors which play a role in the construction of the identity of this individual.

Kidd (2002) and Gergen’s (1991) interpretation of identity will be the main theorists used to discuss identity and its definitions. Various forms of identity will be introduced as well as the factors that play a role in the construction of the identity of the individual will be discussed.

Abbinnett (2003), Kidd (2002), Mooij (2004) will be the theorists used to discuss and give an overview of culture and its definitions. Culture as a class ideology with specific reference to the mass media- reality TV will be discussed.

Breese’s (2010) interpretation of celebrity as well as the question of why individuals are interested in buying into celebrities will also be discussed.
Murray and Ouellette’s (2009) interpretation of reality TV where reality TV is contextualized, the realness of reality TV and the commercialization of the real will be discussed as well as Andrejevic’s (2004) interpretation of reality TV will be included in this chapter.

2.2 Defining Postmodernism

“In attempting to define postmodernism, many search for a ‘neat central core’ thus attempting to universalize all postmodern theories and operate ‘within the modern obsession with control and reason’” (Doyle 2006: 123) It is intricate to summarize and give a simple definition of postmodernism. (Cahoone 1996: 13) There are no single ideas or viewpoints that can unify postmodernism. It is just not possible to condense postmodernism to a “knot of philosophical theses in the first place.” (Hart 2004: 26; Alvesson 2002: 19, 20, Klages 2007:1)

The enormous disagreements among writers who are labeled postmodern, the fact that some postmodernists would reject having any doctrines at all and because it is a concept that appears in several disciplines or areas of study such as music, film, communications, fashion, technology, sociology, literature, art, architecture are the reasons why it is difficult to summarize postmodernism. (Cahoone 1996: 14, Klages 2007:1)

The publishing of Jean-Francois Lyotard’s La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir (The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge) was the first time that postmodernism became a major topic and brought about much international debate. This publication was seen as one of the ‘canonical texts’ of postmodern theory which signaled a breakaway not only from the modern era but also a break from various traditional modern ways of seeing the world. (Doyle 2006: 123)

In order to understand postmodernism a definition of modernism should be given. (Doyle 2006: 124, Klages 2007:1) Williams (1998:38) defines modernism as an attitude, a method of thought and goes on further to say:
On a broad level, the attitude can be described as an abiding self-confidence in the steady progress of Western civilisation; the inherent superiority of Western science, technology, social structures, and political systems; the value of formal education; and the value of high culture, represented in standard works of literature, classical music and opera, and art. (Williams, 1998: 38)

In the 18th century modernism explored new methods to understand and control the outside environment. Modernism was seen as a thinking that relied on “the notion of historical progress leading to emancipation and liberation of mankind…thus i(t) legitimiz(ed) all scientific research and technological revolution, modernism is ‘a summary of all metaphysical system-thinking since Plato including the Enlightenment, Marxism and Capitalism.’” (Doyle 2006:124)

Postmodernism questioned this way of thinking and established a new way of thinking and a new view of the world. (Doyle 2006:124) Doyle identifies the common features which contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon known as postmodernism namely “the rejection of the grand narrative, plurality of knowledge and truth, knowledge, language and power and the dissolving of the self.

2.2.1 Rejection of the grand narrative

Postmodernism rejects grand narratives or metanarratives. Narrative means what we tell ourselves about the way that reality works. “Metanarratives are ways of thinking that unite knowledge and experience to seek to provide a definitive, universal truth and have as their goal to legitimate our institutions and our practices.” (Doyle 2006:126) Postmodernists see metanarratives as eliminating differences and as one class imposing their values and attitudes on others. It is also seen as “a manifestation of Western cultural imperialism motivated by consumer capitalist power. Grand narratives are seen as masking the will to power negating the interests of others.” (Doyle 2006:126)

Postmodernism critically assesses these grand narratives and proclaims that such narratives hide the contradictions, constructedness and instabilities that can be found in any social organization or practice. Francois Lyotard argues that all facets of modern society depend on grand narratives. These grand narratives help to maintain order, stability and totality in modern societies. Grand narratives, Lyotard argues has its own set of belief systems. Order in these grand narratives are seen as good while disorder is seen as chaotic and bad. (Klages 2007: 4, 5)
2.2.2 Plurality of knowledge and truth

Knowledge for postmodernists is pluralistic in character. Postmodernists do not agree with the hierarchical structures of knowledge instead they view everyone as on equal standing - that is both experts and non-experts have a mutual influence on one another. They speak of knowledge creation as an interactive process. Knowledge is also seen as local instead of universal, it constantly changes within a group as each individual gives his or her own interpretation to it. Lyotard also refers to “mini-narratives, i.e. stories that explain small practices, local events rather than large-scale universal or global concepts… The mini-narratives emphasize what postmodernists see as the fragmentation of modern culture.” (Doyle 2006:127)

Lyotard further asks the question, “Who decides what knowledge is and who knows what needs to be decided?” (Klages 2007: 6) Postmodernism seems to give alternatives to the forms of knowledge offered by forces beyond the individual’s control. It focuses on the discarding of grand narratives and focusing on specific local goals. “Hence the motto for postmodern politics might well be “think globally, act locally” and don’t worry about any grand scheme or master plan.” (Klages 2007: 6)

Postmodernists believe that truth is not fixed and that there can be no one truth but a myriad of truths which are created by humans in specific social and cultural contexts. If this is true it means that no longer is the fundamental nature of reality and the limits of knowledge a concern. To search for truth is no longer necessary for it doesn’t exist. Truth is a myth and can never be found. (Doyle 2006: 128)
2.2.3 Knowledge, language and power

Power and knowledge are seen as indissoluble by postmodernists. Those in power are the ones who construct and create reality. Language which is the fundamental means in that construction, when it is used by those who “control the official use of language in a society hold the key to social and political power and thus shape the world.” (Doyle 2006: 128)

Postmodernists argue that “when a belief or statement functions ‘as a truth that is made to prevail through a vast array of power arrangements that follow a certain grammar, semantics, and logic’ then it functions as a ‘regime of truth’.” (Doyle 2006: 129) In counteraction to this Doyle discusses Derrida’s concept of deconstruction, “which allows us to ask ourselves whether the verbal and visual signs we use to represent the world to ourselves, i.e. the languages, do sufficient justice to that about which they speak.” (pg 129) According to Derrida the statements that are made when we use language always creates binary opposites where one is privileged over the other therefore the concept of deconstruction restructures this and consciously focuses and favours the marginalized. (pg 130)

Postmodernists believe that there is no single interpretation of knowledge but that each individual person interprets his or her reality “based on his or her individual use of and meaning assigned to the metaphors of language.” (pg. 129) Therefore knowledge is subjective and varies in interpretation. (pg. 129, Cahoone 1996: 483-488)

2.2.4 The dissolving of the self

The idea of the self as universal, autonomous and unitary is rejected by postmodernism. Instead the identity of the self is constructed by the culture one experiences. (Doyle 2006: 130) Raymond Williams offers four distinct definitions of culture: “as an individual habit of mind; as the state of intellectual development of a whole society; as the arts; and as the whole way of life of a group of people.” (Eagleton 2000: 35) (An attempted definition of culture will be discussed later on in this chapter.) Jameson suggests that postmodernism is a cultural formation which is accompanied with particular stages of capitalism.
The stage that we are currently in now is multinational or consumer capitalism “with the emphasis placed on marketing selling, and consuming commodities, not on producing them which is associated with nuclear electronic technologies and correlated with postmodernism.” (Klages 2007:2) It is within this culture that the self is constructed. Gergen speaks about the social saturation of the self and states:

“Social saturation furnishes us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self. For everything we know to be true about ourselves, other voices within respond with doubt and even derision. Selves as possessors of real and identifiable characteristics—such as rationality, emotion, inspiration, and will—are dismantled....Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction.” (Gergen 1991: 6, 7)

In his explanation of the “death of the subject’ or the end of individualism, Malpas speaks about pastiche. He states that pastiche is the “imitation of a peculiar or unique style…it is a neutral practice of such mimicry.” (2001: 25) The concept of a unique self, private identity and individuality which existed in modernism no longer exists in postmodernism; instead individualism is seen as ideological and described as merely a “philosophical and cultural mystification which sought to persuade people that they ‘had’ individual subjects and possessed a unique personal identity.”(Malpas 2001: 25, 26)

Postmodernist see the self dissolve to become a subject who is subject-ed to or controlled by “the ideological motivated discourses of power which predominate in the society they inhabit.” (Doyle 2006:130)

Baudrillard argues that just as there are structures for determining language, there are structures which determine what social life will be. (Salerno 2004: 202)

Instead of reflecting reality, Baudrillard describes the postmodern life as retreating to hyper-reality (this means an exaggerated reality) which is brought about by technological innovation. Imitations become more real than the original. He states that the postmodern life is subjugated by copies of real events or objects. This he terms simulacra. (Salerno 2004: 201)
Three stages of simulacra or “Order of Simulacra” are identified by Baudrillard. For the sake of this study the third stage is of importance.

He describes this stage as the postmodern life that we live in today. It is characterized by the “domain of the copy over the original- some might say the unreal over the real. Here the duplicate has even more power than the original- usurping and undermining its originality. Here the world is made up of simulacra responding to predetermined codes of existence- codes that have been mass produced. The artificial experience is believed to be superior to the so-called authentic experience.” (Salerno 2004: 201, 202)

This is what seems to take place in the reality TV shows which form part of this study, namely How Do I Look, Style Her Famous and My Celebrity Home. It seems as though the producers as well as all the celebrity stylists of these shows already have a predetermined set of codes which they follow. This code is used in order to copy the “look” of a celebrity onto the ordinary person or participant of the reality TV show. These “looks” are then mass produced onto the ordinary participant. He further states that “all social life is simulacra guided by unwritten codes inherent in any particular society.” (Salerno 2004: 202)

The rise in information technology brought about fictional choices…. “One therefore believes a choice exists when actually there is none. The individual is controlled and directed by prefabricated models and predetermined choices. This makes everything subject to cybernetic manipulation.” (Salerno 2004: 202)

It seems as though at the beginning of the show How Do I Look, the participants feel that they have a choice in how they dress when in actual fact the celebrity stylists disagree. During the show the participants are instilled with certain codes of fashion which need to be followed in order to achieve a certain “look” and at the end of each episode the participant follows the code and is then described as beautiful.

Baudrillard states that “it is within his notion of hyper-reality that we find people desiring the artificial to the real, the imaginary world to the real world, the simulated experience to the real experience.” (Salerno 2004: 202)
2.3 The Identity of the postmodern individual

2.3.1 Defining Identity

In his introductory description of what identity means Kidd describes identity as to ‘know who you are.’ (2002:24) He states that knowing who you are is of vital importance as it helps one to understand what one does and what others around one does. (2002: 25)

Kidd suggests that identity is an active construction because it “allows us to see humans as active, thinking beings, rather than the passive victims or ‘robots’ of the culture that controls them.” (pg 26) He also states that identity is negotiable and introduces us to three forms of identity:

- **Individual identity.** Although in one sense this sort of identity is social since it is believed by many to be created through social interaction with others, individual identity is the unique sense of personhood held by each social actor in her or his own right.
- **Social identity.** By ‘social identity’ many sociologists mean a collective sense of belonging to a group, of individuals identifying themselves as being similar to or having something in common with the other members of the group.
- **Cultural identity.** This concept refers to a sense of belonging to a distinct ethnic, cultural or subcultural group.

(Kidd 2002: 26)

A focus on individual identity will form the main part of this research study as the participants’ identities of each reality TV show discussed in this study are influenced some how through social interaction with their family members, co-workers or friends. Their identities are constructed through their social interaction with the groups discussed above.

Alcoff et al (2003) states that the social group which gives the individual his unity of self is also known as the ‘generalized other’. The individual’s behaviour is influenced by the social process within the social group. This community within the social group exercises control over the conduct of its individual members thus the community “enters as a determining factor into the individual’s thinking.” (pg 36)
They further state that the self-conscious human individual assumes the attitudes of the social group or ‘generalized other’ and confronts the various social problems that he or she is faced with at that time.

In other words the “individual possesses a self only in relation to the selves of the other members of the social group; and the structure of his (or her) self expresses or reflects the general behaviour pattern of this social group to which he(or she) belongs, just as does the structure of the self of every other individual belonging to this social group.” (Alcoff et al 2003: 40)

Stuart Hall (1990) suggests that identity is not an accomplished fact instead it should be seen as a production. (Kidd 2002:26) In other words one can never arrive at having an identity since it always changes and is constantly being formed.

Kidd states that because of the emphasis of plurality and divergence in some versions of postmodernism, instead of a single postmodern identity, an increase in the growth of postmodern identities occurs.

He describes postmodern identities as “fragmented or fractured- meaning that the dominant, absolute and rigid traditional sources of identity have been replaced by new sources. In other words the modernist sources of identity such as class, gender and ethnicity have become much looser, much freer- able to be manipulated and played with as never before.” (Kidd 2002:93)

He also mentions that theorists suggest that now the media which provides ‘symbolic communities’ is often turned to where a whole range of new identities are copied and incorporated into our sense of self. (Kidd 2002:93) (This can especially be seen in the investigation of the reality TV Style Her Famous and My Celebrity Home discussed in this study, when the participants of the programme copy the appearance of their favourite celebrities’ homes as well as their look and fashion sense.) Postmodern identities are described as
In the postmodern age our identity is not handed down to us as something which is fixed instead it is up to us how we construct our identity. The consumption of popular culture especially media products aids us in constructing our identity. (Kidd 2002:93) We are now able to choose what sort of people we want to be, we can build the lives we want and we can remould ourselves. With the shift from production to consumption we are who we are by what we buy and consume. (Kidd 2002:94)

2.3.2 Pastiche Personality

The following quote basically summarizes this whole research study:

_We are eager to relinquish ourselves because it is a difficult and painful matter to become a self, and because we long for the rewards that our culture is only too ready to give us in exchange for that self._

Rene’J. Muller, The Marginal Self

The pastiche personality Gergen (1991) states is a “social chameleon, constantly borrowing bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available and constructing them as useful or desirable in a given situation. If one’s identity is properly managed, the rewards can be substantial- the devotion of one’s intimates, happy children, professional success, the achievement of community goals, personal popularity, and so on. All are possible if one avoids looking back to locate a true and enduring self, and simply acts to full potential in the moment at hand.” (pg 150)
This is what can be seen in the reality TV shows discussed in this study. Participants of the shows are told that when they change their looks or the look of their homes to that of their favourite celebrity (with the exception of How Do I Look where a generic sense of style is introduced and not a style of the participant’s favourite celebrity) and once they do this they will achieve success in their marriages, in their relationships with family members, friends as well as the workplace.

For the pastiche personality, the self is constructed within a social context. “Clothing is a central means of creating the self.” (Gergen 1991: 154) (This is what is emphasized in How Do I Look and Style Her Famous) International clothing labels guarantee a new sense of self. “It is not the world of fashion that drives the customer into a costly parade of continuous renewal, but the postmodern customer who seeks means of “being” in an ever-shifting multiplicity of social contexts.” (Gergen 1991: 154, 155) Gergen quotes a poet named Sami Ma’ari and his description of the pastiche personality he states:

> Identities are highly complex, tension filled, contradictory, and inconsistent entities. Only the one who claims to have a simple, definite, and clear-cut identity has an identity problem.

(Gergen 1991: 155)

In the postmodern age one’s hold on one’s self constructions slowly disappears and is no longer seen as one’s private possession. Since the self is constructed socially the individual simply becomes a participant in the social process. As an individual one only has an identity because of the acceptance of that identity within that specific social group. And finally “one is allowed to be a certain kind of person because this sort of person is essential to the broader games of society.” (Gergen 1991: 156,157)

2.4 Postmodernism and its influence on Culture

2.4.1 Defining Culture

“(T)he self who participates in everyday social interaction can do so only through its recognition of certain cultural norms, values and ideals” (Abbinnett 2003: 1), therefore it is vital to define culture since it plays an important role in the construction of the self.
According to de Mooij “culture is the glue that binds groups together… Culture is what defines a human community, its individuals and social organizations…Individuals are products of their culture and their sociocultural environment to act in certain manners. Culture cannot be separated from the individual; it is not a system of abstract values that exists independently of individuals…Culture is to society what memory is to individuals.” (2004:26)

Kidd states that culture is a way of life and we are shaped by it. (2002: 5, 8) The way of life would need to include the following:

- The dominant values of a society
- The values that guide the direction that social change might take
- Shared linguistic symbols (language)
- Religious beliefs
- What is considered to be the correct way for people to behave in their day-to-day lives.
- What is considered to be the highest intellectual and artistic achievements of a group, including science, art, literature, music and so on
- Formal behavioural traditions and rituals
- Dominant patterns of living, including styles of architecture and patterns of land use

(Kidd 2002: 9)

He also states that culture and identity are linked to each other. Culture represents the macro pattern while identity represents the “micro meanings we have as individuals”. (pg 7) Harry Triandis (2002) states that culture is “a shared meaning system found among those who speak a particular language dialect, during a specific historic period, and in a definable geographic region.” (pg 6)

Gannon further emphasizes the importance of culture when he refers to Hofstedes’s seminal study (2001) which consisted of 53 national cultures where it was found that culture accounts for 25-50% of the values that individuals express. He states that culture matters a great deal in many instances. (Gannon 2008:30, 31)

Kidd introduces two views on culture namely Durkeim’s view of culture as order-functionalism and Marx’s view of culture as ideological control.
For the sake of this study we will only look at the second view. Functionalism is a view where society is seen as a system based on harmony and order and consensus whereas the second view—culture as ideology sees society as a pattern of conflict where the individuals do not consciously recognize it. This pattern of conflict exists because of the existence of different classes and their struggle for power. (Kidd 2002: 43)

“Class is an economic category and usually refers to the amount of economic power and material wealth an individual has. Those who share a position of power in common with others—based on their material and economic wealth—can be said to be in the same class as each other.” (Kidd 2002: 44) The participants in the reality TV shows discussed in this study seem to desire the same wealth, success and status as that of their favourite celebrity. They therefore purchase items which resemble the items of their favourite celebrities. Once the participants have acquired this they are portrayed as being in the same class as that of their favourite celebrities.

“Culture is seen to contain a ruling class ideology that is socialized into the consciousness of the individuals living in a society... In this view ideology consists of ideas that are purposefully incorrect...Ideology is thus deliberately created by the powerful to ensure their continuing domination through the manipulation of others by means of false ideas.” (Kidd 2002: 47, 48)

An example of ideology for the sake of this study is the mass media. Frankfurt School members Adorno and Horkheimer suggested that “the commercial development of the mass media had led to a ‘mass culture’ based on intellectual sameness, which prevented critical thought and in so doing sustained capitalist ideological rule.” (Kidd 2002: 49) These two theorists believed that modern culture brought about the creation of the culture industry where there existed fetishism with commodities.

This fetishism was based on false ideological wants, manipulated by capitalism where humans almost worshiped what things for what they stand for that is money, wealth and status. (Kidd 2002: 50, Jameson 1995: X)
Postmodernity and popular culture is also interlinked. Modernity was characterized as the manufacture of production while postmodernity was characterized by consumption, a rapid consumption of popular culture. The establishment of self-identity is based on the popular cultural products that individuals consume. (Kidd 2002: 109)

Abbinnett describes this culture of postmodernism as an aesthetic culture. He states, “postmodern culture should be understood as an aesthetic transformation of the masses; a transformation whose necessity arises with the total commodification of the image.” (2003: 91) This is what seems to be the emphasis in the reality TV programmes discussed in this study. There is an emphasis put on aesthetics. In the reality TV programmes namely Style Her Famous and How Do I Look; participants are told to focus on their appearance as well as to purchase certain products which celebrities use.

2.5 Celebrity

2.5.1 Defining Celebrity

Breese describes celebrity as a “sociological phenomenon. Sociologists have reached a general agreement that it is not talent-skill or an inherent gift—which makes a celebrity. Celebrities are found not made…The central project of many of the scholars has been to answer and analyze how the entertainment industry and mass media creates celebrities.” (Breese 2010: 339)

Alexander (2010) speaks about celebrity-icons and describes them as mythical characters. The roles they play in “mass narratives thicken the meanings of their aesthetic forms. Residues from these mythical roles stick to their aesthetic forms, which become free-floating signifiers, shifters that project this surplus of meaning into everyday life. (Alexander 2010: 329)

According to Turner, “celebrities are created in order to make money.” (2004:34) What could be the reason why individuals are interested in and buy into celebrities? Breese offers two possible answers to this question:
First, celebrities are a salve for the alienation we suffer in capitalist societies. These theorists argue that capitalism creates desires for consumption and class status that cannot be realized for most individuals. Attachments to celebrities, who represent success in the capitalist system, are born of these unfulfilled desires. Second, as we know increasingly less about our neighbors and have fewer real-world relationships, we become more interested in the lives of celebrities. ‘Para-social interactions’ with celebrities who we know about but do not know replace real interactions with peers and family (Breese 2010: 340).

It is important to move beyond the theories of capitalism and psychology in order to identify the importance which society places on celebrities, on their beauty, blunders, constructive and creative qualities as they play a role in the individual’s experience of the celebrity. “(C)elebrities are more than successful commodities whose images are created and maintained by the entertainment and media industries. Celebrities are also meaningful symbols, modern-day totems, through which we talk about ourselves and our society in the public sphere.” (Breese 2010: 340, 341) In conclusion Breese states that:

Celebrities undoubtedly are commodities and a significant para-social presence in the lives of many fans; however, our understanding of celebrity and of society suffers if the work stops there. Celebrities are also symbols by which we narrate, negotiate, and interpret our collective experience and establish moral boundaries. By expanding the focus of research beyond commentary on the relationship between capitalism and the celebrity system and the relationship between fans and the celebrities, we see that society – with its symbols, moral expectations, discourses, and solidarities – stands between celebrities and individuals in the contemporary USA. A cultural order – not only economic and psychological orders – exists, and it is through this cultural order that we view, adore, and criticize celebrities. (2010: 352)

This can be seen in the reality TV shows discussed in this study. The participants of the reality TV programmes desire to have and look the same way as that of their favourite celebrity in order to be associated with wealth, fame and respect.

2.6 Reality TV

2.6.1 Defining Reality TV
“We define ‘reality television’ as an unabashedly commercial genre united less by aesthetic rules or certainties than by the fusion of popular entertainment with a self-conscious claim to the discourse of the real.” (Murray and Ouellette 2009: 3)

The Cambridge online dictionary describes reality TV as “television programmes about ordinary people who are filmed in real situations, rather than actors.” (Unknown: 2011)

2.6.2 Situating Reality TV

In situating reality TV, Murray and Ouellette (2009) state that the rapid increase in reality TV programming has given viewers nonscripted access to “real” people in ordinary and extraordinary situations. The producers of these reality TV makeovers however are commonly accused of exploiting the participants of these reality TV programmes as they do not consider the ethics and responsibility that comes with the representation of “real” people. (pg. 3, 4)

Instead of concentrating on this view Andrejevic speaks about a ‘negotiated-relationship’. “It is not hard to discern the appeal of reality TV insofar as it keeps alive the promise that anyone can make it in an era when the concentration of wealth and ownership in the hands of an increasingly rarefied group of elites is becoming increasingly obvious” (Andrejevic 2004: 68), thus making reality TV appealing to both parties namely the consumers and the producers of these shows. Andrejevic speaks of this relationship as a ‘negotiated relationship’.

There is a clear trade-off between the needs of the consumers and the producers or service-providers. Once consumers sell the access to their private lives they become instant celebrities and in turn the producers are remunerated for the production of these reality shows. (Andrejevic 2004: 6)

A series by the name of An American Family was seen as the first reality TV program where amateur programming, low-budget television was produced. In 1991 with the premiere of The Real World of MTV reality TV took on its current form and was able to be defined. Young adults were cast in a room filled with cameras and microphones in a way where conflict and drama developed. (2009: 4)
A variety of specialized formats or subgenres can be found within reality TV programmes today.

Subgenres including, “gamedoc (Survivor, Big Brother, The Apprentice, America’s Next Top Model, Project Runway), the dating program (Joe Millionaire, The Bachelor, next, Beauty and the Geek), the makeover program (What Not To Wear, Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, Extreme makeover, The Swan, Style Her Famous, My Celebrity Home, How Do I Look) and the docusoap (The Real World, The Real Housewives of Orange County) and subgenres which include talent contests, popular court programmes, reality sitcoms and celebrity variations that top into many of the conventions for presenting “ordinary” people on TV.” (2009: 5)

The single thread that links all these reality TV programs together is the fact that they promise to provide the viewer with an unscripted, unmediated, voyeuristic look into what appears to be “real”. “This fixation with ‘authentic’ personalities, situations, problems and narratives is” what distinguishes reality TV from fictional television. (2009: 5) Irrespective of the way the “real” is represented to the viewers of these reality TV shows, they have developed skills since the emergence of these programmes which have made them able to question and be skeptical of the “real” which is represented to them. (2009: 6)

“Reality TV has moved from the fringes of television culture to its lucrative core as networks continue to adopt reality formats to recapture audiences and as cable channels formulate their own versions of reality formats geared to niche audiences.” (2009: 6)

2.6.3 The “realness” of reality TV

Murray and Ouellette also discuss the “realness” of reality TV. The fact that reality TV has proliferated and has not disappeared or dissolved proves that an investigation into its authenticity and truthfulness is necessary. (2009: 7) Similarities can be drawn between documentaries and reality TV programmes due to the fact that both these programmes make use of handheld cameras and they have a lack of narration. These characteristics refer the viewers to the “form’s original promise which is to provide direct access to the experience of the observed subject. This has the effect of bolstering some of reality TV’s claims to be ‘real’ ”. (2009: 7)
Critics question the representation of the “real” within reality TV programmes. They question the impact that editing, prefab settings, reconstruction and producer mediation has on its viewers.

Reality TV therefore establishes a link or relationship between “reality” and its representation. (2009:7)

Reality TV dulls our resistance to the surveillance of ordinary people who live their lives in front of the camera and are willing to share this with an audience. “We as the audience members witness this openness to surveillance, normalize it and in turn, open ourselves up to such a possibility.” (2009: 9)

2.6.4 The Commercialization of the Real

More and more reality TV programmes were created and sold since it was cheap to produce and easy to sell without being dependent on writing talent and unionized actors. Another reason for the popularization of reality TV was the fact that the producers of these programmes were faced with competition from commercial channels in the U.K, the Netherlands and other European countries. Therefore the development of the reality TV genre was the answer to their prayers. (Murray and Ouellette 2009: 10)

“(T)he reality that is represented by reality TV is commodified…consumers are invited to sell access to their personal lives.”(Andrejevic 2004: 2) The only thing real about these reality TV shows is that the

“real power of these shows remains in the hands of those who are seen to exert a controlling influence over programme commissioning and scheduling…reality TV is a cynical version of democratization, one whereby producers can deploy the offer of participation as a means of enticing viewers to share in the production of a relatively inexpensive and profitable entertainment product. In this respect, reality TV anticipates the exploitation of the work of being watched.... (Andrejevic 2004: 6)
2.7 Conclusion

The above diagram summarizes the research which was drawn from the various literature discussed in this study. This diagram is the researcher’s own interpretation of the literature discussed.

The star shape part of the diagram symbolizes the pluralistic feature of postmodernism as phenomena and also emphasizes that there are no single ideas or viewpoints that unify postmodernism.
Since this study centers on the identity of the postmodern individual, it therefore forms the centre of this diagram. Identity is placed within the star shaped figure thus it is placed within a postmodern context.

Notice that identity is not given a complete circle but is made up of broken lines. This illustrates that identity is fluid, it is never formed but in constant negotiation with the three circles within the star shaped figure which are known as mass media, culture and participants of reality TV. This illustration suggests that the identity of the individual is mediated first by its culture, the media and finally by play (those individuals who participate in reality TV shows)

In conclusion this chapter identified the various factors that play a role in the establishment of the identity of the postmodern individual and how it influences the society. The following chapter, chapter 3 will include the research design and the methodology used to conduct this study.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter describes the research framework used in this study. The research, which was primarily empirical in nature, featured the analysis of three case studies within the context of reality TV programmes. The case studies were constructed using three examples of American reality TV programmes which were broadcast on DSTV and analyzing the change of the participants of the reality TV programme from the beginning of the programme to the end of the programme.

3.2 Research framework

In this section, the research framework of this study will be introduced including an explanation of the research question, aim and objectives addressed by the study, the data analyzed to answer the research questions, as well as a brief summary of the context chosen to justify the analysis of the data.

3.2.1 Research question

This study aimed to provide perspectives that could help answer the following research question: “What role does reality television play in constructing the postmodern identity of ordinary people as celebrities?”

3.2.2 Aim and Objectives of the study

The research aim and objectives that the study sought to answer are as follows:
3.2.2.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to examine the construction of the identity of the participants within the reality TV programme (“Style Her Famous”, “My Celebrity Home” and “How do I look”) as well as look at the representation of that identity as reflected in the change in participants from the beginning to the end of the program.

3.2.2.2 Objectives

- To identify the change in the participants of the reality TV programmes (including programmes such as “My Celebrity Home”, “Style Her Famous” and “How Do I Look”) from the beginning of the programme to the end of the programme
- To determine the thematic nature of each episode within each programme in order to compare and identify the common themes found in the three American Reality TV programmes
- To identify the role of the media and its influence in the construction of the identity of the participants involved in the reality TV programmes
- To test whether the participants of each episode of each programme found it easy to adopt the identity of their favourite celebrity’s as their own

3.2.3 Texts analyzed in study

During this study, three case studies were constructed representing three examples of American Reality TV programmes. These three case studies included How Do I Look, Style Her Famous and My Celebrity Home. All three programmes were recorded from June – November 2010. The three above mentioned programmes were chosen as they closely portray and illustrate the cut and paste identity of the postmodern individual. The cut and paste identity is the main focus of this study. The case studies were constructed by sourcing empirical data from the three reality TV programmes.
The texts sourced from the reality TV programmes were used to conduct a content analysis with the aim of answering the research questions posed in the study. The texts that were analyzed as part of the content analysis included six episodes of each reality TV programme which means a total of 18 episodes were analyzed for this study.

### 3.2.4 The analysis context

The context within which the analysis of texts was performed was informed by knowledge of reality TV programmes, postmodernism, celebrities, identity and culture. The knowledge of the above mentioned concepts includes knowledge obtained through theory as is reflected by the literature review presented in Chapter 2 of this treatise.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following important considerations:

- Each reality TV programme which follow their own format can bring about different reactions in the participants of each program.
- Two of the reality TV programmes which were analyzed followed a similar format in the fact that they styled or groomed the participants according to their favourite celebrity, while one reality TV programme which followed the format of re-designing the homes of the participants to that of their favourite celebrity.
- The presenters of each programme could have a great influence in the coordination, debate about the style of the participant and the final product which is the ‘new look’ of the participant and their homes.
- The strategy used to transform the attitude of the participants’ style in each reality TV programme differs from programme to programme as long as the goal is reached which is to change the mindset of the participant from the beginning to the end of the programme.
- The interaction and debate among the participant’s family members, friends, co-workers and expert stylists could lead to the change in attitude of the participant’s style of dress.
• The reality TV programmes analyzed in this study was analyzed using international perspectives, but the study particularly aims to provide insights into the South African citizens participation of reality TV programmes.

3.3 Research design and methods

This study took an interpretivist approach, with the data being obtained through qualitative methods. A case study was built around the reality TV programmes namely, *How Do I Look*, *Style Her Famous* and *My Celebrity Home*. In order to analyze the information collected as part of the case study, the research design used in this study included the undertaking of a qualitative content analysis of relevant texts which were episodes from each reality TV programme. This section aims to provide insights into the selection and sampling of texts (episodes) for content analysis.

3.3.1 Selecting and sampling texts

3.3.1.1 Case study and content analysis

According to du Plooy content analysts use certain units of analysis (which will be discussed below) once their data is collected. In this study the following units of analysis was used to analyze the data collected:

• **Physical units**, such as the (number of episodes of each programme);
• **Syntactic units**, such as paragraphs, sentences, phrases, clauses or words;
• **Thematic units**, which are repeating patterns of propositions or ideas (found within the reality TV shows)
• **Propositional units**, such as questions, answers, statements, assertions or arguments.

(2009:214)
According to Krippendorff

*the resulting units of text are not meant to be representative of a population of texts; rather, they are the population of relevant texts, excluding the textual units that do not possess relevant information.* (2004: 119)

In other words the sampling which is chosen for a specific study should be relevant to the study while certain texts which are irrelevant should be excluded.

Firstly, the case studies were chosen. *How Do I Look, Style Her Famous* and *My Celebrity Home* were selected as case studies of American reality TV programmes since they all involved ordinary people who became the participants of the above mentioned reality TV shows and who wanted to be associated with the lifestyle of celebrities. All three reality TV shows revolved around some aspect of celebrities whether it was their style of dress or the style of their design of their homes. Six episodes of each programme were selected for analysis making it a total of eighteen episodes in all. The episodes which were selected were randomly chosen.

The underlying paradigm of this study was qualitative, or interpretative, where the ‘cut and paste identity’ of ordinary people as ‘celebrities’ constituted the hermeneutical key of the study. This study attempted to describe and show the change in the representation of the identity of the participants at the beginning and at the end of each of the above mentioned reality TV programmes.

The data which were the episodes of the above mentioned reality TV programmes, had been collected and thoroughly scrutinized. Themes within all the episodes were chosen and analyzed. A comparative analysis of each episode and each programme was used and linked to the theme of a ‘cut and paste identity of ordinary people as ‘celebrities’.

The themes which were identified in the episodes of each programme were related to the theory discussed in Chapter 2 of this treatise.

The data of this research was twofold: primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to the collection of episodes for each reality TV programme.
Secondary data refers to the published studies and texts dealing with postmodernism, identity construction and reality TV programmes with ordinary people as celebrities.

The research paradigm of comparative analysis further aided the study as the existing international research on this topic was compared and applied to the data collected. It was then necessary to categorize the data which was collected from these three reality TV shows in order to answer the research question posed by the study. Two of the reality TV shows namely Style Her Famous and How Do I Look were related to the appearance of the participants while My Celebrity Home was related to the homes of the participants.

The programme Style Her Famous was a straightforward comparison between the celebrity and the participant. It was almost as if the style of the celebrity was directly pasted onto the style of the participant. In How Do I Look the participant was not given a specific celebrity style to choose from instead a generic sense of style was given to the participant. The only section which formed part of a style of a celebrity was the hairstyle of a celebrity. Celebrity hairstyles were the only comparison made between the celebrity and the participant.

In the programme My Celebrity Home there was a straightforward comparison between the homes of celebrities and the participant. It was almost as if the design of the celebrity’s home was directly pasted onto the home of the participant.

The researcher had previously conducted an in-depth content analysis of the reality TV programmes Style Her Famous and How Do I Look, the results of which were used to supplement the research conducted in this treatise where necessary.

After the data captured was categorized a summary of each reality TV show was given in order to identify the differences and similarities in each programme.

3.3.1.2 Content analysis procedure

The data which was captured were categorized into the following sections:
In the following chapter a detailed explanation of each category will be defined. These categories helped to answer the research question posed in this treatise.

3.4 Conclusion

The data captured from the various episodes along with the conclusions reached from each category analyzed assisted in determining the role that reality television plays in constructing the postmodern identity of ordinary people as celebrities. It also helped to provide a perspective on the nature of dialogue and debate that takes place in these reality TV programmes and how these dialogues and debates play a role in the construction of the postmodern identity of ordinary people.

In the next chapter, a detailed report on the findings of this study will be provided. The data analysis points out the various parties involved in the construction of the identity of a postmodern individual as a celebrity.
Chapter 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research findings of this study will be reported and interpreted in an attempt to provide insights into the construction of the identity of the participants of reality TV shows at the beginning and at the end of the programmes.

The research findings were obtained through conducting a comparative thematic content analysis of a total of 18 episodes of three reality TV shows. Six episodes of each of the three reality TV shows—How Do I Look, Style Her Famous, and My Celebrity Home—that were analyzed.

The content analysis provided insights into the dialogue that took place between the participants of the reality TV shows as well as the parties involved in the construction of the identity of the participant namely the presenters, family members and celebrity stylists of each programme. Themes were identified within each episode of each reality TV show. From the research results conclusions could be drawn about the participant of each episode and how each participant adopted the identity of someone else as their own.

The findings presented in this chapter are thus an interpretation of raw data collected through content analysis as described in Chapter 3 of this treatise.

4.2 Structure of research findings report

The research methodology applied in this study allows for the study of 18 episodes of reality TV shows namely How Do I Look, Style Her Famous, and My Celebrity Home while 6 episodes of each program was used.

To further ease the presentation of the research findings, each episode has been subdivided to present the data obtained through content analysis. The episodes are structured as follows:
4.3 Research Findings

4.3.1 Theoretical and contextual considerations and structure details

The following theoretical and contextual considerations were applied to each research subsection representing in the research structure of both case studies:

4.3.1.1 Description of each reality TV programme

A description of each reality TV programme was given in order to contextualize the contents analyzed in each episode.

4.3.1.2 Portrayal of the participant and/their homes at the beginning of each episode

The portrayal of the participant and/their homes which need to be redecorated at the beginning of each episode in this subsection of the research describes the way in which the participant/their homes is portrayed as whole at the beginning of each episode. The portrayal of the participant and/their homes includes dialogue, statements and phrases taken from the presenter, family members and or friends, co-workers, expert stylists, and the participant herself used in each episode. The comments used from the above parties also play a role in the construction of the identity of the participant. The presenter of each programme plays an important role in the portrayal of the participant at the beginning and at the end of each programme. He or she is the one who sets the stage for debate amongst celebrity stylists, friends and or family members and the participant.
They lead all dialogue that takes place on the show. The presenter’s comments are either persuasive or dissuasive to the participants, depending on the authority that the presenter has on the show. The purpose of noting the presenter in each episode is to show influence that the presenter has in the construction of the identity of the participant. The friends or family members of the participant who are introduced on the set of each episode form part of the personal space of the participant.

Their input or comments touches the psyche of the participant. Because these people know the participant very well they are able to persuade or dissuade the participant with their comments. The purpose of noting the friends, family members and or co-workers of each episode is to show the influence that they have in the construction of the identity of the participant.

All the celebrity stylists whether it be makeup artists, hairstylists, celebrity designers etc are also known as the experts of fashion. Their input is vital in choosing a style that they deem as appropriate for the participant. Their input and comments made about the celebrity’s sense of style compared to the sense of style of each participant will show whether the participant’s sense of style or fashion is acceptable or unacceptable.

The purpose of noting the portrayal of the participant and/their homes at the beginning of each episode is to provide a comparative view of the similarities and differences of the participant and/their homes in each episode.

4.3.1.3 Portrayal of the participant and/their homes at the end of each episode

The portrayal of the participant and/ their homes which need to be redecorated at the end of each episode in this subsection of the research describes the way in which the participant/their homes of each episode is portrayed as a whole at the end of each episode. The portrayal of the participant and /their homes includes dialogue, statements and phrases taken from the presenter, family members and or friends, co-workers, expert stylists, the participant herself used in each episode.
The comments used from the above parties also play a role in the construction of the identity of the participant. The presenter of each programme plays an important role in the portrayal of the participant at the beginning and at the end of each programme. He or she is the one who sets the stage for debate amongst celebrity stylists, friends and or family members and the participant. They lead all dialogue that takes place on the show. The presenter’s comments are either persuasive or dissuasive to the participants, depending on the authority that the presenter has on the show.

The purpose of noting the presenter in each episode is to show influence that the presenter has in the construction of the identity of the participant. The friends or family members of the participant who are introduced on the set of each episode form part of the personal space of the participant. Their input or comments touches the psyche of the participant. Because these people know the participant very well they are able to persuade or dissuade the participant with their comments. The purpose of noting the friends, family members and or co-workers of each episode is to show the influence that they have in the construction of the identity of the participant.

All the celebrity stylists whether it be makeup artists, hairstylists, celebrity designers etc are also known as the experts of fashion. Their input is vital in choosing a style that they deem as appropriate for the participant. Their input and comments made about the celebrity’s sense of style compared to the sense of style of each participant will show whether the participant’s sense of style or fashion is acceptable or unacceptable.

The purpose of noting the portrayal of the participant and/their homes at the end of each episode is to provide a comparative view of the similarities and differences of the participant and/ their homes at the end of each episode as well as to provide a comparative view of what the participant and/their homes was like at the beginning of the episode and what they are like at the end of the episode. Included in this section will be the participant’s adoption of the identity of their favourite celebrity.
4.3.1.4 Message themes found in each episode

Through the application of a detailed content analysis of the selected episodes of the reality TV programmes, a thematic nature of communication generated within each episode was identified and a set of themes were extrapolated. The themes identified through the analysis of each episode were compared to the set of themes identified in all three reality TV shows to identify a trend in the themes of each programme. The purpose of identifying the message themes is to show how the themes of each episode contributed to the construction of the identity of the participant in each episode.

4.3.1.5 Case study summary and recommendations

After a detailed research report was given which included the subsections mentioned above, this subsection provided an overview of the impressions created by the total communication process within each episode, which in turn forms part of the three reality TV programmes. This includes comments made by the presenter of each programme, the comments made by the participant’s co-workers, friends as well as family members of each episode. By highlighting these factors which contribute to the construction of the identity of each participant a trend within each TV programme was identified and an overview of each TV programme was given.

4.3.2 How Do I Look

4.3.2.1 Description of each reality TV programme

*How Do I Look* is an American reality television show which is broadcast on the new lifestyle channel from the Style Network. This program is broadcast on DSTV. The set of *How Do I Look* is located in Hollywood. In this programme American females who are portrayed as fashion misfits and disasters to their family and friends are brought into the studio for a total makeover. The makeover includes a new wardrobe, makeup as well as a new celebrity-inspired hairstyle.
Participants are firstly interviewed by the presenter of the programme (Jeannie Mi) to describe their sense of style to the presenter. They are then taken to a panel of accomplices who criticize her sense of style. This is called the ‘intervention’. The accomplices consist of a co-worker, friend and/or family member of the participant as well as an expert stylist.

After the participant’s clothes are criticized it is discarded. Before the make over takes place the participant is introduced to a specific experiment which targets the reason for the participant’s fashion ‘problem’.

As mentioned above the make-over process includes a new wardrobe, a new hairstyle as well as makeup. The accomplices who partake in the intervention are the creators of the ‘new’ look of the participant. Once the ‘new’ look is created the participant is presented to an audience which includes the participants friends and family members.

4.3.2.2 Portrayal of the participant at the beginning of the episode

Firstly a look at the lyrics of the How Do I Look jingle is important and can be applied in my analysis. Below are the lyrics of the jingle.

Wanna see me
Potentially what I can be
I believe it’s up to me
To make it my, time
The world is mine
Look how I shine

While the jingle is sung, several women are placed in front of a mirror. The reflection they see is not their own reflection but a reflection of who they potentially can become if they participate in the make-over process of How Do I Look.
A reflection in the mirror is the most basic form of identity for a child at the age of 6 to 12 months. This identification is called the *Mirror Stage*. This stage forms the basis of all identification and is the foundation for future identifications which the child will build on throughout its life. (Lacan 1989: 44-47)

This basic form of identity is taken away from the participant when the change in the reflection in the mirror is different to that of the participant. The change in the reflection of the participant implies a change in the identity of the participant. It could then be said that this show offers the participant a new identity.

“Potentially” in the lyrics of the jingle means, “latent qualities or abilities that may be developed and lead to future success or usefulness.” (Pearsall: 1998) This new identity which is seen as a potential ‘new’ identity of the participant could bring about future success and usefulness for the participant.

“The world is mine, look how I shine” means that once the participant has accepted the ‘new’ identity she could be seen as in control of her life and in control of the world. These lyrics seem to portray that the ‘new’ identity of the participant will give the participant success in every aspect of her life.

It could then be said that this ‘new’ identity which is imposed by the show is imposed onto the participants of this show. The participants of the show see their fashion sense as a part of who they are. They see it as part of their identity. This sense of fashion and identity is criticized and seen as unacceptable to the presenter, the style experts, and the participant’s friends, family members and co-workers. At the beginning of the programme all the participants seem stubborn and not willing to change their sense of fashion. Participant 5 says, “I’m never gonna change, I’m always gonna be who I am.” Participant 6 says, “I don’t care what anyone else thinks.”
Tension seems to exist between the participant and the accomplices who are the presenter, the style experts, and the participant’s friends, family members and co-workers. The participants of the show seem to find nothing wrong with their sense of style. Participant 4 says, “I don’t think that there’s anything wrong with my style”, whereas her accomplices think that her style is ridiculous and her fashion sense ‘sucks’.

The ‘new’ identity which is proposed by the accomplices of the show is offered or promised to the participant only through a change in the physical appearance of the participant. What this implies is that for the participant to become potentially successful in all aspects of her life she will need to change her physical appearance, change her identity. Comments made by the accomplices such as, “If she changes her style it will help her in the workplace, if she changes her style I think it will improve our relationship, and her profession won’t succeed if she keeps on dressing like that”, prove this.

Physical appearance is the main focus of debate on this show. It could be said that physical appearance could be seen as a function of identity in this show. Emphasis is put on the participant’s looks especially her sense of style.

Comments made by the accomplices such as “She is not putting enough into her appearance, she dresses like a slob, she is dressed to distress, she looks like Ugly Betty and her favourite dress is my favourite mess”, and comments from the participants such as, “It’s who I am on the inside not outside. This is who I am. People shouldn’t be concerned about how I look externally”, emphasizes physical appearance as the main focus of this show. It is therefore the disagreement among the accomplices and the participants about physical appearance that causes the tension between the participant and her accomplices.

The participants of this reality TV show are individuals who live in a postmodern world. According to our definition in Chapter 2 of this study, postmodernism does not believe in one single interpretation of knowledge but that each individual person interprets his or her reality “based on his or her individual use of and meaning assigned to the metaphors of language.”

Knowledge could be replaced with the word fashion for the sake of this analysis. Postmodernism believes in a varied interpretation of fashion. There is no single interpretation of fashion instead each individual interprets his or her own sense of fashion and this is seen as acceptable in the postmodern world.

The comments made by some of the participants such as, participant 3 and 5 respectively states, “I dress the way I do because I don’t want to look like everyone else. I don’t see why I should be following trends; I should do my own thing and bring out my own personality and just because I’m not mainstream doesn’t mean there’s anything wrong with the way I look proves this. According to these participants their own sense of style should be accepted by others because these individuals live in a postmodern world.

However, this does not seem to be the case in this reality TV show. The accomplices in this show seem to disagree. They believe that only one generic sense of style is acceptable in society. They claim that the participant needs to look a certain way in order for her sense of style to be accepted.

Comments made by style experts which state, “I think you’re trying to be original and that’s great but it just doesn’t work and a comment made by a family member which states, I think its great to be original but when you in the fashion world and where you going with your career, you always wanna look a certain way so that you taken seriously, your style is a mess.”

A comment made by a family member which says, “What you wearing says you’re not sure. There’s not one track, there’s not one way you going. It’s not even a trend it’s just everything but everything is not good. You can’t be everything.” These comments seem to emphasize that there is only one sense of fashion which is deemed as acceptable. Fashion which is not in accordance with this generic sense of style is deemed as unacceptable.
Participants are therefore told by their accomplices to let go of their physical appearance, their identity and accept a new physical appearance, a ‘new’ identity in order to be seen as acceptable in society.

Another feature of postmodernism which is also discussed in chapter 2 of this study suggests that postmodernism places the expert and the non-expert on the same level. Both the expert and the non-expert influence one another. The expert is therefore never superior to the non-expert. (Doyle 2006:127) However, this is not the case in this reality TV show. The style experts and the accomplices seem to be portrayed as superior to the participants.

Their views about fashion and physical appearance seem to be imposed on the participants of the show. They do not take the participant’s view about physical appearance and fashion into consideration.

At the beginning of the show neither the accomplices nor the participants seem to take each other’s views about fashion into consideration. Instead of influencing each other they cause tension amongst one another, tension which plays a role in the construction of the identity of the participant.

The role of the presenter Jeannie Mi in this programme is to introduce the transformation of the participant of the reality TV show to the Hollywood audience. The transformation process starts with the participant at the beginning of the programme to the transformed participant at the end of the programme.

The presenter in this show is portrayed as more judgmental of the participant’s looks than the presenters of My Celebrity Home and Style Her Famous. During an interview with the participant instead of embracing the participant, Jeannie criticizes the participant’s style. Jeannie Mi played a valuable role in the transformation of the participant from the beginning of the programme right until the end of the programme.
Not only did she play the role of being the link between the expert stylist, her family members, co-workers and friends and the participant but her comments about the style of dress of the participant throughout the programme was also of crucial importance in the transformation process of the participant which eventually contributed to the construction of the identity of the participant.

The friends, family members or co-workers of the participant who are introduced on the set of each episode form part of the personal space of the participant. Their input or comments touch the psyche of the participant. Because these people know the participant very well they are able to persuade or dissuade the participant with their comments. The purpose of noting the friends, family members and or co-workers of each episode is to show the influence that they have in the construction of the identity of the participant.

4.3.2.3 Portrayal of the participant at the end of the episode

The potential of the participant to become successful which is spoken about at the beginning of the episode is found in the participant at the end of the episode. The only reason that this potential is acknowledged is because the participant chose to change her sense of style, her physical appearance. After she changed her physical appearance and sense of style, a comment made by a family member highlighted this potential, “I feel like this is the true Genevieve. This is who you always had the potential to be. You just have so much confidence as compared to before.”

This comment which was made by a family member is seen as invaluable to the participant. The input or comments from the family members touch the psyche of the participant because the family members are the ones who know the participant very well. The future success of the participant is acknowledged by participant 3, herself in the following comment, “This new style I think will schedule more meetings, and make me go to a few more parties with my husband.” The participant believes that her new sense of style will improve her work relations as well as her marriage.
After she changed her sense of style, participant 1 said, “I have a new journey to start and it’s a better relationship with my kids and my profession.” Not only do the accomplices see the potential in the participants but the participant themselves believe this.

At the beginning of the episode the participants were portrayed as stubborn. They were not willing to change their sense of style for anyone, while at the end of the program the participants seemed more acceptable of the generic sense of style which was proposed by the accomplices at the beginning of this show. Participant 2 realized this when she made this comment at the end of the show, “Before the episode started, I was a person with a mixed up sense of style. I have more confidence now. I do see that my exterior can go with who I am inside.”

Participant 3 also realized and admitted that the style she had before was not acceptable when she made the following comment, “Before my style was very all over the place. Putting my own little twist on it but I think my twist went a little too far. Trying on the pieces I realized very quickly that I might have been wrong.” Participant 4 said, “To think about the person I was before and look at the person I am now is just a dream. It’s absolutely incredible.”

An emphasis was placed on the generic sense of style proposed to the participants at the end of the show when a co-worker described the ‘new’ look of the participant as follows, “She looks like a black Barbie Doll”. A Barbie Doll implies a certain look which is associated with perfection. To look like a Barbie is every girl’s dream. After the makeover or change in physical appearance, the participant was associated with a Barbie Doll, a generic sense of style. The Barbie Doll look is a style within the mainstream of the fashion world.

This look does not deviate from the generic look as did the participants at the beginning of the episode but stays in accordance to the generic sense of style. The tension which existed between the accomplices and the participants at the beginning of each episode was almost non-existent at the end of each episode because the participants accepted and agreed with a change in their sense of style which was in accordance to the generic sense of style.
Physical appearance which is a function of identity is emphasized at the end of the episode as well. A comment which was made by a celebrity stylist emphasizes this, “Clothes are not just superficial but have a profound impact on people.” The impact it had on the participants is it gave the participants a ‘new identity’. This ‘new’ identity was accepted by the participants as well as her accomplices.

Another comment which was made by the presenter of the show emphasizes that physical appearance especially clothing plays an important role in the new identity of the participant. She said, “Do you now see the value in clothing?” It could almost be said that the new clothing or new wardrobe which is given to the participant brings a change in the appearance of the participant and creates a ‘new’ identity which is accepted by the accomplices and eventually the participants of the show.

The title of this reality TV programme namely How Do I Look places an emphasis on looks and states what the programme is about. In other words the physical appearance or how the participant looks of it is what is important and plays a vital role in this reality TV show.

The participants in this programme were not styled after a specific celebrity but instead were styled according to a generic sense of style. Once their makeovers were complete the participants accepted the generic sense of style which was introduced to the participant by the expert stylists. The participants accepted and adopted this ‘new’ sense of style as the ‘new’ person they had transformed into being.

All of the participants’ family members, friends and co-workers and expert stylists approved of the participant’s ‘new’ look. This also helped the participant to accept and adopt their ‘new’ look as their own, as the new person that they had become.

At the end of her makeover one participant said she felt good and beautiful. She believed that she was a changed or new person. She said, “If somebody were to see me now, they would say that I look classy.
I have a new journey to start and it’s a better relationship with my kids and my profession.” This participant adopted her new identity as her own, as someone who was a ‘new’ person.

It could be said that at the end of the show the influence of the accomplices and the imposed identity proposed by the show is the identity that eventually is accepted by the participants of the show.

4.3.2.4 Message Themes found in the programme

Through the application of a detailed assertions analysis, the selected contents from the selected episodes were analyzed. Through this analysis, the thematic nature of communication generated throughout these episodes was identified and a set of themes were extrapolated. The common theme which was found in this programme was that of acceptance. The majority of the participants in this reality TV show longed to feel accepted by the people in their environment, while another theme identified in this programme was individuality.

4.3.2.4 (a) Acceptance

As stated in chapter 1 of this research study a sense of belonging is one of the basic needs of a human being. (Maslow 1970:20, 21) The majority of the participants in this show longed for that basic need. They longed to be accepted by their family members and at the same time they were seeking their family members’, friends and co-workers’ approval of their style of dress.

Participant 1 felt embarrassed because her family members did not accept the way she dressed. She longed to be accepted by them. The only way that this participant would be accepted by her family members would be if she changed her look, her appearance. One of the family members made a comment and said, “Chastity needs a makeover cause it will change her style and bring her kids closer.”

This family member touched the psyche of the participant who longed to be accepted.
In exchange for acceptance the participant had to change her sense of style for a ‘new’ style, a ‘new’ identity. This comment helped the participant to make the decision of accepting the ‘new’ identity. Once the change occurred not only was participant 1 accepted but her ‘new’ look, her ‘new’ identity was accepted by her family members as well.

Participant 2 did not like the way she looked. She did not find herself attractive and longed to be accepted by others as beautiful. The only way she could feel accepted would be to change the way she looked. The look which was proposed to her by her accomplices in the show was the look that would bring about the acceptance that she longed for.

Participant 2’s co-worker seemed to emphasize this when she said, “Changing Victoria’s style is gonna help her because she’s gonna feel so much better about herself and it’s gonna show in how she holds herself and presents herself.”

This change in style, in looks, in identity enabled her to be accepted by others as beautiful. After her makeover, the presenter of this reality TV show praised participant 2 for her new look, her new identity. The presenter said, “She looks unbelievable.” This statement made the participant feel that she was beautiful when at the end of the makeover she said, “This is the first time in ten years that I felt pretty.” Thus the participant felt accepted and that need was fulfilled.

Participant 6 had a low self esteem and did not think of herself as beautiful either. She felt as though she had lived in the shadow of her twin sister her whole life. Her sister was viewed by others as more beautiful. This is shown in the comment the participant made when she said, “Growing up especially being a twin has always been hard for me, especially because everyone even when we looked identical people always said that you are the prettier one. And I didn’t understand it. Why am I not pretty?”

The participant longed to be accepted as beautiful by others too. Her family members did not accept her sense of dress and physical appearance. The participant’s sister said, “Gen’s style is lazy and she dresses like a slob. Right now when I see you, you look miserable, your shoulders are always down and you wobble around everywhere and it’s sad.”
The participant’s cousin said, “Gen’s style is a simply lack of style. She’s such a beautiful person inside and out and it’s not reflecting to the world who she really is.” During the makeover process the participant realized that in order for her to be accepted as beautiful by others she would have to change her sense of style, her look. At the end of the episode when the makeover was complete she was finally accepted by others as beautiful. Comments such as the following were made, “This is your moment and I feel like you look absolutely stunning and now your outside matches what’s on the inside”, “you are more confident and more beautiful,” and “this is who you always had the potential to be.” After others accepted the participant as beautiful, she was able to accept herself as beautiful too when she made this comment, “I feel amazing. I feel so much more confident in myself. I feel beautiful. I feel like I love my curves now.”

Participant 4 who thought of herself as ordinary would dress up in costumes to get attention from others to be accepted by them. Her friends did not accept her style of dress. They found that it was harder to relate to her on a day to day basis. One of her friends made even made a comment and said, “This makeover is definitely going to make or break my friendship with her because I want her to change.”

In order to be accepted the participant realized that she had to change the way she looked in order to be accepted by her friends. After the makeover her friends said, “We have seen her grow up and turn into a completely different person.” This different person was accepted by her friends as well as the expert stylist. The expert stylist said, “Its all about complete transformation and change. I think she just needed to step out of who she was and being something completely different who is who she will be now going forward.”

4.3.2.4 (b) Individuality

Participant 3 and 5 wanted to be original. Participant 3 wore everything and thought by doing that she could be original and stand out as an individual.
She felt that she did not want to follow the mainstream trends but have a style of her own when she said, “I dress the way I do because I don’t want to look like everyone else. I don’t see why I should be following trends; I should do my own thing and bring out my own personality.” Participant 5 said, “Just because I’m not mainstream doesn’t mean there’s anything wrong with the way I look.” At the beginning of the show these participants refused to change their sense of style to the style imposed onto them by the show.

This sense of style was considered as unacceptable. According to the sense of style imposed by the show, individuality was not accepted instead only a generic sense of style accepted. These participants were criticized for trying to be individual in their style of dress.

Only when these participants changed their sense of style, changed their appearance, their identity, changed from being individuals to following a certain trend, were they accepted by their accomplices. Comments such as “Rebecca is, beautiful, gorgeous and more glamorous,” and “I feel like this is the first day of the beginning of your life, where everything turns around” reveal the acceptance of the ‘new’ style of the participants by their accomplices.

At the end of the episodes the need for individuality no longer existed. Participants were influenced by their accomplices and a change in the look or physical appearance of the participant occurred. The participant therefore accepted the identity which was imposed to them by their accomplices.

4.3.2.5 Case Study Summary

All the participants of this programme had a sense of style which was portrayed as ridiculous and unacceptable. At the beginning of each episode all the participants were portrayed as stubborn. They were not willing to change their sense of style to that of a generic sense of style which was suggested to them by their family, friends, co-workers or expert stylists. They did not admit that they had a fashion problem and found nothing wrong with their sense of style. Some of the participants felt offended by the comments made by the above mentioned parties about their sense of style.
The participants felt as though they were stripped of their identity when their clothes were taken away from them. During the course of each episode the participants found it difficult to change their style and adopt a generic sense of style.

At the end of each episode the participant’s sense of style is seen as acceptable by their family members, friends, co-workers and expert stylists as it is in accordance to the generic sense of style imposed by the show itself. All the participants at the end of each episode were happy with their transformation and agreed that their sense of style at the beginning of the episode was ridiculous and unacceptable.

The participants accepted their ‘new’ look as their own and as a ‘new’ side to themselves which would help them improve their lives, in their career and relationships with family, co-workers and friends.

4.4 My Celebrity Home

4.4.1 Description of each reality TV programme

In this program ordinary American citizens’ homes are recreated to that of the interior design of a celebrity’s home at the fraction of the price. Three members make up the ‘My Celebrity Home’ Team namely; a celebrity designer, an expert shopper and the team project manager. Once a celebrity home is chosen the team, including the ordinary American citizens are divided up into various groups. The expert shopper is given the task of finding odd pieces of furniture which are not that easy to find, the celebrity designer coupled with the ordinary American citizens is given the task of shopping to find the rest of the furniture that is needed to complete the celebrity interior design look.

The role of the celebrity designer and the expert shopper is to duplicate or recreate the items which are found in the homes of the celebrities by shopping for copies of these items of furniture which eventually will be placed in the homes of the participants’.
By using articles of furniture from different stores and bringing them together into one room demonstrates the cut and paste identity of the postmodern individual.

4.4.2 Portrayal of the participants and or their homes at the beginning of the episode

Instead of focusing on the physical appearance of the participants, this reality TV show focuses on the homes of the participants and instead of following a generic sense of style as seen in the previous program, the homes of the participants are made over or re-designed according to the homes of their favourite celebrity.

The homes of all the participants are seen as empty, dull or boring therefore a makeover of the participant’s room of choice is chosen to be re-designed. All the participants are portrayed as ordinary people who have purchased homes and are busy with renovations to their homes. This programme seems to emphasize the ordinariness, dull, mundane and boring lives of the participants and their homes. This can be seen in the comments that the participants make.

Participant 2 said, “My wife and I are what you call domesticated. We go to work in the morning get our coffees, get off work, go to the gym, and then come home. We watch reality TV shows and then we go to bed and then do it all over again.” This highlights the mundane and routine lives of the participants.

Participant 1 said, “We need some excitement in this house. We are willing to take a risk with the room, something that we won’t normally do ourselves.” When asked why they didn’t like their dinning room participant 4 and his wife said, “Cause there’s nothing to it. It’s just here with no energy, no character. What I expect from the room is for it to really come alive and to really reflect our personalities and when people walk in here they need to be like wow!” The last two comments reflect the dull and empty homes of the participants which are in need of a change. Not only does this programme emphasize the ordinary it also emphasizes the extra-ordinary. It emphasizes the lifestyle of the extra-ordinary, the lifestyle of celebrities.
It could be said that the reason why these participants are seen as more open to change than the group of participants in the previous reality TV show *How Do I Look* is summed up in participant 2’s comment when he said, “To live in (a) luxury environment would be really hard for me to even fathom how that would be, to have those luxuries, to travel when you want, to buy what you want. I couldn’t even imagine how that would be.” This is a desire we all seem to have. We all want to live lives that are luxurious. We want to be associated with a life of luxury we all want to live like celebrities.

This desire seems to be fulfilled for the participants of this reality TV show. The expert stylists including the celebrity designers as well as the presenter of this show seem to guarantee the participants that after their homes are re-decorated according to the home of their favourite celebrity; the participants too can live a luxurious life. They too can be associated with wealth and luxury. This is seen in the comment that the presenter of the show always makes at the end of each episode when he says, “You don’t have to be a celebrity to live like one.” A feature of this programme which guarantees that the participants will enjoy luxurious lives is when the participants of this reality TV show receive celebrity treatment. They are driven in limousines to exclusive restaurants and pampered just like celebrities. (See also Turner 2004: 34, Breese 2010:352)

This guarantee that the expert stylists and the celebrity designers give to the participants could be seen as one of the reasons why the participants of this particular reality TV show is open and more than willing to change the appearance of their homes in order to receive the luxurious life promised. At the beginning of each episode the participants are seen as more than willing to transform the interior of their homes to that of their favourite celebrity’s therefore they are not seen as stubborn as the participants in the *How Do I Look* reality TV show.

A second feature of this reality TV show *My Celebrity Home*, which enables the participants to be associated with or placed on the same level as their favourite celebrity, is when the celebrities who are chosen, share something in common with the ordinary participants. Amongst others, participant 6 shares the same interest as that of her favourite celebrity. Both participant 6 and her choice of celebrity enjoy having family photographs in their homes.
Participant 3 and his wife live in a castle just like their favourite celebrity. These similarities seem to give the participants the impression that he or she is just like their favourite celebrity.

A parallel can be drawn between the physical appearances of the participants in *How Do I Look* to the appearance of the homes in *My Celebrity Home*. Therefore because physical appearance acts as a function of identity in *How Do I Look*, the appearance of the homes of the participants in *My Celebrity Home* acts as a function of identity too. A change in the appearance of the participants’ homes could then be seen as a change in their identity. The participants seem to be open to this change.

This can be seen in a comment made by participant 4 when he said, “What I expect from the room is for it to really come alive and to really reflect our personalities.” The room of the participants will not be designed according to the participants’ personality but according to the personality of their favourite celebrity. This means that the personality which will be reflected will not be the participant’s but the personality of a celebrity. Already at the beginning of the show a comment like this is made by a participant of the show.

This specific participant of this show subconsciously makes this comment which implies that he already accepts the personality and identity of his favourite celebrity as his own. This is important as it shows that the participant claims the identity of the celebrity as his own and believes that this new identity is in fact his own identity. Hence the participant possesses a ‘cut and paste identity.’

The role of the expert stylists including the presenter of this show plays a vital role at the beginning of the show. The presenter is the link between the ordinary and the extra-ordinary. He is the one with VIP access to the homes of celebrities. The presenter is the one who introduces the participants not only to the celebrity but the celebrity’s lifestyle and home at the beginning of the show. This is the closest form of contact that the participant can have with their favourite celebrity.
The celebrity also plays an important role at the beginning of the episode because he or she shows his or her home to the participants. Comments such as these introduce the celebrity lifestyle and homes to the participant. When a celebrity designer described the Wynn Hotel which is a celebrity hotspot he said, “This hotel is for the select of the select and rates A list celebrity status. It took $2.7 billion to build this resort. It is one of the most exclusive resorts in the world with 27,000 rooms, a golf course, spa and restaurants it is a top vacation hotspot for celebrities.” The items of furniture in one celebrity’s home are described as being custom built. Another celebrity’s home is described as glamorous while as another celebrity’s home is described as eclectic.

This contributes to the willingness of the participant to change the appearance of his or her home to that of their favourite celebrity in order to be associated with the wealth, success and fame of the celebrity. Therefore the celebrity’s comments plays a role in constructing an identity for the participants involved in this reality TV show. Therefore the expert stylists, celebrity designers and celebrities play a vital role in the construction of the identity of the participant.

4.4.3 Portrayal of the participants and or their homes at the end of the episode

Towards the end of the programme the participants were treated like celebrities in one or more of the following ways. The participants were picked up from their homes in a limousine. While driving to their destination some were served with champagne. Some of them received spa treatments which included manicures and pedicures. Others received their very own photo shoot with a celebrity photographer. Some participants were sent to luxury hotels for a few days as well as dinner reservations at exclusive restaurants.

Participants were all asked whether they felt like celebrities at the end of the show and they all agreed. They all enjoyed the taste of the celebrity lifestyle. Here are some of their responses. Participant 1 and her husband said, “We definitely feel like a celebrities.” Participant 3 said, “I love the celebrity lifestyle. I could get used to this.”
The participants of the show were all treated like celebrities which implied that all the participants were actually celebrities but only for a few minutes. This reality TV show brought the ultimate desires and fantasies of the participants to life. Their desires became a reality. The participants’ desire to be a celebrity, to live luxuriously was fulfilled by participating in this reality TV show.

While the participants were being pampered the presenter of the show made some comments about the participants which portrayed the participants as celebrities. These comments also played a role in the construction of the identity of the participant. Some of the comments were, “Searie and Jeremy are living the high life tonight. Gourmet dinner and fine wine, just the celebrity style pampering they deserve…..They are ready to live the celebrity life Vegas style.” When referring to couple Taylor and Harver Fiffe, he said, “This couple is able to kick back, relax and live it up celebrity style.”

When the room makeovers of the participants were complete, the reaction of the ‘new’ appearance of the participants’ can be seen in the following comments. Participant 1 and his wife said, “I like our room better than the Wynn Hotel (a celebrity hotel).” This implies that the participants felt that the celebrity hotel was not as good as their recreation of it. The replica was considered better than the original. This comment portrays the participants as ordinary people who have had a taste of celebrity life but who seem to appreciate a ‘copy’ more than an original. In other words the ‘real thing’ did not mean anything to the participants. It could be said that the reason why these participants felt this way could be because the ‘real thing’ would never become theirs. It would never be their own whereas the copy became their own, it belonged to them.

Participant 5 and her partner’s response to the room makeover was, “I couldn’t believe it. It was like a fairytale. Like is this really happening to me? It feels like I’m just in a dream.” Even though these participants were part of a reality TV show, and part of the makeover experience it did not feel real to them. Their reality was not seen as ‘real’ to them. According to Murray and Ouellette reality TV dulls our resistance to the surveillance of ordinary people who live their lives in front of the camera and are willing to share this with an audience.
“We as the audience members witness this openness to surveillance, normalize it and in turn, open ourselves up to such a possibility.” (2009: 9)

Therefore it seems as though the ‘realness’ of these participants’ reality had become dulled. To them reality did not exist but was open to interpretation. Their interpretation of reality is, it is a fairytale, and it is a dream. This is characteristic of postmodernism. The ultimate nature of reality is no longer a concern. To search for truth is no longer necessary for it doesn’t exist. Truth is a myth and can never be found. (Doyle 2006: 128) The same could be said about these participants. For them reality can never be found it is simply a dream.

At the end of the episode all the participants were accepting of the ‘new’ found appearance of their homes. They accepted the duplicated recreation of their favourite celebrity homes as their own.

4.4.4 Message Themes found in the programme

Through the application of a detailed assertions analysis, the selected contents from the selected episodes were analyzed. Through this analysis, the thematic nature of communication generated throughout these episodes was identified and a set of themes were extrapolated.

The main message theme found in this programme was that all the participants changed the interior of their homes to that of their favourite celebrity’s in order to be associated with all the attributes of fame and achievement of their favourite celebrity. They wanted to strive to attain the success and lavish lifestyle that comes along with the life of their favourite celebrity.

Included in that lifestyle some looked for respect, acceptance, some wanted to be extra ordinary, while others wanted to be seen as original and as individuals. Once the participants agreed on changing the interior of their homes to that of their favourite celebrity’s the participants were rewarded with celebrity pampering which included limo drives, extravagant dinners at exclusive hotels, spar treatments etc.
By doing this they too could be identified with fame, success, achievement and wealth, therefore they could be celebrities too. This therefore contributed to the construction in the identity of the participant.

4.4.5 Case Study Summary

The participants of this programme were willing to change the rooms in their homes to that of the rooms of their favourite celebrities. At the beginning of each episode the home of the participants were portrayed as boring, dull and unexciting, while the homes of their favourite celebrities were seen as exciting and stylish.

Binary opposites - the ordinary and the extraordinary was emphasized in this reality TV show. Ordinary participants were able to come into contact with extraordinary people namely, celebrities. This reality TV programme showed that even the ordinary person can be associated with wealth, success and a luxurious life, a life just like that of a celebrity, in actual fact the ordinary person in this reality TV show became extraordinary, became a celebrity even though it was only for a few minutes.

These participants were willing to change their homes to the homes of that of their favourite celebrity.

These participants longed to be associated with wealth and fame just like their favourite celebrities and they felt that if they changed their homes to that of their favourite celebrity they too would be associated with wealth and fame. It could be said that your home is your private place, a place that defines who you are and what your beliefs are but to be willing to change your home to that of your favourite celebrity shows that the participants were willing to change who they are to be associated with wealth and fame.

These participants were willing to adopt to the identity of their favourite celebrity and to accept it as their own.

The presenter, expert stylists, celebrity designers as well as the celebrities involved in this reality TV show all played a role in the construction of the identity of the participants.
Their comments and encouragement to shop for copies of the items of furniture which resembled those of their favourite celebrities as well as the celebrity pampering the participants received as part of the makeover process, influenced the construction of the identity of the participants in such a way that the participants were willing to accept the identity of their favourite celebrity as their own.

4.5 Style Her Famous

4.5.1 Description of each reality TV programme

*Style Her Famous* is an American reality television show which forms part of the new lifestyle channel from the Style Network. This program is broadcast on DSTV. This specific program is based around the valorization that the media in this case television gives to American female celebrities. The celebrity’s hair, makeup and fashion style are the three main areas which are focused on in this program.

On each program an ordinary American woman with no sense of style is chosen by the ‘Style Her Famous’ Team. This woman is granted the opportunity of redeeming herself from being unfashionable to becoming fashionable and famous at the same time. This woman gets to pick her favourite celebrity and is then moulded into the celebrity’s image (hair, makeup and dress).

Jay Manuel who is the program presenter accompanies the participant to celebrity clothing stores, to top celebrity makeup and hair stylists to receive a complete makeover. Not only is she given a photo shoot but the mere fact that she is on reality television going through the whole transformation process is what would bring about her fame for a short period of time.

4.5.2 Portrayal of the participant at the beginning of the episode

Firstly the title of this reality TV show reveals the focus of this show which is *style* and *fame*. This reality TV show is centered on those two words. The ordinary person who participates in this show is styled famous and becomes a celebrity.
Celebrities are created in this reality TV show. (Turner 2004:34) The ordinary participant of this show wishes to become famous and be associated with wealth, status and success.

At the beginning of the episodes all the participants admitted that their sense of style was unacceptable and were willing to change their physical appearance according to the style and appearance of their favourite celebrity. Participant 3 said, “I don’t really have a good look or style. It’s completely horrible.” Participant 5 said, “As far as fashion goes I’m a little confused. I wear crazy styles to be seen.”

The ‘good look’ that participant 3 speaks about here seems to be the generic sense of style which is seen as acceptable and fashionable. This participant admits that she does not follow the generic sense of style therefore her style is not good and completely horrible. Participant 5 admits that she is confused because she too does not follow a generic sense of style instead she wears ‘crazy’ styles.

This seems to imply that a style which does not follow the generic sense of style can be described as a crazy, confused style. These participants know that they are not following the norm or generic sense of style and they seem to know that this sense of style it will not be accepted. They therefore approach experts/celebrity stylists to guide them in finding that generic sense of style again. The participants from this reality TV show are not as stubborn and opposed to change in their physical appearance as the participants from *How Do I Look*. All the participants of this programme are open and willing to change their physical appearance.

At the beginning of the episode, participant 1 is portrayed as someone with a lack of confidence. This participant knows this and believes that the change in appearance will give her more confidence. She said, “This makeover will help my confidence, and this makeover will help me be more confident. I am a Marilyn Monroe impersonator and hide behind that mask but once it is removed I feel unattractive and I feel like I’ve lost my identity.”
First of all this participant places a great amount of importance on physical appearance. She believes that a change in physical appearance will give her more confidence. She then links physical appearance to identity. As stated earlier in this study physical appearance acts as a function of identity. The identity which this participant hid behind was Marilyn Monroe’s. Monroe was seen as a sex goddess who “personified Hollywood glamour”. (Unknown: 2011) Impersonating Monroe gave the participant all these attributes that were associated with Monroe but once that mask was removed she felt unattractive. Impersonating Monroe gave the participant a sense of identity.

Even though this participant was only an impersonator / copy of Monroe, it felt like the ‘real deal’, the participant believed that she was Monroe when she states that when the mask is removed she loses her identity. This participant’s identity could be seen as a ‘cut and paste’ identity. She doesn’t only have one identity but two, herself and Monroe. The presenter of this reality TV show describes the participant as “having a little problem finding who she really is. She’s really confused”, he says.

This seems to be a feature of the identity of postmodern individuals. Their identities are never fixed but in constant negotiation with their social environment (which includes the individual’s culture, mass media etc.) Their identities are constructed through their social interaction with the groups mentioned above. (Alcoff et al 2003: 40)

Later on in this episode the presenter tries to help the participant find herself by offering the following advice. He says, “We need to embrace Jody (the participant) today which is why I think Selma Hijack (a celebrity) is a perfect person to use as inspiration.” This suggestion simply highlights the Hollywood agenda. In this programme the participants are encouraged to find out who they ‘really’ and embrace themselves.

Instead of doing that, the presenter of the show adds yet another identity onto the participant by introducing her to another celebrity’s style. This simply adds to the already ‘cut and paste’ identity of the participant. The interesting fact is that this specific participant was open to change her physical appearance, her identity to that of yet another celebrity.
4.5.3 Portrayal of the participant at the end of the episode

The participants at the end of each episode were praised for their beauty and the transformation that they went through during the duration of the show. The participant’s beauty, sense of style and transformation were portrayed as almost being on equal standing with that of their favourite celebrity at the end of the show. Some participants were referred to as movie stars, celebrities and as people with more confidence.

Participant 1 said, “I feel like a movie star. I feel like a new woman. This is who I am…This whole experience was overwhelming and as I transformed I felt like I could be sexy instead of hiding behind this underdone exterior. It feels like I’m on my way to all my dreams come true of being my own icon and not living through Marilyn Monroe but as myself.”

This suggests that participant 1 accepted the ‘new’ identity as her own. The participants themselves felt just like celebrities in fact they felt as if they ‘really’ were their favourite celebrity. The participants were portrayed as more beautiful and more confident. The presenter when he referred to participant 4’s hair said, “This reminds me of Eva’s (a celebrity) hair. It really looks beautiful.”

The participants were happy about their ‘new’ look. Participant 2 said, “I love seeing myself as glamorous and definitely felt like I was capturing Charlize’s accents.” This statement seems to suggest that participant 2 accepted the identity of Charlize. Participant 3 said, “I feel totally like Alicia Keys.” This statement also shows that the participants accepted the identity of that of their favourite celebrity as their own.

4.5.4 Message Themes found in the programme

Through the application of a detailed assertions analysis, the selected contents from the selected episodes were analyzed. Through this analysis, the thematic nature of communication generated throughout these episodes was identified and a set of themes were extrapolated.
The themes which could be extrapolated from the episodes of this programme can be divided into three sections namely, aspirational, a confidence booster, a need to accept herself and belong.

4.5.4. (a) Aspirational

Some participants felt that the makeover that they were going to receive would help them to advance in their careers and in their love life. One participant aspired to be a designer. She felt that if she could change her style of fashion she would be able to achieve this. Another participant felt that if she changed her style of dress she would find the right man, get married and have a family of her own.

4.5.4.(b) A Confidence Booster

Three out of the six participants felt that they lacked self-confidence. They felt that if they were to change their style of dress that this would boost their confidence and that they would be able to find themselves.

4.5.4.(c) Acceptance of Self and a Sense of belonging

Some participants felt ignored and unattractive to others. They did not feel beautiful about themselves. They therefore needed to be accepted by others as beautiful in order for them to accept themselves. They felt that the makeover which they would receive would help them to accept themselves as beautiful and would make them feel as though they belong. These various themes which were extrapolated from the episodes contributed to the construction of the identity of the participant in the reality TV programme.
4.5.5 Case Study Summary

All the participants in this programme knew that they had a problem with fashion. They all sought help for their fashion problem. None of the participants were stubborn in keeping their style of dress but were willing to change their style of dress to that of their favourite celebrity.

Although the expert stylists, family members, co-workers and friends played a role in the construction of the identity of the participant, the presenter of the programme who was an expert stylist was the main link between the participants and the style of their favourite celebrities. He had the greatest influence in the transformation of the participant right from the beginning of each episode to the end of each episode.

At the beginning of each episode the style of dress of the participant was seen as unacceptable by the participant’s family members, friends, and co-workers as well as by the expert stylists, whereas after the participant’s makeover, her style was seen as acceptable by the above mentioned parties.

At the end of each episode the participant loved their ‘new’ look and felt as though they were ‘new’ women. They felt as though they found a ‘new’ side to themselves that they never knew existed. They felt as though the ‘new’ side to themselves had given them a ‘new’ identity. Since these participants were groomed according to the sense of style of their favourite celebrities it could be said that the participants were willing to adopt the identity of their favourite celebrity.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Concluding the research study, this chapter provides an overview of the research findings including the limitations encountered during the study, the primary conclusions drawn from the data analysis and the recommendations that can be made based on these conclusions. Recognizing that the research conducted in this study reflects only a small portion of the potential research within the field of reality TV programmes, additional areas for future research is highlighted.

5.2. Limitations encountered during the study

Trivial limitations were encountered while doing conducting this study. These limitations did not severely affect the outcome of the research in anyway. Below are some of the limitations encountered during the capturing of the data for the content analysis.

- The unpredictability of the availability of the TSN channel could be seen as a limitation. Unfortunately all the reality TV programmes which were analyzed were broadcast on the TSN channel. The TSN channel which is broadcast via DSTV, a satellite channel could only be available if the weather permitted. If the weather was bad the visibility of the channel would be affected by that. Some episodes which were recorded were not clearly visible therefore the researcher had to wait until the channel was not affected by the weather and clearly visible in order to record the episodes and capture the data.

- Only a limited number of episodes were used as part of the content analysis for this study. Only six episodes (with a total of eighteen episodes) of each programme was used for this study therefore this study acts only as a representation of these American reality TV programmes and not as a generalization.
• The data collected was hand written while viewing the each episode. This made the capturing of the data a lengthy process and difficult to recall when the data was used and analyzed. A tape recorder might have made the capturing process a little better when it needed to be recalled and a report written up about it.

• On more than one occasion when the researcher had to rewind the recordings, the researcher’s television would freeze up. The researcher then had to turn off the television and unplug and restart DSTV in order to access the data recorded. The DSTV would take a while to restart and this also added to the lengthy data collection process.

Each of these limitations was managed and effectively did not significantly interfere with the capturing of the data and did not interfere with the course of the research or the results thereof.

5.3 Summary of research

This study provided insights into the American reality TV programmes selected and what role they played in constructing the postmodern identity of ordinary people as celebrities. The study aimed to examine the construction of the identity of the participants within the reality TV programme (“Style Her Famous”, “My Celebrity Home” and “How do I look”) as well as look at the representation of that identity as reflected in the change in participants from the beginning to the end of the program. To address this research aim a set of research objectives were devised which helped guide the development of the research. These research objectives addressed in the study include:

• To identify the change in the participants of the reality TV programmes (including programmes such as “My Celebrity Home”, “Style Her Famous” and “How Do I Look”) from the beginning of the programme to the end of the programme
To determine the thematic nature of each episode within each programme in order to compare and identify the common themes found in the three American Reality TV programmes

To identify the role of the media and its influence in the construction of the identity of the participants involved in the reality TV programmes

To test whether the participants of each episode of each programme found it easy to adopt the identity of their favourite celebrity’s as their own

For the research objectives to be fulfilled and for the research question to be answered this study consisted of three case studies. The first case study was How Do I Look, the second case study was My Celebrity Home and the third one was Style Her Famous. The case studies consisted of the results of the content analysis performed on the contents namely the episodes of each programme.

5.4 Research conclusions

From the results of the case studies which were assembled and analyzed and the theory from the literature review, several conclusions and recommendations were made which may help guide future researchers in the study of American reality TV programmes. Several points were found between the three case studies they are discussed below:

An examination of these three programs illustrated the individual’s pursuit for a new identity within the context of the postmodern world. It highlighted a few important points.

a) Postmodernism questions the way of thinking and establishes a new way of thinking

This could be seen at the beginning of the episodes of How Do I Look. The participants of this particular show questioned the sense of fashion of her accomplices and were stubborn in changing their sense of fashion to follow a generic sense of style. However at the end of the episode these stubborn participants accepted the sense of fashion imposed on them.
b) An Individual’s identity is never fixed

An individual’s identity is constantly in negotiation with its social surroundings which contributes to the construction of the identity of the participants. Therefore the identity of the participants of these reality TV shows are constantly being constructed therefore the celebrity, the expert stylists, the presenters, the co-workers and family members and friends of the participant play a role in constructing the identity of the participant.

c) The postmodern mind is a very open and willing mind

The fact that the participants in the reality TV shows were willing to change their appearance and living area, willing to accept and condone these changes without questioning these changes, shows how naïve the postmodern mind really is. It suggests that they have become almost brain washed to believe what the media considers to be hip and not hip.

The daily dose of the media’s take on fashion and style infiltrates and hypnotizes the postmodern mind to such an extent that they do not even question the agenda behind the messages that are sent and promoted via the media. This I think is particularly dangerous.

d) It emphasizes the individual above the society

The motto or theme of the postmodern individual is “What’s in it for me?” As soon as the individual is guaranteed something out of the ‘thing’ they are involved in or pursuing, it immediately attracts the minds of postmodern individuals, hence the increase of the ‘demotic turn’ as coined by Turner earlier.

The individuals in the reality TV shows above received a few minutes of fame by participating in the reality TV programs. Everything that was done on the three programs was to ‘improve’ or change the individuals appearances whether it was physical appearance of the appearance of their home. The focus of these three programs was the individual.
The participant’s hair, makeup and clothes undertook a transformation in the program “Style Her Famous”. The participants’ living area was the main focus in the program, *My Celebrity Home*.

e) Appearance is more important than reality

As long as the contestants in the reality shows looked like, resembled or even pampered like celebrities, the participants then felt like celebrities. They did everything in their power to look like celebrities. The participants were part of a reality TV show which changed the way they looked by changing their hairstyles, changing their style of dress as well as allowing celebrity makeup artists to give them the appearance of a celebrity. The couple participants went out of their way to recreate the same interior of that of their favourite celebrity into their home by shopping at a variety of stores until their home appeared to be the similar to that of their favourite celebrity.

f) The distinct influence of the celebrity culture on the ordinary person

All the participants in the reality programmes strived to live up to the same standards that were set by celebrities. The fact that they went through all that trouble just to look like a celebrity suggests the great influence celebrity culture had on them. The participants were intrigued either by a generic style which was introduced to them by expert stylists (this includes the participants from *How Do I Look*) or by the style of their favourite celebrity (this can be seen in *Style Her Famous*) while the participants of *My Celebrity Home* strived to live up to the same standards that were set by their favourite celebrities as far as their homes were concerned.

g) The important role of the media in assisting the individual in search of a new identity

The team members of the various programs e.g. the expert designers and stylists were a guide for the participants involved. They were the ones who approved or disapproved the sense of style of the participants and the only way they could do that was by keeping up to date with the fashion that the media promotes.
By condoning or condemning the style of the individual, this helped to create the individual’s seemingly ‘new’ identity.

h) This new identity which is pursued eventually turns out to be the same as the celebrity

It is nothing new or different. As clearly shown in these three programs the changes which occurred among the participants involved whether it was a transformation in their physical appearance or home appearance felt as though it gave them a new identity in actual fact was not that new at all. These seemingly ‘new’ identities were simply a carbon copy of the identities of the celebrities involved.

The individual in the postmodern world who seeks to establish an identity is bombarded by the media from all sides. It is virtually impossible not to be influenced by the values, the icons, the heroes and celebrities that the media creates. This impacts the individual’s identity and propels him into a search for a new identity.

This new identity is a blend of the different influences that the postmodern society offers through borrowing from various cultures and thus ends up being an identity that is not brand new but rather a combination of different elements from the different cultures. It could then be said that postmodern masternarratives are being smuggled through the door in support of the capitalist commodification of our socio-cultural world.

5.4.1 Research recommendations

From the results of the case studies which were assembled and analyzed and the theory from the literature review, several recommendations were made which may help guide future researchers in the study of American reality TV programmes. In summary in My Celebrity Home and Style Her Famous the participants who were ordinary people, their style of dress were directly compared to that of the style of dress of their favourite celebrity while the participants of How Do I Look were strongly encouraged by expert stylists to follow a generic style of dress in order to fit in society.
The expert stylists and the media who encourage a generic sense of style condone what is acceptable and unacceptable fashion. Therefore if the individual does not comply with the generic sense of style she is criticized by family members, co-workers and friends to such an extent that this criticism could lead to a low self esteem and a lack of confidence as seen in the reality TV programmes namely *How Do I Look* and *Style Her Famous*.

Participants should be just as stubborn as the participants from *How Do I Look* were at the beginning of the programme. These participants were not easily influenced by the comments made by their friends, family members, co-workers and expert stylists about their sense of fashion instead they challenged and questioned the generic trend of fashion that these expert stylists encouraged and did not easily adopt the generic sense of style as their own. If participants were to challenge and question the fashion trends, the expert stylists and media would not be as influential as they are now.

5.5 Opportunities for further research

This study looked at the role that reality television plays in constructing the postmodern identity of ordinary people as celebrities. The research needed to understand the various aspects that contribute to reality TV’s role by looking at the various parties involved in the construction of the identity of the participant such as the expert stylists, expert designers, family members, friends and co-workers.

The study provided an overview of the role that reality TV plays in the construction of the identity of the postmodern individual as well as an in-depth look at three reality TV programmes to identify reality TV’s role yet it is acknowledged that while the research provides a useful perspective on reality TV’s role, further research in the field is required. This may include, but is not limited to:
• An investigation of the perceptions that the viewers of these reality TV programmes have about the role of reality TV programmes in constructing an identity for the participants. This could be done by making use of focus groups, surveys or interviews.

• A social media site could also be created where the viewers of the reality TV shows could interact and give their opinions about the programme.

• Investigate and compare reality TV programmes where male participants are used to reality TV programmes where female participants are used.

5.6 Conclusion of study

This study has investigated a portion of the role that reality TV programmes play in constructing the postmodern identity of ordinary people as celebrities and the representation of the identity as reflected in the change in participants from the beginning to the end of the program. This can be described in the following way:

This study certainly confirms that this new identity which is found by the participants of the reality TV programmes is in essence not entirely new since it is really a cut and paste identity that has been put together and makes the individual feel that he is brand new when really it is a grand mix of different identities..

The participants who are postmodern individuals were willing to adopt this new identity as their own yet that the identity was not as brand new as it purported to be but really ended up being the same as some other celebrity.
References and Reading List


Television References

