I’VE GOT 99 FRIENDS, BUT IS TAYLOR SWIFT ONE? AN EXAMINATION OF EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS ON PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

by

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Thesis directed by Associate Professor Carmen Stavrositu

ABSTRACT

Parasocial relationships (PSRs), or perceived relationships with media personae, was examined in light of degree of social media feedback from a celebrity, as well as perceived authenticity of celebrity self-presentation. Additionally, identification with a celebrity was compared to relationships between parasocial relationships to both social media use and authenticity of celebrity self-presentation. College student and social media participants (N= 234) completed an online survey in which they responded to demographic questions prior to answering questions to identify parasocial relationship strength, identification, authenticity of celebrity self-presentation, social media use, and degree of social media feedback received from a celebrity. Parasocial relationship strength was found to have no significant relationship with gender. Parasocial strength was, however, found to have a significant relationship with both authenticity of celebrity self-presentation and degree of social media feedback. Finally, identification with a celebrity was found to be a partial mediator of the relationships between social media use and PSR, as well as authenticity of celebrity self-presentation and PSR. Implications of study are discussed, as well as future research recommendations.

Key Words: quantitative; parasocial relationships; celebrity; social media; Twitter; Facebook; Instagram; self-presentation; identification; feedback
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this Master’s Thesis to my loving husband, Greg, my amazing children, Greyson and Olivia, and my beloved mother and step-father, Debbie and Don, my father, John, and my sister, Terra. Without their enduring love and support through this endeavor, I would not have had the strength to press on and achieve my goals. This study’s theory and development owes much to Dr. Carmen Stavrositu, Dr. Maja Krakowiak, and Dr. Chris Bell for all of their guidance, inspiration, and support in my academic and personal endeavors. I would also like to dedicate this research to my fellow scholars who are full of drive and curiosity. May you never stop seeking answers and working to find ways to make our world a more positive place.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Effects of Social Media Interactions on Parasocial Relationships

With the massive increase in media use and exposure in modern society, media personalities are present in almost every aspect of everyone’s lives. The playing field for media platforms has evolved in recent years to encompass a completely new variety of media for media consumers to utilize. Media are no longer strictly limited to solely audio on the radio or a combination of video and audio as it is on traditional television. Media are multi-dimensional and provides users with a variety of different tools that aid in the media consumption process. For example, Facebook offers multi-modal features for users that include text, video and even voice capabilities, which are accessible all at once in the same place. Social media have been on the rise in recent years and the vast number of users has grown exponentially. Carr and Hayes (2015, p. 49) distinguished social media as a form of “internet-based, disentrained and persistent channels of masspersonal communication, facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content.” Scholars have long recognized social media sites for their ability to allow users to communicate and connect with other members of their social networks in order to maintain such relationships. Perrin (2015) reports in a study that 65% of all American adults use social media regularly. The greatest majority of social media users are in the ages of 18-29, with 90% of young adults being active users of some form of social media. Further, based on demographic analyses conducted by Patterson (2015), females are more likely overall to utilize social media networking sites than are males.
Social media present the added function of allowing users to communicate amongst one another in a way traditional media lack (Kim & Song, 2016). These sites allow for a self-constructed personal profile in which users can display their list of social networked friends, engage in mediated communication, and receive a stream of content customized to their liking (Quinn, 2016). The tools provided by social media actively work to enhance users’ social connections and manage social relationships within their social network.

Celebrities or media figures are more readily accessible than ever before, as individuals are able to follow them on social media, comment on their pictures or comments, and even get responses directly from celebrities. Content shared by celebrities can vary from brand or product endorsement, to promotion of upcoming projects, and even personal information (Kim & Song, 2016). Not to mention, celebrity social media posts pop up in users’ newsfeeds mixed in with the posts made by users’ friends (Ledbetter & Redd, 2016). This exposure to celebrity posts on social media is moderated by interpersonal relationship constructs and can strengthen perceived bonds between users and celebrities. The direct access to celebrities’ comments, particularly their personal information and feelings, gives followers the perception of “knowing” the celebrity. Self-disclosure is an essential aspect of social connection and serves to fulfill intrinsic needs to give individuals a sense of belonging (Bazarova & Choi, 2014). The discloser becomes susceptible to vulnerability by choosing to share information via social media, which requires a careful balance between sharing and privacy in order to meet the needs of both themselves and their followers.
Effective media figures draw in the audience, make them feel connected, and create the belief that a relationship is occurring. When the viewer feels like the media personalities are individuals with whom he or she have a relationship, the phenomenon is referred to as a parasocial relationship (Horton & Wohl, 1956). New features provided by social media have arisen and warrant continued examination of parasocial relationships in light of these new dimensions. This study seeks to examine the relationship between types of social media feedback given by celebrities and the strength of parasocial relationship with that celebrity using a quantitative survey. Additionally, perceptions of selective self-presentation, such as authentic versus idealized, on the part of celebrities will be measured to determine how it influences an individual’s parasocial relationship strength. The survey will seek to measure the strength of established parasocial relationships, as well as social media interaction with celebrities, including frequency and nature of contact. Also, the research will examine the role identification has on parasocial relationships in relation to the amount and degree of social media interaction with a celebrity.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parasocial Relationship Theory

Horton and Wohl developed the idea of parasocial relationships as a part of media effects studies in 1956 which has continued to be built upon and refined over the years (Brown, 2015; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Rubin & Perce, 1987). Parasocial relationships are one-sided, non-reciprocal relationships that media users develop with mass media characters or personalities to whom the user is exposing his/herself on a frequent basis (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). Parasocial relationships are presented in a similar fashion to interpersonal communication situations, with the distinct differences of the mediated aspect as well as the one-way nature of parasocial relationships (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000). Since the initial development of Horton and Wohl’s (1956) theory, communication scholars have molded the definition of parasocial relationships. It was initially suggested that parasocial relationships were immediate for the user, and further research has found that parasocial relationships actually form over a longer period of time, after frequent contact with the performer (Rubin & Perse, 1987). Rubin and McHugh (1987) also went as far as to describe parasocial relationships as one-sided interpersonal relationships, where the media performer is unaware of the relationship while the user experiences similar emotions to that of a true interpersonal relationship. Schramm and Hartmann (2008) analyzed parasocial relationships a little deeper. They explain that these interactions are both automatic and involuntary once media have been consumed and that the only aspect that can be influenced is the audience’s reaction to the encounter. These scholars hold that
the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional reactions can be strengthened the more a persona addresses viewers directly, the more a persona is obtrusively displayed, and the more a character is persistently displayed throughout the exposure.

Typically, parasocial relationship research focuses on media figures in the form of their character, or personae. However, in our age, the media figures that users are exposed to are not always a personality they are portraying, but rather displaying themselves. In his article, Brown (2015) explains that the recent rise in the celebrity phenomenon has led to a greater, yet common, emotional and psychological attachment to various media figures. In a media-centric, celebrity obsessed world, it is essential to fully understand the idea of the celebrity and what it entails. Much like an organization, a celebrity is a brand of their own – an image that has been established by an individual that is heavily in the media spotlight in which cultural or social connections have been made (Ilicic & Webster, 2016). A celebrity’s status resides in the fame that is grounded in a media display that works tirelessly to create a public figure to attach to various entities (Bell, 2009). A celebrity, in many respects, is a commodity, attached to a brand, and thus placed outside of the realm of “normal.” The celebrity status is an intangible concept, discrete from the celebrity as an individual. Celebrity status is not automatically something to envy; it stems from the scraps of fame and is a fleeting concept, subject to dissipate at any time that media decides the individual is no longer suitable.

Celebrities are influential individuals who live their lives in the public eye and have a great impact on the manners in which people live, including the products they purchase, their everyday actions, and their perceptions of world issues (Kerrigan, Brownlie, Hewer, & Daza-LeTouze, 2011). Celebrities in many ways exist in a separate
universe, living their lives in the same time and space, yet seemingly out of reach (Flora, 2008). To become a celebrity is something so many hope to achieve, the fame and associated riches; but while hoping for the easy life, many forget what it truly means to be a celebrity. Paparazzi or media of some sort follow celebrities around in their everyday lives, hoping to paint this picture of normalcy, yet always making sure to remind the public that they are far from such. The work to paint celebrities as down-to-earth is done in hopes to add a relatable, authentic appearance to the celebrity in order to gain the public’s trust and admiration. An interaction with a celebrity is seen as out of the ordinary, something one never expects to experience and something to note and relish in (Bell, 2009). These connections allow these personality figures to greatly influence and affect social processes in many ways. There are several processes that work alongside one another in the formation of parasocial relationships; however parasocial interactions and involvement with media figures are essential to the present research (Brown, 2015).

Empirical research has also delved into the demographics of typical parasocial relationships. This research has found that women tend to develop stronger parasocial relationships with media personae due to their greater interest in attractive or desirable traits that are displayed in the media (Vorderer & Knobloch, 1996). Cohen (2001) explained that an aspect of parasocial relationships that is related to interpersonal relationships is expectancy. Men and women place emphasis in different places in their relationships and prioritize varied aspects. Women have a greater tendency to monitor relationships more closely than men, leading to a deeper investment in the outcome. Women are particularly more sensitive to areas surrounding honesty and trust, and take social actions into greater consideration during relationship development.
Parasocial relationships are most typically greatest among older adults, although this is due to their high levels of television watching, and adolescents, who are bigger fans of ongoing TV series (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Shramm, 2006). On the opposite side, young adults aged 18-29 years dominate the numbers in social media demographics (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). While older adults are migrating toward social media more, it pales in comparison to the usage among younger adults, especially in the major social media platforms. The multi-modal nature of social media results in an increased level of exposure to media personalities or celebrities for those users who are not only seeing their favorite celebrities on television, but also in magazines, on Facebook and even in person at a concert or event. The internet provides the technical ability for two-way communication that traditional media simply does not (Labrecque, 2014). Celebrities often have “brand” representatives, authorized individuals, to post or respond on social media in their place, although in many cases, fans are unable to determine whether the statements made are coming from the celebrity his/herself, or by a social media manager.

**Identification**

Identification is a complex concept that has long been studied by media effects scholars, and there has been a recent rise in the focus of this concept as it relates to parasocial relationship research. Identification is often confused with parasocial relationships due to their involvement with media characters; however, both concepts involve different qualities of the interaction with media figures. Identification relies on the absence of viewer self-awareness, as individuals imagines his/herself as the media persona, whereas parasocial relationships are based on the perceived interaction with the
same persona (Cohen, 2001). A parasocial relationship requires the ability of the viewer to maintain a social distance, much as one would do in a friendship; these are distinctly different concepts.

Burke (1969) paved the way for the theoretical foundation of parasocial identification. Burke’s theory of identification stems from his approach to rhetoric, as an essential component of persuasion. The art of persuasion happens most effectively when the speaker can find ways to relate to their audience, speak their language, so to speak. By speaking in a relatable way, the speaker is able to build a rapport with the audience and lay the ground to establish the identification of the audience with them. Burke’s assertions explain that the media-based identification relies on the sharing of similar principles in order to create a mutual investment in an outcome. This could manifest by helping the audience feel as though they would benefit from the success of the celebrity, such as more movies being made by certain celebrities or having a hand in the outcome of a game/”reality” shows. The most common method that this is accomplished is through continual enforcement that the media figure is a normal person who embodies the ideal qualities of the audience, such as hard work and perseverance. Along the same lines, it is in the nature of people to want to identify with groups of others, align their interests and concerns with the same as other group members, whether an individual is aware of the specific interests of group members or not.

Identification resembles imitation on the surface, but identification goes a step further and involves the internalization of another individual’s personality and behaviors as his/her own. These social qualities include attitude, beliefs, values, and personality attributes. The idea lies in that the individual being influenced, in this case a media user,
adopts such attributes in order to assimilate and maintain the qualities that are considered desirable and superior by the media persona (Kelman, 1961). Identification is most closely related to fictional characters due to the reliance on an individual’s imagination (Cohen 2001). Psychology research has found that the act of an individual assuming the perspective and imagining his/herself as a media figure makes it difficult for identification to occur with “reality” media figures, such as athletes or reality TV stars.

Empirical research has found that identification with a media figure both drives media exposure and is a result of the same exposure (Cohen, 2001). When people identify with a media figure, they seek out more media focused on that persona, acting to strengthen his/her existing identification and sparking interest in gaining more exposure. The process of identification works alongside the process of interpersonal relationship formation due to the nature of social media sites (Brown, 2015). Celebrity social media posts appear in a sea of content that is mixed together with individuals’ friends with little to no distinction. While scrolling through posts, users are equally exposed to content in their newsfeed and take part in the identification process with all individuals of his/her social following (Ledbetter & Redd, 2016). The multi-contextual nature of the social media realm provides users with a vast array of platforms and varied information and formats on each. Each social media site has its own niche; for example, Twitter relies primarily on text, while Instagram is image-based. Different social media sites highlight different content, and the same message can vary greatly between platforms, which in turn alters the perception on the side of the users. The ability to fluidly move between celebrity social media accounts on different sites provides users with multifaceted views of the celebrity and adds to the identification process, continually providing new
knowledge to guide their impression of the celebrity (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm, 2006).

Social media also adds to the identification aspect of parasocial relationships with celebrities in that these social media accounts are designed to highlight the celebrity, not the media persona. Traditional parasocial relationship theory focused strictly on the performer as a media persona, a fictional character or this personality that someone was taking on for the media (Kosenko, Binder, & Hurley, 2016). Social media provides this unique media space where celebrities are both – they are themselves while also inherently embodying the potentially multiple media personae. What the celebrity “is” at any given time is up for individual interpretation on the part of the user and, depending on the situation, can influence a users’ identification with the celebrity. This adds a level of complexity as an individual’s identification can follow with the fictionally based characteristics while he/she are also aware of potentially accurate personal characteristics of the celebrity. Social media blurs lines between media producers and consumers, and these sites provide a platform with access to additional personal information to add to the basis of a user’s identification with a celebrity. By having direct access to seemingly immediate responses and behaviors of celebrities, users are able to get a closer look at the celebrity’s apparent demeanor online, providing a basis for further identification and embodiment of that celebrity. It stands to reason that the more users can view themselves as a celebrities, the greater their desire to interact with celebrities would be (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000).

Social media has an aspect of deliberation to it that adds a different angle than traditional identification that children experience with parents in childhood (Cohen,
2001). Much like a weekly television show, no one, celebrity or otherwise, posts content on social media without specific intentions or goals. Many celebrities create carefully constructed posts and photographs are placed on social media to ensure fans or followers want to continue their exposure to the celebrity and perpetuate positive feelings toward them. Social media provides celebrities the tools to emphasize their authenticity and assert themselves, if desired, as a regular person who shares funny content and communicates with friends, all while battling the media that is constantly trying to keep them in the status of unreachable celebrity status. The goal of this push to be viewed as “real” is to create a relatable basis for fans to more easily identify with the celebrity. Identification with a celebrity is done through a carefully articulated lens through a determined angle. For celebrities, their “brand” is their self and the success of their brand is directly related to the perception of themselves in light of the products or content they provide (Lueck, 2015). All roads for celebrities are designed to lead back to their brand; even displays of authenticity are working to reinforce the celebrity brand and everything associated with it. The culture surrounding celebrities is made to be desirable and everything produced for viewer or fan consumption is designed to feed into an established culture.

Hyperpersonal Communication

With the widespread use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in today’s society, it stands to reason that communication practices have shifted along with this rise. Upon its formation, critics of CMC viewed the communication that took place online as impersonal and somewhat unintended (Walther, 1996). Computers were initially linked together into a giant interwoven web to allow messages sent among users with greater
ease than via handwritten memos. Personal communication between users was an unexpected bi-product of sorts, only discovered when researchers began to examine how effective communication was in group settings that utilized CMC for work purposes. CMC was looked at as inherently impersonal, lacking the ability to display the necessary social and non-verbal cues that not only enhance, but are necessary for, face-to-face (FtF) interpersonal communication. Walther (1996) discusses the connections between face-to-face and computer-mediated communication, explaining that all communicators seek the same goal of creating a social connection with at least one other person. CMC and FtF differ heavily in the rate of exchange of communication, as opposed to the actual amount of information shared. However, in certain manners and uses, CMC has exceeded the capabilities of FtF communication.

CMC has evolved since its advent from an impersonal nature to one rich in cues that are essential to effective communication (Walther, 1996). CMC lacks the nonverbal cues that are embedded in face-to-face communication. There is a void where a user would otherwise be able to analyze a facial expression or hand gestures. This approach is most commonly referred to as “cues-filtered-out,” acknowledging the lack of social cues that make communication personal (Culnan & Markus, 1987). Additionally, environmental or physical aspects of the situation are missing that would provide indications of the communication expectations. CMC users have limited ability to convey themselves, in terms of setting the mood of a message, expressing their personality, or even setting themselves apart from other CMC users. While using CMC, in most cases, the user cannot see their communicator’s face or even hear their voice, which would seemingly alter the ability to form successful impressions (Walther, 2007).
As CMC grew in popularity, research continued to focus on the nature of communication that occurs amongst users on computers. Despite the initial reactions regarding CMC that led it to be perceived as impersonal, an ability to shift the focus to the language used as opposed to the physical appearances involved emerged (Walther, 1996). CMC can act as a great equalizer for many users, making the biases of appearances less pronounced and moving language to the forefront. Communication becomes discrete and intentional, as the user has strict control over the information chosen to share. CMC has come a great way over the years and the recent features present on social media add to the richness CMC provides for users. Social media allows users to connect to others in their social network by creating content to share or exchange with others in order to form or maintain relationships (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2014).

Walther (1996) introduced the term “hyperpersonal” in relation to the abilities of computer-mediated communication. Hyperpersonal communication has been coined to refer to computer-mediated communication that exceeds the quality of emotion and affection that is present in face-to-face communication that happens physically alongside another person. This phenomenon takes place in online situations and platforms which are focused on leisurely communication or on developing social connections (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.). Walther (2007) breaks down the hyperpersonal communication model, which includes the sender, receiver, feedback, and channel. In CMC, senders can adjust their self-presentation in order to meet social idealization, while the receiver has the ability to decode messages and attribute romanticized meanings to them. Walther et al. (2011) also explains in his hyperpersonal communication model that CMC empowers users to have selective self-presentation and enables essential feedback.
channels. Social media affords users the ability to share personal information or content, but through non-direct self-disclosure (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2010). Feedback is more easily controlled as it occurs in a delayed manner as compared to face-to-face communication, which occurs either during or immediately after. Social media provide multiple, convenient, controllable channels for individuals to choose from that allow for easy editing to meet the intended tone of message. Social media features cater to all of these aspects and understanding their roles in hyperpersonal communication is key to understanding their role in the process of parasocial relationship formation on social media sites.

Social media sites offer the ability of users to construct their self-presentation, the aspects of their self in which they desire to display to others online. Individuals can pick and choose what they share, offering the ability of editing to achieve either discretion or inflation of one’s self. This self-presentation in CMC is enabled by communication cues that are reduced as well as the occurrence of asynchronous, or time-delayed, communication (Henderson & Gilding, 2004). Asynchronous communication allows users the ability to consider a response that would be desirable to the receiver in order to adjust their self-presentation to match their intended goals. The sender is provided with the ability to adjust their output of communication in order to present their best “self,” while the receiver has the ability to consider the response in a deeper manner than would be provided FtF. Henderson and Gilding (2004) discuss the implications of the pseudonymous nature of the internet, as individuals have the ability to “be” whomever they so choose. With this ability, it makes it difficult for individuals to truly know who is on the other end of their computer-mediated communication dialogue (Walther, 2007).
Each social media site offers varied options and features for the users of the site to manage their self-presentation and, depending on the users’ goals, these sites can serve very different purposes. Social media sites offer a high level of perceived publicness of posts, which research has revealed enhances an individual’s identity formation more than posts that are made on a more private level (Gonzales & Hancock, 2008).

The ability for users to manage their identity on their social media is driven by the desire for individuals to have the chance to choose the self they display to the world. The publicness of social media guides users’ motivations for the information they determine to share (Gonzales & Hancock, 2008). Specifically, Gonzales and Hancock (2008) found internet users do not solely migrate to their chosen sites for social interaction, but also to construct and demonstrate their self-identity in a public fashion. The public nature of social media requires a greater level of commitment to this self-identity development and opens the users up to an audience that could potentially extend further than their interpersonal circle. Their research also ties in Walther’s (1996) concept of media as hyperpersonal and the nature of social media as asynchronous, lacking social cues, and having the ability to be altered even after shared. In face-to-face communication, the audience is not open-ended so to say, as the information is not available to anyone who exists online. This is a stark contrast to social media, where the audience for any post is the other users who are a part of an individual’s social network as well as those who have access to the poster’s profile.

Research has shown that the more public a message is, the more enhanced the phenomenon of online identity formation is. Public self-presentations are indicative of an individual’s desire to solidify or enhance their online identity. For celebrities, they have
an established identity from their participation in the media spotlight that they are aiming to uphold on their social media. While their audience is seemingly anonymous, celebrities have an investment in image management online and thus must focus heavily on the right amount of selective self-presentation that will foster admiration and trust amongst fans while maintaining the desired privacy (Jiang, Bazarova, & Hancock, 2011). And on the side of the viewer, there are inherent motivations when communicating with celebrities that stem from a desire to impress them on some level. The anonymity of the internet provides users the capability of catering their profiles to appear socially desirable in attempts to catch the attention of media personae. The lacking nonverbal cues present in FtF communication end up being beneficial by restricting the information received on the other end of social media and fostering stereotypical impressions that are formed (Jiang, et. al, 2011). Feedback, an essential component of the hyperpersonal model, acts to reinforce an individual’s representation of their online self and validate their performance (Walther et al, 2011). A function of social media, which did not exist in early CMC platforms, is the ability to share information about oneself with a large audience of followers, sometimes upwards of millions of people in the case of many celebrities (Bazarova & Choi, 2014). Social media sites offer users the feature of one-click, system-generated cues in order to communicate quickly (Carr, Wohn, & Hayes, 2016). Paralinguistic digital affordances (PDAs), or cues that lie within social media that enable communication without explicit language components, allow users to simply communicate at the touch of a button. While the developers of the various social media platforms intended these PDAs to serve as phatic cues, or communication that serve to display sociability yet lack real information, frequent use and decoding of these PDAs
has caused an evolution in their perception. The meaning of the PDAs, such as “likes” on Twitter or Facebook, are non-static as they are open to interpretation by each individual user (Carr, et al., 2016). These buttons make providing feedback relatively easy, but how does the ability to provide feedback in the form of likes, comments, or replies, impact the perceived strength of parasocial relationships? Does this two-way dynamic of feedback available on social media encourage the semblance of a relationship even more so than traditional media?

In summary, the parasocial relationship theory, and CMC model of hyperpersonal communication work together to provide insights into parasocial relationship understandings and formation of relationships via social media. As much of the parasocial relationship research has focused on the establishment and influence from traditional media persona, and media effects research regarding social media has focused on the formation and role in maintenance of relationships, the connection between the two areas is understudied. With a vast majority of celebrities utilizing social media to communicate with fans, individuals have a unique ability to make contact with their parasocial friends in a concrete manner. Understanding how social media interaction between celebrities and their fans influences these relationships will provide insight into the influence celebrities have on individuals, particularly of interest in marketing terms, and offer ideas of how social media can be used effectively to maintain these relationships for the benefit of those involved.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: How does gender affect the strength of parasocial relationships with celebrities?
RQ2: What role does degree of celebrity feedback play in the strength of parasocial relationships?

RQ3: What is the relationship between perceived celebrity authenticity of self-presentation and strength of parasocial relationships with that celebrity?

RQ4: What is the role of identification with a celebrity in the relationships between perceptions of celebrities’ authenticity of self-presentation and social media habits, AND the strength of parasocial relationships?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample Description

To maximize external validity, participants for this study were recruited from two different groups by utilizing a convenience sample. The first group included undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Communication courses at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS). For the second group, a link to the online survey was shared in several social media groups in order to recruit individuals outside of the university setting. This portion allows for added diversity among the participants by incorporating individuals with various backgrounds. Both groups are composed of individuals who range in age from 18 to 56 and who have a variety of relationship statuses, diverse backgrounds, and different experiences using social media.

Participants enrolled in UCCS courses were offered extra credit from participating instructors. Each participant, upon completion of their survey, was prompted to supply their name and course information for which they were to receive extra credit points for their participation. Student information was extracted separately from response data and was not connected to the responses provided in the study survey in any way. This provided the university student sample the opportunity to receive extra credit points for participating while protecting their personal information.

Survey Design

This study was conducted using university-licensed survey tools (surveymonkey.com). Participants were provided a link to an online version of the survey and all participants were given two weeks to complete at a location of their liking. The
hope was to allow for a setting individuals are comfortable with in order to gather more truthful responses. Also, allowing participants to complete the survey online provided easy access to the participants’ social media accounts to allow for more accurate responses. Following informed consent, participants were asked general questions about their social media use and general demographic information, such as age, gender, and education level.

**Measurements**

The survey questionnaire included multiple sets of measures in order to collect data on each variable. A complete list of survey measures can be found in Appendix F.

*Parasocial relationship* (Cronbach’s α = .92) with a celebrity was measured with a set of 20 items (e.g. “I would like to meet celebrity in person” and “Learning about celebrity is very important to me”), adapted for this study from Bocarnea and Brown’s (2007) Celebrity-Persona Parasocial Interaction (CPPI) Scale.

*Parasocial identification* (Cronbach’s α = .86) was measured with seven items (e.g. “Celebrity reminds me of myself”), and extracted from Auter and Palmgreen’s (2000) Audience-Persona Interaction Scale. Both parasocial relationships and parasocial identification measures were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much).

*Social media use* (Cronbach’s α = .89) was measured by asking participants six questions (e.g. “Social media has become a part of my everyday routine,” and “I feel out of touch when I haven’t logged in to social media in a while”). An item-specific variation of the Facebook Intensity Scale was used to measure social media use by participants (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007).
Degree of Feedback was measured via 2 survey items. Participants were first prompted to indicate whether they had ever previously received any feedback on social media from a celebrity. Those who indicated “yes” were given a list of seven types of feedback options for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The items were presented as a “select all that apply” and gave options such as “Facebook Like,” and “Twitter @reply.” Following data collection, the sum of each participants’ selections were calculated and recorded for analysis.

Authenticity of Self-Presentation (Cronbach’s α = .73) was measured by 15 survey items about participants’ perceptions of celebrities on social media, as adapted from the Self-Presentation Facebook Questionnaire for this study (Michikyan, et. al, 2005). The authenticity of self-presentation section included items which asked participants to respond to prompts such as “I feel like celebrity is their true self on social media,” and “Celebrity posts things on social media that are not true.” All of the items for social media use, enjoyment of feedback, and celebrity authenticity self-presentation were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements and measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree).
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

An online questionnaire was administered to 234 participants (90 males, 143 females) from both the UCCS student population and general population of social media users. Participant ages ranged from 18-56 years old (M=23.44). The majority of participants indicated being 18-22 years old (68.4%). Most participants reported having some college education (86.3%). The participant sample was mostly White/Caucasian (68.4%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (8.1%), Asian American (3.4%), Black/African American (2.1%), Other (.9%), Native American/Alaskan (.45%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (.45%) and 16.2% self-reporting as Multiracial.

The online survey asked participants questions regarding their social media use habits. From the sample, 231 participants indicated having at least one social media account (M=2.11, SD=.79), although most participants reported having two or more active accounts (74.5%). The number of logins per day ranged from zero to 50 (M=8.00, SD = 8.25) and the majority said they spend approximately 60 minutes of their log-ins per day on a social media site (M=69.74, SD=72.15). The range of personal new content posts ranged from 0 to 15 daily with most participants (50.9%) indicated not posting their own content regularly (M=1.09, SD=2.02). Although most participants do not create posts of their own content, most participants (63.8%) comment on another users’ content at least once daily (M=5.44, SD=10.21). Participants indicated having a greater number of followers combined between all social media accounts (M=799.64, SD=1444.67) than they indicated having friends on the same social media sites (M=673.82, SD=757.23).
Overall, participants varied on social media activity, though most (38%) specified being somewhat/moderately active (M=2.98, SD=1.02).

**Primary Analyses**

Prior to conducting analyses, a correlation matrix was first produced (Table 1).

The highest correlation was between parasocial relationship and parasocial identification (Pearson correlation = .78).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for Study Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Social Med. Use</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Authenticity Self-Present</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.26**</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. PSR Identification</td>
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<td>1.28</td>
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<td>.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PSR = Parasocial relationship
Note: **p<.001

**Gender as predictor of PSR**

In order to test RQ1, which seeks to determine whether strength of parasocial relationships is predicted by gender, a simple linear regression was conducted. The analysis showed that there was no significant portion of the variance in parasocial relationship strength that can be explained by gender, $F(1, 221) = 3.70, R^2 = .02, p = .06$. This analysis does suggest that the relationship is approaching a positive significance, with males reporting stronger parasocial relationships than females. Table 2 reports the statistics associated with the analysis.
Table 2: Relationship Between Gender and PSR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( F(1, 221) = 3.70, R^2 = .02, p = .06 \)

Role of Degree of Feedback in PSR

To test RQ2, a simple linear regression was employed to examine role of degree of feedback received on social media as a predictor of parasocial relationship strength. Table 3 reports the statistics associated with this analysis, and shows that the degree of feedback received from a celebrity on social media accounted for a significant portion of the variance in parasocial relationship strength with the celebrity. Specifically, degree of feedback was a positive predictor of parasocial relationship strength.

Table 3: Degree of Feedback as Predictor of PSR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Feedback</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.33***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( F(1, 222) = 28.61, R^2 = .11, p < .001 \)

Note: ***p < .001

Authenticity of Celebrity Self-Presentation in PSR

RQ3 sought to determine whether a relationship exists between parasocial relationship strength and perceived celebrity authenticity of self-presentation. To test this, a bivariate correlation was employed. A significant moderate positive correlation was found between perceived celebrity authenticity of self-presentation and parasocial relationship strength, \( r = .512, p < .001 \). In other words, the more authentic the celebrity’s self-presentation was perceived to be, the stronger the parasocial relationship with the celebrity.
Identification as Potential Mediator Variable

Since RQ4 involves two mediation analyses, Baron and Kenny’s (1986) multi-step procedure for establishing mediation was utilized. In the first step, each predictor variable was independently assessed for its impact on the outcome variable. The second step involved the potential mediator being regressed against each of the predictor variables. For step three, the mediator was tested to determine if it significantly affected the outcome variable. Finally, the original predictor variables were again tested for their impact on the outcome variable, this time controlling for the potential mediator.

The first mediation analysis examined the relationship between perceived celebrity authenticity of self-presentation and parasocial relationship strength with parasocial identification as a potential mediator. A simple linear regression was employed between authenticity of self-presentation and parasocial relationship strength, and found authenticity of self-presentation to be a significant predictor, \( F(1, 222) = 78.67, R^2 = .26, p<.001 \). Next, a simple linear regression was run for authenticity of self-presentation and parasocial identification, also finding a significant relationship, \( F(1, 218) = 62.09, R^2 = .22, p<.001 \). A third simple linear regression was employed to examine the correlation between parasocial identification and parasocial relationship strength. This analysis found a significant relationship, \( F(1, 218) = 344.31, R^2 = .61, p<.001 \). Finally, a multiple regression looked for a relationship between authenticity of self-presentation and parasocial relationship strength while controlling for identification as a mediator. The multiple regression model was significant, \( F(2, 217) = 192.16, \) Adjusted \( R^2 = .64, p<.001 \), with authenticity of self-presentation acting as a significant predictor of parasocial
relationship strength, $t=4.02$, $\beta=.19$, $p<.001$. Identification was also found to be a significant predictor of PSR strength, $t=15.04$, $\beta=.70$, $p<.001$. The results of this mediation analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between perceived celebrity authenticity of self-presentation and parasocial relationship that is partially mediated by identification with the celebrity. This suggests that the more authentic a celebrity’s self-presentation is perceived to be, the greater an individual’s identification with the celebrity, and by extension the stronger their parasocial relationship (see Figure 1).

The second set of mediation analysis examined the relationship between social media use and parasocial relationship strength with identification as a mediator. First, a simple linear regression was employed to examine the relationship between social media use and parasocial relationship strength. This analysis revealed a significant relationship, $F(1, 221) = 47.10$, $R^2 = .26$, $p<.001$. A second linear regression found social media use to be a significant predictor of identification, $F(1, 218) = 23.85$, $R^2 = .10$, $p<.001$. As mentioned previously, identification is a significant predictor of parasocial relationship strength, $F(1, 218) = 344.31$, $R^2 = .61$, $p<.001$. Finally, a multiple regression test examined what affects social media use has on parasocial relationships controlling for identification. The multiple regression model was significant, $F(2, 217) = 197.31$, adjusted $R^2 = .65$, $p<.001$, with social media use being a significant predictor of PSR, $t=4.9$, $\beta=.19$, $p<.001$. Identification was also found to be a significant predictor of PSR, $t=16.97$, $\beta=.72$, $p<.001$. In light of this analysis, it is revealed that social media use is a significant positive predictor of parasocial relationship strength and is partially mediated by identification. This significant relationship suggests that the more an individual relies
on social media use, the greater their identification with a celebrity and, therefore, the stronger the parasocial relationship strength (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1.** Identification as Mediator in the relationship between Authenticity of Celebrity Self-presentation and PSR

![Diagram](image1)

Note: PSR = Parasocial Relationship
Note: ***p<.001

**Figure 2.** Identification as Mediator in the Relationship Between Social Media Use and PSR Strength

![Diagram](image2)

Note: PSR = Parasocial Relationship
Note: ***p<.001
Findings and Implications

The intent of this research was to examine the role that social media habits among young adults plays in parasocial relationship strength. Our contemporary society is saturated in social media, and media figures are no longer simply present in either radio or television discretely, as they were when Parasocial Relationship Theory was initially developed. Social media sites provide a new culture to media exposure for many people, with a deep intertextuality, which is the interconnection between media. This concept results in various media interacting with others by referencing content in other media and link together to form a complete picture (Allen, 2012.) In order to develop a complete picture of a person, such as a celebrity, a user has to interact with all of the interwoven media and piece together the information. Also, it is essential to examine the potential effects these features can have on social media users.

The results of this study clearly show that the various attributes of social media sites that were examined play important, key roles in parasocial relationship strength among users, with the only exception being the prediction of PSR strength based on gender. A significant relationship was found to exist between the amount of social media feedback received by a celebrity and the strength of the parasocial relationship with that celebrity. These forms of feedback are examples of paralinguistic digital affordances, or PDAs (Carr, Wohn, & Hayes, 2016). The names associated with the buttons, i.e. “Like,” provides the user with the perception of what another person clicking the button means. The reciprocation of social media activity is similar to that involved in interpersonal relationships. Individuals seek to be socially desirable to their peers, and having reciprocated approval confirms this desirability. This is no different when it comes to
parasocial relationships. Individuals seek to be liked and having a celebrity acknowledge their social media content relates this feeling of approval by the celebrity that the users’ actions or content are desirable to the celebrity. The more often an individual receives this feedback, the more he/she sees the celebrity approving of his/her content and thus, the stronger the parasocial relationship becomes.

Theoretical implications emerge regarding feedback and its importance in parasocial relationships. While these perceived relationships are not established through direct feedback, this adds to the body of research that feedback is becoming more essential to continuing these relationships for the viewers in contemporary society. With the emergence of social media and the fast track to even more being created yearly, we can no longer move back in time to a point where feedback was an abstract concept with no real intention. Older, traditional media created perceived feedback for the viewer, but contemporary social media allow feedback to be a reality (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2010). Celebrities have begun to embrace the importance of feedback to fans that follow on social media and this study shows that it is paying off. The more that celebrities see that their reinforcement of social media users’ behaviors and comments online result in more positive perceptions of them, the stronger their “brand” loyalty will become (Ledbetter & Redd, 2016). As stated earlier, a celebrity’s self is their brand and their overall success is based on the liking of their self-presentation in all respects of the media in which they are present (Bell, 2009). Celebrities can take to social media to provide individual or group feedback in order to show not only acknowledgement, but most importantly appreciation, for their fans and those who
continue to engage with them. This added feature of actual feedback by a celebrity is surely working to change the face of parasocial relationships.

The examination of perceived authenticity of celebrity self-presentation showed that the more authentic a celebrity is found to be on his/her social media accounts, the stronger the resulting parasocial relationships are. The concept of authenticity can be likened to honesty and truthfulness, socially desirable qualities in relationships (Ilicic & Webster, 2016). Authenticity for celebrities has to be established in many respects (Bell, 2009). Celebrities are assumed to be untrustworthy and “fake” until they are able to prove otherwise. The show and dance of celebrities rockets them into public attention and immediately everything is scrutinized about their actions and opinions. Surrounding the establishment of the celebrity, is the indication that something about that individual is special, distinctly different than others and worth the fame. Because fame is associated with wealth and power, the public makes the association that there is inherently something inauthentic about the celebrity; people do not just “become” a celebrity, it is an unattainable goal for most people. When users indicated that their favorite celebrities act like their true selves on social media, the more the users feel the celebrity can be trusted. Additionally, authenticity provides the view that celebrities are more down-to-earth and more similar to the average user than their celebrity status provides them. When users feel as though the celebrity is a real person with enough similar qualities to themselves, social media users have a greater ability to form perceived relationships with them.

Understanding the importance of authenticity can simply add to the research done on the concept of “celebrity.” Being a celebrity in contemporary society is different than
it was many years ago. Celebrities are more present in all aspects of media, with the rise of magazines and social media (Bell, 2009). This push to show the “realness” of celebrities as people has been on the rise, and this study shows why that is for the better (Ilicic & Webster, 2016). This establishment adds to the research on parasocial relationships as it moves past traditional concepts embedded in it. When the theory was developed, the idea of “celebrity” was less established and not a cornerstone in society, as it is today (Brown, 2015). Media figures used to be known in respect to a minimal number of media sources, whereas now media figures are known across the board of all media types. Media figures have moved away from the days of solely portraying a fictional character and are now based on their selves as brands, with character portrayals on the side. Because celebrities are now featured on media outlets as themselves, authenticity is more essential than ever. Viewers are less forgiving of indiscretions and hold celebrities to a higher standard, as celebrities are not “pretending” to be someone else, rather they are being who the audience is made to believe is their true selves (Ilicic & Webster, 2016). Social media provides just the landscape and tools celebrities need to reinforce this idea of authenticity. It gives them a playing field to express their thoughts and opinions in new ways to reach their fans and show their true colors. It is no surprise that authenticity is important for relationships, but authenticity is becoming a greater foundation for parasocial relationships than it was at its creation.

Finally, the study found that identification with a celebrity was found to be a partial mediator between both celebrity authenticity of self-presentation and PSR, as well as between social media use and PSR. Identification serves to strengthen the parasocial relationship strength further than either authenticity of self-presentation or social media
use do on their own. A user who can identify with a celebrity will, by extension, form a stronger parasocial relationship with that celebrity. When the celebrity reflects his/her values and beliefs, an individual is able to relate to that celebrity. The addition of the view that the celebrity is authentic just adds to the idea that the celebrity is socially similar to the user and acts to build on the perceived relationship that the user has with the celebrity. In the same accord, the more an individual relies on social media use in his/her everyday life, the more he/she begins to identify with celebrities and strengthen parasocial relationships with those celebrities. Frequent and continual use of social media ensures great exposure to the celebrity. Not to mention, a heavy reliance on social media for information seeking as well as relational maintenance results in a greater importance being placed on the content provided and consumed via social media.

Previous research suggested that women form stronger parasocial relationships than do men (Cohen, 1997), however this study, surprisingly, revealed a different result. While the regression only approached significance, it showed men as having a stronger parasocial relationship strength toward celebrities than women. A few possible explanations could be provided for this unexpected result. Women have been found to utilize social media in greater numbers than men (Helgeson, 1994; Pinquart, 2003), but this greater use could make women more immune to the effects of the features and have more experience sorting through content. More time on social media leads to more time managing relationships via the platforms, most commonly interpersonal relationships. But as celebrity social media posts show up alongside interpersonal relationships, women are likely more accustomed to the exposure to celebrity content. Another possible explanation could be based on internet and social media habit differences between men
and women. Men are more task-oriented during their online activities, while women are more reserved and focused on sociability. Women tend to turn to social media in order to maintain current relationships and men look to make new friends on the sites they use (Shi, Chen, & Show, 2016). Women may be turning to social media in order to simply maintain a parasocial relationship formed elsewhere, such as via a weekly television show. And at the same time, men may be seeking out celebrities via social media to learn more about them, in turn forming their parasocial relationships through social media. This could potentially result in stronger parasocial relationships being formed specifically through social media use.

This study adds to the current base of parasocial relationship research by providing insights into the role social media features play in parasocial relationship strength. The findings could be relayed to celebrity social media users to provide knowledge on their own habits and ways to strengthen these relationships users have with them in order to leverage greater publicity efforts. Additionally, this provides insights into the factors that influence social media users. Social media platforms could benefit from this research by placing greater attention to developing tools that enhance these features for users.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, social media sites play an integral role in parasocial relationships. The media playing field is ever changing and it is important for research to continue examining individual experiences with social media in light of new technologies and features. Celebrities are turning to social media in greater numbers in order to promote themselves and their projects, and users are seeing the influx constantly. The expectation in contemporary society is that users have a social media account and have become the source of information about everything and everyone, celebrities primarily. The power that social media has is immense and will simply continue to grow as a parasocial relationship maintenance tool. Having the power to directly contact a celebrity and provide a vote of confidence places the power in the hands of users like it has never before in the history of media. Both sides can see the immediate result of preferences, which give the ability to make changes to fit the desired outcomes in order to maintain positive relationships. Social media could be moving to change the face of parasocial relationships by providing the key reciprocation that traditional parasocial relationships lacked.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

First, the sample of this study could be viewed as a limitation. The sample utilized a convenience sample of university students and social media users in the researcher’s immediate circle. However, the advantages of the demographic composition of the study outweigh the limitations of the recruitment of participants. College students comprise the greatest population of social media users and those who were recruited via social media
groups are naturally appropriate due to their use of social media. Future research could examine differences in parasocial relationships by recruiting a sample population from both social media users and non-social media users in order to determine the differences in parasocial relationships between the groups.

Additionally, in order to gather such a large sample size, a survey method was used as it is most practical and provides a greater external validity for replication and explication of results. However, as a result, this study faces potential threat from low internal validity. Without having the control over the setting in which participants are utilizing social media, a causal relationship is more difficult to prove. Confounding variables could be at play in social media use while managing parasocial relationships. Perhaps the participants were not considering a single celebrity when answering the questions or were at varied points within discrete parasocial relationships. For example, those with a recently formed parasocial relationship may exhibit different social media interaction with celebrities than those users who have had longer established parasocial relationships with the same celebrity. Additionally, no specifics were given in regards to the type of celebrity to consider when answering the questions. As Cohen (2001) pointed out, identification is most commonly associated with fictional characters due to the “creation” of their social qualities in order to appeal to the greatest number of people. This potentially confounding variable could change the degree to which users experience parasocial relationships and future research should consider this component. This research focused on the gender of the participant, but the gender of the celebrity together with users’ genders could also play a role in the strength of parasocial relationships.
This research focused on the degree of feedback from celebrities during analysis. While this provides some insights, it limits the findings quite a bit by excluding the dimension of the source of the feedback. Future research could examine the different feedback sources to determine if different feedback types result in differences in parasocial relationship strength. For example, do those who receive a “Like” on their content experience different parasocial relationship strengths than those who receive a direct @reply from a celebrity. This would add on to this research and provide insights into social media habits on the part of celebrity users that could be applied to a variety of publicity ventures. An experimental study could examine the role of trust a bit further, by manipulating the user knowledge regarding the source of social media production. This could be done by measuring parasocial relationship strength primarily then providing participants with the implication that the media was produced by either the celebrity themselves or a “ghostwriter,” and measure the subsequent parasocial relationship qualities and trust.
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX A

### Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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</table>

Note: PSR = Parasocial relationship
Note: **p<.001
APPENDIX B

Table 2: Relationship Between Gender and PSR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
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<td></td>
<td>.128</td>
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$F(1, 221) = 3.70, R^2 = .02, p = .06$
APPENDIX C

Table 3: Degree of Feedback as Predictor of PSR

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<thead>
<tr>
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F (1, 222) = 28.61, R² = .11, p<.001

Note: ***p<.001
APPENDIX D

Figure 1. Identification as Mediator in the relationship between Authenticity of Celebrity Self-presentation and PSR

Note: PSR = Parasocial Relationship
Note: ***p<.001
APPENDIX E

Figure 2. Identification as Mediator in the Relationship Between Social Media Use and PSR Strength

Note: PSR = Parasocial Relationship
Note: ***p<.001
APPENDIX F

STUDY MEASURES

Demographics

1. What is your gender?
   - Male   Female   Other
2. How old are you?
   - [Indicate age in years]
3. What is your highest level of education?
   - High School/GED   Some College   Bachelor’s Degree
   - Master’s Degree   PhD Degree
4. What is your ethnicity? Check all that apply
   - White American  Black/African American  Asian American
   - Native American/Alaska Native  Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
   - Hispanic/Latino
5. Which of the following social media sites do you have an active account on?
   Select all that apply
   - Facebook   Twitter   Instagram
6. On average, how many combined log-ins do you have per day for your Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram accounts?
7. Approximately how many minutes per day do you spend on your active social media accounts indicated above combined?
8. Approximately how many times a day do you post new content, (i.e. status update, Tweet, Instagram picture post, etc.) combining activity from all active social media accounts indicated above?
9. Approximately how many comments do you make on other users’ content weekly?
10. About how many total friends do you have on your combined social media accounts indicated above?
11. About how many total followers do you have on your combined social media accounts indicated above?
12. How active would you say you are on your combined social media accounts?
    - 1=Not Active at All   2= Not Very Active   3= Moderate/Somewhat Active   4=Very Active   5= Extremely Active

Feedback [Likert scale: 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)]

1. Have you ever received feedback (Like, Tweet/Retweet, @Mention, or comment) on any of your content you have shared on social media from a celebrity?
   - If no feedback has been received, please skip the Feedback section of the survey
   - If yes, what source(s) of feedback have you received from a celebrity on social media? Select all that apply:
     - Facebook Like   FB Comment   Twitter like   Twitter retweet   Twitter @reply/mention
     - Instagram like   Instagram @reply/mention
Social Media Use  
[Likert scale: 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)]

1. Social media is part of my everyday activity
2. I am proud to tell people I’m on social media
3. Social media has become part of my daily routine
4. I feel out of touch when I haven’t logged onto social media for a while
5. I feel I am part of the my social media community
6. I would be sorry if my social media site shut down

Self-presentation  
[Likert scale: 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)]

1. I feel like celebrity is their true self on social media
2. I feel like celebrity is a completely different person online than I see elsewhere
3. Celebrity posts information about themselves on their social media profile that is not true
4. I feel like celebrity has to keep up a front on social media
5. I have a good sense of who celebrity is and many of the things they do on social media is a way of showing that who they are online is similar to who they are offline
6. I have a good sense of what celebrity wants in life and using social media is a way to express their views and beliefs
7. The way celebrity presents themselves on social media is how I imagine they are in real life
8. I feel like celebrity likes their image and reflects this in their social media profiles
9. On social media, celebrity can tryout many aspects of who they are much more than they can in real life
10. Celebrity changes their photos on their social media profile to show people the different aspects of who they are
11. I feel like celebrity has many sides to themselves and show it on their social media
12. I feel like celebrity tries to impress others with the photos they post of themselves on their social media profile
13. I feel like celebrity only shows the aspects of themselves on social media that they know people would like
14. Celebrity post things on social media to show aspects of who they want to be
15. Who the celebrity wants to be is often reflected in the things they do on their social media profile (e.g., status posts, comments, photos, etc.)

Parasocial Interaction  
[Likert scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much]

1. Celebrity makes me feel as if I am with someone I know well
2. If celebrity joined social media, I would follow them on social media
3. I see celebrity as a natural, down-to-earth person
4. If I saw a link an article on social media about celebrity, I would read it
5. I would like to meet celebrity in person
6. I feel that I understand the emotions celebrity experiences
7. I find myself thinking about celebrity on a regular basis
8. I do not have any feelings about celebrity
9. I like to follow celebrity on social media
10. Whenever I am unable to get news about celebrity, I really miss it
11. Learning about celebrity is really important to me
12. I have been seeking out information in the media to learn more about celebrity
13. I sometimes go to the internet to learn more about celebrity
14. Sometimes I feel like writing celebrity on social media
15. Celebrity understands the kinds of things I want to know
16. I sometimes make remarks to celebrity while on their social media page
17. I am very much aware of the details of celebrity’s life
18. I feel like I have very little understanding of celebrity as a person
19. I look forward to seeing celebrity in the media or on social media
20. I am not really interested in celebrity
21. I would like to meet celebrity
22. Celebrity’s interactions on social media are similar to mine with friends
23. I would like to be more like celebrity
24. I usually agreed with celebrity

**Identification**

[Likert scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much]

25. Celebrity reminds me of myself.
26. I have the same qualities as celebrity
27. I seem to have the same beliefs or attitudes as celebrity
28. I have the same problems as celebrity
29. I can imagine myself as celebrity
30. I can identify with celebrity