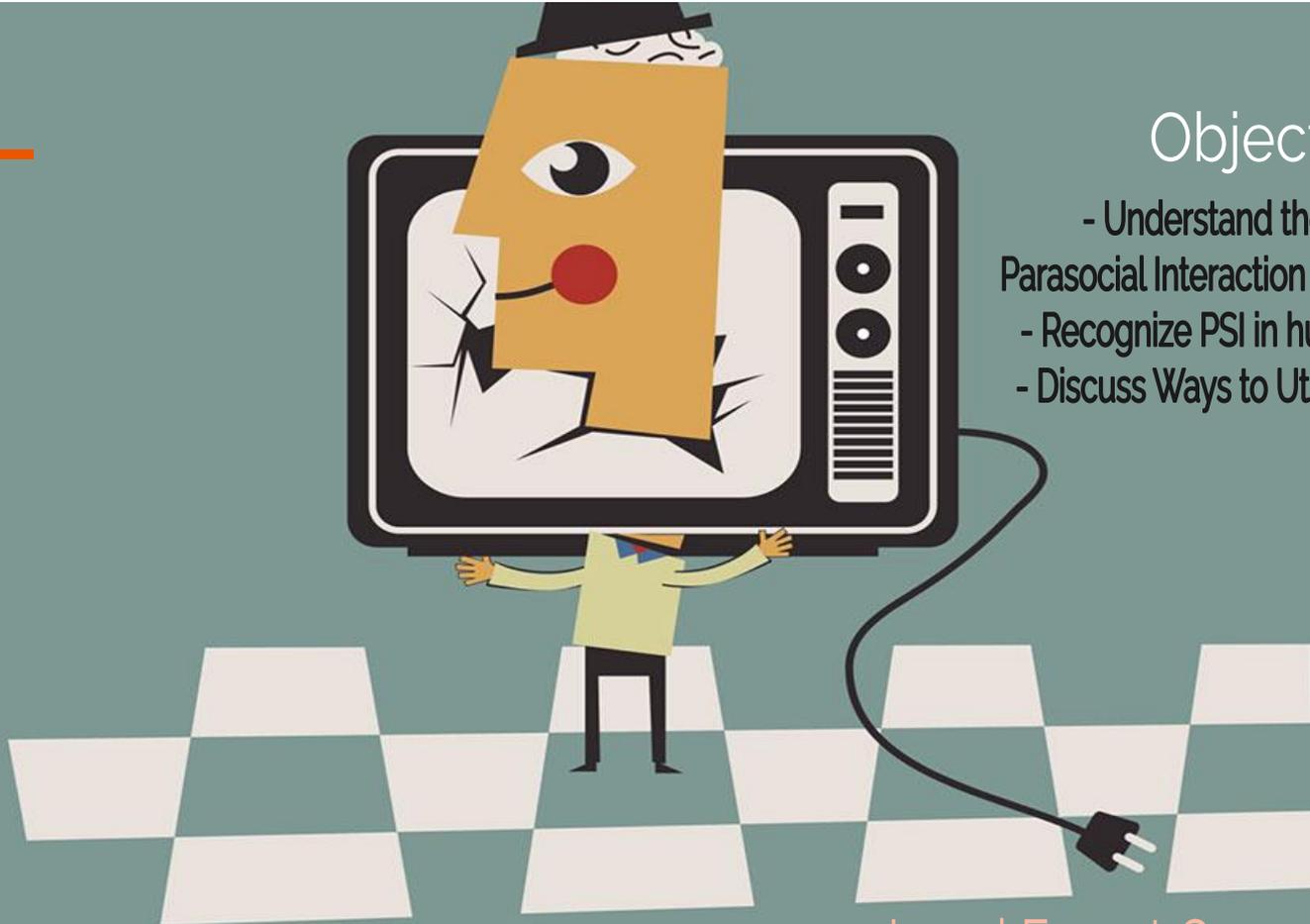


Parasocial Interaction Theory



Objectives:

- Understand the elements of Parasocial Interaction Theory and its origin
- Recognize PSI in human experiences
- Discuss Ways to Utilize PSI effectively

COM 501

Local Expert Group Assignment

Our Team

Nick K



Favorite Show/Movie

Demon Slayer:Kimetsu no Yaiba, RuPaul's Drag Race, The Golden Girls

Favorite Media

Personalities

Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, Trixie Mattel, Katya Zamo,

I have been obsessed with the culture of Drag and learning about the history of the scene through Drag Race and history books

Sydney Williams



Favorite Show/Movie: First Wives Club, Girls Trip, House Party, RPDR

Favorite Media

Personalities:

J. Cole, Amanda Seales, Rihanna

Up until I was about 19 I was obsession with a male artist every few years (B2K, Trey Songz, J Cole) (Bruno Mars)

Katelyn C



Favorite Show/Movie:

Schitts Creek, Jurassic World, Guardians of the Galaxy, Office, Impractical Jokers

Favorite Media

Personalities:

Dan Levy, Chris Pratt, Jennifer Lopez, Steve Carell

My favorite show is Schitts Creek. I've watched the series multiple times and follow all of the cast members on social media.

Jonathan K



Favorite Show/Movie:

Breaking Bad, Game of Thrones

Favorite Media

Personalities:

Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon

When I was around 16 I was obsessed with listening to Jimi Hendrix and The Beatles, and it ended up inspiring me to learn how to play guitar.



What is Parasocial Interaction Theory?

- This theory was created by Donald Horton and Richard Wohl in 1956
- It describes the relationship that is established between television viewers and the remote media communicator.
- The audience develops a connection towards their favorite media personality (ex. A television character, or a internet personality, your favorite superhero).



ACTIVITY

For the next 5 Minutes introduce yourself to the other audience members in the Zoom Meeting.

Be sure to mention:

- Name
- Favorite TV Show/Movie
- Favorite character and/or Media Personality

ACTIVITY



On a scale of 1-10
how would it feel if one
of the favorite characters died?



What makes a theory a theory?

- **Description:** It is a goal of a theory serves to focus the attention of scholars on particular parts of an event or phenomenon
- **Explanation:** Understanding how a phenomenon or or event occurs
- **Prediction:** It is a concept of knowing what events will occur in the future.
- **Control:** The ability to alter elements in the present to achieve a specified outcome given situational factors in the future
- Horton and Whol (1956) theorized that there is a relationship that forms between the audience and a media figure (**DESCRIPTION**)
- Horton and Whol (1956) figured that these relationships form as they feel the media figures fall under their peer group (**EXPLANATION**)
- In order to measure parasocial interaction, a scale was created
 - The scale was a 20-item measure designed to assess an individual's feels of friendship, involvement, and personal concern for a television newscaster and news team. (**PREDICTION**)
- Modifying the target (newscaster or another persona), a researcher can measure parasocial interaction with any media personality (**CONTROL**)



Important Elements of Parasocial Interaction Theory

- Audience develops the one-way relationship
- Parasocial interaction – viewer believe they know and understand the media personality in the same way that they know and understand their “real” friends
- Parasocial relationship – based on belief that the media performer is similar to other people in their circle of friends
- Parasocial breakup - people’s negative emotional reactions to termination of PSR with their media performer (show ends, they leave a show or are written off)



Parasocial Interaction vs. Parasocial relationship

As per the Dibble et. al. (2015) while certain scholars use the terms interchangeably there are in fact differences between parasocial interaction and a parasocial relationship.

- parasocial interaction occurs during viewing (i.e. the moment a tv show character addresses you :Blue clues. It refers to a faux sense of mutual awareness between your and Blue or steve.
- parasocial relationship can develop after parasocial interaction but it also can occur without any parasocial interaction at all (i.e: forming a relationship with a youtube influencer that transcends an initial video addressing followers VS. forming a relationship with Ted from How I met your mother.

What tradition does Parasocial Interaction Follow?

Phenomenological

- Communication is a dialogue or experience to otherness
 - Objectivity and subjectivity are believed to be necessary to understand the human experience
- Words associated with the Phenomenological Tradition
 - Dialogue, experience, genuineness, openness, other, self, and supportiveness

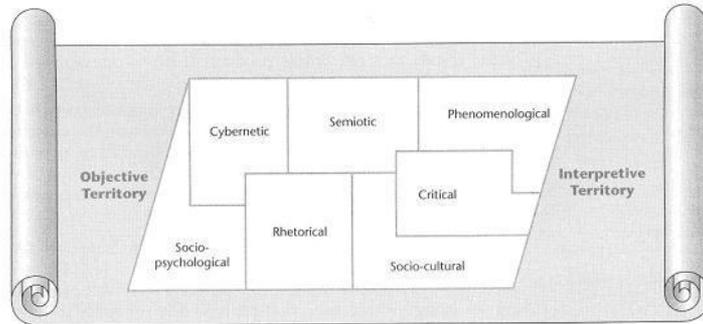


FIGURE 4-3 A Survey Map of Traditions in the Field of Communication Theory

Image source: [Ale Cho: Seven Traditions in the Field of Communication Theory](http://alecho.blogspot.com) (ucarali.blogspot.com)



Popular TV Series Characters and Parasocial Interaction

- Identification was linked to higher levels of parasocial engagement, and perceived similarity was a strong positive predictor of both identification and parasocial interaction.
- Research has shown that audience members that can personally relate to TV personalities create a stronger parasocial bond (Tian & Hoffner, 2010).
- Audience members carry a weaker parasocial bond to disliked characters on Television TV series compared to liked characters (Tian & Hoffner, 2010).
- Non-voluntary relationships were associated more with disliked characters than liked characters in TV series, and encouraged detachment, avoidance, and reduced involvement in relating to TV personalities.

(Tian & Hoffner, 2010)

Parasocial interaction as more than friendship: Evidence for parasocial interactions with disliked media figures.

- Parasocial Interaction can happen with media personalities that you like and dislike
- Parasocial relationships can affect how viewers interpret the show
- Have you ever caught yourself yelling at the TV screen to one of the villains?



Analyzing Media Characters from Other Cultures

- By measuring high and low ethnocentrism with parasocial interaction a study was performed to see a relationship between a British Television Series and its American remake
 - Ethnocentrism: evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture.
- American Audiences with higher ethnocentrism showed lower amounts of Parasocial Interaction with a male sitcom character who was British compared to the American counterpart
- American Audiences with low ethnocentrism had higher parasocial interaction with a british actor over the same character by an american actor
- (Hu et al., 2019)





“Digital buddies”: Parasocial interactions in social media

- Parasocial interactions don't just happen through traditional media like TV/Movies
- One-sided interactions can happen through social media and other online platforms
 - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, etc.
- Endorsed behavior - trying out a product or visiting a new place or restaurant because your favorite media personality recommended it

The application of Parasocial Interaction from Social Media Influencers

Unlike celebrities, social media influencers are content creators who create their popularity and reputation through mediated interactions—mostly two-way interactions—with their following.

- Followers are more likely to build stronger parasocial ties with influencers they find attractive and similar to themselves, and this parasocial relationship leads to increased interest in the influencers' products (Yuan & Lou, 2020).
- Interpersonal fairness (similarities)
- Distributive fairness (expertise)
- Informational fairness (transparency)





YouTube Celebrities and Parasocial Interaction

- Younger media consumers are increasingly using online video platforms as YouTubers draw high numbers of viewers and subscribers.
- YouTube permits various forms of active participation: Users can upload their own videos, read or follow comments, 'like' or 'dislike' videos, and write their own comments on videos
- This observation is confirmed by studies finding that parasocial relationships are stronger when similarities exist between a media figure and his or her audience
 - By following the comments under the videos of my favorite YouTuber I use the like/dislike function on the video, I comment on the videos of my favorite YouTuber, Sometimes my favorite YouTuber reacts to my comments)



Consumer-Brand Relationships and Parasocial Interaction

- Understanding how brands can maintain one-to-one connections and intimacy of social media while also satisfying customer expectations.

Three major strategies for brands to build interpersonal bonds: disclosure, information dissemination, and interactivity (Pinto, Louiero, & Sarmento, 2019).

- Create transparent communication with customers regarding company operations
- Use organizational contacts for consumers to reach out to the company
- Utilize social media pages to interact with the consumer base

Parasocial Example: JCrew

- JCrew is a business with an Instagram following of over 2 million
- Drive engagement and participation with their followers through contests, post feedback and marketer-influencer collaborations.
- Influencers help facilitate interpersonal relationships with their consumers in product endorsements, product reviews, gifting, and guest blogging on the main company page
- **Sponsored Posts**
 - JCrew partners with popular Instagram accounts (influencers) in order to reach a larger audience and further cater to their targeted demographic

J.CREW



#ACCESSORYFIX

Because we know that a bright bag, a high heel or a big earring can help a bad-hair day, make the same old sweater feel new or just knock out a case of the *blabs*.

SHOW US HOW YOU DO IT

Instagram how you wear (and pair, and pile on) your J.Crew accessories with the hashtags **#ACCESSORYFIX** and **#JCREWCONTEST** for a chance to win one of three \$1,500 shopping sprees (our creative director, Jenna, will pick her favorites).



Strategies for Building Consumer-Brand Parasocial Bonds

- Brand Recognition
- Brand Loyalty
- Customer Engagement
- Customer Education



Utilizing PSI in an Organizational Setting (SW)

- Responsive and assertive communications can induce the CEOs' followers to perceive the corporate leaders as amicable role models.
- PSI is used to help show the power of social media as a relationship management tool
- Raises that the nature of social media interaction can help humanize CEO's thus created stronger PSI's

(Tsai & Men, 2016)



Covid-19 & Parasocial Interaction

- “Social media did not just provide us with entertainment, though. It gave us much more than that. Though parasocialization does have noteworthy ill effects, PSI through digital media allowed us to have a sense of togetherness during the quarantine” (Jarzyna, 2020).
- Organizations, recognize the strength of the relationships and interactions that occur between influencers and used the platform to connect with and build trust in the vaccine
- Consequently, some Social Media Influencers showed hesitancy to disclose whether or not they received the vaccine

Syd's Recommendations



- 1- Organizations can utilize parasocial relationships to “humanize” CEO’s and help CEO’s be perceived as amicable “role models”
- 2- Influencers, celebrities and organizations can utilize “Fan activism” to reach quotas and inspire change
 - Content creators (including movie writers, tv show writers, authors can create characters with storylines that help inspire empathy; story lines with a cause (charities, donations, even crowd-funding)
- The key is to acknowledge and utilize!



Jon's Recommendation

When brands seek to build parasocial relationships they should use social media and influencer marketing to build a stronger individual brand relationship with their consumers

In this way, they are able to more effectively cater to their target demographic with a relatable public figure who shares the same interests as them.



Nick's Recommendation

- You may appreciate the interaction of any kind from your favorite influencers/celebrities
- But do your research
- When watching these viewers. Your favorite influencers maybe impersonal, No matter how much you like them/trust with interactions sometimes false information spread can hurt or harm you personally/physically



Katelyn's Recommendation

- Try to remain aware that it is a media personalities job to be likeable. Don't focus all of your attention to these one-sided relationships. Spend time on your real-life relationships.

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THANK YOU 🧐

