**ANDREW H. ROHN**

**10 June 2018**

**COMM 202 (2185)**

After studying the assigned reading **The Handbook of Communication Science, Second Edition: Chapter 20: Media Entertainment**, considering the topic of parasocial relationships, answer the following questions or prompts.

**A) Identify a character in a show with whom you have developed (in the past or present) a parasocial relationship. Remember, this personal can be “real” or a character role. Explain why this character/person is compelling to you.**

To be honest I don’t believe I have ever developed a parasocial relationship with a TV personality in the sense that Charles R. Berger mentions in *The Handbook of Communications Science. However, I do admire and feel that I can relate with the comedian Bill Maher. Bill M*aher is the host of a weekly talk show aptly named “Real Time with Bill Maher”. His show is an intriguing mix of comedy and political debate. The reason I find Bill Maher fascinating is that he is an outspoken progressive, yet he doesn’t allow himself to fall into the black hole that is group think. Group think is when people who have similar views congregate together and, in the desire for conformity, adopt a unified set of beliefs that prevents outside thinking (Russell 2015).

He is staunch progressive on my social issues, yet he is a tough opponent of the political correctness that plagues the left. He has taken many controversial stances in the past that have put him at odds with fellow progressives. For instance, he is outspoken critic of Christian AND Islamic fundamentalists. He is also against political correctness and the tendency of progressives to try to silence the voices of conservatives through political correctness. He even challenged the #MeToo movement by asking whether or not some of the allegations have gone too far in the absence of hard evidence. I suppose what I like about him is that he isn’t afraid to disagree with those he most closely identifies with. In that respect, I and he are similar.

**B) How do you “know” or view this character outside of their role on the show? Have they influenced you in any way besides the aspect of entertainment?**

Bill Maher is more than just a talk show host. He is a comedian, a filmmaker, and a political activist. Whether he’s debating the danger of Islamic extremism or poking fun at Donald Trump, he is incredibly funny. However, his points are more than comedic, they’re insightful. He is more than an entertainer, he’s an intellectual that consistently goes against the grain and doesn’t let narrative get in the way of critical thinking.

**C) Explain any emotional attachment to the character or person. Have they disappointed you? Motivated you? How and why?**

I can’t say that I have any emotional attachment to Bill Maher. He doesn’t know who I am, and honestly, I can’t say I really know who he is on a personal level. While I do admire his blatant honesty and sharp wit, he has crossed the line a couple of times, which is a commonality amongst comedians. He is after all a human being and makes mistakes. There was one instance back in 2017 when he joked that he wasn’t equipped for work in the fields because he was “a house nigger” (Burgos 2017). I don’t believe he meant any offense by it and he promptly apologized on-air to a live studio.

With that small incident aside, I look up to Bill Maher as a breath of fresh air in a time of deep political divisions in this country. He is willing to transcend partisanship and poke fun at the intellectual inconsistencies and hypocrisies of both sides of the political spectrum. It is my belief that more people with huge viewership should take a page out his book and try to think for themselves.

**References**

Berger, C. R., Roloff, M. E., & Roskos-Ewoldsen, D. R. (Eds.). (2009). Chapter 20: Media Entertainment. *The Handbook of Communication Science*. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.umuc.edu/10.4135/9781412982818.n20

Burgos, J., (2017, June 3). Retrieved June 10, 2018, from <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q>= billmaherhousenigger&view=detail&mid=7666DA3C1D466C36E2BE7666DA3C1D466C36E2BE&FORM=VIRE

Russell, J. S., Hawthorne, J., & Buchak, L. (2015). Groupthink. *Philosophical Studies,* (1 May 2015). doi:10.1007/s11098-014-0350-8