

Spring 5-2019

The Effects of the Source of Celebrity Information on Parasocial Relationships

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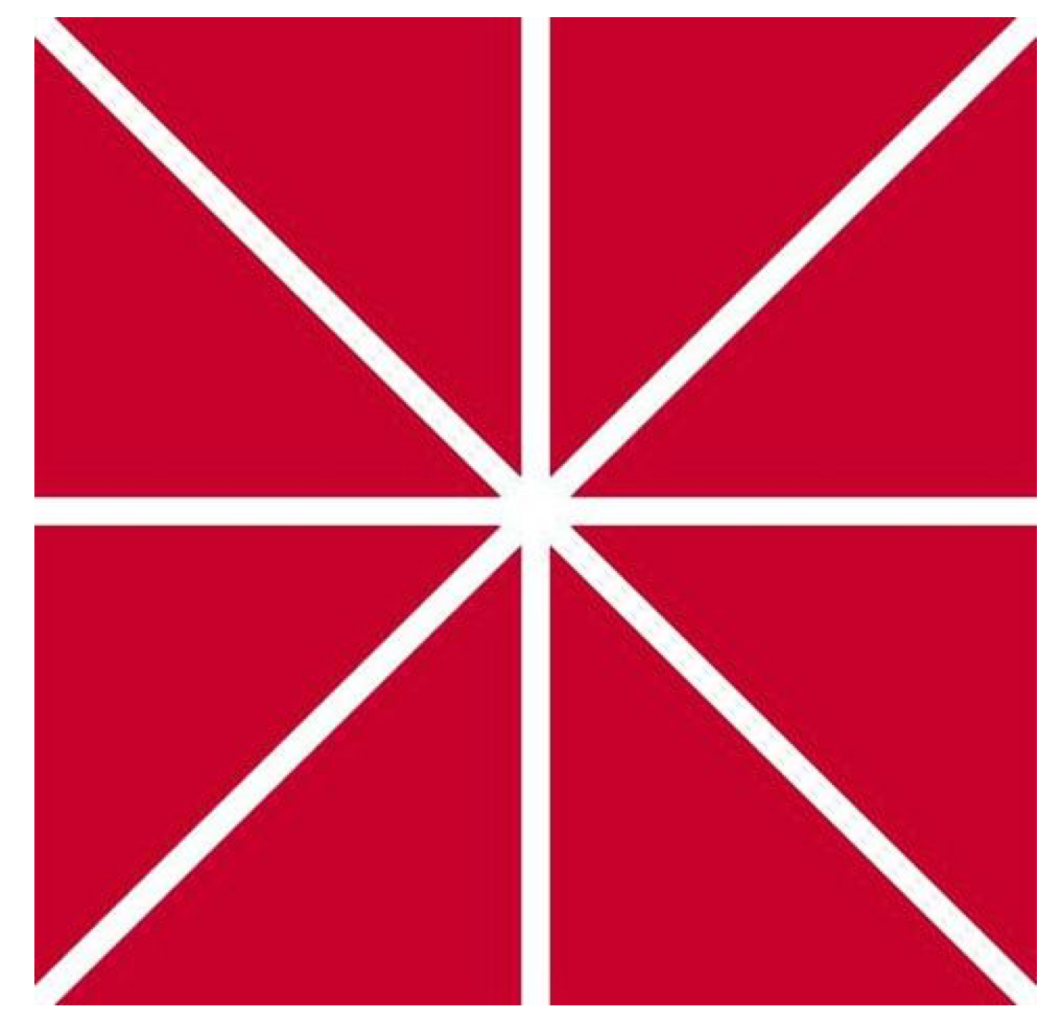
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Recommended Citation

Roys, Noelle; Newman, Monique; and Spooner-LeDuff, Mark, "The Effects of the Source of Celebrity Information on Parasocial Relationships" (2019). *Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters*. 332.

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The Effects of the Source of Celebrity Information on Parasocial Relationships

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Introduction

The purpose of the study is to examine how the source of information about celebrities affects media users' feelings toward them. Specifically, we will focus on two ways in which people relate to media figures. Parasocial relationships (PSR) are one-sided relationships that people form with media figures. The concept of parasocial interaction (PSI) is closely related in that it entails one-sided involvement with a media figure, but the experience is restricted to the duration a person is viewing the figure. Existing research implies that social media is an ideal medium for fans to foster both PSRs and PSIs when viewing content posted by celebrities, compared to viewing the same celebrity content posted by a tabloid magazine source.

Hypotheses

H1: Viewing content posted by celebrities on their personal social media accounts creates stronger **PSRs** than when viewing content about celebrities on the social media accounts of tabloid publications.

H2: Viewing content posted by celebrities on their personal social media accounts creates stronger **PSIs** than when viewing content about celebrities posted on the social media accounts of tabloid publications.

Methods

An experiment was conducted to test the strength of parasocial relationships based on the source of celebrity content. Participants were recruited from the School of Communications' subject pool online at Chapman University.

The sample consisted of 46 females and 10 males between the ages of 18 and 25 $M= 19.96$, $SD 1.52$

Dependant Variable

- **PSFcommunication**-e.g., "I can disclose negative things about myself to her" $M= 3.58$, $SD1.41$, Alpha .88.
- **PSFintimacy**-e.g., "I could trust her completely" $M= 3.41$, $SD=1.41$ Alpha .91
- **PSLphysical**-e.g., "I find her very physically attractive" $M=5.16$, $SD=1.08$ Alpha.860
- **PSLemotional**-e.g., "She influences my mood" $M=2.22$, $SD=.90$ Alpha .79
- **PSLinteraction**-e.g., "I carefully follow the behavior of her" $M= 3.17$, $SD=.87$, Alpha .78

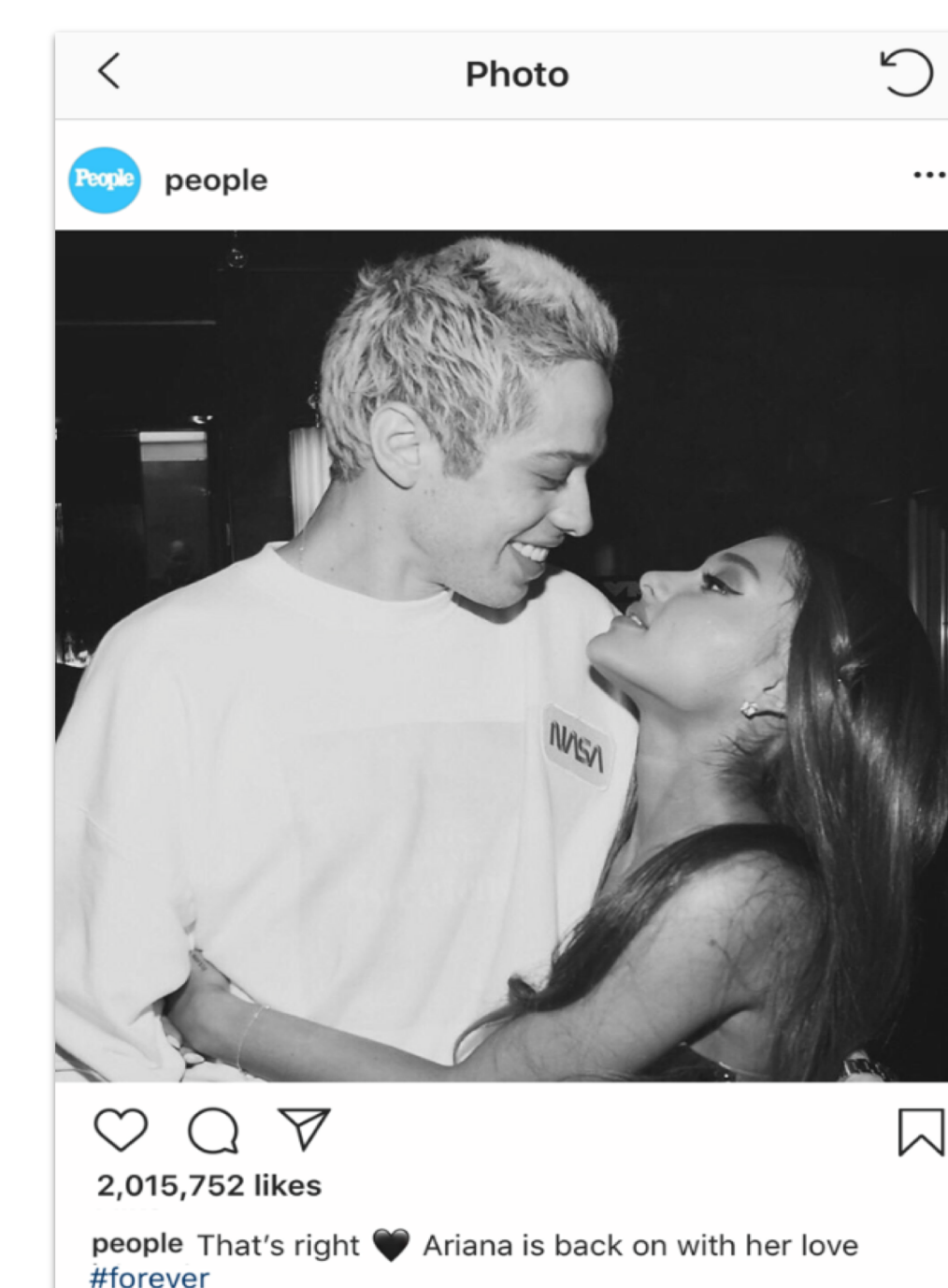
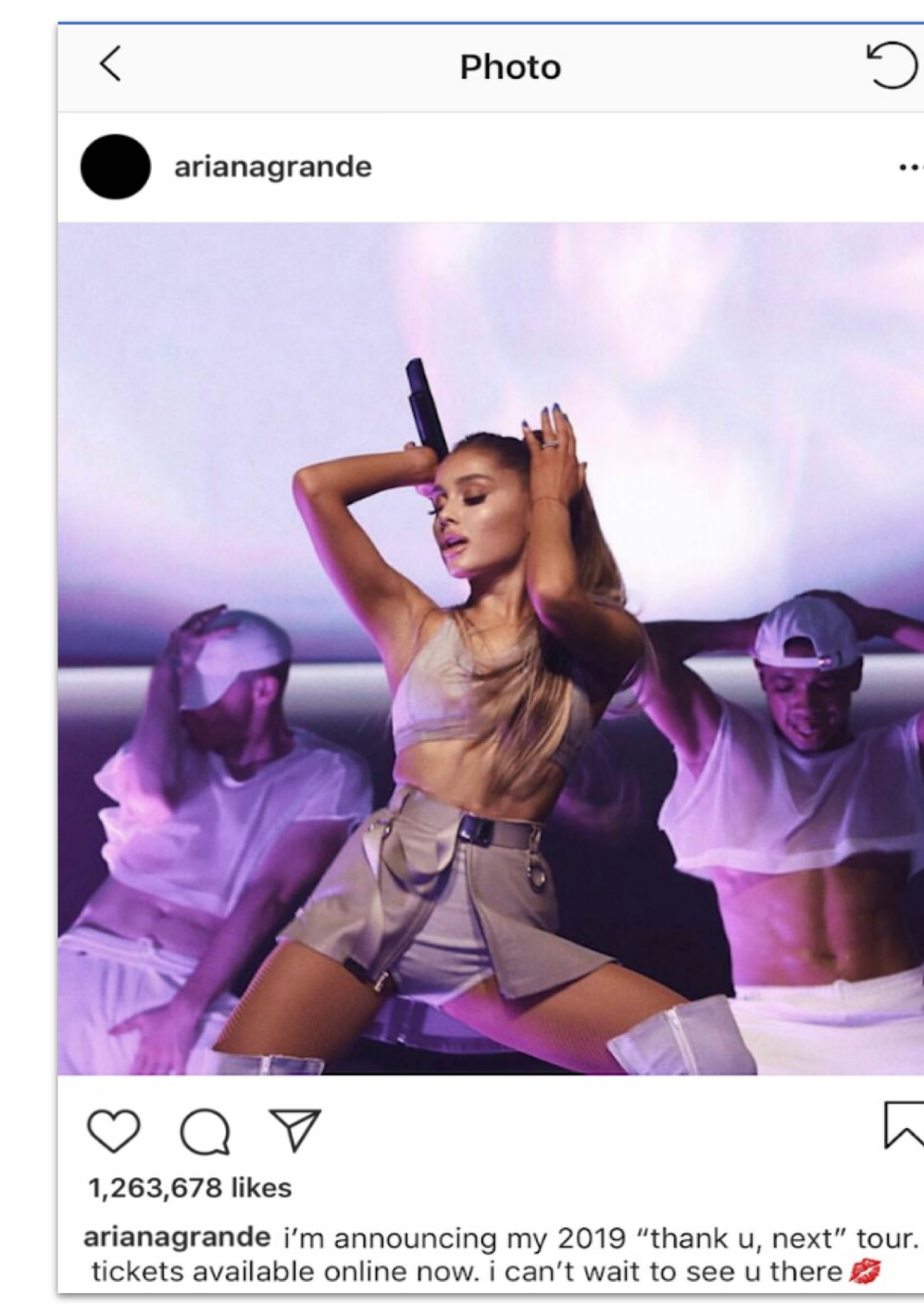
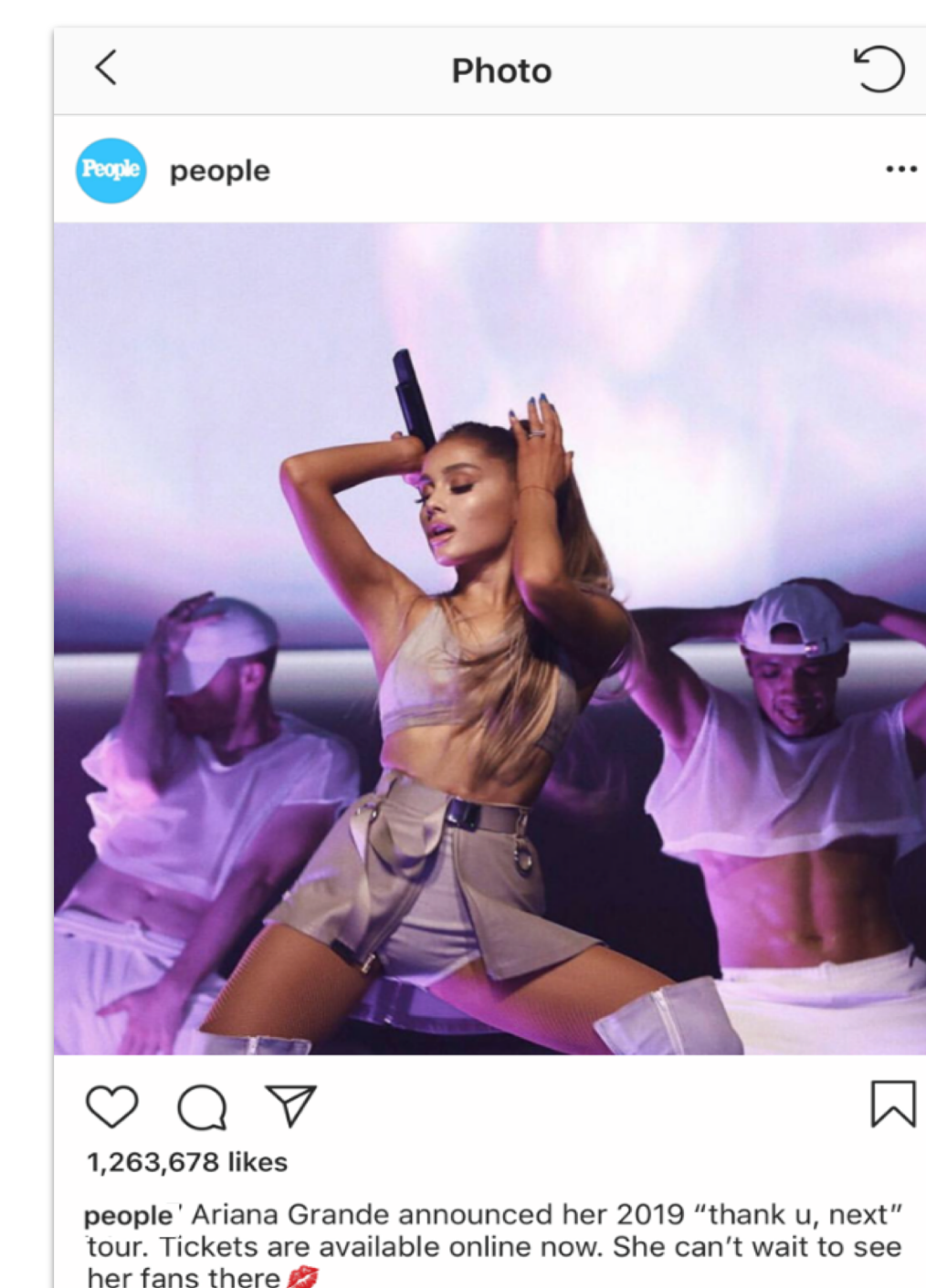
Stimuli

Participants were exposed to one of two types of stimuli. A post from the celebrity's Instagram, or a post from People's Magazine Instagram with the same information, followed by a questionnaire and Likert Scale assessment. The independent variable was manipulated when the control group was not exposed to either stimuli.

People Magazine

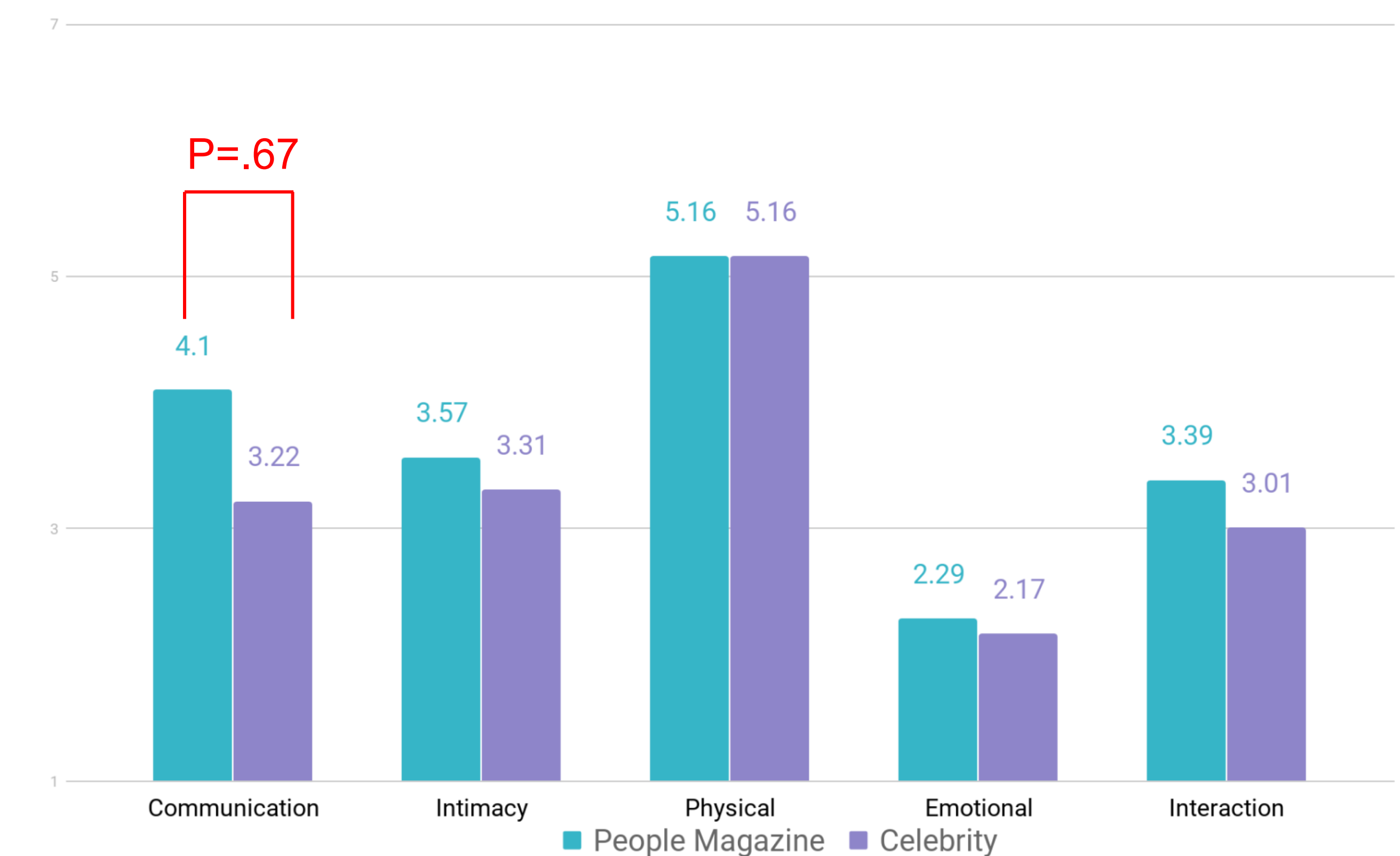


Ariana Grande



Results

The graph shows the comparison of parasocial relationships on different scales after viewing content from People Magazine or from a celebrity source.



H1: Not supported. Instead, we found the opposite of our prediction. Participants reported stronger PSRs when viewing content from a tabloid source.

H2: Not supported. Participants reported that PSIs were not impacted by either stimuli.

Discussion

Participants reported higher PSRs after viewing information from a tabloid source compared to after viewing the same information from a celebrity source. Possible explanations:

- When a celebrity reports news about herself, it may make her appear as egotistical as opposed to relatable
- People Magazine may appear more credible than a celebrity as a source
- Ariana Grande, the specific celebrity chosen for this study, has been involved in recent controversial news

Limitations and Future Direction

- Findings have limited implications due to the majority of the participants indicating that they are female/Caucasian
- Future studies should examine this topic with more than one celebrity and tabloid magazine
- Future studies should aim to further investigate how the source of information impacts parasocial relationships between celebrities and fans