



**THE IMPORTANCE OF  
IDENTIFICATION  
TO A SENSE  
OF PRESENCE**

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# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ Importance of Identification:

- ☒ How can "low tech" products such as books sometimes lead to a higher sense of presence than "high-tech" products?
- ☒ Here we propose that one of the most important factors determining a sense of presence is a person's parasocial identification with a character.

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

⌘ **This presentation reports on a four studies that tested identification as a force shaping responses to media.**

⊞ Research was done with 3 celebrities:

⊞ Magic Johnson

⊞ Princess Diana

⊞ Mark McGwire

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ Importance of spokesperson

☑ as far back as Aristotle's Rhetoric

☒ ethos

☑ research dates to Hovland

☒ some of the earliest research in communication

☑ Hovland's research generally supports Aristotle

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ Empirical studies on celebrities

⊞ many studies support strategy:

⊞ Kahmen, Azhari & Kragh (1975) -- Johnny Cash

⊞ Friedman, Termini & Washington (1976) -- Al Pacino

⊞ Friedman & Friedman (1979) -- Mary Tyler Moore

⊞ Atkin & Block (1983) -- 3 celebrities

⊞ Kahle & Homer (1985) -- 8 celebrities

⊞ Kahmins (1989) - Leonard Nimoy

⊞ Celebrities are more effective than unknowns

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

⌘ **WHY are celebrities so effective?**

⌘ **1. Source credibility**

☑ (Hovland & Weiss, 1951-1952)

☒ credibility and/or attractiveness

⌘ **2. Attractiveness hypothesis**

☑ (Kahle & Homer, 1985)

☒ celebrities are physically attractive

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘3. Match-up hypothesis

⊠(Kamins, 1990)

⊠special expertise adds to product evaluation

## ⌘4. Cultural meaning

⊠(McCracken, 1989)

⊠meanings pass to celebrity to product

⊠and from endorser to consumer

⊠[problems with vague predictions and conflicting levels of analysis]

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ 5. Identification

☑ Previous research on identification

☒ Burke (1950), Horton & Wohl (1956),  
Kelman (1961), Bandura (1977, 1986),  
Ruben, Rubin, Perse (various)

☑ Celebrities can establish a “faux”  
intimacy

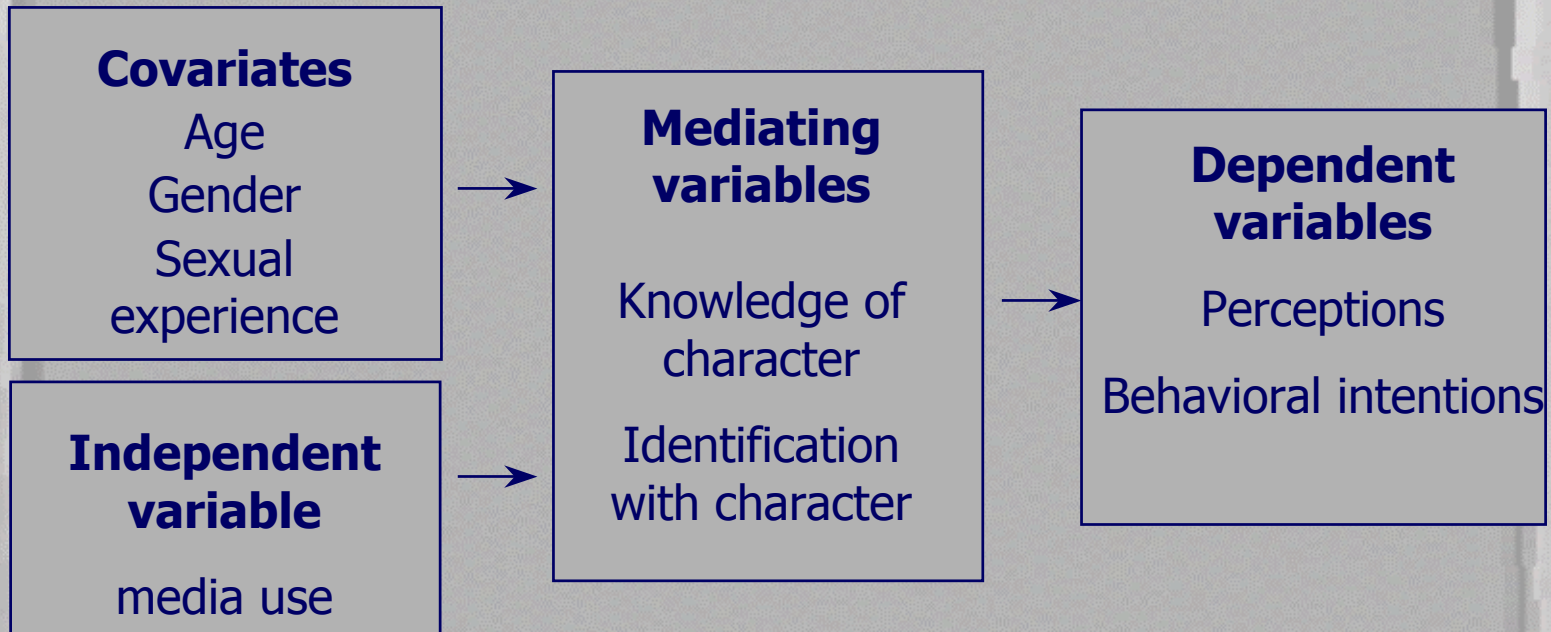
☑ feel like a “friend”

☑ friends more effective than strangers  
(Rogers)



# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ THE MODEL:



# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE



## PARASOCIAL

### INTERACTION SCALE:

- I like [celebrity]
- I do not have any feelings about [celebrity]\*
- I can easily relate to [celebrity]
- [Celebrity] is not easily understood\*
- I think of [celebrity] as a good friend
- I have no doubt [celebrity] and I would work well together
- I am personally affected by [celebrity's situation]
- [Celebrity] is a personal role model

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #1: MAGIC JOHNSON**

☒ 1991, November

☒ Sample: 391 undergraduate students

☒ Independent variables:

☒ media use, knowledge, identification

☒ Dependent variables:

☒ concern, risk perceptions, behavioral intention

☒ Multiple regression used for analyses

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #1: Results**

⊞ Dependent Identification		Knowledge
⊞ Personal concern	.00	.35***
⊞ Perceived risk	-.01	.15**
⊞ Heterosexual risk	.01	.31***
⊞ Behavior Intention	.00	
	.30***	
⊞ HIV Blood test	.00	.02

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #1: Discussion**

- ☒ Knowledge of was not important.
- ☒ Identification was.
- ☒ Feeling close to a protagonist makes it seem that what is happening to them is also relevant to you.

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #2: MAGIC JOHNSON**

⊞ H1. Tyler & Cooks' Differential Impact Theory

⊞ People have two risk perceptions:

⊞ themselves

⊞ everyone else

⊞ TV would affect social but not personal risk.

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #2: Methods**

- ⊓ 1991, November
- ⊓ 361 undergraduate students
- ⊓ 3 groups:
  - ⊗ CNN mass media story,
  - ⊗ interpersonal discussions,
  - ⊗ control group.
- ⊓ Independent variables:
  - ⊗ group
- ⊓ Dependent variables:
  - ⊗ concern, risk perceptions, behavior

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #2B: MAGIC JOHNSON**

☑ H2. Identification predicts effects --

☑ both social and personal risk perceptions

☑ both depend on identification.



# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #2B: Results**

Dependent	Identification (beta)
⊠ Social risk	.20**
⊠ Personal risk	.16***

## **Mediation tests:**

⊠ social w/o ident. = -.31 w/ = -.12

⊠ personal w/o indent. = .35 w = -.15

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #2B: Discussion**

- ☑ Identification determines risk perceptions
- ☑ Risk was mediated by level of identification.
- ☑ These results support identification
- ☑ They also support the proposed mechanism:
- ☑ identification shapes viewers' reactions.

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #3: MAGIC JOHNSON**

- ☑ November 1992: 1 year after event
- ☑ Any lasting effects?

## ⌘ **METHODS**

- ☑ 147 Undergraduate students
- ☑ Independent variables:
  - ☒ media use, knowledge, identification
- ☑ Dependent variables:
  - ☒ concern, risk perceptions, behavioral intention

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #3: Results**

<u>Dependent</u>	<u>Identification (beta)</u>
☑ Personal concern	.17*
☑ Perceived risk	.14
☑ Behavior Intention	.24**
☑ HIV Blood test	.12

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #3: Discussion**

- ☑ Identification determined concern and behavioral intentions a year later!
- ☑ Identification with a character can lead to a feeling of “being there” -- a sense of doom or success.

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #4: PRINCESS DIANA**

- ⊞ 1996. Did identification shape people's
  - ⊗ grief over her death?
  - ⊗ blame of the paparazzi?
- ⊞ Three samples -- over 1,000 people:
  - ⊗ 300 random telephone sample
  - ⊗ 300 college students,
  - ⊗ 300 people off the Internet
- ⊞ Examined reactions to her death.

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #4: Results**

<u>Dependent</u>	<u>Identification (beta)</u>
☒ Television viewing	.26***
☒ News reading	.05
☒ Radio listening	.12**
☒ Funeral viewing	.30***
☒ Attitude to press	.63***

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #4: Discussion**

### ☒ Identification determined:

- ☒ viewing of television stories on her life,
- ☒ radio programs,
- ☒ intention to watch the funeral on television,
- ☒ extent they blamed the press for her death.

☒ Again, identification is a critical factor in shaping viewers' reactions.



# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #5: MARK McGWIRE**

☒ 1998, he broke a 100-year-old record for home runs in a season.

☒ Two possible outcomes:

☒ 1. his favorite cause -- child abuse

☒ 2. his use of androstenedione (a steroid)

☒ Can identification have both positive and negative effects on people?

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #5: Results**

<u>Dependent</u>	<u>Identification (beta)</u>
☒ Concern for child abuse	.33***
☒ Imp. of speaking out	.60***
☒ know of androstenedione	.18*
☒ desire androstenedione	.21**

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #5: Discussion**

- ☒ Identification shapes desire to imitate.
- ☒ In this case, identification predicted:
  - 1. interest and concern for child abuse
  - 2. knowledge & desire for androstenedione.
- ☒ Identification determines people's interest in topics and their desire to imitate behavior.

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **STUDY #5: Discussion**

- ☒ 1. Celebrity identification does predict effects
- ☒ 2. Level of identification mediates effects
  - ☒ effects hinge on identification
- ☒ 3. Identification hypothesis is supported
- ☒ Supports theory of parasocial identification in determining the effectiveness of celebrities

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ CONCLUSIONS

- ⊞ There two main theoretical conclusions:
  - ⊞ 1. Identification generates people's interest in a program and shapes their responses.
  - ⊞ 2. Behavioral imitation hinges on the level of identification

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ PRESENCE IMPLICATIONS

- ☒ 1. Identification with a protagonist makes the situation more real and important.
- ☒ 2. People are probably more likely to get involved in gaming, desensitization exercises, or other presence activities if there is a protagonist to identify with.

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ **ADDITIONAL RESEARCH**

- ☒ 1. How important is identification in shaping a sense of presence?
- ☒ 2. Are identification or technological factors more important in satisfaction?
- ☒ 3. How can identification be created? -- time, realistic situations, throwing a protagonist in jeopardy, etc.?

# IDENTIFICATION AND PRESENCE

## ⌘ Questions on EFFECTS

### ⌘ (such as imitation of behaviors):

- ☑ Will people be more likely to imitate the behaviors of characters when they instill a sense of identification?