

Donald Horton and Richard Wohl argue that media texts encourage members of their audience to develop “parasocial” relationships, which give an illusion of a “seeming face-to-face relationship” with media performers (216). John Caughey extends Horton and Wohl’s conceptualization of “parasocial interaction,” and argues that scholarship exploring the motivations driving social interactions has ignored imaginary social relationships. He asserts that researchers should apply ethnographic methods to imaginary relationships because “like actual social worlds, imaginary worlds are social worlds” (29, emphasis in original).

—Click et al, p. 362

- Should parasocial relationships be analysed in the same terms as actual relationships? Why or why not?
- Horton and Wohl tend to pathologise the parasocial; Caughey embraces it as a form of reality. What do you think?

In line with Caughey's assertions that "imaginary relationships" can have positive, important individual and social consequences (69), interview participants revealed how their deep investments in Lady Gaga have exerted a powerful influence on them, in some cases literally saving their lives. Their candid comments demonstrate that Gaga's identification as a monster and her reclamation of the term through her music and persona allow them to see themselves through her perspective and learn to value their differences, essentially making Lady Gaga "a narrative focal point in the construction of life narratives and identities" (Sandvoss 111). Further, as Sandvoss suggests, the profundity of the relationship's impact says less about Lady Gaga's influence than it does about what fans need from Lady Gaga (105).

—Click et al, p. 373.

- What do you think of Caughey's 'imaginary relationship' concept?
- Does Lady Gaga matter at all in all this?