BINGING ON *GILMORE GIRLS*: A PARASOCIAL

EXPLORATION OF FANS' VIEWING

BEHAVIORS

by

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ABSTRACT

Binge-watching has become increasingly popular with the rise of video-on-demand services and online streaming sites, but little has been done to evaluate the effects of this new viewing behavior on audiences. This study explores binge-watching as a possible mechanism in the formation of parasocial relationships with media personae as well as a motivator for the negative affects experienced when a persona is no longer included in new content, the phenomenon known as parasocial breakup. Other variables, such as the extent to which the media is watched alone or with others, were also explored. To test these relationships, two online surveys were completed by fans of the television show *Gilmore Girls*, one before the release of a new *Gilmore Girls* mini-series on Netflix and one after the release. A total of 387 fans participated in the surveys, which assessed their viewing behaviors of the mini-series and already-released episodes in the time leading up to the mini-series' premiere. In the post-watching sample, it was found that binge-watching the mini-series was negatively related to parasocial relationship intensity. Furthermore, parasocial relationship intensity was positively related to parasocial breakup distress. Other predictors of parasocial relationship intensity include show affinity and age of viewer, while mini-series enjoyment was found to have a strong, negative correlation to parasocial breakup distress. Findings suggest further research regarding the relationship between binge-watching and parasocial relationships, as well as the influence that discussing the show with others has on breakup distress.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the lovely *Gilmore Girls* fans who helped to make it a reality. Without their commitment and dedication, this research would not have been possible. Thank you all for your passion and your time.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

α Cronbach's index of internal consistency

x̄ Mean: the sum of a set of measurements divided by the number of measurements in the set

p Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value

< Less than

= Equal to

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of watching multiple episodes of a television show in the same day has been colloquially dubbed "binge-watching." While "binging" has traditionally been interpreted as hedonistic over-indulgence, more recent examinations of popular opinion suggest that this particular behavior does not carry as strong of a negative association as it has in the past. Some have even called binging a "restorative experience" that allows the viewer to mentally recharge (Kaplan, 1995; Pang, 2014). In fact, because of the connotations suggested by the word "binge," some scholars have suggested an alternate term for this endeavor: "marathon-viewing" (Perks, 2014). As Pittman and Sheehan (2015) note, "Calling it a media 'marathon' simultaneously harkens back to a time of networks broadcasting marathons of television shows while also eschewing binge's language of unhealthy excess" (para. 2). Unfortunately for Perks and others, the popular-press has fully embraced "binge-watching" as the key term for this new form of media consumption. Despite its connotative language, binge-watching has become a popular activity due to the availability and expansion of streaming platforms and video-on-demand services.

Today, binging on a television show is considered a mainstream activity. In a recent TiVo survey, 92% of respondents said that they watched more than three episodes of the same television show in one day and only 30% of respondents had a negative view on this activity (Huddleston Jr., 2015). Two years earlier, Netflix found that 61% of respondents binge-watched regularly, which led to the company deeming this phenomenon the "new normal" (West, 2013). Larger media networks are even joining the binge-watching conversation, as the internet-only

People/Entertainment Weekly Network (PEN) recently launched a new show called *Bingeworthy* on which the hosts discuss the most important shows on television and decide which are worthy of a binge (Robinson, 2016). This cultural shift in the way viewers are consuming television has been so pronounced that scholars have given it a title: "The Netflix Effect" (Matrix, 2014). It is not just television that has felt this effect, but multiple forms of media: books, magazines, newspapers, music, and video games can all be accessed in an "all-you-can-consume" buffet for one flat monthly fee. Not only is all this content available, but it has also been customized for each individual consumer and, with the advent of social media sites like Twitter, consumers can easily share their involvement in this new cultural movement. Because of these technological and cultural shifts, the "Netflix generation enjoys a hyper-personalized yet socially connected media diet, with all the pleasures of on-demand spectatorship and participatory cultural citizenship" (Matrix, 2014, p. 134).

Naming this paradigm shift after Netflix was an apt decision, as this company is currently paving the way in the on-demand content industry. Following the results of their 2013 survey, which led them to claim that binge-watching is the preferred method of viewing television, Netflix has steadily increased its original programming and now has over 60 original series as part of its offerings (Huddleston Jr., 2015). The streaming giant has also had success in reviving popular shows that have been off the air for a while. Their first attempt of revival in 2013 of Fox's *Arrested Development* got mixed reviews from viewers, but Netflix has continued to "mine the nostalgia" out of their viewing data in order to bring back the shows that consumers love to binge-watch (Khan, 2015, para. 25). This November, Netflix will attempt another revival, this time of the Emmy-award winning *Gilmore Girls*. Fans of the show have demonstrated feelings of joy and excitement about this revival online, particularly as Netflix continues to build

hype through promotional events like the nationwide "Luke's Diner takeover" that occurred on October 5th (Roshanian, 2016). As is customary of their original content, Netflix plans to release all four 90-minute episodes of *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* on November 25th, encouraging and enabling binge-watching behaviors.

Despite binge-watching's growing popularity, those who oppose the behavior cite its negative consequences (Baral, 2015; Landa, 2015; Rutsch, 2015). A recent study found a strong, positive link between hours of television watched daily and increased risk of chronic diseases, however this relationship was weakened when confounding factors were taken into account (Keadle et al., 2015). Other studies have connected binge-watching with poor diet and depression (Northrup, 2015; Sung, Kang, & Lee, 2015). People have also expressed negative emotional states after finishing a binge watching session on social media; one tweet called it "PBWD: post binge watch depression," (Karmakar & Kruger, 2016). These negative associations with binge-watching are somewhat unsurprising, as research on heavy TV viewing from the past 30 years has yielded similar results. However, binge-watching is a unique concept outside of the umbrella of "heavy TV viewing," and, therefore, merits its own research.

Binge-watching is a new topic in media effects research and there is still much to learn about it. Of particular interest to this study is the phenomenon of "post binge watch depression" that has been reported among binge-watchers, so much so that Matthew Schneier of *The New York Times* has dubbed the experience, "Unseasonal Affective Disorder: post-binge malaise," (Schneier, 2015, para. 8). One explanation for these feelings of withdrawal and depression is that viewers manifest close connections with the characters on binged shows, which they lose when the show is finished. Netflix produced a short promotional video documenting these feelings in which a woman is distraught after finish a series. She proclaims, "…they just come into your life

and then they just leave…it's like I lost my best friend," (Netflix, 2015). This experience is reminiscent of another topic in media effects research: parasocial breakup (Cohen, 2003; Meyrowitz, 1994). Parasocial breakup (PSB) is an occurrence associated with parasocial interaction (PSI), defined as the one-sided interaction between a media consumer and a media persona (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Sustained occurrences of PSI can create parasocial relationships (PSRs), a one-sided relationship between a media consumer and a media persona (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). PSB occurs when the media persona, with whom a consumer has a PSR, "goes off the air," or when that persona is no longer available for imagined interaction.

Previous research on parasocial interaction, parasocial relationships, and parasocial breakup have shown that individuals treat these phenomena similar to the way they treat normal social interaction (A. M. Rubin & Perse, 1989: Cohen, 2003, 2004; Gleich, 1997; Piccirillo, 1986; R. B. Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Sklar, 2009; Tsao, 1996). In a review on the literature of PSI, Giles (2002) points out that "people use fundamentally the same cognitive processes in both interpersonal and mediated communication" (p. 286). The research on interpersonal relationships is extensive, and suggests that higher quality and quantity of relationships can lead to advantages like increases in health, emotional patterns, cognitive functioning, and creativity (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988; Perry-Smith, 2006). Due to the strong similarities in psychological processing of PSRs and normal social relationships, it is possible that some of the benefits and detriments a person can incur from a social relationship may also be acquired from a parasocial relationship, though more research looking specifically at one-sided relationships between viewers and fictional characters is needed in this area.

PSR and PSI have traditionally been explored in news television and soap operas, though most genres have been studied at some point. *Gilmore Girls*, a show that blends drama and

comedy and has a fully cast with interweaving histories offers somewhat similar content to that of a soap opera, even though it was not on the same type of broadcast schedule. When Netflix released its revival of *Gilmore Girls*, a series with a loyal and abundant fan base, researchers were presented with a unique opportunity to explore the role of binge-watching in creating PSRs and PSB, as well as the role of pre-existing PSRs in motivating binge-watching behavior. Although Netflix's *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* does not reflect the same format as a typical series, the overall watching time required for the mini-series is 6 hours, a length well over that of the commonly binge-watched 8 or 10-episode comedy series.

Furthermore, fans are a unique sample to research, as they already have an attachment to the media. They also lend themselves to studies of parasocial interaction, as most fans have formed strong social bonds to the characters on their shows. As Davisson and Booth (2007) note, "Fans often incorporate the media they watch into their everyday life…by watching the show, engaging in conversations about the show, seeking out information about characters and actors on the show, and in some cases, even writing about the show" (p.35). These repeated interactions can lead fans to form parasocial relationships with the media personae in their fandom (Earnheardt & Haridakis, 2009). Sometimes this attachment becomes so great that when characters leave a show the fans react in extreme ways: for example, when an actress left *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* after her character was killed off in the sixth season, fans were so distraught that they sent the actress threatening correspondence and demanded that she return to the show (Murphy, 2003). For the most part, however, studies have found that fans are concerned with saving the hero of a show by producing content that gives them a happy ending and finding true companions for the major characters. Working under the assumptions of parasocial interaction

theory, this study explored the relationships between binge-watching, PSRs, and PSB in a sample

drawn from the *Gilmore Girls* fandom.

CHAPTER 1
LITERATURE REVIEW

Parasocial Interaction (PSI) Theory

In their seminal study on parasocial interaction, Horton and Wohl (2006/1956) explored, "the intimacy at a distance" that a media consumer can experience with a media persona (para. 1). They defined PSI as the imagined interaction between a viewer and a media persona, which over time, "can produce a form of parasocial relationship [PSR]" (as cited in Giles, 2002, p. 279). However, this was not the first study to investigate the "pseudorelationships" that consumers form with media persona; ten years earlier, Merton, Fisk, and Curtis (1946) had examined the formation of these relationships with Kate Smith during her 18-hour War Bond Drive radio marathon in 1943. They conducted interviews with listeners and performed a content analysis of the broadcast in order to collect the data. Merton and colleagues emphasized, "the personal-social dynamics in the individual which were stimulated to react by the symbols presented by Smith" in their analysis, and they found that, "Smith's audiences had responded to her appeals as if someone they knew personally had asked them to purchase war bonds" (Brown, 2015, p. 262; Merton et al., 1946, p. xiii). The pseudorelationships experienced by the listeners of Smith's broadcast were not given a name until Horton and Wohl published in 1956, but the findings of Merton and colleagues are a significant first step for PSI theory. Multiple scholars have also noted that visual communication technologies, like television and film, provide greater opportunities for PSRs to develop because, "the image which is presented makes available nuances of appearance and gesture to which ordinary social perception is attentive and to which

interaction is cued" (Horton & Wohl, 2006/1956, para. 2). It stands to reason then that the feelings of intimacy which occurred with a radio host in 1943 could easily be replicated with television personalities.

Of great importance in PSI theory, as well as other theories of audience involvement, is the definition of media personae. Originally, Horton and Wohl conceptualized a media persona as any television personality with whom viewers could relate (2006/1956). However, as research on PSI had developed, scholars have expanded the concept of media persona to include media other than television. Today, PSI studies have been conducted on video games, Internet sites, and even literature (Gumpert & Cathcart, 1986; Head, 2003; Sklar, 2009). These studies have changed the definition of media personae as it was originally proposed so that now, "A persona can be a real person or a fictional character encountered through any form of mediated interaction" (Brown, 2015, p. 261).

Following Horton and Wohl's (2006/1956) paper, PSI research was not explored further until the early 1970s. In 1972, McQuail, Blumler, and Brown examined viewers' responses to early soap operas, and found many of the same phenomena Horton and Wohl (2006/1956) had discussed. Most notably, they identified companionship and personal identity as the two essential functions of PSI (Giles, 2002). That same year, in a typology of audience-media interaction, Rosengren and Windahl (1972) argued that PSI occurred when a viewer interacted with a media persona, but not when he identified with that persona. This distinction was important in the fields of psychology and mass communication studies, as identification theory had already been long established as a derivative of psychoanalytic theory. However, these two studies agreed that PSI acted as a replacement for normal social interaction and a compensation for loneliness (McQuail et al., 1972; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972). Later research conducted in Scandinavia did not

support these findings of PSI as a functional alternative to social interaction, nor has subsequent

North American research (A. M. Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Rosengren, Windahl,

Hakansson, & Johnsson-Smaragdi, 1976).

In 1979, Levy conducted focus group interviews with older adults in order to explore

their parasocial interactions with local television newscasters. He used the interviewees'

responses to construct a 42-item scale that measures the strength of PSI with newscasters, which

was found to correlate with multiple demographic factors in a more representative sample. Most

notably, education level was found to have a strong, negative relationship with PSI strength

(Levy, 1979). In 1985, A. M. Rubin and colleagues further developed this scale so that it would

measure PSI with a range of media personae. This study also evaluated PSI with newscasters and

replicated the findings of Rosengren and colleagues that loneliness was not correlated with

strength of PSI. The new 20-item scale, henceforth referred to as the PSI scale, has been adapted

and used in a number of subsequent studies, many of which were conducted under the

framework of the uses and gratifications approach (A. M. Rubin et al., 1985; Katz, Blumler, &

Gurevitch, 1973).

These uses and gratifications studies typically evaluated PSI as a predictor of media use.

In 1980, Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn found PSI to be a viable predictor of selective

exposure to media and a decade later Conway and A. M. Rubin (1991) found that, "PSI was

associated with most viewing motives, and was a better predictor of television use than many

other behavioral measures: indeed, the authors argued that PSI may be a more important viewing

motivation than program content itself" (Giles, 2002, p. 282). Studies have also been conducted

in the reverse fashion, examining the role of television motives on the formation of PSRs. Many

of these studies have found that time spent viewing television and television dependency are

positively correlated with PSI (A. M. Rubin et al., 1985; Gleich, 1997; Grant, Guthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991).

Other factors that have been found to contribute to the formation of PSRs include homophily (similarity between oneself and another), social attraction, and perceived realism, suggesting that, "media users evaluate media figures along similar criteria to people they meet in the flesh" (Giles, 2002, p. 282; R. B. Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Turner, 1993). These findings support a similarity between PSI and two-way social interactions, a topic that a number of studies have investigated. In a German sample, Gleich (as cited in Giles, 2002) had participants make several ratings of relationship quality with media persona and with friends and neighbors. While the ratings for good friends were significantly higher than the ratings for media persona, the ratings for a good neighbor were much closer to media persona ratings and in some aspects the media persona even ranked higher. These findings replicated those of Koenig and Lessan (1985). Additionally, R. B. Rubin and McHugh (1987) discovered that the perceived likelihood of a media persona being a friend was more important as a motivating factor for PSRs than physical attraction. In this same year, A. M. Rubin and Perse (1987) argued that PSRs, "may arise from an altruistic human instinct to form attachments with others, at no matter how remote a distance" (Giles, 2002, p. 284). This argument is in line with the belongingness hypothesis of social psychology, which suggests that people are likely to form social attachments in most conditions and are also likely to challenge and fight against the suspension of those attachments (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). According to this theory, people need frequent interactions in order to form and maintain a lasting relationship, which supports the findings that amount of television viewing is likely to predict the formation of PSRs if one considers PSI as a real form of "interaction."

The preceding findings on the similarity between parasocial interaction and normal social interaction seem to reject the ideas of Rosengren and Windahl (1972) and McQuail and colleagues (1972) that PSI is an abnormal phenomenon operating as a replacement for regular social interaction. Instead, as originally suggested by Horton and Wohl (2006/1956) and further developed by Giles (2002) with his "Continuum of Social-Parasocial Encounters," PSI should be integrated into an expanded concept of social interaction. This case is supported by Horton and Strauss (1957) who suggested that parasocial interactions can exist in face-to-face encounters of large numbers or when there is a gap in the status between members of the encounter. Furthermore, findings from Tsao (1996) indicate that personality factors of sociable individuals are positively related to PSRs, while indicators of social deficiencies are unrelated. All of this evidence suggests, "that social and parasocial interaction are complementary, perhaps because they require similar social skills" (Cohen, 2004, p. 192).

While the concept of PSI as an extension of normal social behavior seems to be fairly agreed upon by scholars in this field, the classification of PSI as a unitary concept is still hotly debated. In 1972, Rosengren and Windahl argued that PSI is a separate concept from identification, while McQuail and colleagues (1972) claimed identification was a major function of PSI. Gleich (1997) also argued that PSI consists of three factors: companionship, which gratifies a need for social interaction; person-program interaction, which deals with issues related to program content; and empathetic interaction, which signifies a behavioral or affective response in the viewer. Auter and Palmgreen (2000) also challenged the notion of PSI as a unitary concept with their development of the Audience-Persona Interaction (API) scale. This 22-item scale measures four sub-factors of PSI which the researchers claim were originally proposed by Horton and Wohl (2006/1956): identification, interest, interaction with the group,

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and favorite character's problem-solving abilities. Along the lines of Rosengren and Windahl's argument, in his conceptualization of identification Cohen (2001) separates identification from PSI, critiquing the API scale as an invalid measure. More recently, Brown (2015) has furthered the conceptualization of types of viewer involvement with media personae by defining them as, "quantitatively distinct processes that differ according to their psychological intensity and the duration of their effects on media users" (p. 273). He has created a model describing the ways these processes form and their interaction with one another. In his paper, PSI is redefined as:

> The process of developing an imaginary relationship with a mediated persona both during and after media consumption, which begins with spending time with the persona through media or participation in mediated events, and is characterized by perceived relational development with the persona and knowing the persona well. (Brown, 2015, p. 275)

Brown's model shows that PSI/PSRs are motivated by social attraction and homophily, and can develop in conjunction with or via transportation, or it can motivate the transportation process (2015). Furthermore, Brown claims that PSI/PSRs can have both negative and positive valence, a departure from the original theory (Horton & Wohl, 2006/1956). Lastly, identification is recognized as a more powerful form of audience involvement, for which PSI/PSRs and the transportation process act as prerequisites (Brown, 2015).

Parasocial Breakup (PSB). Within PSI theory, special attention has been given to the negative affect experienced by viewers when media personae, with whom they have developed a PSR, are no longer available for further PSI. This phenomenon, which has been dubbed parasocial breakup (PSB) in PSI literature, harkens back to the belongingness hypothesis as the distress exhibited by viewers indicates a reluctance to break existing social, or parasocial, bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The earliest study of PSB examined social reactions to the deaths

of major celebrities like Elvis and John Lennon (Meyrowitz, 1994). As Cohen (2004) notes, "The myths, rituals, and pilgrimages surrounding the death of these media stars provide anecdotal evidence of their importance to the lives of their fans and the difficulties associated with their death" (p. 190-191). More recent anecdotal evidence of PSB can found in fan reactions to the passing of popular Hollywood actors and professional athletes.

In 2003, the first quantitative study of PSB was conducted and a self-report measurement of PSB was constructed and validated (Cohen, 2003). The resulting 13-item PSB scale has been used in all subsequent studies on PSB, and has been found to be consistently reliable. In three Israeli samples, Cohen (2003) found that age played a role in how people react to PSB, with teens expecting greater levels of breakup distress than adults. This study also found that women form stronger PSRs than men, but women and men expect the same level of breakup distress, suggesting that women may be more resilient to a broken a social bond (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cohen, 2003). One year later, another study was done to explore the effects of viewer attachment style on PSI and PSB. Cohen (2004) found that PSI is strong predictor of expected break-up distress, regardless of viewing hours, age, attachment style, or character type, which supports the notion that the negative affect experienced by viewers when a show goes off the air is a result of PSB. Furthermore, anxious-ambivalently attached viewers expected the greatest level of breakup distress, suggesting that these viewers may be more likely to form stronger PSRs (Cohen, 2004).

A case study that looked at PSB experienced by college students after the last episode of the show *Friends* aired also found strength of PSR to be a strong predictor of breakup distress, as was character popularity, show affinity and commitment, and viewer loneliness. These researchers stressed the distinction between PSI and PSR as two separate concepts, arguing that a

PSR, and not just PSI, must exist for a viewer to experience PSB (Eyal & Cohen, 2006). Most recently, a study was conducted during the Writer's Guild strike of 2007-2008 looking at the effects of PSRs on viewers' levels of distress and leisure-time behaviors (Lather & Moyer-Gusé, 2011). The researchers found that viewers who had a stronger PSR with a television character experienced greater levels of distress when that character's show went off the air, further supporting the occurrence of PSB. More importantly, Lather and Moyer-Gusé note:

> Because of the time that data were gathered (spring 2008), uncertainty about when shows would return was likely not as extreme as it had been earlier on. Participants may have been aware that their favorite shows would return soon and therefore may have felt less distress than they had earlier. However, some post hoc analyses revealed no difference in the level of distress among those participants whose programs were still off the air and those whose programs had resumed airing new episodes. A similar pattern revealed no difference in parasocial breakup distress depending on whether one's favorite character's program had resumed its normal schedule. Thus, although distress may not have been measured when it was strongest, substantial distress was still evidenced here, indicating that parasocial breakups can cause lasting emotional distress. (2011, p. 212)

Regarding leisure activities, rather than replace the time spent watching their show with a social activity, the majority of participants who exhibited strong PSRs turned to other television shows, internet use, and movies. This finding suggests that when a parasocial bond is broken, viewers will look for a new media persona with whom they can parasocially interact (Lather & Moyer-Gusé, 2011).

Future Research. While the existing literature on PSI is quite extensive, there are still areas that require further examination. Most notably, PSI scholars need to investigate the role of

co-viewing behaviors and social interaction that revolves around a media persona on the development of PSRs. This area is of particular importance to Giles (2002) as he included these effects in his model of the stages of development for PSRs. Researchers also need to employ distinguished conceptualization of PSI and PSR, as one is a momentary activity while the other is a longer-term interaction (Eyal & Cohen, 3006; Giles, 2002).

Binge-Watching

The current literature on binge watching has mainly employed a qualitative approach. While none of the studies have looked directly at the link between binge-watching and PSI/PSRs, many of the findings have been suggestive that a link does indeed exist. For example, a study conducted in 2013 focused on the stigmatization surrounding television, and the effect of binge-watching in curtailing it (Feiereisen, Rasolofoarison, De Valck, & Schmitt, 2013). The researchers interviewed 16 demographically diverse television series watchers and identified five key narratives that shaped the legitimization of television series in the social sphere. They also found that a "reverse stigmatization" around television viewing was beginning: "Whereas TV series viewers used to be stigmatised, those who do not watch any TV series would now be stigmatized as outside the norm," (Feiereisen et al., 2013, p. 184). Another finding of this study was that stigmatization was occurring within binge-watchers: certain genres of TV (soap operas in particular) were still stigmatized, as was binge-watching individually, rather than with a group. T. F. Stafford, M. R. Stafford, and Schkade (2004) identified these two groups as "Lone Wolves" – those who watch alone – and "Social Animals" – those who watch with others. Pittman and Sheehan (2015) comment, "The Lone Wolves would suggest that an individual might be binge-watching to assuage loneliness or for companionship," a notion that draws a

strong parallel to the early assumptions of PSI theory (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015, para. 21; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972; McQuail et al., 1972).

In 2014, Devasagayam and College conducted a qualitative study, interviewing three separate focus groups to discuss the motivations and behaviors of binge-watching. They discovered that participants decided to binge because of episode availability, rather than because of cliffhangers at the end of episodes. In one focus group, participants said that after finishing a series they felt a sense of closure and were happy, while another group reported feelings of emptiness after finishing a series. These two groups differed in age, but only by a few years as the study utilized one focus group of high-schoolers with their parent(s) and one of college students. In a post-discussion questionnaire, 60% of participants confessed to show addiction and 65% reported feeling personally attached to a character in a show. The researchers concluded that the lack of negative connotations or beliefs about the activity and the "unconscious relationships" that viewers reported having with characters are the driving forces behind binge-watching behavior (Devasagayam & College, 2014).

More recently, interviews were conducted with viewers of on-demand content to examine the motivations for viewing (Steele et al., 2015). The key finding of this study was that consumers use on-demand as a way to bond with others over the same content. They also found, despite previous findings on television consumption, that on-demand viewing was motivated by a desire to connect rather than escape. These findings occurred when consumers viewed on-demand individually and in a group setting (Steele et al., 2015). This last finding is significant for the current study, as it could be explained by the existence of PSRs in on-demand viewing. Another explanation may be that despite watching as a Lone Wolf, individuals who consume on-demand content are then able to connect with others through the discussion of that content, a

process called "connected viewing." This phenomenon was explored by Pittman and Tefertiller (2015) in a content analysis of tweets about four television shows posted over a 72-hour time period. The researchers found that asynchronous television shows, which allow for binge-watching, exhibited more connected viewing behavior via Twitter than did synchronous shows.

Pittman and Sheehan (2015) explored the uses and gratifications of binge-watching in a survey of 262 binge-watchers. They divided binge-watching behavior into three categories: regular binging, planned-ahead binging, and watch-an-entire-series-in-one-to-two-days binging. They found different motivations for each type of binging behavior, but engagement was a significant predictor of all three, and, "engagement [was] the only motivation to predict frequency of viewing: the more engaged one feels with the story lines and the characters, the more frequently they will binge watch" (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015, para. 33). Though the measures of "engagement" were not disclosed for this study, it stands to reason that PSI or PSRs may contribute to these findings. Pittman and Sheehan suggest that, "binge TV watching could be a more involved and interactive type of viewing behavior," and while, "this may leave them wanting more when they have completed their binge, it is also likely that this may stimulate demand for binge-watching in the future" (2015, para. 34). The researchers call for further enquiry into the motivations and gratifications of binge-watching, a call that was partially answered by recently released Netflix data indicating that certain genres of shows are binge-watched more often. At the top of the scale are thrillers, horror, and science-fiction shows as the most binge-watched, while irreverent comedies and political and historical dramas are the least binge-watched (Dwyer, 2016).

Fan Studies

Fan studies got its legs in the late 1980's when Henry Jenkins published a paper on "Trekkers," the common moniker of *Star Trek* fans, examining the written fiction produced by the women in this fandom (Jenkins, 1988). In this article, Jenkins refers to these fan fiction writers as "textual poachers," arguing against their portrayal in the media as outcasts and misfits and instead arguing that:

> ""Fandom" is a vehicle for marginalized subcultural groups (women, the young, gays, etc.) to pry open space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations; it is a way of appropriating media texts and rereading them in a fashion that serves different interests, a way of transforming mass culture into a popular culture." (Jenkins, 1988, p. 87)

While culture is a big part of this argument, what has become even more important in conceptualizing "fandom" is the production and reinterpretation of content. A fan community is not a real fan community unless they are participating in these practices (Davisson & Booth, 2007; Jenkins, 1988, 1992, 2002; Pearson, 2010).

Over time, fan studies have developed multiple approaches of research, focusing on different aspects of fandom; specifically, scholars debate over whether the individual fan or the fan community as a whole should be at the center of study, as well as whether the focus should be on meaning-construction or affect and pleasure. There has also been research looking at the way fan communities have influenced studio and network decisions, and how fans can have economic effects.

More recently, fan studies have been particularly concerned with the way digital culture is changing how fan communities interact. The development of the internet has

had an astounding impact on the way fans communicate and share their self-produced or self-edited material with each other. Jenkins (2002) claims that what Levy dubbed the "collective intelligence" of media fans is largely possible because of three trends that are shaping a participatory culture: new tools and technologies, subcultures promoting do-it-yourself media production, and "economic trends favoring…horizontally integrated media conglomerates [which] encourage the flow of images, ideas, and narratives across multiple media channels and demand more active modes of spectatorship" (p. 157). Jenkins goes on to argue that this new participatory culture is giving fans greater control and independence in a new knowledge culture.

In a different approach to digital fandom, Pearson (2010) outlines the way new media technologies have impacted the (illegal) dissemination of content across national borders and the attempts of corporate entities in capitalizing on fan produced content. Pearson also discusses the importance of agency and interactivity in an understanding of fan communities, but does not go further in depth on these topics.

Davisson and Booth (2007), on the other hand, are fully concerned with the interaction of fans, both with other fans in the community and the media text itself. In their article, they propose a new methodology for studying fan cultures, building off of PSI theory and projective identity, a video game theory coined by James Gee (2003). Gee proposed that the real-world identity of a video game player and the identity of their character in the game exist in a tension created from the interactions between the two. Davisson and Booth go on to explain what is lacking in PSI theory as it pertains to fan studies: agency. They argue that, "For the fan…there are other options for engaging the text, including participation in fan fiction or role playing games, both of which allow the

fan to enter the universe of a show and engage the characters" (Davisson & Booth, 2007, p. 35). Therefore, the authors propose "projected interactivity" as a new way of approaching fan studies. This methodology would consist of four different areas of research:

1. A textual analysis of the original media text, focused on the motives of the characters.

2. A social-scientific analysis of the fan, examining her own personal motivations as well as her motivations for the characters in her fan fiction.

3. An affective analysis of the community interaction with the writer, text, and character that explores the community reaction to this rendering of the character as it compares to the character from the original text, as well as other fan fiction within the community.

4. Finally, the last three analyses will be compared and contrasted to see how all three combine to form the actual text of the fan fiction and the character's narrative within it, or what the authors refer to as the projected interactivity.

According to Davisson and Booth, Horton and Wohl claim that "what appears to happen to the viewers is an attachment, an emotional and mental connection with something outside of themself. Contrastingly, projected interactivity model looks at the ways fans attempt to claim agency in their relationship with media texts" (2007, p. 41). This new model has not yet been tested on a fan community, but offers an interesting approach for future research.

Model

The existing literature on PSI is fairly extensive, but there is still much to learn about its associations with binge-watching, the effects of co-viewing on the formation of PSRs, and the role of PSB in explaining the negative affect experienced after finishing a binge-watching session. While some qualitative research has linked both PSRs and PSB with binge-watching, to date there have been no quantitative studies done to examine these relationships. Qualitative research on binge-watching suggests that PSRs and PSB may be responsible for the feelings of "post-binge-watching depression" reported by viewers (Devasagayam & College, 2014; Steele et al., 2015). Furthermore, in the existing literature on PSI, it has been assumed that media consumption, by necessity, pre-dates the existence of PSRs. Because of this, very few studies have investigated the role that pre-existing PSRs play in motivating media consumption behaviors, particularly the recent phenomenon of binge-watching.

Based on the current literature, a model was developed as the basis for the current research. This model displays the expected relationships between binge-watching, PSR, PSB, and the as yet undetermined effects of co-viewing behaviors and discussing the media with others or experiencing others' opinions about the media on these interactions (see Figure 1).

Because previous research has found a link between sustained periods of television viewing and PSI, it would follow that binge-watching, a sustained period of television watching, would positively predict PSR for fans of the show. Furthermore, previous literature on PSB has shown that PSRs must already exist for viewers to experience PSB and therefore PSR would positively predict PSB in this sample. Because the literature is lacking in results on the interactions of co-viewing and discussing with others or experiencing others opinions, those relationships are not positively or negatively predicted in the model. However, their inclusion as

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important variables has been informed by fan culture, binge-watching practices, and Giles'

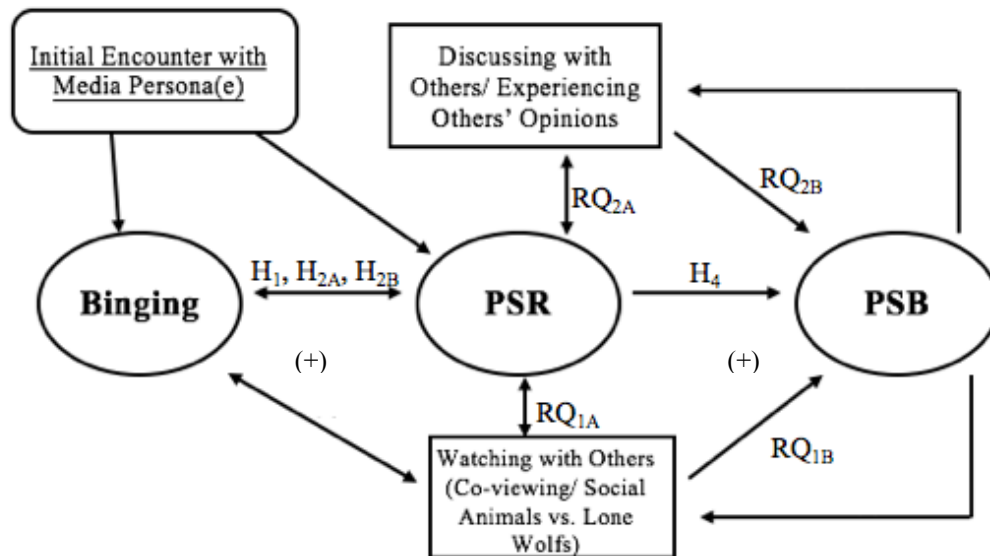(2002) model of PSI (see Appendix D).

Figure 1. Contributing factors to and relationships between Binging, PSR, and PSB.

CHAPTER 2
HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study collected quantitative data on binge-watching's relationships with PSRs and PSB and the relationship between PSR and PSB. It also explored the effects of watching media with others, conversing with others about the media, or observing other's reactions to the media on PSR intensity and PSB distress. This study looked specifically at PSR as a separate concept from PSI, based on the argument from Giles (2002) that interaction and relationship formation should be studied as two separate phenomena, and the argument from Eyal and Cohen (2006) that the existence of PSB requires the existence of a PSR. Furthermore, binge-watching, by definition, requires a sustained period of exposure to media personae, which Perse and R.B. Rubin (1989) found to be a predictive measure of PSRs.

First, this study tested the relationships between binge-watching and PSRs and between binge-watching and PSB. One hypothesis was created to assess the role of PSRs in motivating binge-watching behavior:

H$_1$: A participant's pre-existing PSR score will positively predict intent to binge-watch the *Gilmore Girls* mini-series.

Two hypotheses were also developed in order to examine the role of binge-watching in facilitating PSRs:

H$_{2A}$: Recent binge-watching of previously aired *Gilmore Girls* episodes will positively predict a participant's pre-existing PSR score.

Though *Gilmore Girls* has not released new content for a few years, reruns are still aired frequently on multiple cable channels. In fact, the Up TV network ran a 153-hour marathon of the entire *Gilmore Girls* series over the days leading up to the release of the new content. Moreover, all 7 seasons are available to stream on Netflix, and DVDs of each season are easily purchased in stores and online, giving participants ample opportunities to binge the show prior to the mini-series' drop.

H_{2B}: Binge-watching the *Gilmore Girls* mini-series will positively predict a participant's post-watching PSR score.

In order to examine the relationship between binge-watching and PSB, one hypothesis was tested:

H_3: Binge-watching the *Gilmore Girls* mini-series will positively predict a participant's post-watching PSB score.

As previous research has shown, PSR and PSB are heavily correlated (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Gusé, 2011). Therefore, it would follow that:

H_4: A participant's post-watching PSR score will positively predict his/her post-watching PSB score.

Finally, this study was interested in the effects of binge-watching alone ("lone wolves") versus binge-watching with others ("social animals") and of discussing the media or experiencing others' opinions of the media on the formation of PSRs. This topic is of much interest to researchers in the field of PSI and in the field of binge-watching (Giles, 2002; Stafford et al., 2004; Pittman & Tefertiller, 2015). Moreover, these activities are trademarks of fan culture and are therefore pivotal measures in a case study of the *Gilmore Girls* fandom. As this area is still

lacking any significant findings in any of these fields, four research questions were developed for this study:

RQ$_{1A}$: Does watching with others, as opposed to watching alone, have any effect on a participant's PSR score?

RQ$_{1B}$: Does watching with others, as opposed to watching alone, have any effect on a participant's PSB score?

RQ$_{2A}$: Does the extent to which a participant discusses the media or experiences others' opinions of the media have any effect on his or her PSR score?

RQ$_{2B}$: Does the extent to which a participant discusses the media or experiences others' opinions of the media have any effect on his or her PSB score?

RQ3: Does watching with others, as opposed to watching alone, have any effect on a participant's binging behavior?

RQ4: Does the extent to which a participant discusses the media or experiences others' opinions of the media have any effect on his or her binging behavior?

CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Sample

Participants for this study were recruited online, via a *Gilmore Girls* sub-Reddit page.

Reddit is a user-generated online forum where content is socially produced and endorsed via

voting. The various sub-Reddit pages of this site are devoted to particular topics, each with their

own subscription base. The *Gilmore Girls* sub-Reddit page was chosen as the best place for

recruitment as it was expected to reach individuals who were likely to binge-watch Netflix's

upcoming *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* television mini-series, as well as the fan community

of the show. This page was also chosen due to its high number of subscribers (approximately

10,400). Permission from the page moderators to post the questionnaires on the site was acquired

prior to posting the links.

Procedure

Two weeks before Netflix released *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, an online

questionnaire was posted on the sub-Reddit page for participants to complete before the new

episodes became available. A second survey was posted the day after the mini-series was

released for participants to complete after watching. A survey was the best design for this study

as it was unrealistic to ask participants to spend upwards of six hours binge-watching the mini-

series in the laboratory. Furthermore, a PSR takes time to develop and occurs naturally, a process

that would be hard to replicate in an experiment. A survey also allowed for easy data collection

and optimal participation numbers. A longitudinal, cohort design was chosen because *Gilmore*

Girls originally aired on broadcast television, on an episodic-release schedule. As the current research is concerned with the effects of binge-watching on PSRs and PSB, pre-existing PSRs with *Gilmore Girls* characters that may have been formed through viewing behaviors different than binge-watching need to be taken into account. The two weeks prior to the mini-series' release time period has been chosen so that pre-existing PSR levels could be measured as close as possible to the release of the mini-series. However, the final episode of *Gilmore Girls* was broadcast in 2007 and since then opportunities to binge-watch the series have become abundant due to its availability on Netflix and DVD sets, as well as the 153-hour, series-long marathon planned to air on UP TV one week before the mini-series' release; therefore, recent binge-watching activity was measured on both questionnaires and taken into account when analyzing post-watching PSRs (Goldberg, 2016).

Measurements

The two questionnaires included a total of 68 questions, 32 on the pre-release survey and 36 on the post release survey. These questions revolved around participants' binge-watching behaviors for the television show *Gilmore Girls* and their parasocial relationships with the show's characters. The questions also asked about participants' negative affect after finishing the last available episode of Netflix's *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, or what has become known as PSB. Several demographic and control measures were also included on the questionnaires, including gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, socio-economic status, attachment style, loneliness, show affinity and commitment, and perceived character popularity.

Binge-Watching. To gauge whether a participant binge-watched *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* or any previously aired episodes of *Gilmore Girls*, several questions were developed.

Recent Binging of Previously Aired Episodes. In order to measure a participant's recent binge-watching activity of previously aired episodes of *Gilmore Girls*, five questions were asked. First, the participants were asked a simple yes or no question inquiring whether they had watched *Gilmore Girls* within the two weeks leading up to the release of the mini-series. If the participant answered no, he or she skipped the other four questions regarding this behavior. If the participant answered yes, he or she was asked how many episodes, how frequently, the maximum number of episodes watched in a day, and the maximum number of episodes watched in one sitting.

Binging of the Netflix Mini-Series. To measure a participant's binge-watching of the Netflix mini-series *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, one question was developed. This question asked participants to state how many hours elapsed from when they started watching the mini-series to when they finished it. Because the mini-series differs from the typical episodic format, this question provided a more accurate measurement of the participants' viewing behavior than if they were given a binge-watching definition that relied upon a certain number of episodes being watched. It also eliminated any bias that might have existed if participants were reluctant, or eager, to report that they binged the show.

Although this method of measuring binge-watching has not been used before, there has been no consensus on the actual definition of a "binge" and therefore no definitive way of measuring the behavior. Previous studies have used varied definitions of the concept in order to gage it, but those have been mostly ordinal measures (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). This was an opportunity to test out a new measurement for the variable, one that provides a ratio measure and allows for more advanced statistical tests. Furthermore, it is fairly easy for participants to remember roughly when they started watching and when they finished watching, then if necessary a bit of simple math should then give them an accurate number of hours. Though this

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measure has its own limitations, it was decided that it would be the best way to assess viewers'

binging behaviors for this study.

Because the greater number of hours it took a participant to finish watching, the less

likely it was that he or she binged the mini-series, this measure was renamed "hours to complete

watching" to avoid any confusion during the interpretation of statistical analyses. This was done

because reverse coding the measurement was infeasible during data analysis.

Intent to Binge-Watch Netflix Mini-Series. In order to examine the relationship between

pre-existing PSRs and the intent to binge-watch, an intent to binge-watch *Gilmore Girls: A Year*

in the Life measure was generated. This measure consisted of two questions, the first of which

was a yes or no question that asked participants if they intended to watch the Netflix mini-series.

If participants responded yes, they were then asked how quickly they intended to watch the mini-

series in an open-ended question. This question was clarified in parentheses: (i.e., do you intend

to finish the day it is released, by the end of the weekend, before Christmas, etc.). Answers

ranged from "Finish it the day it comes out!" to "I'll finish before Christmas." These responses

were then coded into groups ranging from 1 to 5 based on the approximate number of days that

would elapse from when a participant started watching the series to when she finished watching

it (1 = finish it the day it came out; 2 = finish it by the end of the weekend; 3 = finish it within

the week; 4 = finish it in two weeks, 5 = finish it in three weeks or more).

Binging/Conversing with Others. Four questions were created in order to determine

whether a participant binge-watched alone or with others and whether he or she experienced

others' opinions about the show or its characters in the time leading up to the release, while they

were watching, or soon after completing the mini-series. In both questionnaires, if a participant

answered yes to having watched previously-aired episodes of *Gilmore Girls* in the two weeks

leading up to the release, he or she was asked the extent to which that watching was conducted alone or with others. Another question inquired whether a participant used synchronous communication platforms to communicate with others while watching. This section also includes a question inquiring about the extent to which a participant visited any *Gilmore Girls* fan sites, heard any news about *Gilmore Girls*, or discussed *Gilmore Girls* with any of his or her friends/colleagues in the time leading up the release, while they watched the mini-series, or the two days after having finished it.

In the post-watching questionnaire, participants were asked the extent to which they watched the mini-series alone or with others. The participants were also asked the extent to which, during the time spent watching the mini-series or in the immediate periods before or after watching, they visited any *Gilmore Girls* fan sites, heard any news about *Gilmore Girls*, or discussed *Gilmore Girls* with any friends/colleagues. To answer whether they partook in discussions of *Gilmore Girls* or visited any fan sites for the show in this period of time, fans answered one question on a 5-point Likert scale. Options ranged from "Just once" (score of 1) to "Everyday" (score of 5).

Parasocial Relationships. Drawing on the argument that PSRs are a separate phenomenon from PSI, and should be measured as such, this study employed the five-item PSR measure developed by Eyal and Cohen (2006). This measure was created by drawing five items that specifically relate to PSRs from A. M. Rubin and colleague's (1985) PSI scale. The PSI scale has been adapted by many studies: recently, Auter and Palmgreen (2000) adapted it into the audience-persona interaction scale, which measures the four sub-factors of PSI originally predicted by Horton and Wohl (1956). However, more recent literature has proved these sub-factors to be separate concepts from PSI, corresponding to criticism of the original scale (Cohen,

2001; Brown, 2015). Therefore, Eyal and Cohen's PSR scale is the best measure for the current study.

The five items are measured on a Likert scale, with participants answering to what extent they agree with statements like, "My favorite *Gilmore Girls* character makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends." The scale was found to be moderately reliable (α=.71), and Eyal and Cohen note, "Although this value is lower than most previously published assessments of the scale's reliability…it is consistent with other studies" (2006, p. 509). In the current study, Eyal and Cohen's PSR scale was found to have a higher reliability than the 2006 study, particularly after removing one item (α =.80 in pre-release and post-watching samples). PSR score was measured by adding together four items from a PSR measurement and dividing by four; possible scores ranged from 1 to 7.

Parasocial Breakup. In order to measure participants' PSB, Cohen's 13-item Parasocial Breakup Scale was used (2003). This scale has been found to be reliable and valid (α = .80, r^2 = .49), and has been used in multiple studies on PSB (Cohen, 2003, 2004; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Goyer-Musé, 2011). The 13 items are measured on a Likert scale, with participants answering to what extent they agree with statements like, "When I finished watching the last available episode of *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, I felt like I had lost a close friend." Three items were dropped from the scale before data collection in order to properly adapt it to binge watching. One more item was dropped from the scale during data analysis and the resulting reliability of the scale was found to be sufficient (α =.81 in post-watching sample).

Control Measures. Based on previous findings regarding the role of certain individual characteristic and aspects of the media personae on the formation of PSRs, several control measures were considered.

Fandom. Because the sample for this study was drawn from a fan site, fandom level needed to be taken into account. Participants were asked to self-report their level of fandom on a sliding scale with "I enjoy the show" on one end and "I live and breathe *Gilmore Girls*" on the other. Respondents were also asked the extent to which they partook in fan activities, such as watching interviews with cast members, attending conventions and panels, and attending the Luke's Diner takeover marketing event that occurred in October 2016.

Attachment Style. Studies have found that an individual's attachment style may also have an effect on his or her formation of PSRs (Cohen, 2004; Cole & Leets, 1999; Greenwood & Long, 2011). To account for this, the relationships questionnaire, a measure of attachment style developed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), was included in the survey. This self-report measure has been shown to converge with both family and peer evaluations of attachment style, and has been found to be reliable (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998).

Show Affinity, Show Commitment, and Recency. Eyal and Cohen (2006) found that a participant's show affinity and commitment, as well as the recency of having watched the show were all correlated with PSB. To control for these factors, the show affinity and show commitment measures from their study were adapted, and a question regarding the time elapsed between finishing the mini-series and starting the online survey was added to the questionnaire (see Appendix A, questions 9, 10, 11, & 16). Five items were removed from the affinity measure in order to reach sufficient reliability ($\alpha = .80$ in pre-release and post-watching samples).

Loneliness. Eyal and Cohen (2006) further found that loneliness was correlated with PSB, despite any significant findings relating loneliness to PSI (A. M. Rubin et al., 1985). However, because this study is interested in PSB a loneliness measure was added. This measure was adapted from the UCLA Loneliness Scale and was found to be reliable ($\alpha = .88$) (Eyal &

Cohen, 2006). During data analysis, 6 items were removed from this scale in order to achieve higher reliability (α =.85 in pre-release sample; α =.81 in post-watching sample).

Education and Socio-Economic Status. According to Levy (1979), education level has a negative correlation with PSI. Therefore, participants were asked to provide information regarding the highest level of education or degree they have obtained. Furthermore, because education level and socio-economic status have been highly correlated in most research done to date, participants were also asked about their household income. In addition to Levy's (1979) findings, education level and socio-economic status were measured as a means to compare the participants in the samples to *Gilmore Girls* fans as a population. While no qualitative data exists regarding the socio-economic status or education level of *Gilmore Girls* fans, there is much anecdotal evidence suggesting that this show is generally consumed by a more literate, highly educated, and wealthier crowd than most other programs, due in part to its portrayal of wealthy and highly literate characters (Kozlowska, 2016; Nelson, 2010; Sborgi, 2010; Stern, 2010).

Demographics. Three demographic questions were used as control variables. These three questions asked the participant to designate their age, gender, and race/ethnicity. These variables were also used to compare the samples in the study to the known demographics of *Gilmore Girls* viewers.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Sample

387 sub-Reddit subscribers participated in total; 211 completed the pre-release

questionnaire and 176 completed the post-watching questionnaire. No questions were asked that

could identify participants who responded to both surveys, so it is unknown if any such

participants exist in the sample. In the pre-release sample, mean age was 26.52 years ($s^2 = 5.52$),

96.2% of the participants were female, and 83.9% identified as white/Caucasian. In the post-

watching sample, mean age was 27.9 years ($s^2 = 6.45$), 89.2% of the participants were female,

and 86.4% identified as white/Caucasian. These samples were not significantly different in age

or race, but the post-watching sample did have a significantly higher proportion of male

respondents than the pre-watching questionnaire. Pre-release data were collected from November

13th, 2016 to November 25th, 2016. Post-watching data were collected from November 25th, 2016

to December 30th, 2016.

While exact data on the demographics of *Gilmore Girls* fans does not exist, it is known

that during its original broadcast viewers were predominantly women under 35 years of age,

though that demographic expanded to adults 18-34 in the fifth season of the show and, more

recently, a younger audience when the show reached syndication and began showing on the teen-

targeted Freeform network (Adalian, 2016; Hibberd, 2016; Mourad, 2016). Still, the

demographic of viewers is predominantly female, suggesting that the samples are an accurate

representation of the gender of *Gilmore Girls* fans. Though Netflix does not typically release its

viewing numbers, the streaming tracking company Symphony reported that approximately five million subscribers between the ages of 18-49 streamed the new episodes within the first three days of their release (Hibberd, 2016). Mean ages of the two samples in this study fall within that range, suggesting a sample of mostly 20 and 30-somethings, and further matching the original age demographic of the show. Anecdotal evidence further suggests that *Gilmore Girls* fans are predominantly White, particularly as the show has garnered much criticism over its lack of diversity (Chung, 2010; Kozlowska, 2016).

Data Analysis

To test the proposed hypotheses and research questions and examine the relationships between PSR, PSB, and viewing behaviors, the researcher performed a bivariate correlation test and four sets of linear regressions. Some demographic variables were excluded from the regressions due to low correlations with the interest variables. After the initial regressions were run, show affinity was found to be such a strong predictor of PSR in both samples that those two regressions were repeated without this variable. The researcher also ran an independent samples t-test to compare pre-watching and post-watching mean PSR scores.

Bivariate Correlations

First, a bivariate correlation was run on all independent, dependent, and control variables in the pre-release sample. Significant correlations were found between PSR and age, show commitment, show affinity, fan level, watching interviews with actors and actresses from the show, the number of episodes watched in a single sitting, and discussing the show with others. Moderate correlations were found between PSR and the number of episodes watched in one day, the use of synchronous communication platforms during viewing, and intent to binge. The results can be seen in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1 Bivariate Correlations Between Measures in the Pre-Release Sample

		1 PSR	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
2	Gender	.054															
3	Age	-.210**	.005														
4	Loneliness	.080	-.053	-.109													
5	Show Commitment	.169*	.022	.079	-.044												
6	Show Affinity	.474**	.202**	-.037	-.041	.206**											
7	Fan Level	367***	.102	-.054	-.026	.247***	626***										
8	Interviews	294***	-.025	-.010	-.052	272***	485***	424***									
9	Conventions	-.063	-.027	.094	.059	-.092	-.063	-.071	-.138*								
10	Luke's Diner Takeovers	-.019	-.044	.082	.181**	-.016	-.131#	-.177*	-.047	.042							
11	Episodes Watched in Last 2 Weeks	.065	-.066	.072	.136#	.030	.059	.058	.067	.066	-.056						
12	Episodes in 1 Day	.144#	-.016	-.065	.083	-.120	.131#	.152*	.176*	-.208**	.027	283***					
13	Episodes in 1 Sitting	179*	-.060	-.059	.014	-.019	.221**	.236**	.160*	-.056	-.029	372***	766***				
14	Alone vs. With Others	.022	-.156*	.010	-.049	-.038	.046	-.046	-.006	.032	-.095	-.086	-.221**	-.133#			
15	Synchronous Comm.	.139#	.086	-.136#	.080	.071	.151*	.149#	.100	.052	-.099	.199**	.144#	.187*	-.002		
16	Discussing/ Experiencing Opinions	.227**	-.091	-.057	.093	.064	.241**	.282***	.295***	.115	-.091	.117	.253**	.211*	.142#	.184*	
17	Intent to Binge	-.118#	-.140*	-.007	-.107	-.089	-.213**	-.287***	-.187**	.055	.067	-.208*	-.200**	-.228**	.022	-.015	.030

Note: Sample size = 211; Cell entries are final-entry Pearson correlations.

# p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Next, a bivariate correlation was run on all independent, dependent, and control variables in the post-watching sample. Significant correlations were found between PSR and PSB, show commitment, show affinity, fan level, and watching interviews of actors. Moderate correlations were found between PSR and the hours between finishing the mini-series and taking the survey and watching alone versus watching with others. There was no significant correlation between PSR and the hours it took to complete watching the mini-series. For PSB, significant correlations were found with PSR, show commitment, show affinity, enjoyment of the mini-series, fan level, watching interviews with actors, attending a Luke's diner takeover, utilizing synchronous communication channels while watching, and discussion and experiencing others' opinions. Hours to complete watching, the measure of binging for this sample, only had significant correlations with watching alone versus watching with others. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 2 on the next page.

Regressions with All Control Variables

Model 1. Model one tested the relationships between pre-existing PSR, recent binging of *Gilmore Girls*, and intent to binge-watch the mini-series. This model deals with H_1 and H_{2A}, which predicted that recent binging of *Gilmore Girls* episodes would predict PSR score and PSR score would predict intent to binge-watch the Netflix mini-series. This regression was run with data collected in the pre-release survey (n = 211). The model explains 34.1% of the total variance in PSR score in the pre-release sample, a figure which is significant at the .001 level. The results of this regression can be seen in Table 3 (p. 47).

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Table 2 Bivariate Correlations Between Measures in the Post-Watching Sample

		1 PSR	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
2	PSB	.348***																		
3	Hours to Complete Watching	.043	-.017																	
4	Gender	.019	.067	-.057																
5	Age	-.023	-.122	.058	.012															
6	Loneliness	.030	.107	-.035	-.085	-.201**														
7	Show Commitment	.232**	.160*	-.018	.031	.197**	-.122													
8	Show Affinity	.553***	.334***	-.004	-.004	-.060	.109	.312***												
9	Enjoyment of Mini-Series	.092	-.369***	.034	-.147	.065	.179*	.102	.251***											
10	Fan Level	.363***	.287***	-.124	.023	-.052	.157*	.339***	.690***	.259***										
11	Interviews	.206**	.233**	-.106	.098	.103	-.032	.335***	.395***	.132#	.528***									
12	Conventions	-.009	-.103	.026	.099	-.043	-.064	.048	-.023	-.013	-.119	-.077								
13	Luke's Diner Takeovers	.100	.158*	.053	-.090	-.044	.007	-.152*	.003	-.083	-.095	-.068	-.039							
14	Episodes Watched Before	.107	.045	-.083	-.015	.174*	.139	.128	.197*	.203*	.152#	.028	-.019	.104						
15	Episodes in 1 Day	.015	-.040	-.088	-.010	-.066	.190*	.045	.072	.168#	.180*	.022	.056	.065	.505***					
16	Episodes in 1 Sitting	.082	.021	-.048	-.074	.021	.156#	.141	.137	.135	.193*	.087	.034	.109	.535***	.853***				
17	Hours Between Watching and Survey	-.131#	-.031	-.005	.024	-.049	.042	-.037	-.165*	-.106	-.097	.176*	-.078	-.044	-.005	-.005	-.103			
18	Alone vs. With Others	-.131#	-.009	.177*	.060	.039	-.049	.050	.050	-.026	-.031	.038	.044	-.111	-.210	-.138	-.146#	-.026		
19	Synchronous Comm.	.016	.177*	-.112	.163*	-.036	.002	.113	.230**	.043	.268***	.393***	-.094	-.073	.039	.015	.008	.326***	.031	
20	Discussing/ Experiencing opinions	.128	.194*	-.138	.035	-.049	.133	.136	.248**	.131	.453***	.445***	-.220*	-.046	.114	.084	.114	.047	-.032	.387***

Note: Sample size = 178; Cell entries are final-entry Pearson correlations.

# $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

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Table 3 Pre-Release Sample: Predictors of PSR

	PSR Score (Model 1)
Block 1: Control Variables	
Age	-.187*
Gender	-.037
Race	-.068
Loneliness	.125
Show Affinity	.476***
Show Commitment	.086
Fan Level	.002
Interviews	-.020
Conventions	-.064
Luke's Diner Takeover	.015
Block 2: Independent Variables	
Episodes Watched Last 2 Weeks	-.039
Intent to Binge-Watch Mini-Series	.021
Watching with Others (Physically)	.059
Watching with Others (Synchronous Comm. Channels)	-.015
Total R^2 (%)	34.1***

Note: Sample size = 211; Cell entries are final-entry linear regression standardized Beta coefficients.
[#] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Pre-Existing PSR Score. Mean PSR score in the pre-release sample was 4.77 ($s^2 = 1.30$).

In previous studies, this measurement has been used on a 5-point scale with mean scores ranging

from 2.70 ($s^2 = .65$; A. M. Rubin et al., 1985) to 3.86 ($s^2 = .67$; Hoffner, 1996). Because this study

used a 7-point scale, variability was higher. However, the mean score for this sample was not

significantly different from those previously reported, and in fact fell within the interval between

2.70 and 3.86 once converted to a 5-point scale ($\bar{x} = 3.51$; see equation used for conversion in

Appendix C). PSR score was found to be significantly predicted by show affinity and age. Eyal

and Cohen (2006) linked show affinity with parasocial relationships, so these results are

unsurprising. Age negatively predicted PSR score, suggesting that younger viewers are more

likely to form parasocial relationships with media personae, at least for this media text and

sample of fans. Gender was not found to have any effect on PSR score in this sample.

Episodes Watched in the Last 2 Weeks. Reports ranged from 1 to 154 episodes; the sample mean was 18.5 ($s^2 = 24.59$). 41.5% of the sample had watched 14 or more episodes within the last two weeks, equaling one episode or more per day. This coincides with a definition of binge-watching used in Pittman and Sheehan's (2015) study on binging motivations and suggests that over a third of participants in this sample binged on *Gilmore Girls* in the weeks leading up to the mini-series' release. However, no significant relationship was found between recent binging activity and a participant's PSR score, giving no support to H_1 (see Table 3).

Intent to Binge-Watch Mini-Series. Mean score for intent to binge-watch was 1.57 ($s^2 = .98$), with 64% of participants reporting an intent to finish the entire mini-series on the day it was released. H_{2A} received no support in this sample, as intent to binge-watch did not significantly predict a participant's PSR score (see Table 3).

Model 2. Model two tested the relationships between post-watching PSR score and the interest variables: namely, hours to complete watching, PSB score, watching with others (physically and via synchronous communication channels), and discussing the media with others or experiencing others' opinions of the media. This model was built to investigate H_{2B}, H_3, and H_4, as well as RQ_{1A} and RQ_{2A}. The regression was run using data from the post-watching sample (n = 176) and included all control variables. The model explains 56.9% of the total variance in PSR score in the post-watching sample, a figure which is significant at the .001 level. The results of this regression can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4 Post-Watching Sample: Predictors of PSR, PSB, and Hours to Complete Watching

	PSR Score (Model 2)	PSB Score (Model 3)	Hours to Complete Watching (Model 4)
Block 1: Control Variables			
Age	-.003	-.148	.132
Gender	-.047	.031	.042
Race	-.285*	.007	-.161
Loneliness	-.159	.120	-.024

Show Affinity	.583***	-.007	.003
Show Commitment	.011	.026	-.101
Hours Between Watching and Survey (Recency)	.046	-.081	.086
Fan Level	.029	.135	-.186
Interviews	-.041	-.067	-.123
Conventions	-.023	-.013	-.034
Luke's Diner Takeover	.090	.000	-.023
Episodes Watched Before Release	.098	.228*	-.241
Enjoyment of Mini-Series	.104	-.535***	.170
Block 2: Independent Variables			
Hours to Complete Watching	.173#	-.023	1
PSB Score	.287*	1	-.043
PSR Score	1	.306*	.348#
Watching with Others (Physically)	.045	-.011	.218*
Watching with Others (Synchronous Comm. Channels)	.084	.025	-.107
Discussing/Fan Sites	.051	.192*	.088
Total R^2 (%)	56.9***	58.0***	42.7#

Note: Sample size = 178; Cell entries are final-entry linear regression standardized Beta coefficients.
# p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Post-Watching PSR Score. In this sample, the highest score reported was 7, and the

lowest was 1. Mean PSR score in the post-watching sample was 4.918 (s^2 = 1.28). This mean

score was converted to that of a 5-point scale, using the same equation that was used to convert

pre-release PSR score, and was found to be within the interval between 2.7 and 3.86 ($\bar{x}$ = 3.61)

which were reported in earlier studies using this scale. Again, variability in response was higher

for this sample than in previous research, but was not significantly different from the variance

found in the pre-release sample which used the same 7-point scale. PSR score was found to

relate significantly to show affinity in this sample, as it was in the pre-release sample and

previous research (Eyal & Cohen, 2006). Once again, gender did not seem to have any

significant effect on PSR score in this sample. PSR score was not significantly related to the

number of episodes of *Gilmore Girls* watched before the release of the mini-series, which

corroborates the finding from the pre-release sample. PSR score was also not significantly

predicted by the recency of watching, show commitment, or fan score, unlike previous findings

(Eyal & Cohen, 2006).

Hours to Complete Watching. The lowest reported answer in this measure was 6 hours,

which is the approximate length of all four episodes of *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*, and the

highest reported answer was 336 hours, or approximately 14 days. The mean number of hours it

took respondents to complete the mini-series was 27.997 ($s^2 = 45.09$). Hypothesis H_{2B} claims that

binging the mini-series will positively predict a participant's PSR score. There was a moderately

significant relationship found between the hours it took to complete the mini-series and PSR

score; however, that relationship is positive suggesting that the longer it took a participant to

finish the mini-series, the higher his or her PSR score. H_{2B} is not supported by the data but the

opposite relationship is moderately supported: binge-watching the mini-series *negatively* predicts

PSR score.

PSB Score. Mean score for PSB in this sample was 3.656 ($s^2 = 1.16$). In previous studies,

sample means for this measure have been reported as 2.16 ($s^2 = .65$; Eyal & Cohen, 2006) and

1.74 and 2.14 (Cohen, 2003) on a 5-point scale. Once the mean from this sample was converted

to a 5-point measure ($\bar{x} = 2.77$), it was found to be significantly higher than those previously

reported. As predicted in H_4, PSR score was a strong, positive predictor of PSB distress; thus,

there is strong support for H_4.

Watching with Others. Mean score for the first measure (physically watching with others)

was 2.57 ($s^2 = 1.72$), with 60.8% of respondents reporting watching the show mostly or only by

themselves. This measure was not found to significantly predict PSR score. The second measure

deals with synchronous communication channels (such as text, twitter, snapchat, etc.) with mean

score coming in at 1.66 ($s^2 = .96$). Sixty percent of respondents said they never used these channels, and another 20% said they rarely did. Synchronized co-viewing was not found to have any significant relationship with PSR score. These two measures give little support to RQ_{1A}.

Discussing/Experiencing Others' Opinions. Mean score for this measure was reported as 2.91 ($s^2 = 1.27$) with 45.2% percent of participants reporting having visited fan sites or discussed the show with others "a few times" and 18.3% reporting having done so every day in these periods. No significant relationship was found between this measure and PSR score, and therefore no support for RQ_{2A} exists in this sample.

Model 3. Model three was concerned with the relationships between PSB score and the interest variables: hours to complete watching, watching with others, and discussing the media with others or experiencing others' opinions of the media. This model was built to investigate hypothesis H_3 and research questions RQ_{1B} and RQ_{2B}. The regression was run using data from the post-watching sample (n = 176) and included all control variables. The model explains 58% of the total variance in PSB score in the post-watching sample, a figure which is significant at the .001 level. The results of this regression can be seen in Table 4.

PSB Score. As previously discussed, PSB score was significantly higher in this sample than in previous studies ($\bar{x}$ = 3.66 on 7-point scale; 2.77 on 5-point scale). Contrasting to previous findings on parasocial breakup, PSB score was not predicted by age, loneliness, or attachment style (Cohen, 2003 & 2004, Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Gusé, 2011). It did, however, have a strong negative effect form participants' enjoyment of the mini-series, suggesting that those who did not enjoy the new content felt higher levels of break-up distress with their favorite characters on the show.

Hours to Complete Watching. The number of hours it took participants to complete watching the mini-series was not found to relate with their parasocial breakup scores. This finding negates H_3 which expected that binging the mini-series would positively predict PSB score; however, because binging was moderately, negatively related to PSR score, and PSR score was significantly related to PSB score, it may be that the relationship between binging and PSB is mediated by PSR. Further research should be done to investigate the relationships between these three variables.

Watching with Others. Physically watching the mini-series with others, versus watching alone, did not significantly predict PSB score. Nor did using synchronous communication channels while watching alone relate significantly to PSB score. In regard to RQ_{1B}, these findings suggest that watching with others, as opposed to watching alone, does not have any effect on PSB distress.

Discussing/Experiencing Others' Opinions. Discussing the show and its characters with others and experiencing others' opinions about the show was a significant, positive predictor of PSB score. This is an interesting avenue for further study on the phenomenon of parasocial breakup and supports the notion of RQ_{2B} that there is a relationship between these two variables.

Model 4. Model four was interested in the relationships between binge-watching behavior, measured as hours it took participants to complete watching the mini-series, and other viewing/fan behaviors. These other behaviors include watching with others versus watching alone and discussing the media with others or experiencing others' opinions of the media. This model was built to investigate research questions RQ_3 and RQ_4. The regression was run using data from the post-watching sample (n = 176) and included all control variables. The model only

explains 21.3% of the total variance in PSB score in the post-watching sample and that figure is not significant. The results of this regression can be seen in Table 4.

Hours to Complete Watching. As previously discussed, the mean of this measurement as reported in this sample was 27.997 ($s^2 = 45.09$). None of the control or demographic variables were significant predictors of the hours it took to complete watching. However, PSR was a moderately significant predictor for this measure, as previously stated in the discussion on model two.

Watching with Others. Physically watching the mini-series with others was also a positive predictor of the hours it took to complete watching. This finding suggests that those who watch alone are more likely to consume the content quicker than those who watch with others. There was no noteworthy relationship between co-viewing using synchronous communication channels and the hours it took to complete watching the mini-series. These results suggest that, as laid out in RQ$_3$, physically watching with others does have an effect on viewers binging behavior, while watching with others over mediated channels does not. Further research should be conducted to explore the motivations behind physically binge-watching with others and the interactions between these variables.

Discussing/Experiencing Others' Opinions. The relationship between the hours it took a participant to finish watching the mini-series and how often they discussed the show with others or visited *Gilmore Girls* fan sites was insignificant. This finding supports a negative answer to RQ$_4$.

Regressions Without Show Affinity

Because show affinity was such a strong predictor of PSR in regression models 1 and 2, these regressions were rerun with the show affinity variable removed. Results of these regressions can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5 Predictors of PSR in Both Samples – Show Affinity Removed

	PSR Score Pre-Release (Model 5)	PSR Score Post-Watching (Model 6)
Block 1: Control Variables		
Age	-.173#	-.092
Gender	.000	-.198#
Race	.004	-.169
Loneliness	.100	-.186
Show Affinity	-.007	.003
Show Commitment	.044	.009
Hours Between Watching and Survey (Recency)	--	-.074
Fan Level	.176#	.227
Interviews	.136	.099
Conventions	-.059	.073
Luke's Diner Takeover	-.006	.117
Episodes Watched Before	-.002	.156
Enjoyment of Mini-Series	--	.191
Block 2: Independent		
Hours to Complete Watching	--	.247*
Intent to Watch Speed	.013	--
PSB Score	--	.450**
PSR Score	1	1
Watching with Others (Physically)	.122	.066
Watching with Others (Synchronous Comm. Channels)	.049	.078
Discussing/Fan Sites	.112	.088
Total R^2 (%)	22.0*	43.4*

Note: Sample size = 211 in pre-release, 178 in post-watching; Cell entries are final-entry linear regression standardized Beta coefficients.
# p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Model 5. Model five analyzed the pre-release sample predictors of PSR without the show affinity variable. This model explains only 22% of the total variance in PSR, which is less than the original model. Furthermore, the significance of age as a predictor was decreased in this model; however, fan level became a moderate predictor of PSR.

Model 6. Model six was interested in the predictors of PSR in the post-watching sample without the show affinity variable. This model explains 43.4% of the total variance in PSR, again less than the original model including all of the control variables. However, the relationship between PSR and hours to complete watching became significant in this model despite having been only moderately significant in the previous model.

Independent Samples T-Test

Comparing Pre-Release PSR and Post-Watching PSR. To evaluate the difference in pre-release and post-watching PSR scores, an independent samples t-test was conducted on the mean PSR score in the two samples. Mean PSR for the pre-release sample was 4.77 ($s^2 = 1.30$; n = 211) and mean PSR for the post-watching sample was 4.92 ($s^2 = 1.28$; n = 176). These means were not found to differ significantly ($Z_{\alpha/2} = .793$).

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Mini-Series Reception

An issue with all revivals of previously discontinued texts is that they may not live up to the original programming. This is a particularly poignant problem for *Gilmore Girls* as the revival came almost a decade after the initial discontinuation, in a different format, and on an entirely new platform. However, Netflix was able to get all the original actors to return for the revival, along with Amy Sherman-Paladino, the show's original creator. Fan reactions were mostly favorable, though some found the mini-series slightly less than faithful to the original flavor of the show. Rotten Tomatoes reports an audience score of 74%, but critics gave the revival a score of 88% and came to the consensus that "*Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* provides a faithful and successful revival of the quirky, sweet, and beloved series fans fell in love with over a decade ago" ("*Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life*", n.d.). Overall, the revival was considered a success by fans and critics and would have provided fans with new parasocial interactions with their favorite characters.

Study Findings

The data in this study support some previous findings in research on PSRs and shed light on the connection between PSRs and certain viewing behaviors. Like Eyal and Cohen's (2006) study, show affinity was found to be a strong predictor of PSR strength. Because the measures of show affinity and PSR intensity are so similar in wording, this correlation is unsurprising (see Appendix A). Another previous finding that was supported by these data is the relationship

between PSR intensity and PSB distress. Again, the measures used for these two variables are similar in wording and concept, which may account for their high correlation in several studies (Cohen, 2003 & 2004; Eyal & Cohen, 2006, Lather & Moyer-Gusé, 2011).

However, some findings of this research seem to counter those of previous studies. In 2006, Eyal and Cohen found a strong correlation between show affinity and PSB distress, and between loneliness and PSB distress. In the current research, show affinity only moderately predicted PSB distress, though there was a significant correlation between these two variables. In addition, no relationship was found between PSB and loneliness. Nevertheless, show affinity was strongly correlated with, and a predictor of, PSR intensity, and PSR intensity, as previously discussed, both correlated with and predicted PSB. Therefore, PSR may act as a mediating variable in the relationship between PSB and show affinity. Many previous studies have also found that women report higher PSR scores than men, but that was not the case for either sample surveyed in this study (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cohen, 2003 & 2004; Eyal & Cohen, 2006). This may be due to the fact that both samples in the present research were overwhelmingly composed of women; had a greater number of men been included these results may have been more significant. Cohen (2003 & 2004) that age was negatively correlated with PSB distress. This finding was not replicated here. It could be that Cohen had a more dispersed sample in terms of age or it could be that *Gilmore Girls* fans are more likely to be of a certain age range, as discussed in the sample section of this paper. In the pre-release sample, age was a significant negative predictor of PSR score, which is typically highly correlated with PSB (though PSB was not measured on this questionnaire), and may act as a mediator in this relationship; however, these results were not replicated in the post-watching data. This finding is surprising as the previous research has mostly linked PSR with older viewers rather than younger ones. It could be

the case that as younger generations have proportionally more mediated experiences and interactions than older generations, they are also more likely to form PSRs. Future research should further explore the link between youth and PSI as computer-mediated communication continues to propagate.

In 2015, Pittman and Tefertiller's study on tweets and "connected viewing" found that asynchronous shows that were available to binge-watch were more likely to be tweeted about and "co-viewed." However, only 20% of respondents reported using communication channels like twitter with any frequency while watching the mini-series. This could have been the result of the show having been off the air for many years, and online chatter about *Gilmore Girls* having been significantly reduced from when it was in its prime. Another explanation is that since the mini-series was new content, rather than content that had been available for quite a few years, participants were hesitant to post on sites like twitter as a means of avoiding spoilers. There seems to be an understood time period in which one should not post spoilers online after the release of new content; for a full series release on Netflix or similar streaming sites, this time period seems to be about three days. Perhaps fans of the show were abiding this "understood" guideline and saving their posts for a later time.

Perhaps the most surprising finding of this study is the complete lack of fan level and other measures of fan activity predicting any of the three interest variables: most notably, PSR intensity, despite the strong correlation found between fan level and PSR. In 2009, Earnheardt and Haridakis found a strong, positive relationship between respondents' levels of fandom and intensity of PSRs with professional athletes. This study "demonstrated [that] television viewers vary in their relationships with mediated characters based on levels of interaction with those characters" (Earnheardt & Haridakis, 2009, p. 44). However, in the current study, interaction or

"fandom" was not found to have the same impact on PSRs when other variables were taken into account. Conceivably, the measures of fandom varied in these two studies or Earnheardt and Haridakis (2009) did not take control variables into account in their analysis. It is also very likely that mediated relationships with real-life athletes vary in their formation from those with fictional characters. Moreover, the questionnaires utilized other measures (i.e., show affinity, show commitment, PSR) that might have been more accurate gages of what defines "fans" and which explained a large amount of the variance in these models. Therefore, these measures which were specifically added to examine fandom most likely didn't have much variance left to detect in the regressions. This is supported by model five, in which fan level became a moderate predictor of PSR when show affinity was removed from the control block.

Another result from these two samples that is in alignment with previous findings is the correlation between recent viewing of previously-aired *Gilmore Girls* episodes and PSR intensity in the pre-release sample. Though overall viewing in the two weeks leading up to the mini-series release was not correlated with PSR, episodes viewed in one day was moderately correlated and episodes viewed in one sitting was significantly correlated. These results were not repeated in the post-watching sample however. Many studies of PSR have positively linked time spent viewing media with parasocial relationships (A. M. Rubin et al., 1985; Gleich, 1997; Grant, Guthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991). In these studies, "time spent viewing media" was often measured as total television viewing, rather than the amount of viewing of one specific text. It could be the context of *Gilmore Girls* having halted production of new material for 8 years that makes this a special case; although, if that were true the results from both samples should have been similar. Perhaps those people in the pre-release sample had been consuming the previously aired episodes for the first time, thus allowing a new PSR to take shape and grow while those in the post-release

sample had been avid watchers prior to this two-week window and were therefore rewatching episodes and not being provided with new materials for their PSRs to grow.

On the other hand, recent viewing of previously-aired *Gilmore Girls* episodes was a moderate predictor of PSB distress in the post-watching sample, despite a lack of correlation between these two variables. Because this is the first study to test this relationship, there are no previous findings on this relationship with which to compare. These results might be erroneous, or they might suggest that by (re)watching previously-aired episodes, especially episodes from the last season of the show, viewers were reminded of what they had been missing out on since the show ended in 2007. It was almost as if they were experiencing the initial "breakup" all over again, whereas participants who watched fewer previously-aired episodes were not experiencing the same déjà vu. These findings go hand-in-hand with the strong, negative relationship found between enjoyment of the mini-series and PSB distress. While overall enjoyment of the mini-series in the sample was above-average ($\bar{x}$ = 4.86; s^2 = 1.53), almost 20% of respondents reported scores of three or less on a 7-point scale. These participants who reported lower levels of enjoyment of *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* also reported higher PBS distress. One explanation for this finding is that those who did enjoy the mini-series were still feeling engaged and connected with the new Netflix content when they completed the survey. At the same time, for those who did not enjoy it, the mini-series might have compounded their original breakup distress because they felt it was not the same as it had been before.

This "compounding" of PBS distress would also help to explain the significantly high levels of PSB reported in this sample ($\bar{x}$ = 2.77). The highest PSB score previously recorded was in Eyal and Cohen's (2006) study of *Friends* viewers after the very last episode of the series was broadcast ($\bar{x}$ = 2.16). The mean score from the present sample is significantly higher, despite

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similar mean scores of PSR intensity in each study. It is unclear if this significant finding is due to the fact that *Gilmore Girls* fans were experiencing a revival of their PSRs and thus had repeated PSB distress while *Friends* fans were experiencing PBS distress for the first time, or if the content of *Gilmore Girls* itself is more likely to incur greater levels of distress. Furthermore, it is not entirely clear if *Gilmore Girls* is finished as there has been speculation about future episodes by both fans of the show and its creators (Yandoli, 2016). This speculation has been proliferated by the final line of the mini-series, which left viewers with a major cliffhanger (Rory, one of the show's two lead characters, announces that she is pregnant). In a content analysis of online fan posts about *The West Wing*, Williams (2011) claims that "It can be argued that the show itself encourages continued attachment as… the final episode did offer closure for each character, suggesting what the next stage of their fictional lives would involve. Thus, in contrast to series that end ambiguously such as *The Sopranos*, *TWW* leaves relatively few storylines in a state of uncertainty" (p. 275). While Rory's announcement at the end of *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* would allow fans to imagine what the next stage of her life may look like, it is still an ambiguous ending that left many fans reeling. Amy Sherman-Palladino emphasized the ambiguousness of this ending, saying that she "very intentionally wanted an 'open ending' for Rory instead of portraying a cliché, happily-ever-after where she figures out solutions to each and every one of her problems" (Yandoli, 2016, para. 17). According to Williams' (2011) claim, this unresolved storyline may work to dissuade continued attachment with the show and its characters, and may serve as an explanation for the higher levels of PSB distress found in this study.

However, more recently there has been chatter online about yet another return of the Gilmore girls. Despite Sherman-Palladino's claims that Rory's open ending was the ending she

wanted, Netflix has been in preliminary talks with the showrunner to continue the narrative (Ausiello, 2017). Because of this uncertainty about whether the show really is over, it should be noted that the distress felt by fans cannot necessarily be called "breakup" distress. Instead, a new concept in the theory of parasocial interaction needs to be introduced: a parasocial "break." Like Lather and Moyer-Gusé's (2011) study during the writers' strike, there is a difference between when fans believe a show is over and when they believe a show is over *for a while*. Future research on parasocial breakup distress should delineate the differences between these two phenomena and study them as individual concepts.

Notably, mean PSR scores for the pre-release and post-release samples were not significantly different. Because this was not a panel study, those numbers are not indicative that PSR intensity stayed the same for any one participant. They do suggest, however, that the new content displayed in *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* and the format of the mini-series did not have an effect on respondents' PSRs with the show's characters. In future research, a panel study is recommended in order to measure change in PSR after exposure to media in both binge and non-binge scenarios.

In direct opposition of H_{2B}, binge-watching the mini-series was a negative predictor of PSR score (or rather hours to complete watching the mini-series was a positive predictor of PSR). This relationship was only moderate in the original model, but became significant in the model with show affinity removed from the control block. In a previous study, Perse and Rubin (1989) found that a sustained period of exposure was a strong predictor of PSR. However, there remains a question of directionality in this relationship: does sustained exposure create a stronger PSR, or does a stronger PSR motivate sustained exposure? It is also important to clearly define "sustained exposure." For this study, the term was thought to apply to binge-watching, as that

behavior ensures that a viewer will be exposed to the media persona for a prolonged number of hours. However, it could also be interpreted as shorter periods of exposure over a longer period of time; Perse and Rubin (1989) were specifically looking at soap opera viewers in their study, a format that releases one new episode every weekday, so their findings support the latter definition more that the former. The results from this data set also support the latter definition.

Another possible explanation, for this sample in particular, is that viewers with high levels of PSR wanted their exposure to the new media to last longer rather than speed through it all in one day. This idea of "savoring" the content is reminiscent of one of the promotional infographics that Netflix released showing which series are more likely to be binged, or "devoured," and which were less likely to be binged, what they called "savoring." *Gilmore Girls* would be considered a dramatic comedy, which falls just towards the "devour" side near the middle of Netflix's scale (Dwyer, 2016). While this is incongruent with the results of this study, it is unclear how Netflix determines what a "devouring" looks like. It could be that by Netflix's standards, what appears to be a savoring of *Gilmore Girls* in the current data is actually more of a binge compared to the consumption of other genres of shows. However, the idea that fans who have a pre-existing PSR with characters on a show are more likely to "savor" the limited new content of that media text is appealing. It is as if they are attempting to postpone the inevitable "breakup" (or break) by taking their time with the mini-series. This is similar to the way readers are hesitant to finish the last few chapters of a good book, dreading the end of a great story.

Again, directionality is an important factor to examine in future research, as it could be that taking longer to watch is actually what leads to PSRs rather than PSRs informing how the content is viewed. While binge-watching the mini-series was not found to be a predictor of PSB,

PSR was found to moderately predict PSB, so it is possible that PSR acts as a mediator in the relationship between binging and PSB.

Two other results from this study merit discussion. First, there was a positive correlation between discussing *Gilmore Girls* with others, visiting and posting on fan sites, and generally experiencing others' opinions of the show and PSB distress. It is possible that respondents who talked about the show with others or read others' comments about it, especially about the fact that it was over, might have felt that the ending or "breakup" was more real than those who did not. In a study on the way fan activities effect PSRs, O'Donovan (2016) found that increased participation in fan activities led to greater levels of PSR, which in turn led to more fan activities. O' Donovan claims that "Fan people like all the benefits that they have received from participation which means that they are likely to keep repeating the action to continue gaining the rewards which creates a cycle effect in which parasocial relationships are going to continue to grow stronger" (2016, p. 57). In other words, fandom and parasocial relationships exist in a spiral relationship, but one that spirals upwards rather than down.

However, in this sample the connection was found between fan activities and PSB; there was no significant correlation between these behaviors and PSR. It would make sense that an increased PSR would lead to an increase in PSB distress, but because the link between PSR and fan activities does not exist another explanation is needed. One possible reason for this is that there was only one question for this measure of "fan activities" included on the questionnaires in this study. In order to further investigate this relationship, better measures will be needed that properly delineate between involved discussion of the media and passively visiting a fan site, along with other fan behaviors like writing, sharing, and reading fan fiction.

The second relationship found in the data that deserves discussion was between the number of hours it took to complete watching the mini-series and physically watching with others. The most feasible explanation for this connection is that in order to watch the show with other people, schedules need to be coordinated and proper time set aside. Most people cannot commit to a 6-hour viewing party, especially around the holidays when Netflix released the new *Gilmore Girls* episodes. It is more likely that those who watched with others were able to watch one episode every few days or over a couple weekends.

Implications for Theory

Though further research needs to be done, the results of this study suggest that shorter periods of parasocial interaction with a media persona over a longer span of time are more likely to create parasocial relationships between viewers and personae than longer periods of exposure in a short span of time. On the other hand, it could be that having an existing PSR with a media persona motivates a slower consumption of new content that is known to have an end (or an indefinite break in production). Studies should be done to further investigate the directionality of this relationship. If binging is less likely to create a PSR between viewer and persona, and therefore less likely to cause PSB distress, future studies should also evaluate other explanations for the "post binge watch depression" experienced by bingers (Karmakar & Kruger, 2016).

Furthermore, similar to what Giles (2002) suggested in his model (see Appendix D) of the "stages in the formation of a parasocial relationship," there appears to be a significant connection between discussing a media persona with others or experiencing others' opinions of a media persona and PSB distress (p. 297). Giles says "If the user is highly influenced by peers, the discussion may substantially color the person judgments made in the next viewing episode" which in turn would affect whether a PSR is formed (2002, p. 297). However, the current results

suggest that discussion with others was more likely to fuel a viewers' distress after the PSR had

to come to an end, or a "break," than in the actual formation of the relationship itself. Whether

this was because the PSR had already been formed when the show had originally aired is

unknown. Future research should examine this relationship in more detail, separating discussion

with others and exposure to others' opinions into two separate concepts, as well as incorporating

other behaviors inherent in fan culture.

Previous studies on PSI that have looked at age as a predictor focused mostly on elderly

populations. In contrast, results from the pre-release sample in this study suggest that younger

viewers are more likely to form PSRs with *Gilmore Girls* characters. These findings were not

repeated in the post-watching sample, and therefore may be a fluke finding, but age may need to

be revived as a variable of interest in PSI theory. As younger generations spend more and more

time on mediated experiences, they may be more receptive to parasocial relationships.

Study Limitations

As alluded to in the previous discussion, there were some issues with this study, the most

glaring of which seem to be the measurements for a few different variables. The question

regarding discussing the media and experiencing others opinions of the media should have been

broken down into narrower components. Actively participating in a discussion is much different

than passively scrolling through online posts and comments and those differences need to be

taken into account. The measure regarding "connected viewing" practices might need to be

altered as well. It is possible that some participants were unsure what "synchronous"

communication meant. It is also possible that the question was not clear about the time period in

which that synchronous communication could take place. Lastly, the questions regarding fan

behaviors should be evaluated for validity in measuring fandom level. Another issue with the

study was a large dropout rate for participants. Initially the sample sizes were much larger, but many participants were excluded from final data analysis because they did not complete the entire questionnaire. It would be pertinent to examine the format of the two questionnaires and see where improvements could be made to lessen those dropout rates.

Another sizable limitation of this study was that it looked only at one media text: *Gilmore Girls*. Though this show has a large fan base, the findings of this research cannot be generalized to other genres of shows, or even to other fandoms of similar texts. Furthermore, because *Gilmore Girls* has such a female-centric fan base, the majority of participants were women. Results might differ greatly for a more gender-balanced show or a male-centric show; future studies should examine different genres of media texts and demographically different fandoms to see how those variables effect PSRs, PSB, and binge-watching behaviors. This may also explain why some results of this study are in opposition to previous findings within PSI research.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Despite its deficiencies, there were some significant findings in this study that contribute to the corpus of research for both parasocial interaction and binge-watching. The negative relationship between binging and PSR offers a new avenue for further research; particularly, the directionality of this relationship should be investigated. Additionally, forthcoming studies should further examine the effects of discussing the media with others and experiencing others' opinions of the media on parasocial breakup distress and parasocial relationships. However, these variables should be properly differentiated into separate measures in the future. Moreover, a mixed method approach like that proposed by Davisson and Booth (2007) is suggested to examine fan behaviors in future studies; qualitative data on the way fans cope with a "break" from the objects of their fandom and critical analyses of fan fiction would help to explain the statistical results found in this study.

The elevated levels of PSB distress found in this study, and their connection to the enjoyment of the mini-series, provide other areas of potential examination. Specifically, whether certain shows or media personae are more distressing to lose than others should be looked at, and the amount of time that passes from when those personae were lost to when PSB is measured should be considered as well.

The regression models in this study explained a significant amount of the variance for PSR intensity and PSB distress but there is still much to be discovered about the motivations and effects of binge-watching. Further research on this phenomenon should investigate other causes

of "post binge watch depression" (Karmakar & Kruger, 2016). It would also be incredibly

beneficial to the corpus of binge-watching research to define binge-watching as a concept, with a

concrete classification of what viewing behaviors count as a "binge."

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE #1

Thank you so much for participating in this survey! This study is interested in viewers' behaviors and perceptions surrounding the television show Gilmore Girls and the characters the show depicts. This survey should be taken prior to watching the Netflix mini-series Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life.

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The study is being done by Caitlin Dyche, a master's student at the University of Alabama, and Andrew Billings, a professor at the University of Alabama. This study is being conducted to better understand the viewing behaviors and character perceptions surrounding the show Gilmore Girls. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a short survey. This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. The only cost to you from this study is your time. This research is non-sensitive in nature, and thus we do not anticipate any risk to you as a result of your participation. There are no direct benefits to you as a result of your participation; however, the research may contribute to the body of research on media effects. You are free to discontinue the survey at any point. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop any time by closing your browser. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama. The individual data you provide here will not be shared with any other person or persons. No identifying information will be collected; as such, the researchers will not be able to associate your name with any of the information you provide. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Caitlin Dyche at cdyche@crimson.ua.edu or (205) 348-8658. If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1 (877) 820-3066.By clicking the below "proceed" button, you agree to the conditions described above.

❍ I agree, proceed
❍ I do not agree, do not proceed

All of your responses will be kept completely confidential, so please answer the following questions as fully and honestly as you can.

First, please provide some general information about yourself.

What is your gender?
❍ Male
❍ Female
❍ Other

What is your age in years?

What is your race or ethnic origin? Check all that may apply.
- ❑ Caucasian/White
- ❑ Hispanic / Latino
- ❑ Black / African American
- ❑ Asian / Pacific Islander
- ❑ Native American / American Indian
- ❑ Other

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
- ○ Less than high school diploma
- ○ High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- ○ Some college credit
- ○ Associate degree / Bachelor's degree
- ○ Some post-graduate credit
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Doctorate

What is your annual household income?
- ○ Less than $40,000
- ○ $40,000 -$79,999
- ○ $80,000-$119,999
- ○ $120,000-$159,999
- ○ $160,000 or more

Following are four general relationship styles that people often report. Please select the style that best describes you or is closest to the way you are.

- ❍ Style A: It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.
- ❍ Style B: I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
- ❍ Style C: I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.
- ❍ Style D: I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

Now please rate each of the relationships styles above to indicate how well or poorly each description corresponds to your general relationship style.

Style A: It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Style B: I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Style C: I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Style D: I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often feel in tune with people around me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have many friends.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often lack companionship.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel alone.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with my social life.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel there are people I can talk to.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel there are people around me but not with me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have trouble making friends.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel isolated from others.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel close to other people.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I generally find that people want to be my friends.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often feel my relationships with others are not meaningful.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The following questions are concerned with your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding the television show Gilmore Girls.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often search for information about Gilmore Girls in magazines, online, and in other television shows or films.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I think that my life is a lot like that of the characters on Gilmore Girls.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I wish I had friends like the characters on Gilmore Girls.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I enjoy watching Gilmore Girls.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Gilmore Girls is very important to me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I do not relate at all to the characters on Gilmore Girls.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I rarely think about Gilmore Girls before or after I watch the show.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often watch reruns of Gilmore Girls.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
When Gilmore Girls comes on I switch the channel.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I really get involved in what happens to the characters on Gilmore Girls.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Watching Gilmore Girls is a waste of my time.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I really get the characters on Gilmore Girls.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
While viewing Gilmore Girls I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the program.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

How committed were you to the show Gilmore Girls while it was still being broadcast?
- ○ 1 = "I watched a few of the episodes when it was convenient"
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ 6
- ○ 7 = "I never missed an episode and even taped/recorded the ones I missed"

How many full seasons of Gilmore Girls have you watched? (If you have watched 5 and a half seasons, you would say 5 full seasons)
- ○ Less than 1 season
- ○ 1-2 full seasons
- ○ 3-4 full seasons
- ○ 5-6 full seasons
- ○ All 7 seasons

Have you watched any episodes of Gilmore Girls within the last two weeks?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

About how many episodes have you watched in the last two weeks?

How frequently did you watch Gilmore Girls over the last two weeks?
- ○ Just once
- ○ A few times
- ○ More than four times
- ○ Every other day
- ○ Every day

What is the maximum number of episodes you watched in one day?

What is the maximum number of episodes you watched in one sitting?

Did you watch these episodes by yourself or with others in the same room?
○ Only by myself
○ Mostly by myself but sometime with others
○ An even mixture of by myself and with others
○ Mostly with others but sometimes by myself
○ Only with others

If you were physically alone while watching, did you utilize synchronous communication platforms such as text, twitter, snapchat, Facebook messenger, Skype, etc. to communicate with others who were co-watching the show with you?
○ Never
○ Rarely
○ Sometimes
○ Often
○ Always

Have you posted on any Gilmore Girls fan sites or discussed Gilmore Girls with any of your friends/colleagues in the last two weeks?
○ Yes
○ No

If yes, how frequently did you do so?
○ Just once
○ A few times
○ More than four times
○ Every other day
○ Every day

Do you consider yourself a fan of Gilmore Girls?
○ Yes
○ No

How big of a fan are you?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy the show. : I live and breathe Gilmore Girls, I consider myself part of the Gilmore Girls family.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How often, if ever, have you watched interviews with actors/actresses from Gilmore Girls?
- ◯ Never
- ◯ Just once
- ◯ A few times
- ◯ More than four times
- ◯ More than ten times
- ◯ Every time you can

Have you ever attended a Gilmore Girls convention or panel?
- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Did you attend any of the Luke's Diner takeovers that occurred in October?
- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Who is your favorite Gilmore Girls character? If more than one, separate each name with a comma.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I like my favorite Gilmore Girls character.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to meet my favorite Gilmore Girls character in person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like to compare my ideas with what my favorite Gilmore Girls character says.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My favorite Gilmore Girls character makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like hearing the voice of my favorite Gilmore Girls character in my home.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you intend to watch Netflix's Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life mini-series?
○ Yes
○ No

If yes, how quickly do you intend to watch the mini-series? (i.e., do you intend to finish it the day it is released, by the end of the weekend, before Christmas, etc.)

Please rank the following Gilmore Girls characters in terms of their general popularity among viewers. (1 is most popular, 10 is least popular)
_____ Lorelai
_____ Rory
_____ Luke
_____ Lane
_____ Paris
_____ Sookie
_____ Dean
_____ Jess
_____ Logan
_____ Christopher

Please rank the following Gilmore Girls characters in terms of your own personal favorites. (1 is most favorite, 10 is least favorite)

_____ Lorelai
_____ Rory
_____ Luke
_____ Lane
_____ Paris
_____ Sookie
_____ Dean
_____ Jess
_____ Logan
_____ Christopher

How do you define binge-watching? (e.g., how many episodes/how much time/etc.)

Thank you for taking the time to participate, your contribution is very much appreciated! This study is especially interested in the viewing behavior of binge-watching and its effects on character perceptions. Your participation in this research may greatly contribute to our understanding of this new phenomenon.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you can contact Caitlin Dyche at cdyche@crimson.ua.edu or (205) 348-8658.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE #2

Thank you so much for participating in this survey! This study is interested in viewers' behaviors and perceptions surrounding the television show Gilmore Girls and the characters the show depicts. This survey should be taken after completing the Netflix mini-series Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life.

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The study is being done by Caitlin Dyche, a master's student at the University of Alabama, and Andrew Billings, a professor at the University of Alabama. This study is being conducted to better understand the viewing behaviors and character perceptions surrounding the show Gilmore Girls. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a short survey. This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. The only cost to you from this study is your time. This research is non-sensitive in nature, and thus we do not anticipate any risk to you as a result of your participation. There are no direct benefits to you as a result of your participation; however, the research may contribute to the body of research on media effects. You are free to discontinue the survey at any point. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop any time by closing your browser. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama. The individual data you provide here will not be shared with any other person or persons. No identifying information will be collected; as such, the researchers will not be able to associate your name with any of the information you provide. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Caitlin Dyche at cdyche@crimson.ua.edu or (205) 348-8658. If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at (205) 348-8461 or toll-free at 1 (877) 820-3066.By clicking the below "proceed" button, you agree to the conditions described above.

○ I agree, proceed
○ I do not agree, do not proceed

All of your responses will be kept completely confidential, so please answer the following questions as fully and honestly as you can.

First, please provide some general information about yourself.

What is your gender?
○ Male
○ Female
○ Other

What is your age in years?

[_____] What is your race or ethnic origin? Check all that may apply.

- ❑ Caucasian/White
- ❑ Hispanic / Latino
- ❑ Black / African American
- ❑ Asian / Pacific Islander
- ❑ Native American / American Indian
- ❑ Other

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- ❍ Less than high school diploma
- ❍ High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- ❍ Some college credit
- ❍ Associate degree / Bachelor's degree
- ❍ Some post-graduate credit
- ❍ Master's degree
- ❍ Doctorate

What is your annual household income?

- ❍ Less than $40,000
- ❍ $40,000 -$79,999
- ❍ $80,000-$119,999
- ❍ $120,000-$159,999
- ❍ $160,000 or more

Following are four general relationship styles that people often report. Please select the style that best describes you or is closest to the way you are.

- ❍ Style A: It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.
- ❍ Style B: I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
- ❍ Style C: I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.
- ❍ Style D: I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

Now please rate each of the relationships styles above to indicate how well or poorly each description corresponds to your general relationship style.

Style A: It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Style B: I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Style C: I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Style D: I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often feel in tune with people around me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have many friends.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often lack companionship.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often feel alone.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am satisfied with my social life.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often feel there are people I can talk to.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often feel there are people around me but not with me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have trouble making friends.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often feel isolated from others.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often feel close to other people.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I generally find that people want to be my friends.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I often feel my relationships with others are not meaningful.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

The following questions are concerned with your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding the television show Gilmore Girls.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often search for information about Gilmore Girls in magazines, online, and in other television shows or films.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think that my life is a lot like that of the characters on Gilmore Girls.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I wish I had friends like the characters on Gilmore Girls.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy watching Gilmore Girls.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gilmore Girls is very important to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I do not relate at all to the characters on Gilmore Girls.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I rarely think about Gilmore Girls before or after I watch the show.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I often watch reruns of Gilmore Girls.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When Gilmore Girls comes on I switch the channel.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I really get involved in what happens to the characters on Gilmore Girls.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Watching Gilmore Girls is a waste of my time.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I really get the characters on Gilmore Girls.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
While viewing Gilmore Girls I forget myself and am fully absorbed in the program.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How committed were you to the show Gilmore Girls while it was still being broadcast?
- 1 = "I watched a few of the episodes when it was convenient"
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 = "I never missed an episode and even taped/recorded the ones I missed"

How many full seasons of Gilmore Girls have you watched? (If you have watched 5 and a half seasons, you would say 5 full seasons)
- Less than 1 season
- 1-2 full seasons
- 3-4 full seasons
- 5-6 full seasons
- All 7 seasons

Did you enjoy the Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life mini-series?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I hated it : I loved it	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

To the best of your knowledge, approximately how many hours elapsed from when you started watching Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life to when you finished it?

Did you watch the mini-series by yourself of with others in the same room?
- Only by myself
- Mostly by myself but sometimes with others
- An even mixture of by myself and with others
- Mostly with others but sometimes by myself
- Only with others

If you were physically alone while watching, did you utilize synchronous communication platforms such as text, twitter, snapchat, Facebook messenger, Skype, etc. to communicate with others who were co-watching the show with you?
- ○ Never
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Often
- ○ Always

During the time that you were watching the mini-series, or in the immediate periods before or after watching (two days before you started and two days after you finished), did you visit any Gilmore Girls fan sites, hear any news about Gilmore Girls, or discuss Gilmore Girls with any of your friends/colleagues?
- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes, how frequently did you do so?
- ○ Just once
- ○ A few times
- ○ More than four times
- ○ Every other day
- ○ Every day

To the best of your knowledge, approximately how many hours elapsed from when you finished watching the mini-series to when you started taking this survey?

Who is your favorite Gilmore Girls character? If more than one, separate each name with a comma.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I like my favorite Gilmore Girls character.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I would like to meet my favorite Gilmore Girls character in person.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I like to compare my ideas with what my favorite Gilmore Girls character says.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
My favorite Gilmore Girls character makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I like hearing the voice of my favorite Gilmore Girls character in my home.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Do you consider yourself a fan of Gilmore Girls?
❍ Yes
❍ No

How big of a fan are you?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy the show. : I live and breathe Gilmore Girls, I consider myself part of the Gilmore Girls family.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: When I finished the last available episode of Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life, I...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...felt lonely.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...became less excited about watching TV shows.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...watched the show again.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...felt like I lost a close friend.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...felt sad.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...missed my favorite character.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...looked for information about my favorite character in other places (fan fiction, social media, etc.).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...felt disappointed.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...tried to meet the actor who portrays my favorite character.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
...felt angry.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How often, if ever, have you watched interviews with actors/actresses from Gilmore Girls?
○ Never
○ Just once
○ A few times
○ More than four times
○ More than ten times
○ Every time you can

Have you ever attended a Gilmore Girls convention or panel?
○ Yes
○ No

Did you attend any of the Luke's Diner takeovers that occurred in October?
○ Yes
○ No

Please rank the following Gilmore Girls characters in terms of their general popularity among viewers. (Top is most popular; bottom is least popular)

_____ Lorelai
_____ Rory
_____ Luke
_____ Lane
_____ Paris
_____ Sookie
_____ Dean
_____ Jess
_____ Logan
_____ Christopher

Please rank the following Gilmore Girls characters in terms of your own personal favorites. (Top is most favorite; bottom is least favorite)

_____ Lorelai
_____ Rory
_____ Luke
_____ Lane
_____ Paris
_____ Sookie
_____ Dean
_____ Jess
_____ Logan
_____ Christopher

In the two weeks leading up to the release of the mini-series, did you watch any previously aired episodes of Gilmore Girls?
○ Yes
○ No

About how many episodes did you watch?

How frequently did you watch Gilmore Girls in those two weeks?
○ Just once
○ A few times
○ More than four times
○ Every other day
○ Every day

What is the maximum number of episodes you watched in one day?

96

What is the maximum number of episodes you watched in one sitting?

[   ]

In the two weeks leading up to the release of the mini-series, did you post on any Gilmore Girls fan sites or discuss Gilmore Girls with any of your friends/colleagues?
❍ Yes
❍ No

How frequently did you do so?
❍ Just once
❍ A few times
❍ More than four times
❍ Every other day
❍ Every day

How do you define binge-watching? (e.g., how many episodes/how much time/etc.)

[   ]

Thank you for taking the time to participate, your contribution is very much appreciated! This study is especially interested in the viewing behavior of binge-watching and its effects on character perceptions. Your participation in this research may greatly contribute to our understanding of this new phenomenon.
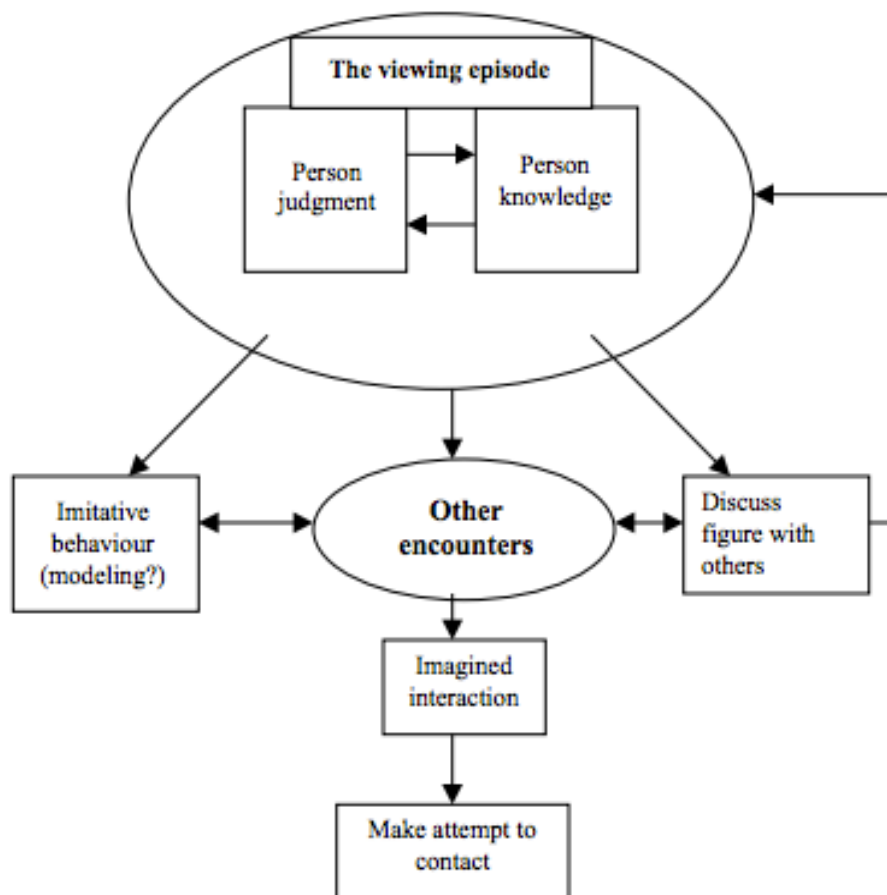
If you have any questions regarding this study, you can contact Caitlin Dyche at cdyche@crimson.ua.edu or (205) 348-8658.

APPENDIX C
LIKERT SCALE CONVERSION EQUATION

$$X_2 = \frac{(X_1 - min_1)(max_2 - min_2)}{max_1 - min_1} + min_2$$

APPENDIX D
STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

Taken from Giles (2002, p. 237)

APPENDIX E
IRB CERTIFICATE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA® | *Office of the Vice President for*
Research & Economic Development
Office for Research Compliance

November 11, 2016

Caitlin Dyche
Dept. of Telecommunication & Film
CCIS
Box 870172

Re: IRB#: 16-OR-388 "Binge Watching Gilmore Girls"

Dear Ms. Dyche:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of written documentation of informed consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

Your application will expire on November 3, 2017. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent/assent forms to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Director & Research Compliance Officer