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Family Communication and Parasocial Phenomenon: An Examination of Identity  
Salience and Relationships with Media Figures

By

SUPREET MANN  
DISSERTATION

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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COMMUNICATION

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DAVIS

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Committee in Charge

2022

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband and wonderful family who have been constant in their support of all of my interests and passions. I am forever grateful to my parents who have always supported me with their love and understanding; my sister, Shareen, for her relentless honesty - it has made me a better researcher and writer; and my husband, Alex, for his unwavering faith in me and my abilities. And finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather, Dr. Niranjana S. Sandhu. He taught me to always strive to be the best version of myself while never forgetting to laugh along the way. I miss you every day and hope you are proud of the work I have accomplished and the person I have become.

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Finally, I thank my cohort and fellow graduate students for their advice, help, and friendship along the way. I especially thank Hannah Stevens for stepping in as a reliability coder for this project. This project truly would not be possible without her help and encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

The three studies included in this investigation examine the relationship between family communication, parasocial relating, and identity salience. The family unit is one of the primary socializing forces for interpersonal relationships and its impact can be seen in the relationships we form with media characters, known as parasocial relationships. The studies here seek to examine how family communication, conceptualized as high conversation orientation and high conformity orientation, shape our parasocial relationships through our perceived similarity with a parasocial character. Study 1 examined the relationship between a respondent's sense-of-self or identity and the perceived identity of a media figure. Findings suggested that respondents describe themselves and parasocial figures using terms that indicated the same dimension of identity as posited by the Communication Theory of Identity (personal, enacted, relational, communal). Studies 1 and 2 also created and tested a measure of parasocial relating and identity salience. The measure consisted of four subscales examining perceived similarity on identity dimensions and Study 2 examined relationships between this measure and conversation/conformity orientation. Results found a significant positive relationship between conformity orientation and perceived similarity on relational aspects of identity, suggesting that for those respondents from families that emphasize interdependence and family functioning, respondents are more likely to also view parasocial figures as similar in relational interpersonal aspects. Finally, Study 3 examined how family communication might shape perceived identity similarity for a new and ambiguously-described media figure. Results are mixed but suggest that in some circumstances being from a conformity oriented family is related to perceived similarity with a new media figure on several dimensions of identity.

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# **Family Communication and Parasocial Phenomenon: An Examination of Identity Salience and Relationships with Media Figures**

## **Introduction**

Interpersonal relationships come in many forms and are not limited to face-to-face interactions as they may be mediated through a variety of channels. Research shows that interpersonal communication is paramount for creating a sense of self and building social networks (McDermott, 2009). And patterns of interpersonal communication are learned from socializing forces that shape children's interaction. The family is one of the primary socializing forces for children and interaction patterns and communication that occurs within the family can shape subsequent interactions, both face-to-face and online. One of the interactions that may be shaped by family communication patterns are parasocial relationships and interactions which may mimic interpersonal relationships. Parasocial relationships are one-sided interactions with a media figure and extant research suggests that they may function in ways that mimic other types of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Rubin & Perse, 1987). If parasocial interactions can mimic interpersonal interactions broadly, then it is important to consider the way sense-of-self can impact interaction patterns, both face-to-face and perceived. The Communication Theory of Identity suggests that there are four types of identity dimensions that shape the way we see the world: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. These dimensions are reflexive in that we use them to shape not only one's sense of self, but also the way we understand and categorize others (Stets & Burke, 2000). This study seeks to bridge these research areas by considering the role of family



communication on parasocial relating through the lens of identity salience, specifically salience of the four dimensions of identity.

Broadly, the present study investigates the influence of family communication patterns on the types of parasocial relationships into which media audiences enter, and whether this relationship is mediated by identity salience. The family unit is one of the primary socializing forces for individuals and teaches one how to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships that extend beyond the family (Ozmete, 2011). While a parasocial relationship is one that takes place with a media figure and is not interpersonal in a face-to-face traditional sense, it can be experienced as a meaningful relationship on the part of the viewer (Horton & Wohl, 1956). There is a large body of research examining the impact that family communication has on face-to-face interpersonal relationship development (e.g., Barbato, Graham, & Perse, 2009; Elwood & Schrader, 1998; Koesten, 2003; Koesten & Anderson, 2009), but the extant literature has failed to consider how family communication influences parasocial relationship development.

This examination is composed of three studies which build upon each other to develop an understanding of how identity salience is related to parasocial relating and the way family communication can shape these relationships by impacting one's sense of identity. Study 1 utilizes a created measure of parasocial relating and identity salience to understand how respondents perceive themselves as similar to a parasocial figure on dimensions of identity. Study 1 also asks respondents to describe themselves and how they think their parasocial figure would describe themselves. I expect that

respondents will perceive themselves and their parasocial media figure in similar terms representing similar dimensions of identity.

Study 2 is an extension of Study 1 and seeks to confirm the measure of parasocial relating and identity salience tested in Study 1 and also consider the role of family communication patterns. Like Study 1, Study 2 uses an online survey to measure respondent's sense-of-self and perceived sense-of-self of a parasocial figure. Additionally, Study 2 utilizes a measure of family communication, namely conversation orientation and conformity orientation, to understand the role that these family conversation patterns may have on identity salience and parasocial relating. I expect that families that emphasize uniformity in beliefs and that family functioning is of highest importance will also be more likely to perceive similarity to parasocial figures on relational and communal aspects of identity as these aspects of identity emphasize group functioning and interpersonal relationships/structure. Conversely, families with a more democratic style that emphasize diverse opinions and beliefs will be more likely to perceive similarity to parasocial figures on personal and enacted aspects of identity as these aspects of identity emphasize individuality and expression.

Study 3 will use an experiment to advance the findings from Study 2 by considering how family communication salience influences perceived similarity to a new media character. This is a departure from Studies 1 and 2 which considered similarity to a parasocial figure, but may shed light on how these relationships form. By looking at perceived similarity to a new character, we might begin to understand how a new character is perceived when a particular family communication pattern is made salient. Specifically, I expect the findings from Study 3 to advance the findings from Study 2 and

show that families with more democratic communication styles are more likely to perceive similarity to the new character on personal and enacted aspects of identity whereas families that emphasize uniformity of beliefs is more likely to perceive similarity to the new character on relational and communal aspects of identity.

Because different family communication patterns emphasize different dimensions of identity (e.g., whether one has an increased focus on personal identity characteristics, communal/group characteristics, etc.), it is possible that particular family communication patterns make specific identity aspects more/less salient, thereby influencing the ways we view parasocial relationships and media figures. To examine the interaction between family communication, identity salience, and parasocial relationships, I will highlight each of these concepts individually, with a detailed focus on the proposed interaction of family communication and identity salience in order to show how these variables impact parasocial relationship development. I will begin with a conceptualization of parasocial relationships to contextualize the interaction and proposed model.

## Literature Review

### **Parasocial Relationships: What they are and how they Function**

For many individuals, interpersonal relationships are not limited to face-to-face interactions but may also extend to online relationships. This may be true even in situations when relationships are one-sided and lack dyadic interaction. A parasocial relationship (PSR) is one that takes place between a user of mass media and a media figure or persona that appears in the media (Horton & Wohl, 1956). These relationships are formed because mass media often create an illusion of a face-to-face relationship between the spectator and the media figure (Horton & Wohl, 1956). There are a variety of considerations that may impact the types of character with which one forms a parasocial relationship. Relatedly, the way we view these characters may be shaped partly by environment and also by one's own perspective on others, suggesting that both personal identity as well as interpersonal interactions may shape our parasocial interactions.

The parasocial phenomenon broadly encompasses a variety of parasocial concepts, including PSRs, parasocial interaction (PSI), and parasocial break-up (Shackleford, 2020). Parasocial interaction is the interaction that happens between a media persona and user during media exposure, whereas parasocial relationships refer to a "cross-situational relationship" that a viewer continues to feel even after the media exposure has ended (Schmid & Klimmt, 2011; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). Therefore, PSI is restricted to the specific media exposure whereas PSR can endure beyond the exposure and create a long-lasting, albeit one-sided, relationship. There are conceptual

distinctions between the different parasocial phenomena, but they have largely been treated similarly in the literature. PSI interactions are often studied beyond the moment of exposure using traditional PSR measures, justifying my examination of these concepts (PSI and PSR) interchangeably as they relate to family communication and identity salience. Parasocial relating is a common phenomenon, but it is important to highlight that merely watching a television program is not evidence that a parasocial relationship is developing. A viewer may watch a program with a low level of empathy towards the show and/or characters, thereby failing to create a meaningful relationship; or a viewer may be engaged while watching a program but lose this feeling upon the shows completion (Horton & Wohl, 1956), a relationship more akin to parasocial interaction.

Although PSI and PSRs are distinct types of involvement with media figures, many of the conclusions drawn by modern PSI research may hold true for PSRs. This is because much of the existing PSI literature actually examines parasocial relating broadly, not limiting the examination to the time of media exposure. For example, a number of studies have shown that attraction to a media figure is highly correlated with PSI and have suggested that media users evaluate media personalities using comparable standards to individuals they encounter in interpersonal interactions (e.g., Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). Conway and Rubin (1991) build on this idea by suggesting that the more one feels attracted to a media personality, the more one will ascribe importance to the relationship. Just like in interpersonal relationships, viewers also likely feel a certain level of comfort and affinity with media personalities with whom they are developing a

parasocial relationship. Conway and Rubin (1991) even go so far as to suggest that the parasocial interaction may be a more important component of viewing intention than a program's content. These feelings of interpersonal liking and media figure attraction should not be limited to one type of parasocial relating, as both PSI and PSR require similar attraction and affinity with media figures.

As PSR is more cross-situational, many of the PSI research findings may be extended to PSR. The concept of parasocial relating generally includes both of these concepts of PSR and PSI. Furthermore, several of the PSI studies (including Conway & Rubin, 1991) include measures that are more akin to examining PSR rather than PSI, showing how intermingled the PSI and PSR literature is and the necessity for considering previous PSI literature when examining new PSR avenues. The significant role that parasocial relationship development may have on one's media experience is similar to other types of social interaction and highlights the need for greater research to survey the features that contribute to its formation and development.

Many of the characteristics of parasocial relating are similar to interpersonal social interaction, and many scholars have previously compared both PSI and PSR to other types of interaction. For example, Rubin and Perse (1987) suggested that PSI may stem from an intrinsic human motivation to form attachments with others, regardless of the distance between those individuals. Reeves and Nass (1996) furthered this idea by suggesting that actions and reactions to media figures are related to innate responses to human characteristics. They stated that this is an example of the "media equation," where social responses by individuals are elicited due to cues related to human characteristics from the media figures, such as a human face on the screen

(Reeves & Nass, 1996). Additionally, Hartmann and Goldhoorn (2011) found that a parasocial experience was intensified when a media figure addressed viewers head-on as if the media figure was speaking directly to the media viewer. It is therefore apparent that human characteristics of the media figure may have a large impact on the development of a parasocial relationship, specifically the strength of the relationship may be intensified when we perceive the character as more human or similar to ourselves. Therefore, it is important to weigh the considerations that individuals make when reacting to a media personality, including similarity to the self, and overall likeability.

The way we determine how similar or dissimilar people, including media figures, are to ourselves is complicated and can be based on a variety of considerations. It is likely that these considerations are based upon fundamental conceptualizations of the self, for how we view ourselves often provides the templates for how we evaluate others, and how we view ourselves is likely shaped by the way we are socialized to communicate in our family.

### **Why Family Matters - Socialization**

Before examining exactly how particular types of family communication impact identity salience and the development of PSRs, it is important to highlight why the family matters and how family communication and socialization processes can impact subsequent socialization and general relationship formation.

Socialization is often defined broadly as the process through which an individual becomes a “social being” that lives in and takes part in social groups (see Grusec & Lytton, 1988). Family socialization is often considered one of the most important means

of socialization and has been associated with long-term developmental outcomes and interpersonal relationship development. This is due, in large part, to the development of one's self-identity and self-representation which provide templates for future interaction (Ozmete, 2011). Because childhood socialization can have a large impact on how children perceive themselves and others, it is important to examine the factors that contribute to socialization.

There are several different types of socialization, and they work together and independently to foster growth. The foundation of socialization is referred to as primary socialization, which occurs as a child acquires the basic attitudes, actions, and beliefs typical of their culture, laying the foundations for secondary socialization (Ozmete, 2011). The ability of the family to contribute to socialization stems from two primary factors: control and an emotional bond. Because the family has nearly exclusive control of a child during the first years of life, and because they are spurred by an emotional bond to motivate the child to be socialized, the family unit, especially parents, is often responsible for primary socialization (Rusconi & Tummons, 1975). Other caregivers may impact children, but the parental role is unique in that children tend to be most highly socialized with their parents and turn to their parents to build their own sense of self.

Primary socialization begins a process through which individuals learn and develop into adults. The development that occurs in primary socialization is carried into secondary socialization. Secondary socialization involves smaller changes than those that occur in primary socialization; it teaches individuals about the type of behavior that is considered appropriate as a member of a group within society at large (Ozmete,



2011). Because primary socialization provides a template for future interactions, it is important to consider how family communication patterns that exist in the family might be related to interpersonal relationships (including those with media figures) and the development of one's identity. Family communication and socialization teaches children how to prioritize certain characteristics and aspects of communication by making salient specific identity aspects. The way socialization impacts one's identity may shape how we view media figures with whom we form relationships.

## **Identity**

There are a number of definitions of identity (see Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Weisskirch, 2008), but most conceptualize identity as the way an individual thinks of or experiences the self. In both identity theory and social identity theory, the self is viewed as reflexive, as it can view, classify, and categorize itself as an object in relation to other classifications and social categories/groups (Stets & Burke, 2000). Because we think of ourselves in relation to several evolving groups/categories, identity can be made up of a number of different aspects or roles at any given time.

Identity refers to the way we view ourselves in relation to others and other groups of people. Identity is a multilayered construct as people have a variety of identity dimensions that may be salient at any given time (Hecht & Phillips, 2022). The salience of a particular aspect of identity may be due to either internal or external factors and cues. Understanding how family communication may shape the salience of particular identity dimensions is important to understanding how identity can subsequently shape our interpersonal interactions, including our parasocial interactions.

Family communication may influence the types of PSRs that one engages in by activating particular aspects of identity and, therefore, shaping the way we perceive ourselves as similar to potential objects of parasocial relationships. When family communication follows particular patterns, individuals in these families may be accustomed to thinking of themselves in particular terms which leads to seeing others with these same characteristics. For example, if a family is focused on their collective experience (e.g., we are football-playing family) rather than personal attributes (e.g., I am smart) one may be more likely to think about themselves and others in similar collective/group terms or personal terms. Previous examinations have found that family communication patterns may influence both general family relationships and also lay the groundwork for how individuals create relationships outside of the family. Research has examined family communication patterns and various interpersonal relationships, including romantic partner and friend relationship development (Barbato, Graham, & Perse, 2009; Elwood & Schrader, 1998; Koesten, 2003; Koesten & Anderson, 2009). One of the ways the family relationship may impact subsequent interactions is by making certain aspects of a family member's identity more or less salient. By emphasizing particular identity dimensions, the family unit may shape the way individuals view others and build interpersonal relationships, including parasocial-type relationships.

### ***Communication Theory of Identity***

This multifaceted view of identity is highlighted by the Communication Theory of Identity, which proposes a "layered" perspective of identity where communication is viewed as identity enactment through four primary layers: personal, relational, enacted,

and communal (Hecht & Phillips, 2022). The personal identity layer address how an individual defines themselves; relational identity deals with how identities are defined in terms of particular relationships and in relation to other identities; the enacted layer of identity is the performance of identity and how one may express who they are; and finally, the communal layer of identity examines how society defines identities and how these identities are related to culture/society (Hecht & Phillips, 2022).

### ***Identity Salience***

At any given time, how we view ourselves is likely informed by which of these interconnected identities is most salient. Identity salience is an individual-level construct representing how prominent a category is in the mind of an individual and how that prominence informs subsequent thoughts/decisions/interactions (Randel, 2002). There are a number of cues related to human characteristics which may elicit a social response from an individual, but some are more salient than others. The elements of one's identity that are salient shape how one categorizes others as similar or dissimilar based on the characteristics and self-categorizations that matter most. Randel (2002) acknowledges that the salience of some aspects of identity may change from time-to-time, but the salience of group membership identities is more stable and consistent over time. This is echoed in research that highlights the way identity aspects may be situational or stable, but that many group-based identities, like ethnicity, are generally stable (e.g., Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

Identity salience has the ability to impact social interactions and the choices we make. Research by McLeish and Oxoby (2011) found that individuals were more likely to cooperate on social tasks with others whom they perceived as being similar to

themselves in identity salience. Perceived similarity in identity salience suggests that they view others as similar in either personal, enacted, communal, or relational aspects of identity. In addition to impacting perceptions and interactions with others, identity salience may impact behavior more broadly. A meta-analysis examining the relationship between identity salience and marketing success found that identity salience plays an important mediating role in nonprofit relationships (i.e., donating and promoting goods/services) (Michalski & Helmig, 2008). The potential for identity salience to influence various aspects of one's life can be extended to other dimensions, including media exposure and evaluations of parasocial figures. The way we conceptualize the self may impact which of the four levels of identity, as proposed by the Communication Theory of Identity, namely personal, relational, enacted, and communal, we view with greater prominence and therefore ascribe more importance to. This suggests, for example, that if one views their personal identity as most salient, then they may view their parasocial character in terms of their personal identity dimension. This might shape the way we view others as similar or dissimilar to ourselves and shape our sense of homophily with others.

To better understand if parasocial relationships are reflective of salient identity dimensions, I will develop a multidimensional measurement of PSR and Identity Salience. The measure will seek to examine an individual's level of perceived similarity with a parasocial character on the four dimensions of identity outlined by the Communication Theory of Identity: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. For each of the four dimensions, I derived eight items that are supported by the literature for

an initial measure of 32 items. To assess the structure and reliability of the items I propose the following research questions:

**RQ1: What is the factor structure of the PSR and Identity Salience measure?**

**RQ2: What are the overall reliability and validity of the instrument and of any subscales that might be derived?**

### ***Homophily***

Identity salience rests on the idea that we have multiple identities that make up our sense of self but that certain identities may be more or less salient at any given time. If identity, then, is thought of as being made up of multiple parts with varying levels of significance for oneself, homophily may explain why we are drawn to certain individuals and even parasocial figures (McPherson et al., 2001).

The categorization process of identity is informed by those identity aspects that are more or less salient. The greater the prominence of a particular category in the mind of an individual, the more salient that category of identity. When we perceive others as similar on important aspects of identity, then a sense of homophily may draw individuals together. Homophily is the idea that similarity brings people together (Stets et al., 2021) and shapes the way we interact with one another (e.g., Haun & Over, 2014). It refers to the tendency for people to be drawn to those they perceive as similar to themselves (McPherson, et al., 2001). Homophily rests on the idea that social networks are both limited and amplified by perceived similarity as we develop deeper social connections with individuals we perceive as similar on aspects of the self that are of particular importance (McPherson, et al. 2001).

If a particular identity category is high in salience, then one may be more likely to experience homophily with others they perceive as being similar in that dimension. Although identity dimensions are not exclusive and we may cycle through different dimensions as identity salience changes, many aspects of identity are stable across time (e.g., Shelton & Sellers, 2000), and family communication may shape how we perceive our own identity. When we encounter others, we have a natural tendency to place them into categories based on similarities and differences within and between self-established category boundaries, thereby determining if they are more or less like us on a particular dimension, and consequently, overall (Randel, 2002). Because identity salience can shape aspects of identity that we perceive to be most important, it can be used to develop a sense of homophily as we develop interpersonal social connections on dimensions that are most important to one's sense of self (McPherson et al., 2001). To associate with others whom we perceive as similar on specific dimensions of identity may develop increased liking and homophily, thereby shaping the types of interpersonal relationships that are formed, including parasocial relationships.

Homophily is the tendency for people to be attracted to those who they perceive as being similar to themselves and can occur on a number of different levels, including appearance, background, and attitude (as seen in Turner, 1993). For example, if one's religion or occupation is particularly salient, then you may be more likely to experience homophily with others who are similar in their religious views or occupation type/status. While appearance and background are visible and readily identifiable, homophily can be built on a number of other factors. For example, Turner (1993) finds that attitude homophily is clearly related to PSR with media figures and may be more important than

physical characteristics. This suggests that the way a character looks and other obvious targets for homophily (such as gender, age, and ethnicity) may not be as important for the development of parasocial interaction as other, less visible, factors (Turner, 1993). Therefore, homophily should be defined more generally as the idea that liking and affiliation between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people and may occur in a number of different types of relationships (McPherson et al., 2001).

Homophily is the tendency to be attracted to those we perceive as similar on one or more levels. If one of these layers is more salient for an individual, then we may be more likely to experience a sense of affinity derived from perceived similarity with those who also view this dimension similarly.

**Homophily and PSR.** A sense of homophily between oneself and others is likely dependent on which elements of one's identity are most salient because when a particular dimension of identity is perceived as more important than an individual will be more likely to search for others that are similar on the same dimension. The finding that similarity in attitude dimensions influences the development of PSRs (Conway & Rubin, 1991) suggests that the salience of specific identity dimensions for a viewer may result in homophily with characters that are perceived as being similar in the same identity dimension. This increase in homophily may be related to the intensity of the parasocial relationships one builds with media figures. Therefore, I hypothesize that salience in particular identity dimensions for oneself will be related to salience of perceived identity of a parasocial figure, such that an increase in any identity dimension for oneself will be related to an increase in the same identity dimension for a parasocial figure. In other words, if a certain dimension of identity is salient for an individual, then that person may

be more likely to develop a PSR with a character they perceive as similar in that particular dimension. For example, if personal identity salience is increased for oneself we posit that for the parasocial figure, personal identity salience will be perceived to be increased; that is, there will be a positive correlation between self-reported identity salience and the salience of perceived identity of a parasocial figure. This brings me to my first hypothesis:

**H1: Media viewers will tend to describe themselves and the object of a parasocial relationship using terms representing the same dimension of identity (personal, enacted, relational, or communal).**

For different individuals, different layers of identity may be more/less salient. To understand the relationship between parasocial relating and identity salience, it is important to understand what element or elements of that audience member's identity are most salient and important factors that may shape identity salience. One aspect that may influence the salience of a particular dimension of identity is family communication.

### **Family Communication and Relationship to Identity Salience**

As discussed previously, families are the primary context of socialization for individuals. Traits learned in childhood are often carried into secondary socialization and the development of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Lubbers et al., 2009). Families differ from one another in the patterns of communication that characterize their interaction. These differences may cause some identities to be more habitually salient. This, in turn, may shape perceived homophily with media figures, thereby influencing the development of PSR. Individuals from families with particular family communication



patterns are more likely to create parasocial relationships with media figures that they perceive as similar on each of these particular dimensions of identity.

### ***Family Communication Patterns***

There are several different types of family communication patterns that may impact how both parents and children perceive media figures, but for this research, two major foci will be examined in depth. Existing research on FCPs has identified conversation and conformity orientations within families as central characteristics of how families communicate (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Definitions of conversation orientation and conformity orientation have evolved over time, and Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002) developed an aggregate of these definitions based on prior research by McLeod and Chaffee (1972), Fitzpatrick and Richie (1994), and Koerner and Fitzpatrick (1997); this aggregate view will inform the present investigation. The FCP dimensions are a broad way of examining a variety of communication that takes place within a home and is not limited to any one interaction but rather speaks to communication norms in a household. Existing research on FCPs suggests that these norms may impact subsequent interpersonal communication and are therefore stable across communication types.

**Conformity orientation.** Conformity orientation is the degree to which family communication emphasizes uniformity of expressed attitudes, beliefs, and values within the family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). A key component of high conformity orientation families is, “a clear hierarchical family structure and a belief that family member interests are superior to individual interests” (Ball, Wanzer, & Servoss, 2013, p. 618). Families with high conformity orientation exhibit more limited communication on a

narrow range of topics because they are working to maintain a given family structure (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Furthermore, because harmony and interdependence within the family is essential to families with high conformity orientation, conflict is often avoided (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Avoiding conflict generally suggests that individuals within this family structure avoid disagreement and are less likely to find faults in their other family members, thereby increasing interpersonal liking and interdependence (Ball et al., 2013; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). High-conformity families have a focus on family functioning and require that each member of the family contribute to the family unit by fulfilling their individual roles and, clearly, an awareness of the roles of others.

The fulfillment of these individual roles is essential to creating a stable family unit, therefore resulting in a relational co-dependency to maintain the family structure and functioning. This is highlighted in research by Reuter and Koerner (2008) that examines adolescents adopted by high conformity families; these adolescents seem to struggle with assimilation into an existing family structure more so than adolescents adopted by high conversation oriented families. This research suggests that because high conformity families emphasize individual family roles and the way these roles come together to create a stable family unit, individuals who join high conformity families may have difficulty assimilating in a structurally sound family unit. Functioning within a family characterized by clear, established, mutually-interdependent roles may lead to their family role identities becoming more pronounced as they view themselves as having a shared, interdependent family reality. Research by Reuter and Koerner (2008) finds that adolescents adopted by protective families (those low in conversation orientation but

high in conformity orientation) have a higher frequency of externalizing behavior, including delinquency, behavioral disorders, conflictual relations with parents, and trouble at school, compared to those adopted by high conversation oriented families. The authors suggest that this could be, in part, because when adolescents are adopted into an existing interdependent family structure, they are unable to assimilate into the shared social reality of the family (Rueter & Koerner, 2008). A consequence of high conformity families who stress a shared, interdependent family reality, is an emphasis on communal and relational family roles and the relationship of these roles to one-another.

Because high conformity orientation families rely on interdependence within the family to maintain family structure (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), it is likely that this family structure would result in individuals for whom relational identity is particularly salient (e.g., viewing themselves as a father, daughter, mentor, etc.). This relational identity might manifest itself in relationships, both interpersonal as well as parasocial as those high in conformity orientation may be more likely to develop relationships with those they perceive as being similar in a relational way (e.g., this character is a good partner, like me). It is not that an individual overtly perceives a character as being similar to them in relational aspects, rather they form relationships with characters and then perceive them as similar in those aspects that they perceive as most salient.

Families that are high in conformity orientation rely on interdependence to maintain harmony within the group. This interdependence often means that they view themselves in reference to others within the family structure as they work together to achieve goals and maintain family functioning (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). For

example, an older child from a high conformity family is likely to be highly aware that child-care chores are carried out - both for the well-being of their younger sibling and also for parents' peace of mind. This focus on their role in relation to other family members is necessary to ensure effective family functioning. This increased focus on family functioning suggests that for those from high conformity orientated families, relational aspects of their identity (how they view themselves in reference to others/relationships) are more salient. For these individuals, then, they are more likely to view their favorite media characters in similar relational terms as they build their parasocial relationships with these characters. If one perceives oneself as being a *father*, they may be more likely to view their favorite media figure in relational terms as well (e.g., *my favorite media figure is a sister*).

**H2: Individuals from high conformity orientation families are more likely to perceive media figures with whom they parasocially relate as similar in terms of relational identity; this effect is expected to be mediated by relational identity salience of oneself and perceived relational identity salience of a parasocial figure. Individuals from high conformity orientation families are more likely to perceive their parasocial media figures in relational identity terms when mediated by their own increased relational identity salience.**

The communal layer of identity involves how one views oneself in relation to a larger community. The communal identity layer is the broadest layer of the Communication Theory of Identity and is linked with how society defines identity and

describes cultures within society (for example, what we value, perhaps as it connects to our religious beliefs) (Hecht & Phillips, 2022). This layer is less about how we personally view ourselves and more about how we view ourselves in relation to others in the community. This connects to high conformity orientation as it similarly emphasizes commonalities in expressed views, beliefs, etc. An emphasis on communal identity might manifest itself in parasocial relationships, as those high in conformity orientation may be more likely to develop relationships with those they perceive as being similar in communal characteristics (i.e., this character is of the same faith).

Like the relational layer of identity, the communal layer also emphasizes the self in relation to others. While the relational layer emphasizes the self in reference to another individual, the communal layer emphasizes the self in reference to a larger social or collective identity. The emphasis on interdependence and group needs for high conformity families suggest that in addition to the relational layer of identity, the communal layer of identity is more salient for individuals from these families. For these individuals, then, they are more likely to view their favorite media characters in communal terms. For example, if one perceives oneself as being *Asian*, they may be more likely to view their favorite media figure in relational terms as well (e.g., *my favorite media figure is Catholic*).

**H3: Individuals from high conformity orientation families are more likely to perceive media figures with whom they parasocially relate as similar in terms of communal identity; this effect is expected to be mediated by communal identity salience of oneself and perceived communal identity salience of a parasocial figure. Individuals from high conformity orientation**

**families are more likely to perceive their parasocial media figures in communal identity terms when mediated by their own increased communal identity salience.**

**Conversation orientation.** Conversation orientation refers to an open communication environment with little to no restriction on topics discussed. Because families that exhibit high conversation orientation view communication as a crucial way of socializing and educating their children (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), children in these types of families view communication as “a means of gaining control, alleviating isolation, and seeking affection from others” (Ball et al., 2013, p. 618). Families with a high conversation orientation believe that open communication is essential for building an enjoyable family life and parents often see frequent communication as the primary way they socialize and educate their children (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), essentially viewing high conversation as inversely related to high conformity orientation. Families with low conversation orientation often limit the amount and details of private information conveyed and thus share less with other members of their family regarding personal thoughts and feelings (Ball et al., 2013). In these low conversation oriented families, there is less exchange of private thoughts and a greater emphasis on family functioning as a whole, akin to high conformity families (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). One of the fundamental differences between conversation- and conformity- oriented families is that conformity oriented families are more likely to focus on the group and overall family well-being whereas conversation oriented families focus on individual differences and autonomy. It is important to note that conversation and conformity

orientation are conceptually independent and it is possible to be high or low in both constructs, but research suggests that they are often inversely correlated (see, Keating, 2016). Essentially, families with high conversation orientation tend to have an open communication environment while families with high conformity orientation emphasize uniformity of beliefs and attitudes (Ball et al., 2013). Therefore, when considering dimensions of identity and the way it may relate to family communication, conversation orientation is more likely to be related to aspects of identity that stress individual beliefs and differences rather than group-based or interdependent qualities.

The personal layer of identity is how an individual defines him or herself and includes ethnic and gender identities (Hecht & Phillips, 2022). High conversation oriented families tend to focus on individual needs and individual differences rather than focusing on the group. This emphasis on the individual suggests that those from high conversation oriented families are more likely to be high in personal identity salience.

**H4: Individuals from high conversation orientation families are more likely to perceive media figures with whom they parasocially relate as similar in terms of personal identity; this effect is expected to be mediated by personal identity salience of oneself and perceived personal identity salience of a parasocial figure.**

Additionally, high conversation oriented families extend the emphasis on the individual beyond just one's own perceptions but also to include how one may act upon their beliefs. These families encourage voicing opinions, even if they differ from parental opinions, and view communication as a way for individuals to gain control. The enacted

layer of identity is the performance of identity or the way in which actions express who we are. Because high conversation oriented families encourage self-expression, the enacted layer of identity is likely to be more salient for individuals from these family structures.

**H5: Individuals from high conversation orientation families are more likely to perceive media figures with whom they parasocially relate as similar in terms of enacted identity; this effect is expected to be mediated by enacted identity salience of oneself and perceived enacted identity salience of a parasocial figure.**



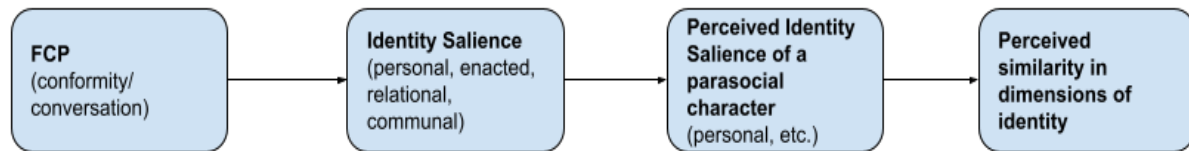
## Proposed Model and Testing

Individuals from different families engage in conversation and interpersonal interaction in distinct ways. These differences may extend to their engagement in parasocial relationships and the way they view their parasocial media figures. Because family socialization is such a critical factor in many areas of one's life, it is essential that we consider the ways family socialization may impact media use. In order to examine the relationship between family communication/socialization and parasocial relationship development, it is important to consider the types of PSRs that may be taking place.

Previous research (i.e., Lull, 1980) suggests different family communication styles are indicative of different media use patterns for a variety of reasons, but have failed to consider how family communication patterns may impact parasocial relationships. I posit here that identity salience impacts parasocial relationships, especially in terms of the way we perceive the identities of a parasocial figure and the similarities to our own identity salience. Therefore, any model examining the relationship between family communication and the parasocial phenomena must consider how family communication impacts identity salience.

The extant literature fails to consider how deeply rooted family socialization is in our media choices, particularly in our likelihood of developing and maintaining parasocial relationships. The proposed model seeks to bridge this gap by examining the relationship between FCP and PSR as mediated by identity salience. The model proposed herein suggests that **FCP, whether high in conversation orientation or conformity orientation, impacts the dimensions of one's identity that are the most salient. That is, individuals high in conversation or conformity orientation are**

**more likely to think of themselves and therefore their parasocial character in specific identity terms, which, in turn, impact perceived similarity with the parasocial character.**



To examine the proposed model, there are first a number of considerations that need to be made. The model suggests that FCP and the degree to which families are high in either conversation orientation or conformity orientation may impact the parasocial relationship that is developed by making particular identity dimensions more/less salient. Thus, my research design examining the types of media figures with which participants choose to engage in a parasocial relationship, must consider the FCP of the individual and a measure of identity salience.

## **Overview of Studies**

To examine the proposed model and address the hypotheses, I conducted three studies. The first study, a survey, considers identity salience of the respondent and relationship between one's identity and the salience of perceived identity of a parasocial character. The first study also establishes a measure of parasocial relating based on the Communication Theory of Identity and the four dimensions of identity: personal, enacted, relational, and communal.

The second study extends this research by also considering the relationship family communication patterns may have on identity salience and parasocial relationships. The second study also tightens the PSR measure established in Study one by considering the identity dimensions and the reliability of the subscales.

Finally, the third study, an experiment, considers how salience of a particular family communication pattern might impact a respondent's reaction to an ambiguous character, specifically their perceived similarity to this character. This study seeks to extend the PSR focus by considering how family communication might shape the way we immediately think of a character. For each of these studies, overall media use is considered and basic demographic information is collected.

## **Study 1**

The primary purpose of Study 1 was to examine the relationship of self-concept and the perceived self-concept of a parasocial character. Based on the Communication Theory of Identity (Hecht & Phillips, 2022), I expected that the way an individual defines themselves may be related to the way they define a character with whom they have a parasocial relationship. That is, an individual will be more likely to define themselves and their parasocial character using the same dimension(s) of identity: personal, enacted, relational, and/or communal. Therefore, Study 1 had two primary purposes, it (1) sought to examine similarities between one's identity salience and perceived salience of a parasocial figure and (2) it sought to create and validate a measure of PSR and identity salience.

### ***Methods***

To obtain data for the first study, a cross-sectional survey was carried out in 2020 at a large, public university on the U.S. west coast. Institutional Review Board approval was received prior to data collection, and the survey utilized a convenience sample of undergraduate college students enrolled in an introductory Communication course. The online survey was optional, with extra-credit offered to any student who attempted the survey. For the full survey, see Appendix A.

### ***Sample***

After eliminating responses from incomplete surveys and participants whose completion time for the survey suggested they did not read survey questions completely, the total number of respondents was 439. Of the 439 respondents, the mean age was 20.5 years (range: 18-25,  $SD = 1.51$ ), 27.3% identified as male ( $n = 120$ ),

71.8% identified as female ( $n = 315$ ) and four participants (0.9%) identified as *other*. Participants were asked to indicate their race with multiple choices possible. The majority of participants identified as Asian (51.9%,  $n = 228$ ), 26.4% identified as White ( $n = 116$ ), 16.2% ( $n = 71$ ) identified as Latino/Hispanic, 3.6 % ( $n = 16$ ) identified as Black/African American, 2.5% ( $n = 11$ ) identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and the remaining 6.6% ( $n = 29$ ) identified as other.

### **Measures**

**Identity salience/dimensions of identity.** To measure identity salience, participants completed a revised version of the Twenty Statements Test (TST) (developed by Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). The TST asks participants to answer the question, “Who am I” by completing twenty sentences beginning with “I am...” and allowing participants to self-represent, highlighting those aspects of their identity that they deem to be most important or salient. The TST has previously been used to examine self-concept and identity salience (including religious identity, cultural identity, personal identity, etc.) (see Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Murdock, Hirt, & Ferring, 2014; Hong et al. 2001). The revised version presented herein was adapted such that participants were first asked to complete ten statements to describe themselves and, after a set of questions about media use and recently watched programs, participants completed another ten statements to describe their favorite media figure. This allowed us to consider salient dimensions of each participant’s identity/self-concept as well as perceived identity dimensions of a parasocial media character. The two sets of TST statements were not presented back-to-back to avoid a priming effect of participant TST responses on perceived character TST responses.

To examine the four identity dimensions articulated by the Communication Theory of Identity, the responses to the TST were grouped into four categories: personal - how an individual defines themselves, any characterization that is not in reference to another and not an outright expression of identity (e.g., I am... brave/smart/happy); enacted – the performance of identity and how one may express who they are, must be an action of performance that can be interpreted by another person/group (e.g., I am... a driven); relational – how identities are defined in terms of particular relationships or a title conferred upon others (e.g., I am... a boyfriend/sister); and communal -how society defines identities and how these identities are related to culture/society (e.g., I am... Jewish). Coding of the responses into the four categories was performed by the author and a trained coder using a detailed codebook highlighting the identity dimension groupings. The second coder was trained on the dataset and codebook. After multiple rounds of reliability checking, we achieved inter-coder reliability for both the ten statements examining the respondent's own identity salience ( $\kappa = 0.922$ ) and the ten statements examining salience of perceived identity of a media figure ( $\kappa = 0.952$ ). For a detailed codebook, see Appendix D.

To calculate identity salience for each category (personal, enacted, relational, communal) for both the self-identity and perceived identity of a parasocial figure, the proportion of all responses coded as falling within each category was calculated. See Table 1 for proportions of identity dimensions as a function of overall self-identity and Table 2 for proportions of identity dimensions as a function of perceived identity of the parasocial media character.

Table 1: *Proportion of Responses by Identity Category for Self-Identity TST (Study 1)*

	Personal Identity Dimension	Enacted Identity Dimension	Relational Identity Dimension	Communal Identity Dimension
Mean	0.456	0.273	0.194	0.076
SD	0.186	0.191	0.198	0.102

Table 2: *Proportion of Responses by Identity Category for Perceived Self-Identity of Parasocial Media Character TST (Study 1)*

	Personal Identity Dimension	Enacted Identity Dimension	Relational Identity Dimension	Communal Identity Dimension
Mean	0.381	0.332	0.256	0.032
SD	0.198	0.218	0.229	0.063

**PSR & Identity Salience.** A second measure of PSR was also used specifically to measure the identity overlap between the media figure and the respondent, as perceived by the respondent. This measure was created by the author and is, to the author's knowledge, the only measure that considers similarity to a parasocial character on specific dimensions of identity, based on the CTI. The creation of this measure is meant to fill a gap in the literature on parasocial relating. To the authors' knowledge, there is no existing instrument that considers PSR and identity salience in this way. For this measure, participants rated their similarity to their favorite media character on a number of domains. The initial measure consisted of four subscales, each one examining perceived similarity of the participant to their parasocial media figure on a

different layer of identity (personal, enacted, relational, communal), with eight items each.

To develop the items for each subscale, I reviewed the main goals and features of the CTI (as explained by Hecht & Phillips, 2022) and established items that were consistent with descriptions of each dimension. For example, a key element of the relational layer of identity is that it considers who you are in reference to another specific person or group of people. To examine this concept, the relational subscale included items like, “In relation to your favorite character/celebrity [character name], would you say you are more similar or dissimilar to [character name] in terms of... your relationship with those around you.” Similar considerations were made for the other identity measures and the total scale with 32 items was included in Study 1. For a full list of measure items, see Appendix E.

Items asked participants to rate similarity to their favorite character on aspects of personal identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of how you see yourself”), enacted identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of how you act on your beliefs”), relational identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of how you care about other people”), and communal identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of your group identification”). Responses were anchored from 1 (Extremely Dissimilar) to 7 (Extremely Similar).

**Media use.** In addition to the coded measures examining salient identity dimensions of the respondent and perceived identity dimensions of the parasocial media figure, I also examined media use. Participants were asked to indicate the



number of hours spent per day (a) watching TV shows, either on TV or online, (b) watching movies, (c) using social media (like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.), and (d) playing video games. Responses were anchored from 0 hours per day to 10 hours per day and an aggregate score of overall media use was calculated by totaling each of the four media use categories ( $M = 9.04$ ,  $SD = 5.11$ ).

## **Results**

RQ1 addressed the factor structure of the PSR and Identity Saliency measure. An EFA was performed using principal axis factoring and promax oblique rotation. I used an oblique rotation on an assumption of inter-correlations between the factors. Based on the criterion of eigenvalues over 1.0, EFA results produced a four-factor structure with primary loadings of at least 0.48 with no secondary loadings higher than 0.45. The factor loadings are shown in Table 3.

The four-factor structure accounted for a combined 57.9% of the variance. Of the initial 32 items, 8 items did not significantly load with any of the factor loadings, suggesting that these eight items were not significantly related to any of the four dimensions identified. The items that did not significantly load were primarily created by the author as items intended to reflect similarity in *Enacted Identity Saliency*.

Conceptually, enacted identity refers to one's ability to express identity. Because the items were assessing beliefs rather than behaviors, it may be that a survey measure is unable to accurately assess behaviors that are consistent with one's enacted identity and perceived enacted identity of others. Six of the eight enacted identity items were, then, excluded. The remaining items that failed to load with the four-factors could also be considered behaviors/actions (e.g., "... your role in a group") or perceived outlook,

which may also be interpreted as an action (e.g., “your world view”). These items may not be a good reflection of identity and should then be excluded. The eight items were removed and 24 items remained for the PSR and Identity Salience measure.

My interpretation of the factors was similar to three of the four that I originally conceptualized (personal, relational, and communal), with the main difference relating to similarity on the enacted identity dimension. The items created to measure perceived similarity on the dimension of enacted identity did not clearly load together. Rather, some of these items seemed to be most similar to items assessing perceived similarity on personal dimensions of identity. For the items examining perceived similarity on communal aspects of identity, there seemed to be two distinct factor groupings: one considering “personal” communal identities (e.g., similarities in a common group quality like clubs) and the other considering “social” communal identities (e.g., similarities in religious affiliation, race or ethnicity).

Table 3. *Factor Loadings for the Four-Factor Conceptualization of the PSR and Identity Salience Measure (Study 1)*

Variable*	Personal	Relational	Communal: Personal	Communal: Social
... how you see yourself	<b>.66</b>	-.13	.19	.03
... your unique personality	<b>.81</b>	-.10	.05	-.17
... the characteristics which make you unique	<b>.80</b>	-.19	.16	.02
... your individuality	<b>.91</b>	-.10	-.15	.04
... your personality	<b>.57</b>	.17	.15	-.12
... your self-concept	<b>.60</b>	.04	-.01	.20
... how you express yourself	<b>.77</b>	-.19	.22	-.07
... how you act in a situation	<b>.54</b>	.25	.07	-.04
... how you care about other people	-.06	<b>.89</b>	-.12	.01
... how you act towards other people	.03	<b>.79</b>	.09	-.09
... your relationship with those around you	-.06	<b>.74</b>	.11	-.02
... the relationships you have with your family/friends	-.00	<b>.64</b>	.08	.06
... how you take care of others	-.10	<b>.90</b>	.04	-.15
... how you treat others	-.21	<b>1.01</b>	.01	-.05
... how you interact with others	.14	<b>.62</b>	.11	-.06
... your social system	.15	.05	<b>.63</b>	-.01
... your membership in various groups	.17	-.01	<b>.61</b>	.03
... your similarities to those in your group(s)	.03	.30	<b>.52</b>	.07
... your social group	.17	-.10	<b>.74</b>	-.06
... a group stereotype	-.15	.01	<b>.70</b>	.27
... a common group quality	.09	.24	<b>.48</b>	.03
... a communal identity	.06	.23	<b>.48</b>	.15
... your background (nationality, ethnicity, etc.)	-.31	-.13	.48	<b>.69</b>
... your religious affiliation	.10	-.14	.02	<b>.79</b>

\*Participants were asked to indicate whether they are more alike or more different to their favorite media character in terms of...

In response to RQ2, I examined the overall reliability of the instrument as well as the reliability of the four subscales derived from the overall measure. Overall reliability was assessed because the scale can either assess PSR, broadly, by considering average of the overall measure, or any of the subscales can be used to assess PSR on a specific dimension of identity. Eight items constituted the *perceived similarity in personal identity* factor, representing the respondent's perception that their favorite media figure is similar to them in aspects that are reflective of personal identity qualities ( $\alpha = .89$ ); seven items made up the *perceived similarity in relational identity* factor,

representing the respondent’s perception that their favorite media figure is similar to them in aspects that are reflective of the relation aspect of identity ( $\alpha = .90$ ); seven items made up the *perceived similarity in personal communal identity* factor ( $\alpha = .88$ ); and two items made up the *perceived similarity in social communal identity* factor ( $r(437) = .30, p < .001$ ), based on the Communication Theory of Identity (Hecht & Phillips, 2022). The overall 24-item instrument derived a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.94. See Table 4 for the averages and standard deviation of each subscale. Because the primary purpose of Study 1 was an initial test of the measure, ensuring validity was reserved for Study 2.

Table 4. *Mean and SD for PSR and Identity Salience subscales*

	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.
1. Perceived Personal Similarity	4.23	1.06	-		
2. Perceived Relational Similarity	4.55	1.12	.68**	-	
3. Perceived Communal (Personal) Similarity	3.86	1.08	.73**	.68**	-
4. Perceived Communal (Social) Similarity	3.46	1.34	.33**	.31*	.43**

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

H1 posits that one’s self-reported identity salience will be positively related to the salience of perceived identity of a parasocial figure. In response to H1, I calculated correlations between the proportions of identity dimensions as a function of self-identity and proportions of identity dimensions as a function of perceived identity of the parasocial media character. I expected that there would be a positive correlation for proportions of the specific identity dimensions (personal, enacted, relational, communal)

for both self-identity and perceived identity of one's favorite media character (parasocial character). See Table 5 for identity dimension correlations.

Table 5. *Identity Dimension Correlations – Self-selected Identity Proportion and Perceived Identity of a Parasocial Character (Study 1)*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Self-identity: personal	-						
2. Self-identity: enacted	-.28**	-					
3. Self-identity: relational	-.54**	-.53**	-				
4. Self-identity: communal	-.25**	-.33**	.03	-			
5. Perceived parasocial identity: personal	<b>.30**</b>	.01	-.24**	-.10*	-		
6. Perceived parasocial identity: enacted	.07	<b>.37**</b>	-.31**	-.21**	-.30**	-	
7. Perceived parasocial identity: relational	-.30**	-.33*	<b>.48**</b>	.23**	-.54**	-.60**	-
8. Perceived parasocial identity: communal	-.09	-.13**	.10*	<b>.22**</b>	-.11*	-.32**	.13**

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Correlations in bold identify positive correlations in response to H1

Results show that for the personal and enacted identity dimensions, significant and positive correlations are present when examining the same identity dimension for oneself and the parasocial media figure. For example, when considering the proportion of TST answers that suggest personal aspects of identity, there is a positive and significant correlation with TST answers that indicate perceived personal identity of a

parasocial figure. Indeed, for personal and enacted self-identities, the only positive and significant correlations are for the same identity dimension of a parasocial character. For relational identity, the strongest significant and positive correlation is for perceived relational identity of a favorite media figure. For communal identity, the relationship is positive for both relational identity and communal identity of a parasocial figure. Findings support H1 by suggesting that, indeed, self-reported identity salience is positively and significantly related to perceived identity of a parasocial figure.

### ***Discussion***

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of self-concept and the perceived self-concept of a parasocial character. Based on the Communication Theory of Identity (Hecht, 2015), I expected that the way an individual defines themselves may be related to the way they define a character with whom they have a parasocial relationship. That is, an individual will be more likely to define themselves and their parasocial character using the same dimension(s) of identity: personal, enacted, relational, and/or communal. Therefore, the study had two primary purposes, it (1) sought to examine similarities between one's identity salience and perceived salience of a parasocial figure and (2) it sought to create and validate a measure of PSR and identity salience.

The study was successful in creating a measure of PSR and identity salience, although the dimensions found were not entirely in-line with what was hypothesized based on the four identity dimensions. Rather, I found that enacted identity is not distinctly represented in the data and communal identity is represented in different ways, both as personal, or self-selected, group identities such as clubs; and social

aspects, or ways that others might classify an individual, such as race or ethnicity. It may be then, that communal identity should be viewed as two separate categories of identity based on self-created and socially-defined groupings.

Perhaps the most interesting finding as it relates to PSR is that the salient identities of oneself shape the ways we view our parasocial figures. The character with whom one has formed a parasocial relationship may be dramatically different from oneself, but we tend to view ourselves in similar terms. For example, a respondent might describe themselves as a mother and sister and describe their favorite parasocial character as a husband and friend. For each of these characterizations, the relational aspect of identity is salient.

Study 1 helps pave an understanding of the interaction between identity salience and parasocial relating by examining how one's sense-of-self is related to the salience of perceived identity of a parasocial figure. Additionally, Study 1 developed a measure of perceived similarity and parasocial relating based on the dimensions of identity salience. To consider how family communication may play a role in the interaction of identity salience and parasocial relating, Study 2 will extend this research by incorporating conversation and conformity measures and examining relationships between these measures and the measures considering identity dimensions.

## **Study 2**

The primary purpose of Study 2 was to extend the relationship on self-concept and the perceived self-concept of a parasocial character from Study 1. I continued to

examine the PSR and Identity Salience measure by considering the way the created measure interacts with other measures of homophily and parasocial relating. In addition to considering parasocial relating, Study 2 saw the addition of a measure of family communication to consider the role of the family in identity salience. Specifically, Study 2 sought to provide a first look at the way family communication patterns, whether one is high in conformity versus conversation orientation, plays a role in one's identity salience and perceived identity of and similarity with a parasocial media character.

There are a variety of considerations that shape the way we form relationships with others. Our previous examination (Study 1) considered how identity salience is related to parasocial relating. This examination (Study 2) considered how conversation orientation and conformity orientation relate to perceived identity similarity to a parasocial character. Specifically, I sought to address hypotheses 3-5 which hypothesize that conversation orientation is positively related to perceived similarity on personal and enacted identity dimensions and that conformity orientation is positively related to perceived similarity on relational and communal identities. I suspect that individuals from conversation oriented families will be more likely to perceive similarity on personal and enacted identity dimensions because they come from families that encourage independent thoughts and behaviors, therefore emphasizing those aspects of their personality that make them especially unique. Conversely, I suspect that individuals from conformity oriented families will be more likely to perceive similarity on relational and communal identities because individuals from these families stress homogeneity in value and are dedicated to maintaining a given family structure or



identity and may therefore view themselves both in relation to others and as part of a larger social group.

### **Methods**

To obtain data for the second study, an online, cross-sectional survey was carried out in Fall 2020/Winter 2021 at a large, public university on the west-coast. Institutional Review Board approval was received prior to data collection and the survey utilized a convenience sample of undergraduate college students enrolled in an introductory Communication course. The survey was optional, with extra-credit offered to any student who attempted the survey. And just like with Study 1, the survey could be terminated at any time. The survey for Study 2 was offered during a different term from the Study 1 survey, and although there is a possibility that there may be some repeat respondents in Study 1 and Study 2 (e.g., participants repeating a class), it is likely to be a very small number of the overall responses. For the full survey instrument, see Appendix B.

### **Sample**

After eliminating responses from incomplete surveys and participants whose completion time for the survey suggested they did not read survey questions completely, the total number of respondents was 404. Of the 404 respondents, the mean age was 19.6 years (range: 18-25,  $SD = 1.39$ ), 32.9% identified as male ( $n = 133$ ), 66.1% identified as female ( $n = 267$ ) and four participants (1%) identified as *other*. Participants were asked to indicate their race with multiple choices possible. The majority of participants identified as Asian only (55.4%,  $n = 224$ ), 19.6% identified as White only ( $n = 79$ ), 10.6% ( $n = 43$ ) identified as Latino/Hispanic only, 1.7 % ( $n = 7$ )

identified as Black/African American only, one respondent (0.2%) identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander only, with the remaining 12.4% ( $n = 50$ ) identifying as multiracial or other.

**Measures**

**Identity salience/dimensions of identity.** To measure identity salience, participants completed a revised version of the Twenty Statements Test (TST) (developed by Kuhn & McPartland, 1954) as they did in Study 1. Coding for the TST followed the same guidelines as in Study 1 and were grouped into the same four categories: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. The author and trained coder from Study 1 completed the coding for Study 2. The proportion of all responses coded as falling within each category was calculated. See Table 6 for proportions of identity dimensions as a function of overall self-identity and Table 7 for proportions of identity dimensions as a function of perceived identity of the parasocial media character.

Table 6: *Proportion of Responses by Identity Category for Self-Identity TST (Study 2)*

	Personal Identity Dimension	Enacted Identity Dimension	Relational Identity Dimension	Communal Identity Dimension
Mean	0.427	0.294	0.200	0.079
SD	0.178	0.218	0.191	0.097

Table 7: *Proportion of Responses by Identity Category for Perceived Self-Identity of Parasocial Media Character TST (Study 2)*

	Personal Identity Dimension	Enacted Identity Dimension	Relational Identity Dimension	Communal Identity Dimension
Mean	0.417	0.276	0.268	0.040
SD	0.204	0.199	0.225	0.077

**PSR & Identity Salience.** To measure PSR and identity salience, I again included the author-created measure considering perceived similarity to a parasocial character on specific dimensions of identity. The inclusion of this measure in Study 2 is meant to confirm the findings from Study 1 by testing the remaining 24 items to ensure the factor loading is consistent with the previous findings. Participants rated their similarity to their favorite media character on a number of domains. The measure consisted of four subscales, each one examining perceived similarity of the participant to their parasocial media figure on a different layer of identity, adapted from the CTI to reflect the findings from Study 1. The 24 items that converged in four iterations in Study 1 were retained for Study 2. Of the 24 items included in the overall measure, eight items specifically assessed the *perceived similarity in personal identity* factor, seven items made up the *perceived similarity in relational identity* factor; seven items made up the *perceived similarity in personal communal identity* factor; and two items made up the *perceived similarity in social communal identity* factor.

Items again asked participants to rate similarity to their favorite character on aspects of personal identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of how you see yourself”) and relational identity (e.g., “are you more alike or

more different to the character in terms of how you care about other people”). Study 2 also considered personal communal identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of your social group”) and social communal identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of your religious affiliation”). Responses were anchored from 1 (Extremely Dissimilar) to 7 (Extremely Similar).

**Homophily.** To consider how the created PSR & Identity Salience measure differs from other similar measures of parasocial relating, I included measures of homophily and parasocial breakup. For the PSR and Identity Salience measure to be reliable and valid, I expect that it should be correlated with the homophily subscales and highly correlated with parasocial breakup, a measure of intensity of the parasocial relationship. To examine homophily, participants completed the Perceived Homophily Scale (McCroskey, Richmond & Daly, 1975). The scale is a four-factor measure and examines four dimensions of homophily including attitude, background, value, and appearance homophily. The measure was adapted to examine perceived homophily with a parasocial figure indicated by each respondent. Each of the four subscales consists of four, 7-point Likert items with statements such as, “this person thinks like me” (attitude homophily scale) and “this person is from a different social class” (background homophily scale). I examined the overall reliability of the measure as well as the reliability of the four subscales to compare the PSR and Identity Salience measure to homophily, generally, as well as each subscale.

To ensure the four dimensions of homophily posited by the Perceived Homophily Scale were consistent for this examination, an EFA was performed using principal axis factoring and varimax rotation in line with prior uses of this measure that assumes no

inter-correlations between the factors (McCroskey et al., 1975). Based on the criterion of eigenvalues over 1.0, EFA results produced a five-factor structure with primary loadings of at least 0.45 with no secondary loadings higher than 0.40. The factor loadings are shown in Table 8. Because the scale has only been used once before, an EFA was used in this situation rather than a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA would be appropriate to verify the factor structure of a scale that has been previously tested and validated. EFA is appropriate in this situation because it does not assume a set factor structure and therefore provides greater flexibility when to classify the subscales based on how they best load together.

The five-factor structure accounted for a combined 61.4% of the variance. Of the initial 16 items, 1 item failed to significantly load with only one of the factor loadings. Four items constituted the *perceived homophily in attitude* dimension ( $\alpha = .71$ ,  $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ), three items made up the *perceived homophily in value* dimension ( $\alpha = .71$ ,  $M = 4.68$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ), and four items made up the *perceived homophily in appearance* dimension ( $\alpha = .78$ ,  $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ). The four items to assess *homophily in background* dimension were represented across two factors. Two of the items represented background that I describe here as *socially imposed* (e.g., "...has status similar to me" or "...has an economic situation like mine") ( $r(404) = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ). The other two background items represented *group background* (e.g., "... is culturally similar to me") ( $r(404) = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ). The overall 15-item instrument derived a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.75.

Table 8. *Factor Loadings for the Perceived Homophily Scale*

Variable*	Attitude Homophily	Background (Socially Imposed) Homophily	Background (Group) Homophily	Value Homophily	Appearance Homophily
... is like me	<b>.76</b>	.17	.09	.17	.21
... is similar to me	<b>.74</b>	.20	.14	.09	.04
... thinks like me	<b>.48</b>	.08	-.19	.33	.32
... behaves like me	<b>.70</b>	-.07	.15	.09	.03
... has status like mine	.21	<b>.77</b>	.01	-.15	.20
... is from the same social class	.28	.11	<b>.75</b>	-.12	.06
... is culturally similar	.12	-.12	<b>.66</b>	.04	.42
... has an economic situation like mine	.07	<b>.84</b>	.06	-.06	.08
... has morals like mine	.22	.01	-.05	<b>.78</b>	-.07
... has sexual attitudes like mine	-.11	.28	.41	.40	.08
... treats people like I do	.14	-.09	-.09	<b>.74</b>	.03
... shares my values	.07	-.18	.10	<b>.72</b>	.03
... looks similar to me	.03	.18	.12	-.03	<b>.76</b>
... is the same size I am	-.07	.24	.13	.03	<b>.71</b>
... has an appearance like mine	.15	-.01	.10	-.03	<b>.82</b>
... resembles me	.36	-.03	.03	.07	<b>.71</b>

\*Participants were asked to indicate their feelings about their favorite celebrity/character by indicating the degree to which the character...

**Parasocial Breakup.** To consider how the PSR & Identity Salience scale differs from other examinations of parasocial relating, I also examine parasocial breakup. The Parasocial Breakup scale (adapted from Cohen, 2003), is a 13-item scale intended to measure how a respondent would feel if their favorite television personality was removed from their show or taken off the air. The scale was adapted to ask respondents specifically how they would feel if their favorite media figure or character was removed from the air. Examples of items included in the scale are “I would... feel lonely” and “I would... feel like I lost a close friend.” Responses were anchored from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7(Strongly Agree) such that a higher score indicates a more intense reaction to a parasocial breakup, therefore suggesting a stronger parasocial relationship

( $\alpha = .87$ ,  $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ). The parasocial breakup scale essentially measures the depth of a parasocial relationship by considering one's reaction to a favorite media figure being removed from the air. In this study, it is used as a proxy for degree of parasocial relating.

**Family Communication Pattern.** To measure family communication patterns, participants completed a version of The Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument, one of the most heavily used family communication instruments available (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990, adapted from McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). The Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument (RFCP) is a self-report questionnaire asking respondents to agree or disagree with 26 statements (measured on 7-point scales) about their family communication habits and patterns. The RFCP focuses on the interactions between parents and children with questions that are tailored to children/adolescent respondents as opposed to parents (e.g., "My parents often say something like 'you'll know better when you grow up,'""). Despite being tailored to child respondents, this scale is still appropriate for a young-adult college sample as their demographic is more able to identify with children in a family structure than parents.

The RFCP measure consists of two subscales, one 11-item scale measuring conformity orientation ( $\alpha = .85$ ,  $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ). and the other 15-item scale considering conversation orientation ( $\alpha = .91$ ,  $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ). While the constructs of conformity and conversation are often found to be inversely related (those high in conversation orientation are generally low in conformity orientation and vice versa), most research conceptualizes the two constructs as being independent (see

Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Because of the independence of the two subscales, this measure allows the most complete picture of the individual's FCP.

**Media use.** As with Study 1, Study 2 also considered media use. Participants were asked to indicate the number of hours spent per day (a) watching TV shows, either on TV or online, (b) watching movies, (c) using social media (like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.), and (d) playing video games. Responses were anchored from 0 hours per day to 10 hours per day and an aggregate score of overall media use was calculated by totaling each of the four media use categories ( $M = 7.08$ ,  $SD = 4.11$ ).

## **Results**

Study 2 had two primary goals. It first sought to confirm the findings from Study 1, especially the factor-loading and validity of the PSR and Identity Saliency measure created by the author. Additionally, Study 2 sought to extend the findings from Study 1 by examining the role of family communication on identity saliency and parasocial relating, thereby addressing Hypotheses 2-5.

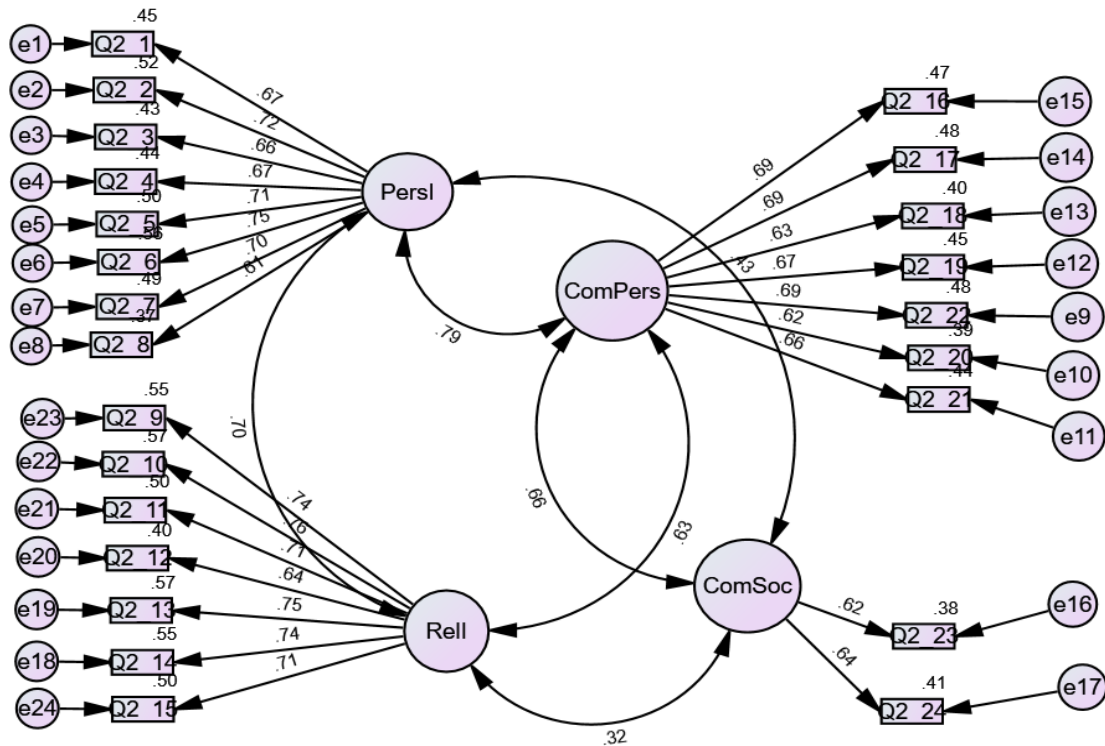
To confirm the findings from Study 1, it is first necessary to validate the factor-loading of the PSR and Identity Saliency measure before comparing the findings to other related measures, namely perceived homophily and parasocial breakup. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS 26.0 (The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 27.0). The result for the chi-square goodness of fit test indicates that I should reject the null hypothesis of an exact-fitting model,  $\chi^2(246) = 573.825$ ,  $p < .001$ . Both the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI: 0.914) and Comparative fit index (CFI: 0.923) are consistent with thresholds for an acceptable model fit. The Root mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) value of 0.058 also



indicates an acceptable fit (see Kline, 2016). Therefore, when considering the TLI, CFA, and RMSEA, results suggest that the model is an acceptable fit to the data.

**Figure 1**

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis: PSR & Identity Salience Measure, Study 2*



\*For numbered item descriptions, see Appendix E

CFA results validated the four-factor structure with positive standardized estimates greater than 0.5. See Figure 1 for the full path diagram with estimates.

Of the 24 items retained from Study 1, eight items assessed *perceived similarity in personal identity* ( $\alpha = .88$ ,  $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ), seven items assessed *perceived similarity in relational identity* ( $\alpha = .88$ ,  $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ), seven items assessed

perceived similarity in communal (personal) identity ( $\alpha = .85$ ,  $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ), and two items assessed perceived similarity in communal (social) identity ( $r_s(404) = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ).

To assess whether the PSR and Identity Salience measure established by the author was related to other measures of homophily and parasocial relating the subscales were analyzed in relation to the Parasocial Breakup scale and the five subscale factors indicated by the Perceived Homophily Scale (for Subscale correlations, see Table 9).

Table 9. *Correlations of Parasocial Relating and Homophily Scales*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Personal Identity	-								
2. Relational Identity	.62**	-							
3. Communal: Personal Identity	.68**	.54**	-						
4. Communal: Social Identity	.31**	.23**	.46**	-					
5. Attitude Homophily	.60**	.46**	.50**	.30**	-				
6. Background (Socially Imposed) Homophily	.15**	.08	.20**	.09	.23**	-			
7. Background (Group) Homophily	.20**	.15**	.25**	.38**	.29**	.17**	-		
8. Value Homophily	.33**	.60**	.32**	.17**	.33**	-.13*	.03	-	
9. Appearance Homophily	.30**	.16**	.33**	.40**	.34**	.27**	.38**	.03	-
10. Parasocial Breakup	.14**	.12*	.12*	-.02	.08	-.01	-.05	.13*	.01

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Results suggest that the PSR and Identity Salience measure created to assess perceived similarity between oneself and a parasocial figure on dimensions of identity is highly correlated with the homophily subscales. This suggests that the measure functions similarly to the Perceived Homophily subscales, but consistently significant and high correlation in each dimension suggests that the new subscales are not varied enough. The parasocial breakup scale was moderately correlated with two of the subscales, *personal identity* and *communal (personal) identity*. Because parasocial breakup is a measure of parasocial relationship intensity, I expect it to be highly correlated with perceived similarity to the media figure. The positive correlation with perceived similarity in personal attributes suggests that the scale does, indeed, measure important aspects of relationship intensity, particularly when the perceived similarity is related to personal attributes. Therefore, the created measure appears to be reliable in that the subscales are highly correlated and significantly factor together, but the validity of the measure, the extent to which it conceptually differs from other established and similar measures, is unclear and more analysis is needed to establish validity.

In addition to assessing the validity of the PSR and Identity Salience scale, Study 2 also sought to affirm the findings from Study 1 in reference to identity salience of oneself and salience of perceived identity of a parasocial character. Study 1 addressed H1 and found that, indeed one's self-reported identity salience is positively related to the salience of perceived identity of a parasocial figure. To confirm H1, I again calculated correlations between the proportions of identity dimensions as a function of self-identity

and proportions of identity dimensions as a function of perceived identity of the parasocial media character. See Table 10 for TST correlations.

Table 10. *Identity Dimension Correlations – Self-selected Identity Proportion and Perceived Identity of a Parasocial Character (Study 2)*

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Self-identity: personal	-						
2. Self-identity: enacted	-.39**	-					
3. Self-identity: relational	-.43**	-.56**	-				
4. Self-identity: communal	-.11**	-.42**	.07	-			
5. Perceived parasocial identity: personal	<b>.22**</b>	.06	-.22**	-.11*	-		
6. Perceived parasocial identity: enacted	-.03	<b>.32**</b>	-.22**	-.25**	-.27**	-	
7. Perceived parasocial identity: relational	-.16**	-.28**	<b>.36**</b>	.19**	-.59**	-.56**	-
8. Perceived parasocial identity: communal	-.06	-.21**	.10*	<b>.38**</b>	-.23**	-.24**	.08

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Correlations in bold identify positive correlations in response to H1

Findings in Study 2 confirmed the results from Study 1 and suggest that self-reported identity salience is positively and significantly related to perceived identity of a parasocial figure. Findings are significant and the most positive when comparing the same identity dimensions of oneself and the perceived identity dimension of the

parasocial character (e.g., salience of personal identity for oneself is positive and significant when considering the perceived personal identity of a parasocial character).

To examine hypotheses 2-5, I consider the relationships between family communication and dimensions of identity by examining correlations between the variables of interest (see Table 12).

Table 11. *Correlations of Identity Salience, Parasocial Relating and Family Communication*

	Conformity Orientation	Conversation Orientation	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Personal Identity	.12	.04	-	-	-	-
2. Relational Identity	.12*	.10	-	-	-	-
3. Communal: Personal Identity	.09	.06	-	-	-	-
4. Communal: Social Identity	-.01	.05	-	-	-	-
5. Self-identity: personal	.00	.05	.00	-.07	.06	.06
6. Self-identity: enacted	.02	-.02	.04	.03	.00	.06
7. Self-identity: relational	.00	-.04	-.02	.08	-.02	-.06
8. Self-identity: communal	-.04	.02	-.05	-.10*	-.07	-.12*
9. Perceived parasocial identity: personal	-.05	-.04	.05	-.09	-.02	.02
10. Perceived parasocial identity: enacted	-.01	.04	-.03	.08	.04	.07
11. Perceived parasocial identity: relational	.05	-.02	.01	.03	-.01	-.08
12. Perceived parasocial identity: communal	.00	.05	-.07	-.07	-.03	-.03
13. Media use	.18**	-.01	.05	.03	.11*	.02

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Note: Items 1-4 are from the PSR and Identity Salience measure. For correlations of these items, see Table 10.

Note: Items 5-8 are from the TST and assess self-identity; items 9-12 from the TST assess perceived identity of a parasocial figure. For correlations of these items, see Table 11.

To address Hypotheses 2 and 3, I consider the relationship between conformity orientation and the relational (H2) and communal (H3) aspect of identity. Hypothesis 2

predicted that conformity orientation would be positively and significantly related to the relational aspect of identity. Indeed, results suggest that conformity orientation is significantly and positively related to perceived similarity on the relational aspect of identity, supporting H2. Results examining the relationship between conformity orientation and perceived similarity on communal aspects of identity found no significant correlations, suggesting that H3 is not supported. To address Hypotheses 4 and 5, I consider the relationship between conversation orientation and the personal (H4) and enacted (H5) aspect of identity. Neither perceived similarity on the personal level of identity nor one's perceived enacted identity salience is significantly related to conversation orientation, thereby not providing support for Hypotheses 4 or 5.

To consider the role that media use might play, relationships between media use and the variables of interest were also considered (see Table 12). Media use was significantly and positively related to conformity orientation and perceived similarity on communal (personal) identity dimensions. Media use was not significantly associated with any other variables but may suggest that individuals from conformity orientated families are more likely to be heavy users of media. While this by itself does not clearly indicate a stronger or more meaningful relationship with media characters, it may suggest important differences in how they use media.

To further confirm the correlation findings and to test indirect relationships between FCP, one's identity salience, and perceived identity similarity with a parasocial figure, (assessing Hypotheses 2-4), a set of linear regression models was calculated. To test the hypotheses, I used Model 6 of the PROCESS v. 4.0 macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017). This model was chosen because it assesses the direct relationship of

family communication on perceived similarity in identity dimensions and can consider the role of multiple mediators on the direct effect, including the role of identity salience of oneself and salience of perceived identity of a parasocial figure. The model was run four times to assess Hypotheses 2-4. The model generates 95% confidence intervals following 5000 bootstrapped samples; intervals not including '0' are significant at  $p < .05$ .

The first model examined the role of conformity orientation on perceived similarity in relational aspects of identity mediated by relational identity salience and perceived relational identity salience of a parasocial figure, addressing H2. The direct effect of conformity orientation on predicting perceived similarity on relational aspects of identity was significant; direct effect = .20,  $SE = .06$ ,  $CI [.09 : .31]$ . I controlled for both media use and conversation orientation; the same relationships were significant when these controls were removed. There were no significant indirect relationships of conformity orientation on perceived similarity in relational aspects of identity via either one's relational identity salience or the perceived relational identity salience of a parasocial figure. The findings from the regression model partially support H2, suggesting that conformity orientation is related to perceived similarity with a parasocial figure on relational aspects of one's identity but this relationship is not significantly mediated by one's own relational identity salience or the salience of perceived identity of a parasocial figure.

To test Hypothesis 3, I separately examined the direct and indirect effect of conformity orientation on perceived similarity on the Communal (Personal) dimension of identity and perceived similarity on the Communal (Social) dimension of identity. Additionally, communal identity salience of both oneself and perceived communal

identity salience of a parasocial figure were included as mediators. Again, I controlled for media use and conversation orientation. Results found the direct effect of conformity orientation on predicting perceived similarity on communal (personal) aspects of identity was significant; direct effect = .11,  $SE = .05$ ,  $CI[.00 :.22]$ . There were no significant indirect relationships of conformity orientation on perceived similarity in communal (personal) aspects of identity via either one's communal identity salience or the perceived communal identity salience of a parasocial figure. There were no direct or indirect relationships between conformity orientation and perceived similarity on communal (social) aspects of identity. Therefore, the findings from the regression model partially support H3, suggesting that conformity orientation is related to perceived similarity with a parasocial figure on communal (personal) aspects of one's identity but this relationship is not significantly mediated by one's own relational identity salience or the salience of perceived identity of a parasocial figure nor does the relationship exist when considering perceived similarities in communal aspects that are social.

Finally, to test Hypothesis 4, I examined the direct and indirect effect of conversation orientation on perceived similarity on the personal dimension of identity. Personal identity salience of oneself and perceived personal identity salience of a parasocial figure were included as mediators. I controlled for media use and conformity orientation. Results found the direct effect of conversation orientation on predicting perceived similarity on personal aspects of identity was significant; direct effect = .10,  $SE = .05$ ,  $CI[.00 :.20]$ . There were no significant indirect relationships of conversation orientation on perceived similarity in personal aspects of identity via either one's personal identity salience or the perceived personal identity salience of a parasocial



figure. Therefore, the findings from the regression model partially supported H4, suggesting that conversation orientation is related to perceived similarity with a parasocial figure on personal aspects of one's identity.

Hypothesis 5 sought to examine the role of conversation orientation on perceived similarity on the enacted dimension of identity. However, the PSR and perceived similarity measure did not clearly establish an enacted factor, therefore I was unable to further test Hypothesis 5. Therefore, results did not support H5.

### ***Discussion***

Findings from Study 2 support results from Study 1 and pave the way for considerations about family communication and the role of perceived similarity of identity dimensions. Study 2 had two primary goals, the first was to confirm the PSR and identity salience measure from Study 1 and second, to determine how family communication, conceptualized as conversation and conformity orientation, is related to perceived similarity on identity dimensions with a chosen parasocial figure. Specifically, I predicted that conversation orientation would be positively associated with perceived similarity on personal and enacted dimensions of identity whereas conformity orientation would be positively associated with perceived similarity on relational and communal dimensions of identity.

Results from Study 2 confirm findings from Study 1 showing that respondents conceptualize themselves and their parasocial character using terms that are indicative of the same dimension of identity. Essentially, Study 2 confirms there is a positive correlation with one's identity dimension and the perceived identity dimension of their

parasocial character. Additionally, results from this study also validated the PSR and Identity Salience measure introduced and refined in Study 1.

Finally, the primary change from Study 1 to Study 2 was the inclusion of the FCP scales and an examination of the relationships between family communication pattern and parasocial relating. I hypothesized that conformity orientation would be positively and significantly related to perceived similarity in both relational and communal dimensions of identity to a media figure. Results found that indeed, conformity orientation was directly and positively related to perceived similarity in relational and communal aspects of identity. For conversation orientation, I expected this dimension of FCP would be positively and significantly related to perceived similarity in both personal identity and enacted identity to a media figure. While correlation results suggest that conversation orientation is not significantly related to either perceived similarity in personal or enacted identity, regression effects show a significant direct effect on perceived similarity in personal identity.

Overall, this suggests that there is something special about the way family communication relates to the ways we perceive ourselves as similar to a parasocial character. Conformity orientation relates to perceived similarity in relational and communal identity salience. Conformity orientation, broadly, is characterized by a commitment to family functioning and a focus on maintaining relationships. The relational aspect of identity emphasizes interactions, especially interpersonal interactions. The communal aspect of identity emphasizes group functioning. When taken together, this suggests that when individuals report a family communication pattern that is high in conformity orientation, they are more likely to also perceive

themselves as similar to media figures on relational aspects of identity. It is very possible that the focus on family and relationships in their FCP has shaped the way they perceive other interpersonal relationships and the ways in which similarities are understood. To better understand how family communication may shape identity and impact our understanding of media characters, Study 3 seeks to understand how family communication shapes the way we view new characters to understand how our relationships with media figures are formed.

### Study 3

When considering how individuals view their parasocial relationships, identity salience is an important factor. Results from Studies 1 and 2 show that we tend to think of ourselves and our parasocial figures in terms that are reflective of similar dimensions of identity. Study 2 considers the role of family communication and finds that for individuals from some families (i.e., those high in conformity orientation), they are more likely to indicate perceived similarity with a media figure in relational aspects of identity. One aspect of parasocial relationships that is not considered is how these relationships initially form and how initial impressions are made of media figures. Study 3 seeks to understand the initial perceptions of a media character by presenting respondents with an ambiguous character description and asking them to rate their perceived similarity to this character. The experiment will prime individuals on a particular family communication pattern to understand if this relates to their perceived similarities to the media figure using the same PSR and Identity Salience measure tested in Studies 1 and 2.

Studies 1 and 2 assessed the way parasocial relationships may be reflective of one's own identity. Both Study 1 and Study 2 showed that significant and positive correlations are present when examining the same identity dimension for oneself and a parasocial media figure. Through Studies 1 and 2, I also created and tested a measure of PSR and Identity Salience which attempted to measure perceived similarity on one of four aspects of identity as adapted from the CTI: personal, relational, communal (personal), and communal (social). Results show that the measure is similar to perceived homophily and that perceived similarity on the *relational* or *communal*

(*personal*) level of identity is significantly and positively related to conformity orientation and perceived similarity on the *personal* level of identity is significantly and positively related to conversation orientation. Study 3 offers a different method to assess how family communication, specifically salience of a particular family communication pattern, might shape perceived similarity with an ambiguous character.

Studies 1 and 2 assessed interaction with a parasocial character whereas Study 3 considers how we assess a new character. Parasocial relationships begin with a viewer connecting to a character on some specific element. This Study helps establish a more nuanced understanding of how these relationships might begin and how families might shape the way we view new characters and perceived similarities to these characters.

I expect that salience of a particular family communication pattern will shape the way individuals perceive the new media character in line with expectations from Study 2. Namely, I expect that individuals primed with the conversation orientation prompt will be more likely to perceive the media character as similar on personal dimensions and those primed with the conformity orientation prompt will be more likely to perceive the media character as similar on relational and communal aspects of identity.

### ***Method***

To obtain data for this study, an online survey was carried out in Spring/Summer 2021 at a large, public university on the west-coast. Institutional Review Board approval was received prior to data collection and the experiment utilized a convenience sample of undergraduate college students enrolled in an introductory Communication course.

The survey was optional, with extra-credit offered to any student who attempted the online survey. For the full instrument, see Appendix C.

### **Sample**

After eliminating responses from incomplete surveys and participants whose completion time for the survey suggested they did not read survey questions completely, the total number of respondents was 324. Of the 324 respondents, the mean age was 20.6 years (range: 18-25,  $SD = 1.53$ ), 25.6% identified as male ( $n = 83$ ), 73.5% identified as female ( $n = 238$ ) and three participants (1%) identified as *other*. Participants were asked to indicate their race with multiple choices possible. The majority of participants identified as Asian only (58.6%,  $n = 190$ ), 15.7% identified as White only ( $n = 51$ ), 12.7% ( $n = 41$ ) identified as Latino/Hispanic only, 2.5 % ( $n = 8$ ) identified as Black/African American only, four respondents (1.2%) identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 8% ( $n = 26$ ) selected two or more race categories, and the remaining 1.2% ( $n = 4$ ) identified as other.

### **Measures**

**Demographics and manipulation.** Respondents were presented with a few basic demographic questions, including one question asking respondents to indicate their preferred pronouns with options including *He/Him/His*, *She/Her/Hers*, *They/Them/Theirs*, and *Other*. After answering the demographic questions, respondents were presented with a short-answer portion designed to make family communication salient. The short answer question either asked the participant to consider a time when their parent discussed an important topic with them (conversation orientation), their

parent excluded them from a conversation (conformity orientation), or to describe a room in their childhood home (control). See Table 12 for the full Prompt and number of respondents presented with each prompt.

Participants were then asked to read a description of an ambiguous character called, “Riley.” The participant was presented with a character description that matched their own pronoun use, as indicated by their demographic response (*he/him/his* or *she/her* or *they/them/their*). The ambiguous character description was pre-tested prior to Study 3 to ensure that the character was not clearly perceived as good or bad but was rather neutral and would allow participants to connect to the character in a variety of ways. For character descriptions, see full survey in Appendix C.

Table 12: *FCP Manipulation and Prompts*

Manipulation	Prompt	Number of Respondents
Conversation Orientation Salient	<p>Many parents feel that all voices in a family matter, that difficult topics should be discussed amongst all family members, and that everyone's ideas should be considered. These parents may seem to care about what their children think and the ways they feel, especially when it comes to sensitive or difficult family topics. In these cases, parents may discuss important topics with their children.</p> <p>Think about a specific time when your parents discussed an important topic with you and you felt like they listened to your thoughts or feelings. Describe that incident here.</p>	N=104
Conformity Orientation Salient	<p>Many parents feel that they know what's best for their children and families, and believe that difficult topics should not be discussed among family members. They do not value input from children, and may seem to not care about what their children think and the ways they feel. In these cases, parents may not discuss important topics with their children.</p> <p>Think about a specific time when your parents refused to discuss a topic that you felt was important and you felt like they did not listen to your thoughts or feelings. Describe that incident here.</p>	N=109

Neutral/Control Group	<p>Most people have one primary home that they remember from when they grew up. This might be your childhood home or the home that your parents currently live in.</p> <p>Think about a specific room in that home that meant something to you. Describe that room here.</p>	N=111
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**PSR & Identity Salience.** To measure perceived similarity with an ambiguous character on dimensions of identity salience, I employed the PSR and Identity Salience measure created through Studies 1 and 2. The measure consists of four subscales, each one examining perceived similarity of the participant to their parasocial media figure on a different layer of identity, adapted from the CTI. For Study 3, this item was used to assess perceived similarity to the ambiguous character, Riley. The 24 items that converged in four iterations in Study 2 were retained for Study 3. Of the 24 items included in the overall measure, eight items specifically assessed the *perceived similarity in personal identity* factor, seven items made up the *perceived similarity in relational identity* factor, seven items made up the *perceived similarity in personal communal identity* factor; and two items made up the *perceived similarity in social communal identity* factor.

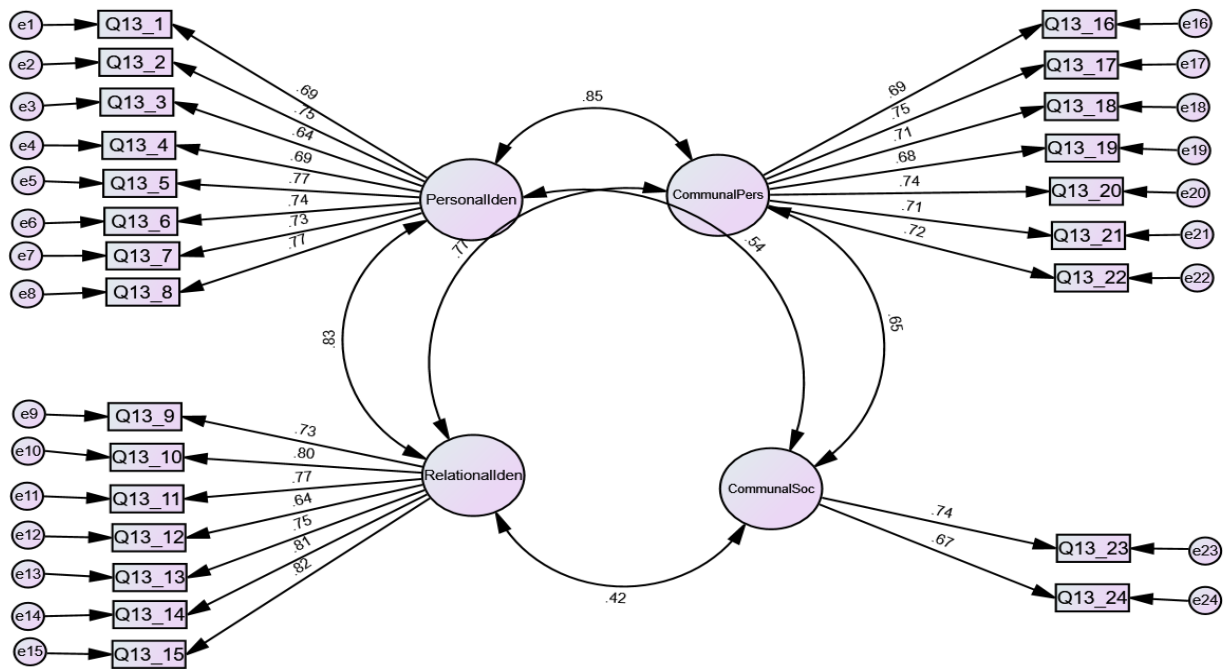
Items again asked participants to rate similarity to the character (Riley) on aspects of personal identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of how you see yourself”) and relational identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of how you care about other people”). Study 2 also considered personal communal identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of your social group”) and social communal identity (e.g., “are you more alike or more different to the character in terms of your religious affiliation”). Responses were anchored from 1 (Extremely Dissimilar) to 7 (Extremely Similar).



To ensure the model fit from Study 2 is applicable to Study 3, it was first necessary to validate the factor-loading of the PSR and Identity Salience measure before considering the relationship of the measure to family communication patterns. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS 26.0 (The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 27.0). The result for the chi-square goodness of fit test indicates that I should reject the null hypothesis of an exact-fitting model,  $\chi^2(246) = 507.12, p < .001$ . Both the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI: 0.924) and Comparative fit index (CFI: 0.937) are consistent with thresholds for an acceptable fitting model. The Root mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) value of 0.057 also indicates an acceptable fit (see Kline, 2016). Therefore, when considering the TLI, CFI, and RMSEA, results suggest that the model is an acceptable fit to the data. For full model, see Figure 2.

## **Figure 2**

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis: PSR & Identity Salience Measure, Study 3*



\*For numbered item descriptions, see Appendix E

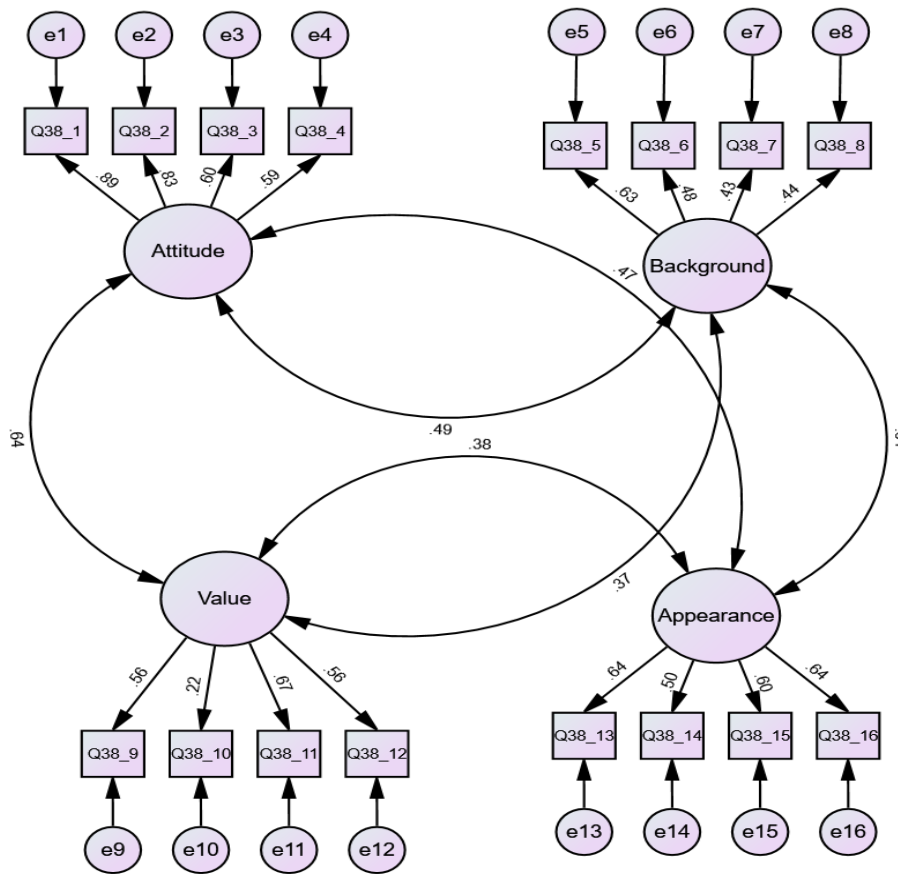
For Study 3, this resulted in four factors, eight items assessing *perceived similarity in personal identity* ( $\alpha = .90$ ,  $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ), seven items assessing *perceived similarity in relational identity* ( $\alpha = .90$ ,  $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ), seven items assessing *perceived similarity in communal (personal) identity* ( $\alpha = .88$ ,  $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ), and two items assessing *perceived similarity in communal (social) identity* ( $rs(313) = .49$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ).

**Perceived Homophily.** To again consider similarities and differences between the PSR and Identity Saliency measure, I included the Perceived Homophily scale (McCroskey et al., 1975). A CFA using the original four subscales was conducted to examine the fit of the original subscales to the Study 3 data. Results show that, like in Study 2,

Background Homophily does not fit in one factor and the item assessing similarity in sexual attitudes does not fit in any of the factors (see Figure 3 for full CFA model). Because a CFA must be done with three or more items per factor, a second CFA with only two factors produces invalid results. Rather, I examined the reliability of the five subscales used in Study 2. These five subscales were retained for Study 3.

**Figure 3**

*CFA: Perceived Homophily Scale, Study 3*



\*Item Q38\_10 was omitted from analyses due to low loading. For item descriptions, see Appendix C (Study 3 Experimental Survey, Q38 Perceived Homophily Block).

Four items constituted the *perceived homophily in attitude* dimension ( $\alpha = .81$ ,  $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ), two items made up the *perceived homophily in social background* dimension ( $rs(315) = .33$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ); two items made up the *perceived homophily in group background* dimension ( $rs(315) = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ); three items made up the *perceived homophily in value* dimension ( $\alpha = .63$ ,

$M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), and four items made up the *perceived homophily in appearance* dimension ( $\alpha = .69$ ,  $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ).

**Family Communication Patterns.** To examine FCP, participants completed the RFCP Instrument, a self-report questionnaire asking respondents to agree or disagree with statements about their family communication habits and patterns. For a full description of the RFCP, see Study 2. The measure consists of two subscales, one 11-item scale measuring conformity orientation ( $\alpha = .86$ ,  $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), and the other 15-item scale considering conversation orientation ( $\alpha = .92$ ,  $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ).

## **Results**

The primary goal of Study 3 was to examine whether family communication pattern salience shapes the perceived similarity between oneself and a new character. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions either a neutral condition or one that made a particular family communication pattern salient (conversation orientation or conformity orientation). Participants were then presented with an ambiguous character description and asked to rate their perceived similarity and homophily to the character, along with a measure of their own FCP. To consider similarities between oneself and the ambiguous character, I compared the effect of the three conditions on perception of the media character and also considered correlations between the variables of interest for those exposed to the conversation orientation condition and those exposed to the conformity orientation condition.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the effect of the three conditions on perceived similarity on the four identity dimensions and the five perceived homophily dimensions. Results suggested that there is a statistically significant difference in

perceived similarity in personal and relational identity dimensions between at least two of the experimental groups (conversation orientation prime, conformity orientation prime, and neutral prime).

Results showed a significant difference in perceived similarity in personal identity dimensions between at least two of the experimental groups ( $F(2, 309) = [3.066]$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) with Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons showing that the mean value of *perceived similarity in personal identity dimension* between oneself and the ambiguous character approached a significant difference between the conversation oriented primed group and the conformity orientated primed group ( $p = .07$ , 95% C.I. =  $[-.64, .02]$ ). These results suggest that for those exposed to the conformity orientation prompt, the average score for perceived similarity in personal identity ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) was significantly higher than for those in the conversation orientation primed group ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).

Results also showed a significant difference in perceived similarity in relational identity dimensions between at least two of the experimental groups ( $F(2, 310) = [3.29]$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) with Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons showing that the mean value of *perceived similarity in relational identity dimension* between oneself and the ambiguous character approached significance between the conversation oriented primed group and the neutral primed group ( $p = .06$ , 95% C.I. =  $[-.66, .01]$ ). These results suggested that for those exposed to the neutral orientation prompt, the average score for perceived similarity in relational identity ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) was significantly higher than for those in the conversation orientation primed group ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ).

There was no statistically significant difference in scores of other variables between any of the groups. This suggests that when conversation orientation is primed, individuals are less likely to perceive themselves as similar on personal aspects of identity to an ambiguous character than those exposed to a conformity orientation prime. Additionally, individuals exposed to a conversation orientation prime are less likely to perceive themselves as similar on relational aspects of identity to an ambiguous character than those exposed to a neutral prime.

To consider differences between the variables as a consequence of FCP prime, I also examined correlations between the variables of interest by condition. That is, correlations for the variables of interest were examined when conversation orientation was primed and when conformity orientation was primed. Correlations between the variables were fairly similar in both conditions with a few notable differences.

When conversation orientation was primed (i.e., respondents were exposed to the condition asking them to consider a time when their parents asked for their opinion/advice), the FCP measure of conformity orientation was significantly and positively correlated with attitude homophily ( $r(98) = .34, p < .001$ ), perceived similarity on personal ( $r(97) = .39, p < .001$ ), relational ( $r(97) = .38, p < .001$ ), and communal (personal) ( $r(98) = .31, p < .001$ ) identity dimensions. These variables were neither significantly correlated in the conformity oriented condition nor in the neutral condition.

When conformity orientation was primed (i.e., respondents were exposed to the condition asking them to consider a time when their parents refused to discuss an important topic), the FCP measure of conversation orientation was significantly and positively correlated with perceived similarity on the communal (social) identity dimension ( $r(108) = .37, p < .001$ ). These variables were slightly correlated in the

neutral condition ( $r_s(106) = .23, p < .05$ ) and were not correlated in the conversation oriented condition.

The effects of the one-way ANOVA suggest that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean score of perceived similarity in personal identity between the conversation orientation primed group and the conformity oriented primed group. Additionally, there is a difference in the mean score of perceived similarity in relational identity between the conversation oriented group and the neutral condition. Correlations also suggest that the relationships between the variables may change as a function of how individuals are primed to think of others.

### ***Discussion***

Study 3 sought to extend research from Studies 1 and 2 by considering whether conformity and conversation orientation can increase perceived similarities in particular dimensions of identity with a new character. Results from Studies 1 and 2 suggest that the way we perceive ourselves is related to how we perceive a parasocial character (see Tables 5 & 11 for correlations between self-identity and perceived self-identity of a parasocial figure). Further, Study 2 found that conformity orientation is related to perceived similarity in relational identity dimension. Study 3 finds that differences in how FCP is primed does have an effect on some aspects of identity and the relationships between specific identity dimensions and FCP. Namely, Study 3 finds that the mean score for perceived similarity in personal identity is higher in the conformity orientation prime condition than the conversation orientation condition and that perceived similarity in relational identity is lower when conversation orientation is primed than in a neutral



condition. These results suggest that priming family communication patterns may shape the way we perceive ourselves as similar to new characters.

It is important to note that Study 3 found some significant differences in correlations between the variables of interest when looking at those exposed to the conversation orientation prime and those exposed to the conformity orientation prime. The results show that when considering those exposed to the conversation orientation prime, conformity orientation is significantly related to a number of identity dimensions. Study 2 did not find any significant relationship between conformity orientation in personal or communal dimensions of identity, suggesting there may be some inherent differences in assessing perceived similarity between a parasocial character and a new media figure. The relationship between the media figure and respondent in Study 3 might be more closely related to a construct like impression formation rather than perceived similarity.

Overall, Study 3 provides new insight into the possible relationship between family communication and interpersonal interaction with media figures. Results of this study alone may not advance the research on parasocial relating as the subject of perceived similarity is not a known media figure, but results surely suggest some important interactions for family communication research. By highlighting the ability of FCPs to shape our perceived similarity with others, including known and new media figures, we shed light on how new relationships may form.

## **Overall Discussion and Conclusion**

As humans, we seek interpersonal relationships with others. The relationships we build with media figures may provide many of the same benefits that interpersonal relationships provide (e.g., Rubin & Perse, 1987). Parasocial relationships may build as we form deep, albeit often one-sided, connections with media figures. Research on parasocial relating suggests that these relationships can have implications for how we view others and the way we learn to form other types of relationships. Understanding how we perceive parasocial relationships and the way family shapes perception of others can help fill gaps in understanding interpersonal relationships broadly as they relate to identity formation.

The studies included in this examination have three primary objectives. The first is to determine how one's own sense of self is related to the way we describe our favorite media figure, a proxy for a parasocial figure. Second, we created a scale of perceived identity similarity with a parasocial figure and sought to validate the scale dimensions in line with CTI research. And finally, we used both a survey and experiment to consider if and how family communication, specifically conversation and conformity orientation, shapes parasocial relating through identity salience.

### **Objective one: Identity salience and parasocial**

The first objective of the research included in this examination was to consider the relationship of self-concept or identity and the perceived self-concept of a parasocial character. Based on the Communication Theory of Identity (Hecht, 2015), it was expected that the way an individual defines themselves may be related to the way they define a character with whom they have a parasocial relationship. That is, an individual

will be more likely to define themselves and their parasocial character using the same CTI dimension(s) of identity: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. Using an adapted version of the twenty-statements-test to examine one's own sense of identity as well as perceived identity of a favorite media character, high inter-coder reliability suggests that indeed, the salient identities of oneself shape the ways we view parasocial figures.

There is a strong relationship between the way we describe ourselves and the way we describe a parasocial figure. For example, a respondent might describe themselves as a mother and sister and describe their favorite parasocial character as a husband and friend. For this respondent, the relational aspect of identity is salient for both themselves and their parasocial media figure. Results from Studies 1 and 2 suggest that personal identity is most highly correlated with perceived personal identity of a parasocial figure. This pattern is consistent for enacted, relational, and communal identities as well, suggesting that while we see ourselves through a variety of identity lenses, the way we most see ourselves is most highly correlated to the same perceived identity dimension of a parasocial figure.

### **Objective two: PSR and identity salience scale**

The second objective is to create and validate a scale of parasocial relating and identity salience. The original 32 items tested in Study 1 were created using constructs from the CTI to measure perceived similarity to a media figure on the personal, enacted, relational, and communal dimensions. After examining the four-factor structure, the interpretation of the factors changed such that the *enacted* grouping was dropped and two factors were established to consider communal identities. The 24 items retained

from Study 1 were re-tested in Study 2 and a confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the four dimensions established in Study 1. The final 24-item measure includes eight items assessing *perceived similarity in personal identity*, seven items assessing *perceived similarity in relational identity*, seven items assessing *perceived similarity in communal (personal) identity*, and two items assessing *perceived similarity in communal (social) identity*. The created scale was not significantly related to the ways that individuals described themselves through the TST measure, but was significantly related to measures of perceived homophily in ways that suggest it is assessing an aspect of parasocial relating.

Overall, the studies included in this examination provide insight into how individuals may perceive themselves as similar to their parasocial figure. There is not enough evidence to fully validate the measure, but the four subscales included are reliable in their measurement. Future examinations should compare the subscales to other measures of homophily and parasocial relating in order to refine the items and clearly measure PSR as a function of identity salience.

### **Objective three: Family communication and media-figure relationships**

Finally, the third objective sought to examine the relationship that family communication may have on parasocial relationships by shaping identity salience and perceived similarity in identity dimensions. To examine the relationship of family communication and parasocial relationships, those relationships with media figures, Study 2 asked respondents to indicate their perceived similarity to their favorite media figure and indicate their FCP via scales assessing conversation and conformity

orientations. Study 2 confirmed that conformity orientation is significantly and positively related to perceived similarity in relational identity dimensions with a parasocial figure.

To extend the findings from Study 2, Study 3 sought to determine how family communication might impact perceptions of a new media figure. Study 3 compared conversation and conformity conditions and their effect on perceived similarity to an ambiguous character. In particular, this study sought to shed light on how family communication, broadly, might shape the way we form initial impressions about new media characters in an effort to better understand how we perceive media figures with whom we form deep parasocial relationships. Study 3 found that when conversation orientation is made salient, conformity orientation is positively and significantly related to perceived similarity on personal, relational, and communal (personal) dimensions of identity. When conformity orientation is made salient, conversation orientation is positively and significantly related to perceived similarity on communal (social) dimensions of identity. This is related to findings that perceived similarity in personal identity is higher for individuals primed by conformity orientation than conversation orientation and relational identity is lower for those primed by conversation orientation rather than a neutral prime.

When taken together, this suggests that indeed, family communication does impact the way we perceive media characters and our perception of how similar characters are to ourselves. The findings from Study 3 are not in line with the findings from Study 2 in that Study 2 did not find any significant relationship between conformity orientation and perceived similarity in personal or communal identity. This suggests that perhaps one's initial formation of media figures is based on different considerations that

our ultimate parasocial relationships. That is, as we develop deeper relationships with media figures, we perceive different similarities to media figures.

## **Conclusion and Limitations**

The three studies included in this examination advance our understanding of both parasocial relationships and family communication in nuanced ways. There are a variety of considerations that shape our interpersonal relationships. Research on face-to-face communication has examined the role of family communication but this has not extended to research on parasocial relationships. The studies included herein consider both direct effects of family communication on parasocial relating as well as the way family communication shapes our perceived similarity to parasocial characters via identity salience.

Findings suggest that respondents tend to describe themselves and their parasocial media figure using terms that suggest the same dimension of identity salience. This suggests that we see parasocial figures in the same way we see ourselves. This may mean that we seek out figures who are similar to ourselves or that we perceive the figure as similar, but either way, it suggests the importance of identity salience in our parasocial relationships.

We also found that respondents from high conformity oriented families are more likely to report perceived similarity on relational aspects of identity. This suggests that for those families in which family functioning is stressed, individuals are more likely to perceive their parasocial figure as similar in terms that stress interdependence and relationships with others. Initial reactions to media figures are less clear as family communication salience seems to shift the way communication patterns relate to

identity dimensions but not in ways that are clearly connected to the literature. Further research in this area is needed to fully understand how initial impressions of media figures might shape subsequent parasocial relating. Future studies should consider how family communication shapes initial reactions to a media figure and how this changes over time as viewers learn more about the figure.

The studies included herein have a number of strengths including high inter-coder reliability for the self-reported identity and perceived identity of a parasocial character measures; and a large sample size for instrument validation, there are also several weaknesses that should be addressed in a follow-up study. First, the instrument for PSR and Identity salience created in this study does not include an enacted layer of identity and the subscales created are not clearly conceptually different from existing homophily scales. The enacted layer of identity assesses behavior or planned behavior and may not be appropriately measured by asking respondents about their perceived similarity rather than action. A future examination should consider how to measure behavior of an individual as well as behavior of the parasocial character to assess perceived similarity in the enacted dimension of identity. Additionally, it is important to include nuanced measures of parasocial relating to ensure the validity of the scale items and also add items to bolster the 2-item subscale of perceived similarity on the communal-social dimension of identity. Future testing should consider other items to bolster the reliability of the subscale. Finally, the majority of respondents described themselves as Asian, potentially biasing the results. Identity salience can be strongly tied to a variety of factors, including demographic factors like place of origin or ethnicity. Future examinations should strive for greater sample diversity.

The family unit is one of the primary socializing forces for interpersonal relationships. This extends beyond our personal relationships and can also be seen in our relationships with media figures. Family communication patterns can shape the way we form these parasocial relationships and can also shape the way we perceive ourselves and media figures in ways that impact these relationships. Specifically, we find that our sense-of-self shapes the way we see media figures and that family communication, specifically being from a high conformity family, is related to the way we perceive similarities between ourselves and parasocial figures.



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## Appendix A: Study 1 Survey

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### Start of Block: Informed Consent

Q11 Young Adults' Media Use Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This questionnaire is about your experiences using media, specifically television, film, and online content, and some of the factors connected to your viewing. You will be asked some questions about yourself, others, and how you see yourself in relation to others. You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. Participation in this study is voluntary and you should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be participating in an online survey in which you will be asked to read a couple of instructions and answer a few questions related to instructions you just read. Participation in this study is voluntary and will take 30 minutes or less. After consenting to participate, you may exit the survey early without penalty or credit. As you complete this questionnaire, keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Just try to answer each question as honestly as possible. Think carefully about each question for a moment, and then answer it to the best of your ability. If you have any questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher at UC Davis, Supreet Mann, Department of Communication, 177 Kerr Hall, UC Davis, Davis, CA, 95616, Email: [sumann@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sumann@ucdavis.edu) If you do not understand, or are uncomfortable with any question, please simply leave it blank. If you do not want to complete the questionnaire, you can stop at any time without any penalty. After completing the survey, you will be redirected via a separate link to another Qualtrics survey where you will provide your email address and the name of the course for which you want to receive extra credit. The unique code does not contain any personal information and the responses from this survey do not link to you when receiving the extra credit. Additionally, the records of this study will be kept private in a locked file in a locked office and only the investigators will have access to the records. We will not include any information that makes it possible to identify participants in any type of report that we might publish.

Researcher and Title:

Supreet Mann, Ph.D. Student, Communication. 177 Kerr Hall, Davis, CA, 95616. [sumann@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sumann@ucdavis.edu)

### End of Block: Informed Consent

---

### Start of Block: TST

TST - You Below are ten numbered blanks. Please write ten answers to the question, "Who am I?" in these blanks. Please provide ten different answers and answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself- not someone else. Write your answers in the order that they occur to you. Do not worry about logic or importance.



WHO AM I?

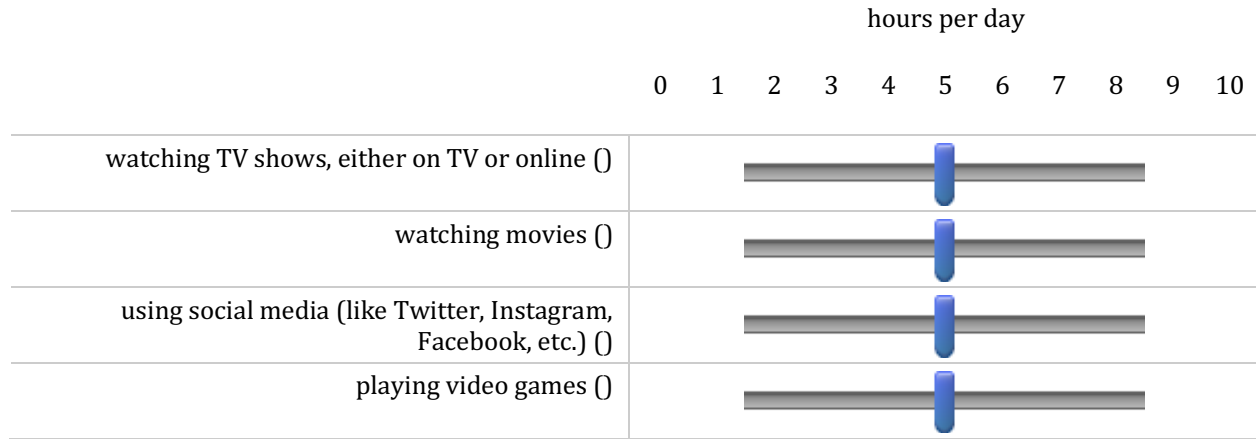
- 1. I am... (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. I am... (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. I am... (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. I am... (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. I am... (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. I am... (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. I am... (7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. I am... (8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. I am... (9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. I am... (10) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: TST

---

Start of Block: Media Use

Q12 On average, how many hours a day do you spend:



Q18 Of the television shows you have seen in the last year (not necessarily new shows), which three were your favorite?

- Show #1 (1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Show #2 (2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Show #3 (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q19 Of all the movies you have seen in the last year, which were your three favorite?

- Movie #1 (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- Movie #2 (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- Movie #3 (3) \_\_\_\_\_

**End of Block: Media Use**

---

**Start of Block: Persona**

Q1 A persona is a role or character that someone presents to others. It is often how someone, real or fictitious, is perceived. Everyone we see in the media, including characters in television shows and movies, celebrities, and pop-culture figures, are presenting a certain personality as part of their persona.

Most people have a favorite media persona from TV, film, or pop culture. Which media persona would you say is your favorite? This might be your favorite celebrity or favorite character from a television show or movie.

\_\_\_\_\_

**End of Block: Persona**

---

**Start of Block: TST - Character**

TST Character In relation to your favorite celebrity/character, [\\${Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue}](#), how might they answer the question, "Who am I?" in these blanks. Please provide ten different answers and answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself- not someone else. Put yourself in the shoes of [\\${Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue}](#) and answer as you think they might answer. Write your answers in the order that they occur to you. Do not worry about logic or importance.

WHO AM I?

- 1. I am... (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. I am... (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. I am... (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. I am... (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. I am... (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. I am... (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. I am... (7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. I am... (8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. I am... (9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. I am... (10) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: TST - Character

---

Start of Block: PSR and identity salience



Q2 In relation to your favorite celebrity/character,  $\{Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue\}$ , would you say you are more similar or dissimilar to  $\{Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue\}$  in terms of...

	Extremely Dissimilar (1)	Very Dissimilar (2)	Somewhat Dissimilar (3)	Neither Similar nor Dissimilar (4)	Somewhat Similar (5)	Very Similar (6)	Extremely Similar (7)
... how you see yourself (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your unique personality (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the characteristics which make you unique (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your individuality (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your personality (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your self-concept (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your world view (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your social system (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you outwardly act on your beliefs (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you express yourself (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you respond in certain situations (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how your behavior corresponds with your beliefs (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how others see you (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you act in a situation (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your behavior (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

... how you behave/act (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you care about other people (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you act towards other people (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your relationship with those around you (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the relationships you have with your family/friends (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your role in a group (21)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you take care of others (22)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you treat others (23)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you interact with others (24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your membership in various groups (25)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your background (nationality, ethnicity, etc.) (26)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your religious affiliation (27)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your similarities to those in your group(s) (28)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your social group (29)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a group stereotype (30)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

... a common group quality (31)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a communal identity (32)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: PSR and identity salience

---

Start of Block: Demographics

Q8 These last few questions tell us about those taking our survey. These questions will not be used to identify you in any way and responses will be kept confidential.

-----

Q10 What is your age, in years, as of today:

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

Q12 What is your race? (Multiple answers possible)

- White (1)
  - Black or African American (2)
  - American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
  - Asian (4)
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
  - Latino/Hispanic (6)
  - Multiracial/Other (7)
-

Q14 With which gender do you most identify

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q16 What is your sexual orientation

- Gay (1)
- Lesbian (2)
- Bisexual (3)
- Heterosexual / Straight (4)
- Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

**End of Block: Demographics**

---

**Start of Block: Thanks**

Q12 Thank you for your participation in this survey. The next screen will provide you with a unique identifying code and a link to another survey so you can input your name and the course for which you would like to receive extra credit. Your name and course information will not be attached to any of your responses from this survey.

**End of Block: Thanks**

---



## Appendix B: Study 2 Survey

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### Start of Block: Informed Consent

Q11

**Young Adults' Media Use and Family Communication** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This questionnaire is about your experiences using media, specifically television, film, and online content, and some of the factors connected to your viewing. You will be asked some questions about yourself, others, and how you see yourself in relation to others. You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be participating in an online survey in which you will be asked to read a couple of instructions and answer a few questions related to instructions you just read. Participation in this study is voluntary and will take 30 minutes or less. After consenting to participate, you may exit the survey early without penalty or credit.

Research sometimes requires that information regarding its purpose not be shared with the research participants because its knowledge could impact the results of the research. Note that none of the aspects of the research being withheld are reasonably expected to affect your willingness to participate. While the tasks you will be asked to perform for this research have been explained, the full intent of the research will not be provided until the completion of the study. At that time you will have the opportunity to ask questions, including about the purpose of the study and the procedures used, and withdraw your data if you so choose.

As you complete this questionnaire, keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Just try to answer each question as honestly as possible. Think carefully about each question for a moment, and then answer it to the best of your ability. The data you provide will be anonymously banked for future use. If you have any questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher at UC Davis, Supreet Mann, Department of Communication, 177 Kerr Hall, UC Davis, Davis, CA, 95616, Email: [sumann@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sumann@ucdavis.edu) If you do not understand, or are uncomfortable with any question, please simply leave it blank. If you do not want to complete the questionnaire, you can stop at any time without any penalty. After completing the survey, you will be redirected via a separate link to another Qualtrics survey where you will provide your email address and the name of the course for which you want to receive extra credit. The unique code does not contain any personal information and the responses from this survey do not link to you when receiving the extra credit. Additionally, the records of this study will be kept private in a locked file in a locked office and only the investigators will have access to the records. We will not include any information that makes it possible to identify participants in any type of report that we might publish.

Researcher and Title:

Supreet Mann, Ph.D. Student, Communication. 177 Kerr Hall, Davis, CA, 95616. [sumann@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sumann@ucdavis.edu)

### End of Block: Informed Consent

---

### Start of Block: TST

TST - You Below are ten numbered blanks. Please write ten answers to the question, "Who am I?" in these blanks. Please provide ten different answers and answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself- not someone else. Write your answers in the order that they occur to you. Do not worry about logic or importance.

WHO AM I?

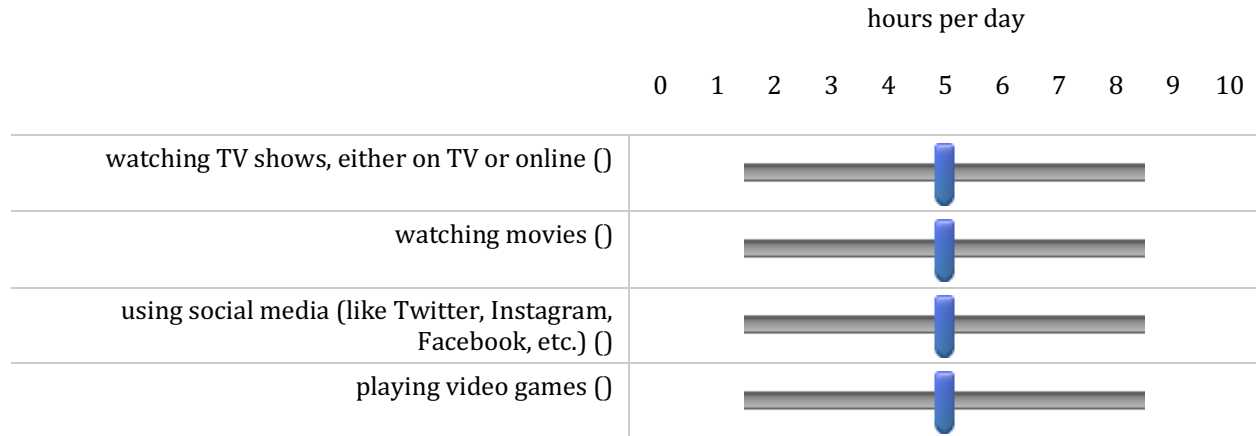
- 1. I am... (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. I am... (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. I am... (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. I am... (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. I am... (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. I am... (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. I am... (7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. I am... (8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. I am... (9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. I am... (10) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: TST

---

Start of Block: Media Use

Q12 On average, how many hours a day do you spend:



Q18 Of the television shows you have seen in the last year (not necessarily new shows), which three were your favorite?

- Show #1 (1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Show #2 (2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Show #3 (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q19 Of all the movies you have seen in the last year, which were your three favorite?

- Movie #1 (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- Movie #2 (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- Movie #3 (3) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Media Use

---

Start of Block: Persona

Q1 A persona is a role or character that someone presents to others. It is often how someone, real or fictitious, is perceived. Everyone we see in the media, including characters in television shows and movies, celebrities, and pop-culture figures, are presenting a certain personality as part of their persona.

Most people have a favorite media persona from TV, film, or pop culture. Which media persona would you say is your favorite? This might be your favorite celebrity or favorite character from a television show or movie.

\_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Persona

---

Start of Block: TST - Character

TST Character In relation to your favorite celebrity/character, [\\${Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue}](#), how might **they** answer the question, "Who am I?" in these blanks. Please provide ten different answers and answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself- not someone else. Put yourself in the shoes of [\\${Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue}](#) and answer as you think they might answer. Write your answers in the order that they occur to you. Do not worry about logic or importance.

WHO AM I?

- 1. I am... (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. I am... (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. I am... (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. I am... (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. I am... (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. I am... (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. I am... (7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. I am... (8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. I am... (9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. I am... (10) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: TST - Character

---

Start of Block: Perceived Homophily Scale

Q17 On the scales below, indicate your feelings about your favorite celebrity/character, [\\${Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue}](#). Numbers 1 and 7 indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers 2 and 6 indicate a strong feeling. Numbers 3 and 5 indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number 4 indicates that you are unsure or undecided. There are no right or wrong answers.

[\\${Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue}](#)...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Is like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is unlike me
Is different from me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is similar to me
Thinks like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not think like me
Doesn't behave like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Behaves like me
Has status like mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has status different from mine
Is from a different social class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is from the same social class
Is culturally different	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is culturally similar
Has an economic situation like mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not have an economic situation like mine
Has morals like mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has morals unlike mine
Has sexual attitudes unlike mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has sexual attitudes like mine
Treats people like I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Doesn't treat people like I do
Doesn't share my values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Shares my values
Looks similar to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Looks different from me
Is the same size I am	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is a different size than I am
Has an appearance unlike mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has an appearance like mine
Doesn't resemble me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Resembles me

End of Block: Perceived Homophily Scale

---

Start of Block: PSR and identity salience



Q2 In relation to your favorite celebrity/character,  $\{Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue\}$ , would you say you are more similar or dissimilar to  $\{Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue\}$  in terms of...

	Extremely Dissimilar (1)	Very Dissimilar (2)	Somewhat Dissimilar (3)	Neither Similar nor Dissimilar (4)	Somewhat Similar (5)	Very Similar (6)	Extremely Similar (7)
... how you see yourself (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your unique personality (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the characteristics which make you unique (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your individuality (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your personality (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your self-concept (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you express yourself (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you act in a situation (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you care about other people (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you act towards other people (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your relationship with those around you (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the relationships you have with your family/friends (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you take care of others (22)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you treat others (23)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



... how you interact with others (24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your membership in various groups (25)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your similarities to those in your group(s) (28)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your social group (29)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a group stereotype (30)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a common group quality (31)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a communal identity (32)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your social system (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your background (nationality, ethnicity, etc.) (26)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your religious affiliation (27)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: PSR and identity salience

---

Start of Block: Parasocial Breakup

Q18 If your favorite media personality,  $\{Q1/ChoiceTextEntryValue\}$ , were taken off the air or removed from my favorite show/movie, I would...

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Feel lonely (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch another program with the same personality (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Become less excited about watching TV/Movies (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch reruns or taped episodes of the show in which the personality appears (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel like I lost a close friend (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel sad (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Try to do something to change the situation (e.g., write a letter to the network/broadcaster) (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Miss my favorite personality (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Find a different personality to like (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Look for information about my favorite personality in other places (e.g., newspapers, Internet, etc.) (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel disappointed (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Try to meet my favorite personality some other way (e.g., face to face, in movies, shows, etc.) (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feel angry (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Parasocial Breakup

---

Start of Block: Block 11

**Q20 For the following questions, think about your family and family interactions that took place when you lived at home during childhood and adolescence. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

End of Block: Block 11

---

Start of Block: Block 8

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
In my family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents often say things like, "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions." (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my home, my parents usually have the last word. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents feel it is important that they are the boss. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In my family,  
we often talk  
about our  
plans and  
hopes for the  
future. (7)

My parents  
sometimes  
become  
irritated with  
my views if  
they are  
different  
from theirs.  
(8)

I usually tell  
my parents  
what I am  
thinking  
about things.  
(9)

If my parents  
don't approve  
of it, they  
don't want to  
know about  
it. (10)

My parents  
encourage  
me to  
challenge  
their ideas  
and beliefs.  
(11)

I can tell my  
parents  
almost  
anything.  
(12)

When I am at  
home, I am  
expected to  
obey my  
parents'  
rules. (13)

We often talk  
as a family  
about things  
we have done  
during the  
day. (14)

My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.

(15)

My parents often say things like, "You'll know better when you grow up."

(16)

My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.

(17)

My parents often say things like, "My ideas are right and you should not question them." (18)

My parents often say things like, "You should always look at both sides of an issue."

(19)

My parents like to hear my opinion, even when I don't agree with them.

(20)

My parents often say things like, "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."

(21)

In my family we often talk about feelings and emotions.

(22)

My parents often say things like, "A child should not argue with adults."

(23)

I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.

(24)

My parents often say things like, "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad."

(25)

My parents encourage me to express my feelings.

(26)

**End of Block: Block 8**

---

**Start of Block: Demographics**

Q8 These last few questions tell us about those taking our survey. These questions will not be used to identify you in any way and responses will be kept confidential.

-----

Q10 What is your age, in years, as of today:

\_\_\_\_\_

-----

Q12 What is your race? (Multiple answers possible)

- White (1)
  - Black or African American (2)
  - American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
  - Asian (4)
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
  - Latino/Hispanic (6)
  - Multiracial/Other (7)
- 

Q14 With which gender do you most identify

- Male (1)
  - Female (2)
  - Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q16 What is your sexual orientation

- Gay (1)
- Lesbian (2)
- Bisexual (3)
- Heterosexual / Straight (4)
- Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

**End of Block: Demographics**

---

**Start of Block: Thanks**



Q12 Thank you for your participation in this research study.

The goals of this study were withheld at the beginning of the survey to avoid swaying your answers and reactions. The goal of this study is to examine relationships between the way your family communicates and your relationships with media figures/characters. We are interested in similarities that you perceive between yourself and your favorite media figure and the degree to which those similarities may be related to how your family interacts and the communication structure they utilize within the home. Please do not share the true nature of this study with others as it may influence their response(s).

I hope you enjoyed your experience. Please feel free to contact the primary researcher, Supreet Mann, if you have any questions about the nature of the study or if you would like to withdraw your response. All responses will be anonymously banked for analysis.

**The next screen will provide you with a unique identifying code and a link to another survey so you can input your name and the course for which you would like to receive extra credit. Your name and course information will not be attached to any of your responses from this survey.**

Supreet Mann  
Department of Communication, 177 Kerr Hall, UC Davis, Davis, CA, 95616,  
Email: [sumann@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sumann@ucdavis.edu)

**End of Block: Thanks**

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## Appendix C: Study 3 Experimental Survey

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### Start of Block: Description of Study

Q28

**Character Study** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study! This questionnaire will first ask you to describe a specific situation and will then provide you with a character description for a new book. We ask that you read the description multiple times for a detailed understanding of the character. After you have read the character description, you will answer a number of questions to assess how you felt about the character, followed by other questions about yourself.

Research sometimes requires that information regarding its purpose not be shared with the research participants because its knowledge could impact the results of the research. Note that none of the aspects of the research being withheld are reasonably expected to affect your willingness to participate. While the tasks you will be asked to perform for this research have been explained, the full intent of the research will not be provided until the completion of the study. At that time you will have the opportunity to ask questions, including about the purpose of the study and the procedures used, and withdraw your data if you so choose.

Participation in this study is voluntary and should take 30 minutes or less to complete. After consenting to participate, you may exit the survey early without penalty or credit.

As you complete this questionnaire, keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Just try to answer each question as honestly as possible. Think carefully about each question for a moment, and then answer it to the best of your ability. The data you provide will be anonymously banked for future use. If you have any questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher at UC Davis, Supreet Mann, Department of Communication, 177 Kerr Hall, UC Davis, Davis, CA, 95616, Email: [sumann@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sumann@ucdavis.edu) If you do not understand, or are uncomfortable with any question, please simply leave it blank. If you do not want to complete the questionnaire, you can stop at any time without any penalty or credit. After completing the survey, you will be redirected via a separate link to another Qualtrics survey where you will provide your email address and the name of the course for which you want to receive extra credit. The unique code does not contain any personal information and the responses from this survey do not link to you when receiving the extra credit. Please note that you MUST complete this separate survey for any extra credit to be awarded. Additionally, the records of this study will be kept private and only the investigators will have access to the records. We will not include any information that makes it possible to identify participants in any type of report that we might publish. Thanks for your participation!

Researcher and Title:

Supreet Mann, Ph.D. Student, Communication. 177 Kerr Hall, Davis, CA, 95616. [sumann@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sumann@ucdavis.edu)

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### End of Block: Description of Study

### Start of Block: Demographics

**Q24 These first few questions tell us about those taking our survey. These questions will not be used to identify you in any way and responses will be kept confidential.**

---

Q26 What is your age, in years, as of today:

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q28 What is your race? (Multiple answers possible)

- White (1)
  - Black or African American (2)
  - American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
  - Asian (4)
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
  - Latino/Hispanic (6)
  - Multiracial/Other (7)
- 

Q30 With which gender do you most identify

- Male (1)
  - Female (2)
  - Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_
-

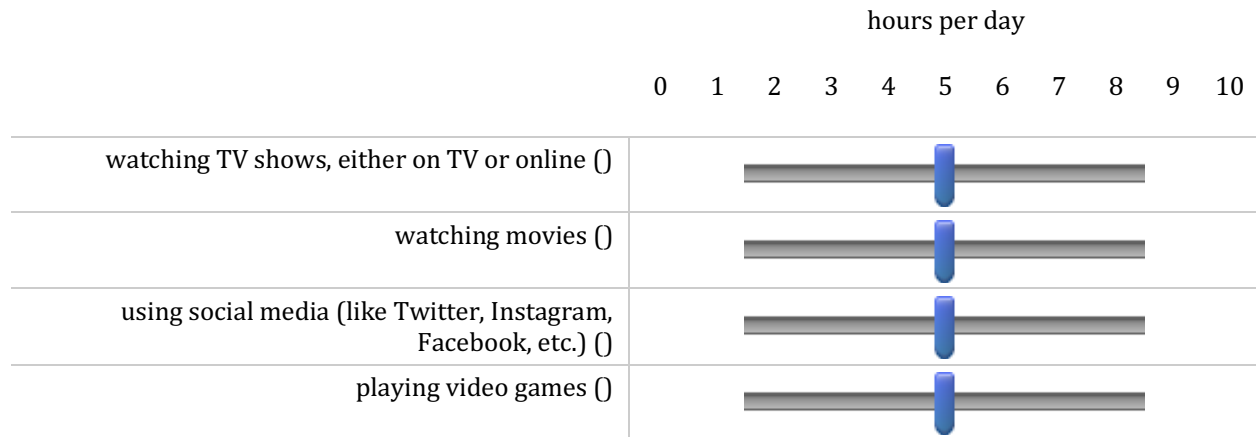
Q32 What are your preferred pronouns

- He/Him/His (1)
  - She/Her/Hers (2)
  - They/Them/Theirs (3)
  - Other (4)
- 

Q34 What is your sexual orientation

- Gay (1)
  - Lesbian (2)
  - Bisexual (3)
  - Heterosexual / Straight (4)
  - Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q36 On average, how many hours a day do you spend:



End of Block: Demographics

---

Start of Block: Family Salience Intro

Q28

On the following page, you will be presented with a prompt that asks you to think about your

**childhood and/or past experience. Please read the prompt, think about your response and answer in detail.**

End of Block: Family Salience Intro

---

Start of Block: Conv Style Salient



Q1 Many parents feel that all voices in a family matter, that difficult topics should be discussed amongst all family members, and that everyone's ideas should be considered. These parents may seem to care about what their children think and the ways they feel, especially when it comes to sensitive or difficult family topics. In these cases, parents may discuss important topics with their children.

Think about a specific time when your parents discussed an important topic with you and you felt like they listened to your thoughts or feelings. Describe that incident here.

---

---

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---



Q19 During this incident, how did you feel?

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---

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---

End of Block: Conv Style Salient

---

Start of Block: Conf Style Salient



Q3 Many parents feel that they know what's best for their children and families, and believe that difficult topics should not be discussed among family members. They do not value input from children, and may seem to not care about what their children think and the ways they feel. In these cases, parents may not discuss important topics with their children.

Think about a specific time when your parents refused to discuss a topic that you felt was important and you felt like they did not listen to your thoughts or feelings. Describe that incident here.

---

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Q20 During this incident, how did you feel?

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End of Block: Conf Style Salient

---

Start of Block: Neutral Salient



Q4 Most people have one primary home that they remember from when they grew up. This might be your childhood home or the home that your parents currently live in. Think about a specific room in that home that meant something to you. Describe that room here.

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---

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---



Q21 How does this room make you feel?

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End of Block: Neutral Salient

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Start of Block: Character Intro

Q31

**On the next page, you will be presented with a description of a character for a new book. This description is brief, but you are encouraged to read the description several times to best understand the main character, Riley.**

Note: When presented with the character **description** on the next page, you will not be able to press "next" for 45 seconds to ensure that you read the description carefully. You may spend longer than 45 seconds reading the description, if needed. Going to another page and coming back to the survey during this time will restart the timer.

End of Block: Character Intro

---

Start of Block: They/Them

Q40 Timing

First Click (1)

Last Click (2)

Page Submit (3)

Click Count (4)

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---

Q42 On the surface, Riley seems to have a lot going for them. Riley owns some nice things, and a lot of people seem to think Riley's a good person, despite Riley's tendency for being cold. Their unassuming charm and unorthodox good looks draw people to Riley. But Riley sometimes wonders if it's just superficial--do they really understand who they are?

It hasn't always been smooth sailing for Riley. They have had a couple relationships that seemed like they might get serious in the past, but Riley's generally been unlucky in love. Riley would like to find a long-term romantic relationship at some point, but for now, they're focused on building relationships with their friends and family. Some people feel that Riley has their guard up but Riley does their best to seem open and friendly towards others.

Riley tries to impress people, but some people aren't fooled. Riley's family and friends feel they're a good person, but are unsure if they are always sincere about their feelings. It helps that Riley is often willing to go out of their way for those around them, and many of Riley's friends and family appreciate their honesty.

Riley is generally optimistic about the future, although they are unsure what it holds for them. Riley believes that being a good person will move them in the right direction, although Riley sometimes wonders if they're good enough.

End of Block: They/Them

---

Start of Block: She/Her

Q32 Timing

First Click (1)

Last Click (2)

Page Submit (3)

Click Count (4)

---

Q34 On the surface, Riley seems to have a lot going for her. She owns some nice things, and a lot of people seem to think she's a good person, despite her tendency for being cold. Her unassuming charm and unorthodox good looks draw people to her. But Riley sometimes wonders if it's just superficial--do they really understand who she is?

It hasn't always been smooth sailing for Riley. She has had a couple relationships that seemed like they might get serious in the past, but she's generally been unlucky in love. She'd like to find a long-term romantic relationship at some point, but for now, she's focused on building relationships with her friends and family. Some people feel that Riley has her guard up but she does her best to seem open and friendly towards others.

Riley tries to impress people, but some people aren't fooled. Her family and friends feel she's a good person, but are unsure if she is always sincere about her feelings. It helps that Riley is often willing to go out of her way for those around her, and many of her friends and family appreciate her honesty.

Riley is generally optimistic about the future, although she is unsure what it holds for her. She believes that being a good person will move her in the right direction, although she sometimes wonders if she's good enough.



End of Block: She/Her

---

Start of Block: He/Him

Q36 Timing

First Click (1)

Last Click (2)

Page Submit (3)

Click Count (4)

---

Q38 On the surface, Riley seems to have a lot going for him. He owns some nice things, and a lot of people seem to think he's a good guy, despite his tendency for being cold. His unassuming charm and unorthodox good looks draw people to him. But Riley sometimes wonders if it's just superficial--do they really understand who he is?

It hasn't always been smooth sailing for Riley. He has had a couple relationships that seemed like they might get serious in the past, but he's generally been unlucky in love. He'd like to find a long-term romantic relationship at some point, but for now, he's focused on building relationships with his friends and family. Some people feel that Riley has his guard up but he does his best to seem open and friendly towards others.

Riley tries to impress people, but some people aren't fooled. His family and friends feel he's a good guy, but are unsure if he is always sincere about his feelings. It helps that Riley is often willing to go out of his way for those around him, and many of his friends and family appreciate his honesty.

Riley is generally optimistic about the future, although he is unsure what it holds for him. He believes that being a good person will move him in the right direction, although he sometimes wonders if he's good enough.

End of Block: He/Him

---

Start of Block: Perceived Homophily

Q38 On the scales below, indicate your feelings about Riley. Numbers 1 and 7 indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers 2 and 6 indicate a strong feeling. Numbers 3 and 5 indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number 4 indicates that you are unsure or undecided. There are no right or wrong answers.

Riley...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Is like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is unlike me
Is different from me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is similar to me
Thinks like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not think like me
Doesn't behave like me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Behaves like me
Has status like mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has status different from mine
Is from a different social class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is from the same social class
Is culturally different	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is culturally similar
Has an economic situation like mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not have an economic situation like mine
Has morals like mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has morals unlike mine
Has sexual attitudes unlike mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has sexual attitudes like mine
Treats people like I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Doesn't treat people like I do
Doesn't share my values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Shares my values
Looks similar to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Looks different from me
Is the same size I am	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Is a different size than I am
Has an appearance unlike mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Has an appearance like mine
Doesn't resemble me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Resembles me

End of Block: Perceived Homophily

---

Start of Block: PSR & Identity Saliience



Q13 In relation to Riley, would you say you are more similar or dissimilar to Riley in terms of...

	Extremely Dissimilar (1)	Very Dissimilar (2)	Somewhat Dissimilar (3)	Neither Similar nor Dissimilar (4)	Somewhat Similar (5)	Very Similar (6)	Extremely Similar (7)
... how you see yourself (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your unique personality (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the characteristics which make you unique (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your individuality (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your personality (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your self-concept (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you express yourself (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you act in a situation (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you care about other people (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you act towards other people (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your relationship with those around you (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... the relationships you have with your family/friends (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you take care of others (22)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... how you treat others (23)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

... how you interact with others (24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your membership in various groups (25)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your similarities to those in your group(s) (28)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your social group (29)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a group stereotype (30)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a common group quality (31)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... a communal identity (32)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your social system (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your background (nationality, ethnicity, etc.) (26)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... your religious affiliation (27)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: PSR & Identity Salience

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Start of Block: FCP Intro

**Q15 For the following questions, think about your family and family interactions that took place when you lived at home during childhood and adolescence. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

End of Block: FCP Intro

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Start of Block: FCP

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
In my family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents often say things like, "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions." (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my home, my parents usually have the last word. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents feel it is important that they are the boss. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In my family,  
we often talk  
about our  
plans and  
hopes for the  
future. (7)

My parents  
sometimes  
become  
irritated with  
my views if  
they are  
different  
from theirs.  
(8)

I usually tell  
my parents  
what I am  
thinking  
about things.  
(9)

If my parents  
don't approve  
of it, they  
don't want to  
know about  
it. (10)

My parents  
encourage  
me to  
challenge  
their ideas  
and beliefs.  
(11)

I can tell my  
parents  
almost  
anything.  
(12)

When I am at  
home, I am  
expected to  
obey my  
parents'  
rules. (13)

We often talk  
as a family  
about things  
we have done  
during the  
day. (14)



My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.

(15)

My parents often say things like, "You'll know better when you grow up."

(16)

My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.

(17)

My parents often say things like, "My ideas are right and you should not question them." (18)

My parents often say things like, "You should always look at both sides of an issue."

(19)

My parents like to hear my opinion, even when I don't agree with them.

(20)

My parents often say things like, "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."

(21)

In my family we often talk about feelings and emotions.

(22)

My parents often say things like, "A child should not argue with adults."

(23)

I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.

(24)

My parents often say things like, "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad."

(25)

My parents encourage me to express my feelings.

(26)

End of Block: FCP

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Start of Block: Thanks and Close

Q29 Thank you for your participation in this research study.

The goals of this study were withheld at the beginning of the survey to avoid swaying your answers and reactions. The goal of this study is to examine relationships between the way your family communicates and your perception of a character. We are interested in similarities that you perceive between yourself and Riley, the character introduced in the study. Please do not share the true nature of this study with others as it may influence their response(s).

I hope you enjoyed your experience. Please feel free to contact the primary researcher, Supreet Mann, if you have any questions about the nature of the study or if you would like to withdraw your response. All

responses will be anonymously banked for analysis.

**The next screen will provide you with a unique identifying code and a link to another survey so you can input your name and the course for which you would like to receive extra credit. Your name and course information will not be attached to any of your responses from this survey.**

Supreet Mann  
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**End of Block: Thanks and Close**

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## Appendix D: TST Code Book for Identity Dimensions

### Identity Saliency

TST as a measure of self-concept

- Responses will be coded into one of four categories of identity (personal, relational, enacted, communal)
- TST for both oneself and for the parasocial/media figure
- TST has previously been used to examine self-concept and identity saliency
- Definitions:
  1. Personal: how an individual defines him- or herself. Any characterization that is not in reference to another and not an outright expression of identity.
    - Examples: weak, jolly, smart, male, religious, a life-loving person, blind, tough, lonely, a woman, introvert, extrovert, sensitive, thinker, age, sexual orientation, college majors, educated, not ugly, under quarantine, stuck at home, not weird, goal oriented, fun, pancake lover, adventurous, young/old, lazy, unique, plant lover, braindead, daydreamer, stressed, anxious, nervous, worthy, skillful (by itself), powerful, important, energetic, quiet, passionate, plant owner, shy, funny, honest, compassionate, relaxed, strong, beautiful, responsible, creative, independent, worthy, emotional, logical, lucky/blessed, determined, optimistic, happy, amazing, motivated, sad, ambitious, average, healthy, savvy, vulnerable, curious, resilient, hopeful, stubborn, grateful, rich, confused, courageous, fair, crazy, content, normal, competent, capable, broken
  2. Enacted: the performance of identity and how one may express who they are. Something you strive towards. Must be an action or performance that will be interpreted by another person or group - "I am... to/by others". Something that can fluctuate
    - Examples: easy-going, true to my beliefs, someone who does what I believe is right, a good leader, tough guy, masculine/feminine, empowered, inspired, hurt, outgoing, caring, role model, loving, go-getter, selfish, giving, an adventurer, a worker, loyal, excited, plant keeper/caretaker, stressed about..., worried about..., passionate about..., brave, fearless, fierce, cunning, clever, witty, kind, worthy of..., talented (b/c suggests performance), skillful at..., advocate, the protagonist in..., the actor in... , resistant, witty, entrepreneur, a cat, controlling, charismatic, cool, driven, sweet, compassionate person, empathetic, growing, elegant, diligent, insightful, wonderful, thoughtful, patient, confident, genuine, interesting, humble, dedicated, nice, trustworthy, an optimist, mean, nerd, enough, scared, persistent, positive, loud, lost, careful innovative, active, organized, lovely, bored, stylish, successful, calm, friendly, quirky, daring, serious, busy, bold, idealistic, sleepy, dramatic, awkward

- Any time a qualifier (signaling valence) is used, the statement will be coded as Enacted. (e.g., I am... not fun enough)
- 3. Relational: how identities are defined in terms of particular relationships. Something conferred upon (e.g., Idol).
  - Examples: wife, student (vs. teacher), son, dog-mom, dog-dad, a friend, occupation, athlete, I am... your etc; I am cherished, I am loved, I am wanted, I am needed, family names, pet owner, alone, , in love, idol, famous, popular, the leader (vs. follower), well known for role in..., transfer student, high school student, celebrity, an ally, star
- 4. Communal: how society defines identities and how these identities are related to culture/society.
  - Examples: religious group, social group. I am a member of..., location (e.g., I am from...), a gamer, a teen, first gen, young adult. Remember this means you are part of a bigger social group!

Personal  
 Enacted  
 Relational  
 Communal

Sample Coding:  
 Who Am I?

1. I am... strong
2. I am... a go getter
3. I am... Jewish
4. I am... smart
5. I am... a student
6. I am... calm in stressful situations
7. I am... African American
8. I am... a boyfriend
9. I am... a doer
10. I am... athletic
11. I am... a coach

## Appendix E: PSR & Identity Salience Original Item List

### PSR and Identity Salience - initial item grouping

- Personal identity
- Enacted identity
- Relational identity
- Communal Self identity

Participants will first be asked to name their favorite media character, and will then be presented with the following: In relation to your favorite media character, would you say that you are more alike or more different to the character in terms of...

Numbering system Study 1	Numbering system Study 2	Numbering system Study 3	In relation to your favorite media character, would you say that you are more alike or different to the character in terms of...
1	Q2_1	<u>Q13_1</u>	... how you see yourself
2	Q2_2	<u>Q13_2</u>	... your unique personality
3	Q2_3	<u>Q13_3</u>	... the characteristics which make you unique
4	Q2_4	Q13_4	... your individuality
5	Q2_5	Q13_5	... your personality
6	Q2_6	Q13_6	... your self-concept
7	Not included		... your world view
8	Q2_22 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	Q13_22 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	... your social system (grouped as communal for Study 2)
9	Not included	Not included	... how you outwardly act on your beliefs
10	Q2_7	Q13_7	... how you express yourself
11	Not included	Not included	... how you respond in certain situations
12	Not included	Not included	... how your behavior corresponds with your beliefs
13	Not included	Not included	... how others see you

14	Q2_8 (Grouped as Personal)	Q13_8 (Grouped as Personal)	... how you act in a situation
15	Not included	Not included	... your behavior
16	Not included	Not included	... how you behave/act
17	Q2_9	Q13_9	... how you care about other people
18	Q2_10	Q13_10	... how you act towards other people
19	Q2_11	Q13_11	... your relationship with those around you
20	Q2_12	Q13_12	... the relationships you have with your family/friends
21	Not included	Not included	... your role in a group
22	Q2_13	Q13_13	... how you take care of others
23	Q2_14	Q13_14	... how you treat others
24	Q2_15	Q13_15	... how you interact with others
25	Q2_16 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	Q13_16 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	... your membership in various groups
26	Q2_23 (Grouped as Communal Social)	Q13_23 (Grouped as Communal Social)	... your background (nationality, ethnicity, etc.)
27	Q2_24 (Grouped as Communal Social)	Q13_24 (Grouped as Communal Social)	... your religious affiliation
28	Q2_17 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	Q13_17 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	... your similarities to those in your group(s)
29	Q2_18 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	Q13_18 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	... your social group
30	Q2_19 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	Q13_19 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	... a group stereotype
31	Q2_20 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	Q13_20 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	... a common group quality
32	Q2_21 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	Q13_21 (Grouped as Communal Personal)	... a communal identity