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"Breaking Up Is Hard To Do": An Analysis of Parasocial Relationships and Breakups Among "How I Met Your Mother" Viewers

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"BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO": AN ANALYSIS OF PARASOCIAL

RELATIONSHIPS AND BREAKUPS AMONG

HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER VIEWERS

by

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ABSTRACT

"Breaking Up Is Hard to Do": An analysis of parasocial relationships and breakups among *How I Met Your Mother* Viewers

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The study of one-sided mediated interactions, commonly known as parasocial interactions, have generated significant investigations which have examined both mediated relationships through television, the Internet, other media, and the discontinuation of these relationships (also known as parasocial breakups). These studies have specifically identified certain trends in which respondents have tended to form strong emotional connections with subject(s) within narrative fictional depictions. This study examines the relationship between parasocial breakup and the dissolution of a viewer following the end of primetime series, *How I Met Your Mother*. The following measures were used in the survey; 1) age, gender, and ethnicity; 2) parasocial relationships; 3) parasocial breakups; 4) viewing of the show; 5) attitudes toward the show; 6) attitude toward the favorite *HIMYM* character. Overall, findings support that stronger parasocial relationships with *HIMYM*, did indeed predict stronger parasocial breakups with *HIMYM*. Affinity to *HIMYM* and respondent's favorite *HIMYM* character as overall favorite TV character were also indicative of stronger parasocial breakup. This study proposes a Parasocial Interaction Paradigm for future research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The study of one-sided mass mediated interactions, commonly known as

parasocial interactions, have generated significant investigations which have examined

both mediated relationships through television, the Internet, other media, and the

discontinuation of these relationships (also known as parasocial breakups) (Cohen, 2004;

Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). These studies have

specifically identified certain trends in which respondents have tended to form strong

emotional connections with subject(s) within narrative fictional depictions (Eyal &

Cohen, 2006; Rosaen & Dibble, 2008; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006). Cohen (2001)

examined parasocial relationships using identification theory, and the belief that

parasocial relationships with other types of characters, such as athletes, have a different

formation than those with fictional characters.

Based on Nielsen television viewer data (2012), the average American spends 34

hours a week watching television. Because so much time is spent by the American viewer

with television, there is the potential for one to build relationships with different character

types. The formation of these mass mediated character relationships with a viewer are

known as parasocial relationships. Scholars have uncovered a tendency for respondents to

become increasingly attached to fictional characters depicted on television, which have

been measured using different constructs. Previous scholars have centered constructs of

these studies particularly around: 1) viewing habits; 2) affinity toward a show; and 3)

attractiveness toward character (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather, Moyer-Guse, 2011;

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Schiappa, Allen, & Gregg, 2007). The previously mentioned constructs for formation of such relationships have also been associated with a viewer's sense of loneliness along with particular attachment styles in relation to parasocial interactions with mass mediated characters (Greenwood, Pietromonaco, & Long, 2008; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010; Cohen, 2004).

Past researchers have investigated parasocial relationships and interactions, as opposed to parasocial breakups and have examined the development of these relationships (Greenwood, 2008; Rosaen & Dibble, 2008; Turner, 1993). Some scholars have used these mediated relationships in place of a theoretical perspective, but have examined attachment styles and relational development in viewers' social relationships in comparing the two (Cohen, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Koenig & Lessan, 1985; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010). These scholars have investigated aspects of relational development theories, such as attachment styles and have suggested that these mediated relationships, too, are real and important to consider. Scholars have looked at parasocial relationships in comparison to social relationships from an interpersonal attributional perspective (Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Cohen (2004) suggested that these relationships are not identical, but instead complimentary and need similar social skills for maintenance and that those who struggled with forming social relationships due to shyness and inability to relate also struggled with the formation of parasocial relationships. Although they are both similar in that they both require some form of maintenance, they are better defined as complementary.

Contemporary scholars have found the notion of social acceptance as a primary construct among social relationships. This is particularly true to childhood peer

relationships and the formation of these social groups (Clarkson, 1995; Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Parker & Asher, 1993). Cohen and Metzger (1998) argued that in the uses and gratifications theory in relation to parasocial relationships, social affiliation serves as an underlying factor. The audience member essentially feels as though he or she is a part of the show. Television also serves as a basis for entertainment purposes, where the attention and affinity for particular shows allow audiences to develop relationships with the mediated characters. People have a myriad of reasons and ways in which they watch TV, differing from individual to content. This, too, may depend on the viewer's attachment styles.

Parasocial relationships are meant to provide viewers with enjoyment and serve as entertainment or perhaps a form of escape from real life (Greenwood, 2008). Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) applied the uses and gratifications theory in their study of consumption of television news viewing by incorporating the theory to their analysis. The authors applied this theory stating that people who have limited interpersonal interactions and relationships may turn to media personas and in turn develop parasocial relationships (p. 157). The study of parasocial relationships remains an area of inquiry characterized by various theories, including the uses and gratifications theory, the contact hypothesis theory, transportation theory, attachment theory, and personal construct theory (Greenwood, 2008; Greenwood, Pietromonaco, & Long, 2008; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rosaen & Dibble; 2008; Rubin & McHugh, 1987). This analysis follows the direction of previous studies for examining mediated relationships known as parasocial interactions. This study assesses the existing literature in methodological and theoretical terms from which a new parasocial theoretical model is advanced.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between parasocial breakup and the dissolution of a viewer pertaining to the end of television primetime series, *How I Met Your Mother (HIMYM)*. As described by Eyal and Cohen (2006) in the parasocial breakup study following the end of the popular sitcom, *Friends*, the strongest predictor of breakup distress in a parasocial relationship is dependent on the intensity of that relationship (p. 502). This study will enable further researchers to determine the intensity of parasocial breakup to a contemporary television show, *HIMYM*, and see how attached viewers become to each of the characters. In an attempt to replicate Eyal and Cohen's (2006) study to a more contemporary television program, the purpose is to apply previous research questions and hypotheses in order to uncover the popularity of *HIMYM* and distress caused among viewers following the end of the series.

Significance of Study

Previous research has examined parasocial interactions with primetime television sitcoms, such as *Will & Grace* and *Friends*, however, no studies have focused on *HIMYM* with regard to parasocial relationships breakups (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006). Therefore, the study will extend preceding studies by uncovering the degree to which viewers create and maintain relationships with fictional, mediated characters, and potential emotional effects triggered by the show's end. As this study examines viewers' tendencies to create and maintain mediated relationship, additional societal factors must be considered for potential contribution, particularly the rise of individual isolation in contemporary Western society (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, &

Brashears, 2006; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985), and the potential relationship between

such outside factors to which the study may indicate. Consequently, the significance of

this study is not limited to parasocial relationships and breakups, but to broader societal

implications—such as examination between increasing Westernized viewer isolation and

formations of such mediated relationships— which is a possible realm for future

research.

This study aims to uncover the ways by which respondents create and maintain

relationships mediated through a fictional television show, and potential viewer effects

(i.e., the parasocial breakup) following its discontinued production. The significance of

noting the strength in which viewers create and maintain relationships may give

understanding into broader societal trends pertaining to the societal effects of

Westernization and the consumption of mediated fictional narrative content.

Parasocial Relationships

Eyal and Cohen (2006) define parasocial relationships as, "a set of feelings

viewers develop toward media characters that allow viewers to think and feel toward

characters as if they know and have a special connection with them" (p. 504). It is a one-

sided relationship in which a viewer engages in some parasocial with that television

character. Bilandzic, Patriarche, and Traudt (2012) stated that although parasocial

interaction is not like the interaction in the traditional social sense, "it is safe to say that

an individual develops relationships with media figures or at least the cognitive

representations of relationships" (p. 163). Previous studies support that these

relationships are not identical to those of social friends, but are closer than acquaintances

and that these television characters can be a major part of their social circle (Koenig & Lessan, 1985; Newton & Buck, 1985). Previous research of parasocial relationships tends to focus on fictional characters (Cohen, 2003; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006) According to Horton and Wohl (1956), parasocial relationships from the viewer require little or no responsibility or commitment and allow the spectator to abandon the relationship freely.

The personae in a parasocial relationship are the television performers who take the role of the companion and reach a level of affinity offering a continuous relationship. Essentially the personae give the viewer the opportunity to engage in parasocial interaction through illusion of a character and give the viewer the ability to create a fantasy. The viewer shadows the personae's life as if they were a part of his or her life, creating and maintaining that intimacy of a relationship. Camera shots also play an important role in creating illusions of intimacy for such relationships (Auter, 1992; Horton & Wohl, 1956). Horton and Wohl (1956) explained the bond and how it is created through these illusions set forth by the characters. Consequently, the audience is expected to accept the character's role in creating the parasocial relationship. Audience members create their own sense of reality through these characters and their mediated friends, essentially feeling like they are a part of the group. Sometimes referred to a multi-dimensional construct, this suggests that when studying these relationships carefully, insightful results can be found in accordance to how they work in relation to social relationships.

Psychological perspectives have explored parasocial relationships attributed to loneliness. For example, Greenwood and Long (2009) examined whether or not the

formation of parasocial interactions compensated for social interactions. The study suggested that individuals who are become emotionally involved with mediated characters are able to experience some sort of social connection through a sense of belonging. Several previous studies define parasocial relationships using Horton and Wohl's 1956 definition, a "seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer" (p. 215). In essence, parasocial relationships incorporate some sort of level of emotional attachment and therefore are important to be considered as "real" relationships. In this sense, the term parasocial relationship refers to the relationship between a viewer and a mediated television character that is dependent first and foremost on affinity for a particular show, with distinct personae.

Parasocial Breakups

Parasocial breakup is defined as a "situation where a character with whom a viewer has developed a parasocial relationship goes off air" (Eyal & Cohen, 2006, p. 504). This can be the case when a series is cancelled, when a character is removed, or at the end of a series. An important aspect of a parasocial breakup is the dissolution that a viewer faces from the breakup. The dissolution can affect a viewer in various ways, depending on his or her emotional involvement. This may, in turn, cause the viewer to continue to watch reruns of that particular television show or look for additional entertainment news about the show or his or her favorite character. Greenwood, Pietromonaco, and Long (2008) utilized Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's (1998) adult attachment styles which consisted of: 1) preoccupied attachment profile; 2) dismissing avoidance profile; and 3) fearful avoidance profile in exploring the formation of

parasocial relationship in women. Mental modes of attachment were taken into account for these studies, for example, Cohen (2004) used three models including 1) comfort with intimacy; 2) ability to depend on significant others; and 3) ability to trust in their faithfulness and love.

Types of attachment styles are dependent on personal experiences, and if in fact viewers shape parasocial relationships similar to social ones in regards to fundamental psychological mechanisms, then different attachment styles will manifest different reactions or emotions to the loss of a favorite television character (Cohen, 2004). Some researchers have argued that there can be temporary breakups between television viewers and characters (Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011). The study was done during the Writers of the Writers Guild of American strike in 2007; however, a model has not been further investigated. Further research might examine such studies during the offseason of primetime television shows for the anticipation of viewers, typically occurring between the months of May through September. This previous research allows the generation of clear and succinct definitions for the current study. A parasocial relationship is a relationship that is formed with a mediated personae developed over a period of time. The term parasocial breakup, which was originated by Cohen (2003), can be redefined as a permanent separation of the television personae, which typically occurs following the end of a series, or when a particular character is permanently removed or written off of the show by the producers.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter One provided a general overview of concepts of parasocial relationships and parasocial breakups. A definition of each concept was provided, as well as an overview of previous research. Chapter two will provide further research of literature review of both parasocial relationships and parasocial breakups. Chapter three will discuss the hypotheses and methodology in how the research will be conducted. Chapter four will contain the results found following the study. Conclusively chapter five will include the discussion of results and discuss implications of future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes previous research in investigations of parasocial

relationships and investigations of parasocial breakup involving media. The following

studies are based on constructs including: 1) mediated relationships among groups and

subgroups; 2) attachment styles; 3) social and task attraction; 4) interaction addressed by

performer; 5) TV affinity and viewing habits; 6) relational development; 7) interpersonal

attribution and identification; and 8) a meta-analysis of television effects. Discussion of

each study will include method utilized, which in most cases were surveys.

Constructions of Mediated Relationships Among Groups and Subgroups

Particular studies provided salient themes in regards to particular groups of

viewers. These salient themes consisted of investigations among children and adults,

particularly pertaining to the contact hypothesis theory, which essentially states that the

more people are exposed to a particular specific minority or majority group, the more

accepting people become (Rosaen & Dibble, 2008). One study, for example, investigated

the relationship between children and parasocial interactions and examined parasocial

interactions and the social realism among a child's age. Rosaen and Dibble (2008)

referenced previous studies in which the most consistent findings support that younger

children focused on physical characteristics, whereas older children focus on behavioral

characteristics. The purpose of this study was to compare parasocial interactions in social

realism. "Social realism refers to how likely a show's characters and events are to occur in the real world" (p. 147).

There was no clear hypothesis in this study, but instead three research questions. Rosaen and Dibble's (2008) examined the relationship between a child's age and the social realism of the child's favorite character. These television characters were put into two categories: real or fantasy. Real characters were defined by their human attributes. A popular example of this type of character used in this study was Lizzie McGuire. Fantasy characters were those that were low in social realism such as SpongeBob SquarePants. The authors alluded to, "the strongest parasocial relationships should develop with characters that are more socially real than less socially real" (Rosaen & Dibble, 2008, p. 149). The authors concluded that older children would have stronger social relationships with more real characters.

The additional questions addressed whether or not there was a relationship between social realism and parasocial interaction and if so was the relationship moderated by age. There were 183 children of which 77 were male and 105 were female between the ages of 5 and twelve years old. The children watched an average of 2.75 hours per day. Individual interviews were conducted where there were at total of 73 television characters reported. There were three independent coding judgments used (1 = real, 0 = not real) for character's appearance and behavior. Scott's π was used in measured for intercoder reliability, (appear, $\pi = .90$, $\pi = .84$).

The authors used a Parasocial Interaction Scale of 15 items, some of which came from previous studies. These items were measured using a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from very wrong (1) to very right (5). Results revealed that 73% of participants

chose characters that neither appeared real nor behaved real, 19% chose a character that

both appeared and behaved real, 6% chose a character that appeared real it did not behave

real, and 2% chose characters that did not appear real but behaved real. The first question

was measured using a point-biserial correlation coefficient, ($r = .22$, $p < .01$) supporting

that older children chose characters that were more consistent with the real world. The

second research question also found a positive correlation, ($r = .17$, $p < .05$), in which

parasocial interaction was stronger when there was greater social realism in a character.

The third and final question was measured using hierarchical regression, and resulted in

no significant relationship between the age of the child and social realism and parasocial

interaction.

Some studies have integrated parasocial relationships with theory, such as the

contact hypothesis theory. In a study by Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes (2006) the authors

utilized the Contact Hypothesis and Parasocial Interaction as framework for a particular

television comedy, *Will & Grace*. *Will & Grace* was a prime-time television comedy that

ended its production in 2006, but continues to run in syndication. *Will & Grace* had four

main characters, two of which were gay men. Schiappa et al. (2006), sought to examine

these interactions in relation to audience's perceptions of male homosexuals. In previous

studies, researchers found that there was little representation of gay men in television.

The authors used two theories: 1) the Contact Hypothesis; and 2) Parasocial Interaction.

"The Contact Hypothesis states, that under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact

is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority

group members" (p. 17).

The concept of the Contact Hypothesis is that people change their perceptions on a certain minority group when exposed to enough information about them. However, as noted by Schiappa et al. (2006), "group members must feel of equal status, share common goals, and contact must not be opposed by an authority figure" (p. 19). The authors believed that parasocial interaction, too, could lead to audience's attitude change.

There were four hypotheses that suggested that the more frequent the viewers watched *Will & Grace*, audience perceptions of homosexual males would be less prejudice. Another proposed that the greater the parasocial interaction, the less prejudice audience members would feel toward gay men. Participants consisted of 245 undergraduate students majoring in communication studies at a large Midwestern state university. The survey contained questions regarding the frequency in which viewers watched *Will & Grace*, as well as involvement that participants had with non-heterosexual individuals. Questions asked were, "*Will & Grace* has encouraged me to think positively about homosexuals" (p.25). Attitudes concerning homosexuality were measured using Herek's (1988) Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men instrument. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure parasocial interaction. Another item was created to measure the social contact participants faced with homosexuals.

Results concluded that *Will & Grace* served as a stepping-stone to more acceptance of male gay characters in television comedies. Also, the study measured the behaviors of two of the main characters, Jack and Karen and whether or not they acted like children. There was a positive correlation between viewing frequency and parasocial interaction involving all four characters, but a lower correlation between parasocial interactions involving only the two gay men characters. There was significant support for

all hypotheses. Attitude towards gay men scores were lower with higher levels of parasocial interaction. Participants, who had social contact with homosexuals, would be more accepting of the characters in the series. "Both viewing frequency and parasocial interaction predict lower levels of sexual prejudice toward gay men" (Schiappa et al., 2006, p. 31).

<div align="center">Attachment Styles</div>

Adults have learned to cope with different types of attachment styles since childhood. Previous scholars examined the role of attachment styles in relation to parasocial relationships, particularly to generate an understanding of whether such attachment styles have an impact on the creation of these types of relationships (Cohen, 2004; Greenwood, 2008; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010). Greenwood, Pietromonaco, and Long (2008) examined the parasocial relationship of women with female TV stars by replicating two previous studies (Cole & Leet, 1999; Harrison, 1997) which examined interpersonal attraction levels among women and the idealization of mirroring female media personalities. Harrison (1997) predicted that attraction to provocative media personalities would positively predict a desire for "thinness, anorexia, bulimia, perfectionism, and ineffectiveness, whereas attraction to average and heavy media personality did not" (p. 493).

In addition to the previous research on parasocial relationships, this study examined "whether women with a more preoccupied attachment style report more intense idealization of and identification with media characters relative to their less anxious or more avoidant counterparts" (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 388). The authors used Brennan,

Clark, and Shaver's (1998) attachment theory in adult attachment styles: 1) preoccupied attachment profile; 2) dismissing avoidance profile; and 3) fearful avoidance profile.

Greenwood et al. (2008) analyzed: 1) attachment and parasocial relationships; 2) attachment and identification/idealization; 3) anxious attachment and appearance idealization; and 4) parasocial interaction, idealization, and gender. There were seven hypotheses that explored attachment styles in relation to women's anxiety levels when parasocial interaction existed between same-sex characters. The research question was:

RQ: Do women with a preoccupied attachment style experience more or less appearance identification with a favorite female character?

One of the hypotheses consisted of a question in regards to women's choice of their favorite character's weight and appearance identification. There were two stages to the method in using a mass prescreening questionnaire relying on the Experiences in Close Relationships attachment anxiety and avoidance previously used by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998). Based on the participant's attachment style, they were asked to complete a brief questionnaire. There were anxiety and avoidance subscales used in which responses were made on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Media affinity was distinguished among: 1) appearance identification/idealization; 2) behavioral identification/idealization; and 3) parasocial feelings/behaviors using a 7-point Likert-type scale. Character body type was intra coded with characters with certain body types.

Participants reported greater attachment anxiety than attachment avoidance. Attachment style and character affinity were measured using regression analyses. A total of six analyses were performed in which attachment anxiety and avoidance scores were the dependent variables. Some of the hypotheses were partially supported such as the

variance in behavioral identification and parasocial closeness. "Women with high anxiety but low avoidance reported the greatest desire to behave like their favorite female character" (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 399). Women with high anxiety and low avoidance reported the greatest desire to look like their favorite female character. There was no significant relationship in appearance identification. As expected women who chose thin looking characters reported a greater desire to look like those characters.

As previous studies reported, women with higher anxiety about relationships reported the strongest behavioral and appearance idealization of a favorite female character. The study also revealed that women who chose thin characters were not linked to greater attachment or avoidance. As stated in the limitation of the study, the sample size was relatively small and the reliability for identification items was lower than the ideal.

Theran, Newberg, and Gleason (2010) examined parasocial interaction in adolescent girls. The authors focused on the relation between involvement of parasocial interaction and attachment styles in adolescents. Previous research supported the idea that adolescent girls used parasocial relationships in transition toward adult relationships. The purpose of studying adolescent girls was that previous research done by Cohen (2003) supported that girls have stronger parasocial involvements than boys. Also, a main concern affecting adolescent's role models is the "emulating life style choices" (Theran et al., 2010, p. 271), such as body image.

The study contained one hypothesis that most adolescent girls would report strong parasocial relationships. It also stated, "preoccupied attachment style would predict involvement in and emotional intensity of parasocial interactions" (p. 271). Participants

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consisted of 107 female ninth graders from a public high school, ages ranging from 14.06 to 16.17 years. They were first asked to identify their favorite popular media figure or TV-film character of the same sex. Parasocial interactions or involvement was measured using the 20-item Parasocial Interaction Scale. Parasocial interactions or emotional intensity was measured using six items developed to measure the emotional intensity. The study also contained a media figure questionnaire in which the authors judged thoughts and feelings about parasocial interactions. The authors used Furman and Wehner's (1999) Behavior Systems Questionnaire to measure the respondent's parental attachment.

Results supported the hypothesis in that 94% of participants reported a media figure, "indicating the potential for parasocial interaction" (Theran et al., 2010, p. 273). Both preoccupied attachment styles and emotional intensity were significant predictors of parasocial interactions. The majority of adolescent girls saw these models just as media figures and not "interactive partners" (p. 275). Most girls also chose media figures that were older, such as Jennifer Anniston, Angelina Jolie, and Reese Witherspoon, indicating that they looked for figures to idealize. This also indicated that these girls look to media figures while finding their own identities.

Those with preoccupied attachment styles were said to find some security in these types of relationships since there is no room for rejection. While there is no rejection by media figures toward their audience, the interaction will never be reciprocated. This safety net provides temporary comfort to the audience member.

Greenwood (2008) explored the psychological predictors of media through the examination of self-esteem, social anxiety, attachment anxiety/avoidance, negative affect,

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and effortful control. The consumption of media by audiences has been and continues to be a cognitive area of study, specifically the processes by which parasocial relationships are developed. This study explored the media psychology of parasocial relationships with media personas and transportation into media programs (p. 415). Parasocial Interaction (PSI) is the development of a friendship or relationship with a mediated character in which the viewer forms some sort of attachment and feels that they "know" the character. Transportation theory has been adapted to movies and television shows (p. 416). This theory, "provides a lens for understanding the concept of media enjoyment. … understanding why and how enjoyment occurs in response to media" (Green, Brock, Kaufman, 2004, p. 312). Viewers of television may use transportation as a means to escape from their daily distress. The purpose of this study was to explore the two concepts with favorite television characters.

Greenwood (2008) hypothesized that, "individuals who experience increased negative affects and decreased effortless control tendencies would report increased transportation into media programs and increased PSI as a means of regulating/escaping emotional difficulties" (p. 416). The author replicated prior research in search of a link between attachment anxiety and parasocial interaction to see if that same pattern existed for transportation in a media program. A survey was distributed to over two hundred undergraduate students for course credit and consisted of questions measured using media habits, Parasocial Interaction Scale, Transportability Scale, negative affect and effortful control using adult temperament questionnaire, self-esteem using Rosenberg's (1965) 10-item scale, social anxiety using a subscale from previous research, and attachment style using adult attachment styles also found in prior research. Gender

differences were assessed using *t*-tests, means and inter-correlations were used to measure media and emotional well-being, and regression analyses were used to determine the relative contribution of emotional well being to degree of media involvement.

Results supported the hypothesis that those with difficulty with emotion were, "predictive of both parasocial interaction with a favorite character and transportation into media programs" (Greenwood, 2008, p. 421). Consequently, the results highlighted the importance of the relationship between those who experience negative emotions, such as fear and frustration, and the form in which they escape into the mediated world through viewing. Transporting into a mediated world was also linked to issues of self-esteem and anxiety, providing some sort of tranquility to the viewer. The author states that future research should investigate the differences in media consumption of men and women and their form of escapism through media.

Cohen (2004) conducted a study with a purpose to provide further support for previous studies on parasocial breakups and the levels of intensity that are based on these relationships. The author attempted to replicate the results between attachment and parasocial interaction. He used three models of attachment including: 1) comfort with intimacy; 2) ability to depend on significant others; and 3) ability to trust in their faithfulness and love. Cohen (2004) also incorporated previous work, Hazan and Shaver (1987), who defined three types of adult attachment styles: 1) people with secure attachment styles; 2) people with avoidant attachment styles; 3) anxiously attached individuals.

Previous studies have supported the idea that parasocial relationships are an extension of social relationships, and that they are complementary to each other and

require the same sort of skill. Three hypotheses based on previous research suggested there would be a positive correlation between parasocial relationships and the intensity of distress following the loss of a favorite character. Another suggested that anxiously attached adults would have the strongest parasocial relationships; followed by secure adult, and that avoidantly attached adults would have the lowest levels of parasocial relationships. Anxiously attached adults would have the strongest parasocial relationships and be the most distressed following the parasocial breakup.

The sample consisted of 381 Jewish Israelis and included both men and women in three age categories and both light and heavy TV viewers. There were three variables measured in the questionnaire: 1) attachment style; 2) parasocial relationships; 3) parasocial break-up. Criterion validity was used in attachment style where three paragraphs were presented describing attachment styles. Parasocial relationships were measured by asking participants to choose a favorite character. Cohen (2004) used a five point Likert-type scale to respond to statements ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Parasocial break-up was also measured using a five-point Likert-type scale of feelings following the separation of a character.

The Parasocial Interaction Scale was reliable ($\alpha = .79$) and the new Parasocial Breakup Scale also substantiated reliability ($\alpha = .85$). There was a significant correlation between break-up distress and interaction ($r = .58$), therefore supporting the first hypothesis. The second and third hypotheses on parasocial interaction and break-up distress were combined and measured using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The second hypothesis was partially supported in that anxious respondents did report the highest parasocial interaction, while secure respondents and avoidant

respondents did not. The third hypothesis was also partially supported in that anxious respondents reported the highest levels of anxiety from break-up, while secure respondents and avoidant respondent resulted in a low mean.

This study replicated Cole and Leet's (1999) findings that viewers of high intensity are prone to more anxiety when a parasocial break-up occurs. The study provided "additional support for the notion that parasocial relationships should be seen as an extension of a viewers' social relationships rather than as compensation for lack thereof" (Cohen, 2004, p. 198). The study also suggested that more research may be found in more targeted populations such as fan-club members. Some of the parasocial break-up questions involved mental models instead of behavioral responses; therefore a better method may have been to ask these questions to those who consistently watch a specific television show.

<center>Social and Task Attraction</center>

Social and task attraction to a television character are also concepts that should be taken into account in the investigations of parasocial relationships. Rubin and McHugh (1987) and Turner (1993) explored the impact on attraction based on personality and in this case, the viewer's attraction toward the character's abilities and trustworthiness. Rubin and McHugh (1987) conducted a study that focused on the development of parasocial relationships applying the uses and gratifications theory as well as principles of uncertainty reduction theory. The uses and gratifications theory explores the question of what people watch and why they watch it. The uncertainty reduction theory was introduced by Berger and Calabrese (1975) and asserts that people look for patterns, such

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as similarities in order to reduce uncertainty. These two theories provide theoretical framework in that, "uncertainty reduction theory proposes that communication strategies are used to achieve the goal of relationship development" (Rubin & McHugh, 1987, p. 280). Hypotheses included that television exposure would be related positively to parasocial interaction, included social, physical, and task attraction, and that parasocial interaction was dependent on the importance of the relationship with the mediated character.

A survey was conducted at a mid-Western University to 303 undergraduate students and both the Parasocial Interaction Scale and a 15-item scale developed by McCroskey and McCain (1974) was used to measure social, physical, and attraction. Relationship importance in developing relationships with television characters was measured using: a) three affinity items adapted from earlier; b) one item used by Levy and Windahl (1984) to measure preactivity and shown to be related significantly to affinity; and c) two items that tapped a functional alternative notion of affinity. Results supported that social and task attraction towards media had a strong relation to parasocial interaction. The study, "suggests that viewers are more interested in television personalities who are attractive as social or work partners than in the physically attractive" (Rubin & McHugh, 1987, p. 288).

Findings differ from previous studies in that attraction infers from a high level of exposure. This may be so because respondents may have "passed through first impression stages, measure of television exposure may have been inadequate, and amount of communication may not figure into parasocial relationships because the mediated context may be controlled, ritualized, and predictable" (p. 289). The Parasocial Interaction Scale

(PSI) further serves as a model in showing significance in a parasocial relationship based on task attraction in relation to the measures of task attraction. This was an older study that explored the PSI Scale and supported that relationship importance as a construct that differs from attraction. The study contributed to serve as substantial support for the two theoretical frameworks that are important in the development of parasocial relationships.

Turner (1993) examined interpersonal communication through parasocial relationships with television characters. The author examined parasocial relationships within the context of interpersonal homophily and self-esteem and further investigated the motive for watching a television character and developing these relationships as a need for companionship. Turner (1993) discussed previous studies and their framework based on interpersonal communication theories, such as cognitive-oriented theories and the term "homophily" to discuss the similarities between the viewer and character and explore these dimensions through the development parasocial relationships. The author operationalized homophily by identifying four dimensions in Attitude, Background, Value (Morality), and Appearance. Previous studies of interpersonal relationships suggested that persons with low-self esteem had higher levels of communication apprehension, therefore had less contact with other. In parasocial relationships, however, self-esteem may not necessarily be a factor, such that, "television viewing and radio listening, therefore, may seem to some persons to provide a nonthreatening forum or interaction" (Turner, 1993, p. 445). The author examined homophily and self-esteem in hopes to find an explanation for parasocial interaction and better interpret the differences, if any, between mediated relationships and interpersonal relationships.

A survey analysis was distributed to undergraduate students and consisted of questions such as gender, race, age, class rank, and grade point average. Other questions consisted of the number of hours the student watched on a daily basis, their favorite television performer or newscaster, and finally the length of time they had spent watching that television performer. The Parasocial Interaction Scale, the Perceived Homophily Scale, and a revision of the Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale were used to measure self-esteem (p. 446). Respondents answered self-esteem questions in regard to themselves and the Parasocial Interaction Scale and the Homophily Scale "according to the person whom they identified as their favorite television personality" (p. 446). Turner (1993) used Pearson correlation coefficients to determine the relationships among the dimensions for homophily, self-esteem, and parasocial interactions with television performers. The author then used stepwise multiple regression analysis to analyze the dimensions in explaining parasocial interaction with each performer. Results supported that "Attitude" homophily was the strongest predictor, which reinforced previous research that appearance or attractiveness of a certain television performer is not as significant as the similarities in attitudes. Results also supported that positive self-esteem uncovered a significant correlation with parasocial interaction with comedians. There was a significant negative predictor in self-esteem dimensions of communicative propensity of parasocial interaction with soap opera characters, which also supported the prediction that people with low self-esteem who were less inclined to communicate would have no problem in developing parasocial relationships.

Turner (1993) was able to further support the levels of homophily in relation to parasocial interaction, particularly with "Attitude" as well as find differences in these

attributes depending on the type of television performer. He utilized interpersonal

communication theory as framework for the study. This study also limited the options of

respondents in categorizing television performers to which they could choose.

Theoretically, "the present study indicates that mass and interpersonal theories can

complement each other" (p.451).

Interaction Addressed by Performer

When a viewer is addressed by a performer, or in this care a television character,

there is greater potential for the viewer to build a more intimate parasocial relationship.

Auter (1992) introduced this with by using the concept of "breaking the fourth wall". The

author conducted an experiment in order to examine the validity of the Parasocial

Interaction Scale originated by Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) and took in the concept

of "breaking the fourth wall". Auter (1992) was the first to examine parasocial

relationships through the manipulation of program content. The author intended to

evaluate the construct validity of the Parasocial Interaction Scale (PSI) established in a

1985 study by Rubin, Perse, and Powell. Auter (1992) concentrated on the increase of

parasocial interaction in regards to "altering message structural components and personal

behavior in order to 'blur' the line between audience and characters" (p. 174). The

author investigated the construct of the message and the extent at which the viewer

decides to "parasocially interact" (p. 174). Auter (1992) argued that based on previous

research there is more potential to forming parasocial relationships with characters that

are frequently on television. The author investigated the effects of a viewer depending on

camera distances and shot compositions. He incorporated prior research based on the

model of para-proxemics, "or the spatial relationships between various television characters and the viewer" (p. 176). Auter (1992) refers to the "breaking the fourth wall" as a technique by which the program characters breaks the wall between he or she and the viewer. A program character that speaks directly to the audience member has more potential to build a parasocial relationship through direct communication.

The author hypothesized that viewers who watch more situation comedy programming will report higher levels of parasocial interaction than those who view less situation comedy programming. An experiment was conducted using an original 1950s episode of *The George Burns* and *Gracie Allen Show* and was edited to provide the stimulus. Two versions were edited, one of which included George breaking the fourth wall and the other copy of the program included breaks. Both tapes omitted the musical interlude and the closing commercial and monologue. Students from an introductory communications class were randomly divided into two groups where one group watched the low interaction version of the show, while the other watch the high interaction of the show. The revised PSI Scale was used to measure statements about the respondents' favorite characters from the program they had watched. Cronbach's alpha was .81, resulting in high reliability of the scale. ANOVA was used with character selection crossed with treatment, which resulted in significance only in treatment.

As hypothesized, the results supported that the PSI is related to program content. Respondents who watched the more intimate program reported higher scores of PSI and chose George as their favorite character. This also supported the notion of "breaking the fourth wall" such that participants reported a higher degree of PSI when viewing a more intimate program. Some limitations, however, included that respondents were forced to

watch a show they may not have known anything about prior to the viewing. The study

suggested that future research consider looking at parasocial interaction across a period of

time in regards to a particular show to see if length has any affect on the development of

such relationships.

Hartmann and Goldhoorn (2011) conducted research linked to Horton and Wohl's

(1956) study of parasocial interaction. They developed a new scale known as Experience

of Parasocial Interaction. The authors aimed to examine bodily addressing versus verbal

addressing between subjects. Mutual awareness and attention are key in that when a

viewer feels that he or she is being paid attention to, they feel the mutual connection. An

example of this would be when a television performer attempts to establish some sort of

eye contact with the viewer. "The present approach defines a parasocial experience as an

immediate feeling or impression that results from users' automatic mindreading

activities" (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011, p. 1107). Bodily addressing refers to the

concept that the performer looks into the camera, "particularly eye-gazes" (p. 1107).

Verbal addressing refers to statements that greet the audience member, such as, "Good

evening ladies and gentlemen", or simply by changing their voices and tones according to

the audience to which they are appealing such as low, soft-spoken tones used when

addressing children. Hartmann and Goldhoorn (2011) hypothesized that viewers who are

directly addressed by a television performer on a verbal level report are able to build a

more intense parasocial experience than those who are not addressed on a verbal level (p.

1108). Attractiveness, perspective-taking ability, commitment to social norms, and

enjoyment were all taken into account when forming hypotheses. "A 2 (Bodily

Addressing Yes vs. No) x 2 (Verbal Addressing Yes vs. No) between subjects online experiment on viewer's parasocial experience was conducted" (p. 1110).

The experiment consisted of a TV clip in which a female spoke of her opinion about TV-call-in-shows. The experiment was manipulated to show the woman addressing the audience and then showed her from the side without bodily addressing the audience. The verbal addressing was manipulated through the tone in which the performer talked to the audience and differed when talking to children as opposed to adults. Following the clip, respondents were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. The Parasocial Experience Scale was constructed from this study in analyzing the intensity of the viewer, which measured a different phenomenon from the Parasocial Interaction Scale. Statistical analyses included varimax-rotated exploratory factor analysis, zero-order correlations, and ANOVAs. The experiment provided a new approach to core ideas of parasocial interaction in that it redefined it as an immediate experience for viewers to mutually encounter a relationship with the television character (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011, p. 1115). In essence, if the viewer has any sort of communication from the TV performer, the viewer then constructs relationships similar to non-mediated, interpersonal interactions that particularly include interpersonal awareness, adjustment, and attention. A television performer's bodily address and perceived attractiveness, in turn, had an effect on the intensity of the parasocial interaction.

<div align="center">TV Affinity and Viewing Habits</div>

There have been a number of scholars that have used TV affinity and viewing habits as essential constructs with investigations of parasocial relationships (Eyal &

Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011). It is important to take such constructs into account to examine the effects of affinity and viewing habits that take place when forming a relationship with a television character. Eyal and Cohen (2006) investigated the intensity of parasocial breakups (PSB) and parasocial relationships (PSR) of television viewers, and specifically relationships within primetime TV sit-com, *Friends*. The authors conducted a study in which 279 students completed a survey assessing viewing habits, their attitudes toward the show, their favorite character, their commitment and affinity to the show, the character's perceived popularity, and the participant's loneliness. These variables identified the predictors of PSR were used to evaluate the amount of distress the participant had through parasocial breakup and parasocial relationships with the characters of *Friends*.

For parasocial relationships, participants were asked to indicate their agreement with five statements assessing the intensity of their PSR with their favorite character with ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Eyal and Cohen (2006) used Cronbach's reliability to measure the strength of the relationship of the participant with the character. The reliability was $\alpha = .71$. They measured PSB representing both an emotional dimension and a behavioral one, with a reliability of $\alpha = 0.81$. This study found a strong and positive correlation between PSB and PSR.

Viewing of the show was assessed as well through a level of commitment and dedication and resulted in $r = .41, p < .001$. Attitudes toward the show were measured with 15 statements where the participants were asked to indicate their agreement. "Affinity toward the show also reflects such positive dispositions before and after the viewing itself, such as searching for information about the show on the Internet" (p. 510).

The Cronbach's reliability measure was α = .91. Attitudes toward the favorite Friends character using an ordinal method to measure character popularity. "This is in contrast to the PSR and PSB measures that assess the degree to which the participant himself or herself likes the character" (p. 511). Participant measures were assessed through their levels of loneliness. Respondents had an overall loneliness Cronbach score of α = .88.

The hypothesis, which measured the intensity of the viewer, supported the results in that he or she reported to be more distressed following the end of the show. The commitment of the viewer and positive attitudes of the viewer also reported the viewer to be more distressed.

The amount of time a viewer reported watching *Friends* had no effect on the viewer and reported there was less distress. The more the viewer reported his or her favorite Friends character was perceived as being his or her overall favorite, the less distressed the viewer felt after the end of the show. The more a viewer reported findings that his or her favorite *Friends* character was attractive the less distressed the viewer was after the end of the show.

The results supported the hypothesis that the more committed and involved a viewer was, the more distressed he or she was following the end of the show. There was also support that parasocial relationships and breakups are not as distressful as social ones. Gender was not fully taken into account, however, women tended to feel more distressed, but could have been because there were more women participants than males. "PSR's allowed for enjoyable relationships that keep one company and entertain" (p. 516). Limitations of this study included the exclusion of nonviewers of the show as well as a sample of undergraduate students that consisted mostly of women. The survey aided

in measuring the intensity of parasocial relationships and parasocial breakups with the distress that a viewer reported following the end of a hit sit-com, *Friends*.

The following study explored temporary parasocial breakup during the writers strike. The study examined temporary parasocial breakup during the time of the writers strike in 2007. Writers of the Writers Guild of America went on strike from November 5, 2007 through February 10, 2008. Many popular prime time television shows went off air during that time. Lather and Moyer-Guse (2011) were interested in finding out what activities viewers turned to during this time; whether they were additional media exposure or more social activities. Previous studies are limited in that they measured anticipated breakup as opposed to the real thing. The authors employed framework of parasocial relationships and parasocial breakups. They also applied the uses and gratifications theory in considering instrumental viewing versus ritualistic viewing motives.

The study contained five hypotheses and posed two research questions. Lather and Moyer-Guse (2011) predicted that those with stronger parasocial relationships and greater affinity would report more distress when the favorite character's television show was no longer airing. It was also predicted, as in previous studies, that women would report stronger parasocial relationships than men. The authors hypothesized that "watching television for instrumental motives would be positively associated with experiencing distress when a favorite television program was no longer available" (p. 202). Companionship motive was also considered in the study, where someone watches television when there is no one to talk to or to feel less lonely. The two research questions

explored the activities that viewers sought during the time that his or her favorite show was not airing and whether or not there would be a difference in responses due to gender.

Four hundred and three undergraduate students from Midwestern university completed the online questionnaire ranging from 18 to 33 years old and 52.9% were female. Lather and Moyer-Guse (2011) used Rubin and Rubin's (1982) five-item measure of television affinity as well as Rubin's (1983) Motivation for Viewing Television Scale. These were: 1) relaxation; 2) companionship; 3) habit; 4) to pass the time; 5) entertainment; 6) social interaction; 7) information; 8) arousal; and 9) escape. These were then divided into instrumental and ritualistic motives. Participants were asked how many of the shows they watched, if any, were affected by the writer's strike. Those who were affected were asked additional questions regarding their distress in its absence. These questions were taken from Eyal and Cohen's previous 2006 study using eigenvalue.

Stepwise regression was used to measure one of the hypotheses, which supported that the strength of one's parasocial relationship was a significant predictor of parasocial breakup distress ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$). Television affinity was also a significant predictor ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$). Results showed 49% of respondents spent their time watching reruns on TV during the writer's strike. This varied by gender in that males were more likely to spend their time playing video games or watching sports. There was no difference between men and women's parasocial breakup, although women had stronger parasocial relationships than men. Instrumental television motives were a significant predictor ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$). "There was an indirect relationship between viewing for companionship and parasocial breakup distress" (Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011, p. 209). The findings

supported previous research that people with stronger parasocial relationships experience more distress during a parasocial breakup.

Relational Development Among Parasocial Relationships

Several types of relationships require some sort of relational maintenance in order to be sustained. As such, parasocial relationships, too, warrant upkeep and nurture to an extent. Eyal and Dailey (2012) investigated relational maintenance in parasocial relationships. They used the interpersonal model of friendships, also known as the investment model, and an exploratory mediated model. The study was an extension of research, which examined the comparison between parasocial and social relationships. Although parasocial relationships are one sided, viewers often times feel as though they know the characters just as they know their friends. They formed these friendships with the characters and in some cases depend on them for guidance. Eyal and Dailey (2012) examined relationship dissolution, both in social and parasocial relationships, essentially defining parasocial breakups.

The authors addressed relationship maintenance, which define how friendships are maintained through social gatherings, self-disclosure, and support. As previous research suggests, parasocial relationships do not replace social relationships, but instead serve as complementary. Eyal and Dailey (2012) utilized the investment model, which "builds on social exchange and interdependence theories suggesting that individuals are more committed to their relationships when satisfaction and investments are higher and the quality of alternatives is lower" (p. 761). This study included the investment model

within parasocial relationships. This model explicates the importance of satisfaction in social relationship and lead to the consistent idea for parasocial relationships.

Four hypotheses were formed and one research question that were formulated from the investment model. These positively predicted the relational satisfaction and investment, and perceived attractiveness in both friendships and parasocial relationships. The second set of hypotheses and research question were based on the parasocial model of maintenance. "This model posits that identification with the other, commitment, social network embeddedness, sex, and relationship length all predict relational strength, and, thus, relational preservation" (p. 765).

The study contained participants from two southwestern universities with a significant age difference. Participants were asked to complete a two-part survey. The first part consisted of questions pertaining to a close friend, while the other pertained to a favorite mediated personality. Investment model variables, parasocial relational strength model variables were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. These were measured using ANOVAs for each variable. Essentially, due to a large sample size, which was not mentioned in the article, RMSEA (The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) was used to measure model fit.

The results supported past research, that social and parasocial relationships might be experienced similarly. The strength of social relationships in commitment, investment, satisfaction, and identification was greater than that of a parasocial relationship. Despite the strengths of association, however, "both models of interpersonal and mediated communication applied nearly equally well to both types of relationships" (p. 778). As

mentioned in the article, a longitudinal study might conclude stronger support, by examining correlations between the two relationships.

Cohen (2003) examined parasocial breakups (PSB) measuring individual differences in responses to the dissolution of parasocial relationships (PSR). The study was conducted in an attempt to come up with a new scale for reaction of viewers to PSB. Three separate samples were taken: 1) sample pre-test of 124 adults; 2) sample of 387 adults; and 3) sample of 82 teens. The purpose of this study was to provide an extension of self-report in emotions during a parasocial breakup. Cohen (2003) explored the expected patterns across age and sex groups. His two hypotheses predicted that women would report stronger parasocial relationships, but no difference was expected in responses to parasocial breakup. The second predicted that teens would report stronger parasocial relationships in comparison to adults, as well as stronger responses to parasocial breakup. Post breakup reactions were measured by having participants select a favorite television character and "asked how they would respond if the character was taken off air" (p. 193). Other participants addressed post breakup behaviors using the same method. The Parasocial Breakup Scale was presented in a hypothetical context.

Pretest results showed that the parasocial relationship and parasocial breakup items were reliable and consistent with Cronbach's reliability at $\alpha = .79$. Cohen (2003) examined the two hypotheses using analysis of variance (ANOVA) models. He concluded that viewers feared breakup from fictional characters more than from real characters, such as those on reality shows. Women had stronger parasocial relationships than men, but did not have different reactions to parasocial breakups. The author

"provided construct validity to the concept of parasocial breakup, as measured by the new scale" (p. 200).

<div align="center">Interpersonal Attribution and Identification</div>

Attributional confidence is the ability to accurately predict someone's behavior in a given situation, in this case the viewer's ability to foresee a character's behavior. These predictions are generally contingent on the strength of a relationship or may be dependent on the length of time spent with a particular person. The following investigations examined the effect of interpersonal attribution and identification relative to parasocial relationships. Perse and Rubin (1989) explored parasocial relationships from an interpersonal attribution perspective. Their theoretical framework was based on personal construct theory (PCT) and uncertainty reduction theory (URT), which previous research has been done in regards to parasocial relationships. The authors stated that like many interpersonal relationships, parasocial interactions are developed over a period of time and are intensified when these television performers mirror interpersonal interactions. These relationships are also dependent on television exposure to the same characters and shows. The uncertainty reduction theory (URT) states that individuals constantly seek information about others, which in turn reduces uncertainty, which may further lead to a level of attachment. Parasocial relationships use passive uncertainty strategies based on the amount of time a viewer spends watching a particular character and active strategies based on the conversations about the character that a viewer exhibits with others (p. 62). The authors hypothesized that under URT the length of an acquaintance is positively related to attribution confidence in both social and parasocial relationships and that the

greater the television exposure, the greater the parasocial relationship will be with the performer.

Personal construct theory (PST) is based on the concept that individuals construct their own reality derived from experiences. Previous studies investigated PST in regards to social relationships, however, it is important to consider the construct systems utilized in the development of mediated relationships. The second set of hypotheses were based on PCT and suggested that there would be a positive relationship between length of acquaintance in parasocial interactions and cognitive complexity levers where the character is used as a target (p. 65). "In the mediated context, higher social complexity levels and longer parasocial acquaintance lead to higher parasocial complexity levels" (p. 66). A model was tested in the study comparing and contrasting social and parasocial relationships within the two theoretical frameworks. A survey was administered to a group of undergraduate students enrolled in a communications courses. Soap opera characters were used in the survey because according to the authors these characters were most appropriate being that they have "extensive story and character development" (p. 66). Conversation, for example, is a principal component in the development of the relationships between character and viewer. Cognitive complexity was measured using Role Category Questionnaire, the Attributional Confidence Scale to measure uncertainty levels in both social and parasocial relationships, and the Parasocial Interaction Scale to measure the respondent's agreement in comfort with their favorite soap opera character. The statistical analyses used for this study were LISREL in order to test the hypotheses and ability of PCT and URT in regard to parasocial relationships (p. 70).

Results suggested that PCT demonstrated that soap opera viewers might develop interpersonal relationships with mediated character based on some of their interpersonal construct systems. Cognitive complexity, however, did not significantly correlate to either attributional confidence or parasocial interaction. "LISREL analysis showed that cognitive complexity was not directly linked to either attributional confidence or parasocial interaction" (Perse & Rubin, 1989, p. 73). URT provided support that an increase in attributional confidence aids in the formation of parasocial relationships. This study, however, was limited to soap opera characters and the authors suggested that future research should include measures of similarity and attraction, particularly with both "angels" and "villains" (p. 74).

Eyal and Rubin (2003) incorporated the theoretical basis of social cognitive theory in their research of parasocial relationships in this study. The authors examined key constructs of social cognitive theory which included a viewer's aggression and homophily, identification, and parasocial interaction with television characters. Eyal and Rubin (2003) based their study on the social cognitive theory in relation to aggression. Social cognitive theory stems from social learning theory, "which is interested in observational learning and imitation as they apply to social behavior, and had an early focus on aggressive behavior" (p. 79). A previous study by Bandura (1978) explained the theory of human aggression, which examined aggression and how patterns are formed, how aggressive behavior is provoked, and what sustains that aggressive behavior.

The authors clearly defined the meaning of each: "homophily is the degree to which people who interact are similar in beliefs, education, social status, and the like" (Eyal & Rubin, 2003, p. 80). This relates to social cognitive theory in that people tend to

pay more attention to those whom they share similarities with. Identification, as defined by Hoffner (1996), "refers to a viewer sharing a character's perspective and vicariously participating in the character's experiences when viewing" (p. 80). This suggests that when people watch television characters that are similar to them, in turn they have a desire to act like him or her. The intensity of the parasocial relationship can mediate effects, causing the viewer to replicate certain behaviors.

In conducting the study, gender was controlled for since previous research supports that men tend to be more attracted to violence on television over women. The first hypothesis suggested that the greater the identification, perceived homophily, and greater parasocial interaction would result in higher levels of viewer aggression. The second was that "greater perceived homophily with aggressive television characters or personalities will predict greater identification with those aggressive personae" (Eyal & Rubin, 2003, p. 82). Since the three are "theoretically distinct social constructs" the authors were interested in how the relationships among these would affect viewer aggression (p. 82).

A research questions examined if parasocial interaction and aggressive television characters would have any affect on the viewer and his or her aggression and identification. The second examined whether or not verbal and physical aggression would differ in predicting homophily, identification, and parasocial relationships. The study consisted of 219 undergraduates from a large midwestern university since they found college students to be "intentional in their viewing" (p. 84). In the surveys, participants were provided with a list of eight aggressive television characters/personalities. They

were asked to choose one of the characters were asked questions based on homophily, identification, and parasocial interaction.

Homophily was measured using Andersen and de Mancillas' (1978) perceived homophily with public figures. A scale was constructed to measure identification using questions from previous studies. The Parasocial Interaction Scale was used for PSI, and the Aggression Questionnaire was used for aggression with both the physical aggression and verbal aggression subscales. Four episodes of 30-minute programs and two episodes of 60-minute programs were sampled for content analysis. The characters were analyzed for portrayals of aggression. Aggression was defined as, "the motivation behind acting violently and so it can be inferred from violent acts" (Eyal & Rubin, 2003, p. 87). Results showed significant differences between the choices of the participants based on gender. "Viewer aggression correlated modestly but significantly with all three relationships with an aggressive television character: identification ($p < .002$); homophily ($p < .02$); and parasocial interaction ($p < .05$)" (Eyal & Rubin, 2003, p. 88). The first hypothesis was partially supported while the second one was supported. Homophily significantly predicted identification with characters. Parasocial interaction and gender controlled the relationship between viewer aggression and identification with aggressive characters. "Physical aggression but not verbal aggression correlated positively with perceived aggression" (p. 91). The results showed a concern that viewers who displayed already aggressive behavior would show an increase in aggression the more he or she watched aggressive behavior on television.

A Meta-Analysis of Television Effects

Schiappa, Allen, and Gregg (2007) conducted a meta-analysis and referred to parasocial interaction as, "not a 'real' interpersonal relationship because there is no corresponding self-disclosure from the viewer to the person on the screen" (p. 302). They posit the unique difference between interpersonal relationships and parasocial relationships. This difference is that relationships with media celebrities and characters on TV are unidirectional. Parasocial relationships lack the "direct connection of person to person" (p. 301). They affirm that not all-communicative interaction leads to personal relationships, just as not all television viewing leads to parasocial relationships. They seek answers to questions such as how these relationships are formed, and what keeps viewers attracted to these mediated characters.

They conducted a content analysis that searched for previous literature using the word parasocial. Results of the meta-analysis supported that persons who watch a greater amount of television, are more likely to form such relationships in that they become more aware and understanding of the character and his or her attributes, in turn forming a real relationship. This investigation was important in that Schiappa et al. (2007) examined how these relationships are formed as well as the characteristics of the viewers who form these types of relationships.

Summary of Literature Review

Results have provided framework for such studies of parasocial relationships and parasocial breakups. Studies measuring parasocial relationship intensity in relation to social relationships conclude that these relationships are not necessarily identical, but

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complementary of each other. Cohen (2004) suggested those who struggle forming social relationships due to their shyness and inability to share feelings also find it difficult to form parasocial relationships (p. 192). Most of these studies consist of quantitative survey analysis and use a variety of scales in measuring such relationships (i.e., Parasocial Interaction Scale, Loneliness Scale, Television Affinity Scale). Some, but not all, previous research is also based on theoretical basis and/or rationale including: 1) uses and gratifications theory (Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011; Rubin & McHugh, 1987); 2) social learning theory (Bandura, 1978); 3) investment model (Eyal & Dailey, 2012); 4) attachment styles model (Cohen, 2004; Greenwood, Pietromonaco, & Long, 2008; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010); 5) contact hypothesis theory (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006); and 6) uncertainty reduction theory (Rubin & McHugh, 1987).

Additional studies of parasocial relationships remain divergent across theoretical orientations. Several studies show the consistent use of constructs within the parasocial interaction phenomena. Eyal and Cohen (2006) used interpersonal, relational, and developmental theories in their parasocial breakup study of the series *Friends*. The rationale used for the authors' study, also used for the current study is parasocial interaction within aspects of relational development, or in this case relational breakup. Considerations for gender, as well as age were taken into account with certain studies (Rosaen & Dibble, 2008) when they examined social realism and parasocial interaction in young children. Schiappa, et al. (2006) examined parasocial relationships in adolescent girls and considered attachment styles. The strengths of these types of relationships may be more easily determined if these are categorized in different studies. Often times, women are thought to be more emotional, and in turn shape a stronger bond or

connection in such parasocial relationships. It is important to consider different types of attachment styles in adults and teens in parasocial relationships.

A quantitative survey analysis in measuring the levels of distress and emotions is necessary in the examination of such relationships. Theory is essential in looking to conduct more extensive research on the effects of people following the end of a series, but remains divergent in previous studies. Previous scholars have referred to parasocial interaction as a perspective, using interpersonal settings and relational maintenance in an effort to better understand parasocial relationships (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Eyal & Dailey, 2012). This can aid in the support of having greater distress following a parasocial breakup.

Media have been found to affect viewers in a number of different ways. Future research should examine personality styles in people prior to measuring a parasocial relationship/parasocial breakup. Rubin (1983) provided groundwork that "television use motivations and viewing patterns are indeed interactive, and that television use motivations can effectively explain or predict viewing pattern consequences" (p. 48). In doing so, this fulfills some sort of need, in which the viewer indicates greater affinity toward the mediated character.

This provides groundwork for parasocial breakups in an attempt to investigate parasocial breakups through feelings of affinity, as well as levels of emotional distress. Relationship dissolution is taken into account during these parasocial breakups, just as respondents may experience during a social breakup. Furthermore, since a parasocial relationship is mediated, and one sided, the level of disillusion is far less than one would be in a social breakup. Eyal and Cohen's (2006) findings indicated that these

relationships with mediated characters were closer than an acquaintance, but not as close as a friend. "This suggests that some emotional distress is likely when mediated relationships dissolve but that this distress is likely to be weaker than the distress experienced following social breakups" (p. 516). Other models, such as the parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship can be further developed in future research. There are constantly new shows and new seasons, that when one series ends, or one character is taken off a show, there is always a replacement for the viewer to form a parasocial relationship (Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011, p. 311). Given all constructs used in these previous investigations, it is important to take into account that television viewing has indeed changed and evolved throughout the years. Since hit sit-com show, *Friends*, concluded its production almost ten years ago, it is necessary to examine a hit sit-com, *HIMYM*, as a more contemporary work, applying Eyal and Cohen's (2006) constructs: 1) parasocial relationships; 2) parasocial breakups; 3) viewing of the show; 4) attitudes toward the show; 5) attitudes toward favorite *HIMYM* character; and 6) participant measures.

Questions may be taken from previous survey research, including Eyal and Cohen's (2006) parasocial breakup examination during the end of a series. The lack of studies for parasocial breakup raises concerns in the methods that have been consistently used in supporting results for parasocial breakups. In order to seek advancement in this area of research, such considerations for these studies should be implemented into more contemporary work, such as *How I Met Your Mother*.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Previous scholars refer to parasocial relationships as a perspective or a theory in itself. In this case, it will be treated as such. Eyal and Cohen (2006) studied parasocial relationships with mediated TV characters and extended previous research using characteristics from relational development theories. Cole and Leets (1999), for example used attachment theory in examining adult attachment styles in a parasocial approach, thus finding that viewers of high intensity tend to experience more anxiety during a parasocial breakup. Cohen (2003) investigated emotional and behavioral dimensions in the examination of fictional and real characters, suggesting that viewers feared breakup from fictional characters more than they did from real characters (i.e. characters in reality TV shows). Cohen (2004) used PSB as a new scale and applied it to respondent's attachment styles as well as anxiety. The findings suggested partial support that anxious respondents reported both higher PSR and higher PSB. These attributes of relational development will be used in this examination of relational dissolution following the end of TV show, *HIMYM*. This study is in line with other studies using aspects of relational maintenance theory where breakup, or dissolution following the removal of a TV character, or in this case the end of the series with a mediated character, are examined.

Previous scholars have investigated specific constructs in relation to TV affinity, loneliness, instrumental television viewing, social, physical, and task attraction when examining parasocial relationships (Cohen & Metzger, 1998; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). Participants in social relationships are typically

unprepared for a breakup. In contrast, participants in mediated relationships are often informed of a series cancellation, allowing the participants to prepare for the discontinuation of the relationship at hand. As mentioned by previous scholars, (e.g. Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Turner, 1993) successful television shows that last several years may be indicative of stronger parasocial relationships, since the duration of time that a viewer spends watching a show has been highly associated with distress of such breakups. Previous studies have uncovered strong relationships between affinity, homophily, and viewing frequency of audiences using survey analyses (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006; Turner, 1993).

Rationale and Hypotheses

Although a considerable number of scholars, (e.g. Cohen, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Cole & Leets, 1999; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011) have examined parasocial relationships using different constructs, it is important to examine parasocial breakups, since fewer studies incorporated the potential presence of emotional distress when faced with separation to specific television shows and characters. Few scholars have examined parasocial breakup, while even fewer scholars have examined parasocial breakups pertaining to specific television shows with specific characters (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2006). Additional investigations of parasocial breakup using constructs such as viewing habits, attitudes, affinity, and loneliness incorporating previous research are necessary to uncover the extent to which viewers develop and maintain mediated relationships with characters in contemporary TV sit-com, *HIMYM*.

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This study will incorporate and expand upon Eyal and Cohen's (2006) analysis that addressed various dimensions of parasocial breakup.

How I Met Your Mother (HIMYM)

According to *The Hollywood Reporter* (2014), 12.9 million viewers tuned in to watch *HIMYM's* one-hour series finale, which was the series' all time most watched episode. The high popularity of the series finale suggests that various people maintained an interest in the show's closure. *HIMYM* is a hit television comedy that ran for nine seasons and remained highly popular. According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), the show averaged 8.5 stars out of 10, yielding favorable rates (Internet Movie Database, 2014). The main character is Ted Mosby, an architect, who narrates the story in 2030, to his kids on how he met their mother. The story begins in 2005 when Ted attempts to find a wife. Ted's efforts are motivated by the recent engagement of his friends, Lily and Marshall. Ted becomes emerged in the idea of finding true love and is inspired by the Lily and Marshall's relationship. The show takes place in New York City where Robin and Barney becomes integrated into the group. Barney is a professional, but most importantly, a womanizer who later falls in love with Robin, Ted's ex girlfriend, and form a love triangle. The show explores various plots, including the careers of each of the four main characters.

In order to identify the predictors of a parasocial breakup (PSB), Eyal and Cohen (2006) stated the importance of predictors of parasocial relationships (PSR). The authors hypothesized that the stronger the parasocial relationships, then perhaps the stronger a viewer will feel following a parasocial breakup. Therefore:

H_1: PSR for *HIMYM* will be positively related to PSB.

Viewers who engage in consistent viewing of *HIMYM* will form stronger parasocial relationships, and in turn develop a stronger commitment and experience a higher level of breakup distress, displaying similar emotion to social relationships. Consequently, for parasocial breakups, the following hypothesis is taken from Eyal and Cohen (2006):

H_2: Duration of *HIMYM* viewing will be positively related to PSB

Eyal and Cohen (2006) make the assumption that, "PSR's in an ensemble show like *Friends* are developed within a context of a show as a whole" (p. 507). Therefore, the parasocial breakup, or emotional connection lost, is affected by the attachment and affinity to the show as a whole. Therefore, fourth hypothesis is then:

H_3: Affinity for *HIMYM* will be positively related to PSB.

As previously mentioned by Eyal and Cohen (2006), "parasocial breakup should be associated with factors related to the characters" (p. 507). Respondents with a stronger value of a parasocial relationship pertaining to a specific character are perhaps more likely to face stronger dissolution following a parasocial breakup or the end of a series. Social and physical attractions are also taken into account. Therefore:

H_4: Relationships with *HIMYM* characters will be positively related to PSB.

H_5: Perceived popularity of a viewer's favorite *HIMYM* character attractiveness will be positively related to PSB.

Consequently, when a viewer faces difficulty in replacing a relationship with a mediated character with another, the more distressful the breakup will be.

H_6: Stronger relationships between a viewer's favorite *HIMYM* character as their overall favorite TV character will be positively related to PSB.

Sampling and Procedure

Previous authors have uncovered particular traits when examining parasocial-mediated relationships. In order to assess such traits among contemporary television media consumers, a survey will be administered to a convenience sample of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the College of Urban Affairs at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) for extra credit. A pretest was conducted with approximately eighteen undergraduate students during the summer of 2014 at UNLV with a modified survey based on the Appendix of the original study (Eyal & Cohen, 2006). This pretest was used solely for item clarification and was not used for any statistical analysis. In administering the survey for the pretest, it allowed for further discussions about media platforms used to watch *HIMYM*. During the pretest about fifty percent of the students had watched multiple seasons of *HIMYM* and were familiar with the show. These findings suggested that people are now watching a variety of shows, and that in contemporary society it can be difficult to find a specific population who watched a specific show, in this case *HIMYM*. The pretest also allowed for further questions on the survey pertaining to binge watching and online streaming. For pretest purposes, students were able to select a favorite show of their choice in relation to the questions.

The target-completed sample was 200 UNLV respondents based on the utilization of bivariate Pearson correlations looking at the relationships between PSR and PSB and independent variable such as affinity (Cohen, 1992). This target sample of 200 students comprised a portion of the larger sample of study participants. The target sample had a history of *HIMYM* viewership. The survey took approximately 20 minutes and was administered to students outside of normal class times using the Qualtrics online survey

system in the Emerging Technologies Laboratory facility in Greenspun Hall on the UNLV campus. Data collection began approximately eleven months following the airing of the series finale giving participants enough time to miss their favorite characters. After provided with age if they had never watched *HIMYM*, respondents were directed to the end of the survey where they were thanked for their time and participation. Those who marked they had watched any episode of *HIMYM* were asked to continue with the survey and responded to the questions accordingly. Demographic variables included age, sex, and ethnicity. Previous scholars have used undergraduate college students as respondents, with the underlying assumption that undergraduate students may have more time for television viewing, and in turn, are more susceptible to developing such relationships (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Greenwood, 2008; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Schiappa et al., 2006; Turner, 1993). A convenience sample of undergraduate and graduate students was used in conducting the survey. Since many previous scholars used populations of undergraduate students there is more room for the comparison of results within similar populations (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Greenwood, 2008; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Turner, 2003). As previously stated, collegiate students may be more susceptible to forming mediated relationships thus feeling more emotional distress following a parasocial breakup.

According to Babbie (2013), survey research is generally weak on validity and strong on reliability given that participants have a limited amount of options when choosing the best response. Surveys however are most appropriate for this study considering the collection of data from individuals and seeking responses for how they

think, feel, or behave, in this analysis being parasocial relationships and parasocial breakups.

<p style="text-align:center">Measures</p>

The survey included statements for the measures: 1) age, gender, and ethnicity; 2) parasocial relationships; 3) parasocial breakups; 4) viewing of the show; 5) affinity toward the show; 6) affinity toward favorite *HIMYM* character; and 7) participant measures.

Age, Gender, and Ethnicity

The first section of the survey asked for gender: male or female, and age of participant. Age is a particular important factor since there is an assumption that teens tend to be more emotionally vulnerable than adults and prone to develop stronger mediated relationships. This also creates the assumption that since they tend to create stronger parasocial relationships, then they will report stronger feelings following a parasocial breakup. Participants will also be asked to mark all that apply under ethnicity.

HIMYM Viewership

The next three questions on the survey asked about participant's viewership of *HIMYM*. One question asked, "How many seasons were you a viewer of *HIMYM*?". Those who chose the first response, "I have never watched an episode of *HIMYM*" were directed to the end of the survey where they saw, "Thank you for your participation" and received credit for their contribution. Respondents who chose answers from "Less than

two seasons" to "I watched every episode of *HIMYM*" continued with the survey. The proceeding questions asked how often they watched episodes of *HIMYM*, such as "I never missed an episode and even taped ones I missed" to "I used Digital Video Recording (DVR) to watch most episodes of *HIMYM*". The next question asked who they typically watched episodes of *HIMYM*, and were asked to mark all that applied ranging from "I watched alone" to "I viewed with a regular group of people".

Parasocial Relationships

Previous examinations of parasocial interaction require use of the Parasocial Interaction Scale in measuring the strength and development of mediated relationships. All scales used have demonstrated reliability, such as the Parasocial Interaction Scale, which has been used in most of the aforementioned studies (Auter, 1992; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). This scale is frequently used to measure potential interactions between mediated characters and viewers. Previous studies using these measures have a computed reliability coefficient of 0.81 to 0.95. A Likert-type scale was used for five statements ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) taken from Eyal and Cohen's (2006) parasocial breakup study, in order to measure the intensity of parasocial relationships. Since this study is concerned with the intensity of the relationship instead of measuring the quality of the relationships, the Parasocial Interaction Scale developed by Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985) was used. Previous scholars have incorporated the Parasocial Interaction Scale in the examination of these mediated relationships (Auter, 1992; Greenwood, 2008; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Turner, 1993). Examples found in the survey included

statements taken from Eyal and Cohen (2006), such as, "I would like to meet my favorite *HIMYM* character in person" All of these questions can be found in the survey in Appendix A.

Parasocial Breakup

This next section of the survey was assessed parasocial breakup using Cohen's (2003) Parasocial Breakup Scale. Cohen (2003) developed a reliable Parasocial Breakup Scale, measuring emotional distress following the separation of viewer and character using relational development theories in understanding parasocial relationships. Eyal and Cohen (2006) were further able to provide reliability and validity to the Parasocial Breakup Scale given that their study included different age samples across a different culture. Lather & Moyer-Guse (2011) also used the Parasocial Breakup Scale to examine the temporary breakup during the Writer's Strike in 2007. Previous studies using these measures have computed reliability coefficient ranging from 0.79 to 0.85. Thirteen statements were used to measure the respondent's PSB ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Such statements consisted of, "Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel more lonely" and "Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I tend to think of him or her more often".

Duration of Viewing

Participants were asked questions in order to measure the duration in which they watch the program using a Likert-type scale taken from Eyal and Cohen (2006) with statements ranging from 1 (I used to watch the show but stopped before it came off the

air) to 5 (I never missed an episode and even recorded ones I missed and viewed at a later time) in response to the statement regarding the dedication of their viewing habits.

Affinity Toward the Show

Respondents were given fifteen statements about the show assessing their attitudes and behaviors towards *HIMYM*, specifically their affinity and likeness regarding *HIMYM*. Attitudes stem from affinity toward the show, and in turn there exists an underlying assumption that more positive attitudes signify stronger program affinity. Affinity is a major construct that has consistently been used in measuring mediated relationships, and is constructed through attitudes toward the show (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007; Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Schiappa, Allen, and Gregg (2007) provided a more clear understanding of the term in relation to television viewing. Affinity for watching television consists of the degree of "emotional reaction or desire" (p. 305). Since it is assumed that respondents with greater affinity will report stronger relationships, it is also assumed that those viewers will report stronger parasocial relationships and breakup distress (See H$_3$). Positive attitudes consist of those favorable feelings which a viewer may develop over time toward a specific television show or specific characters in a series. Previous scholars using these measures have computed a Cronbach reliability ranging from 0.84 to 0.90.

The affinity toward the show also included statements that suggest the viewer's search for information about the show and its characters before or after airing, such as "I often search for information about *HIMYM* in magazines, online, and in other television shows or films" and "I often watch reruns of *HIMYM*". This may contribute to the overall

likeness and interest that a viewer holds to the characters and the overall show in *HIMYM*. Response options included a Likert-scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Affinity Toward Favorite *HIMYM* Character

In this section, respondents were asked the extent to which their favorite *HIMYM* character was their favorite television character overall with response options ranging from 1 (My favorite *HIMYM* character is my LEAST favorite overall TV character.) to 5 (My favorite *HIMYM* character is my MOST favorite overall TV character.) based on Eyal and Cohen's (2006) work who used Rubin's (1983) scale of affinity. In order to measure the popularity of the characters, respondents were asked to rank each character from 1 (most popular) to 5 (least popular) in order of perceived popularity, the order in which they think most viewers will respond. Character affinity statements were taken from Eyal and Cohen (2006) but have been modified for this particular study. Eleven items consisted of statements ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) pertaining to the respondent's favorite character, such as "I think I have a good understanding of my favorite character" and "While viewing the show, I could feel the emotions my favorite *HIMYM* character portrayed". These items were used in testing hypothesis four for measuring viewer relationships with *HIMYM* characters, specifically the favorite character. Such potential exists that viewers who find characters more attractive, or relatable, will construct stronger parasocial relationships.

Participant Measures

       This section included statements in measuring the participants' loneliness using the UCLA Loneliness Scale used and revised by Russell (1996). Hartshorne (1993) investigated the psychometric properties of the UCLA Loneliness Scale and were confirmed reliable and valid. Measures for this scale have computed a reliability coefficient ranging from 0.89 to 0.94. This consisted of twelve statements in which participants will need to respond to questions taken from Eyal and Cohen's (2006) study, such as, "I often feel in tune with the people around me". Four additional items looking at a social aspect were taken from Eyal and Cohen's (2006) study and added to measuring participants' loneliness using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) such as, "I have trouble making friends".

Analysis Plan

       Chapter Four reports the internal consistency of the scale measures after the administration of the survey. Item analysis provides information on how individual items for each scale will relate to other items (e.g. affinity toward the show, affinity toward a particular character). The internal consistency a *priori* level of alpha was established via Coefficient Alpha at .70 (Cronbach, 1951). Factor analysis was used to analyze sub-dimensions within scale-items. A .40 coefficient criterion level was used to determine a *priori* (Spector, 1992).

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

General Description

This chapter includes the analysis and results from the administered survey of

HIMYM viewers. The analysis begins with a test of internal consistency for scales

previously discussed in chapter three, parasocial relationships (PSR), parasocial breakups

(PSB), affinity toward the show, and affinity toward favorite *HIMYM* character. Scale

measures for loneliness were also analyzed, but did not meet established criteria for

reliability. This construct was consequently dropped because it was not essential to the

testing of any hypotheses. Previous scholars have indicated that gender plays a major role

in parasocial relationships indicating that women tend to be more vulnerable,

consequently make it easier for them to develop such relationships (Eyal & Rubin, 2003;

Greenwood, Pietromonaco, & Long, 2008; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010) Thus

gender was also considered when testing the hypotheses.

Demographics

The participant sample consisted of 215 undergraduate and graduate students at

the University of Nevada Las Vegas from the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs. The

HIMYM screener question, however, eliminated over 100 students and 84 respondents

were used for data collection.[1] Of the 84 participants who responded with "Less than two

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[1] Note: *HIMYM* Screener Question: *How I Met Your Mother* (*HIMYM*) was on the air for 9 years. How
many seasons were you a viewer of *HIMYM*?

seasons" to "I watched every episode of *HIMYM*", 44% had watched every episode of

HIMYM. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 51 with an average of 22.9. The

majority of respondents, 29 (34.5 %), were White, 21 (25%) Hispanic or Latino, 15

(17.9%) Multiracial, 7 (8.3%) Black or African American, and 6 (7.1%) Asian American,

5 (6.1%) other, and 1 (1.2%) were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Watching of the show

Participants were asked, "How did you typically watch episodes of *HIMYM*?"

Responses included Netflix, Digitally Video Recorded (DVR), Monday nights on CBS,

and only reruns on cable/network TV. Viewers were asked to check all that applied,

which suggested that most respondents, 67.9% viewed on Netflix. A relatively high

percentage also included viewers who watched reruns on cable/network TV, 33.3%,

while 21.4% watched them on DVR, and only 25% watched episodes when originally

aired on Monday nights on CBS. These findings suggest that a relatively high percentage

of people indeed are using online streaming as a main source for television watching,

steering away from conventional TV viewing when episodes are first aired.

Internal Consistency

The PSR Scale was used to measure respondent's PSR toward *HIMYM*.

Cronbach's alpha was used to test internal consistency of a given measurement scheme,

in this case, the survey. Table 1 details the reliability scores for PSR, PSB, affinity

toward the show, and affinity toward favorite *HIMYM* character. In measuring PSR, all

four items for the construct were retained and Cronbach's reliability measure was $\alpha = .71$.

The PSB Scale was then tested for inter-reliability with all thirteen items retained and Cronbach's reliability measure of α = .78. Of the fourteen items for affinity toward the show, two of the items that were reversely coded were eliminated. These items were, "I rarely think about *HIMYM* before or after I watch the show" and "Watching *HIMYM* is a waste of my time". When testing internal consistency these statements were removed since they were reversely coded and might have been viewed differently by respondents. The twelve items maintained for affinity toward the show yielded a Cronbach's reliability of α = .77. All items for affinity toward respondents' favorite characters were reliable and consistent with Cronbach's α = .82.

Table 1

Cronbach's α of Internal Consistency

Parasocial Constructs	α (N = 84)
Parasocial Relationships	.71
Parasocial Breakups	.78
Affinity Toward the Show	.77
Affinity Toward Favorite Character	.82

Note. See questions for each Construct in Appendices B, C, D, & E.

Factor Analysis

The statistical analysis in this study included exploratory factor analysis used to determine the number of factors that best represented the scale items (Spector, 1992, p.

54-55). Factor analysis helps to identify the most appropriate measures to include for further analysis.

Parasocial Relationships

One factor was identified for PSR with an eigenvalue of 2.17 and accounted for 54.42% of the total variance after rotation. Table 4 in Appendix B summarizes the factor analysis for PSR of consistent *HIMYM* viewers. These items were ("I would like to meet my favorite *HIMYM* character in person;" "I like to compare my ideas with what my favorite *HIMYM* character says;" "My favorite *HIMYM* character makes me feel comfortable as if I am with friends;" and "I like hearing the voice of my favorite *HIMYM* character).

Parasocial Breakups

For PSB, four factors accounting for 64.4% of the variance were identified. Table 5 in Appendix C summarizes factor analysis for PSB of consistent *HIMYM* viewers.

Factor 1 was used to identify PSB with an eigenvalue of 4.56 and a total variance of 35.14%. This factor consisted of six items measuring PSB, ("Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel like I lost a close friend;" "Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I watch reruns or recorded episodes of *HIMYM*;" "Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I am less excited about watching TV;" "Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I tend to think of him/her often;" "Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel sad;" "Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel a void in my life"). These measures best represent

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the construct of PSB in terms of the feeling and emotion respondents reported now that their favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air. The three additional factors were not used for subsequent analysis.

Affinity Toward the Show

Four factors identified affinity toward the show, *HIMYM* and accounted for 68.43% of the variance. Table 6 in Appendix D summarizes the factor analysis for affinity toward the show of *HIMYM* viewers.

Factor 1 was used to identify affinity toward the show with an eigenvalue of 4.63, accounting for 38.59% of the total variance after rotation. The additional three factors were not used for consequent analysis. The first factor consisted of the four items that best represented affinity toward *HIMYM*: "I enjoy watching *HIMYM*;" "I really get involved in what happens to the characters on *HIMYM*;" "I really get the characters on *HIMYM*;" and "While viewing *HIMYM* I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the program." Factor 2 consisted of items repetitive with Factor 1, while Factors 3 and 4, consisted of only two items not included in Factor 1, one of which stated, "I often search for information about *HIMYM* in magazines, online, and in other television shows/films", which overall, is not necessarily important when measuring affinity or likeness of the show.

Affinity Toward Favorite *HIMYM* Character

Three factors were generated to identify affinity toward favorite *HIMYM* character. These factors accounted for 62.75% of the total variance after rotation. Table 7

in Appendix E summarizes the factor analysis for items of affinity toward the respondent's favorite *HIMYM* character.

Factor 1 was used to identify affinity toward favorite *HIMYM* character with an eigenvalue of 4.29 and 39.01% variance. These six items included: "I tend to understand the events in the program like my favorite *HIMYM* character understands them;" "I'd like to do the kinds of things my favorite *HIMYM* character did/does on the program;" "My favorite *HIMYM* character presents things as they really are in life;" "When I watch my favorite *HIMYM* character on the program, I sometimes wish I was actually in it;" "While viewing the show, I could feel the emotions my favorite *HIMYM* character portrayed;" and "At key moments in the show, I felt I knew exactly what my favorite *HIMYM* character was going through." These items were most appropriate to use and more indicative feelings and emotions toward a favorite *HIMYM* character. It should be noted that Factor 2 also contained several of the same items as Factor 1, while Factor 3 was limited to only two items one which was "When I heard that my favorite *HIMYM* character was going off the air, I thought about trying to do something to change the situation (e.g., write a letter to the broadcaster)". This item seems less relevant to a viewer's affinity or likeness of a particular *HIMYM* character and thus was dropped from further analysis.

Hypothesis One

Recall that hypothesis one posited: PSR for *HIMYM* will be positively related to PSB. The results indicate support for hypothesis one. Table 6 summarizes Pearson product correlations from computed Parasocial variables and provides indication of

significance between parasocial relationships of viewers of *HIMYM* and parasocial

breakups of viewers of *HIMYM* (r = .395, p = .000). Viewers of *HIMYM* who reported a

higher connection or relationship with characters of the show also reported greater

distress following the discontinuation of this relationship, in this case the end of the

series. Further examination comparing gender on this item showed significant Pearson

correlation for women (r = .448, p = .000). Males, however, showed no significance,

which could have been due to the small number of men that were frequent viewers of

HIMYM.

Hypothesis Two

　　Hypothesis two stated: Duration of *HIMYM* viewing will be positively related to

PSB. Results provide no support for hypothesis two. Duration of *HIMYM* viewing did not

predict PSB, thus hypothesis two was not supported. The *HIMYM* screener question,

which asked participants to answer "How many seasons were you a viewer of *HIMYM*"

and automatically eliminated those who had never watched an episode had no affect on

the dissolution a viewer reported following the end of the series. There was no statistical

significance whether the respondents watched less than two seasons, or were consistent

viewers and watched every episode of *HIMYM* to parasocial breakup, or the end of the

series. Even when examining duration of viewing with those who were more constant

viewers of *HIMYM*, like Eyal and Cohen's 2006 study of the series, *Friends*, they too

found that duration was not positively related to PSB. When accounting for gender, no

significant correlation was found due to the small sample size of respondents.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three posited that affinity for *HIMYM* will be positively related to PSB. Results indicated support for this hypothesis, thus affinity toward the show as a whole indicated greater emotional loss. Table 6 displays Pearson's correlations between the computed variables; affinity toward the show and PSB. Findings support affinity toward the show and PSB as positively related statistically ($r = .267$, $p = .014$). The results suggest that the higher the viewer's likeness or rapport for *HIMYM* as a whole, then the higher the viewer's dissolution was reported following the series' end. When comparing to gender, there was no significant relationship, but this was perhaps due to the small population of male respondents.

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four posited: Relationships with *HIMYM* characters will be positively related to PSB. Results found no relationship between the factored variables. The statements referring to the respondent's favorite *HIMYM* character did not significantly predict PSB. There was no support, that is to say that participants' responses to statements regarding their favorite *HIMYM* character had no relationship with the dissolution the viewer felt at the end of show. Further analysis when comparing gender was not significant, again, possibly due to the small number of respondents.

Hypothesis Five

The fifth hypothesis predicted perceived popularity of a viewer's favorite *HIMYM* character will be positively related to PSB. Findings found no statistically significant

support for this hypothesis. There was no positive correlation between *HIMYM*

character's perceived popularity and PSB. When respondents were asked to rank

character popularity, there was no relationship between the viewer's perceived most

popular character and the discontinuation of mediated relationships with the *HIMYM*

characters. When comparing gender there was no significant support, again, perhaps due

to the small number of respondents.

Hypothesis Six

The sixth hypothesis predicted that stronger relationships between perceived

popularity of a viewer's *HIMYM* character would be positively related to PSB. Results

indicated a positive significant correlation ($r = .228$, $p = .037$). Table 6 illustrates

Pearson's correlation between the variables, indicating statistical significance for

hypothesis six. Viewers of the show who reported their favorite *HIMYM* character as

their most overall favorite TV character also reported more distress following the

separation of the mediated relationship at the end of the series. Extended analysis on

gender found no significant support for hypothesis six, due to the small sample of

respondents.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations between Computed Parasocial Construct Variables and Parasocial Breakups (PSB)

Parasocial Construct (N = 84)	*r*
PSR	.395***
Duration of *HIMYM*	.096
Affinity to *HIMYM*	.267*
Affinity toward *HIMYM* Characters	.207
Perceived popularity of a viewer's *HIMYM* character	.164
Stronger relationships between perceived popularity as a viewer's overall favorite TV character	.228*

Note. PSR= parasocial relationship; PSB= parasocial breakup; *HIMYM*= How I Met Your Mother. Correlations represent the relationships between computed PSB variables.
*$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .01$, ***$p \leq .001$

Favorite *HIMYM* Character

Of the five *HIMYM* characters most respondents chose Barney as their favorite character (29%) followed by Marshall (27%), Robin (20%), Ted (12%), and Lily (12%). Table 7 illustrates the distribution of favorite *HIMYM* characters chosen by respondents, as well as the mean for PSR and PSB scores, along with perceived popularity rank for each *HIMYM* character. As illustrated in Table 7, Barney was the most frequently chosen as the favorite character and was also the character with whom respondents felt the strongest PSR (*M* = 3.52, *SD* = 1.10). Notably, Ted was the character with whom respondents felt strongest PSB (*M* = 2.33, *SD* = 0.76). These findings could have been due to the small sample size of viewers of *HIMYM*.

Table 3

Choice of Favorite HIMYM Character, PSR, PSB, and Perceived Popularity of Character Relative to All Other HIMYM Characters

| Character | N | PSR | | PSB | | Popularity | |
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Barney	24	3.52	1.10	1.95	0.90	1.82	1.16
Marshall	22	3.47	1.00	2.15	0.93	2.95	1.15
Robin	16	3.22	1.14	2.24	1.01	3.64	1.33
Ted	10	3.50	4.30	2.33	0.76	2.80	1.35
Lily	10	3.25	1.21	2.10	0.88	3.79	1.16
Total	82						

Note. PSR= parasocial relationship; PSB= parasocial breakup; *HIMYM*= How I Met Your Mother. PSR response options were Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate higher PSR for character. PSB response options were Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate higher PSB for character. Lower popularity scores indicate greater popularity, which was measured in an ordinal scale where respondents ranked characters from 1 (*most popular*) to 5 (*least popular*). Each character's score is dependent on all other characters' scores.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter includes discussion and analysis of the findings for the current study. This chapter conceptualizes the results more thoroughly and provides implications of the results, strengths and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

General Discussion and Interpretation

The general assumption of the hypotheses was that more intense viewers of *HIMYM* would develop stronger parasocial relationships, in turn causing higher levels of distress during the parasocial breakup. This finding was significantly supported in hypothesis one, where respondents with higher PSR's reported higher PSB's. These findings suggest that those who develop strong mediated character relationships with a television show experience a higher level of dissolution when the show ends, such is the case with *HIMYM*. The results also indicate that these relationships are powerful and valid, and certainly evoke emotional distress at the time of separation. Viewers of *HIMYM* who developed strong mediated relationships experienced some levels of sorrow at the time of separation between character and viewer. Additional analysis was generated for gender and much consistent with previous research a positive relationship for women was found supporting that in the current study women developed higher parasocial relationships than men. These findings suggest that women viewers formed stronger relationships with characters on *HIMYM*. This poses implications that emotional distress is higher among women than men.

Duration of the show was not a significant predictor of PSB (Hypothesis 2). Within social relationships, breakups are often times painful; therefore, it was unexpected that those who watched more episodes and were more habitual viewers of *HIMYM* would report more PSB. These findings suggest that affinity and commitment are perhaps more influential in PSB than the number of episodes viewed by respondents, since hypothesis three which posited that more affinity toward the show would predict higher level of PSB showed significant support. Previous scholars have associated the duration of time that a viewer spends watching a television show with more powerful relationships (Cohen, 2004; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). These scholars also suggest that long running TV shows, those with several seasons, provide viewers with a greater opportunity to develop these relationships. Because *HIMYM* ran for 9 seasons, it was predicted that habitual viewers would report higher parasocial breakup, which was not the case. This may be attributed to the fact that merely watching a long running series does not guarantee that the viewer will develop a relationship with the show, or even with the characters. In the current study, viewers of *HIMYM* perhaps watched the show and its characters for pure entertainment purposes and may not have found the characters relatable. Similarly, Eyal and Cohen (2006) found that the duration of time that a viewer spent watching Friends was not related to the dissolution following the end of the series.

Previous scholars have also found affinity for television to be a strong predictor of PSB by previous scholars, hence those who have a deeper attachment to television characters experience more distress at the time of a breakup, even if it is temporary just as results conveyed throughout the television writer's strike in 2007 (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Greenwood & Pietromonaco, 2008; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011). Hypothesis 3

was supported in that viewers of *HIMYM* who reported greater affinity toward the show, also reported higher emotional distress at the time of the breakup. In other words, respondents with a greater likeness or rapport for *HIMYM* also experienced greater grief following its discontinued production.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that items about the relationships with favorite characters, in other words, affinity toward favorite *HIMYM* character, would be significant to parasocial breakup. Participant responses of items such as, "I think I have a good understanding of my favorite *HIMYM* character" were not indicative of higher PSB. This hypothesis was not supported. Simply because viewers develop such relationships with characters on *HIMYM,* it does not mean they will experience high levels of distress following the end of the series. That is to say that viewers may not have found themselves relatable to their favorite characters on *HIMYM*. This could perhaps be that the characters on *HIMYM* were older and had their careers in line while living in New York City. This differs from the respondents' ages in survey respondents.

Hypothesis five predicted that the perceived popularity of a viewer's favorite *HIMYM* character would predict PSB. This hypothesis was not supported for *HIMYM*. The perceived popularity of the characters on *HIMYM* was not indicative of higher reports of PSB. In other words, when participants assessed the *HIMYM* characters' popularity among other viewers, character popularity did not impact the viewer at the series' end. These findings also suggest that just because a respondent found a character to be popular, it did not directly affect his or her emotional distress at the time of a separation. This indicates that classifying a character in terms of popularity did not influence the viewer's emotions during the parasocial breakup.

The sixth and final hypothesis posited that the stronger the relationship of the favorite *HIMYM* character as the respondents overall favorite TV character predicted PSB. This hypothesis was supported. The more the viewer reported his or her favorite *HIMYM* character to be his/her overall favorite TV character, the more distress he or she felt following a PSB. This relationship suggests that those who develop strong parasocial relationships with their favorite characters are also more susceptible to experiencing a higher level of distress following a parasocial breakup. Respondents who reported their favorite *HIMYM* character as their overall TV character consequently formed stronger relationships, thus feeling a higher degree of dissolution following the conclusion of the production.

Implications of the Results

Reliability is consistent with previous research implying that the Parasocial Breakup Scale is indeed reliable (Cohen, 2003; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011). Furthermore, these results support previous findings in that viewers find mediated connections enjoyable, but do not become dependent on them, much as is the case in social relationships (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Implications of this study build on the phenomena of parasocial breakup at large. The current analysis indicates that parasocial breakups are not identical to breakups between two people in real life, but are indeed important to examine.

In general, findings of this study extend research on parasocial breakup and display significance that these mediated relationships cause some level of emotional distress on viewers. The distress of a separation from a mediated character, however, is

relatively low in comparison to a social breakup. This is perhaps due to the interaction in social relationships, where two people are active participants, while mediated relationships tend to be one-sided. The one-sidedness in these relationships refers to the lack of direct reciprocated communication. Previous scholars have uncovered that although these relationships are not identical, they are instead complimentary and do indeed require relational maintenance (Cohen, 2004; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Various aspects of relational maintenance were examined in this analysis, specifically relational dissolution. The factors that predicted parasocial breakup in the current study were duration of *HIMYM* viewing, affinity toward *HIMYM*, affinity toward *HIMYM* characters, perceived popularity of the characters, and stronger relationships when respondents reported their favorite *HIMYM* character to be their favorite overall TV character. These measures can be and have been used similarly in studying interpersonal relationships. These findings suggest that the breakup of mediated relationships, although existential, are not as intense as they are at the end of interpersonal relationships.

Previous research has examined the relational maintenance within social relationships in comparison to those with mediated characters and found that these relationships may be experienced similarly. The intensity of a social relationship, however, in commitment, investment, satisfaction, and identification is greater than that of a parasocial relationship (Eyal & Dailey, 2012). As findings from a previous examination of parasocial breakups suggest, viewers develop stronger parasocial breakups with fictional characters, even though they develop stronger parasocial relationships with real characters, such as those on reality shows (Cohen, 2003).

Overall, this study is also consistent with previous studies that have found women more susceptible to developing mediated relationships with characters. Previous scholars have posited that women are more inclined to emotional attachments, thus more easily developing mediated relationships with TV characters (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010). The current study found a positive correlation gender with PSR and PSB (r = .448, p = .000), but did not find any similar associations with other measures (i.e. gender and affinity toward the show and PSB).

How is television exposure measured? TV exposure has been measured in several studies, specifically within investigations of parasocial relationships (Auter, 1992; Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin, Perse & Powell, 1985; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Some of these analyses do not contain questions on how much television participants watch, but instead examine the effects, or feelings of respondents by asking questions such as, "The character makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends." (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Eyal & Cohen, 2006). In the current study, respondents were asked to indicate how many seasons they watched of *HIMYM*. Duration had no effect on parasocial breakup meaning that those who watched every episode of *HIMYM*, did not report higher PSB. Since the introduction of new media platforms allow viewers to stream content online, there is now a different type of exposure available to viewers. As previously noted, this exposure is known as binge watching where viewers are able to watch several episodes, often times several seasons at a time and the anticipation for next week's episode no longer exists. Binge watching has the potential of creating stronger parasocial relationships and immerses the viewer at a more intense level. Normal

watching allows for breaks between episodes, often months between seasons, allowing for distances between viewer and character. Binge watching effectively maximizes exposure and perhaps intensifies the parasocial relationship, in turn creating a higher level of distress following the ending. In a recent Nielsen report (2015), two in every five American households have a video streaming subscription and found that these people spend a significantly greater amount of time in front of a screen. Nielsen's Total Audience Report (2015) also found that there has been a continuous decline in traditional live television viewing, specifically among younger generations.

The results contribute to the existing literature providing support that television characters serve as some form of companionship and that these indeed are relationships worth studying. Koenig and Lessan's (1985) early findings of parasocial interactions were that when compared to social interaction, these relationships are not identical. Such relationships should not be considered primary relationships, but the term that appears most appropriate is, "'quasi-friend'" (p. 265). In other words, viewers continue to develop relationships with TV characters and often times construct different levels of attachment. The idea of a "quasi-friend" suggests that these relationships are indeed one-sided and rather than experiencing actual interaction, television viewing is a type of "vicarious interaction" (Perse & Rubin, 1989). As previously noted mediated characters offer a viewer an opportunity to engage in parasocial interaction, making it easier for the viewer to create an illusion. Although these feelings are not reciprocated, they should not be dismissed. The current results on parasocial breakup from *HIMYM* are an expansion of this research and suggest that the emotional distress following the series' end is indeed present with fictional TV characters.

Parasocial Interaction Theory

The current study affirms what previous scholars have demonstrated that

relationships between mediated characters and television viewers indeed exist and are

known as parasocial relationships. Horton and Wohl (1956) introduced these phenomena

in 1956. These mediated relationships are formed from the parasocial interactions

between character and viewer. The notion of parasocial relationships comes from the

emotional attachments viewers create toward television shows, specifically television

characters. The attachments are based on characteristics such as liking, or affinity and the

strength of the connections viewers develop. Viewers often times develop stronger

relationships with those characters they find relatable. Previous scholars that have

examined PSR's have found support that these relationships are not identical, but

complimentary to social relationships and require similar social skills for relational

maintenance (Cohen, 2004). The parasocial interaction (PSI) paradigm is a phenomenon

that is measurable and consists of the following attributes (See Figure 1):

Parasocial Relationships—There are several attributes that consist of what is considered a

parasocial interaction or relationship, particularly when looking at strength. Previous

scholars have named duration, although not always the case, to be a principal aspect of

mediated relationships in that the more a viewer watched a particular television show,

then the stronger the parasocial relationship will be (Auter, 1992; Perse & Rubin, 1989;

Turner, 1993). Mediated relationships do not replace a viewer's friendships, but rather

serve as complementary to their social networks. The Parasocial Interaction Scale used in

several studies has been reliable among various investigations of PSR's and measures the

intensity of the connection between viewer and character (Auter, 1992; Cohen, 2003;

Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Rosaen & Dibble, 2008; Turner, 1993). PSR's are often times

associated with the comfort that a viewer feels toward the TV character. It is necessary

that the investigations of PSR examine media habits of the viewers when looking at the

development of these relationships.

Parasocial Breakups—Previous scholars have examined the permanent or temporary

removal of television characters within TV programming and have found that these

breakups cause distress among viewers by comparing a television breakup to a real life

breakup (Cohen, 2004; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011). A number of

these studies have used relational maintenance and relational dissolution when looking at

mediated relationships, specifically mediated breakups (Cohen, 2003; Eyal & Dailey,

2012; Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Although the distress in mediated relationships differentiates

from the distress in a breakup between two people, perhaps due to the one-sidedness, it

still creates levels of dissolution among viewers. The Parasocial Breakup Scale used

across myriad of studies, including the current analysis has consistently been reliable

(Cohen, 2004; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011).

Affinity Toward the Show—In the examination of television viewing, it is important to

consider TV viewing habits, as well as likeness or rapport. Variables within this construct

consist of the understanding and closeness that the viewer feels toward a show. These

attitudes stem from previous research that more positive attitudes indicate stronger

affinity. As stated by Schiappa, Allen & Gregg (2007), affinity for television refers to the

extent of "emotional reaction or desire" (p. 305). It is also important for the variables to

contain the viewer's search for information about the show itself outside the show such as

online or other television shows. These consist of general items regarding the liking of the show.

Affinity Toward Favorite Character—Affinity toward particular characters—or in this case one's favorite character—is also important to consider given the positive associations between relationship strength and difficulty of a breakup. The items under the construct were measured for identification in line with a previous study with variables catered to specific characters (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). The affinity toward the character is also dependent on the whether the viewer finds the character relatable. Previous research also considers social, physical, and task attraction to be positive indicators of stronger mediated relationships (Rubin & McHugh, 1989; Turner, 1993).

The above-mentioned constructs offer reasonably accurate assessments of the extent to which viewers experience attachments to mediated characters. As previously noted there is a legitimized approach to establishing this theory, since it consists of attributes that have been reaffirmed by other studies and the current study.

The heterogeneity of these studies and their divergence in theoretical orientations warrants the necessity of this new theory. Parasocial interaction theory offers a consistent model from which future scholars can use in the study of PSR's. Previous scholars have used numerous theories in the study of PSR's such as the contact hypothesis theory, the uses and gratifications theory, attachment theory, transportation theory, cognitive-oriented theories, uncertainty reduction theory, personal construct theory, and interpersonal communication theories in the examination of mediated relationships (Greenwood, 2008; Rosaen & Dibble, 2008; Greenwood, 2008; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Turner, 1993; Perse & Rubin, 1989). Other scholars have incorporated PSR's and PSB's

as framework into its own theorization (Cohen, 2003; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011). Parasocial interactions have been studied in several ways for over forty years, and it is time for it to be placed into its own theoretical domain. Using different theories in the examination of these relationships, offering different approaches, may lead to findings that fluctuate, thus lacking validity. According to Potter and Donnerstein (1999), ecological validity is the extent to which people form agreement and interpretations from sharing the same psychological schema (p. 268). This new theory is necessary and will help future studies and increase ecological validity. The heterogeneous theories used in previous research of PSR's should be taken and examined using the parasocial paradigm that contributes to the study of mediated relationships at large.

Figure 1

Parasocial Interaction Paradigm Model
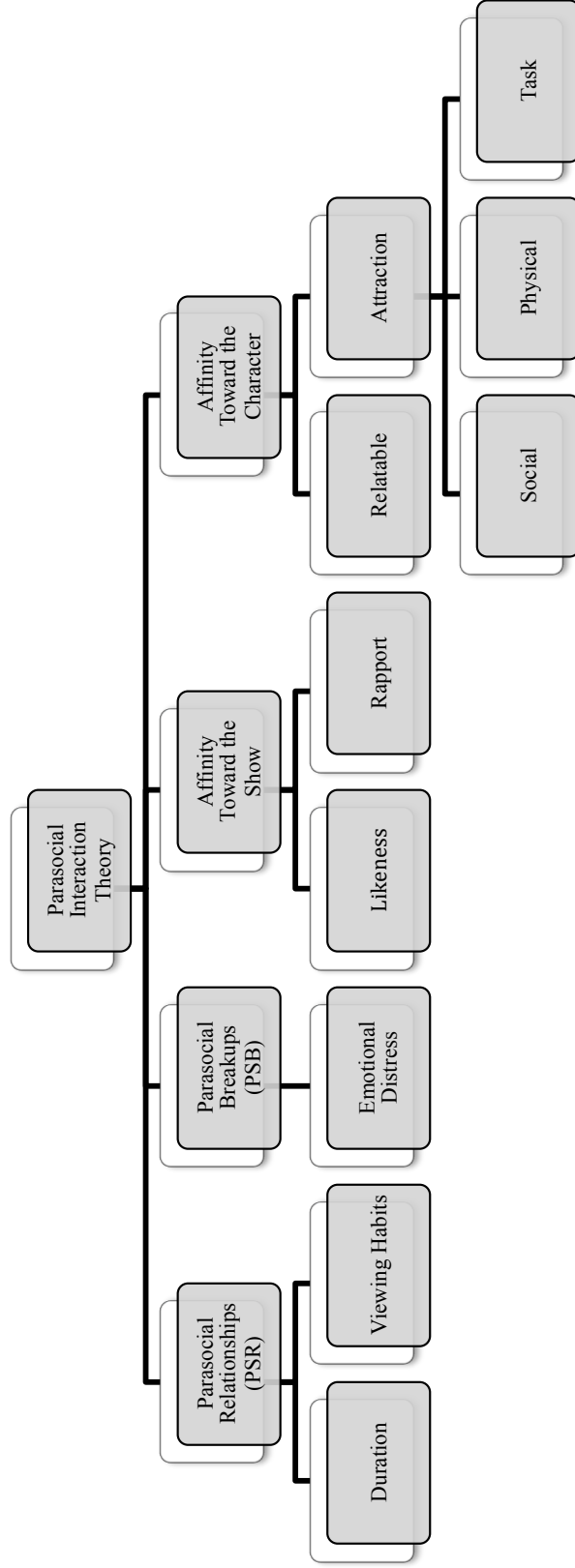
Note. PSR, PSB, Affinity Toward the Show, and Affinity Toward the Character are parasocial interaction constructs.

Strengths

One of the major strengths in this study was the reliability yielded from scale items using a Coefficient Alpha .70 (Cronbach, 1951). Cronbach's alpha for PSR was α = .71, while PSB's Cronbach's alpha was α = .78, a little higher than PSR's. After discarding the two reverse coded items for affinity toward the show, Cronbach's Alpha for affinity for *HIMYM* was α = .77, and for affinity toward favorite *HIMYM* character, Cronbach's alpha was α = .82. This study tested reliability for scale items pertaining to *HIMYM* and were consistent with previous scholars, as illustrated in Table 1 (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Greenwood et al., 2008; Rubin & McHugh, 1987).

Previous scholars have posited that age is a strong predictor of parasocial relationships proposing that younger audiences, specifically teens are more vulnerable to TV effects since it is an imperative age in which they develop personal identities (Erikson, 1968). The majority of the survey respondents ranged from ages 18-23 years old, meaning that respondents were perhaps in their teens when they began viewing *HIMYM*. This supports the assumption that teens have more time for leisure television viewing, thus enhancing the opportunity for development of parasocial relationships. In the current study, 77% of respondents were women. The large number of women respondents provides support for the assumption that women tend to be more vulnerable and generally are more prone to forming stronger parasocial relationships than males (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011; Rosaen & Dibble, 2008).

This analysis incorporated a parasocial interaction perspective and provided support for parasocial breakup, and that it continues to be present for particular television shows with particular television characters, in this case following the series' end of

HIMYM. The examinations of the analysis measures were strong and consistent with previous research. It is important to note that eleven years after Eyal and Cohen's study, a different television comedy that aired for nine complete seasons, *HIMYM*, while not identical, yielded similar results.

Limitations

One of the limitations in this study was the difficulty to acquire students who were frequent viewers of *HIMYM*. Another limitation was that this study fell short of the target goal for a sample size, however, had adequate participation in order to conduct main tests of the hypotheses. Perhaps a different television show or allowing respondents to choose a show of their own may have allowed for a greater number of respondents. Although there were a total of 216 respondents, due to lack of time and participation, only those who had watched more than two seasons of *HIMYM* were used for further analysis for a total of 84. Another major limitation within the study was the convenient sample size of graduate and undergraduate students at UNLV. Only 22% of the respondents were male which limited the analysis in terms of gender.

As previously noted by Babbie (2013), surveys tend to be weaker on validity. The current study established criterion validity for previous measures using Cronbach's alpha. The survey contained particular scale items that did not contribute to the measure. Instead of having as many as fourteen scale items for one measure, some could have been eliminated in order to maintain the most important items that best represent the measure. Another limitation for the validity of the survey was the time gap between the end of the series and the administration of the survey. Since the survey was distributed almost one

year following the series' end, perhaps administering it one week later could have had a greater effect on parasocial breakup. Stronger PSB could also have occurred if the survey was administered in early September, when the show's new season typically began. Streaming online platforms and syndication of *HIMYM* allows for viewers to continue watching the show and potentially patches the heart for parasocial breakups.

Another limitation was the measurement of duration for the show. By simply asking viewers how many episodes or seasons of HIMYM they had watched, the engagement and intensity of parasocial relationships are perhaps not fully measured. With the increased use of online streaming platforms, engagement to these shows might be measured best in asking viewers how much of one show they consume in a short period of time. While the current study asked viewers about their binge watching habits in general, they were not used for statistical analysis.

Additionally, this study also contained survey items that had been previously used in Eyal and Cohen's (2006) study pertaining to a different television show, in which many used Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Perhaps different items would have provided more nuances within the study.

Future Research

The future of parasocial relationships, more specifically parasocial breakups, looks promising. As previously mentioned, on average, Americans spend 34 hours a week watching television, based on Nielsen television viewer data (2012). This demonstrates that television continues to be a major part of culture in the United States. Although people's practices of television consumption have changed due to the increased

access of digital media with online streaming, future scholars should perhaps examine the effects of this in the development of such relationships. Online streaming such as Netflix, Amazon prime, and Hulu provide viewers with several options of shows, and several seasons for those particular television shows, consequently allowing viewers to binge watch, spending hours on end watching one episode after another, often times one season after another. In these cases, the anticipation for next week's episode no longer exists. Therefore, it is important examine the factors of immediate access to TV and assess whether these viewing habits have any effect on the development and or dissolution of such relationships. Most importantly, when people binge watch an entire series, what happens following the series finale. Streaming and evolving platform video consumption allows for even more intense and frequent viewership of favorite programming, thus creating a greater potential in forming PSRs.

The study of parasocial relationships, specifically, parasocial breakups has been limited to younger age groups (Greenwood, Pietromonaco, & Long, 2008; Rosaen & Dibble, 2008; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010). Future research should expand and cross over generations to examine if older people, particularly the elderly who may have more time to watch television report high intensity during a parasocial breakup. These studies can explore additional age groups as well as more detailed questions regarding the commitment to a character on a television show. It would be interesting to go back in time and examine relationships between older generations and classic shows among the baby boomers that lasted several years (i.e. *The Andy Griffith Show* and *M*A*S*H**).

Furthermore, since *HIMYM*'s popularity has traveled overseas, a cross-cultural analysis perhaps would also contribute to the current study. This could possibly

demonstrate differences in culture as far as television viewing practices. It is also

noteworthy to consider an examination of parasocial breakup across reality TV shows,

which have now become prevalent on cable TV channels. These future studies should

include a proportionate amount of men and women, as well as TV shows that may be

geared toward both genders.

Future research might also examine shorter running shows, or mini-series' that are

often shown on channels, such as HBO, to see how those parasocial relationships differ

from longer running shows with multiple seasons. Additionally, examining different

types of shows, such as *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart or *The Late Show* with David

Letterman as they prepare to leave, could potentially lead to emotional distress or

dissolution for many habitual viewers, leading to a parasocial breakup with these long

time hosts.

Previous scholars have examined parasocial relationships and parasocial breakups

using a quantitative approach (Cohen, 2003; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Greenwood, 2008) It is

important to consider qualitative approaches in possibly conducting focus groups or

experiments by airing several episodes, or perhaps for the current study, having aired the

final episode of *HIMYM* to see if that brought emotional distress using key words to

determine the intensity of such relationships. With the increased use of social media, such

as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, and Vines, a qualitative approach might also look

at themes within fan sites or threads of commentary posted by viewers of a particular

series.

Future research should also consider the series finale of a show and its particular

ending. There may be different emotions elicited from a parasocial breakup dependent on

whether the show actually provides a "happy ending", or a clean break for the viewer. These finales can highly impact the relationship between viewer and character and leave audiences with mixed emotions. These endings, possibly even image quality could have the potential of making parasocial relationships, or in this case parasocial breakups more or less difficult. Perhaps examining the pilot and the series' final episode may provide a different perspective to the effects of such breakups.

With the different genres of TV shows now available, particularly those that have emerged within the last ten years, people now have a greater selection of television shows from which to choose. Future scholars should consider the difficulty in examining one particular television show and should perhaps look at a specific genre or allow participants to answer questions in relation to the show of their preference.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between parasocial breakup and the dissolution of a viewer pertaining to the end of television primetime series, *HIMYM*. Results provided support that stronger parasocial relationships with *HIMYM* did indeed predict stronger parasocial breakup with *HIMYM*. The study provides an extension to previous research with a more contemporary TV comedy. Furthermore, this study contributes to the idea that Western culture, specifically the United States is indeed a visual and visceral society in which television consumption eludes emotional effects, in this case dissolution in parasocial relationships.

Although there is a lot to be done in continuing the examination of parasocial breakups, specifically with new technologies, this study has contributed and provided substantial support that parasocial breakups do indeed occur.

Survey Instrument

UNLV

Information Consent
Department of Journalism and Media Studies

Title of Study: Parasocial Relationships and Breakups: An Analysis of *How I Met Your Mother* Viewers
Investigator(s): Dr. Paul Traudt, Principal Investigator; Sara Montes de Oca, Associate Investigator

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Paul Traudt at 702-895-3647 or via email at paul.traudt@unlv.edu; Sara Montes de Oca at 619-841-4873 or via email at montes1@unlv.nevada.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between parasocial breakup and the dissolution of a viewer pertaining to the end of television primetime series, *How I Met Your Mother* (*HIMYM*). Parasocial relationships are one-sided mass mediated interactions through television, the Internet, and other media. The term parasocial breakup refers to a permanent separation of a television character, which typically occurs following the end of a series, or when a particular character is permanently removed or written off of the show by the producers.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in this study because you comprise the demographic being targeted: students and graduate students enrolled in the College of Urban Affairs at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV). Participants must be at least 18 years old.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: take a single survey. This should take approximately 20 minutes.

Benefits of Participation
The benefits of your participation may include learning about parasocial relationships. Furthermore, your participation will contribute to the research at hand.

Risks of Participation
This study includes minimal risks. You may experience testing fatigue.

Cost/Compensation
You may receive credit towards one of your courses for participating in this study. The amount of this extra credit will vary depending on your participating professor. There will be no financial cost for your participation nor will you receive any financial compensation. The study will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. No credit will be provided if you do not complete the survey.

I have read, understood, and printed a copy of, the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

○ Yes
○ No

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What is your current age?

_____

Gender:

○ Male

○ Female

Ethnicity (Mark all that apply)

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native

☐ Asian American

☐ Black or African American

☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ White

☐ Multiracial

☐ Other

How I Met Your Mother (*HIMYM*) was on the air for 9 years. How many seasons were you a viewer of *HIMYM*?

○ I have never watched an episode of *HIMYM*

○ Less than two seasons

○ At least two seasons, or the equivalent to 24 episodes

○ More than two seasons

○ I watched every episode of *HIMYM*

UNLV

How did you typically watch episodes of *HIMYM*. (Check **ALL** that apply).

☐ I typically watched episodes of *HIMYM* on Netflix.

☐ I typically Digitally Video Recorded (DVR'ed) episodes of *HIMYM*.

☐ I typically watched on Monday nights on CBS when they first aired.

☐ I have only watched reruns of *HIMYM* on cable/Network TV.

Some people like to watch a full season (such as 13 episodes for a cable of Netflix show or 22 episodes for a broadcast show) in a relatively short period of time. Within the past 12 months, have you ever watched a full season of *HIMYM* in this way?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure.

Within the past 12 months, have you ever watched **more than one season** of *HIMYM* in a relatively short period of time?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure.

In the last season, how often did you watch *HIMYM*?

○ I never missed an episode.

○ I tried to not miss any episode

○ I watched whenever I got a chance

○ I rarely watched any episodes

○ I used to watch the show but stopped before it came off the air

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When you watched episodes of *HIMYM*, who did you view with? (Check **ALL** that apply).

☐ I viewed alone

☐ I viewed with other family members

☐ I viewed with one or two friends

☐ I viewed with a group of people

☐ I viewed with a regular group of people

Please choose among the following options that best reflects your opinion for each statement on the left.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Some & Agree Some	Agree	Strongly Agree
I still can't believe *HIMYM* is off the air.	○	○	○	○	○
While viewing *HIMYM* I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the program.	○	○	○	○	○

Please choose among the following options that best reflects your opinion for each statement on the left.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Some & Agree Some	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often search for information about *HIMYM* in magazines, online, and in other television shows/films.	○	○	○	○	○
I think that my life is a lot like that of the characters on *HIMYM*.	○	○	○	○	○
I wish I had friends like the characters on *HIMYM*.	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy watching *HIMYM*.	○	○	○	○	○
HIMYM is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○
I do not relate at all to the characters on *HIMYM*.	○	○	○	○	○
I rarely think about *HIMYM* before or after I watch the show.	○	○	○	○	○
I still hope that *HIMYM* will return to TV.	○	○	○	○	○
I often watch reruns of *HIMYM*.	○	○	○	○	○
I really get involved in what happens to the characters on *HIMYM*.	○	○	○	○	○
Watching *HIMYM* is a waste of my time.	○	○	○	○	○
I really get the characters on *HIMYM*.	○	○	○	○	○

"HIMYM" had five main characters: Ted, Barney, Marshall, Lily, and Robin.
Please name your favorite character below:

**Below, choose the option that best represents your response about the character you named above.
I am specifically asking about the _character_, NOT about the actor that portrays the character.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Some & Agree Some	Agree	Strongly Agree
I tend to understand the events in the program like my favorite *HIMYM* character understands them.	○	○	○	○	○
My favorite *HIMYM* character presents things as they really are in life.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel more lonely.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel angry.	○	○	○	○	○
I think I have a good understanding of my favorite *HIMYM* character.	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to meet my favorite *HIMYM* character in person.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I plan to watch other programs with the same actor.	○	○	○	○	○
I find my favorite *HIMYM* character to be attractive.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I am less excited about watching TV.	○	○	○	○	○
While viewing the show, I could feel the emotions my favorite *HIMYM* character portrayed.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I tend to think of him/her often.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I watch reruns or recorded episodes of *HIMYM*.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel sad.	○	○	○	○	○
I like to compare my ideas with what my favorite *HIMYM* character says.	○	○	○	○	○

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Some & Agree Some	Agree	Strongly Agree
Please choose among the following options that best reflects your opinion for each statement on the left.					
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I don't miss him/her as much as I thought I would.	○	○	○	○	○
At key moments in the show, I felt I knew exactly what my favorite *HIMYM* character was going through.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel like I lost a close friend.	○	○	○	○	○
While viewing the show, I wanted my favorite *HIMYM* character to succeed in achieving his/her goals.	○	○	○	○	○
My favorite *HIMYM* character makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.	○	○	○	○	○
I'd like to do the kinds of things my favorite *HIMYM* character did/does on the program.	○	○	○	○	○
When I watch my favorite *HIMYM* character on the program, I sometimes wish I was actually in it.	○	○	○	○	○
When I heard that my favorite *HIMYM* character was going off the air, I thought about trying to do something to change the situation (e.g., write a letter to the broadcaster).	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I found a different TV personality to like.	○	○	○	○	○
I like hearing the voice of my favorite *HIMYM* character.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel a void in my life.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I look for information about him/her in other places (e.g., talk shows, newspaper, Internet).	○	○	○	○	○
When I watch my favorite *HIMYM* character on the program, I imagine myself doing the same things s/he is doing.	○	○	○	○	○
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel disappointed.	○	○	○	○	○

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Of all television characters and personalities, how would you rank your favorite *HIMYM* character (about whom you previously responded)?

	1	2	3	4	5	
My favorite *HIMYM* character is my LEAST overall favorite TV character	○	○	○	○	○	My favorite *HIMYM* character is my MOST overall favorite TV character

---

Please rank the 5 main *HIMYM* characters in terms of popularity – place a number from 1 to 5 next to each character's name, with 1 being <u>most</u> popular to 5 being <u>least</u> popular. I am specifically asking you to rank them in terms of their popularity, NOT based on how much you personally like the characters. (To rank, please place cursor on character's name and drag the number to match the order).

- Ted
- Barney
- Marshall
- Lily
- Robin

Please indicate, by marking either "yes" or "no," if <u>you</u> have ever engaged in any of the following behaviors.

	Yes	No
Purchased any *HIMYM*-related merchandise (T-shirts, posters, etc.)?	○	○
Adopted any *HIMYM*-like talking styles or language?	○	○
Adopted any *HIMYM*-like appearances (hairstyle, clothes, etc.)?	○	○
Been influenced by the attitudes expressed on *HIMYM*?	○	○

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The following questions are about _you_ and not about HIMYM or the alternative show.
Please mark the number that represents the extent of your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Some & Agree Some	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often feel in tune with the people around me.	○	○	○	○	○
I have many friends.	○	○	○	○	○
I often lack companionship.	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel alone.	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with my social life.	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel there are people I can talk to.	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel there are people around me but not with me.	○	○	○	○	○
I have trouble making friends.	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel isolated from others.	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel close to other people.	○	○	○	○	○
I generally find that people want to be my friends.	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel my relationships with others are not meaningful.	○	○	○	○	○

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Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX B

Table 4

Factor Loadings for Parasocial Relationships (PSR)

Variable	Factor 1
I like to compare my ideas with what my favorite *HIMYM* character says.	.796
I like hearing the voice of my favorite *HIMYM* character.	.765
My favorite *HIMYM* character makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.	.736
I would like to meet my favorite *HIMYM* character in person.	.645

Table 5

Factor Loadings for Parasocial Breakup (PSB)

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel like I lost a close friend.	.786			
Now that my favorite character is off the air, I watch reruns or recorded episodes of *HIMYM*.	.753			
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I am less excited about watching TV.	.738			
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I tend to think of him/her often.	.633			
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel sad.	.607	.478		
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel more lonely.		.847		
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel angry.		.820		
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I don't miss him/her as much as I thought I would.			-.785	
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel disappointed.			.709	
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I feel a void in my life.	.438		.595	
Now that my favorite *HIMYM* character is off the air, I found a different TV personality to like.				.832

Table 6

Factor Loadings for Affinity Toward HIMYM

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
I enjoy watching *HIMYM*.	.810			
I really get involved in what happens to the characters on *HIMYM*.	.805			
HIMYM is very important to me.	.798			
I really get the characters on *HIMYM*.	.755			
While viewing *HIMYM* I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the program.	.649			
I still hope that *HIMYM* will return to TV.		.843		
I still can't believe *HIMYM* is off the air.		-.785		
I often search for information about *HIMYM* in magazines, online, and in other television shows/films.			.842	
I think that my life is a lot like that of the characters on *HIMYM*.			.667	
I wish I had friends like the characters on *HIMYM*.		.570	.572	
I do not relate at all to the characters on *HIMYM*.				.695
I often watch reruns of *HIMYM*.				.680

Table 7

Factor Loadings for Affinity Toward Favorite HIMYM Characters

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
I tend to understand the events in the program like my favorite *HIMYM* character understands them.	.887		
I'd like to do the kinds of things my favorite *HIMYM* character did/does on the program.	.724		
My favorite *HIMYM* character presents things as they really are in life.	.631		
When I watch my favorite *HIMYM* character on the program, I sometimes wish I was actually in it.	.563	.469	
While viewing the show, I wanted my favorite *HIMYM* character to succeed in achieving his/her goals.		.825	
I find my favorite *HIMYM* character to be attractive.		.757	
While viewing the show, I could feel the emotions my favorite *HIMYM* character portrayed.	.453	.629	
At key moments in the show, I felt like I knew exactly what my favorite *HIMYM* character was going through.	.429	.619	
I think I have a good understanding of my favorite *HIMYM* character.		.505	
When I heard that my favorite *HIMYM* character was going off the air, I thought about trying to do something to change the situation (e.g., write a letter to the broadcaster).			.862
When I watch my favorite *HIMYM* character on the program, I imagine myself doing the same things s/he is doing.			.700

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