

Podcast Assignment Script

Section I – Introduction – 1-2 minutes

[Background Music Fades In]

Host: "Good evening, and welcome to [Media Mirage](#), the place where we dive deep into the fascinating world of media and culture. It's 9 o'clock, the moon looks beautiful tonight, the stars are lighting up the sky. This can only mean one thing... It's time for the **STARLIGHT SPOTLIGHT**, the segment where we discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly of our favourite stars! No, no. I'm not talking about the stars in the sky. I mean the stars from Hollywood and the like. I'm your host [E-MAC](#), and tonight we're exploring a topic that's increasingly relevant in our digital age.

[Short Pause]

Host: "Our focus for our spotlight this evening is on parasocial relationships — y'know, those one-sided connections we develop with celebrities and public figures, people we often know only through a screen or speakers. Don't deny it, we all do it to some degree. Me personally? I'm in a long term committed relationship with Ariana Grande, but that's beside the point. In this era of social media and instant communication, these relationships are becoming more complex and influential than ever before."

[Slight Pause for Effect]

Host: "We'll be discussing how the media, both traditional and new, has played a pivotal role in privileging certain celebrities over others. From the golden age of Hollywood to the influencers

of today's Instagram and TikTok, we'll explore how the evolution of media platforms affects our perception and interaction with these public figures."

[Slight Pause]

Host: "So, I was doing some light reading over the weekend and came across Morgan Fargo's article on Cosmopolitan.com. It was called *Why does it feel so personal when a celebrity does something bad?* Have any of you heard of it? Either way, it got me thinking, and our journey tonight can't only be about the "how". It should be about understanding how we form these connections and why they impact us so profoundly. The role of social media in intensifying these relationships brings us closer to public figures, sometimes making their actions feel unexpectedly personal."

[Music Softens]

Host: "Is this evolution in media bringing us closer to those we admire, or is it creating a more detached, idealized version of celebrity? How does this impact us as individuals and as a society? If you asked me, I'd argue that these parasocial relationships can be positive sources of much needed comfort to make the chaos in our lives bearable when they are formed and used in a healthy way but can be wildly dangerous if our grip on reality loosens. Stay tuned, there'll be more on that - after this."

[Music Fades Out]

[1 Second gap for pretend commercial]

Section II - Historical Context – 2-3 minutes

[Background Music Fades In]

Host: "Welcome back to [Media Mirage](#)! I'm [E-MAC](#), ready to delve deeper into tonight's **STARLIGHT SPOTLIGHT**. Before the break we were discussing parasocial relationships, or PSRs, which are not a new phenomenon. In fact, they've been evolving alongside media itself. Let's take a brief journey through history to understand how these one-sided connections with celebrities have changed over time."

[Slight Pause]

Host: "Our story begins in the 1950s when the term 'parasocial interaction' was first coined. Back then, television was the new frontier in entertainment, and viewers began forming imaginary bonds with TV characters and personalities."

[Transition Sound Effect]

Host: "Fast forward a few decades, and the landscape shifts dramatically with the advent of the internet and social media. These platforms have not only changed how we consume media but also how we interact with it. Today, influencers and celebrities are just a tweet or a post away, making these relationships feel more personal and direct."

[Music Softens]

Host: "But this evolution isn't just about technology; it's also about psychology. The nature of parasocial interactions has shifted from passive viewership to active engagement, blurring the lines between celebrity and fan."

[Short Pause]

Host: "According to a 2023 study by *Uh-Reef* Ashraf, and his colleagues, experts on the impact social media has on consumers, the power of influencers lies in their perceived attractiveness, expertise, and similarity. These are regular folks who've become experts in their niche, be it fashion, technology, or lifestyle. Their recommendations feel more like advice from a friend rather than a scripted endorsement from a distant star."

[Short Pause]

Host: "This shift isn't just about who's on our screens, but how we relate to them. The influencers' success hinges on their ability to connect on a personal level, to make their followers feel like they're part of their daily lives. It's a world where a makeup tutorial or a tech review can feel like a conversation with a close friend."

[Music Softens]

Host: "Interestingly, these modern PSRs can have varying impacts on our well-being. While some find comfort and a sense of belonging in these relationships, others might experience negative effects, especially when their ability to discern between reality and the parasocial world diminishes."

[Music Picks Up]

Host: "This evolution in celebrity influence is more than just a change in faces; it's a transformation in how we perceive and interact with those we admire. From the untouchable stars of yesteryears to the approachable influencers of today, the gap between celebrity and consumer continues to close."

Host: "So, what does this mean for the future of celebrity culture? How will our relationship with the media continue to evolve? Let's keep exploring that, and the bond between audience and celebrity, as it is more complex than ever before - right after this."

[Background Music Fades Out]

[1 Second gap for pretend commercial]

Section III - Current Landscape – 3-4 minutes

[Background Music Fades In]

Host: "Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome back to the **STARLIGHT SPOTLIGHT** brought to you by **Media Mirage**. I'd like to pivot to the present. In today's digital era, social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have revolutionized our interactions with celebrities. These platforms offer a unique, more intimate glimpse into the lives of public figures, making parasocial relationships more accessible and seemingly personal."

[Slight Pause]

Host: "Unlike traditional media, social media allows for immediate and often unfiltered content. Celebrities can share their daily lives, thoughts, and even interact directly with their audience. This has created a new type of celebrity - **the social media influencer** - who might not have traditional fame but holds significant sway over their followers."

[Music Softens]

Host: "In our digital age, the landscape of celebrity has transformed. Today's digital celebrities - influencers on Instagram, vloggers on YouTube – they aren't just faces on a screen. Research published by **Kum-Jew Hwang** and **Chee Zhang** reveals that these relationships are more than just superficial. They influence real-world actions, like purchase decisions and spreading the word about products. It's a two-way street of influence. These digital celebrities share their lives, and in return, their followers trust their recommendations, buying into the lifestyles and products they endorse."

[Short Pause]

Host: "This phenomenon is reshaping the marketing landscape. Brands are now leveraging these parasocial relationships, recognizing the powerful sway these digital celebrities hold over their followers. It's not just advertising; it's about creating a connection, a sense of trust, and a personal recommendation."

[Short Pause]

Host: "But this transformation is not without its complexities. The ease of access and the illusion of intimacy can lead to more intense parasocial attachments. In the arena of social

media, the intimacy we feel with celebrities isn't just happenstance. It's a crafted experience, deeply rooted in the art of self-disclosure. Researchers from Singapore Management University and the National University of Singapore, whose names are difficult for me to say, have shed light on this dynamic. It turns out, when celebrities share their personal stories, their struggles, and their triumphs, they're not just updating their status. They're building bridges of empathy and understanding with *us*, their audience.

[Slight Pause]

Host: "This act of sharing, or self-disclosure, is a powerful tool. It turns out that when celebrities open up, it's not just about making headlines. We, as followers, interpret these disclosures as a sign of friendship, an invitation into their world. And this, in turn, strengthens our parasocial bonds with them."

[Music Softens]

Host: "But it's a delicate balance. While self-disclosure brings us closer, it also carries risks for celebrities – of misunderstandings, rumors, even invasions of privacy. Yet, in this digital age, this openness is the currency of trust and relatability in our parasocial relationships."

[Short Pause]

Host: "There's this article written by Amy Bree Becker called *Getting Out the Vote on Twitter* that considers the case of Mandy Patinkin and Kathryn Grody during the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Their Twitter engagement exemplifies a new era of celebrity advocacy, where personal and political worlds merge seamlessly online."

[Music Softens]

Host: "Their approach, blending authentic personal narratives with a political message, perfectly represents this broader shift in how celebrities interact with their audience across the board. It's a digital dance of intimacy and influence, where fans feel a direct, almost family-like connection with the stars they follow."

[Short Pause]

Host: "But it's important to recognize the complexity behind this apparent closeness we feel with our favourite celebs. While these connections may appear more personal and direct, they are still shaped by the nature of social."

[Music Softens]

Host: "It's a fascinating shift, one that raises questions about authenticity, influence, and the nature of fame in the 21st century. How do these platforms shape our perceptions of celebrities, and how does the new perception of celebrities influence our daily lives? The answer? Well... stick around! We'll have more **STARLIGHT SPOTLIGHT** on [Media Mirage](#) - after this."

[Background Music Fades Out]

[1 Second gap for pretend commercial]

Section IV - Case Studies/Examples – 2-3 minutes

[Background Music Fades In]

Host: "Welcome back to [Media Mirage](#) ladies and gentlemen, I'm your host [E-MAC](#) and before the break we introduced an interesting question: How does the advent of the internet and social media shape our perceptions of celebrities and what role does this all play in the daily lives of the consumer? Let's explore some real-life examples to understand the depth of parasocial relationships in today's social media era. I read an article earlier this week, it was called *Why You Feel Like You're Friends With Your Favorite Celebrities* and it was written by Romano Santos. If you've got the time, I recommend giving it a read. The article delves into the world of K-pop, where fans' connections with idols present a vivid illustration of these dynamics offering a few real-world examples."

[Slight Pause]

Host: "Take Trish Menchaca, a fan of the boy group BTS. She shares that her engagement with the band through social media, vlogs, and live streams creates a sense of closeness, almost as if they are friends rooting for each other. This connection is heightened by BTS sharing snippets of their daily lives on various social media platforms, making the relationship feel less one-sided than it truly is."

[Music Softens]

Host: "Another fan, Nadya Siregar, speaks about her emotional journey with the boy group WINNER. Her experience highlights how fans' emotions are intertwined with their idols' ups and downs, affecting their own feelings of pride, shock, or sadness."

[Short Pause]

Host: "These examples emphasize how social media has intensified parasocial relationships, making celebrities feel more accessible and creating deeper emotional bonds for fans. Yet, it's crucial to remember these relationships remain largely one-sided, despite their profound impact on fans' lives."

[Music Softens]

Host: "Unfortunately, the positive aspects of parasocial relationships are nearly entirely one-sided in favour of the fans, but the negative aspects can reach the celebrity in harmful ways. Let's examine some intriguing cases that shed light on the darker side of parasocial relationships."

[Slight Pause]

Host: "In another article I came across this week titled *Second Take: Parasocial relationships rising, fueled by unhealthy celebrity obsessions*, author Lex Wang discusses the case of Pedro Pascal. Famed for his role in the live action adaptation of the hit video game *The Last of Us*, his bold persona and red-carpet fashion made him an internet sensation. Yet, this adoration took a turn when Pascal began to notice the hypersexualized comments his fans were posting across all

his social media profiles, making him extremely uncomfortable, leading to his departure from Twitter."

[Music Softens]

Host: "In addition to Pascal, Wang describes music icon Taylor Swift's experience with the oddity of parasocial relationships due to fans that affectionately refer to her as 'mom.' Despite the endearing intent, a video posted on social media platform Tumblr in 2015 immortalized a real mother expressing her disapproval of this nickname, noting that Swift had not 'earned' the honour of such a title. Swift, understanding the underlying issues, humorously requested to be called the 'crazy aunt' instead."

[Short Pause]

Host: "These stories highlight how social media can sometimes blur the line between affection and intrusion. Fans, while well-meaning, often forget that celebrities, like all of us, deserve respect and personal space."

[Slightly Less Short Pause]

Host: "**E-MAC** and the rest of the **Media Mirage** crew are going to take a quick break as all this marinates in your heads. When we come back, we'll reflect on everything we've talked about as we wrap up tonight's **STARLIGHT SPOTLIGHT**. We'll be right back, after this.

[Background Music Fades Out]

[1 Second gap for pretend commercial]

Section V - Conclusion – 1-2 minutes

[Background Music Fades In]

Host: "Welcome back to the **STARLIGHT SPOTLIGHT**, here on Media Mirage. Let's reflect on everything we have touched on tonight. The rise of social media has made fame more accessible, but also more fleeting. Celebrities now have to navigate a landscape where their influence is not only gauged by their talent but also by their ability to connect and engage with their audience through these platforms."

[Slight Pause]

Host: "The future might see an even greater emphasis on authenticity and relatability, as audiences increasingly value genuine connections over curated personas. This shift could redefine what it means to be a celebrity."

[Music Softens]

Host: "Yet, with these changes come challenges. **The merging of public and private lives**, the pressure to maintain an online presence, and the impact of these dynamics on mental health are all crucial considerations. This is why it's important to remember that the lens through which we view celebrity lives, including their relationships, is often distorted by the glare of media narratives."

[Music Softens]

Host: "From our discussions on influencer impact to the delicate balance of admiration and obsession, if I had to choose only one key takeaway from tonight's discussion that sticks with you all is in understanding the importance of a grounded perspective. This is articulated best by Kathleen Newman-Bremang, author of the article "*It's Time To Let Go Of Celebrity #RelationshipGoals*". Her argument makes it clear that the glamour of celebrity relationships, though enticing, should not eclipse the reality of their complexities or our own unique experiences."

[Short Pause]

Host: "In a world where media narratives shape much of our understanding, let's strive to view these public personas with a discerning eye, recognizing the blend of reality and artifice."

[Music Softens]

Host: "That's going to be it for our **STARLIGHT SPOTLIGHT** into the world of parasocial relationships, with your navigator **E-MAC**. Remember, the voices you hear and the faces you see in the media are more than just signals through the airwaves. They're part of a larger story, part of our shared human experience. Keep those connections alive, but always remember where the screen ends, and real life begins. **E-MAC**, signing off. Stay connected, stay real."

[Background Music Fades Out]

Reference Checklist: Syllabus: 3/3, non-syllabus: 3/3, Primary Non-Academic Sources: 2/2

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