Operant Subjectivity: The International Journal of Q Methodology
37/1–2 (2014): 2–22, DOI: 10.15133/j.os.2014.002

Operant Subjectivity
The International Journal of Q Methodology

The Gender Factor of *Survivor*: A Q-Method Approach

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***Abstract*:** Reality television is embedded in our popular culture. We see the shows, we follow the so-called "stars" on social media, we hunt online for live feeds or message boards about our favorites, we see the scandals in the tabloids and we guiltily profess our affinity to one show or another. Reality television has a dominant presence in popular culture today. Due to the success of *Survivor: Borneo* in the summer of 2000, we have seen a proliferation of reality programming. After 13 years and 26 seasons, *Survivor* continues to garner impressive ratings for CBS. The popularity and endurance of this program makes it important to understand exactly what is being presented to viewers. Gender identity is a particularly salient issue when it comes to representation in popular culture. *Survivor* offers a prime location for the exploration of perceptions of contestants' gender identity. This study uses Q methodology in order to assess subjective responses to how masculine or feminine 46 participants perceive 64 contestants from four seasons of *Survivor*. The analysis resulted in a single factor for female contestants and four distinct factors for the male contestants. These results suggest elements of dominant ideology at work within the context of *Survivor*.

Since 2000 reality programs continue to proliferate on both network and cable channels, which demonstrates their popularity as well as its importance to the ideological framework set forth in the media. "As television is one of the primary socializing agents of contemporary society, it is necessary to determine which programs have the largest viewership and investigate what we are learning from them" (Roth, 2003, p. 35). As such, reality television demands our attention to gain a better understanding of its messages and meanings. In this study Q method quantitatively explored subjective perceptions of the reality show *Survivor* in order to explore the effects of constructing gender identity within reality programming.

Literature Review

Since the beginning television has attempted to achieve a certain element of reality (Fiske, 1987). While the sets and narratives may be contrived, the use of "realistic" situations and activities are hallmarks of television. Since the 1950s, with shows such as *The Big Story*[1] and *Candid Camera*[2] to today, reality style programming is a success

[1] A re-enactment based drama of actual crimes reported by journalists.

[2] A hidden-camera program where participants are unknowingly placed in unusual and staged situations while an audience watches.

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based on Nielsen[3] ratings (Baker, 2003, p. 60).

Reality television is a mega-genre that has an ambiguous set of characteristics and televisual devices that can sometimes make it difficult to distinguish from other types of programming. Therefore, arriving at a succinct definition is complicated when we consider the myriad of shows that are considered *reality.* Kilborn (1994) gives us a useful place to start in his definition of reality television that includes three criteria: using lightweight cameras to record people in everyday life, using dramatized re-enactments of real-life events, and editing the footage into a program that can be "promoted on the strength of its reality" (p. 423). In 2013, the most relevant aspect of his definition is the notion of marketing or promoting the program based on its realism.

In his essay on the history of reality television, Baker (2003) extends this definition to include shows like *Survivor,*[4] *Big Brother,*[5] *Wife Swap,*[6] and *Surreal Life*[7] which rely on subjects' participation and involvement with the production of the program. Unlike the "slice of life" shows like *COPS*[8] and *Rescue 911,*[9] *Survivor* uses a constructed scenario in which people are observed over an extended period of time (Baker, 2003). Smith and Wood (2003) add that, shows such as *The Amazing Race,*[10] *Temptation Island,*[11] and *The Real World*[12] "share a same basic plot: introduce a diverse group of people, put them into situations bound to induce conflict, and watch them squirm" (p. 1).

Survivor is another series with a similar outline. The show's format places contestants (split into teams called tribes) in a remote location where they must live and negotiate with the elements and each other as they participate in challenges and life at the campsite in their quest to win a one-million dollar prize. In each episode, a member of the tribe who loses the immunity challenge is voted off the show by his or her fellow tribe mates. The game's motto puts it plainly: "Outwit, outplay, outlast." Much of the show's narrative revolves around the campsite interactions and the results of tribal council (the formal place and ceremony where the tribe member is voted off).

While using devices that present a seemingly "real" portrayal of events, most producers embrace the entertainment status of reality television, promising melodrama and excitement with each episode. As a result, many scholars refer to the genre as: "an umbrella term for audience-participation shows" (Giles, 2003, p. 235),

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[3] Nielsen ratings are the industry standard measurements that inform advertisers of viewership and demographics so they can purchase commercial space. The ratings translate into notions of popularity and financial sustainability of television programs.

[4] A competition show where a group of 16 contestants are stranded in a remote location for 39 days with little more than the clothes on their back competing for $1 million.

[5] Contestants must compete against each other for a chance to win $500,000 in a house wired with cameras and microphones, capturing their every move for a TV and Internet audience.

[6] Two very different moms switch families for 10 days to see if the grass is greener on the other side.

[7] Seven B- or C-list celebrities balance career baggage and strong points of view while living together.

[8] Hand-held cameras document the fast-paced world of police officers on duty.

[9] A celebrity hosts a show featuring dramatic reenactments of situations leading to emergency calls to 911.

[10] Eleven teams of two compete in a 72,000 mile race around the world with clues, challenges and pit stops in each exotic locale in hopes of being the first to the final spot to win $1 million.

[11] Four unmarried couples test their relationships by splitting up and hanging out with groups of sexy singles.

[12] Seven strangers are chosen to live under the same roof as we watch what happens.

"infotainment" (Hill, 2005), "factual/documentary TV" (Kilborn, 2003), "event TV" (Biressi & Nunn, 2005), "water cooler TV" (Biresi & Nunn, 2005), and "popular factual programming" (Hill, 2005). In their third person effect study, Leone, Peek and Bissell, (2006) noted "respondents may well recognize reality television as a guilty pleasure" (p. 265).

Baker (2003) offers a typology of reality television programming that falls into four categories: "artificial people in ordinary settings" (p. 61), "artificial people in extraordinary settings" (p. 62), "real people in ordinary settings" (p. 63), and "real people in extraordinary settings" (p. 64). *Survivor* falls into this final category because it is comprised of non-actors who are placed in settings that are beyond the realm of normal or ordinary. However, *COPS*, which is true to the *cinéma vérité* [13] form, is perhaps a cruder and more accurate depiction of what is meant by the real/extraordinary category because it deals with real police officers in the throes of their occupations.

Survivor is part of this hyper-extraordinary setting category with real people who are "cast" by producers, including executive producer Mark Burnett. Yet, it is more than just the setting and the cast; *Survivor* is a "reality show" according to Godard (2003) who states the following:

> To distinguish them [shows like and including *Survivor*] from what is sometimes called "reality TV," reality shows concern interactions within a group (rather than of a police officer's or department's interactions with those pursued, such as on *Cops*) and over a period of days to months (rather than hours, such as on *Fear Factor*). (Godard, 2003, p. 94)

For over a decade, reality television has been a subject of academic inquiry (Butsch, 2006). In addition to attempts to define and typify the mega-genre, many scholars ask who is watching and why? For example, studies examine reality television in terms of third-person effect perceptions (Leone, et al., 2006), or sensitivity theory (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). One study employed Q methodology as a means to understanding the generic perception of reality television to audiences (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003). In their study the Q sorts by 112 residents awaiting jury duty allowed them to conclude two important things about reality-based programming. First, "that a genre of reality-based television is coalescing in the public consciousness but is not yet secured" (Nabi, et al., 2003, p. 310). In addition, the authors noted that the way participants sorted reality-based programs did not fall distinctly into the fiction category. Instead, they discovered that participants did not see these programs as entirely real. These conclusions tell us a lot about how viewers define the mega-genre and it demonstrates a useful application of Q methodology in assessing audience's perceptions of reality television.

The present study used Q method to enhance our understanding of how participants (derived from a methodological convenience sample) perceive gender portrayals on *Survivor*. According to Edwards (2004), gender is one of the most prominent elements depicted and conventionalized by reality programs. "Gender emerges in reality programming as a set of generic conventions in which individual

[13] Cinéma vérité: translated directly from French means, film truth. However as used here, it is a style of filmmaking that uses several nuances of the "real." "Often employing lightweight, hand-held cameras and sound equipment, it shows people in everyday situations and uses authentic dialogue, naturalness of action, and a minimum of rearrangement for the camera" (http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/c1/cinemaver.asp).

shows frequently transgress and then reassert traditional gender role expectations" (p. 226).

As is the case with most communications research, television criticism borrows from various other disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities. From the humanities we take a cue from film theory and literary criticism both which cross over into cultural studies. In terms of social sciences, much of the literature on television and media effects utilize psychology and sociology. To look forward, we must look back at the original studies of gender roles and how over time the term "gender" began to differentiate itself from "male" and "female." Social psychology offers a theoretical explanation of how we are socialized into our gender roles and what that means about our society. While psychology and television seem to be very different disciplines, we must recognize television as an ideological apparatus (Althusser, 1969/1971; Corcoran, 1984) that socializes us and creates the culture in which we live.

Television content projects meaning about our culture and serves an ideological function which questions and then reinforces the status quo. Our desire to look and watch is met with our search for reality and normality that keeps us entertained and at ease. Through its use of ideological tropes television confirms itself as a mirror of reality (Fiske, 1987, p. 21).

Ideology, then, is the way in which the ruling class perpetuates its ideas and standards through all parts of a culture's social reality such that the members of the society find their supremacy normal and legitimate (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, & Fiske, 1983). According to Fiske (1987), television acts as an ideological apparatus, perpetuating these social norms by transmitting a collective meaning (created by the use of a system of codes) to an otherwise diverse audience.

In this study gender portrayals are explored through audience perception. Edwards (2004) suggests that the stereotyped gender roles seem to be challenged by reality shows while "they simultaneously norm them" (p. 226). Therefore any dilemma created in decoding gender is satisfied by the assumption that we return to the norms with which we began. This happens in a myriad of ways. For example, a female participant on *Survivor* might exhibit non-stereotypical behavior by dominating a physical challenge, but at the end be shown crying and weak because she was forced to vote out a friend. *Survivor* tests these boundaries between two (assumed) opposite social identities – masculine and feminine – through the contestants' competition between themselves and the elements.

Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the physiological differences between men and women. Over the years biological differences have come under immense scrutiny due to new information regarding gestation of a fetus as well as other physiological inconsistencies. However, for the sake of this study, we will take on the definition of sex to mean the conventional, biologically assigned man or woman. This distinction is theoretically based on the fact that in the case of *Survivor* there are no hermaphrodites or other types of ambiguously sexed contestants (at least in their representation on screen); each contestant is introduced and then consistently shown as either a man or a woman.

Gender is a trickier issue. Gender is the first way a person distinguishes himself or herself. Bandura and Bussey (2004) use social cognitive theory to describe this phenomenon as it occurs across a person's life span. By examining the interplay of

several factors (biological, cognitive and social) we can gain a better understanding for how people categorize themselves. Modeling plays a large role in social cognitive theory and is not limited to a child's mimicry of his or her parents or a favorite television personality.

> Modeled activities convey the rules and structures embodied in the exemplars for generating new variants of a behavior. This higher level of learning is achieved through abstract modeling. Rule-governed behavior patterns differ in specific content and other details, but they embody the same underlying rule. (Bandura & Bussey, 2004, p. 95)

Therefore, because of abstract modeling it is necessary to explore the behaviors and images shown on television that have the potential to be modeled. Again, we return to the idea that television, as an ideological apparatus, reinforces gender stereotypes that can be modeled and therefore perpetuated throughout society (Whyte, 1998).

Social psychologists have determined that the old assumptions of men as solely masculine and women as feminine have been tested and disavowed. In fact, the psychology of gender is an area of study that has emerged from the question: what is gender? Through the efforts of Constantinople (1973) and Bem (1974) we come to understand gender as a continuum between masculine and feminine. The two do not exist as opposites, such as one being a lack of the other. Instead, a man can maintain traits and behaviors that are both masculine and feminine and still be male. Gender, therefore, is a psychological construct that emerges from a culture's dominant ideology as "clusters of socially desirable attributes stereotypically considered to differentiate males and females" (Spence & Helmreich, 1978, p. 12).

Interestingly, much of our information regarding sex roles comes from the evolutionary process. Because of the physiological differences, female humans spend more time (nine months of pregnancy, plus the added time of nursing) with their young as opposed to males who can "plant the seed" and be done with the process (Kendrick, Trost & Sundie, 2004). However, as evolution continues, patterns emerge in humans that contradict such a phenomenon because men create a bond with their offspring more so than other male mammals (Kendrick, et al., 2004). The resulting division of labor, in most modern societies, is such that women assume responsibility for rearing children and taking care of the home and men are the providers (Spence & Helmreich, 1978).

This is where the concept of men and women as opposites originates as a bi-modal relationship; one in which masculine is the opposite of feminine. However, according to Bem (1974) this is not the case. In fact, she posits that in the continuum of masculinity and femininity, androgyny lies in between. This indicates that there are behaviors and attitudes that are a combination of masculine and feminine; that is they are not opposites.

Judith Butler summarizes these various viewpoints by stating:

> …gender itself is a kind of becoming or activity, and that gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort. If gender is not tied to sex, either causally or expressively, then gender is a kind of action that can potentially proliferate beyond the binary limits imposed by the apparent binary. of sex (Butler, 1999, p. 143)

Butler's assessment of gender perhaps can account for the difficulty in the literature of pinpointing one exact definition of "gender." This study examines the indefinable

quality of gender by quantifying subjective responses to the gender portrayals in *Survivor*.

Based on the literature presented and the theories therein, the purpose of this study is to see how is gender is portrayed and perceived on *Survivor*. As such, this study posed the following research question: How do audiences perceive men and women on *Survivor* in terms of gender identity?

Method

In order to answer the research question a Q study was used to see if any factors emerged that indicated audience perception of gender portrayal on the program *Survivor*.

Q methodology was developed by William Stephenson (a psychologist and physicist) in 1935 as a means to measure subjectivity (Brown, 1996). Distinct from R methodology, Q combines elements of both qualitative and quantitative research. This method utilizes a ranking process of statements, images or a number of any other entities, and forces the participant to place one item ahead or behind another as a means of unveiling their subjectivity. All of this is executed by a "specified condition of performance" (Brown, 1980, p. 17), which, in this study, meant that participants were asked to sort images of contestants from four episodes based on perceptions of masculinity and femininity. The sorts from each were then factor-analyzed to uncover any similarities between respondents based on their perception of the contestants.

The first step was to choose an appropriate number of contestants from the entire set of individual contestants on all seasons of *Survivor* (the concourse). This study used the contestants from seasons one, two, nine and 10. Participants viewed one episode from each of the following seasons of *Survivor* that were available on DVD: *Survivor: Borneo* (season one, premiered Summer, 2000), *Survivor: Australian Outback* (season two, premiered on January 28, 2001), *Survivor: Vanuatu* (season nine, premiered on September 16, 2004), and *Survivor: Palau* (season 10, premiered on February 15, 2005).

The second episode from each of the four selected seasons was chosen for two primary reasons. First, the relationships and dramatic intricacies of the contestants have not yet been established this early in the season, so viewers will not feel behind or left out regarding the narrative/story line of the show. Second, next to the first episode, the second episode has the largest number of contestants because at the end of each show another person is voted off the island.

Each season casts an equal number of men and women. However, in the first episode of seasons one, two and ten, a woman was voted off first so there are two fewer women than men in the sample. The breakdown by season in the episodes viewed is as follows: season one – 7 women, 8 men; season two – 7 women, 8 men; season nine – 9 women, 8 men; season 10 – 8 women, 9 men. In the overall sample (64 contestants) 51.6% were male and 48.4% were female.

For this study, volunteers were asked to view four episodes of *Survivor* and to sort headshots of the 64 contestants (see Appendix) in a quasi-normal flattened distribution. There were two Q sorts, one comprised of headshots of the 31 female contestants and the other made up of headshots of the 33 male contestants. Each was sorted based on the condition: Sort the following contestants by placing those you find *most masculine* under +4 and those you find *most feminine* under –4. By separating the contestants into two sorts, the aim was to reduce gender stereotyping

by deterring participants from sorting the contestants based on their sex. After sorting the subjects engaged in a short interview or responded to a brief questionnaire regarding their Q sorts.

The convenience sample included a 2 x 2 design based on sex and age in order to provide a somewhat diverse sample, which might help to interpret any factors that emerge. The Nielsen ratings system (which is the primary tool used to measure audience viewership and is considered a television industry standard) separates audience into demographics indicating that the most sought after age is the 18–34 demographic. For the purposes of this study the design used this system by requiring 20 participants ages 18–34 (10 men and 10 women). While more age demographics are apparent in the Nielsen system, this study placed the non-targeted group together by requiring 20 participants aged 35 and older. While the second age set has a significant range, the age split allows for a more diverse P set. In total, there were 46 participants. Of these 46 people, 16 were women ages 18–34, 10 were women over the age of 35, 10 were men ages 18–34 and 10 were men over 35. The P set was made up of mass communications students and faculty as well as other professionals and retirees with varying degrees of knowledge regarding *Survivor*.

As stated above, each participant viewed four episodes in order to make the most accurate sort based on his or her subjective response to *Survivor* and its portrayal of gender identity. The episodes were meant to provide context so the participants could sort the contestants from most masculine to most feminine with a general idea of their performance within the show and not solely base their perceptions on the images alone.

A brief questionnaire was presented immediately after the sort to gain more information that helped with analyzing the emergent factors of the sort. Besides standard demographic questions, participants were asked about their overall television viewing habits as well as their thoughts on reality television and how they sorted their images.

Data collection and administration of the Q sorts was based on the availability and convenience of the participants. This flexibility resulted in various locations where participants viewed the four episodes and the manner in which they viewed them. For example, about half of the participants saw the episodes and did the Q sort in a classroom on a university campus, and the other half participated in the comfort of their home and on a much smaller screen.

The Q study segmented the participants into factors based on their preferences and subjective ranking of whom they deemed most masculine and most feminine. The aim of this study is to give further insight on how to interpret and quantifiably categorize gender identity images in reality television.

Results

The following results are based on statistical and factor analyses of 92 Q sorts using the PQMethod software developed by Peter Schmolk (2012). SPSS was also used for the other statistical information below. Among the 46 sorters, only one factor emerged for the female contestants and four factors emerged for the male contestants. Below is further explanation of the factors and the other pertinent data collected from this Q study. Some of the factor names are titles of long-running soap operas as homage to the social melodrama of *Survivor.*

Female Factor: Beauty and the Beast

"Beauty and the Beast" is the only factor that emerged for the women contestants. The women sorted as most masculine (+4 and +3) are Maralyn, Twila, Scout, Susan, and Alicia (see Figure 1a). With the exception of Alicia, all of these women are the oldest and the most rugged looking – even in their photos used for the sort. These women had more chiseled and less soft (that is, less stereotypically feminine) features. Alicia, while not one of the older contestants was labeled as a personal trainer and her physique was a testament to her occupation. During the immunity challenge she showed how tough and strong she was through her body language by not making a face when she had to eat an indigenous bug with "pinchers." Table 1 shows the factor array.

Figure 1a: Female Factor – "Beauty & The Beast": Most Masculine

In each of the questionnaires following the Q sort, participants were asked: "why did you place the contestants you did in +3 and +4?" Almost all of the answers revolved around the idea that they were perceived as more aggressive and less attractive than the others.

The women at the other end of the scale – the most feminine – Dolly, Kim, Elisabeth, Kimmi, and Eliza were all considered to be the most feminine of the female contestants (see Figure 1b). These women were described as attractive, more passive and emotional. Many of the respondents noted that they were the ones that cried more often. And in fact three of the five did cry at some point during the episodes viewed (Dolly, Kimmi and Eliza).

Figure 1b: Female Factor – "Beauty & The Beast": Most Feminine

Another important element of the "Beauty and the Beast" factor is that there were only three participants (one younger woman and two older men) that did not load on this factor. The other 43 participants achieved factor loading scores above 0.46, which is the score necessary to achieve a statistically significant loading ($p < .01$). Because there is only one factor, there were no confounded scores nor were there any consensus statements.[14]

[14] A "statement" in this Q study are the images of contestants that the participants were asked to sort.

Table 1: Factor Array for Female Contestants

Contestant	*Factor Score*	*Contestant*	*Factor Score*
Maralyn	+4	Janu	0
Twila	+4	Stephanie	0
Susan	+3	Colleen	–1
Alicia	+3	Tina –	–1
Scout	+3	Leann	–1
Kelly	+2	Ashlee	–1
Gretchen	+2	Amber	–2
Angie	+2	Julie	–2
Caryn	+2	Jennifer	–2
Stacey	+1	Katie	–2
Ami	+1	Elizabeth	–3
Lisa	+1	Kimmi	–3
Mia	+1	Elizabeth	–3
Jenna	0	Dolly	–4
Ramona	0	Kim	–4
Jerry	0		

Male Factors

For all of the male factors, in order to have a significant loading, the factor score had to be +/–0.45 to be statistically significant ($p < .01$). Here, there is a four-factor solution for the data collected from the 46 participants. Of these participants eight did not load on any of the four factors and four were confounded between two factors. Below are detailed descriptions of the four unique factors. Table 2 depicts the factor arrays and Table 3 summarizes the factor loadings of the Q sorts grouped by sex and age.

Male factor A: The Critics and The Producers Sixteen participants loaded on "The Critics & The Producers" factor. The factor is titled as such because the men that are scored on the most masculine side (+4 and +3), which included Rudy, Lea, B. B., Chris, and Tom, were the providers and doers of their respective tribes based on the viewed episodes (see Figure 2a). From the questionnaire responses the prevailing reason for placing these men as most masculine was because they were dominating and macho.

These men, designated as most masculine, contributed positively to the livelihood of their tribe-mates. For example, B. B. from season 1 was a hard-working and domineering older man who had a certain way about him – it was his way or no way. In one case Gervase (a fellow tribe-mate) stated, "If you aren't working as hard as B. B. then you aren't working." Chris from season nine (who won the million dollars that season) was integral to creating fire and keeping the team together. Tom (who won in season 10) was seen as a leader of his tribe and played a vital role in retrieving the necessary flint that had sunk to the ocean floor after their boat capsized on the first day. It is significant that Tom (the fire fighter), Rudy (the Navy SEAL Veteran), and Lea (the drill Sergeant, whose nickname is "Sarge") were all sorted as most masculine in this factor. These job titles were referred to as a rationale for their designation. What all of these men (regardless of job title) have in common is that they produced for their tribes – whether it was a shelter (B. B.), a campfire (Chris), a win at an immunity challenge (Sarge), advice (Tom), or food (Rudy) – these men adhered to the long-held gender construction of men as providers.

Figure 2a: Male Factor A – "The Critics & The Producers": Most Masculine

Table 2: Factor Array for Male Contestants

	Factor			
Contestant	***A***	***B***	***C***	***D***
Richard	−1	+1	−4	+3
Gervase	−1	−1	+2	−4
Rudy	+4	+4	0	+4
Greg	−1	−1	0	−1
Sean	0	+1	+2	+2
Dirk	0	+2	+4	+1
Joel	0	+3	+2	+1
B. B.	+3	+3	+1	+4
Colby	+2	−1	−1	−1
Jeff V.	−2	−1	−1	−3
Nick	−2	−2	+1	−2
Keith	−3	0	0	0
Rodger	−1	+1	−4	+3
Kel	−4	−2	−1	+2
Michael	+2	−2	−3	0
Mitchell	−3	−3	−2	−2
Brady	+1	−1	+1	−1
Chad	+1	+2	+3	0
Chris	+3	+3	+1	0
John K.	−1	−2	0	−2
John P.	+1	0	+3	+1
Lea (Sarge)	+4	+4	+3	+3
Rory	−3	+1	+1	+1
Travis (Bubba)	+1	+2	+2	+1
Bobby Jon	+2	−4	−1	−4
Coby	−4	−3	−3	−2
Gregg	0	0	0	−1
Ian	0	−3	−2	+2
Ibrehem	−2	−4	−1	−3
James	+2	0	−2	−1
Jeff	+1	0	+4	0
Tom	+3	+1	−3	+2
Willard	−2	+2	−2	−3

Table 3: Summary of Factor Loadings for Male Contestants

	Number of Significant Factor Loadings			
Sorter Group	***A***	***B***	***C***	***D***
Female, 18–34	5	4	2	4
Female, 35+	3	2	3	0
Male, 18–34	5	2	0	2
Male, 35+	4	2	0	4

On the other end of the spectrum the men who were designated as most feminine represent "The Critics." These contestants were Kel, Coby, Keith, Mitchell, and Rory (see Figure 2b). Kel's and Keith's roles in their tribes decided how this factor would emerge. Kel was fishing for most of the episode, but failed. He always had an excuse and claimed that there was not much fish to be had. Mitchell echoed this sentiment as we see a shot of him wading in water and cut to an underwater shot showing an abundance of very large fish. Mitchell, however, never even tried and instead complained that Kel did not have any fishing skills and, along with the rest of the tribe, accused Kel of smuggling beef jerky onto the show (something that was against the rules and unfair since food was scarce).

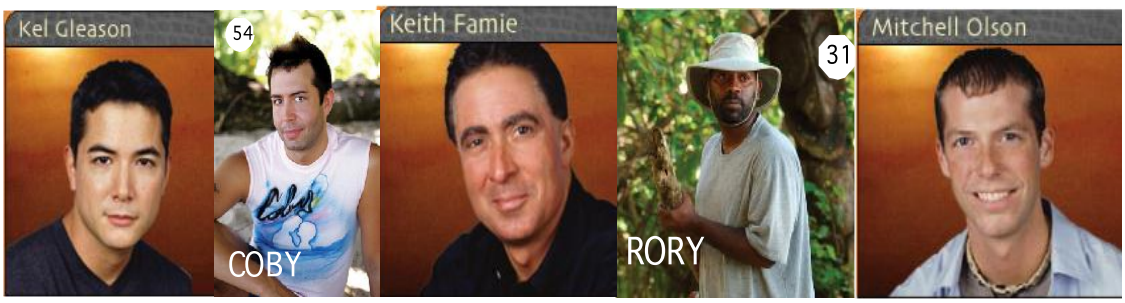

Figure 2b: Male Factor A – "The Critics & The Producers": Most Feminine

Like Mitchell and Kel, Keith was a member of the Ogakor tribe in season one. Keith was listed as a chef but was unable to make rice, so he relinquished the cooking responsibilities to Jerri who was able to make something the entire tribe enjoyed. He too made excuses and claimed that it would be better for him to collect wood and do heavy lifting (more manly activities) than it would be for him to do the cooking. While giving this speech he had an armload of small branches and twigs that he was throwing over some unknown cliff.

Coby from season 10 is one of the consensus contestants that will be discussed later in this section. His placement as a "critic" is consistent because when five of his tribe-mates went out to recover the sunken trunk with the flint inside to make fire he stayed on the beach and criticized their efforts.

From season nine, Rory is perhaps the biggest critic of the men. One of his bigger blow-ups in the viewed episode was when he was criticizing Mia for celebrating the women's victory in the reward challenge. He was complaining to Sarge, who responded, "This is a game and I lose humble." This statement evokes the puritan ideal of working hard and getting what you earn. As such it registered with participants as admirable and strong in the face of defeat and perhaps contributed to the placement of Sarge and Rory at opposite ends of the spectrum.

Male factor B: The Bold & The Beautiful In this second factor eight participants loaded on "The Bold & The Beautiful." As the name might suggest the men deemed more attractive were placed in the most feminine (–4 and –3) side of the scale and the bolder, more outspoken men were sorted under the most masculine side of the scale (+4 and +3).

Bobby Jon, Ibrehem, Mitchell, Coby and Ian (see Figure 3a) all have one thing in common – their photos portray an attractive, camera-ready young man. In fact, most of the responses about why these men were placed the way they were revolved around their looks with descriptions such as "playboy types" and "pretty boys." While this could be why they were sorted in the most feminine side of the scale (since beauty is associated with femininity in our culture) there are other similarities that put them at odds with those men that are positioned on the most masculine side of the scale.

Still consistent with their appearances, these five men all have slighter frames and tend to fail when it comes to the challenge activities, which again, might be considered more feminine based on dominant ideology. For example, Bobby Jon, despite his bravado, fails to navigate the obstacle course time and again. Ibrehem's body seems more sculpted and muscular compared to the others in this factor, however he fails to perform in the underwater trunk pulling challenge. Instead it is Stephanie that is able to pull the trunk and not Ibrehem or Bobby Jon.

Figure 3a: Male Factor B – "The Bold & The Beautiful": Most Feminine

Figure 3b: Male Factor B – "The Bold & The Beautiful": Most Masculine

Ian performed very well in the challenges and proved his strength at the campsite when he retrieved a heavy trunk that was 25 feet underwater. However, what these "beautiful" men do have in common is their physical appearance, which is the deciding point on this factor. During the obstacle course, Coby uses yoga breathing exercises while attempting the same obstacle course only to fall immediately after becoming "centered" as host Jeff Probst comments. Like Coby, Mitchell is another consensus item and in his episode he was not nearly as active as the others in this factor, however his slight frame and attractiveness is what places him on this factor.

Those that loaded on this factor deemed men that were slight and "pretty" more feminine than those that took action and spoke out like the men that placed on the more masculine side of the factor. These men include Rudy, Lea (Sarge), Joel, B. B., and Chris (see Figure 3b). Again, Rudy is the retired Navy SEAL and Sarge is the drill Sergeant and these two men were placed as most masculine. Rudy speaks out about his homosexual tribe-mate Richard just as Sarge boldly states that he disagrees with the way Rory handles himself saying, "Something about him doesn't sit right with me." Joel and B. B. are both the alpha-male types of their tribe, both working hard to complete the shelter, but they clash and an argument of work ethic ensues. Chris is also outspoken and tries to rally his tribe-mates to build a fire and has opinions about keeping the older men in the tribe banded together to pick off the younger tribe-mates.

Male factor C: The Young & The Restless "The Young & The Restless" factor is the most disparate of the factors because of some of the more agreed-upon ideas that emerged from this study. In the other three factors the older men tended towards the more masculine side of the scale. However, here the most feminine side has an older set. The five participants that loaded on this factor were all women and indicated that older men have more feminine qualities and young and active men are more masculine.

Lea (Sarge) is the one anomaly on the most masculine part of the sort because he is a bit older than the others. However, his leadership skills and command of respect seem to trump this fact as was indicated in the questionnaire responses. The other men in this part of the scale are Dirk, Jeff, Chad, and John P. (see Figure 4a). Dirk was

another surprising placement in this factor because he was rarely on screen, which might imply that he was sorted based on his photograph used for the sort. In the photo he is shown in a young and impressive stance staring off into the distance with a bare chest.

Figure 4a: Male Factor C – "The Young & The Restless": Most Masculine

John P., Chad and Jeff, on the other hand, were more memorable. Chad for example has an artificial limb and was capable of participating in challenges as though he had no disability. He and John P. were on the same tribe in season nine and both persevered in the balance-eam reward challenge. Both men were knocked off more than twice and kept getting back up on the balance beam and trying again. Chad at one point slipped as he was trying to get up and got a big gash on his head that the camera focused in on to further illustrate his persistent attitude. Travis warned John P. that he was a threat because he was young and strong. In season 10 Jeff stood up for Kim by convincing others not to vote her off after she did not participate in an immunity challenge. As a result, Jeff was deemed not only young and attractive, but also chivalrous by respondents.

On the other hand the men that were deemed more feminine were perceived as homosexual, quiet or older (see Figure 4b). Tom was older and in the episode viewed by the sorters, he was relatively quiet, especially considering to how he would be portrayed throughout the rest of the season. The women that loaded on this factor rarely (if ever) watched *Survivor* and all of them were unfamiliar with season 10. This is important because this episode is not indicative of Tom's character as it developed over the course of the season. So, given only the context of this one episode (as the participants had), he had a similar role in this episode as Rodger. Rodger was older and did not cause any conflict within the tribe. His contributions to the challenges were minimal and we discover that he only recently learned to swim and was scared to participate in the cliff-jumping reward challenge in season two.

Figure 4b: Male Factor C – "The Young & The Restless": Most Feminine

According to some of the questionnaires, respondents were under the impression that Michael was homosexual. Both Richard and Coby were perceived the same way, a perception that was confirmed later on in the season.

Male factor D: The Guiding Light The men in the most masculine designation were notable because of their leadership abilities and the way they steered the path for

their tribe-mates. The participants that loaded on "The Guiding Light" factor believed that leadership abilities are what constitute masculinity.

This interpretation was based on the differences between those who were sorted most feminine and those who were sorted most masculine. As has been discussed earlier, Rudy, Lea (Sarge), Richard and B. B. are older contestants who commanded respect from their tribe-mates and thus placed in the +4 and +3 side of the scale (see Figure 5a). The implication is that age, for these participants, indicated a level of esteem and admiration. Rodger is also placed up here, and while later on in the season he takes on a role more consistent with this factor, this interpretation concedes that his age places him in this factor. The trope of "older means wiser" seemed to be at play in this factor.

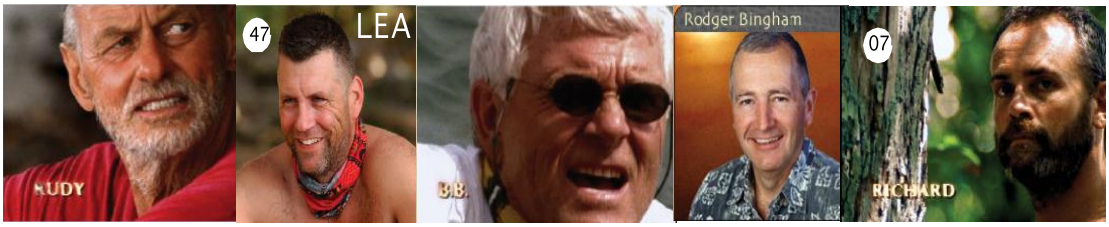

Figure 5a: Male Factor D – "The Guiding Light": Most Masculine

The men on the feminine side of this factor are Gervase, Bobby Jon, Jeff V., Ibrehem, and Willard (see Figure 5b). None of these men took on leadership roles and they were considerably younger than their masculine counterparts on this factor. For example, Gervase was the one in his tribe who spoke out the most (via direct camera address) about B. B. taking on too much and who did not agree with all the work he was doing. Gervase was not a member of the tribe that was inspiring others to action. Bobby Jon had the same effect on his tribe. There was even a moment in the beginning of the episode where someone asked, "Well, what should we do now?" and Bobby Jon simply stretched, not willing to come forward and set a plan in action. Willard was not an integral part of the team. In the obstacle challenge of season 10 he sat out and did not offer any support to his teammates until he told Katie the correct way to use the rope swing (after she did it incorrectly at least five times). Jeff V. was simply antagonistic and only provided negative comments about any of his tribe-mates and even made noises to elicit vomiting from an opposing tribe member during the eating immunity challenge.

Figure 5b: Male Factor D – "The Guiding Light": Most Feminine

Consensus items and correlations The consensus items in the men's factors are of particular interest because of the higher correlations that exist (see Table 4). The consensus items here are items that were sorted roughly within the same area of the scale consistently (refer to factor scores in Table 2). The general parameters for designating an item as a consensus is whether or not that item is placed within two places of the others.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

	Factors			
	A	***B***	***C***	***D***
A	1.00	0.50	0.30	0.38
B		1.00	0.44	0.63
C			1.00	0.30
D				1.00

The data show several items that are considered consensus items. For example, Gregg and Greg are two contestants that are consistently placed under 0 or –1. Along with Brady and John K., these contestants seem to be ones that the participants did not remember as well as the others. In comparison, the images sorted at either extreme (be it masculine or feminine) are more memorable. The middle-range scores imply a variety of things; the sorters may not remember the contestant, or they may not have formed an opinion about the contestant, or they might not believe the contestant is either highly masculine or highly feminine. Out of that mold emerges Lea (Sarge). He is consistently sorted as being most masculine (either +4 or +3). This is interesting primarily because his presence infers different things depending on the factor.

Some contestants are close to consensus across the four factors: Rudy (4, 4, 0, 4), Keith (-3, 0, 0, 0) and Rory (-3, 1, 1, 1). Rudy has similar characteristics as Lea, which are the military background and the likeable personality. Keith and Rory, placed in three of the four factors in the 0 or +1 columns, may not have been remembered by sorters, or sorters may not have thought them to exude any type of extreme gender identity.

Overall the Q study helped to answer the research question: *How do audiences perceive men and women on* Survivor *in terms of gender identity?* The answer to this question is the resulting factor analysis, which indicates distinct variations of perception of gender identity in *Survivor*. The one-factor solution for the female contestants implies that the 46 participants have a consensus view on the most masculine and feminine contestants. However, these same viewers did not form a consensus with the male contestants. Instead, four factors emerged to describe the participants' perceptions.

Discussion

This study set out to gain a better understanding of reality television perceptions. The results show the different subjective responses from our audience members regarding gender identity on *Survivor,* which may encourage more questions about audience behavior and effects. Q method is not a typical choice in television research,[15] but it serves the purpose well and demonstrates that it is an applicable method for this type of study.

The single factor that emerged from the participants when they sorted the female contestants is an interesting result of this study, especially because there are four factors for the male contestants. There are several possible reasons for this finding,

[15] Relatively few studies have been located in the body of literature that use Q methodology as a measure of subjectivity. Among the few are the aforementioned reality television study by Nabi, Biely, Morgan and Stitt (2006) and a television violence study by Suppasarn and Adams (1984).

but the most compelling is that for the people that participated it was clearer to them what it is that makes women more masculine or feminine; looks seem to be the predominant characteristic. Much like in society, women tend to be judged on appearances and levels of culturally designated marks of attractiveness. Contestants with less attractive and more angular features of were designated more masculine. The more feminine contestants appeared to reflect cultural ideals of beauty: soft features, long hair, and thin physiques with feminine curves.

The different views (or factors) for men imply that definitions of masculine and feminine characteristics were not as easy to define. From a social-learning standpoint society has made more clear-cut definitions of what it means to be "manly" or "girly." For the women it seems simple that if a contestant is unattractive by popular standards, older, or muscular, he is considered more masculine. If he reflects norms of attractiveness, is young and more passionate, he is considered more feminine. These rules do not necessarily apply to the men. The implication of this is important since, following Bem (1974), standards can be applied to anyone regardless of biological gender.

Ideologically speaking, we can attribute finding several factors for the male contestants to parameters that are created within society for various norms. According to Fiske (1987), the television creates an audience based on a shared dominant ideology. Using that statement to look at these results infers a very important finding: participants' perceptions of gender identity are more complex when applied to men. While this was not a tested hypothesis, it might indicate a dominant ideology at work with regard to the perceptions of women on *Survivor.*

According to the combined results of this Q study, participants do not agree on one view of the male contestants. Instead, four distinct views (factors) point to the fact that the participants viewed gender construction of male contestants as more flexible and less absolute than that of the female contestants. What emerges is a sense that participants are negotiating with several ways to assign gender identity to men. Yet, when it comes to women, there are masculine and feminine characteristics that are more easily discernable when prompted. For women, appearance led to the designation of masculinity and femininity. Yet for men, the rationales were more nuanced and based on leadership qualities (masculine) or complaining (feminine) to name just two types of perceptions. As often happens in society, women are judged by their looks, and men by their actions. While not an absolute assessment of cultural values, the participants' perceptions of *Survivor* underline a trend within dominant ideology.

Another interesting aspect of the Q study results for the men concerns the correlations between factors. The factors are themselves distinct, but the interpretation was difficult because of the high correlations as depicted in Table 4. A pattern emerged (especially within Factors A, B and D) in which the most masculine men were relatively consistent. However, when the sorters were asked to place men on the most feminine end of the scale there were fewer consensus statements (or contestants). The lowest of the statistically significant correlations exists between "The Critics & The Producers" and "The Guiding Light" factors. This low correlation is created because of the most feminine portion of the scale and not necessarily the most masculine side of the scale. Therefore it can be understood from these findings that participants found it more problematic to sort these men as exhibiting feminine characteristics, whereas their notions of masculinity for these men were more resolute.

The images used (see Appendix) for this study were a possible limitation. The images within each season had the same look (whether it was a red background, an action shot pulled from the episode or a modeled pose) which allowed the sorters to associate contestants with others in the same season. However, across seasons there was not a universal way to create an image for each contestant. In defense of the method used, each contestant's image was pulled from either the CBS.com website or the program's opening credits. All images were manufactured by the producers of *Survivor*. Some images were more recognizable and others looked too clean in comparison to how they appeared on the show. For example the image of Leann (image #44 in the Appendix) was difficult for many respondents to recognize because in the episode she never struck such a provocative pose. Because of this people might have placed her as more feminine. This limitation did not seem to have affected the results because memory recall was high enough with the strong associations on the two extreme sides of the Q-sort scale (*most masculine* and *most feminine*); participants were able to recognize the characters that they felt were the most masculine and most feminine without any trouble.

One interesting point in the questionnaire responses during the Q study was that participants associated contestants with their occupations. This could lead to a very informative study about American culture in general in the way we attach a narrative or a stereotype to someone based on his or her occupation. For example, Greg in season one was listed as an "Ivy League Student," not just a college student, so this designation further qualified his status. Surely this was done to evoke some kind of preconceived notion about Greg's character. Perhaps instead it was a way for us to explain or foretell future behaviors. Either way by placing a person's occupation underneath their name the producers are reinforcing other elements of their personality that might not be otherwise obvious given their situation. This effect is not exclusive to *Survivor* and would be worthy of further inquiry due to the way the producers position the audience to identify each person with their respective occupation.

Age is another area that is worthy of more research. As was evident in the factors from the Q study, the age of the contestants plays a part in the way that audiences perceive people on these types of reality shows. This is especially the case when assessing a show such as *Survivor* where there are rigorous challenges that require physical and mental strength. In fact, it is such a contested area that in season 12 the contestants were separated into four tribes based on biological sex and age.

However, age did not seem to be a factor within the participant sample. There seemed to be no effect of a sorter's age on the results. For each factor there was a mix of those 18-34 and those over the age of 35. This indicates that certain perceptions are not based on a generational divide. Here is another area in which further research could examine how the age of an audience member effects the formation of gender identity of characters/contestants in other programs.

Reality television's influence on society can be seen throughout the programming schedule of almost every major network and cable station. Since the characters used for such programming are everyday volunteers chosen to participate, it is important to understand the myriad of ways gender identity is perceived and performed. In doing so, we might be better positioned to understand the effects such programming has on dominant ideology and vice versa. Regardless of the varying degrees of reality the viewer allows for when engaging with reality television, the use of actual citizens, not paid actors, allows for representations that are more relatable than hired

professionals. Therefore, it could be problematic if these more realistic characters offer only stereotyped representations of gender.

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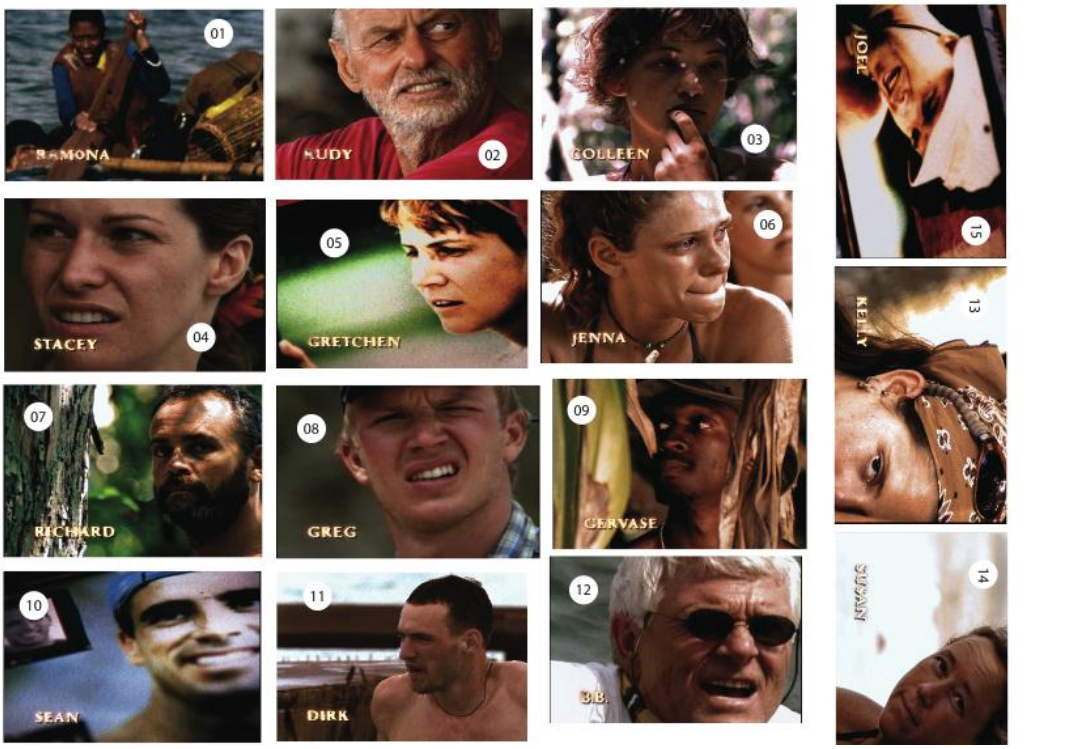
Appendix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