#Parasocial Interaction: Celebrity Endorsements

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By

Kristen J. Schroath

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#PARASOCIAL INTERACTION: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

Dissertation written by

Kristen J. Schroath

B.A., John Carroll University, 2003
MBA, Kent State University, 2006
PhD, Kent State University, 2016

Approved by

________________________________________________________________________
Federico Subervi, PhD., Chair, Doctoral Dissertation Committee

________________________________________________________________________
Jeffery Fruit, MA, Doctoral Dissertation Committee

________________________________________________________________________
David Robins, PhD., Doctoral Dissertation Committee

________________________________________________________________________
Pamela Grimm, PhD., Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Approved by

________________________________________________________________________
Danielle Sarver Coombs, PhD., Chair, Doctoral Studies Committee

________________________________________________________________________
Amy Reynolds, PhD., Dean of the College of Communication and Information
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Chapter One

Introduction and Problem Statement

On May 6, 2004, over 51 million people watched the final episode of *Friends*, which aired for ten years (Associated Press, 2004). After that final episode aired, viewers began to feel a sense of loss, distress, and even sadness. The viewers were showing the same symptoms as if they had just broken up with a partner or experienced the loss of a close friend or family member. What could cause this strange phenomenon of experiencing such strong emotions from simply watching the end of a television sitcom? Eyal and Cohen (2006) explained that the viewers had formed strong parasocial interactions with the cast, and thus, felt the symptoms of a parasocial break-up.

One of the ways media scholars have studied the relationship between fans and celebrities is through the use of the Horton and Wohl’s (1956) parasocial framework (Hoffner, 1996; Levy, 1979; Perse, 1990; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). Parasocial interaction is “conceptualized as an imaginary, one-sided friendship...based on vicarious interaction (television viewing) rather than actual interaction...[viewers] feel that they know and understand the persona [celebrity] in the same intimate way they know and understand flesh-and-blood friends” (Perse & Rubin, 1989, p. 60). Parasocial interaction is an outcome of forming an imaginary relationship with the celebrity. The majority of studies of parasocial interaction has been in the context of traditional media, such as television and radio shows. The inception of social media as a new media phenomenon
has changed the way people communicate with each other; this includes fans and celebrities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Hargittai, 2007; Kwon & Wen, 2010). Parasocial interaction needs to be further studied within the new media context; it gives fans access to more information about their favorite celebrities. The inception of social media has created an improved “bridge” between celebrities and their fans, allowing for more immediate communication and interaction. The one aspect of this dissertation is to study how social media may strengthen parasocial interaction between celebrities and their fans, and how those strengthened relationships may influence product endorsements.

Social media may influence parasocial interaction because, in their own respective ways, social media impacts how people communicate with celebrities. Social media can be defined as “activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media...Web–based application that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios” (Safko & Brake, 2009, p. 6). Social media provide immediate information. Based on Safko and Brake’s (2009) research, social media are more interactive than traditional media because they provide a place where people have the ability to easily share personal information and communicate with each other. For example, social media offer celebrities opportunities to respond to fans’ comments about them. The celebrities thus have a direct line of communication through social networking to their fans. Hence, social media permit fans to find more intimate information about the celebrity because it comes from the direct source without the entertainment industry filtering the information (Sparks, 2010). I also want to emphasize
that the social media definition applies equally to celebrities and the public in general. Some celebrities just have a larger network.

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand how social media influence parasocial interaction between fans and celebrities. Secondly, it also seeks to address the question: do parasocial interactions fostered by social media influence consumers’ purchase behavior? This research is different from the previous research on the topic because parasocial interaction has rarely been studied within the context of social media and parasocial interaction’s influence on celebrity endorsements. Further, little research has explicitly examined the relationship between parasocial interaction and consumer choice behavior, specifically related to celebrity endorsements. Later in the dissertation, I will discuss the second purpose in more detail.

There are many types of social media and it seems that new types are introduced to the public on a regular basis. However, I decided to review parasocial interaction and social media through the use of the two most popular social media outlets: Facebook and Twitter. I chose Facebook because it has the most social media users at over one billion members (Facebook Investor Relations, 2014; Protalinski, 2013). Twitter has over 800 million accounts, of which 255 million are active members that write over 500 million Tweets per day (About Twitter, Inc. 2014; NPR, 2014).

Facebook is defined as a social networking Internet site creating virtual communities (Acquisti & Gross, 2006; Alhabash, Littau, Wise, Eckler, & Kononova, 2009; Wang & Gloviczki, 2008). In 2010, Facebook had over 175 million active users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Within the last four years, it has increased to over one billion members (Facebook Investor Relations, 2014; Protalinski, 2013).
Twitter is defined as a type of micro-blogging application (Java et al., 2007). It is a way to quickly and almost continuously share information between individuals, celebrities and fans in particular. In July 2009, there were over 41 million Twitter users (Zhao & Rosson, 2009). By 2009, 1.47 billion social relationships and over 4,000 topics were discussed via Twitter (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010; Zhao & Rosson, 2009). Within the last several years, Twitter has now grown in popularity and currently has approximately 316 million users (Twitter.com, 2015).

Media outlets are businesses that are competing for viewership, a business commodity (Harris, 2009). Approximately 93% of companies have developed their own Facebook and Twitter accounts (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Of those companies, 92% utilize Facebook and 84% use Twitter to form or maintain relationships with current or potential customers and as a means to advertise their services and products (Stelzner, 2011). I infer this is a powerful indicator that companies are using social media to sell their products and that the trend will continue.

The second purpose of this dissertation is to understand how parasocial interaction through social media (Facebook and Twitter) influences consumers’ purchase behavior, particularly the impact of a celebrity mention of brands in social media, either as a formal endorsement or simply out of a genuine connection, either good or bad, with the brand.
Figure 1 presents a model that serves as a conceptual map of the main contributions that form the parasocial interaction framework. Throughout the literature review, the following propositions will be addressed. First, the more frequently a fan has access to information about a media figure (celebrity), the stronger the parasocial interaction. In addition, the stronger perceived similarities a fan has to the media figure (celebrity), the stronger parasocial interaction. Lastly, fans that form a parasocial relationship with the media figure (celebrity) are more likely to have their attitudes and behaviors influenced by the media figures.

In summary, parasocial interaction framework will be used as this dissertation’s foundation. The objective will be to use the framework to connect the two main aspects of the dissertation: social media and celebrity endorsements. In the chapters to follow, I will review
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Foundations of the Parasocial Interaction Framework.

Horton and Wohl’s (1956) seminal piece of literature introduces the framework for parasocial interaction, though the authors listed no specific assumptions or propositions. A proposition is akin to a hypothesis as it suggests relationships between variables that were introduced in the parasocial framework. Nevertheless, as they stated, “our observations in this paper are intended to be no more than suggestions for further work” (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Their observations and assertions are the foundation for how scholars have studied the formation of parasocial interaction, the role of media, and potential outcomes.

Horton and Wohl (1956) introduce parasocial interaction as a process where fans form intimate and imaginary relationships with a media character or figure. Through parasocial interaction, fans perceive celebrities as part of their network of friends. This bond of intimacy offers fans emotional and social gratification, which motivates them to seek out further interactions. Horton and Wohl (1956) identify several factors that aid fans in the formation of parasocial interaction, which include how frequently the fan watches or listens to the celebrity and perceived similarities between the fan and the celebrity. The authors also argue that parasocial interaction can change fans’ attitudes and behaviors.

One of the first assertions by Horton and Wohl (1956) is that people form parasocial interactions with different media personas. They list different types of media persona,
including celebrities, radio and television hosts, actors who are playing themselves or fictional characters. Some of the factors that can create parasocial interaction include the frequency with which people watch the shows, similarities between the viewer and the persona, and relatability to the show’s content.

Horton and Wohl (1956) believe entertainment industry leaders apply the parasocial interaction framework in hopes of increasing viewership, and also to develop viewer loyalty. They suggest that industry uses different persuasion techniques to form parasocial interaction in hopes of gaining sponsorships and advertisements. Some of those techniques are media dissemination of information about the personas and different types of presentation styles on television and radio shows.

Horton and Wohl (1956) propose that media only allow people to receive carefully vetted information about the personas’ personal lives through their fictional roles. Traditional media create and define the way fans perceive personas in hopes of developing the illusion of an intimate relationship. They also contend a popular method is for the persona to act in a predictable manner in an emotional setting in their personal lives. This aids people in developing an easy understanding of and empathy towards the persona. People also want more news, and personas are told to specifically use and share information about sponsors’ products in advertisements and magazines. Another tactic is to use media, especially magazines, to create contests to meet the persona or carefully orchestrate places for persona to sign autographs.

Horton and Wohl (1956) further argue that the relationships between people and fictional personas must demonstrate sympathy, sociability, and intimacy to create parasocial
interaction. People must perceive the information to be realistic, credible and following societal norms. One way for the media to do this is to demonstrate that the persona and people have similarities. A persona’s actions must be similar to how people act in their everyday lives.

Additionally, Horton and Wohl (1956) suggest the entertainment industry uses persona to influence fans to buy products to mimic celebrities, such as soaps, clothes, and makeup. Purchasing celebrity-endorsed products is another way for fans to form parasocial interaction with the personas. They argue that companies try to use strong parasocial interaction to increase product sales and generate revenue.

**Frequency and its Relationship to Parasocial Interaction.**

Frequency refers to how often people have contact with the celebrity. An example would be how often a fan reads a celebrity’s Tweets. Frequency is among the main measures of parasocial interaction discussed in this subsection of the literature review. The focus is on studies that examined the relationship between frequency and parasocial interaction (Chia & Poo, 2009; Cohen, 2004; Davisson & Booth, 2007; Kassing & Sanderson, 2009; Nikunen, 2007; Williams, 2010); in other words, the influence that frequency has on people forming a parasocial interaction. In essence, that literature proposes that the more frequent people have contact with media figures, the more it strengthens parasocial interaction.

Scholars such as Auter and Palmgreen (2000), Hoffner (1996), Hoffner and Cantor (1991), and Turner (1993) have found that the frequency with which the viewer has contact with a character is proportional to the likelihood of forming a parasocial interaction. Those authors’ research established that there is a positive relationship between watching a show and
form a parasocial interaction; the more frequent the viewership, the stronger the parasocial interaction.

Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) also support the importance of how frequent contact with the character is in forming parasocial interaction. These authors studied viewers’ relationships with newscasters. The results indicated that viewers are more likely to develop stronger parasocial interaction when they frequently watch the show. Perse and Rubin’s (1989) study also demonstrated that frequently watched television shows amplify parasocial interaction.

Similarly, Rubin and Step (2000) found frequency impacted radio listeners and their parasocial interaction with radio hosts. The study indicated that listeners who listened more frequently had a stronger parasocial interaction. The authors also found that if the listener had a parasocial relationship with the radio host, they were more likely to repeatedly listen to the host’s show.

This was also assessed by McCutcheon’s (2001) study, which reviewed how people’s different personality characteristics contributed to the frequency with which they watched television. The results showed that there was a differential impact of frequency on the formation of parasocial interactions. People who were shy (but not those who were outgoing) were more likely to form parasocial interaction with the celebrities if they watched the show more frequently.

Now with social media, fans have more options to find information about their favorite celebrities. In the context of social media, there is a need for further studies to understand how social media may influence the level of frequency and its effects on forming parasocial
New Context: Social Media (Facebook and Twitter).

This section presents the literature related to the differences between traditional and social media (Facebook and Twitter). As stated in the introduction, new types of social media are being introduced to the public on a regular basis. Facebook and Twitter are the most relevant for this study because they are the most popular types of social media. An important point requiring clarification is the differences between traditional and social media. I contend that I cannot understand if social media extends the parasocial interaction framework without further investigation into the relationship between traditional and social media.

Traditional versus Social Media. Social media differs from traditional media because they permit fans to form bonds with other fans by creating virtual communities. Fans do this because they share the same interests, exchange comments and receive feedback from those who belong to the same social media (Malone, Grant, Turbak, Brobst & Cohen, 1987; Jones, 1995; Markus, 1987). Fans making the effort to befriend the celebrity can join together out of mutual interest with a greater likelihood of being heard (Acar, 2008; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). For example, Facebook gives fans the opportunity to add comments to a celebrity’s wall, send messages, and make suggestions on the celebrity’s Facebook profile.

Furthermore, social media are more interactive, which alters the way fans communicate with celebrities. This communication process is different from what has been studied in traditional parasocial interaction research because social media’s communication process allows fans to follow what the celebrities are doing in real time, on a day by day or minute by
minute basis, which is nearly impossible for more time-challenged traditional media (Malone et. al, 1987; Jones, 1995; Markus, 1987).

For example, traditional media are slower at presenting the newest information to the public, while social media, like Facebook and Twitter, provide a means to quickly find information about what celebrities and friends are doing while it is happening (Kassing & Sanderson, 2009; Theberge, 2006). Thus, I propose that, no longer do fans have to wait for the next day’s headlines in traditional media, because in a substantially shorter period of time, in some cases immediately, they can go to their favorite celebrities’ social media to see what those celebrities are doing. Other people and scholars may argue that online news sources can provide constantly updated information about the celebrity. However, excluding instances of paparazzi, fans would still have to wait until the celebrity personally makes the information public, such as a Tweet.

One specific example is Lebron James who, on July 2, 2014, at 8:32 AM, Tweeted “Bronny caught him a black fin tuna. Need to put him on "Wicked Tuna". #WeWasHyped #WhatColorWasIt... http://instagram.com/p/p-Am0mCTIt/. “ He had over 680 reTweets from his Twitter followers, and 2,574 of his followers marked it as “favorite.” In addition to the information, he posted the actual picture of his son, Bronny, catching the fish. Almost 250,000 followers “liked” the Tweet and picture and there were over 6,200 comments. The information was instantaneously received by his followers, while traditional television media (e.g., CNN, ESPN), radio shows (e.g., The Herd), and online news sources (e.g., bleacherreport.com) had to wait to disseminate James’ Tweet and picture after his social media followers (fans) had already received the information a day earlier.
Facebook. This social media networking site emphasizes the group. Facebook was designed to create repetitive searches and information about people’s friends, which contributed to an inclusive support system in their Facebook network (Acquisti & Gross, 2006; Wang & Gloviczki, 2008). Alhabash et al. (2009) found that Facebook created an emotionally supportive environment by forming a supportive virtual community. The virtual community is complex, with many variables making it strong. It down-plays the individual’s role in the community and places an emphasis on the group, similar to the way fans interact with a celebrity or show (Wang & Gloviczki, 2008).

Alhabash et al. (2009) studied how Facebook changed a user’s relationships with other members in their network. People searched on a regular basis to find out how their “friends” were doing. The researchers suggested there were several ways the people formed the emotional support system. Friends commented on other members’ comments on their walls and updates. Some of the comments were associated with members’ pains, such as work stresses, or shared in joys, such as birthdays, in the same kinds of ways that friends in face-to-face conversation commiserate and celebrate life events. An example of finding social and emotional support on Facebook was on May 12, 2014, when Michael Sam, the first openly gay college football player, was drafted into the NFL. During the draft, ESPN showed Sam kissing his boyfriend. This caused controversy about gays kissing on television (ESPN.com). However, his fans on Facebook supported him by creating a day where everyone posted pictures of the fans kissing their partners (Facebook, 2014).

Moving on from connecting only with their direct family and friends through Facebook, people are now using Facebook to make connections with celebrities. Fans can join social
groups, a separate structure in the Facebook platform that is dedicated to their favorite celebrities. Furthermore, celebrities have their own Facebook profiles where fans can “befriend” them. Fans must create a user profile, find the star’s Facebook page, and become part of the celebrity’s group by using Facebook’s “Friend” function (Acar, 2008; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

The repetitive nature of using Facebook forms an inclusive support system. For example, this was seen when soccer player Neymar da Silva Santos Jr. got injured during a world cup soccer game. He cheered on his fans to support his team on Facebook. His post received close to 1,200,000 “likes” and almost 55,000 “shares.” Santos created an inclusive supportive system for his team by posting a Facebook message (Facebook.com).

In addition to finding emotional support and a sense of community, research has shown that people earn more social capital by using Facebook. Social capital is the perception of their social status and how much they are worth as a person. Social capital is important because it ties into the notion of feeling like a viable part of society. Similar to developing an emotional supportive community, Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) found that students who used Facebook more frequently were more apt to increase their social capital.

**Twitter.** Twitter is another new social media outlet that has become a means for communicating with celebrities. As a type of micro-blogging, it is now frequently being used to send very short messages throughout the day for celebrity followers to read (Zhao & Rosson, 2009). Micro-blogging platforms like Twitter feed fans real-time information about the daily activities of celebrities (Java et al., 2007; Huberman, Romero, & Wu, 2008). Twitter is a way to share information, but also a way for others to seek information as well. “Emotionally, people
seem to use micro-blogging to achieve a level of cyberspace presence being felt and to feel another layer of connection with friends and the world” (Zhao & Rosson, 2009, p.1). Twitter is a social media outlet that has created a new landscape in which fans and celebrities connect, even though it is still not face-to-face communication.

Twitter can influence the discussion topics of its users’ Tweets because they can re-tweets by other users about different topics (Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto, & Gummadi, 2010). The more followers people have on their social media, the more potential outreach and influence they have on others (Romero, Galuba, Asur, & Huberman, 2011). When fans have Twitter accounts, celebrities can use Twitter to convey personal information and create intimacy between themselves and their followers. Celebrities see their followers as fans, while fans perceive the celebrities as friends or intimate relations (Marwick, 2011). For example, in December of 2014, Khloe Kardashian was going through a very public divorce. She shared intimate information about her feelings regarding the divorce on her Twitter account. She wrote, “This, in and of itself, is heart breaking and torture to my soul.” She continued on May 14, 2014, to update her fans by writing, “Still hurts...Maybe it always will.” Kardashian received close to 5,500 retweets and 7,125 likes to her post.

Fans use Twitter to connect with their favorite celebrities and can view Tweets on the celebrities’ Twitter accounts, including celebrities’ endorsements for companies, often their own. Celebrities are building their brand by connecting with their fan base through tweets (Illicic & Webster, 2008).

**Differences between Facebook and Twitter.** Facebook and Twitter share many similarities, but they have differences that may impact parasocial interaction. First, they are two different types
of social media and operate on different platforms; a social networking site (Facebook) and micro-blogging (Twitter). Facebook is traditionally used on a computer, while over 40% of Twitter users send Tweets via their phones (marketingcharts.com, 2014; statisticsbrain.com, 2014). Because the majority of Tweets are sent through the phone, the users posting to Twitter have the ability to update information on a much timelier basis because they can send Tweets as they are participating in an activity. Also, Twitter restricts the amount of information you can share at a time, 140 characters or fewer, which makes it faster to read than a typical Facebook post (Twitter.com, 2015). On Facebook, users must go through different Internet pages to gain specific information about a friend, although they do have the opportunity to share as much information as they would like at one time. Furthermore, people tend to Tweet throughout the day, while Facebook users will update information less frequently (marketingcharts.com, 2014; statisticsbrain.com, 2014).

Another new trend is that, for several reasons, people are changing their Facebook profiles for impression management. The recent influx of parents joining (Facebook was originally intended for college students) and also the potential for employers reviewing people’s Facebook profiles in their hiring decision process are motivating users to erase comments, pictures, and posts to fit a specific image. They are self-censoring the content on their profile pages to create an acceptable public impression (He, Van de Vijuer, Espinosa, & Mui, 2014; Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). Impression management has not yet been an issue for Twitter users. Thus, I argue that the information in a Tweet is less filtered and more personalized, or at least perceived as such by fans. I contend that people receive more frequent and personal information from Twitter; the kind of information you might expect to
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receive from a friend. Therefore, there is a greater likelihood of forming a parasocial interaction based on Twitter than Facebook.

Building on the aforementioned literature on frequency and its relationship to parasocial interaction and social media, I present the first research question:

R1: Does frequency of following the celebrity on social media impacts parasocial interaction rather than only watching or listening to the celebrity using traditional media?

The literature suggests that if fans have more frequent contact with the celebrity, they are more likely to form a stronger parasocial interaction. Now, fans have the ability to watch or listen to their favorite celebrities, but also to follow them on Facebook or Twitter. Thus, the first hypothesis follows:

H1: People who use Facebook or Twitter more frequently to follow a celebrity will form a stronger parasocial interaction with the celebrity than people who use it less frequently to follow the celebrity.

Social media offer a new context in which to study the impact of frequency and how it will influence fans’ parasocial interaction with the celebrity. There needs to be further investigation, which is what I intend to do for this study. I will use the body of literature to support the importance of investigating frequency and parasocial interaction.

Social media give the fans additional ways to have more frequent contact with the celebrities. Fans that use social media have more frequent contact, because it is another source for them to gain additional and more personal nature of the information about the celebrities.
Fans and the Impact of Perceived Shared Similarities with Media Figures.

Another line of parasocial interaction research investigates how perceived similarities affect parasocial interaction development. Not surprisingly, researchers found that people were more likely to form stronger parasocial interactions with characters they perceived as sharing similar attitudes and beliefs (Rubin & Step, 2000; Turner, 1993). People thought that the celebrity shared their views, even if the show never talked about the celebrity’s personal attitude or beliefs.

I propose the same applies with people following celebrities on Facebook and Twitter. Researchers established that people were more likely to form stronger parasocial interactions with characters they perceived as sharing similar attitudes and beliefs (Brown & Basil, 1995; Derrick, Gabriel, & Tippin, 2008; Katz, Liebes, & Berko, 1992; Papa, Auwal, Singhal, Law, Pant, Sood, Rogers, & Shefner-Rogers, 2000; Tian & Hoffner, 2010).

Perse (1990) focused on how perceived similarities needed to exist to develop parasocial interaction. The context of the study was to review newscasters’ environments and topics. The results indicated that if the listener perceived the story to be real, then they were more likely to believe the newscaster shared their understanding of reality and also considered the news content to be true. This increased the likelihood of viewers believing they shared similar views with the hosts, thus increasing the likelihood of parasocial interactions with the newscasters. Turner (1993) also found that people were more likely to form parasocial interaction with television cast members who they perceived as sharing similar attitudes. The fans developed a stronger parasocial interaction than those who did not share perceived similarities with the celebrity. Another factor in creating parasocial interaction was the
perception of the media figure’s background. Parasocial interactions were stronger towards characters whose perceived backgrounds were similar to those of the viewers (Turner, 1993).

To better understand the relationship between perceived similarities and parasocial interaction, Rubin and Step (2000) examined people who listened to call-in talk radio hosts. Their study’s results indicated the listeners’ perception that their views were congruent with the radio hosts created stronger parasocial interaction. The authors also found that listeners thought that the hosts shared their views, even if the radio host never mentioned his or her viewpoint on any given subject matter. The listener merely assumed the host shared their viewpoint across domains even if the host did not agree with the listener’s viewpoints.

While the literature review has mainly covered studies with adult participants, scholars studied how parasocial interaction affects children. Wishful identification is similar to parasocial interaction because the children identify with the characters and then form imaginary relationships (Noble, 1975; Williams, LaRose, & Frost, 1981). Wishful identification created future social beliefs (Brown & Cody, 1991; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Rubin & McHugh, 1987, Tian & Hoffner, 2010). They were more likely to form parasocial interaction with characters with similar attributes. Character traits such as attractiveness, intelligence, humor, strength, and social behaviors were predictor variables for wishful identification (Feiltizen & Linne, 1975; Hoffner, 1996; Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005). Children who identified with more successful people were more likely to become successful in their own endeavors; they were also more likely to mimic those people that shared perceived similarities with them.

Historically, Horton and Wohl (1956) suggested that parasocial interaction is formed because of similarities fans share with celebrities. Prisbell and Andersen (1980) found that
“regardless of causation, increases of perceived homophily [similarities] are associated with the increases in the frequency of interaction” (p.23). Meanwhile, Hoffner and Cantor (1991) found that characters in the media can potentially validate a fan’s beliefs and concerns. Also, if people believe they share similarities with the character [celebrity], they were more likely to look for more information about the character [celebrity]. Hutchinson found similar results. Hutchinson’s (1982) study results supported that people to seek out more information about the character [celebrity]. It is more likely for people who believe they share similarities to identify with the character or celebrity (Hoffner, 1996). There is support that students also are influenced by perceived similarities. Boon and Lomore’s (2001) study found perceived similarities and intimacy changed the students’ attitudes towards themselves.

People seek out others that share their similar views and beliefs. Also, the more similar a person is to someone, the greater the likelihood they will like the other person (Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988). If the person likes another person, they are more likely to change their views and beliefs to be more similar to the other person. More recently, researchers (e.g., Byrne, 1992; Duck, 1998; Kenny, 1994; Monsour, 1994) have found that relationships are formed based on the perception of similarities. In the context of radio talk shows, listeners are more likely to listen to the show, especially shows that are driven by opinion content (Rubin & Step, 2000).

It also appears that perceived similarity impacts people’s political views. Perceived similarities influence people’s attitude towards a candidate during politically televised debates. Rounder and Perfloff’s (1988) study results showed people thought more positively towards candidates who shared similar values and beliefs. The participants who watched the debate
believed the candidate who they shared similarities with the most won the debate (Rounder & Perfloff, 1988). In addition, the researchers found that people exaggerated the differences between the candidates, based upon those perceived similarities. While I will discuss attitude and behavioral changes later in the literature review, the study indicated perceived similarities indicated positive attitudes towards the candidate impacted voters’ behavioral intent; a precursor to behavioral change.

Next, Ho’s (2007) study examined if participants perceived a media figure to be attractive, they would develop stronger parasocial interactions. That indeed was the outcome. In addition, other researchers (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Schiappa et al., 2007, Shramm & Hartmann, 2008; Turner, 1993) have indicated perceived attractiveness is an aspect of perceived similarities. The higher the perceived attractiveness, the more likely it was that people would pay attention to the media figure. Those researchers have also found that the stronger the perceived attractiveness, the greater the illusion that the media figures were making direct contact with their viewers, i.e., that media figures were directly addressing them. Hartmann and Goldhoorn (2011) identified that it was the media figure’s face and eyes that were the most influential in viewers’ decisions on what they considered to be attractive.

Fans identifying similarities with a celebrity is an important aspect in forming parasocial interaction with a celebrity. As the previously mentioned studies suggest, the more a fan perceives shared similarities, the more likely they are to form parasocial interactions. If the fan perceives he or she shares the same views as the celebrity, it amplifies parasocial interaction. This leads to the next research question. In summary, the literature clearly demonstrates a link between similarity and use of traditional media. I propose testing the extent to which similarity
plays a role in the decision to use social media to follow a celebrity.

R2: Do perceived similarities with the celebrity motivate fans to follow the celebrity’s Facebook, Twitter, or both?

The literature supports the idea that fans who perceive themselves to be more similar to the celebrity form stronger parasocial interaction. I suggest fans are more likely to make contact with celebrities when they have higher parasocial interactions, which will motivate them to join the celebrity’s social media because those media offer fans more, and seemingly unfiltered, access to information about the celebrity’s opinions, values, and belief system. Thus, the following hypothesis:

H2: The greater the perceived similarity with the celebrity, the greater the likelihood of following that celebrity on Twitter or Facebook.

For example, if you are a conservative republican, you are more likely to join a conservative republican presidential nominee’s social media accounts because you believe he or she shares similar values and beliefs. Conversely, if you are a democrat, you might perceive many similarities with Hillary Clinton, thus the greater likelihood of joining her social media accounts. Of course, politics is just one example where one might perceive similarities. An individual could simply share a similar sense of humor and outlook on life in general. That could be sufficient to motivate a fan to join a celebrity’s social media accounts. With the exception of President Barack Obama, the most followed celebrities on Twitter are singers, actors, comedians, and talk show hosts (Twitter.com, 2015).

Perceived similarities is the second area that was discussed in the literature review. The literature supported the assertion that the higher the perceived similarities with the celebrity,
the more likely it is for a fan to form a parasocial interaction. Next, I will present two potential outcomes of parasocial interaction: attitude and behavioral changes. The attitude change is the impetus for behavioral changes.

Influence of Celebrities on Attitude and Behavioral Changes.

Attitude and behavioral changes are an outcome of forming a parasocial interaction. The final section of this review of the literature on parasocial interaction will present studies that support the assertion that parasocial interaction can change fans’ attitudes and behaviors. The previous sections have focused on factors that have the potential to increase parasocial interaction. In this section, I will focus on possible outcomes of high level of parasocial interaction.

On November 7, 1991, Magic Johnson, a famous basketball player, announced he was HIV positive. Johnson’s situation raised the HIV/AIDS health issue, controversial and at the time usually hushed in public discourse, to the mass audience. Brown and Basil (1995) studied the impact of this announcement. The authors wanted to understand the relationship between the publicity surrounding Magic Johnson’s case and high risk sexual behavior. They did a longitudinal study focusing on how Magic Johnson’s announcement influenced other people’s attitudes towards HIV and influenced their behavior. By 1993, 61% of respondents changed their attitudes towards HIV to be more positive. Roughly 45% of the participants’ behavior changed because of the announcement that a straight man could contract HIV.

Hollander (1993) also studied the effect of Magic Johnson’s announcement and found participants started using sexual protection (Hollander, 1993). The results of both studies indicated that fans with a parasocial interaction with Magic Johnson had increased concerns
Parasocial interaction was measured before asking behavioral and attitude related questions. There were also behavioral outcomes. First, fans were more likely to go seek testing for the disease. Second, they were more likely to use sexual protection. Thus, higher parasocial interaction can have a major impact on changing fans’ attitudes, which can then lead to changes in behavior.

Another example of the impact of parasocial interaction on behavior is Perse and Rubin’s (1989) study. They found that people developed parasocial interactions with soap opera stars, and that interaction helped reduce uncertainty in real life situations. Watching the characters deal with uncertainty on the shows taught the viewers how to change their behavior to reduce their own uncertainty. Perse and Rubin’s (1989) findings were based on the assumption that people were capable of predicting the television characters’ feelings and attitudes, and subsequently changed their behaviors to mimic how the stars’ acted in uncertain situations, thus helping the viewers reduce uncertainty with others during face-to-face interpersonal relationships in their own lives.

Katz, Liebes, and Berko (1992) found the more media content related to people, the more likely they were to change their behavior based on the content of the shows. Furthermore, Papa et al. (2000) researched behavioral changes when television fans watched educational and developmental television shows. Their study found the more people had self-efficacy, the more likely they would change their behavior to match what they learned from the television shows. Fans with high parasocial interaction were more likely to learn from the shows and use the new knowledge to change their behavior to match what was being aired in the educational television shows. Additionally, people with high parasocial interaction with the
educational characters were capable of persuading others to adopt the new positive behaviors and attitudes they learned on the shows.

Researchers have also found that parasocial interaction can change people’s attitudes and behaviors in other ways. For example, radio listeners changed their daily schedule around the time the show aired, which added to more frequent contact with the host (Rubin & Step, 2000). Television viewers with parasocial interactions also were changing their behavior in order to watch their favorite celebrities’ television shows. Other studies have exposed viewers to characters with differing belief systems and encouraged the viewers to develop parasocial relationships with these characters in order to gauge attitudinal and behavioral change. For example, Shiappa, Gregg, and Hewes (2005) studied how parasocial interaction can contribute to changing views of minority groups, such as homosexuals. In their study, straight men were shown gay men on a television show. The study found that viewers’ high level of imaginary social contact and parasocial interaction with the characters lead to more positive views of gay men on the television show.

Another example of the relationship between parasocial interaction and behavior change stems from Auter and Palmgreen’s (2000) study that examined Vice President Dan Quayle’s negative comments about the television series Murphy Brown. At the time, Quayle publically condemned the show and attacked the main character, Murphy Brown, for being a single mother on a prime time television show. He wanted the show to be changed or cancelled and tried to persuade people to stop watching the show. The authors found that for viewers who had stronger parasocial interaction with Murphy Brown, their attitude towards her became more positive. Even though Vice President Quayle was a prominent political figure, he
did not succeed in persuading people to stop watching the show. Instead, Quayle’s critique led viewers to become more engaged with the show and supportive of Murphy Brown’s choice.

Other fields of research have connected parasocial interaction with other theories, such as the nature of attachment styles and its effects on parasocial interaction (e.g., Cohen, 2004; Cole & Leets, 1999). Cole and Leets (1999) evaluated how attachment theory was applied to parasocial interaction and how people related to television characters. They found that there was a direct link between viewers’ attachment styles and parasocial interaction. The authors hypothesized that the viewers’ attachment styles were linked to the viewers’ perceptions of similarities with television characters. Participants from the study also found ways to change their behavior to improve their face-to-face interpersonal relationships with others. Cohen (2004) also reviewed attachment styles and parasocial interaction in cases where people’s favorite shows were to be cancelled. He studied what impact a cancelled show had on its viewers. He found that there was a strong positive correlation between distress and parasocial interaction if the show was cancelled. Additionally, participants who had higher parasocial interaction were more likely to show negative behavioral patterns.

Ho (2007) focused on perceived attractiveness, which is an attitude towards a character on a reality television show. He found reality television viewers developed stronger parasocial interactions with characters that were more socially attractive. They identified with cast members who shared similar attributes and were more likely to form imaginary interactions. In Ho’s study, the viewers learned ways to improve their own physical beauty by copying the actions of the attractive cast members.

Lastly, Cohen (2007) researched viewing habits for talent contest shows like Israel’s
version of *American Idol*. He found that parasocial interaction was created through a learning process in which viewers learned from the competitors’ successes and mistakes. People with stronger parasocial interaction contributed to more positive attitudes towards the shows. In addition, Cohen reviewed whether parasocial interaction was connected to viewers’ desire to participate in the contest shows with their favorite contestant. The study’s results supported the proposition that viewers with positive attitudes towards the contestants would change their behavior, and that viewers would want to participate in the contests themselves. These findings support my premise that parasocial interaction can change attitudes and behaviors.

Building on the aforementioned findings about attitude and behavioral change, I hence propose the following research questions:

**R3**: Can parasocial interaction between a fan and a celebrity influence consumer attitude?

**R4**: Might a celebrity’s communication about a product on Facebook, Twitter, or both influence a fan to purchase the product?

The studies in the literature review indicate that people change their viewpoints and also their behaviors based on what they see or hear their favorite celebrities doing on television and radio shows. This suggests that parasocial interaction can change people’s attitudes and behaviors. I therefore propose that one way to change consumer behavior patterns is to utilize social media. Celebrities are using Facebook, Twitter or both to endorse their products, either formally, with a contractual agreement, or informally, by simply mentioning they like or use a specific product on Facebook or Twitter. Fans who have parasocial interaction imitate a celebrities’ consumer behavior. This leads me to propose the following hypotheses:
H3: Parasocial interaction will have an indirect impact on behavior through a direct, positive affect on attitude.

H4: Parasocial interaction will have a direct impact on purchase behavior such that the stronger the fans’ parasocial interaction with the celebrity, the greater the likelihood of purchasing a product mentioned on the celebrity’s Facebook or Twitter.

From the parasocial framework literature, it is known that fans have started to copy their favorite celebrities’ actions by purchasing the celebrities’ products (Ballantine & Martin, 2005; Stephens, Hill, & Bergman, 1996). I believe that my hypotheses are supported by Powers, Advincula, Austin, and Graiko (2012) and Lipman, Mudd, Rich, and Brunch’s (2012) findings that social media are creating an environment in which more people trust each other for advice to purchase different products. Powers et al. (2012) found consumers utilize social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, to communicate about and suggest the best products to one another. They suggested social media are becoming so integral to the everyday life of so many people that they do not realize it is impacting their purchasing habits.

Additionally, Lipman et al. (2012) focused on how fans of a product influenced other people’s purchasing decision through the use of Facebook. Different types of fans engaged their Facebook friends to encourage them to purchase a product in hopes of increasing popularity of the brand. Fans persuaded their friends to also become fans of the product, which resulted in the creation of more fans, and thus, more friends influencing others. Parasocial framework suggests that celebrities become people’s friends, even if it is an imaginary friendship. Therefore, I believe that Powers et al. (2012) and Lipman et al.’s (2012)
findings can be used to further investigate the potential for a relationship between parasocial interaction and consumer behavior because those studies reported that friends influence consumer behavior. What the literature indicates is that people with stronger parasocial interaction are more susceptible to change their attitudes to match media figures’ views, and that some people also will change their behavior based on what they see or hear from the media figures. The findings summarized in the next studies complement the previously mentioned literature on frequency and perceived similarities and their influence on attitude and behavioral changes.

Parasocial Interaction and Social Media.

Several scholars (e.g., Chung & Cho, 2014; Labrecque, 2014; Stevers & Lawson, 2013; Sun, 2013) have recently studied parasocial interaction and social media in the context of celebrities. They believe that even if the fan receives a direct response from the celebrity, this still falls under traditional means of face to face interaction, but the information sharing is considered one-sided. The interaction may seem real in the eyes of the fan. However, to the celebrity, the fan is just another fan, not a friend. The celebrities do not even know the fans’ true identities. Twitter is very close to the idea of face-to-face conversations, but it is impossible to have a true face-to-face conversation on social media, especially when a celebrity does not even know the fan’s identity.

I suggest social media provide an abundance of opportunities to gain personal information to have more perceived interaction with celebrities, all of which I believe will influence parasocial interaction. However, there is still no actual face-to-face interaction between the two of them, which suggests that it is a parasocial interaction, not a true two-way
interaction. This was previously supported in the literature review (e.g., Chung & Cho, 2014; Labrecque, 2014; Stevers & Lawson, 2013; Sun, 2013).

**Celebrity Endorsements in Consumer Behavior.**

Horton and Wohl (1956) argued that the entertainment industry hopes parasocial interaction aids the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. Today, another way to change purchasing patterns is to utilize the new social media context.Celebrities are starting to Tweet what they are formally and informally endorsing. Based on the parasocial framework, researchers have found that fans are starting to copy their favorite celebrities’ purchasing behavior (Ballantine & Martin, 2005; Stephens, Hill, & Bergman, 1996).

For the next section, I will start by briefly reviewing literature related to celebrity endorsements in consumer behavior. The second part of this section will address writings about celebrity endorsements and two ways to study celebrity endorsements: the source credibility model and the match-up hypothesis. Drawing on the previous literature section, social media has altered how people communicate with others, especially with celebrities. My assertion is there is a link between parasocial interaction and social media with the potential to influence consumer behavior changes, especially with the use of celebrity endorsements.

**Celebrity Endorsements.** Companies cannot control whether the celebrity informally uses social media to communicate about a product. Therefore, fans that follow celebrity consumer behavior on social media may simply perceive that the celebrity likes the product, rather than being paid to say that they use the product. However, in the social media context, it is difficult for the fans to differentiate whether the celebrity is contractually obligated to endorse a product or if they are just informally mentioning a product they like to use. Confusion is
One of the most prominent forms of advertising is celebrity endorsements. For the purpose of this dissertation, the definition that is being used for celebrity endorsement is “an individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it” (McCracken, 1989, p. 310). Celebrity endorsement effectiveness has a rich history in marketing research (e.g., Friedman & Friedman, 1979; Kelman, 1961; Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; Mowen & Brown, 1981; Norman, 1976). Agrawal and Kamkura (1995) found approximately 25% of television commercials have celebrities in them. In addition, businesses use roughly 10% of their advertising budget on celebrity endorsements in their television advertisements.

Erdogan (1999) suggests that there are potential advantages to utilizing celebrities to endorse products. The celebrities can increase consumers’ awareness of the product. Companies can choose celebrities to improve their corporate image. Because the celebrity is already known to the public, celebrity endorsements are also effective when introducing a new product.

Research suggests that a celebrity can effectively persuade consumers to purchase the endorsed product because of the celebrity’s status. One of the reasons that companies utilize celebrity endorsements is because consumers perceive the celebrity to be desirable and associate that trait with the product they are endorsing. The companies expect that consumers will purchase the product to be like the celebrity (Assael, 1984; Choi & Rifon, 2007; Escalas & Bettman, 2005).
Sherman (1985) suggested companies use celebrity endorsements because the celebrity can make the advertisement more memorable to the consumer, because the association connects the product to a recognizable and memorable source. Similarly, Bowman (2002) believed companies hope that the link between the celebrity and the product will improve its recognition, thus increasing sales.

Companies sign celebrity endorsements in hopes the celebrity will be an effective spokesperson for their product (Kambitis, Harahousou, Theodorakis, & Chatzibeis, 2002; Katyal, 2007). In addition, companies use celebrity endorsements because consumers can relate to the celebrities (Temperly & Tangen, 2006). Also, in the eyes of the consumer, celebrities create a sense of glamour by using the endorsed product (Reynolds, 2000).

Celebrity endorsements have the potential to help the brand and products be more competitive and increase brand equity (Till, 1998). Pappas (1999) argued another benefit to using a celebrity endorsement is it aids the celebrity to help create their own brand equity. Furthermore, Choi and Rifon (2007) found that celebrities have the ability to exert their status to persuade consumers’ purchasing behavior. Of all the types of companies’ spokespeople, the literature suggests that using a celebrity is the most effective method for advertisements.

There are several advantages to using celebrity endorsements. First, celebrities can change the brand image (Erdogan, 1999). If a company has negative public relations, it can utilize celebrities to assist in building a better public image of the company. Additionally, Sherman (1985) found celebrity endorsers potentially improve communication, because the consumer is focused on what the celebrity is endorsing, rather than focusing on other aspects of the advertisement.
Bowman’s (2002) results indicated celebrity endorsed products increase the probability the consumer will remember the product, as well as the advertisement. Celebrity endorsements have the ability to produce a more positive attitude towards the product; thus, leading people to choose to purchase the product (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000; Mathur, Mathur, & Rangan, 1997).

**Source Credibility Model and Match-up Hypothesis.** The source credibility model proposes that the effects of celebrity endorsers in advertisements is based on the celebrities’ credibility and perceived similarity with the viewer. Atkin and Block’s (1983) model further delineates credibility into attractiveness and trustworthiness.

Source credibility is when the purchaser perceives the celebrity to be credible, which increases the likelihood for the endorsement to be successful (Giffin, 1967; Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000; McGinnies & Ward, 1980). This is due to the fact that if a celebrity is connected to a product he or she actually used, the consumer believed that product to be more efficient and effective. For example, Tom Brady selling shoes he wears in his football games; Brady would be considered to be a more effective endorser of the football shoes because he actually uses them in his games. In addition, if the celebrity is more successful than other celebrities endorsing competing products, there is a greater likelihood of the marketing strategy to work (Amos, Holmes, & Strutton, 2008; Kahle & Homer, 1985; Ohanian, 1990). However, credibility of the celebrity endorser is mitigated if the consumer has expert knowledge of the product (Biswas, Biswas, & Das, 2006).

By incorporating variables related to celebrities’ attractiveness and trustworthiness into the source credibility model, researchers have found advertisements to be more effective than
merely reviewing credibility but also including the other variables (Atkin & Block, 1983; Bower & Landreth, 2001; Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989; Ohanian, 1990; Sliburyte, 2009). Attractiveness has an impact on how people perceive the celebrity, whether they choose to purchase a celebrity endorsed product, and the consumer's shopping habits. However, there is a low correlation between attractiveness and purchasing intent. It could be argued that attractiveness is not as effective as credibility, because people have different definitions of attractiveness, which hinders the impact of a commercial that utilizes “attractive” celebrities (Chao, Wuhrer, & Werani, 2005; Erdogen, 1999).

While the source credibility model is one way to understand celebrity endorsements, the match-up hypothesis provides another way to study celebrity endorsement effectiveness. The match-up hypothesis suggests that if a purchaser wants to match the celebrity in a specific way, then he or she is more likely to purchase the product. In other words, if the product will make the person more like the celebrity, it is more likely he or she will purchase the product. This is especially the case with respect to beauty products. The match-up hypothesis is more about the product matching the endorser and not how effective the product is going to be (Bower & Landreth, 2001; Kamins, 1990; Sliburyte, 2009).

According to Kamins (1990), the match-up hypothesis relies more on the visual rather than the verbal arguments in the advertisement. An attractive product with the combination of an attractive celebrity supports the match-up hypothesis (Kamins, 1990). Even though the match-up hypothesis increased people’s brand attitude based on fans’ perceptions of the celebrity being attractive, the match-up hypothesis also can explain how credibility can impact the success of the advertisement (Till & Busler, 2000).
In summary, the literature review introduced the parasocial interaction framework. It then focused on how social media have changed the landscape for communication and the research required to understand this new landscape. Once I reviewed the differences between social media and traditional media, I delved deeper to understand the social media’s influence on parasocial interaction. I reviewed the importance of frequency and its relationship to parasocial interaction. Then, I moved on to review the relationship between perceived similarities and their influence on parasocial interaction. In addition, the last aspect of parasocial interaction reviewed was the relationship between parasocial interaction and attitudes and behavioral changes. I presented my research questions and hypotheses regarding each of the different aspects related to parasocial interaction and social media.

Also, I introduced literature that shows similarities between celebrity endorsement research. I reviewed several ways celebrity endorsements have been studied in the past. I attempted to tie parasocial interaction and celebrity endorsements in the context of social media. Finally, I identified that there was a lack of research on parasocial interaction in the context of social media. The literature review identified this was even less so between parasocial interaction relationships and celebrity endorsements.

Next, I will review the methodology used for the study. I will review the different respondents who participated in the study and the procedure used to collect the data. Then, I will review the different measurements that are used in the study. The final section will review the process of analysis for the hypotheses and research questions.

Chapter Three
Methodology

Participants.

I chose to use Mechanical Turk (MTURK), an Amazon.com service, to obtain a sample of subjects for my study because it provides a pool of reliable respondents for my study. There are over 30,000 people who participate in MTURK human intelligence tasks, including surveys. Currently, MTURK has over 250,000 online human intelligence tasks, including surveys, available to be taken by subjects who wish to do so; some are paid for their participation. The respondents may choose to complete a survey for which they qualify. The subjects who took the survey that I posted for this research were paid by me through an account I funded via Amazon.com services (MTURK.com). To make sure that I had respondents who were serious enough to fully participate in my survey, I used a 95% completion rate; the respondents needed to have completed 95% of the questionnaire in order to have the survey included for analysis.

I chose to use MTURK because that sample would be a better representation of the total population, more so than a homogenous convenience sample of college students. The respondents were informed that the data captured in the survey was going to be used for academic purposes. On MTURK, the respondents were paid $1.00 for taking the survey.

Prior to posting the surveys on MTURK, I went through the steps necessary to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). In MTURK, I gave a brief description of the objectives of the study, the criteria for participating in the study, how much they were going to be paid, $1.00, and the MTURK code that needed to be entered in order to receive payment for taking the survey. Not only did the respondents see the IRB in the description of the study on
MTURK, they also had to agree to the statement at the beginning of the survey in order to proceed.

To qualify, the respondents had to be 18 years of age or older and identify a favorite celebrity in any profession (e.g., musicians, athletes, actors). A total of 413 respondents took the survey. There were 125 respondents (30.2%) who indicated they had a favorite celebrity, but did not follow her or him on Facebook or Twitter. The remaining 288 respondents (69.7%) identified themselves as having a favorite celebrity they followed on either Facebook or Twitter.

The survey included demographic questions such as age, gender, and race. Not all the respondents answered every demographic question (explaining why some percentages do not equal 100%). The gender of respondents was close to being evenly split, with 191 (46.2%) male and 188 (45.5%) female respondents. Respondents were asked to indicate their ages within one of four categories. The age of the sample skewed somewhat younger than the population with 160 respondents (38.7%) in the 18 to 30 years old range; 157 (38%) between 31 to 45; 42 (10.2%) between 46 to 55; and 23 (5.7%) 56 and over. The majority identified themselves as Caucasian (n=303; 73.3 %). Asians made up the second largest group (n=40; 9.6%), followed by African-Americans (n=25; 6%). Only 14 respondents (3.4%) identified themselves as “Other.” Relative to the population, the sample somewhat over-represents Asians and under-represents African Americans. It also does not properly represent Latinos, who now constitute more than 15% of the nation’s population.
Procedures.

The method of data collection was a survey incorporating 37 items. The survey was posted on MTURK for a total of five weeks between June 8 and July 13, 2015. Before the respondents could take the survey, they had to meet the criteria, read the IRB statement and indicate they had read the IRB statement. Also, another criterion was that respondents had to have a favorite celebrity. One group also had to follow the celebrity on Facebook or Twitter. Once they had finished taking the survey, they had to enter a code into MTURK to receive payment for taking the survey. Payment of $1.00 for participation was processed within a week of the completed survey being submitted. Qualtrics, an online survey development and delivery software, was used to build and deliver the survey. The survey was constructed with four blocks. The first block was for those who did not follow their favorite celebrity on Facebook or Twitter. The first block was answered by all of the respondents. If the respondents said “yes” to following their favorite celebrity on just Facebook, they were directed to the second block of questions which only related to Facebook. Similarly, if the respondents said “yes” to follow their favorite celebrity on just Twitter, they then would answer questions in the third block, which only related to Twitter. If respondents answered “yes” to following the celebrity on both Facebook and Twitter, they answered both the second and third blocks of questions. The last block of questions consisted of demographic questions, which every respondent had to answer. Once data collection was completed, I transferred the data from Qualtrics into SPSS for data analysis.
#PARASOCIAL INTERACTION: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

**Measures.**

The self-report instrument included two different scales with a combined 14 items in the scales. Those scales were the parasocial interaction scale (Rubin, Palmgreen, Sypher, & Beatty, 2004) (Appendix A) and the homophily/similarities scale (McCroskey, Richman, & Daly, 1975) (Appendix B). Additional questions were included that gathered information on respondents’ favorite celebrities, their frequency of media consumption, their use of Facebook or Twitter to follow their favorite celebrity, awareness and recall of their favorite celebrity endorsing products on Facebook or Twitter, and attitude and intent to purchase a product with respect to brands mentioned by celebrities on Facebook or Twitter.

**Parasocial Interaction Scale.** This study utilized the parasocial interaction scale. The scale is a 10 item Likert scale, with items measured by 1= “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree.” Rubin, Palmgreen, Sypher, and Beatty (2004) found that this scale has a high degree of reliability (Cronbach alpha of .88) and were able to demonstrate the scale has both content and construct validity. The parasocial interaction scale was originally used to understand if respondents formed parasocial interaction with local newscasters. The scale was adapted to assure it was relevant for a study that refers to any type of celebrity, rather than just newscasters. Once the respondents identified their favorite celebrity, the celebrity’s name was “piped” by the Qualtrics survey software, essentially customizing each question to include that celebrity’s name, so that each question related explicitly to the respondent’s favorite celebrity. This ensured that the respondent was thinking about the celebrity they had identified as their favorite when answering the questions. This step is likely to be especially important for respondents who have a large number of celebrities whom they follow. A confirmatory factor
analysis on the scale resulted in a Cronbach Alpha score of .74, which is well within acceptable standards for a developed scale. An average for the parasocial interaction scale was computed in SPSS for each participant and used in all subsequent analyses.

**Homophily/similarities scale.** The homophily/similarities scale is designed to capture the extent to which the participant perceives him or herself as like the target; in this case, his or her favorite celebrity. The scale measures the similarities respondents shared with the celebrity. The homophily/similarities scale is a bipolar scale with four items ranging from 1 through 7. The scale is used to measure communication effectiveness and perceived similarities. Numbers 1 and 7 means the respondent has a very strong feeling regarding the question. Numbers 2 and 6 suggest a strong feeling regarding the question. Numbers 3 and 5 suggests a fairly weak feeling regarding the question. Number 4 indicates that the respondent was unsure or undecided about the answer to the question. McCrosky et. al (1975) found the scale to be very reliable (Cronbach alpha of .87). A confirmatory factor analysis of this scale resulted in a Cronbach’s Alpha score of .91; well within acceptable standards for a developed scale. Items in the homophily/similarities scale. A summation of scale results was done on SPSS to be used as a single variable.
**Additional Variables.** The frequency of Facebook and Twitter use were measured on a Likert scale from once a month to several times a day. The attitude change was measured on a Likert scale from attitude changed to attitude changed positively or negatively about the mentioned product on Facebook and Twitter. If a respondent said yes to purchasing a product, he or she had a follow up question asking what product had been bought.

**Analysis.**

Research question one was addressed in hypothesis one, how frequency of use of different media, including Facebook and Twitter would impact parasocial interaction. I chose multiple regression because there were multiple independent variables in regards to how frequently respondents follow their favorite celebrity. The specific independent variables included in the test of hypothesis one are: how frequency impacted respondents’ media consumption, how often you use Facebook and how often you use Twitter, and how the frequency of media use influenced the respondents’ parasocial interaction scores.

Hypotheses two through four were tested using logistic regressions and independent t-tests. Logistic regression was used because, in each case, there is at least one dichotomous variable as the dependent variable. The test predicts the odds of a respondent being classified into one of the two groups (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2009). For example, for hypothesis two I wanted to know if perceived similarities would indicate if a respondent would follow his or her favorite celebrity on Facebook or Twitter. The dependent variable (following or not following the celebrity) allowed for a yes or no answer. Logistic regression predicts the odds of the respondents following their favorite celebrity on Facebook or Twitter based on similarities and
estimates the significance of that prediction. The $p<.05$ level was used as the cutoff for significance.

The homophily/similarities score was utilized as the independent variable in the logistic regression testing hypothesis two. I ran two separate logistic regressions to see the results for both Facebook and Twitter independent of each other.

Research question three was addressed in hypothesis three, where parasocial interaction will have an indirect impact on behavior through a direct, positive affect on attitude, which then exerts a positive impact on behavior. The independent variables used to test the hypothesis were the fan’s attitude towards the product and attitude change towards the product. Whether or not the fan purchased a product mentioned by the celebrity on Facebook or Twitter was the dependent variable. Attitude change was measured by a five point scale from no change to completely changing. The attitude towards the celebrity was measured on a three point scale: positively changed, neither, or negatively changed based on the attitude towards the celebrity. The fan purchasing a product mentioned on Facebook or Twitter was the dichotomous variable. Two separate logistic regressions were run to answer hypothesis three, because I wanted to see the differences between the two types of social media: a social networking site (Facebook) and a microblogging site (Twitter).

Research question four was addressed in hypothesis four, which predicted using Facebook or Twitter would result in higher scores than respondents who did not use Facebook or Twitter. It utilized the parasocial interaction score as the dependent variable. The independent variable was whether or not a respondent bought a product mentioned on Facebook or Twitter. I ran an independent t-test because there is one dichotomous
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independent variable and a continuous dependent variable. I also ran a test for purchasing products mentioned on Facebook and one test for products mentioned on Twitter.

The next chapter of the dissertation reviews the results of the tests to address the research questions and test the hypotheses. The final section is the discussion. The discussion section is broken down into general discussion, limitations, future research and conclusion.

Chapter Four

Results

A multiple regression was run to address research question one and answer the first hypothesis that people who use Facebook and Twitter more will have a stronger parasocial interaction. There were six variables that were input into the regression model: the parasocial interaction scale, the amount of time spent reading, watching or listening to media involving the celebrity, how often Facebook and Twitter are used. Items on the parasocial interaction scale were averaged and used as the outcome variable and the rest of the variables are the predictor variables. The test for the overall model was significant, $F (2, 389) = 34.75, p < .01$, Adjusted $R^2 = .21$, in predicting parasocial interaction. For the amount of time spent reading, watching or listening to media involving the celebrity’s $\beta = .19$ and significance level was $p = .017$. For frequency of using Facebook’s $\beta = .19$ and significance level was $p = .015$. For frequency of using Twitter’s $\beta = .11$ and significance level was $p = .044$. The model explained 21% of the variance. The first hypothesis was supported. See Table One.
# PARASOCIAL INTERACTION: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

## Table 1

Impact of Social Media Usage on Parasocial Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching, listening, or reading about the celebrity</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of using Facebook</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of using Twitter</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R$ squared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A logistic regression was conducted to see if perceived similarities would lead people to follow the celebrity on Facebook. The test was run to see if one predictor variable, perceived similarities, would indicate if respondents followed their favorite celebrity on Facebook. The model included the similarities subscale as the predictor variable and following the celebrity on Facebook as the outcome variable. A total of 388 cases were reviewed. The test did not significantly predict whether respondents would follow the celebrity on Facebook based on similarities ($\text{omnibus chi square}=2.01$, $df=1$, $p=.16$). The model correctly classified 54% of the cases. The coefficient for perceived similarities variable was the Ward statistic (equaling 1.97) which was not significant at $p=.16$. Nagelkerke's $R^2$ of 0.08 indicates a relatively weak relationship between the predicted variable, perceived similarities, and the outcome variable, following their favorite celebrity on Facebook. The test was not significant; therefore that particular part of the model was not a good fit.
Another logistic regression was conducted to address research question two and if there was support for hypothesis two regarding how perceived similarities related to following the celebrity on Twitter. The test was run to see if one predictor variable, perceived similarities, would predict if respondents would follow their favorite celebrity on Twitter. The model included the similarities scale as the predictor variable and following Twitter as the outcome variable. A total of 388 cases were reviewed. Perceived similarities was not a significant predictor of respondents following the celebrity on Twitter (omnibus chi square=.002, df=1, $p=.88$). The model correctly classified 54% of the cases. The coefficient for the perceived similarities variable was the Ward statistic, which equaled .022. It was not significant at $p=.88$. Nagelkerke’s $R^2$ of .00 indicates no relationship between the predicted variable, perceived similarities, and the outcome variable, following the celebrity on Twitter.

However, when using the parasocial interaction score as the predictor variable for following the celebrity on Twitter, the model was significant (omnibus chi square=5.35, df=1, $p=.02$) with 390 total cases reviewed. The model accounted for 14% and 18% of the variance. The correct classification rate was 54.9%. The coefficient for the parasocial interaction score was the Ward statistic which equaled 5.21. It was significant at $p=.022$. The Nagelkerke $R^2$ of .018 reflects a relationship between the predictive variable, parasocial interaction, and the outcome variable, joining on Facebook or Twitter. The test was significant; therefore the model was a good fit.

Similar findings were observed for the relationship between parasocial interaction and joining a celebrity’s Facebook page. When using the parasocial interaction score as the predictive variable, and respondents following the celebrity on Facebook as the outcome
variable, the model was significant (omnibus chi square=13.34, df=1, $p<.01$). The model accounted for 34% to 45% of the variance in following on Facebook. Overall, the model correctly classified 54.7% of the cases. The coefficient for the parasocial interaction score was the Ward statistic, which equaled 12.59. It was significant at $p<.01$. The Nagelkerke $R^2$ of .045 reflects a relationship between the predictive variable, parasocial interaction scale, and the outcome variable, following the celebrity on Facebook. The test was significant; therefore the model was a good fit.

For research question three and hypothesis three, first a regression was run for hypothesis three for both Facebook and Twitter to see the indirect impact of attitude change and parasocial interaction on behavior changes. The independent variable was parasocial interaction and the dependent variable was attitude change. The test for the overall model was significant, $F (2, 172) = 1.13$, $p < .05$, Adjusted $R^2 = .02$, in predicting attitude change and parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction, $\beta=.157$ and significance level was $p<.05$.

Secondly, a logistic regression was run to see if respondents’ parasocial interaction will have an indirect impact on behavior through a direct, positive affect on attitude, which then exerts a positive impact on behavior through using Facebook. The model used attitude towards the product and attitude change towards the product mentioned on Facebook as the predictor variables and purchase of products mentioned on Facebook was the outcome variable. A total of 173 cases were reviewed. The test results were significant (omnibus chi square=11.05, df=3, $p=.011$). Attitude changes towards the product scores did predict whether a respondent would purchase a product seen on his or her favorite celebrity Facebook account. The model accounted 6.2% to 13.9% of the variance in predicting whether a respondent would purchase a
product on Facebook. The Nagelkerke $R^2$ of .14 indicates a relationship between parasocial interaction, the change in attitude, and purchasing a product mentioned on Facebook.

Also, a logistic regression was run to see if respondents’ parasocial interaction will have an indirect impact on behavior through a direct, positive affect on attitude, which then exerts a positive impact on behavior through using Twitter. The model used what extent is your attitude towards the product and what was your attitude change towards the product mentioned on Twitter as the predictor variables and people purchasing products on Twitter as the outcome variable. There were 170 cases reviewed for the model. It was significant (omnibus chi square = 14.12, df = 2, $p = .01$). Attitudes towards the mentioned product on Twitter did predict whether respondents would change their purchasing behavior to buy what they read on the celebrity’s Twitter account. The model accounted for 8% to 11.2% variance in the purchasing a product on Twitter. The Nagelkerke $R^2$ of .112 indicates a relationship between the predictive variables and the outcome variable. The test was significant; therefore the model was a good fit.

An independent t-test was conducted to test the hypothesis that the stronger the parasocial interaction score, the more likely fans would purchase products mentioned on the favorite celebrity’s Facebook. The independent variable was if a person would purchase a product mentioned on Facebook and the dependent variable was the parasocial score. The test was not significant, $t(171) = .99, p = .21$. There was no difference between people’s parasocial interaction score for people who purchased a product ($M = 4.01, SD = .59$) and those who did not purchase a product ($M = 4.14, SD = .43$). Another independent t-test was conducted to test the hypothesis that the stronger the parasocial interaction score, the more likely a fan would
purchase a product mentioned on the celebrity’s Twitter. The independent variable was if a person would purchase a product mentioned on Twitter and dependent variable was the parasocial score. The test was not significant, $t(168) = .54, p = .87$. There was no difference between people who bought a product mentioned on the celebrity’s Twitter ($M = 4.15, SD = .44$) and fans who did not purchase a product ($M = 4.08, SD = .47$).

Each of the significance levels are based on tests run for both Facebook and Twitter. There were two hypotheses that were supported, while the other hypotheses were not (see figure two).

Both hypotheses one and three were supported. However, hypotheses two and four were not supported. More details of the finding will be in the following discussion section.
Chapter Five

Discussion

The primary goal of this dissertation was to examine how social media influenced by parasocial interaction between the fan and celebrity. The secondary goal was to review how parasocial interaction and social media impact consumer behavior change, specifically with regard to the purchase of celebrity endorsed products. The first section of this discussion will concentrate on the results of the hypotheses tests. The second section will identify and review the limitations of the study. The final section will discuss potential future avenues of research and to provide a conclusion.

For the first hypothesis and research question, I examined the relationship between social media usage and increases parasocial interaction. A parasocial interaction was stronger the more frequently a fan had access to his or her favorite celebrity through social media. The first hypothesis did answer the first research question. The analysis showed that frequency of using Facebook and Twitter did influence fans’ parasocial interaction. Extending the findings of previous research into the domain of social media (e.g., Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Hoffner, 1996; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991; Turner, 1993), frequency was a critical variable to include with parasocial interaction. Both Facebook and Twitter users seemed to be influenced by the frequency with which they used each type of social media. Parasocial interaction scores were contingent on how frequently they used media and social media to follow their favorite celebrity.

The media landscape is a rapidly changing environment. It makes sense that as technology continues to develop, there will be an increase in the ability to build the strength of
the “bridge” between celebrities and their fans. Social media aid in preserving, or even strengthening, parasocial relationships. As social networking continues to get more sophisticated, it seems very likely that parasocial relationships will continue to evolve along with those advances.

The second research question and hypothesis examined the relationship between perceived similarities and the act of following a celebrity on Facebook or Twitter. I suggested the more similar the fan was to the celebrity, the more likely the fan would be to join Facebook or Twitter to follow their favorite celebrity. However, perceived similarities did not predict whether or not fans would join their favorite celebrity’s Facebook or Twitter accounts. The results appear to conflict with previous research (Brown & Basil, 1995; Derrick, Gabriel, & Tippin, 2008; Katz, Liebes, & Berko, 1992; Papa et al., 2000; Tian & Hoffner, 2010) in that perceived similarities were an important variable influencing parasocial interaction. Therefore, respondents did not follow the celebrity on Facebook or Twitter. The research suggested similarity would be a driving force for joining social media. The results did not support the second hypothesis.

Perceived similarities should have an increased parasocial interaction, in hopes of leading fans to join the celebrity’s social media. This rationale was not the case. A possible explanation for this finding is that an individual with celebrity status often has aspects that are not typical of the average fan. For example, many celebrities are extremely attractive, charismatic, funny, and/or excel at their craft. Most fans are not celebrities. Although greatly admired, celebrities’ attributes may simply be too difficult to attain. It is the lack of perceived similarities that drove the results.
It is possible that the second research question and hypothesis could have benefitted by using a slightly different measurement of perceived similarity. For example, simply asking whether a celebrity “is like me” may be a bit vague. A fan might think the celebrity is like him or herself, but answers the question “no” because the first thing that might come to mind is an attribute like physical appearance, as opposed to more achievable attributes to be similar on such as sense of humor, ways of thinking, or shared passions, to name a few examples.

Because of the lack of support for hypothesis two, I decided to test the relationship between parasocial interaction and fans joining their favorite celebrity’s Facebook or Twitter account. While there was no positive relationship between similarity and joining a celebrity’s social media, there was a positive relationship between parasocial interaction and joining the celebrity’s social media. It is important to note that the research methodology does not allow us to fully understand the causal relationship. The results could be because fans already had a parasocial interaction with the celebrity, which motivated them to join the celebrity’s social media. Or the result could indicate fans formed parasocial interaction by using Facebook or Twitter to follow their favorite celebrity. It may be that having a parasocial interaction motivates fans to join Facebook or Twitter to follow their favorite fan, which then further strengthens parasocial interaction.

With research question three and hypothesis three, I wanted to understand how parasocial interaction will have an indirect impact on behavior through a direct, positive effect on attitude, which then exerts a positive impact on behavior. There is a positive impact on parasocial interaction on attitude. I believed that having a parasocial interaction with a celebrity would mean fans would purchase their favorite celebrity’s endorsed products.
PARASOCIAL INTERACTION: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

featured on either Facebook or Twitter. The expected relationship was supported for both Facebook and Twitter users: parasocial interaction and attitude change towards the product mentioned on Facebook and Twitter significantly influenced consumer behavior. Those results do support that consumer behavioral changes can be impacted by parasocial interaction and attitude change (Auter, 1992; Conway & Rubin 1991; Papa et al., 2000; Sood & Rogers, 1996). The fans were influenced to change their purchasing pattern by merely having a parasocial interaction and change in attitude towards the product mentioned on the favorite celebrity social media.

However, their fans may not want to have their celebrity act like a commercial on social media. Perhaps a celebrity trying to persuade their fans to buy certain items is a desirable way to connect with many of their followers. In other words, a celebrity that is well known for promoting products, such as Kim Kardashian, may have success in this area. Their followers expect to see such endorsements, and may indeed be influenced in their consumer behavior. However, followers of a famous comedian might find it odd to see their celebrity promoting a product. It might not necessarily hurt the parasocial relationship, or even favorability towards the product, but it simply is not what the followers are accustomed to, and therefore consumer behavior may not change.

It is also possible that the self-reported, retrospective nature of this study is not ideal for studying the link between celebrity social media consumption and purchase behavior. The study might better have been served if it was a longitudinal study. The respondents’ behavior could be more accurately tracked through both their social media consumption and purchase
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behavior. A longitudinal study could more accurately identify the influence of social media consumption leading to any changes in purchasing decisions.

For hypothesis four, neither Facebook nor Twitter followers’ increased parasocial interaction influenced their purchasing decision. This could be related to fans not joining social media to follow their favorite celebrity. This does not support the previous literature (Brown & Basil, 1995; Derrick, Gabriel, & Tippin, 2008; Katz, Liebes, & Berko, 1992; Papa et al., 2000; Tian & Hoffner, 2010) that suggested parasocial interaction drove fans to share the same values and act like the celebrity. Thus, stronger parasocial interaction with the celebrity did not result in fans purchasing a celebrity endorsed product.

The study expands the knowledge about studying parasocial interaction in the context of social media. We now know that parasocial interaction does influence fans’ use of their favorite celebrity’s Facebook or Twitter accounts. My study is one of only a few studies that tried to understand the relationship between parasocial interaction and social media. At the onset of the study, the argument was that a parasocial interaction would lead to consumer behavioral change consistent with the purchase behaviors of the celebrity. However, the results for consumer behavioral changes attributable to the use of social media do not support that hypothesized relationship. Attitude towards the product mentioned by the celebrity influenced fans to purchase a product mentioned by a celebrity. Results on consumer behavioral change were not substantive other than when it relates to attitude change.

Still, the study was breaking new ground by trying to understand the relationship between parasocial interaction and social media. Parasocial interactions can influence the acceptance of celebrity endorsements on social media. The lack of support for the hypotheses
about behavioral changes on social media could suggest that very few fans are purchasing products mentioned on their favorite celebrity’s social media accounts. That does not necessarily mean that this is not a fruitful area of research when one takes into account any type of celebrity. Specifically targeting followers of certain celebrities that are better known to endorse products on social media platforms could yield more fruitful results. It could also mean that the methodological limitations did not accurately capture the relationship.

Limitations.

One of the unexpected findings of this study is that so few of the respondents purchased celebrity endorsed products. This could be the result of the self-reported, retrospective nature of the methodology. It is possible that respondents were simply not accurately recalling their exposure to brands mentioned by celebrities or their purchase of these brands. Future research may benefit from a longitudinal approach that could help track purchases and assess if they are related to celebrity endorsements. It might also be beneficial to focus on those respondents who follow their favorite celebrity and are aware they have purchased an endorsed product.

Perceived similarity is a very important variable to form a parasocial interaction. However, in the measurement, it could have not been the right scale to use as a survey instrument. Even though the perceived similarities scale has been used before, there might have been a different perceived similarities scale more suitable for the study. Another measurement issue is that many of the questions on the survey instrument were not used in previous studies. Maybe incorporating more previously used scales would have provided me with different results.
Future Research.

Future research should aim to focus on the same ideas in this dissertation, but construct a methodology that does not rely on self-reported, retrospective data. It is possible that a longitudinal study which actually follows a celebrity’s posts, notes endorsements and then contacts followers to see if they have purchased the endorsed products would give a more accurate picture of what is actually taking place via celebrity endorsements in social media.

It is also possible that the notion of ideal self is relevant in the context of this study. Researchers have focused on similarity, but other work has noted that people want to associate with celebrities in order to be more like an idealized version of them. It is possible that previous work on actual versus ideal self-concept may be relevant to this research area.

At a conceptual level, there also needs to be more clarification if social media are really a one-sided interaction or it has indeed become an avenue for two-sided interaction. The fundamental principle of parasocial interaction is that the interaction is one-sided. However, as social media become more advanced, the topic should be further investigated and defined to see how it influences parasocial interaction.

Another interesting avenue for future research is to investigate the celebrity rather than the fan. It would be interesting to see if celebrities form parasocial interaction with their fans. Maybe to certain celebrities, they perceive posting on social media to be a two-way interaction, whereas others perceive those postings to be a one-way interaction. If such different perceptions were to be identified, it would be interesting to compare and contrast those celebrities and their followers.
This dissertation could have gone into more depth with measuring those factors to gain a better understanding of exactly what role the social media platforms were performing in these mediated relationships. Research on parasocial interaction and the relationship to mediated communication is lacking, especially related to social media. More research should review the different factors that lead to mediated communication.

Another area to research is how the fans' social media environment impacts parasocial interaction. It is important to know the context in which a celebrity has achieved recognition in order to understand the role of creating parasocial interaction and its relationship to attitude and behavioral changes. There might be differences between the different types of celebrities people follow on social media and fans' responses to a product endorsement shared on social media. By reviewing the differences, I could see a fuller picture of how celebrities and parasocial interaction relate to celebrity endorsements.

Finally, it is important to note that people operate within a broader network of social environments in which social media can be used as a mechanism for maintaining relationships. There is potential for more fully understanding parasocial interaction by understanding other social media environments in which people are connecting. For example, people may be using social media in a home, school, work or social groups context. What is the relationship between this type of usage and use of social media to follow a celebrity?

**Conclusion**

Using the foundation of previous research and frameworks related to parasocial interaction, this dissertation found support for significant statistical relationships between
parasocial interaction, use of social media (i.e., Facebook and Twitter), user’s perceived similarities with celebrities, and consumer behaviors. The study demonstrated that parasocial interaction and the use of social media are connected.

There was support that frequency of the use of social media outlets resulted in higher levels of parasocial interaction. The more the respondents followed the celebrity on Facebook or Twitter, the greater the likelihood they were going to form a parasocial interaction. Like previous studies, higher levels of frequency did impact whether or not a fan would form a parasocial interaction with the celebrity.

Even though perceived similarities are a key indicator for parasocial interaction, it did not seem to be the case for this study. Parasocial interaction and similarities were not significant driving forces for respondents to join the celebrity’s Facebook or Twitter. Nor did it indicate whether or not a respondent would follow the celebrity on Facebook or Twitter.

However, attitude change towards the product and parasocial interaction indicated that respondents were more likely to purchase a product mentioned by the celebrity on Facebook or Twitter. This supports the previous literature that attitude change can occur if there is potential for parasocial interaction with a celebrity, which can lead to behavioral changes.

The results were not always conclusive and further exploration is still needed in parasocial interaction and consumer behavior based in the social media context, especially considering the limitations of this dissertation.
Appendix A: Parasocial Interaction Scale

1. I feel sorry for my favorite celebrity* when favorite celebrity makes a mistake.

2. The favorite celebrity makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

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

4. I look forward to seeing or hearing my about favorite celebrity.

5. If my favorite celebrity appeared in a new or different program, I would watch that program.

6. Favorite celebrity 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 favorite celebrity in the media.

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

10. I find my favorite celebrity to be attractive.

*The scale was modified from newscaster to “favorite celebrity.” When they take the survey, qualtrics will automatically fill in their favorite celebrity’s name when they take the survey question (e.g. question one: “I feel sorry for Jo-Lo when she makes a mistake.”).
Appendix B: Perceived Homophily (similarities) Scale

Directions: On the scales below, indicate your feelings about your favorite celebrity. There are no right or wrong answers.

(Name of person the to whom participant is asked to respond)- Favorite celebrity

1. Is like me
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1
   Is unlike me

2. Is different from me
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Is similar to me

3. Thinks like me
   7 6 5 4 3 2 1
   Does not think like me

4. Doesn't behave like me
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Behaves like me

Add the numbers you circled for each measure separately.

Scores for each concept must be between 4 and 28.

Scores > 22 = higher attitudinal and background homophily/similarity.
### Appendix C: Parasocial Interaction Scale Means and Standard Deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel sorry for my favorite celebrity* when favorite celebrity makes a mistake.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The favorite celebrity makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see favorite celebrity as a natural, down to earth person.</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look forward to seeing or hearing my about favorite celebrity.</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If my favorite celebrity appeared in a new or different program, I would watch that program.</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite celebrity seems to understand the kinds of things I want to know.</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there were a story about my favorite celebrity in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I miss seeing my favorite celebrity when favorite celebrity in the media.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to meet my favorite celebrity in person.</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find my favorite celebrity to be attractive.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D: Perceived Homophily (similarities) Scale

#### Means and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is like me / Is unlike me</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is different from me / Is similar to me</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks like me / Does not think like me</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't behave like me / Behaves like me</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Top Favorite Celebrities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Reoccurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saundra Bullock</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Lawrence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denzel Washington</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Degeneres</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnny Depp</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina Jolie</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Smith</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor Swift</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyonce</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Brady</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam Neeson</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad Pitt</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seth Rogan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnold Schwarzenegger</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Clooney</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steph Curry</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Cruise</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benedict Cumberbatch</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison Ford</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Hanks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Hart</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebron James</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Kardashian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Roberts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: Additional Questions

1. Do you have a favorite celebrity? [INCLUSION CRITERIA: MUST ANSWER YES]
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. Who is your favorite celebrity?*

3. I read, watch or listen to media involving favorite celebrity
   a. Never
   b. Once a month
   c. Several times a month
   d. Once a week
   e. Several times per week
   f. Once a day
   g. Several times per day

4. The amount of time I spend reading, watching or listening to media involving favorite celebrity is about
   a. None
   b. One hour per week
   c. Several hours a week
   d. One hour a month
   e. Several hours per month
   f. One hour a day
   g. Several hours per day

5. Do you follow that celebrity on Facebook?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Do you follow that celebrity on Twitter?
   a. Yes
   b. No
*(The celebrity’s name was piped throughout the questionnaire. Bolded words indicate where the celebrity’s name was piped).

7. In the last year, do you recall the celebrity mentioning any product(s) on Twitter?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Answer If What product(s) do you remember your favorite celebrity mentioning? Please tell us as much as you remember about the product(s), including specific brand names you recall

Click to write Choice 1 Is Selected

8. What product(s) do you remember favorite celebrity mentioning? Please tell us as much as you remember about the product(s), including specific brand names you recall

9. Have you ever purchased product(s) that your favorite celebrity mentioned on Twitter?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Answer If Have you ever purchased a product(s) that your favorite celebrity mentioned on Facebook? Yes Is Selected

10. What was the product(s) you purchased that favorite celebrity mentioned on Twitter? Please tell us as much as you remember about the product(s) you purchased, including specific brand names you recall
11. Do you recall your favorite celebrity mentioning any product in other media forms, such as television or radio?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Answer: If Do your favorite celebrity mentioning any product in other media forms, such as television or radio? Yes Is Selected

12. What product(s) do you remember favorite celebrity mentioning in these other media? Please tell us as much as you remember about the product(s), including specific brand names you recall.

13. In general, to what extent did your attitude towards the product and/or brand mentioned on Twitter by favorite celebrity change because of its association with favorite celebrity?

   1. Attitude didn’t change
   2. Attitude changed a little
   3. Attitude changed moderately
   4. Attitude change a lot
   5. Attitude changed completely

14. If your attitude towards the product changed at all, in what direction did it change because it was mentioned by favorite celebrity on Twitter?

   1. It became more positive
   2. It became more negative
   3. My attitude didn’t change at all
The questions below followed demographics on the survey.

15. In the past year, how often have you used Facebook to follow favorite celebrity?

   1. Once a month
   2. Several times a month
   3. Once a week
   4. Several times per week
   5. Once a day
   6. Several times per day

16. In the last year, do you recall favorite celebrity mentioning any product(s) on Facebook?

   1. Yes
   2. No

Answer If Yes What product(s) do you remember favorite celebrity mentioning? Please tell us as much as you remember about the product(s), including specific brand names you recall Click to write

17. What product(s) do you remember favorite celebrity mentioning? Please tell us as much as you remember about the product(s), including specific brand names you recall

18. Have you ever purchased product(s) that favorite celebrity mentioned on Facebook?

   1. Yes
   2. No
Answer If Have you ever purchased product(s) that favorite celebrity mentioned on Facebook? Yes Is Selected

19. What was the product(s) you purchased that favorite celebrity mentioned on Facebook? Please tell us as much as you remember about the product(s) you purchased, including specific brand names you recall

20. Do you recall favorite celebrity mentioning any product in other media forms, such as television or radio?

1. Yes
2. No

Answer If Do you recall your favorite celebrity mentioning any product in other media forms, such as television or radio? Yes Is Selected

21. What product(s) do you remember favorite celebrity mentioning in these other media? Please tell us as much as you remember about the product(s), including specific brand names you recall

22. In general, to what extent did your attitude towards the product and/or brand mentioned on Facebook by favorite celebrity change because of its association with favorite celebrity

3. Attitude didn’t change
4. Attitude changed a little
5. Attitude changed moderately
6. Attitude change a lot
7. Attitude changed completely
23. If your attitude towards the product changed at all, in what direction did it change because it was mentioned by favorite celebrity on Facebook?

1. It became more positive
2. It became more negative
3. My attitude didn't change at all

24. What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female

25. What is your age?

1. 18-30
2. 31-45
3. 45-55
4. 56- and above

26. What is your race?

1. Caucasian (1)
2. African American (2)
3. Asian (3)
4. Other (4)
### Table 2: Gender and Race

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Caucasian</th>
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<th>Asian</th>
<th>Other</th>
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### Table 3: Gender and Use of Facebook

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<th>Choice</th>
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<tr>
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### Table 4: Gender and Use of Twitter

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<td></td>
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<td>49.6%</td>
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# PARASOCIAL INTERACTION: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

Tables 5 and 6

<table>
<thead>
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<td>79.3%</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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### Tables 7 and 8

**Table 7: Age and Use of Facebook**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>56 and above</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>6.1%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8: Age and Use of Twitter**

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>85</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-55</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 and above</td>
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<td>20</td>
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</table>
Figure Three

Age Demographics

<table>
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<tr>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>159</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56- and above</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure Four

Race Demographics

- Caucasian
- African American
- Asian
- Other

Count
# PARASOCIAL INTERACTION: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

**References**


# PARASOCIAL INTERACTION: CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS


Gong, L., Appiah, O., & Elias, T., 2008-05-21 "Race as a real and virtual social identity: The moderating effects of ethnic identity on ingroup favoritism toward real vs. virtual human representations" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, TBA, Montreal, Quebec, Canada*.


Hornsey, M. J., & Jetten, J. (2004). The individual within the group: Balancing the need to belong with the need to be different. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 8,* 248-264.


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