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To cite this article: Jennifer Lewallen, Brandon Miller & Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz (2016) Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous: Celebrity Media Diet and the Cultivation of Emerging Adults' Materialism, *Mass Communication and Society*, 19:3, 253-274, DOI: [10.1080/15205436.2015.1096945](https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1096945)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1096945>



Published online: 25 Jan 2016.



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Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous: Celebrity Media Diet and the Cultivation of Emerging Adults' Materialism

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The present study used cultivation theory to explore the relationships between celebrity media diet and materialism for a sample of 224 emerging adults. Results indicated main effects between both celebrity magazine consumption and celebrity TV news consumption on materialism. Total celebrity media diet was also significantly related to materialism. Findings suggest that a media diet high in celebrity culture and lifestyle has significant impact on emerging adults' preoccupation with consumerism, particularly for women. This research contributes to a growing body of literature on the effects of a celebrity-saturated media environment and the cultivation of materialistic attitudes.

Increased attention to celebrity-focused blogs and websites (e.g., TMZ), celebrity-based reality television (e.g., *The Real Housewives* series and *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*), and celebrity news illuminates the significant presence

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that celebrity culture has in the new millennium (Goodson, 2013). News editors and columnists agree that celebrity gossip has been at a fever pitch in recent years, which is why it is common for some of the most reputable news outlets to have a section devoted to entertainment and celebrity culture (De Vries, 2006). The traditional notion of celebrity has also changed over time, in that celebrities may be viewed as peers or competitors for emerging adults; in other words, some may view their lifestyle as attainable.

Indeed, celebrity gossip and news is a booming industry in its own right and can be an influential source in the lives of emerging adults. Boon and Lomore (2001) found that, although young adults in their survey reported only moderate amounts of time devoted to celebrity media, over half of the sample reported that their favorite celebrity had significantly impacted their personal beliefs or inspired them to do something. In addition, some scholars have warned that 10% or more of adults may experience celebrity worship as a carryover from their adolescence (Hyman & Sierra, 2010). At the center of this obsession with celebrity culture are consumerist behaviors (De Vries, 2006). This connection between materialistic values and celebrity worship has been documented in psychological literature (Green, Arugueté, McCutcheon, Griffith, & Edman, 2014).

Although media scholars have taken interest in the potential effects and implications of a celebrity media diet (e.g., W. J. Brown & Basil, 1995; McGuire, 1974), none have recently explored the implications of the current celebrity media environment on the millennial generation. Emerging adulthood (ages 18–25) has been defined as the period between adolescence and adulthood, marked by features of identity exploration, optimism, and a feeling of being “in-between” (Arnett, 2006). Emerging adults are likely to have expendable income and are simultaneously learning the importance of financial responsibility (Thorson & Kranstuber Horstman, 2014). As many young adults are making the transition into college, the workplace, and financial independence, learning to manage personal finances is increasingly important.

Scholars have found that cultural attitudes toward money and debt are changing (e.g., Twenge & Kasser, 2013) and that emerging adult attitudes toward compulsive buying are moderated by credit card use; studies have suggested that accessibility to credit cards is related to overspending (Roberts & Jones, 2001). In fact, scholars have also established that there are several socialization factors for young adults’ financial capabilities (Shim, Serido, Bosch, & Chuanyi, 2013), but to date not many have explored the potential influence of celebrity-based media. It is possible that the extravagant lifestyles portrayed in celebrity-based media have an influence on emerging adults’ attitudes toward materialism.

Given that many emerging adults are grappling with identity formation and instability, it is possible that in addition to financial instruction from family members they may also look to celebrity-based media for lifestyle possibilities (Arnett, 2006; Thorson & Kranstuber Horstman, 2014). Scholars have

established that emerging adulthood is marked by optimism and the possibility that youth can do better than their parents financially (Beutler, 2012; Bindah & Othman, 2012). Taken together, this population and the current celebrity-saturated media environment provide a potential locus for exploring the cultivation of materialism. Thus, the present study examines the role of celebrity-focused media and the cultivation of materialistic attitudes in an emerging adult population. The research contributes to a growing body of literature on emerging adult attitudes toward materialism and the influences of celebrity culture under the framework of cultivation theory.

CELEBRITY MEDIA DIET

A celebrity is any person who is well known in a field, such as science, politics, or entertainment (Boorstin, 1961), but celebrity media tend to favor the entertainment personality. The idea of celebrity has shifted over the years, reflecting a change in who is and is not featured in gossip magazines. The newer version of “celebrity” is defined not by talent or skill but by media visibility and a life that is relatable or “ordinary” (Holmes, 2005). Reality television stars are an example of people earning notoriety for putting their lives on display for the public eye. Thus, we conceive of celebrity media as any media that features either an individual celebrated for their talent, and/or the newer version of celebrity, or an individual with notoriety who has become celebrated because of their status as a television star.

The onslaught of this new type of celebrity has only increased in the new millennium with the popularity of reality television and celebrity news. According to Gamson (1994), “it does not matter for gossip how celebrities got there, or even how they manage to stay there, but how they behave once they’re there” (p. 175). Celebrity gossip in the media typically focuses on material elements such as the clothing stars wear, the places they shop, the events they attend, and the products they endorse, as well as the inner workings of their personal lives and relationships. Even the most “ordinary” of reality stars may begin to live a more “celebrity” lifestyle after entering into the public eye.

The study of celebrity news and gossip magazines is relatively young, intertwined with both research on the culture of celebrity and with fan studies. According to Gorin and Dubied (2011), “such stories report on celebrities’ movements and actions of all kinds, and tend to comment on the character of those in the spotlight and the attitudes, opinions and norms which they do or do not observe” (p. 600). The prominent idea behind celebrity news is that celebrities appear as models, participating in both imitable and inimitable behavior. Therefore, celebrities encourage a process of assessment that is permanent, causing their actions, attitudes, and characteristics to be continuously adjudicated (Gorin & Dubied, 2011).

Contributing to the increasing supply of celebrity photographs are advances in digital photography and the availability of these photographs on Internet platforms, such as celebrity gossip blogs (De Vries, 2006). With advances in technology, nearly anyone can be a paparazzo if they are in the right place and the right time to take a picture of a celebrity. Furthermore, with the shift from magazines to online content, photographs are readily available and celebrity gossip is instantaneous (Groskop, 2008). Coupled with these changes in technology are changing social norms that make emerging adulthood a confusing time for many millennials. According to Schwartz (2013), the world is becoming increasingly complex and emerging adults may look to outside sources as a means of identity exploration. It is possible that some adolescents and emerging adults may look to celebrity culture for lifestyle role models (e.g., Giles & Maltby, 2004; Martin & Bush, 2000). The present research further explores this notion by investigating new and traditional media use, celebrity culture, and its influence on the materialistic attitudes of emerging adults.

Some have hypothesized that the increase in adolescent media use can be attributed to time spent alone in a personal bedroom during this period (J. D. Brown, Dykers, Steele, & White, 1994; Larson, 1995; Steele & Brown, 1995). Past research supports the idea that stars and media icons elicit wishful identification in audiences by representing an overvalued image of the self, with the media presenting celebrities as a glorified version of the consumer (Barron, 2006; Kitch, 2000). These findings align with social cognitive theory research, which maintains that people learn by observing others, such as celebrities in this case. For example, research has found a relationship between involvement with celebrities and adolescents' dressing styles, product purchases, and health behaviors (W. J. Brown & Basil, 1995; McGuire, 1974). It has also shown a link between adolescent involvement with celebrities and the adolescents' personal values and self-concept (Adams-Price & Greene, 1990). In a study on Singaporean adolescents, Chia and Poo (2009) found that those who consumed more media content about their celebrity idols reported a greater sense of intimacy with these celebrities. Most pertinent to this article, the researchers also found a link between high levels of intense-personal feelings with celebrities and the valuation or desire of monetary and material possessions (Chia & Poo, 2009). Thus, we feel that materialism is an important variable of study when examining emerging adults' entertainment media exposure.

MATERIALISM AND EMERGING ADULTS

Materialism is a psychosocial construct measured by consumer, communication, and social psychology researchers alike. It is defined by tendencies of the individual to place more importance on the accumulation of worldly possessions

rather than intangibles such as spirituality, relationships, or experiences (Chaplin & John, 2007). Much of the social scientific research on materialism stems from concerns about commercialism and heavy advertising to children as a vulnerable population, yet not much has been done to examine adolescents and emerging adults in the context of media effects (Chaplin & John, 2007).

It has been documented that the post–World War II era in the United States was associated with consumerism and materialism in pursuit of “the American Dream” (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Scholars have recognized that materialism is useful as a cultural construct, but there is much to be gained from examining individual differences in levels of materialism (Richins & Dawson, 1992). As such, materialism measures have been developed to examine consumer values. For example, the Material Values Scale measures three central themes of materialism: centrality, happiness, and success (Richins & Dawson, 1992). First, acquisition centrality describes the idea that materialists place high importance on the accumulation of material goods. Next, acquisition happiness addresses the tendency for materialists to derive their satisfaction from material things. Finally, possession-defined success describes the tendency for materialists to define their own and others’ success by their material possessions. Each of these constructs may be measured separately, but they can also be combined to create a composite score for overall materialism.

One preliminary study found that over half of the emerging adults in their sample reported that living well involves having nice material things and that owning socially acceptable things will bring them happiness (Beutler, 2012). In fact, Twenge and Kasser (2013) found that millennials rank higher on material values measures than any other generation. Their data included only correlational analyses, thus more sophisticated analyses are necessary for understanding the complex relationships between media and societal influence on materialism. Some researchers have also explored gender differences in material values. For example, Segal and Podoshen (2013) found in their study that men scored higher than women on materialism levels and that women scored higher on impulse buying. Because emerging adulthood is often associated with risk taking, economic uncertainty, and the process of individualization, this population warrants further investigation with media influence and materialism.

According to Chan and Prendergast (2007), adolescents are an important population to examine when studying materialism because peer influence on consumption habits is particularly important during this time. However, it is emerging adults who have largely been labeled selfish and self-involved, however, because they are stereotyped as living a self-focused and materialistic lifestyle (Arnett, 2006). Although the purpose of Arnett’s (2006) article was to dispel some of the myths surrounding emerging adult attitudes, it is clear that materialism and self-indulgence are associated with this population, due to their expendable income and new responsibilities as adults. In fact, Beutler’s (2012)

qualitative data revealed that emerging adults tend to place higher priority on extrinsic aspirations (e.g., financial success, social recognition) than they do on intrinsic aspirations (e.g., physical fitness, self-acceptance).

The literature suggests that extrinsic aspirations typically have a negative correlation with well-being. Furthermore, people between the ages of 18 and 25 incur credit card debt faster than any other age bracket and routinely spend more than they earn every month (Jiang & Dunn, 2013). Researchers have also found that emerging adults may be higher in sensation seeking and risk taking, which may be detrimental to one's financial status (Worthy, Jonkman, & Blinn-Pike, 2010). Although scholars have investigated numerous variables that may impact one's financial risk taking, such as age, gender, and family influence, not as much work has been done to explore the influence of celebrity culture on materialism.

To date, the existing research on materialism has addressed religiosity and consumerism (Bindah & Othman, 2012), self-esteem and materialism (Chaplin & John, 2007), and social comparison (Chan & Prendergast, 2007). Scholars have established that materialism is related to social comparison and status. For example, Goldsmith and Clark (2012) found that the relationship between materialism and consumer independence is mediated by consuming for status. In other words, individuals who are more conscious of their social status may be more motivated to seek higher status through purchasing material goods. To explain potential media influence on emerging adults, we draw on cultivation theory as a framework for understanding the cumulative influence of celebrity media on materialistic attitudes.

CULTIVATION THEORY

In its most traditional form, cultivation theory focuses on television, dividing viewers into heavy, medium, and light viewers, and positing that heavy television viewers are more likely to see the world as it is presented on television (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Researchers compare heavy viewers to light viewers in order to find the "cultivation differential," the margin of difference within and across the groups of those who provided "television answers" (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan, 1980, p. 12). This difference in answers indicates the social reality formation that viewing cultivates. According to this theory, then, heavy television viewers of any sort of content become "cultivated" into television's distorted version of social reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

More current analyses have reached beyond the original studies on crime to focus on a wide array of issues, including sex-role stereotypes (Saito, 2007; Signorielli, 1989), political views (Morgan & Shanahan, 1991), and the cultivation of personal attitudes—for example, concern for the environment (Dalhstrom & Scheufele, 2010; Good, 2009). Much like television overemphasizes crime

and violence, researchers have found that it also overstates affluence (Lichter, Lichter, & Rothman, 1994; O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997). For this reason, studying the cultivation of materialistic values has become increasingly popular in recent years (Shrum, Lee, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2011).

Television has been noted to be a considerable source of values, ideologies, perspectives, assumptions, beliefs, and images (Gerbner, 1998), which Hawkins and Pingree (1982) deemed the cultivation of "value systems." These values are often referred to as second-order cultivation effects or judgments (Shrum et al., 2011). Much previous research has focused on first-order cultivation judgments. First-order cultivation effects (i.e., percentage estimates of a certain occupation in the workforce) are memory based, can be learned directly from media content (Grabe & Drew, 2007), and often result in a distorted estimation of a particular group or society as a whole (Hetsroni, 2010). Second-order cultivation effects are spontaneous judgments (Shrum et al., 2011), typically beliefs, attitudes, and values that can be enhanced by media content (Hetsroni, 2010). Findings suggest that the cultivation effect is more stable for first-order effects (Shrum, 2007), though second-order effects are more common, are easier to produce, and occur repeatedly in everyday life (Shrum et al., 2011). The cultivation of materialistic attitudes would fall into the latter category of second-order effects, and prior research has linked television viewing with materialism using a cultivation framework (Reimer & Rosengren, 1990; Shrum et al., 2011).

Early cultivation studies treated viewing as a harmonized activity, looking at overall viewing rather than the contexts of viewing, the types of content consumed, and the variations among viewers (Cohen & Weimann, 2000). In recent years, the theory has been adapted to examine viewer exposure to television genres (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010), and different genres have been found to focus on different aspects of reality (Cohen & Weimann, 2000). This disparity can have a critical impact on the cultivation effect. For example, Cohen and Weimann (2000) found that heavy viewers of comedies tended to see the world through a less pessimistic lens, a stark contrast to the early studies' characterization of the uniform "heavy viewer" as gloomy and mistrusting. As new program types have developed, researchers have begun to study these genres. For example, "reality" shows are a new and exciting area of cultivation research, with many publishing studies on cultivation effects in this genre (Egbert & Belcher, 2012; Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, & Smith, 2007; Kubic & Chory, 2007; Nabi, 2009). Other genre-specific cultivation research includes a focus on medical dramas (Chory-Assad & Tamborini, 2003; Pfau, Mullen, & Garrow, 1995), daytime talk shows (Woo & Dominick, 2003), environmental programming (Good, 2009), and television news (Lee & Niederdeppe, 2011; O'Keefe & Reid-Nash, 1987; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003).

It has been established that heavy viewing of particular genres of television has a more distinctive effect than overall viewing (Hawkins & Pingree, 1981;

Romer et al., 2003; Segrin & Nabi, 2002; Shrum, 2002). For this reason, we posit that examining reality television's relationship with materialism through a medium-specific lens will provide more insight into the possibilities of genre and medium-specific cultivation analysis. Because today's media landscape allows audiences more control than ever over the types of media content they consume, it is conceivable that some individuals may have exposure to only one or a few genres. Nonetheless, it is difficult to explore exposure to one specific genre of media in isolation from exposure to other genres, and the current study recognizes that heavier viewers are rarely exposed to only one single genre.

Because prior research has found that the consumption of particular media (magazines, television, etc.) is associated with attitudes, we propose the following research questions in order to determine if exposure to specific celebrity-based media outlets influence attitudes toward materialism. These questions reflect the idea that celebrity media beyond television may influence the cultivation of materialism among emerging adults. In particular, we explore whether popular celebrity gossip magazines and blogs, alongside television, may be related to emerging adults' materialism. First, we examine whether the cumulative, composite influence of these forms of celebrity media (i.e., the celebrity media diet) will be related to materialism:

H1: Overall celebrity media diet will be related to levels of materialism among emerging adults.

Next, based on the theoretical framework and in light of prior research on celebrity media diet and materialism, we propose the following hypotheses:

H2: Amount of exposure to (a) print and online celebrity gossip magazines, (b) celebrity news blogs, (c) celebrity reality TV, and (d) celebrity-focused entertainment television programs will be related to levels of materialism among emerging adults.

Because celebrity-based media tends to focus on traditionally and stereotypically feminine content, such as fashion, relationships, and gossip, it is possible that gender may moderate the relationship between exposure to celebrity-based media and materialism. Thus, we pose the following questions:

RQ1: Will gender moderate the relationship between overall celebrity media exposure and levels of materialism?

RQ2: Will gender moderate the relationship between exposure to each celebrity medium and levels of materialism?

METHOD

Participants

Two hundred twenty-eight undergraduate students ($n = 169$ women, $n = 55$ men) from a large midwestern university participated in the study by completing an online survey about their celebrity media diet and materialism beliefs. The researchers obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board prior to collecting data. The population of interest was emerging adults, thus undergraduate students were recruited from basic communication courses for the study and were offered extra credit in their respective course in exchange for completing the online survey. Only those who were 18 to 25 years of age were retained in the sample for analysis. This resulted in the elimination of four participants who were older than 25, and a final sample of 224 emerging adults ($M_{AGE} = 20.02$, $SD = 1.24$). The sample included 92.8% ($n = 192$) Caucasian participants, 0.5% ($n = 1$) Latino participants, 2.9% ($n = 6$) Black or African American participants, 3.4% ($n = 7$) Asian participants, and 0.5% ($n = 1$) identified as Other. The survey contained questions about celebrity media exposure and materialism. Filler items about magazine readership, Internet use, political media use, and political beliefs were included in the survey as distracter items but were not used for analysis.

Measures

Celebrity magazine exposure ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 2.86$) was measured by summing the number of celebrity-focused print magazines (e.g., *Life and Style* and *US Weekly*) and celebrity-focused online magazines (e.g., *OK! Magazine.com*) that participants reported reading in the past 12 months. Participants were given a list of 32 celebrity-focused print ($N = 16$) and online ($N = 16$) magazines to select from when reporting their celebrity magazine use. This list was created using the most popular celebrity magazines at the time of data collection. Participants were asked to indicate which print and which online magazines they read. Although the magazines were available in print or online, both options were included to capture whether a participant read the magazine online, in print, both, or neither. A sum total was created for each participant.

Celebrity blog exposure ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 6.56$) was measured by summing the number of celebrity-focused blogs (e.g., Perez Hilton) that participants reported accessing in the past 12 months. Participants were provided a list of 15 popular celebrity blogs at the time of data collection. Although there was not an option to provide open-ended answers, an option to indicate "other" was included for participants to select if they read a celebrity blog not included on the list.

Celebrity reality television exposure ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 3.32$) was measured by summing the number of celebrity lifestyle-based programs (e.g., *The Hills*; $N = 30$) that participants reported watching in the past 12 months. Participants were provided a list of 25 popular reality lifestyle shows at the time of data collection. Although there was not an option to provide open-ended answers, an option to indicate “other” was included for participants to select if they watched similar programs not included on the list.

Celebrity TV news exposure ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 1.63$) was measured by summing the celebrity-focused television news programs (e.g., *Entertainment Tonight* and *TMZ*) that participants reported watching in the past 12 months. Participants were provided with a list of six celebrity TV news programs.

Overall celebrity media diet ($M = 12.08$, $SD = 9.4$) was measured by summing the number of celebrity magazines (print and online; e.g., *InTouch*), celebrity television news (e.g., *TMZ*), celebrity blogs (e.g., PopSugar), and celebrity lifestyle-based reality programs (e.g., *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*) viewed in the past 12 months.

Materialism was measured using the Material Values Scale short form. The six-item abbreviated version is designed to tap into three domains of materialism: success, centrality, and happiness ($\alpha = .75$, $M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.5$; Richins, 2004). The Material Values Scale asked participants in the present study to indicate the extent to which they agreed with six statements assessing their levels of materialism on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Although most items were positively worded, some were negatively worded on the survey and later reverse-coded during data cleaning. Items were taken from each of the three domains: success (e.g., “I admire people with expensive homes, cars, and clothes” or “The things I own say a lot about how well I’m doing in life”), centrality (e.g., “I like a lot of luxury in my life” or “Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure”), and happiness (e.g., “My life would be better if I owned certain things I don’t have” or “I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things”). Higher scores reflected higher levels of materialism, or stronger beliefs that material possessions hold more importance than intellectual or spiritual “intangible” things. Although there are three dimensions, items can be summed to reflect an overall materialism score (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Haws, 2011).

RESULTS

Prior to testing the linear relationships between each medium and levels of materialism, we ran a correlation matrix and found that celebrity magazine diet, celebrity TV news diet, and overall celebrity media diet were significantly correlated with materialism. Each hypothesis was tested using a simple linear regression, initially including gender as a control. However, gender was not

significant and did not significantly change the results of each regression. Prior to testing H1, which predicted that overall celebrity media diet would predict levels of materialism, we conducted simple bivariate correlations between each celebrity media item. The only items that were not significantly related were celebrity blogs, celebrity TV news, and celebrity magazines (see Table 1). Next, to test H1 we conducted a simple linear regression and support was found for this hypothesis. Overall celebrity media diet explained a significant proportion of variance in levels of materialism, $R^2 = .025$, $F(1, 187) = 4.959$, $p = .029$. Heavier exposure to celebrity media predicted higher levels of materialism, $b = .159$, $t(187) = 2.204$, $p = .029$.

To examine H2, we conducted five separate simple linear regressions, regressing materialism on each celebrity medium. Partial support for H2 was found. First, for H2a, we found that the total sum of magazines read explained a significant proportion of variance in levels of materialism, $R^2 = .029$, $F(1, 144) = 5.263$, $p = .023$. Next, we conducted a simple linear regression to test H2b. Results revealed that celebrity blog diet did not explain a significant proportion of variance in levels of materialism, $R^2 = .008$, $F(1, 75) = 0.573$, $p = .451$. The results of H2c similarly indicated that celebrity lifestyle reality TV did not explain a significant proportion of variance in levels of materialism, $R^2 = .014$, $F(1, 153) = 2.16$, $p = .144$. Last, for H2d, results indicated that amount of celebrity-based TV news exposure explained a significant proportion of variance in levels of materialism, $R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 156) = 4.759$, $p = .031$. For a complete list of results, see Table 2.

Next, the research questions were explored using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS procedure in order to estimate potential interactions. Specifically, we used PROCESS model 1 with 5,000 bootstrap estimates for the construction of 95% confidence intervals (CIs). For RQ1, probing the interaction between gender and overall celebrity media diet revealed that gender significantly moderated the relationship between overall celebrity media diet and materialism, $\Delta R^2 = .0292$, $\Delta F(1, 185) = 5.765$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [0.048, 0.494]. As shown in Figure 1, women who had a heavier celebrity media diet had stronger

TABLE 1
Bivariate Pearson's Correlations Among Media Variables

	1	2	3	4
1. Magazines				
2. Reality TV	.413**			
3. News	.400**	.451**		
4. Blogs	.181	.233*	.058	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2
Materialism

Hypothesis	Variable	df	b	β	t	p
H1	Overall celebrity diet	187	0.094	0.159	2.436	.029
H2a	Celebrity magazine	144	0.184	0.188	2.294	.023
H2b	Celebrity blog	75	-0.072	-0.87	-0.757	.451
H2c	Celebrity reality TV	153	0.20	0.118	1.47	.144
H2d	Celebrity TV news	156	0.609	0.172	2.182	.031

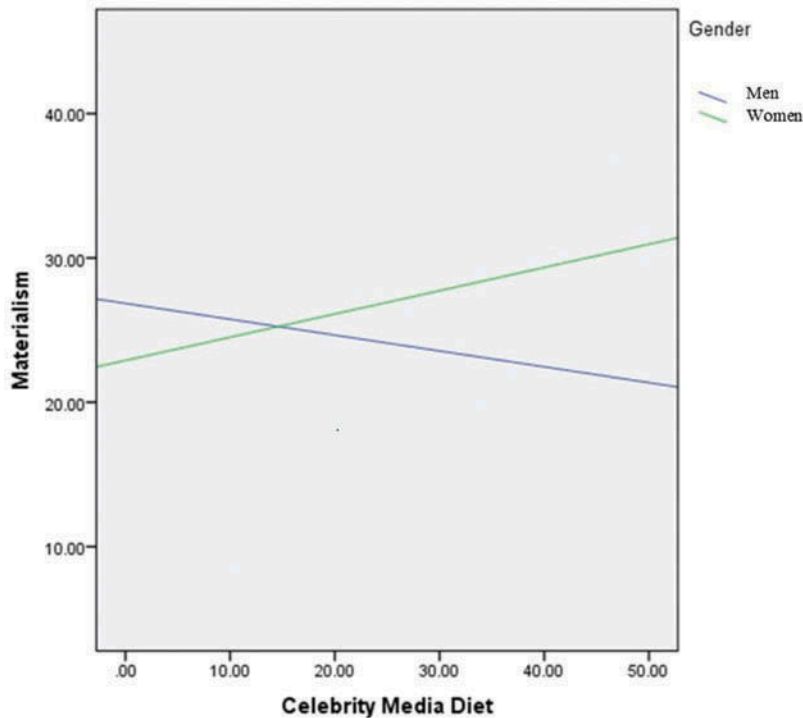


FIGURE 1 Interaction plot for celebrity media diet and gender on materialism.

materialistic attitudes than men who had lighter or heavier celebrity media diets, $b = .27$, $t(185) = 2.4$, $p = .017$. Overall, celebrity media diet was more impactful on levels of materialism for women, $b = .161$, $t = 3.22$, $p < .01$. For men, overall celebrity media diet was not impactful on their levels of materialism, $b = -.11$, $t = -1.09$, $p < .279$.

Next, RQ2 inquired about whether gender would moderate the relationship between each independent variable (magazines read, celebrity blogs read, celebrity reality TV watched, and celebrity TV news watched) and the dependent variable (materialism). In answering RQ2, we used Hayes's (2013) PROCESS procedure following the same method employed for RQ1. The results identified gender as a significant moderator of celebrity TV news programs and materialism, $\Delta R^2 = .038$, $\Delta F(3, 154) = 6.33$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.396, 3.29]. As shown in Figure 2, women who watched more celebrity TV news programs had stronger materialistic attitudes than men who watched either lower or higher amounts of celebrity TV news programs, $b = 1.84$, $t(153) = 2.52$, $p = .013$. Examining the conditional effect of x on y at the level of the moderator suggests that for women, exposure to celebrity TV news was impactful on their levels of materialism, $b = .949$, $t = 3.13$, $p < .01$, CI [.035, 1.55]. For men, exposure to celebrity TV news was not impactful on their levels of materialism, $b = -.898$, $t = -1.34$, $p = .182$, CI [-2.22, .424]. Gender did not significantly moderate the relationships between any of the other individual celebrity media and materialism. For a complete list of research question results, see Table 3.

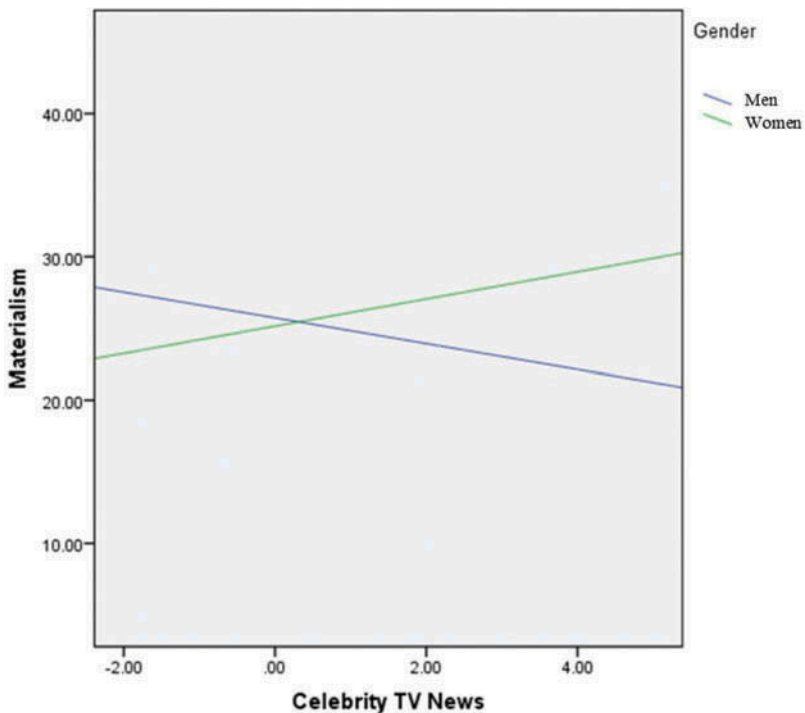


FIGURE 2 Interaction plot for celebrity TV news and gender on materialism.

TABLE 3
Materialism

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	Overall Celebrity Diet $\times$ Gender	185	0.27	2.4	.017
2	Celebrity Magazine $\times$ Gender	144	0.41	0.735	.463
2	Celebrity Blog $\times$ Gender	73	-0.053	-0.225	.822
2	Celebrity TV News $\times$ Gender	154	1.84	2.515	.013
2	Celebrity Reality TV $\times$ Gender	151	0.616	1.57	.118

DISCUSSION

The results of this study contribute to the literature on medium-specific media content—celebrity media, particularly—and its effects on attitudes toward materialism. Given the unique economic challenges that emerging adults are facing and the focus on celebrity culture and lifestyle in the media, it is important to establish whether these issues are related. H1 measured the relationship between an overall celebrity media diet and level of materialism. Findings demonstrated that overall celebrity media diet is positively associated with level of materialism. Thus, those who consume more celebrity-based media—including magazines, blogs, television news, and reality television programming focused on famous people—had significantly higher levels of materialism.

Although variables such as celebrity blog diet and celebrity reality TV diet were not related to materialism on their own, overall celebrity diet significantly predicted materialism. These variables had a significant negative correlation prior to regression analyses, thus it is possible that the more participants preferred one medium, the less they preferred the other. For example, some participants may prefer to watch a celebrity reality TV program firsthand, whereas others may prefer to read gossip about reality programs on celebrity blogs. Because responses were low for celebrity blogs, it is also possible that this medium is not very popular with this population. However, despite the potential preferences of one medium over another, results suggest that the sum of one's exposure to celebrity-based media predicts their levels of material values. These findings are consistent with the tenets of cultivation theory, which would suggest that both the amount of time and amount of media consumed by this emerging adult population would influence their levels of materialism. In other words, perhaps it is not just one type of celebrity medium that influences materialism, but the overall consumption of the messages in new and traditional forms of celebrity media that predicts such attitudes. In the digital age, it is likely that individuals are exposed to messages about celebrity across a variety of unique channels, and it is important to consider the overall impact of these messages.

Next, H2 examined the relationship between celebrity magazine exposure, celebrity blog diet, celebrity reality TV diet, and celebrity news diet and levels of materialism. Results indicated that the total number of celebrity magazines read by participants within the past 12 months significantly predicted levels of materialism. That is, the more exposure one has to celebrity-focused magazines (both online and print), the higher the level of materialism. Belch and Belch (2013) found in their content analytic work that 10% of magazines have celebrity endorsements in product advertisements; it is likely that celebrity endorsements add to the allure of purchasing decisions, particularly for younger audiences. Alternatively, it might be the case that young adults who are still in the process of identity formation are looking to celebrity magazines for role models of successful adulthood. Because the concept of celebrity is also associated with wealth and material success, it is possible that consumption of this medium cultivates higher levels of material values.

In addition, results suggested that celebrity TV news diet was associated with higher levels of materialism. In other words, the more participants watched celebrity TV news, the more likely they were to report a higher level of materialism, and vice versa. Turner (2006) suggested that the rise of reality TV programming has contributed to a public fascination with celebrity culture in that ordinary individuals on reality programs are now largely recognized as celebrities. Similar to magazine consumption, it is possible that individuals who are exploring their identity and learning how to be a successful adult may turn to celebrity TV news for adult role models. Many of these news stories feature actors, reality TV stars, and other successful people in the entertainment industry who take lavish vacations and own expensive things. Individuals who watch more of these TV news programs may come to associate successful adulthood with wealth and material items.

RQ1 examined whether gender would interact with overall celebrity media exposure. Results were significant, which suggests that a heavy diet of celebrity media is related to higher levels of materialism for emerging adult women. Although prior research has found that men tend to rank higher on levels of materialism than women, it is possible that women who consume more celebrity-focused media are more influenced by the material success of celebrities. This is consistent with the results of Reeves, Baker, and Truluck's (2012) study, which found that materialism and self-esteem were significant predictors of celebrity worship for women. They suggested that individuals who exhibit deficits in self-concept may turn to external sources of gratification as an escape from introspection. Furthermore, some qualitative work has found that individuals' interactions with celebrities may serve to provide meaning to consumers' identity formation (Banister & Cocker, 2014). Thus, as the results of the present study demonstrate, a heavier celebrity media diet cultivates higher levels of materialism for emerging adult women. In other words, women who are still forming

their self-concept may turn to external sources, such as celebrity media, for instruction on successful adulthood. Because celebrity media tends to focus on material success, a diet heavier in celebrity-focused messages may also cultivate higher levels of materialism.

Finally, RQ2 examined the moderating effect of gender on each celebrity medium. We found that the relationship between celebrity TV news exposure and materialism was stronger for female participants and was not significant for male participants. Although some research has demonstrated a significant relationship between overall TV viewing and the cultivation of materialism (e.g., Harmon, 2001), this result offers unique insight into cultivation and media influence. In fact, this result is also consistent with prior research on American culture's obsessions with celebrity, in particular the female body (Holmes & Redmond, 2006; Hopper & Aubrey, 2013). The focus on fashion and the appearance of female celebrities in celebrity TV news may be more salient to emerging adult women than men. Although not specifically examined in the present study, it is possible that female audiences that identify with female celebrities are more likely to desire a similar lifestyle and therefore score higher on materialism. In fact, in her critical analysis of celebrity gossip, Wilson (2010) argued that celebrity-focused gossip magazines serve as instructional guides for young women on appropriate gender behaviors and attitudes. Future studies should further explore female emerging adults in an experimental context in order to control for celebrity-based media exposure and the specific elements that influence levels of materialism.

The results of the present study align with the existing cultivation literature, particularly work that has investigated second-order cultivation effects (Shrum et al., 2011). The current research advances cultivation theory by examining not only television or print media but also a unique combination of multiple types of celebrity-based media. That the overall celebrity media diet variable includes both traditional and newer forms of media is an important step toward understanding cultivation effects in the digital age. Future work should continue to incorporate newer forms of celebrity-focused media, including social media, blogs, and smartphone applications.

In addition, the findings of this study have implications for the importance of investigating emerging adults' attitudes and behaviors concerning materialism and consumer spending habits. In fact, the social-psychological literature has suggested that this is an important age group to study with regard to materialism, given that they are learning financial responsibilities and taking steps toward becoming financially independent. This study finds that exposure to celebrity-based media does impact attitudes toward materialism, such that viewing extravagant lifestyles in the media may influence the importance placed on material possessions. Future work should examine the link between materialism and celebrity media on emerging adults outside of a college setting.

Undoubtedly, the study demonstrates that emerging adults are a necessary population to study in regards to materialism. Although college students have some degree of expendable income now, their ability to spend freely will continue to grow as they become less reliant on their parents or other assistance to help supplement their lifestyles. Credit card debt is one major concern for people of this generation, and linking spending habits to materialistic values cultivated by the media is an area of research ripe for future exploration.

One limitation of the present study was the survey design employed, as this method did not allow for the establishment of causality. Although it is indeed possible that celebrity-based media creates materialistic attitudes, it is also possible that those with preexisting higher levels of materialism seek out, or are in some way drawn to, media with a large amount of celebrity-focused content. In addition, the present study reflects the raw number of media outlets participants were exposed to, rather than the actual frequency of their exposure to each medium. As such, this is a limitation by traditional cultivation research standards. However, it is also possible that asking for a raw number may reveal a more accurate recollection than asking participants to estimate the amount of time they spent with each outlet. Future studies may benefit by providing lists of media outlets and asking participants to estimate the amount of time they spend with each.

In addition, a limitation of the present study is a lack of variation in race representation. Prior research on preadolescents has suggested that high-status peers are more influential on African Americans than on Hispanic Americans and stronger on Hispanic Americans than Caucasians (Shi & Xie, 2013). This research should be extended to examine emerging adults and potential interactions of high-status groups (i.e., celebrities) and race and their influence on materialism. It would also be useful to examine socioeconomic status as a potential moderator in future research on this topic. A longitudinal design might also be beneficial for assessing the cumulative effects of this type of media diet and for exploring behavioral as well as attitudinal outcomes.

The reliance on college students as a convenience sample may be another limitation, as these students are fortunate enough to have the opportunities to attend postsecondary education and, therefore, might engage with the media more frequently or in a different way than those with less schooling. Although some researchers have classified college students as emerging adults (e.g., Worthy et al., 2010), future research on this topic should also examine emerging adults who are not in college to improve external validity.

Despite these limitations, the present study does offer some important takeaways, such that emerging adults are in fact an important population for research on materialism and celebrity culture. Whether they are students, part of the workforce, or both, emerging adults are learning a variety of personal and social skills. Although they are still exploring aspects of their identity,

they may look to role models in the media for examples of success. Celebrities have been exalted as models of success, and their accomplishments are often highlighted by their ability to consume. Thus, it is important that researchers continue to explore emerging adult populations and their media preferences to understand their attitudes toward materialism, consumption, and financial success. In addition, this study finds that some attitudes toward materialism may be shaped by exposure to medium-specific content, which should also be explored in future research on celebrity media diet. These medium-specific findings have both applied and theoretical implications in that the cultivation of certain attitudes toward materialism may be due to a combination of medium type and content. Overall, this study finds that magazines and television are still particularly influential channels, especially in the context of celebrity media for emerging adult women. Indeed, it is clear that engaging with celebrity lifestyle media impacts emerging adult attitudes toward lifestyles of the rich and famous.

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