

Actors as fictional characters: parasocial relationships

[Entertainment](#)



Media production of actors personal thoughts could coincide with the character role one may play. The roles of one's character provides a contrast in the actors thoughts or beliefs. Viewers of the actors work can often involve a fictitious outlook on their behavioral actions of the person, due to having a previous outlook on the fictional character they portrayed.

Therefore many roles can become put down if not written correctly for one person. Tukachinsky's (2015) article explains: If vegan or vegetarian activists, such as actors Natalie Portman, Emily Deschanel, and Jorja Fox, were to play a role of an avid fur-wearing carnivore, their fan base would recognize the apparent dissonance between the actors' personal beliefs and their actions as characters. (p. 2) Cognitive dissonance theory assumes one is to want consistency within thoughts and behaviours of others. One changes their attitude or behaviour to create similarities between personal thoughts and actions one displays. It is important within a group setting to understand these hypocritical actions as viewers could consider character traits as the actors.

According to Tukachinsky (2015), " the dissonant behavior is not that of the fictional character but of the actor who is expressing one set of beliefs but then advocates for the contrary in a narrative" (p. 6). This is important to study as media continues to grow and certain individuals maintain higher power over others, viewers need to change their thoughts on it is okay for actors to go against their personal thoughts or beliefs within character roles, as it is there job as an actor.

Parasocial relationships involve a one way relationship between the performer and audience member. One person is to express time and emotion toward another individual, as a fan would to a celebrity. Over time parasocial relationships creates a deep understanding for the person, being a bond of friendship, or seen as a crush on said individual. Tukachinsky (2015) found “ viewers with a strong parasocial bond with an actor who engages in a counterattitudinal behavior are more likely to respond to this situation by employing dissonance reduction strategies used to resolve personal dissonance and vicarious dissonance in interpersonal contexts” (p. 5).

Tukachinsky then created a study to see if participants who have a greater parasocial relationships with an actor would have a stronger attitude towards the character they portray, compared to participants with weaker parasocial relationships. This study can be compared to Duck & Mullin (1995) study, “ the belief that entertainment media can have profound negative effects on the public is highly prevalent among media consumers” (p. 6).

The author assigned participants with an actor and manipulated the knowledge they had before watching the film the actor starred in. The participants were given different sources of media clips of the actors beliefs, one including consistent beliefs with the actor and character and one inconsistent with the beliefs the actor has and portrays to have. Depending on the participants parasocial relationship with the actor was to determine if individuals who have a weak parasocial relationship with the actor, incongruence had a negative effect on the attitude, as incongruence did not have an effect on individuals with strong parasocial relationship.

Therefore, there was no direct effect of parasocial relationship on attitudes, but parasocial relationship are important in the attitude change from the inconsistency of others. The final conclusion of Tukachinsky's (2015) experiment includes: when viewers' expectations for an actor to perform an attitude-consistent role are violated, viewers become more critical of the message. However, the data indicate that feeling friendly with the actor and having a strong sense of affiliation with the actor prior to observing the hypocritical behavior eliminate the negative effect of incongruence. (p. 11)

Overall there was no main effect of parasocial relationship attitudes.

Although It is possible for society's mind to compare some actors so strongly connected with there certain values and behaviors that these incongruent roles within there fictional characters can become apparent. In conclusion examining the ways actors and fictional characters interact within consent media productions can become an ongoing investigation.