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## Parasocial relationships with celebrities: An illusion of intimacy with mediated friends

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PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH CELEBRITIES:  
AN ILLUSION OF INTIMACY  
WITH MEDIATED FRIENDS

by

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Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for

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**Thesis Approval**  
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Parasocial Relationships With Celebrities: An Illusion of Intimacy

With Mediated Friends


is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of


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## ABSTRACT

### **Parasocial Relationships with Celebrities: An Illusion of Intimacy With Mediated Friends**

by

Amanda R. Laken

Dr. Anthony Ferri, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor of Journalism and Mass Media  
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This research looked at parasocial interactions among college students. The study looked at the differences in gender and parasocial interaction, ethnicity/race and parasocial interaction, and the type of entertainment the celebrity was in and parasocial interaction. The research looked at celebrities as themselves and not as the characters they play as previous studies have. The research consisted of a revised parasocial interaction scale along with basic demographic questions. Although there have been studies examining levels of worship among different celebrities, they have been no correlations or differences stated concerning parasocial interactions. In addition, there has been no previous research stating the differences among ethnic/racial groups and parasocial interactions. Research on gender differences has yielded inconclusive results. This study found the difference in gender and parasocial interaction to be significant. However, ethnicity/race and the type of entertainment the celebrity was in were not significant in relation to parasocial interaction.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	4
Significance.....	5
Parasocial Interaction.....	6
Celebrity.....	9
Summary .....	12
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	13
Summary .....	29
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	31
Scale Selection.....	32
Research Questions.....	33
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS .....	34
Scale Distribution .....	34
Demographics.....	35
Findings.....	35
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	39
Further Research.....	43
Limitations .....	44
Conclusion: How Celebrity May Affect American Culture .....	44
APPENDIX I Summary of Scales in Literature Review .....	49
APPENDIX II Original and Edited Parasocial Interaction Scales .....	51
APPENDIX III Survey Used in Research .....	53
APPENDIX IV Individual Means and Standard Deviations for Parasocial Interaction Scale Items .....	56
APPENDIX V Complete List of Chosen Celebrities .....	57

APPENDIX VI Internal Review Board Approval Form .....	65
REFERENCES.....	69
VITA.....	73



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

There have always been famous people in the world and, “It has often been said that movie stars are the royalty of America,” (Gabler, 1998, p. 174). However, it seems that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people are more curious and captivated by celebrities.

Schopenhauer (1851) wrote, “Riches, one may say, are like sea water: the more you drink, the thirstier you become; and the same is true of fame,” (p.37). Celebrity will be discussed later, but it is important to look at the increase in interest.

Celebrity coverage doubled from 1980 to 2003 (McCafferty, 2005). The Project for Excellence in Journalism assessed 3,760 reports on nightly news programs and found that celebrity journalism, combined with human-interest stories and scandals, saw an increase of 27.6 % from the year 1977 to 1997 (cited in Peterson, 1998). In addition, “*Time* and *Newsweek* were seven times as likely to having the same cover story as *People* magazine” in 1997 compared to 1977 (Peterson, D8). One reason for this change was due to news media attempts at making news more relevant (Peterson).

According to the Fas-Fax report released by the Audit Bureau of Circulations, celebrity magazines saw an increase in circulation in the first six months of 2004 (cited in Fine, 2004, p. 30). *US Weekly*’s newsstand sales increased by 47.3 %, *In Touch*’s sales rose 73.6 % and *People* magazine sales rose 3.3 % during the same time period (Fine). These three magazines deal primarily with celebrity news stories. In addition to celebrity

magazines reporting an increase in sales, other magazines saw an increase in the coverage of celebrities. Celebrities appeared on almost half of all American magazine covers during 2004 (McCafferty, 2005).

Newsstand sales alone on magazines such as *People*, *Star*, *Us Weekly*, *In Touch Weekly* and *Life & Style* equal \$25 million a week, totaling more than \$1.3 billion a year. The television show *Entertainment Tonight* averages about 7 million viewers a day. That number increases to more than 100 million viewers a week when *The Insider*, *Inside Edition*, *Access Hollywood* and *Extra!* are all combined (Tapper and Morris, 2005).

During the first six months of 2007 compared to the first six months of 2006, *Time* magazine saw a 17 % decline, dropping from 4.1 million to 3.4 million in circulation. However, the celebrity magazine, *OK!*, saw a 54 % increase, selling more than 809,000 copies an issue. *US Weekly* also saw an increase (Perez-Pena, 2007). According to "State of the News Media 2006," a report released by Journalism.org (2006), *People* magazine had an average circulation of 3.5 million in 1999. That same report stated that in 2004, *People's* average circulation was 3.7 million.

The Pew Research Center (2007) explored which news stories Americans were most interested in. The survey found

Paris Hilton's brief but memorable stint in jail became a national news story earlier this summer. During the first week in June, when she was briefly released from jail and then sent back, 4% of the national news was devoted to the story and 12% of the American public said the Hilton saga was the story they were following more closely than any other. (Summary of Findings, para. 5)

Another story the survey examined was the death of Anna Nicole. “During the two days immediately following [Anna Nicole] Smith's death, nearly a quarter of the news from all sectors (24%) was devoted to this story” (The Pew Research Center, 2007, Summary of Findings, para. 5).

With these increases in magazine circulation and celebrity television shows, it is important to understand the audiences' relationship with celebrities. Over the years, and especially in the last ten years, celebrity presence has increased in the media. With increased coverage, it is important to further research the areas and culture surrounding celebrity and how it affects the audience.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the differences among audience relationships with celebrities using the parasocial interaction theory. Parasocial interaction theory proposes that viewers form relationships with celebrities they admire through media just as they form relationships in real life.

This research looked at three different variables in relation to parasocial interaction, which are gender, ethnicity/race and the type of entertainment business the celebrity was in. Previous parasocial studies have examined media characters. This study looked at the celebrities as themselves and not as characters in television shows. Celebrity encompasses a large layer of groups and will be better defined later.

## Research Questions

The goal of this research was to examine the parasocial relationships between audiences' and celebrities. A particular type of celebrity was not chosen because parasocial interactions are based on prior experience with a media figure. Presenting or forcing a choice of a celebrity who respondents might not be familiar with may skew results of the survey. However, by allowing the respondent to choose their own favorite celebrity, higher results may also occur (this idea is according to Rubin, R.B. and McHugh, 1987).

This study looked at several factors of parasocial interaction. First, the study looked to see if one type of celebrity yielded a higher parasocial interaction level than other types of celebrity. Second, the study looked at ethnic/racial differences in parasocial levels. This has not been mentioned in prior research. Although research has been done in other countries regarding the theory, there have not been any associations as to if one ethnicity/race has had higher tendencies than others. Last, the differences in gender were examined in which previous research has had conflicting results. The researcher looked at the following questions:

Research Question 1: What differences are there between the intensity of parasocial interaction and gender?

Research Question 2: Are there differences among ethnic/race and the intensity of parasocial interaction?

Research Question 3: Does one type of celebrity yield a higher parasocial interaction level over other types?

## Significance

This study added to the current literature on celebrities and expanded on the literature on audience and media relationships. According to Epstein (2005), one perceived opinion about Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that the culture cares about two things: money and celebrity. The study of celebrity is important because celebrity is a commercial culture at work and celebrity reflects the “directions American democratic life has been taking” (Gamson, 1994, p. 8). It is important to understand the relationship audiences have with celebrities because of the possible influence celebrities have on everyday lives.

In his book, *Imaginary Social Worlds*, Caughey (1984) explained how Americans are expected to know about media figures, in the way some other cultures know about gods and spirits. The importance that American culture places on media figures is demonstrated during World War II, when interrogation questions about media figures were designed to test American affiliation. For example, “Who plays first base for the Philadelphia Phillies?” (Caughey, p. 31). Even in today’s society, psychiatric interviews will often ask about media figures, for example, “Name the last four presidents,” (Caughey, p. 31). Knowledge of such material is necessary for interaction with others. “Pseudo mutual acquaintances of this kind often provide American strangers in airplanes, taxicabs, or bars with the primary basis for socializing” (Caughey, p. 33).

In *Self-Exposure*, the scholar Ponce de Leon (2002) believed celebrity was constructed by “new values and beliefs that were integral to this process of ‘modernization,’” (p. 13). Fame was structured by values that “altered the ways we think about individuals and social order,” (Ponce de Leon, 2002, p. 13). However, with so

many stimuli, it has been suggested that a culture would not see the difference between reality and the illusion of reality (Baudrillard cited in Henderson, 2005).

One effect of celebrity, “To a greater or lesser degree, we have internalized them, unconsciously made them a part of our consciousness, just as is they were in fact, friends,” (Schickel, 1985, p.4). Some scholars described this relationship more similar to communion or a relationship as some describe with God (Gabler, 1998, p. 174). Celebrities are like modern day priests because they offer the public ideas on ideal personality types. When celebrities sell us commodities, they are in fact telling the public how they should live their life (Derakhshani, 2007).

#### Parasocial Interaction

The characteristics of parasocial interaction were described by Horton and Wohl in a 1956 study which was one of the first to use the term parasocial interaction. The scholars described the concept as the relationship that audience members had with characters they interacted with through some form of media, mainly theatre, radio and television. Horton and Wohl believed that the audience response was more than just observing; they were participating and interacting with the actor on screen.

Horton and Wohl (1956) described the characteristics of parasocial interaction. They suggested that the audience is free to withdraw at any moment from the relationship, as well as to choose among the different relationships that are offered. However, Horton and Wohl claim that audience members cannot create new relationships. They described the relationship itself as “one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible of mutual development” (Horton and

Wohl, p. 215). They admitted that audience members may be able to make their feelings known to the performers but doing so would bring them outside the realm of parasocial interaction.

A character's "personae" is a part of the parasocial concept. The personae – the fictional character – of an actor are the ones whom the audience develops the parasocial relationship with. These fictional characters are formed into personalities, who then become celebrities. "These 'personalities,' usually, are not prominent in any of the social spheres beyond the media. They exist for their audiences only in the parasocial relation" (Horton and Wohl, 1956, p. 216). The personae are at the center of the parasocial relationship. The personae "can claim and achieve intimacy with what are literally crowds of strangers" (p. 216). Audiences know the personae as they would their own friends. Audiences recognize and know the performers "through direct observation and interpretation of his appearance, his gestures and voice, his conversation and conduct in a variety of situations" (p. 216). The performer also offers a continuing relationship; his appearance is regular and "integrated into the routines of daily life" (p. 216). Audience members share the media figure's life as though the performer is someone in their own life. Audiences "share the small episodes of his public life – and to some extent even his private life" (p. 216).

Audience members acquire a history and a set of shared experiences, which create a bond. This bond however, is "symbolized by allusions that lack meaning to the casual observer" (Horton and Wohl, 1956, p. 216). In time, the audience member, or fan, "comes to believe that he 'knows' the personae more intimately and profoundly than others do; that he 'understands' his character and appreciates his values and motives" (p.

216). However, this relationship remains one-sided. Horton and Wohl suggested that these personae create an illusion of intimacy because the relationship remains one-sided. The actor creates this illusion by treating supporting cast members as close friends. In return, the audience learns of their personae and thus feels included in the group.

Most parasocial interactions are normal and healthy (Horton and Wohl, 1956). These pseudo-interactions teach audience members about group interaction and sociability. People who are most susceptible to parasocial relationships are those who are lonely and isolated. Once a parasocial relationship crosses the line of objective reality is when Horton and Wohl consider the relationship pathological.

In parasocial relationships, the user responds as though the relationship with the media figure is real (Giles, 2002). This relationship is similar to an interpersonal social interaction but in parasocial interaction, the communication is mediated and the interaction is only one way (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000). Auter and Palmgreen believe that understanding parasocial interaction, “might provide significant insight into the audience-media relationship” (p. 79).

Klimmt, Hartmann and Schramm (2006) tried to separate the concept of parasocial interaction from that of parasocial relationship. They described interaction as “the one-sided process of media person perception during media exposure” (p. 292). The relationship is one that the viewer or audience member holds toward a media person. McDonald and Hu (2005) proposed that parasocial interaction occurs during the actual viewing of a character and that parasocial relationships occur after the observation. Caughey (1984) used the term pseudo social interaction. “People characterize unmet



media figures as if they were intimately involved with them, and in a sense they are – they engage in pseudo-social interactions with them” (p. 33).

To summarize, a parasocial interaction or parasocial relationship contains the following characteristics. First, a parasocial interaction must be mediated. This mediation can be through a variety of media, including but not limited to television, magazines, newspapers, radio and Internet. Second, the relationship is one-sided. The audience has this relationship or interaction with the celebrity or mediated figure. The celebrity does not have a relationship or interaction with the audience. Sometimes, the celebrity may break the fourth wall, but the relationship remains one-sided. Breaking the fourth wall is when a character speaks directly to the camera, making it seem as if he or she is speaking directly to the audience member. Last, and most important, the audience member forms this relationship or interaction, as though the celebrity is a friend, mimicking real life friendships.

### Celebrity

Andy Warhol said, “In the future, everyone will be world famous for fifteen minutes.” In the twenty-first century, it seems as though famous people are everywhere. Many scholars have tried to define fame and celebrity. Boorstin (1987) in his book, *The Image*, wrote one of the most widely used definitions of celebrity. According to Boorstin, “a celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness,” (p. 57). This definition stems from his idea that a celebrity is a pseudo-event, which is one that Boorstin described as an event created for the sole purpose of being covered by the media.

In *The Frenzy of Renown*, Braudy (1986) gave a detailed description of the history of celebrity and defined fame using four factors, which included the person, the accomplishment, the publicity and posterity. Fame is an extension of society; everyone wants to be recognized for his or her own talent, however, some do so more publicly than others. "Societies always generate a number of people willing and eager to live at least part of their lives in the public eye," (Braudy, p.5).

Scholars have defined celebrity a number of different ways. Caughey (1984) briefly described celebrities as those who appear in "television, movies, radio, books, magazines, and newspapers. Within this group will be many..." (p. 32). According to Turner, G. (2004), a public figure is transformed into a celebrity once the media focuses on his or her private life instead of their public role and he also believed that the celebrity represents a social function to its followers. Spitzberg and Cupach (2007), in their survey, defined celebrity as "the fame associated with any person who is in the public eye" (from survey). They included a wide variety of public figures ranging from musicians to news anchors, to criminals and politicians.

New media did, and will continue, to change the definition of celebrity (Ponce de Leon, 1992). "By virtue of their ability to make public figures visible and familiar to millions of people who have never encountered them in the flesh, it is the news media that literally creates celebrity," (Ponce de Leon, 2002, p. 5). In *Intimate Strangers*, Schickel (1985) wrote that television enabled viewers to learn the faces on the screen just as viewers learn the faces of family and friends. However, Schickel wrote that until the beginning of the twentieth century, there was no such thing as celebrity. He

acknowledged that some people behaved in a manner in which society might now call celebrity, but the term itself was never used until recently.

In the past, people were defined as either successful or famous. Success was something that set a person apart. Fame could be managed, and followed success, but someone may choose whether or not to be famous. Entertainers were referred to as phenomena; however, these people did not receive praise until they proved to have talent (Schickel, 1985). In an attempt to separate fame and celebrity, Epstein (2005) acknowledged that the two are not mutually exclusive. Fame, he wrote, is something one earns while celebrity, he suggested, was something the individual cultivated. Someone could achieve fame in his or her own right and not be a celebrity. On the other hand, a celebrity could have little talent or fame (Epstein). Gabler (1998) shared Schickel's and Epstein's idea of fame and celebrity as well. Gabler wrote that fame was earned through accomplishments while celebrity was more of how one was perceived. He argued that because celebrity is based on public awareness, it was only natural for show business and celebrity to become intertwined. Show business offered the visibility needed to be a celebrity. The only ability or talent a celebrity must possess, is the ability to get their name in the media (Gabler, p. 156).

Therefore, this study will look at celebrity using a general definition. Since the study was looking to see if one type of celebrity yielded more parasocial interaction than others, a celebrity was considered any mass media figure that a respondent idolized. This aided in the "control of parasocial interaction measurement error by insuring that the respondents were familiar with a character" (Kerlinger cited in Rubin, R.B. & McHugh, 1987, p. 290). The study looked at individuals and not bands or television characters.

The study was looking at the celebrity as the individual and not as the character he or she played on screen. This does not include non-media figures. In order to be a celebrity, one has to be visible in the mainstream media.

### Summary

According to Gamson (1994), people who admire celebrities have a “long list of weaknesses” (p. 141). These weaknesses are “mistaking appealing manufactured images for appealing reality,” and “simply being addicts hooked on fame’s contact high” (p. 141). Gamson hinted that those who admire celebrities do so to fill a void in their lives which echoed Horton and Wohl’s (1956) idea that parasocial interaction is correlated with loneliness and isolation. Gabler (1998) in his book, *Life the Movie*, argued that

Not only are celebrities the protagonists of our news, the subject of our daily discourse and the repositories of our values, but they have also embedded themselves so deeply in our consciousness that many individuals profess feeling closer to, and more passionate about, them than about their own primary relationships (p. 7).

Celebrities have become a natural part of our lives and audiences form relationships with them. These relationships are described as parasocial relationships or parasocial interactions. This research examined parasocial interactions in hopes of better understanding the audiences’ relationship with celebrities.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars who have previously researched parasocial interaction have come from a variety of fields including media studies, sociology and psychology, and have looked at parasocial interactions using a variety of variables. Researchers have studied newscasters, comedians, television personalities, reality show contestants and soap opera characters, and their effect on audiences. However, no one has studied the celebrity as an individual and not as a character.

Audiences are different today compared to audiences of famous people in the past (Schickel, 1985.) Celebrity today is based on a false intimacy provided by the media. In the past, there was a reality that separated audiences from celebrities but technology is a major factor that changed this. Shakespeare in the sixteenth century wrote that true fame occurred only when recognized after death (Braudy, 1986, p. 13). In terms of fame in America, one key point was the photograph, which allowed people to see and recognize images. The thought was that, "The emotional intimacy that the photograph helped foster between the famous and their audience was also reflected in the movement away from former standards of how prominence was conveyed," (Braudy, p. 494).

These new levels of prominence also lead to a new definition of success. "Celebrity became a measure of success in a culture preoccupied with personality," (Henderson, 2005, p. 9). Articles featured in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Colliers*

from 1901 to 1914 featured biographies of people from politics, business and professionals 74% of the time. However, from 1922 to 1941, half came from the entertainment business, including sports, music, and film (Henderson, p. 9). By the 1920s, film had helped to increase the presence and interest in famous people. During the Depression, Americans became fascinated even more with larger than life celebrities and the magazine *Photoplay* began featuring articles about the stars' personal lives (Henderson, p. 10).

In addition to the photograph and print, radio also played an important role in the formation of the celebrity culture. According to Henderson (2005), "entertainment and information were available at the touch of the dial," (p. 10). This would be an important precursor to the celebrity of the twenty-first century. Henderson wrote that cable led to the 24/7 coverage of celebrity and helped to transform celebrity which echoed Schickel's (1985) idea that technology changed how audiences perceive celebrities. Henderson suggested that earlier celebrity focused on a broad inclusion while contemporary celebrity focused on a more narrow audience.

The focus of the audience has led to more promotion of celebrities. Gamson (1994) explained in his book, *Claims to Fame*, how a celebrity in America is purely manufactured and marketed to the American public. He believed that a celebrity is the creation of production teams and that there does not have to be any true talent behind the person. Gamson's thought that a celebrity could be created for the purpose of marketing echoed Boorstin's (1987) idea of pseudo-events, events or people created solely for consumption by audiences.

Scholars have looked at how parasocial interaction may influence people's behavior and have tried to show how parasocial interaction affects celebrity fans. McCutcheon, Lange and Houran (2002) looked at how intense fan identification could be and developed the celebrity worship scale. They suggested that as audiences become increasingly more aware of celebrity conduct, fame not only affects the celebrity, but the celebrities' fans as well. The scholars believed a normal parasocial relationship could exist for younger audience members. However, for some adults, celebrity worship could increase instead of decrease with age. The scholars hoped that the celebrity worship scale would help predict possible indications of worship.

Three levels of celebrity worship were found (McCutcheon, Lange and Houran, 2002). The scholars found that low levels of celebrity worship consisted of individualist behavior, described as individually watching, reading or learning about celebrities. Another level of celebrity worship was characterized as social activities with others and included such activities as watching, hearing or talking about celebrities. The highest level of worship presented two different depictions. One was that individuals identify with their favorite celebrities' successes and failures. The other depiction was one of obsessive or extreme behavior. Their survey showed a higher worship among music and sports celebrities than actors and other celebrities. Men also scored higher on the scale than women.

Continuing the research on celebrities was a study which explored celebrity pursuit activities among college students (Spitzberg and Cupach, 2007). The researchers' intent was to study the association between parasocial interaction needs, celebrity worship, entertainment needs, media connectedness and obsessive celebrity pursuit

activities. Three major findings were found from the 76.4% of respondents who said they had an idol. The first was that even though the media favor a small portion of celebrities, audiences have a considerable diversity of favorites. The scholars believed that this could mean even a minor celebrity could extract attention from audience members. Second, the scholars found that there were no major differences in gender in terms of celebrity worship or parasocial interaction. Last, the scholars found that the celebrity worship scale was an extremely reliable scale in predicting intense fan behaviors.

The audience-persona interaction scale, which was used in the previous study, was developed in order to have a new measurement of parasocial interaction (Auter and Palmgreen, 2000). The scholars hoped to address the development of parasocial interaction over time and to develop a multi-dimensional scale that would “tap all possible sub-dimensions of the construct” (p. 81). The scholars tested the reliability and validity in two different studies. Although several media figures may contribute more to the parasocial theory, Auter and Palmgreen chose to study characters in comedy television. The scholars did not state what other forms may contribute more, but did state three reasons why they selected this genre. Comedy was selected because sitcoms feature recurring characters that exist as a set of interacting people, plot lines usually lead to the development of main characters and the scholars wanted to expand on parasocial research and therefore did not study previous variables such as newscasters and soap opera characters. Their preliminary survey was administered after viewing an episode of “Murphy Brown.” The researchers chose this comedy show because they felt the characters provided both a nuclear family and a group of interacting co-workers and friends.



Auter and Palmgreen (2000) had no hypothesis and used a principle components factor analysis. The original 47-item scale was reduced to 22-items which were then split into four sub-categories: identification with favorite character, interest in favorite character, group identification/interaction and favorite character problem solving abilities. "A Pearson correlation analysis of the four sub-scales and the total index support the proposition that these are four separate dimensions of an overall PSI index," (Auter and Palmgreen, p. 83). In addition, they found that respondents had a stronger parasocial relationship when they reported higher levels of media exposure.

According to Auter and Palmgreen (2000), a desire to interact with individuals develops from identifying with a person, interest in that person, and liking the problem solving abilities of that person. They believed the audience-persona scale addressed all of the individual aspects of parasocial interaction, which they felt was important in order to look at "other variables involved in the media consumption process" (p. 87). Television viewing and group identification were the most highly correlated and characters' problem solving skills was also significantly correlated with television viewing. Interest and identifying, feeling a part of the television show's family, with a character were not strongly correlated with television viewing.

In one of the only other experiments to examine parasocial relationships, Auter (1992) assessed Rubin, A.M., Perse and Powell's 1985 20-item parasocial interaction scale by examining the difference between a comedy where characters break the fourth wall and where they do not break the fourth wall. When a character breaks the fourth wall, he or she is recognizing the audience by speaking to them. He found that subjects

who viewed the comedy where actors broke the fourth wall had higher levels of parasocial interaction.

He came to this conclusion after showing two versions of *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*. One group watched unedited versions of both shows while the other group watched an unedited version of the *Gracie Allen Show* and one where George Burns' character was edited out when he broke the fourth wall. Although the scholar did not state why these shows were chosen, besides providing the act of breaking the fourth wall, conceivably the shows were selected because most people would not watch these shows and the basis for establishing a parasocial relationship would be more even. After viewing the shows, students filled out a revised version of the 20-item parasocial interaction scale and reported who their favorite character was. The parasocial questions were revised to fit the respondents' views of the characters from the shows they just viewed. Parasocial interaction scores were high when respondents saw the act of breaking the fourth wall and even higher if they said George was their favorite character.

The first parasocial interaction scale was created by Rubin, A.M., Perse and Powell (1985). The 20-item parasocial interaction scale examined television news along with perceived loneliness. This original parasocial scale is one that many other scholars have used (please see appendix for list). The scholars chose to study local television news because of the applicability to parasocial relationships. Most local newscasts air two or three times a day, and since the scholars believed that "consistent presentation" was a key component of parasocial interaction, they believed local newscasts would be a perfect case study. In addition, local newscasters often talk to the audience, once again breaking the fourth wall as the shows in the previous study also examined.

The scholars found that perceived loneliness and alternatives to real life communication were significant and negatively correlated but loneliness and the use of television when lonely was significant and positively correlated. There was no significant relationship between loneliness and parasocial interaction, however, parasocial interaction and use of television when subjects reported to be lonely was significant and positively correlated. The scholars assumed that because of the sample studied, the group was not a lonely group and this would have affected the outcome of the study. They pointed out that even though loneliness was not significant in this study, lonely and non-lonely people watch television differently.

There was also no relationship between parasocial interaction and alternatives to interpersonal communication. Parasocial interaction was correlated positively with perceived realism and was also affected by viewing duration and level of viewing news. The scholars concluded that this might mean that parasocial relationships are formed from active bonding with characters that are perceived as real and similar to the viewer, instead of making up for loneliness.

Rubin, A.M. and Perse (1987) continued to study parasocial interaction, this time with soap opera characters. They found correlations with parasocial interaction and perceived realism, passing time, viewing motivation, intention and attention. They also found that watching for a social function did not correlate with parasocial interaction.

The scholars found that parasocial interaction was related to watching for voyeurism, information and escape. They also found that perceived realism of the soap opera was positively related to parasocial interaction. They believed that these gratifications showed a personal involvement, similar to real life gratification. While

those who were socially motivated (seeking some “social utility gratification”) discussed characters and plots with others after watching, those who were motivated by the attractiveness of the characters were found to be parasocially interacting. Rubin, A.M. and Perse (1987) concluded that it was not those who watched more television that had higher parasocial interaction, but those who were more active viewers.

The original parasocial interaction scales allowed other scholars to study characters on other shows as well. Grubbs (1997) examined parasocial relationships using the television program, *The Real World*, as a base. One episode of *The Real World* was shown to the respondents with the commercials edited out. The researcher looked at frequency of viewing, attraction to a character, parasocial relationships, perceived realism of the show, communication choice and self-disclosure. He found that the perceived realism and attraction to character correlated positively and significantly with parasocial interaction. There was no significance in amount of viewing time with parasocial relationships.

Although Grubbs (1997) specifically studied *The Real World*, many scholars chose to study television personalities. Studies have looked at different aspects such as establishing the parasocial relationship, developing the parasocial relationship, and the dissolve of the parasocial relationship.

Turner, J.R. (1993) examined the “relationship of self-esteem and interpersonal homophily with the development of parasocial interaction” (p. 443). Turner, J.R. was not interested in why people turn to certain media figures for such relationships, as past research had, but instead wanted to examine what actually lead the viewer to establish the relationship and how low self-esteem mattered in parasocial relationships. Looking at

homophily, the similarities between two people, and self-esteem, the scholar explained that low self-esteem contributed to less real life communication.

The scholar found that attitude homophily was the strongest predictor for parasocial interaction. He also found appearance and background to be significant indicators of parasocial interaction. Further, he found a significant correlation between positive self-evaluation and parasocial interactions with comedians, which was the most common favorite television personality.

Turner, J.R. (1993) assumed that people might see newscasters as having similar backgrounds, and therefore have more similarities, thus leading to a higher parasocial interaction. High parasocial interaction with comedians and positive self-evaluation he believed was due to comedians being able to make people feel better and emphasize good feelings. The scholar concluded that those who were less likely to socialize with others were more likely to have parasocial interaction and found that the length of time one spent viewing television had no effect on the level of parasocial interaction.

Rubin, R.B. and McHugh (1987) looked at the development of parasocial relationships and proposed that parasocial relationships develop from “social and task attraction to parasocial interaction to a sense of relationship importance” (p. 279). The social dimension was described by the scholars as physical attraction and/or having similar attitudes with the characters. The physical dimension was described as the physical attraction between the respondent and the television performer. Last, the task dimension was defined as the camera angle as well as the credibility and social attractiveness of the character. The scholars admit that all three variables intertwine with each other.

Rubin, R.B. and McHugh (1987) administered a scale where respondents chose their own favorite television performer. They found significance in terms of length of viewing and parasocial interaction. However, “parasocial interaction correlated significantly with social, physical and task” (Rubin, R.B., & McHugh, p. 286-287). Relationship development importance was not significant with social, physical or task but was significant with parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction was strongly related to task and social attraction towards the television personality. The scholars concluded that this further supports the idea that “media relationships can be seen as functional alternatives to interpersonal relationships” (p. 288) and that social attraction is highly important in a parasocial relationship.

Cohen (2003) examined what people felt like when a parasocial relationship dissolved. Respondents were asked to select a favorite television character and answered a variety of questions. In an ANOVA test, parasocial breakup was used as a dependent variable. This resulted in a finding that age played a role in the intensity but not gender. The second ANOVA featured parasocial interaction. The findings were reversed; age was not a factor but gender was. Cohen (2003) found that “Gender was the most important predictor of parasocial interaction intensity, but age was found to predict breakup anxiety,” (p. 200).

In addition to the different stages of parasocial interaction with a character, studies have looked at different attachment styles and parasocial interaction. Cole and Leets (1999) looked at parasocial interactions and attachment styles with favorite television personalities. The majority of favorite television personalities were characters on sitcoms (67.6%) followed by characters on dramas (14.9%) and movie stars (5.4%).

There were no gender differences in relation to parasocial interaction. The scholars found that attachment styles were related to parasocial interaction. “Anxious-ambivalents were the most likely to engage in parasocial interaction whereas Avoidant individuals were the least likely to do so” (Cole and Leets, 1999, p. 506). Secure individuals had moderate parasocial interaction; however, the more distrusting secure individuals were, the more likely they were to engage in parasocial interactions.

Two studies have focused on parasocial interaction and perception of self. McDonald and Hu (2005) studied whether characteristics of oneself and perceptions of the external world would influence parasocial interaction and interpersonal interaction. They used television characters as a variable and respondents were allowed to choose their own, but were limited to a newscaster, a television host or a sitcom character. The researchers did find a significant correlation between perceived reality and parasocial interaction. However, there was no significant correlation between parasocial interaction and discrepancy between sociability and social interaction.

Also examining self perception, but not in relation to parasocial interaction were Boon and Lomore (2001). They examined to what extent celebrities influence sense of identity and self-worth in young adults. They found that the 85% of celebrity idols were male. They also found that 33.9% were musicians and 32.3% were actors. The scholars found that 58.7% of the respondents said their idols had influenced their own attitudes and beliefs. In addition, 25.3% said that they had changed their personality to be more similar to their idols, with work ethic and morality being the top two character traits reportedly changed.

Studies that have looked at parasocial interaction but not examined television characters have examined talk-radio hosts and web site creators. Rubin, A.M. and Step (2000) studied parasocial interaction with call-in talk radio shows.

The scholars looked at the listening motivation and interpersonal attraction as possible predictors of why people would listen to talk radio. The scholars used the 10-item parasocial interaction scale to see if parasocial interaction was a predictor.

Parasocial interaction positively predicted talk radio exposure; however, interpersonal attraction did not. Those who listened for information and scored high on the parasocial scale the scholars found that it positively predicted respondents obtaining credible information from talk radio. Rubin, A.M. and Step (2000) also found that parasocial interaction and information viewing motive, combined with task attraction and to pass time or habit, positively predicted the feeling that talk radio hosts' impacted attitudes on social issues. In addition, parasocial interaction and information viewing motivation positively predicted behavioral change in respondents. Respondents said they were more likely to follow the talk radio hosts' advice.

They concluded that parasocially interacting with the talk radio hosts resulted in planning and frequent listening. Parasocial interaction also played a role in whether respondents believed the host was important, credible and influenced attitudes and even behavior. They concluded that developed parasocial relationships increased the need to listen more often.

In a study with parasocial relationships and celebrity web site creators, Beatty (2006) wanted to see why people created and maintained celebrity fan websites. He predicted that because some fans go beyond the means of a normal fascination with



celebrities and create websites devoted to them, they might have more parasocial interaction tendencies. These tendencies are increased because web site creators think that they have even more interaction with that celebrity, even though they do not and this perceived relationship creates the parasocial relationship.

Musician site developers rated the possibility of interacting with other fans higher than the actor site creators as a reason for creating the website. Musician site builders also had more interactive content than the actor sites. In terms of parasocial interaction, Beatty (2006) concluded that web site creators created the websites as an interest in following the happenings of a celebrity but the creators were not likely to feel as if they shared the same beliefs or attitudes of the celebrity. Celebrity site creators had strong interest in getting information out to connect with other fans that feel that they may have something in common with the celebrity. Beatty concluded that fan communication and giving information were strong predictors of high parasocial relationships among web site creators.

Most of the studies conducted have been on college aged people or adults. There have been few studies that have looked at children and their level of parasocial interaction. Giles and Maltby (2004) suggested that celebrity attachments that are shared with others might serve as an extended social network. "Recent research on celebrity interest has found two discrete functions of celebrity attachments: a social entertainment function and an intense personal function" (Maltby, Houran, Lange, Asche, & McCutcheon, 2002 cited in Giles & Maltby, 2004, p. 815). Giles and Maltby presented a study that explored the link between adolescent autonomy and parasocial relationships with celebrities. Their hypothesis was that there should be an increase in celebrity

attachment as the influence from parents' decreases. In other words, as young people became more independent and relied more on themselves as opposed to their parents, they would become more attracted towards celebrities. A high level of attachment to peers was a predictor of positive celebrity interest and strong attachment with parents was a predictor of negative celebrity interest (Giles and Maltby). The scholars also found that overall predictors for attitudes towards celebrities were positive when there was high emotional autonomy.

In a survey administered to children, Halpern (2007) wanted to examine children's thoughts and ideas towards fame and pop culture. Halpern studied gender and ethnicity/race, but did not study either one in relation to parasocial interaction.

Children who watched entertainment shows or read entertainment magazines regularly were more likely to believe that they could be famous. Halpern (2007) found that 47% of African American and 27% of Caucasian children believed their families would appreciate them more if they were famous. The children who watched more television also said that fame would help to improve their lives and believed that their family would love them more if they were famous. Boys wanted to be famous almost as much as being intelligent and girls actually chose fame over intelligence. The study also found that 42% of African American and 21% of Caucasian children chose fame over intelligence, strength and beauty. In addition, 15% of the boys and 17% of the girls who reported watching one hour or less of television a day said they would choose fame over intelligence, strength and beauty compared to 29% of boys and 37% of girls who watched five hours or more of television a day.

Overall, 17.4% of girls would rather eat dinner with Jennifer Lopez compared to

16.8% for Jesus Christ and 15.8% for Paris Hilton and 50 Cent. The lowest of the choices were President Bush and Albert Einstein. In addition, boys who reported feeling lonely opted to eat with 50 Cent and girls who reported feeling lonely more often opted for Paris Hilton. When children reported feeling appreciated, they more often selected Jesus Christ. Children who reported feeling lonely sought fame as a solution. Boys were more likely to report feeling lonely and depressed and believed fame would make them happier while girls believed that becoming famous would help them make more friends and be more popular at school. Children reported the best thing they believed fame would bring was the friendships they believed they would make (Halpern, 2007).

The survey also asked the children what job they would prefer to have. Forty-three percent of girls chose being a personal assistant to a celebrity, as opposed to 23.7% choosing to be president of Harvard or Yale. In addition, 23.7% selected being a US Senator, 13.6% a navy seal and 9.8% selected being chief of a major company, such as General Motors. In addition, 67% of girls who reported getting bad grades said that wanted to be personal assistants. When both genders who reported having bad grades were considered, the number rose to 80%. In addition, 29% of boys and 37% of girls who watched more than five hours of television a day said they would want to be a personal assistant. Halpern (2007) also found that children felt that celebrities helped them to forget problems and lighten their mood. Boys who felt lonely were twice as likely and girls three times as likely to having parasocial relationships, although the scholar did not mention how this was measured.

Hoffner (1996) interviewed children between the ages of 7 and 12 about their favorite television characters and used the 20-item parasocial interaction scale. She

found that parasocial interaction was predicted by perceived intelligence and attraction. Strength was an additional factor for boys. However, for girls who chose female characters, attraction was the only significant predictor.

The scholar found that 91.1% of the boys and 52.6% of the girls chose same sex favorites. She also found that while boys had no significant difference for wishful identification, wishful identification had greater parasocial interaction for girls. Both genders saw female characters taking part in more positive behavior than male characters. Girls also saw female characters as more intelligent and attractive than male characters.

One of the first studies on parasocial interaction since Horton and Wohl's in 1956 was Levy (1979/1982) who studied parasocial relationships with television newscasters. Levy held discussions with 24 adults in Albany, New York where all participants watched news regularly and were diverse in social backgrounds. These discussions yielded a 42-item questionnaire about the uses and gratifications of the news. From the discussions, Levy concluded a possible seven indicators of parasocial relationships.

He found that parasocial relationships increased with the respondents' age. The strength of the relationship was inversely affected by education. Levy concluded that as a person's education increases, his or her social network also tends to increase and could be one reason why education has a negative correlation with the intensity of parasocial relationships. The scholar found no correlations with whether people watched news alone or with someone but did find a positive correlation with parasocial interaction and television exposure. Levy (1979/1982) believed that because parasocial interactions were based on the need to fill a social void, those with more education might not need to fill

this void. Levy concluded that the positive correlation with age might be due to the fact that as people age, the opportunity for social interaction decreases.

A majority of the respondents, 53%, had some level of parasocial interaction with newscasters (Levy, 1979/1982). He concluded that this meant parasocial interaction with television newscast members is a common experience with viewers. The most common parasocial indicator was that “newscasters are almost like friends you see every day” (Levy, p. 180). Fifty-two percent of respondents answered agree or strongly agree while only 36% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In addition, the scholar found that 48% of people said they enjoyed hearing their favorite newscaster’s voice. Eighty percent of respondents said they liked to compare their own ideas to those of the newscasters. The scholar concluded from respondents’ interview answers that parasocial relationships develop over time and that the relationship was based on a shared experience.

### Summary

Although many studies have been done, not all have had similar findings. Gender and length of viewing have been two areas where results have differed most. For example, McCutcheon, Lange and Houran (2002) found that men had the highest level of interest using the celebrity worship scale. Cohen (2003) found gender as the most important predictor of parasocial interaction but he found women having the highest degree of intensity. However, both of these contradict Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) and Cole and Leets (1999) findings that there were no gender differences found in relation to parasocial interaction.

Another contradiction in the research was length of viewing and its relation to parasocial interaction. Rubin, R.B. and McHugh (1987) and Turner, J.R. (1993) found no significance in terms of length of viewing and parasocial interaction, while Auter and Palmgreen (2000) and Levy (1979/1982) found a significant and positive correlation between length of viewing and parasocial interaction.

A common finding has been with perceived reality and parasocial interaction. Grubbs (1997), Rubin, A.M. and Perse (1987), McDonald and Hu (2005) all found higher levels of parasocial interaction when respondents had higher levels of perceived reality with characters. Attraction was also another similar finding. Turner, J.R. (1993) and Grubbs (1997) both found higher levels of parasocial interaction when attraction to the character was high.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The population studied was college students because the age group constituted a large portion of entertainment media consumers. The subjects for this study were undergraduates from various courses offered at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Permission was obtained from UNLV's Internal Review Board (#0811-2931) prior to administering the survey. Courses included introductory journalism, introductory communication and introductory sociology classes. These classes were picked based on convenience and in order to get a wide variety of views. Undergraduate coordinators and course instructors were contacted for approval to administer questionnaires during class time. Questionnaires were administered to fifteen classes during the week of January 29 to February 5, 2009. Courses included one communications course, four sociology courses and ten journalism courses resulting in 536 questionnaires.

The researcher provided a hard copy of the questionnaire for students to answer anonymously. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher and a graduate assistant during class times and at the course instructor's convenience. The research material included directions for the student to read on their own. The scale took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and was returned directly to the researcher by either the respondent or assistant. Information was available to the respondents in case further questions arose.

The surveys were anonymous, but numbered to match the information in the software for reference in case of an error and will be stored in a box. The researcher scored the respondents' answers using SPSS software. Difference tests were used to determine three relationships with regard to parasocial interactions. Parasocial interaction was determined by averaging and summing up the respondents' answers to the scaled items.

### Scale Selection

This research project used an instrument based on items from the parasocial interaction scale in order to establish parasocial relationships with three different variables. The scale consisted of revised items from the 10-item parasocial interaction scale developed by Rubin, A.M. and Perse (1987) (see appendix for original and revised scales).

The parasocial interaction scale was chosen to measure respondents' level of parasocial interaction. This scale was selected over other similar scales because it is the original and most used scale to measure parasocial interaction. The scale was revised to measure the intensity among celebrities, instead of newscasters and soap opera characters.

Rubin, A.M., Perse and Powell (1985) developed the original 20-item scale with a mean of 2.70, a standard deviation of .68, and a Cronbach alpha level of .93. In another study, Rubin, A.M. and Perse (1987) reduced the scale to 10-items. The mean was 2.67 with a standard deviation of .80 and an alpha level of .88. The 10-item scale was selected over the 20-item scale because it still provided a strong reliability while not repeating



similar questions. The scale was a Likert type scale where respondents could chose from strongly agree, agree, neither agree/disagree, disagree, strongly disagree with the answers scored from 1 to 5 accordingly. One will be the highest level of parasocial interaction which correlates with strongly agree.

The survey asked the respondents' who their favorite celebrity was and what type of entertainment that celebrity was involved in. This was used to determine what type of celebrity audiences' tend to have higher parasocial interactions with. Last, the survey included basic demographic questions. These questions included age, years in college, gender and ethnicity/race, which were based on the US census categories. The responses to gender and ethnicity/race were used to find the differences with parasocial interaction.

### Research Questions

Research Question 1: The research looked to see what differences there were between the intensity of parasocial interaction and gender. Hypothesis 1: There would be no difference in gender on the overall parasocial interaction scale.

Research Question 2: The research looked at differences between ethnicity/race and the intensity of parasocial interaction. Hypothesis 2: Ethnicity/race African Americans or Blacks would score higher on the parasocial interaction scale than Whites.

Research Question 3: The research looked to see if one type of celebrity yielded a higher parasocial interaction level over other types. Hypothesis 3: There would be a difference in the type of entertainment business the celebrity was in and parasocial interaction level. Specifically, musicians would score higher overall on the parasocial interaction scale than other celebrities.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This study looked at individual celebrities, as themselves, using the parasocial interaction theory. Specifically, this study examined the difference between gender and parasocial interaction, ethnicity/race and parasocial interaction, and the type of entertainment the celebrity was in and parasocial interaction. Based on previous studies, three hypotheses were formed. Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be no gender differences in parasocial interaction. Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be a difference in ethnicity/race and parasocial interaction. Specifically, African Americans or Blacks would have a higher parasocial interaction level than Whites. Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be a difference in the type of entertainment the celebrity was in and the level of parasocial interaction. Specifically, that musicians would have the highest level of parasocial interaction with audience members. The results showed a significant difference in gender, and no significant differences in ethnicity/race or type of entertainment the celebrity was involved in.

#### Scale Distribution

A total of 536 surveys were distributed to ten journalism courses, four sociology courses and one communications course at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. From these, 48 were not calculated into the final results for a usable sample of 488. Ten of the

questionnaires were incomplete and 11 respondents were not between the ages of 18 to 30 years old. Four of the respondents' chose celebrities that could not be verified as a real person and six respondents did not correctly select the celebrity's industry they were involved in. Six respondents chose television characters, a website or a band, which did not fit the requirement of looking at an individual person. Two respondents selected more than one answer and 6 respondents did not choose a celebrity at all. Three respondents had chosen porn stars and were not coded because it was felt that they did not take the questionnaire seriously.

### Demographics

The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 30, with a mean of 20.21 years. Those who participated consisted of 308 (63.1%) females and 180 (36.9%) males. The ethnicity/race breakdown was 263 (53.9%) Whites, 46 (9.4%) Blacks or African-Americans, 1 (.2%) American Indian and Alaska Native, 26 (5.3%) Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, 71 (14.5%) Asians, 56 (11.5%) Hispanics or Latinos, and 25 (5.1%) selected more than one category and were coded as mixed. Last, 2.16 was the average years in college ( $SD=5.19$ ), on a scale of 1 to 6 or more years.

### Findings

The 10-item parasocial scale ( $M=2.10$ ,  $SD=0.49$ ) had a Cronbach alpha level of .717 (for individual question means and standard deviations, please see appendix). Of the 488 respondents, 249 (51%) chose an actor as their favorite celebrity, 127 (26%) chose a musician, 77 (15.8%) chose an athlete and 35 (7.2%) chose other. For the

“other” category, respondents selected the president, an author, a dancer, a photographer, a producer, a newscaster, a Broadway performer, models, comedians, reality television show persons, magicians, and talk show and talk radio hosts. Overall, a wide variety of individual celebrities were chosen. Of the 263 celebrities chosen, Britney Spears was the most selected celebrity with 18 (3.7%). Second was Angelina Jolie with 15 (3.1%). They were followed by Will Smith, 13 (2.7%), Johnny Depp, 11 (2.3%) and Beyonce, Kobe Bryant, Jennifer Aniston with 10 (2.1%) each. These seven celebrities accounted for 87 (18.1%) of the total celebrities (please see appendix for a complete list).

The first research question looked at the differences in parasocial interaction and gender. There was a significant difference between women ( $M=2.06$ ,  $SD=0.47$ ) and men ( $M=2.18$ ,  $SD=0.59$ ) and parasocial interaction. The difference in gender,  $t(488)=-2.26$ ,  $p<.05$ , showed that women have a higher parasocial interaction level than men. Therefore, the hypothesis that gender would not be significant in relation to parasocial interaction was not supported.

The data were divided according to gender to determine what type of celebrity men and women had a parasocial interaction with. Females were more likely to chose an actor/actress, 84 (46.7%), over the other types of celebrities. Second, females chose 54 (30%) sports athletes, third they chose 30 (16.7%) musicians, and last 12 (6.7%) were selected in the other category. Males were also more likely to chose actors/actresses, 165 (53.6%), over other celebrities. Second, males chose 97 (31.5%) musicians, and last were 23 (7.5%) athletes and others.

The second research question looked at the differences in ethnicity/race and parasocial interaction. There was no significance with ethnicity/race and parasocial

interaction,  $F(6,480)=.97$ ,  $p>.05$ . Therefore, the hypothesis that there would be a difference in ethnicity/race and parasocial interaction was not supported. African Americans or Blacks did not score significantly higher on the parasocial scale than Whites. Therefore, the secondary hypothesis that African Americans or Blacks would have a significantly higher parasocial interaction level than Whites was also not supported.

Last, the research looked to see if one type of celebrity received higher parasocial levels than others. There was no significant difference in terms of the entertainment business the celebrity was in and parasocial interaction level,  $F(3,483)=1.65$ ,  $p>.05$ . Therefore, the last hypothesis that there would be a difference in the type of entertainment business the celebrity was in was not supported. The secondary hypothesis that musicians will have a higher parasocial level than other celebrities was also not supported.

In addition, the questionnaire asked about age and years in college, which no hypothesis was made. There was no significant difference in age and parasocial interaction,  $F(12,474)=1.68$ ,  $p>.05$ . There was no significance in years in college and parasocial interaction,  $F(5,481)=1.28$ ,  $p>.05$ .

All ten respondents who chose Beyonce were females. Eight (80%) of the ten respondents were African American or Black females. The other 2 (20%) were coded as Hispanic or Latino and Asian. There were no males and no Whites who selected Beyonce as their favorite celebrity. The most selected celebrity chosen, Britney Spears had more mixed audience members. Twelve (66.67%) were female and 6 (33.3%) were males. Of the females, 7 (58.3%) were White, 2 (16.7%) were Native Hawaiian, and

Hispanic, Asian and African American or Black each had one (8%). The six males were 3 (50%) White and 1 (16.67%) each for African American or Black, Mixed and Asian.

Five (1%) of the respondents chose President Barack Obama. However, those who selected him as their favorite celebrity, wrote that he was “president” 3 (60%) out of 5 times. Only 2 (40%) of people wrote him down as a “politician.”

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to expand on audience and media relationships with celebrities by looking at three different variables in relation to parasocial interaction. The objective was to look at celebrities as individuals and not as the character they portray in the media, and to look at parasocial interaction with celebrities concerning gender, ethnicity/race and the type of entertainment business the celebrity was in. This research found that gender was significant in relation to parasocial interaction but ethnicity/race and the type of entertainment business the celebrity was involved in was not significant.

This study supports Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) finding that audiences had diversity in a favorite celebrity. However, most respondents in this study selected actors and then musicians whereas Boon and Lomore (2001), who did not look at parasocial interaction, found that respondents chose musicians first and actors second in their study on young adults and the influence celebrities have on identity.

Significant differences in this research were found with gender and parasocial interaction which earlier research had conflicting results. Women tended to have higher levels of parasocial interaction in this study, which is consistent with Cohen (2003) who also found that women had the highest degree of parasocial interaction. However, this contradicts Cole and Leets (1999), who studied television personalities, and Spitzberg and Cupach (2007), who looked at celebrity worship, which found no gender differences

with parasocial interaction. Further research by McCutcheon, Lange and Houran (2002) found that men scored higher on the celebrity worship scale.

One reason why women scored higher on the parasocial interaction scale could be empathy. The parasocial interaction scale contains elements that relate to empathy, perceived similarity, and physical attraction (Rubin, Perse, and Powell, 1985, p. 174). Perhaps it is more socially acceptable for women to say that they have more empathy towards individual celebrities. Also, if perceived similarity is a component of parasocial interaction, this study shows that women may be more likely to identify and see similarities with celebrities than males. Perhaps this is because women can connect more on a materialistic level, such as fashion trends, than men. If these factors are true, then men and women may select entertainment media based on different criteria, which is consistent with findings in social identity theory research.

Males were more likely to say they were not attracted to a male celebrity whereas females were more likely to say a female celebrity was attractive. This study did not code whether the celebrity chosen was male or female and, therefore, it cannot be said if this was a significant factor but this may point to a difference in gender and the attraction part of a parasocial interaction as Klimmt, Hartmann, and Schramm (2006) suggested (p. 294). Other research in parasocial interaction found attraction to be highly important (Rubin, R.B. and McHugh, 1987).

Ethnicity/race was not significant in this study and there have been no previous studies with stated findings using the parasocial interaction scale and ethnicity/race. However, Halpern (2002) researched children's interest in fame and found a difference in ethnicity/race and the desire to be famous. The African American children in the Halpern



study were more likely to want fame because they thought money and friendships would follow. College offers a wide variety of social networks and perhaps no difference in ethnicity/race shows that loneliness is a part of parasocial interactions, although this study did not look into loneliness and cannot state its significance. Further, people in college have the ability to afford it and perhaps economic background and not ethnicity/race contribute to parasocial interaction levels. In other words, college students are not in search of money and fame like the children were.

The lack of ethnic/racial difference is important because it possibly indicates seeking out parasocial interactions when lonely or when other gratifications are not met by society, which is consistent with Horton and Wohl's (1956) definition. Earlier research has not supported parasocial interaction and loneliness. One study found no significance with loneliness and parasocial interaction (Rubin, A.M., Perse and Powell, 1985) and another study found different attachment styles had differences with loneliness and parasocial interaction levels (Cole and Leets, 1999).

Perhaps audiences chose celebrities and have parasocial interactions based on perceived similarity and not identity. If this is so, then audiences may select and experience entertainment not by how they identify themselves within society, but based on a shared experience with the celebrity. Just as with gender, having a shared experience or perceived similarity could be an important factor in audiences' relationships with celebrities. Prior research has found background, such as lifestyle and values, to be an important indicator of parasocial interaction (Turner, J.R., 1993).

The fact that the type of entertainment business the celebrity was in was not significant shows support that even a minor celebrity or media figure may have an impact

on audiences (Spitzberg and Cupach, 2007). If the celebrity can connect with an audience member, no matter the medium, audiences can experience and develop parasocial interactions with any celebrity in the media. This is important because if audiences look up to a celebrity to see how to live their life, and the type of celebrity that an audience member looks up does not matter, then celebrities may have a greater influence by just being present in the media than what their image represents.

However, this contradicts the finding that McCutcheon, Lange and Houran (2002) found when they examined celebrity worship. They did not use the parasocial interaction scale, but found that respondents had higher levels of worship with musicians and athletes than with actors and other people chosen. Considering this study also contradicted their results with gender, maybe there is a difference in worship and parasocial interaction. Part of Horton and Wohl's (1956) original definition of parasocial interaction stated that once the fan crossed the line of interest and tried to connect with the media figure it was pathological and not a parasocial interaction. Perhaps worship and parasocial are different levels of admiration and audience relationships.

The research found no significant difference in age. In other research, Cohen (2003) found teens had higher parasocial levels than adults. However, the close age range, 18 to 30, could account for this. The research found no significance in the number of years in college and parasocial interaction. An earlier study found that parasocial interaction increased with age and decreased with education (Levy, 1979/1982). The fact that this study found no significance could be because it was administered within the college level.

One unexpected finding was there were no Whites who selected Beyonce as their favorite celebrity. This could show that while there was no significance in ethnicity/race and parasocial interactions, there may be a difference in the type of celebrity that different ethnicities/races admire. It could also be another factor in the selection and experience of entertainment.

Another unusual finding was the selection and coding of President Barack Obama. It was no surprise that some respondents chose the president as a favorite celebrity given the historical and substantial coverage of the 2008 election. What was interesting was the coding as either “president” or “politician.” Obama was the only politician selected as a favorite and it presents the question that if this survey had been done before the election, whether any politician would have been selected at all.

Although there are many celebrities that come and go in the media, it raises questions whether audiences admire him because he is president, and would they have still selected him had he not have become president, or won the Democratic bid. This could indicate a change in how Americans view government. Perhaps people feel closer to Obama, and therefore the government, whereas past presidents and politicians may not have had such a relationship. This is important because if audiences see politicians as celebrities, perhaps they will be more likely to model the behavior seen by such leaders instead of celebrities who are involved in movies, music and sports.

#### Further Research

Further research is needed to see why gender is sometimes significant and other times not. The elements that contribute to parasocial interaction need to be further

explored and perhaps the questions reconfigured. It is important to understand why the respondent chose the celebrity they did. Studying attitudes, such as Auter and Palmgreen (2000) did with television characters, could help to better define the elements and ask more directed questions. Further, perhaps parasocial interaction needs to be examined and addressed more in relation to social identity theory. Other interesting variables to examine would be different income levels or social classes, which might make ethnicity/race more significant.

### Limitations

The .717 Cronbach alpha level was lower in this study than previous studies. The original 10-item parasocial scale by Rubin, A.M. and Perse (1988) had a Cronbach alpha level of .88. The study is also limited to the subjects of the sample.

This research asked about specific individuals and may only be significant with regard to certain aspects of parasocial interaction as Klimmt, Hartmann, and Schramm (2006) suggested (p. 294). Particularly with gender being the only significant factor found, parasocial interaction may develop differently with individuals with regard to attraction, similarity and empathy. This study did not ask why the respondent chose the favorite that they did, and perhaps this would give a better insight into what elements contribute more to a parasocial interaction.

### Conclusion: How Celebrity May Affect American Culture

Pinsky and Young (2009) discussed how the American culture mirrors, or imitates, the behavior seen by celebrities. The scholars suggested that American culture

is imitating the narcissistic traits demonstrated by celebrities. This would follow Derakhshani's (2007) idea that audiences look up to celebrities to see how to live their lives. Pinsky and Young discussed how celebrities have changed what is considered normal behavior. For example, the press coverage of celebrities like Britney Spears, Paris Hilton, Amy Winehouse and Lindsey Lohan demonstrating abnormal behavior that seemingly went undisciplined could send the same message to others (Pinsky and Young, 2009).

Other negative effects of celebrity influence could include underage drinking and the consequences of sex appeal on young girls (BBC News, 2008). Images and reports of stars drinking and partying every night could influence people with high levels of parasocial interaction to do the same. Even when stars are caught, their punishment seems to be minimal.

Less discussed are the positive influences of celebrity. Celebrity can be a way to trace social change. Instead of assuming people will imitate behavior seen by celebrities, it gives society a chance to define what is acceptable and not acceptable. Celebrities also present the opportunity to discuss controversial or unknown issues by being spokespeople and speaking out. Caughey (1984) said that celebrities help Americans to communicate with others. Celebrities' actions give strangers a common ground for discussion.

The Internet may or may not be a form of mainstream media, but this study did consider it a medium for parasocial relationships, along with television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Websites like MySpace and Youtube permit the access of fame to anyone. With the creation of the Internet, and a host of social websites, and cell phones that can take pictures and videos, anyone can be noticed at anytime, for anything.

The Internet has become a major source for celebrities to be recognized. Celebrities can have their own webpage that features up to the minute details on their life, whether it is private or career related. These social networking sites allow well-known and unknown musicians to post music and tour schedules on line for fans.

For example, Internet star Tila Tequila was named the first star of MySpace (Weiner, 2006). On March 5, 2009, Tila Tequila was number one MySpace's top artist list for unsigned musicians. Paramore was the top indie band and Hinder was the top Major band (MySpace, 2009). Tila's MySpace (2009) page had over 176 million views as of that same date. Three years ago, she had 31.5 million views and was consistently number one back then as well (Weiner). Since her rise to fame on the Internet, she has appeared on an MTV reality show. Although no one in the study chose Tila Tequila as a favorite, a respondent did choose Hayley Williams who is the lead singer for Paramore.

These social websites also allow fans to post and send messages to their favorite celebrity. In a virtual world, websites like MySpace allow respondents to connect with their favorite celebrity, thus enabling the parasocial interaction even more. The social websites of the Internet have allowed fans to connect on a more intimate level than in the past. Instead of just mailing a letter to one's favorite celebrity, one can post daily comments and send direct mail to a celebrity's website. The websites also allow fans to connect with other fans, which Beatty (2006) studied.

Even cell phones are changing how audiences can interact with their favorite celebrity and other fans. The i-Phone allows users to check e-mails and websites on their phone nearly anywhere. Fans can subscribe to celebrity websites and get the latest information, whether it is tour schedules, appearances, or personal information, about the

celebrity sent to them instantly. The ability of cell phones to take and send pictures and videos also allows people to capture celebrity moments that may otherwise not be seen by other fans. For example, Britney Spears, the most selected celebrity, was on tour at the time of this study. After her first show on March 3, 2009, fans posted videos on Youtube where other fans could watch almost the entire concert. It gave fans the opportunity to re-live that moment and other fans that were not present to experience it. It created an online community based on a shared experience involving a celebrity.

All of these websites and technologies aid in the parasocial interaction between an audience member and celebrity. With audiences receiving so many stimuli, audiences may soon not be able to tell the difference between reality and illusion (Baudrillard, summarized in Henderson, 2005). New technologies will continue to blur the line that separates celebrities from fans. In addition, while audiences may not be friends in real life with a celebrity, they can exist as friends in a virtual world. This could indicate a new form or level of parasocial interaction.

Parasocial interaction has a strong affect on entertainment selection and experience (Klimmt, Hartmann and Shramm, 2006, p. 309). This research showed that men and women might go about selecting and experiencing entertainment differently. The different elements of parasocial interaction, empathy, similarity and attraction, need to be examined in more detail by asking respondents why they favor certain celebrities over others. The fact that ethnicity/race was not significant could mean that having a shared experience or perceived similarity, and not self-identity, is important in parasocial interactions. Also, the type of entertainment the celebrity was in was not significant could mean that even minor celebrities have an influence on audiences' behavior and type of

entertainment selection. However, this research found that gender was significant in relation to parasocial interaction. This finding shows that attraction could be a big part in parasocial interaction. In conclusion, this research found that parasocial interactions with celebrities are significant in relation to gender, possibly due to the particular elements that parasocial interactions consist of (empathy, similarity, and attraction).

The effect of celebrity could be greater to those who experience and are prone to higher levels of parasocial interaction. If audiences look to the celebrities to see how to live their lives, then traditional morals and values could be replaced with more rebellious and pushing the envelope type behavior. If audiences are looking to celebrities as friends, then perhaps they will be more likely to listen to the advice, or lifestyle that the celebrity portrays. Therefore, the influence of celebrity combined with the desire to know personal details of a celebrity's life, could create a culture that focuses on material goods and destructive behavior, instead of traditional morals and values of prior generations. However, celebrity could also create a culture that allows discussions on topics such as what is appropriate behavior and values in life are.



## APPENDIX I

### SUMMARY OF SCALES IN LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Author (according to year)</u>	<u>Scale Developed</u>
Rubin, A.M., Perse, and Powell (1985)	Parasocial Interaction Scale Developed the first 20-item scale to measure parasocial interaction.  Also used: Loneliness Scale (revised, from Russell, 1980)
Rubin, A.M. & Perse (1988)	Parasocial Interaction Scale Reduced the original 20-item scale to 10-items
Auter and Palmgreen (2000)	Audience Persona Interaction Scale Tested the development of parasocial interaction overtime. Created a multi-dimensional scale.
McCutcheon, Lange, & Houran (2002)	Celebrity Worship Scale Examined fans' behavior and identification with celebrities  Other scholars to use Celebrity Worship Scale: Giles & Maltby (2004)
Spitzberg and Cupach (2007)	Fan Activities Scale To find what behaviors respondents have participated in when pursuing celebrities.  Also used the following scales: Need for Entertainment Scale (Brock and Livingston, 2004), Audience-Persona Interaction Scale (Auter and Palmgreen, 2000), Connectedness Scale (Russell, Norman & Heckler, 2004), Celebrity Attitude Scale (McCutcheon, Lange & Houran, 2002), Celebrity Idolization Scale (Engle & Kasser, 2005).

Scholars in literature review to use one of the parasocial interaction scales and what type of media figure they looked at

<u>Author (according to year)</u>	<u>Variables</u>
Rubin, A.M., Perse, and Powell (1985)	Local Newscasters
Rubin, A.M. & Perse (1988)	Soap Opera Characters
Rubin, R.B. & McHugh (1987)	Television Performers
Auter (1992)	Comedy The George Burns Show and The Gracie Allen Show
Turner (1993)	TV Performers. Respondents were allowed to pick their own favorite in as but could not select a newscaster or soap opera character
Hoffner (1996)	Television Character Children
Grubbs (1997)	The television show, <i>The Real World</i>
Cole & Leets (1999)	Television Personalities (top ones included sitcom characters, characters on dramas, movie stars) Looked at different attachment styles
Rubin, A.M. & Step (2000)	Talk Radio Show
Cohen (2003)	Television Characters (able to select own) Looked at the dissolution of the parasocial relationship
McDonald & Hu (2005)	Studied perceptions of self and real world in relation to parasocial interaction

## APPENDIX II

### ORIGINAL AND EDITED PARASOCIAL INTERACTION SCALES

#### Parasocial Interaction Scale – Original 10-item scale

Source: Rubin, A.M. & Perse, E.M. (1987). Audience activity and soap opera involvement: A uses and effects investigation. *Human Communication Research*, 14, 246-268.

1. I feel sorry for my favorite newscaster when he or she makes a mistake.
2. The newscaster makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.
3. I see my favorite newscaster as a natural, down to earth person.
4. I look forward to watching my favorite newscaster on tonight's news.
5. If my favorite newscaster appeared on another television program, I would watch that program.
6. When my favorite newscaster reports a story, he or she seems to understand the kinds of things I want to know.
7. If there were a story about my favorite newscaster in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.
8. I miss seeing my favorite newscaster when he or she is on vacation.
9. I would like to meet my favorite newscaster in person.
10. I find my favorite newscaster to be attractive.

Parasocial Interaction Scale - As modified for "favorite celebrity"

1. I feel sorry for my favorite celebrity when he or she makes a mistake.
2. My favorite celebrity's personality makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.
3. I see my favorite celebrity as a natural, down to earth person.
4. I look forward to watching my favorite celebrity on television.
5. I would watch programs that featured my favorite celebrity, even if I didn't regularly watch the program.
6. When my favorite celebrity is interviewed, he or she seems to understand the kinds of things I want to know.
7. If there were a story about my favorite celebrity in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.
8. I miss seeing my favorite celebrity when he or she is not in the media.
9. I would like to meet my favorite celebrity in person.
10. I find my favorite celebrity to be physically attractive.

\* Rubin, A.M. and Perse are retired professors from Kent State University and were unable to be contacted for scale approval.

### APPENDIX III

#### SURVEY USED IN RESEARCH

The researcher is interested in finding out what kinds of beliefs, values, and attitudes people have about celebrities. This is a completely anonymous survey—there is no possible way to track your responses to you personally, and therefore, it is vital that you answer as honestly and openly as possible.

Please think of and select one entertainment celebrity that you admire.

What is your favorite celebrity's name: \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of entertainment business is this person in (if they appear in more than one, please check all that apply):

- Actor/Actress
- Musician
- Sports
- Other (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

Following are a variety of statements that may or may not apply to you. On the line beside each statement, please check the response that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement regarding the celebrity you picked.

1. I feel sorry for my favorite celebrity when he or she makes a mistake.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. My favorite celebrity's personality makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

3. I see my favorite celebrity as a natural, down to earth person.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. I look forward to watching my favorite celebrity on television.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

5. I would watch programs that featured my favorite celebrity, even if I didn't regularly watch the program.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

6. When my favorite celebrity is interviewed, he or she seems to understand the kinds of things I want to know.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. If there were a story about my favorite celebrity in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. I miss seeing my favorite celebrity when he or she is not in the media.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. I would like to meet my favorite celebrity in person.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. I find my favorite celebrity to be physically attractive.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree/Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

General Demographic Questions:

1. What is your sex?

- Female
- Male

2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What ethnicity do you most identify with?

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Hispanic or Latino

4. Total Years of College:

- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 or less | <input type="checkbox"/> 4         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2         | <input type="checkbox"/> 5         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3         | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 or more |

## APPENDIX IV

### INDIVIDUAL MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR PARASOCIAL INTERACTION SCALE ITEMS

1. I feel sorry for my favorite celebrity when he or she makes a mistake. (M=2.68, SD=1.08)
2. My favorite celebrity's personality makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends. (M=2.22, SD=0.92)
3. I see my favorite celebrity as a natural, down to earth person. (M=1.83, SD=0.89)
4. I look forward to watching my favorite celebrity on television. (M=1.57, SD=0.72)
5. I would watch programs that featured my favorite celebrity, even if I didn't regularly watch the program. (M=1.91, SD=0.93)
6. When my favorite celebrity is interviewed, he or she seems to understand the kinds of things I want to know. (M=2.33, SD=0.83)
7. If there were a story about my favorite celebrity in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it. (M=1.78, SD=0.79)
8. I miss seeing my favorite celebrity when he or she is not in the media. (M=2.96, SD=1.36)
9. I would like to meet my favorite celebrity in person. (M=1.49, SD=0.75)
10. I find my favorite celebrity to be physically attractive. (M=2.27, SD=1.31)

Note: means range on a low of 1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree for each statement



APPENDIX V

COMPLETE LIST OF CHOSEN CELEBRITIES

Celebrity, alphabetized by first name	Frequency	Percent
Adam Sandler	3	.6
Alexis Bledel	1	.2
Alicia Keys	2	.4
Anderson Cooper	1	.2
Anderson Siva	1	.2
Andrew Reynolds	1	.2
Andy Roddick	2	.4
Angelina Jolie	15	3.1
Anne Hathaway	8	1.6
Anthony Green	1	.2
Ashlee Simpson	1	.2
Audrey Hepburn	1	.2
Ayrton Senna	1	.2
Bam Margera	1	.2
Barack Obama	5	1.0
Ben Gibbard	1	.2
Beyonce	10	2.0
Blake Lively	2	.4
Bob Marley	1	.2
Bobby Flay	1	.2
Brad Pitt	9	1.8
Bret Michaels	2	.4
Brett Favre	2	.4
Britney Spears	18	3.7
Caleb Followill	1	.2
Cameron Diaz	1	.2
Carey Hart	1	.2

Cary Grant	1	.2
Cat Williams	1	.2
Catherine Zeta-Jones	1	.2
Celine Dion	1	.2
Chad Johnson	1	.2
Chad Michael Murray	2	.4
Charles Barkley	1	.2
Charlize Theron	3	.6
Chase Jarvis	1	.2
Chelsea Handler	1	.2
Cho Kyuhyun	1	.2
Chris Brown	3	.6
Chris Cornell	1	.2
Christian Bale	1	.2
Christina Aguilera	1	.2
Christina Ricci	1	.2
Christine Ronaldo	1	.2
Christopher Watkins	1	.2
Chuck Norris	1	.2
Clint Eastwood	1	.2
Coco Lee	1	.2
Colbie Caillat	1	.2
Colin Firth	1	.2
Corbin Bleu	1	.2
Dan Arnold	1	.2
Dane Cook	1	.2
Daniel Johns	1	.2
Danny Carey	1	.2
David Beckham	3	.6
David Blaine	1	.2
Denzel Washington	4	.8
Derek Jeter	1	.2
Drew Barrymore	2	.4
Dustin Hoffman	1	.2

Dwayne Johnson	1	.2
Edward Furlong	1	.2
Edward Norton	7	1.4
Elvis Presley	1	.2
Eric Dane	1	.2
Eva Mendez	2	.4
Fedor Emelianenko	1	.2
Gabrielle Union	2	.4
Garth Brooks	1	.2
George Clooney	1	.2
George Strait	1	.2
Georges St. Pierre	2	.4
Gucci Mane	1	.2
Gwen Stefani	1	.2
Harrison Ford	1	.2
Hayley Williams	3	.6
Heidi Klum	2	.4
Hillary Duff	1	.2
Hines Ward	2	.4
Hugh Laurie	3	.6
Hunter S Thompson	1	.2
Ian Watkins	1	.2
Isla Fisher	1	.2
Jack Black	2	.4
Jack Johnson	2	.4
Jack Nicholson	1	.2
Jack White	1	.2
Jackie Chan	2	.4
Jaime Foxx	2	.4
Jake Gyllenhaal	1	.2
James Franco	3	.6
James Hetfield	1	.2
Janice Dickinson	1	.2
Jared Followill	1	.2

Jason Mraz	1	.2
Jay Cutler	1	.2
Jay-Z	1	.2
Jennifer Aniston	10	2.0
Jennifer Garner	1	.2
Jennifer Hudson	1	.2
Jennifer Lopez	1	.2
Jennifer Love Hewitt	1	.2
Jerry Rice	1	.2
Jesse McCartney	1	.2
Jessica Alba	8	1.6
Jessica Biel	1	.2
Jessica Mendoza	1	.2
Jessica Sarah Parker	1	.2
Jessica Simpson	1	.2
Ji Sung Park	1	.2
Jim Carrey	2	.4
Jimmy Stewart	1	.2
Jo Don Rooney	1	.2
Joe Jonas	1	.2
Joe Saunders	1	.2
John Elway	1	.2
John Frusciante	1	.2
John Lennon	2	.4
John Lithgow	1	.2
John Mayer	3	.6
John Terry	1	.2
John Wayne	1	.2
Johnny Cash	1	.2
Johnny Depp	11	2.3
Johnny Knoxville	1	.2
Jon Stewart	1	.2
Josh Groban	2	.4
Juanes	1	.2

Jude Law	1	.2
Julia Roberts	4	.8
Julia Stiles	2	.4
Julius Jones	1	.2
Justin Timberlake	9	1.8
Kaka	2	.4
Kanye West	1	.2
Kat Von D	1	.2
Kate Beckinsale	1	.2
Kate Hudson	4	.8
Kate Winslet	2	.4
Katherine Moennig	1	.2
Kathy Griffin	1	.2
Katt Williams	1	.2
Keanu Reeves	1	.2
Keira Knightley	3	.6
Ken Griffey Jr	1	.2
Kendra Wilkinson	1	.2
Kevin Garnett	1	.2
Kevin Martin	1	.2
Keyshia Cole	1	.2
Kim Kardashian	2	.4
Kobe Bryant	10	2.0
Kristen Stewart	1	.2
Kurt Cobain	1	.2
Kurt Warner	1	.2
Leam Neeson	1	.2
Lebron James	3	.6
Lee Hom Wang	1	.2
Leonardo DiCaprio	2	.4
Lil Wayne	3	.6
Lily Allen	1	.2
Lim Yo Hwan	1	.2
Lionel Messi	2	.4

Lisa Lampanelli	1	.2
Lucy Liu	1	.2
Madonna	1	.2
Manny Ramirez	1	.2
Mariah Carey	2	.4
Mark Wahlberg	3	.6
Mary Elizabeth McGlynn	1	.2
Mathew McConaughey	1	.2
Megan Fox	4	.8
Melanie Troxel	1	.2
Meryl Streep	1	.2
Michael Jordan	2	.4
Michael Phelps	3	.6
Michael Savage	1	.2
Mickey Rourke	1	.2
Mike Epps	1	.2
Miley Cyrus	1	.2
Mischa Barton	1	.2
Misty May	1	.2
Morgan Freeman	2	.4
Natalie Portman	3	.6
Ne-Yo	3	.6
Nicolas Muller	1	.2
Nicole Kidman	2	.4
Nicole Richie	1	.2
Olivia Wilde	1	.2
Oprah	2	.4
Orlando Bloom	1	.2
Paolo Nutini	1	.2
Paris Hilton	2	.4
Patrick Dempsey	1	.2
Patrick Willis	1	.2
Paul McCartney	1	.2
Paul Rudd	1	.2

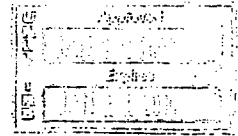
Paul Walker	1	.2
Pavel Datsyuk	1	.2
Penelope Cruz	1	.2
Pharrell Williams	1	.2
Phil Ivey	1	.2
Pink	2	.4
Queen Latifah	1	.2
Rachel McAdams	3	.6
Rafael Furcal	1	.2
Reese Witherspoon	1	.2
Reggie Bush	1	.2
Rev Run	1	.2
Rick Astley	1	.2
Robert De Niro	2	.4
Robert Downey Jr	2	.4
Robert Pattison	3	.6
Robert Redford	1	.2
Robin Williams	3	.6
Roger Federer	1	.2
Roger Fiennes	1	.2
Ronholdinho	1	.2
Russell Brand	1	.2
Sabrina Mathews	1	.2
Sam Jackson	1	.2
Sandra Bullock	5	1.0
Sara Evans	1	.2
Sarah Jessica Parker	1	.2
Scarlett Johansson	5	1.0
Serj Tankian	1	.2
Seth Green	1	.2
Seth Rogen	2	.4
Shahrukh Khan	1	.2
Shia Labeouf	2	.4
Sidney Crosby	1	.2

Soulja Boy	1	.2
Stephen A Smith	1	.2
Stephen Colbert	1	.2
Steven Jackson	1	.2
Stevie Ray Vaughn	1	.2
Sydney Poitier	1	.2
Taylor Swift	2	.4
Teller	1	.2
TI	2	.4
Tiger Woods	1	.2
Tim Tebow	1	.2
TJ Lavin	1	.2
Tom Brady	2	.4
Tom Gabel	1	.2
Tom Hanks	1	.2
Tom Selleck	1	.2
Tracy McGrady	1	.2
Trent Reznor	1	.2
Tupac	1	.2
Tyra Banks	2	.4
Victoria Beckham	3	.6
Vin Diesel	2	.4
Vince Vaughn	1	.2
Vinny Castilla	1	.2
Vladimir Guerrero	1	.2
Wade Robson	1	.2
Will Ferrell	7	1.4
Will Smith	13	2.7
Wink Adams	1	.2
Wong Lee Hom	1	.2
Wynton Marsalis	1	.2
Zac Efron	1	.2
Total	488	100.0



**APPENDIX VI**

**INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM**



## Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review Approval Notice

**NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:**

*Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.*

**DATE:** January 16, 2009  
**TO:** Dr. Anthony Ferri, Journalism and Media Studies  
**FROM:** Office for the Protection of Research Subjects  
**RE:** Notification of IRB Action by Dr. Paul Jones, Co-Chair  
Protocol Title: **Parasocial Relationships with Celebrities: An Illusion of Intimacy with Mediated Friends**  
Protocol #: 0811-2931

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This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is January 11, 2010. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

**PLEASE NOTE:**

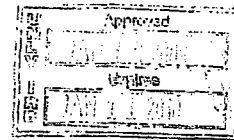
Attached to this approval notice is the **official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form** for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond January 11, 2010, it would be necessary to submit a **Continuing Review Request Form 60 days** before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at [OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu](mailto:OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu) or call 895-2794.

RECEIVED



## INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Journalism and Media Studies

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**TITLE OF STUDY:** Parasocial Relationships with Celebrities: An Illusion of Intimacy with Mediated Friends  
**INVESTIGATOR(S):** Dr. Anthony Ferri and Amanda Laken  
**CONTACT PHONE NUMBER:** (702) 895-0031

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### Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to study relationships audiences have with celebrities.

### Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because of inclusion criteria for participation. The research is looking at college students, ages 18-30 years old, who are enrolled in introductory courses of journalism, communication and sociology. The research is looking at college students' as an audience and their relationship with celebrities.

### Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: You will be asked to complete a series of questions. Responses will be on a strongly agree to strongly disagree scale. The questions will be about relationships with celebrities.

### Benefits of Participation

There *may not* be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how audiences form relationships with celebrities.

### Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. Some of the questions may be offensive to some. Any potential risks, such as not completing the entire survey will result in that survey not being included in final data.

### Cost /Compensation

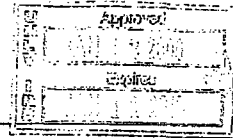
There *will not* be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 10-15 minutes of your time. You *will not* be compensated for your time.

### Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Amanda Laken at 702-895-0031 or Dr. Anthony Ferri at 702-895-1371. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects,

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any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the **UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702-895-2794.**

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

**Confidentiality**

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be shredded.

**Participant Consent:**

The researcher has requested removal of consent in order for the respondent to remain anonymous.

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