

# Parasocial Relationships

## Grant Proposal

Presented by Ella Vu



# What I'll be covering

01.

## Introduction

Introducing myself.  
Defining parasocial  
relations.

02.

## Grant Proposal

Background info,  
Research Question,  
Significance, Aims/  
Prediction

03.

## Plan of Study

Description of Plan,  
Potential Impact

04.

## Concerns

Addressing potential  
problems & relaying  
significance

05.

## Q & A

Questions and Answers

# 01.

# Introduction

What does it mean to be parasocial?



# What does it mean to be Parasocial?



Imagine a celebrity, real or fictional.

What does it  
mean to be  
**Parasocial?**

Imagine a celebrity, real or fictional.



What does it  
mean to be  
**Parasocial?**

# + :° What do you know about them? ▶



# + : ° What do you know about them? ▶

## Personal Info

Mickey Mouse lives in a Club House, and he wears white gloves.

## Hobbies

Mickey Mouse likes to dance to the song “Hot Diggity Dog.”

## Personal Relations

Mickey loves Minnie Mouse. He is besties with Donald Duck and Goofy.



# We have a connection!

MICKEY

ELLA



# We have a parasocial connection! °



# We have a parasocial connection!

**MICKEY**  
DOESN'T KNOW ELLA  
EXISTS

Appeared to have  
“interacted”  
with Ella from the TV  
when she was 8



**ELLA**  
Feels like Mickey  
mouse is a friend  
from watching show

Doesn't know “The  
Real Mickey”  
beyond the TV

# Parasocial: Defined

Originally Psychology and Sociology.

Designating a relationship characterized by the one-sided, unreciprocated sense of intimacy felt by a viewer, fan, or follower for a well-known or prominent figure (typically a media celebrity), in which the follower or fan comes to feel (falsely) that they know the celebrity as a friend. Usually in **parasocial interaction, parasocial relationship**.

1956-

Coined by U.S. sociologists Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl (see quot. 1956) to describe the kind of psychological relationship experienced by members of an audience with regard to performers in the mass media, especially television.

# ► Definition continued



TECH & SCIENCE DICTIONARY

## parasocial relationship

[ par-uh-soh-shuhl ri-ley-shuhn-ship ]

October 20, 2021

### WHAT DOES PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP MEAN?

The term *parasocial relationship* refers to a relationship that a person imagines having with another person whom they do not actually know, such as a celebrity or a fictional character.

This often involves a person feeling as though they have a close, intimate connection with someone whom they have never met due to closely following that person (or

character) in media, such as TV shows, videos, podcasts, etc. For example, a child may feel as though they are friends with a fictional character due to frequently watching the character on a show, or a fan may feel as though they have a relationship with a pop star

*Parasocial relationships* are often discussed in the context of social media and other online platforms that allow celebrities to directly “interact” with fans and followers (or appear that they do).

Though *parasocial relationships* are often considered common, they may be considered unhealthy when they become extreme enough to interfere with real-life relationships or daily life.



Source: Dictionary.com



# 02. Grant Proposal

How does this relate?

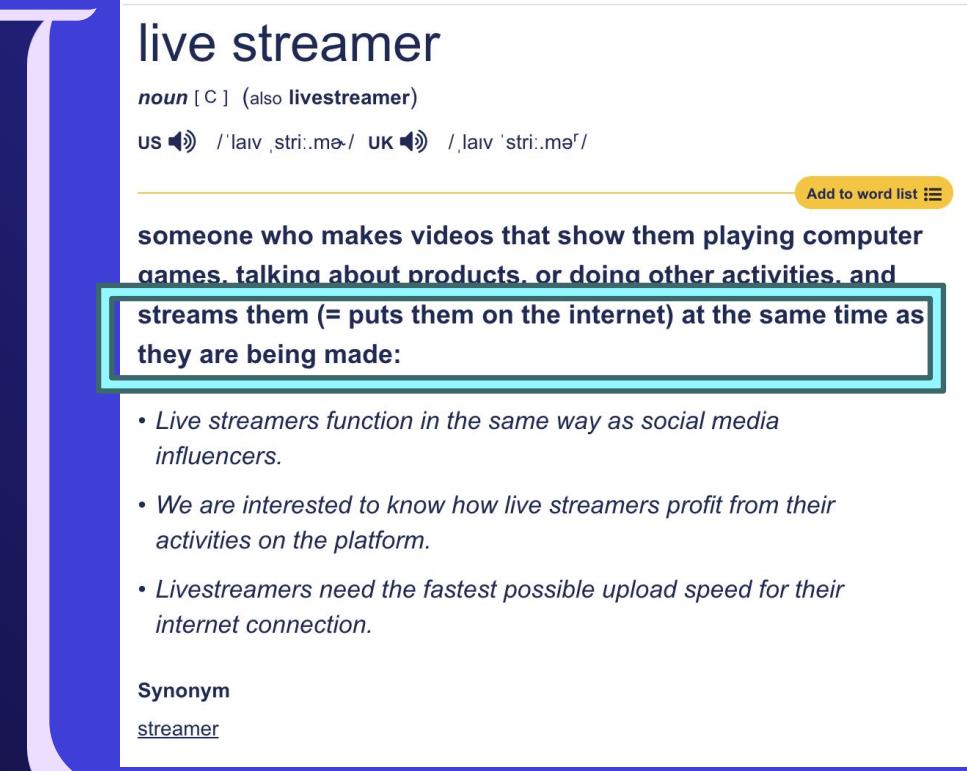
# Grant Proposal

▼ How does this relate?



My grant proposal is about  
studying the effects of  
parasocial relations on live  
streamers

# What is a Streamer?



live streamer

**noun [ C ]** (also **livestreamer**)

US /'laiv ,stri:.mə/ UK /,laiv 'stri:.mə/

Add to word list

someone who makes videos that show them playing computer games, talking about products, or doing other activities, and streams them (= puts them on the internet) at the same time as they are being made:

- Live streamers function in the same way as social media influencers.
- We are interested to know how live streamers profit from their activities on the platform.
- Livestreamers need the fastest possible upload speed for their internet connection.

Synonym

streamer

Source: Cambridge Dictionary

# Background Information



We know what parasocial relations are  
and what a live streamer is.  
What's the correlation?



# Background Information



As live streaming has become popular over the years, so has the parasocial relationships between fans and their content creators.

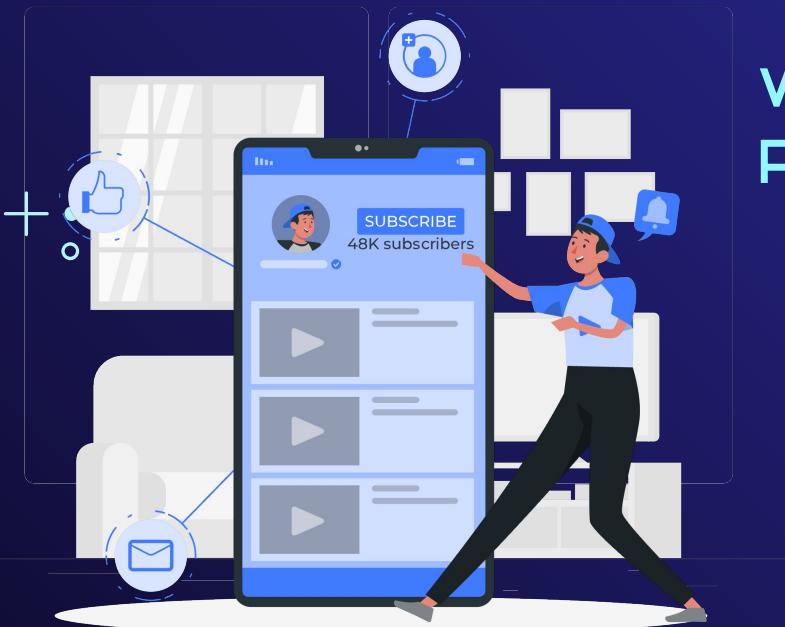


Article Source Title: The one-and-a-half sided parasocial relationship: The curious case of live streami



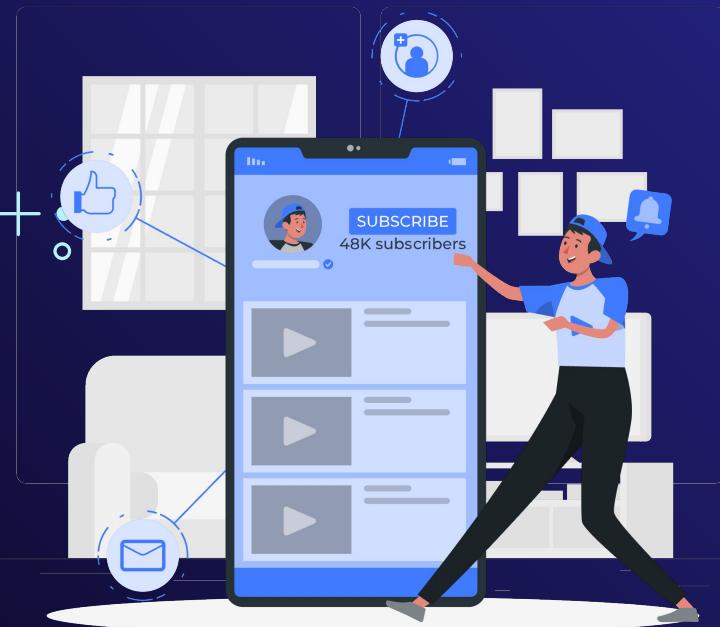
# Background Information

What makes streaming in particular so different?



**Article Source Title:** The one-and-a-half sided parasocial relationship: The curious case of live streaming

# Background Information



**What makes streaming in particular so different?**

**Streamers can interact with their fans in real time via things like live chat. This shows a newer type of parasocial relation where there is reciprocal communication.**

**Article Source Title:** The one-and-a-half sided parasocial relationship: The curious case of live streami

# Background Information

What have been the positives (mental health)?

Article Source Title: How Video Streamers' Mental Health Disclosures Affect Viewers' Risk Perceptions

# Background Information

What have been the positives (mental health)?

Streamers' discussion of mental health issues can reduce the social stigma surrounding mental illness.



Article Source Title: How Video Streamers' Mental Health Disclosures Affect Viewers' Risk Perceptions

# Background Information

Concerns?

# Background Information

Concerns?



What about Streamer Mental health?

# Background Information

During the pandemic, a study was conducted on Streamer Mental health

**Source Title:** An Ethnographic Study of the Mental Health of Twitch Streamers during COVID. *Real life in real time: live streaming culture/edited by Johanna, 57*

# Background Information

During the pandemic, a study was conducted on Streamers' Mental health

Participant demographics

	N	Percentage
Gender		
Nonbinary	1	5
Women	11	58
Men	7	37
Streaming Experience		
1–2 years	5	27
2–3 years	6	31
3+ years	8	42
Streaming Frequency		
2–3 times per week	7	37
3+ times per week	12	63
Average Follower Count		
Below 1,000	9	47
Between 1,000 and 5,000	6	31
More than 5,000	4	22

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# Background Information

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- ▶ They used Zoom to interview streamers on their mental wellness

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STREAMERS

# Background Information



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# Background Information

STREAMERS

Are first responders in  
mental health for their  
viewers

Feel ill-equipped to handle  
mental health topics

Struggle balancing personal  
wellness and their  
community's wellness



# Background Information

## Another study addressing streamer wellness

Participants	Gender	Age	Race	Sexual Orientation	Streaming Content
P1	Cis Female	30	Latino	Bisexual	Variety
P2	Trans Female	26	Caucasian	N/A	Gaming
P3	Cis Female	24	Mixed	N/A	Variety
P4	Cis Female	41	Caucasian	Straight	Creative
P5	Cis Female	20	Caucasian	Straight	Gaming
P6	Cis Female	19	Caucasian	Lesbian	Creative, Gaming
P7	Cis Female	44	African American	Queer	Creative, Gaming, Talk
P8	Cis Female	24	Caucasian	Straight	Variety
P9	Cis Female	32	Caucasian	N/A	Gaming
P10	Cis Female	31	Asian	N/A	Creative, Gaming
P11	Cis Female	N/A	Asian	N/A	Art
P12	Cis Female	19	Asian	N/A	Art, Gaming
P13	Cis Female	25	Caucasian	Straight	Creative, Gaming
P14	Trans Female	N/A	Caucasian	N/A	Gaming
P15	Cis Female	26	Latino	Straight	Gaming
P16	Cis Female	52	Caucasian	N/A	Gaming
P17	Cis Female	24	African American	N/A	Gaming
P18	Cis Female	31	Latino	N/A	Gaming
P19	Cis Female	22	Asian	Straight	Gaming
P20	Cis Female	33	Asian	N/A	N/A
P21	Cis Male	N/A	N/A	Gay	N/A
P22	Cis Male	25	Caucasian	Bisexual	Gaming
P23	Cis Male	29	Caucasian	Bisexual	Gaming
P24	Cis Male	28	Latino	Bisexual	Gaming
P25	Cis Male	34	Caucasian	Gay	Gaming, Tabletop

**Source Title:** Uttarapong, J., Cai, J., & Wohn, D. Y. (2021, June). Harassment experiences of women and LGBTQ live streamers and how they handled negativity. In *ACM international conference on interactive media experiences* (pp. 7-19).

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P15	Cis Female	26	Latino	Straight	Gaming
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Hate Speech, Racism,  
Sexism, Homophobia,  
Transphobia

Sexual harassment  
towards women  
streamers

We know streamers have challenges that come from live streaming and relations with their audience.

What is my Research Question?



# Research Question

How has parasocial relations affected streamer mental health and their influence over fans?



# Significance of Question

As streaming popularity increases, so will parasocial relations. Thus, more streamers are likely to face mental health struggles that come with streaming.



# What do I predict will happen? (Aims of Study)



I expect a streamer's degree of being "parasocial" will affect their mental health and their level of influence over fans.

# 03. Plan of Study



# Procedure

## EMA Study

- Administered via video game
- Short gameplay = assessment
- Duration: 3 Days w/ hourly assessments while streaming



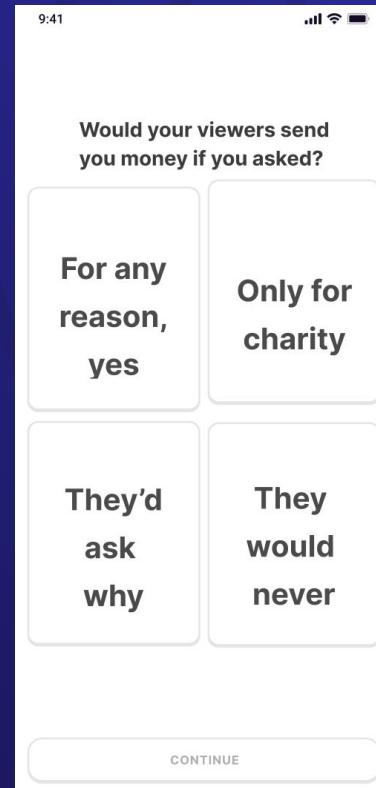
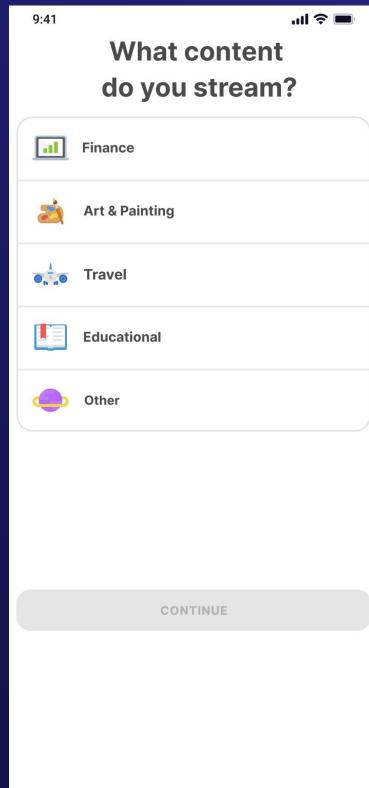
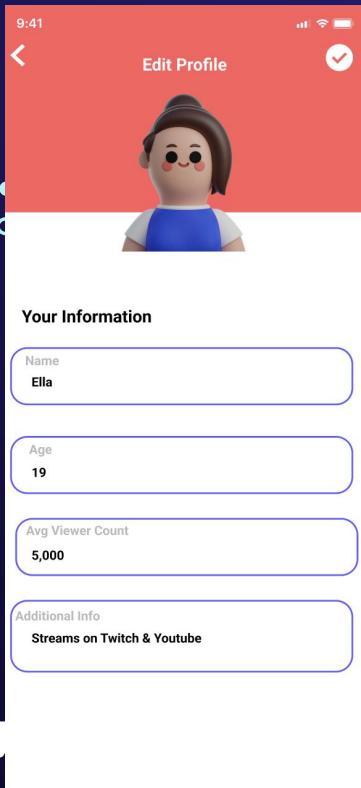
# What is an EMA

Ecological Momentary Assessment: repeated sampling of subject's behaviors & experiences in real time

Source: National Institute of Health



# Procedure Mockup



Made using Figma

# Procedure Justification

+ :: Why EMA?

To record data of how streamers feel towards their viewers in real time

Why in video game format?

Hypothetical scenarios during a stream will have the streamer choose decisions based on how they feel at the time

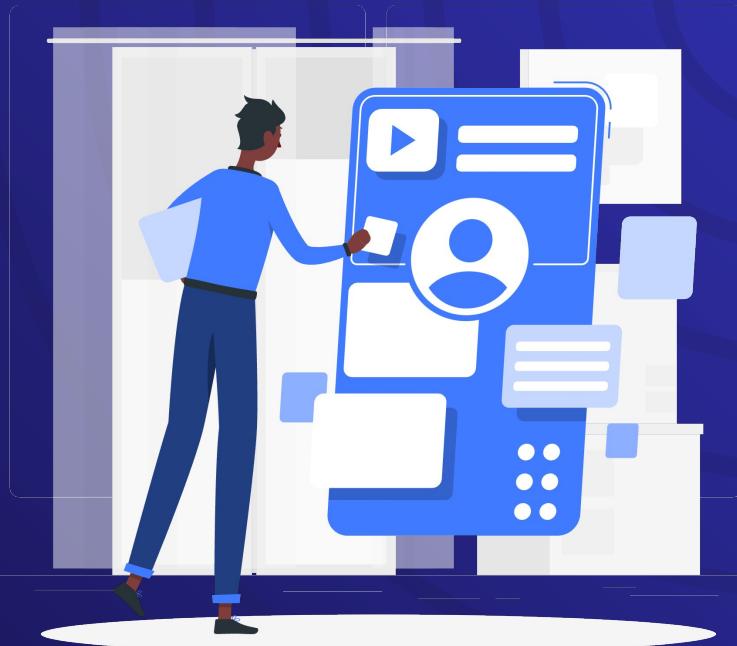
# Participants

## 30 Streamers

Diverse in:

- Content
- Age
- Streaming Experience
- Audience Size

Justification: A diverse sample population will less likely skew the data of the study



# Measures<sup>+</sup><sup>°</sup>

Based on choices, these will be measured on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low 5 being high):

Streamer's level of reciprocity towards viewers

Streamer's feelings of responsibility for viewers

Streamer's level of influence over viewers

Streamer's level of reliance on viewers



# Measures



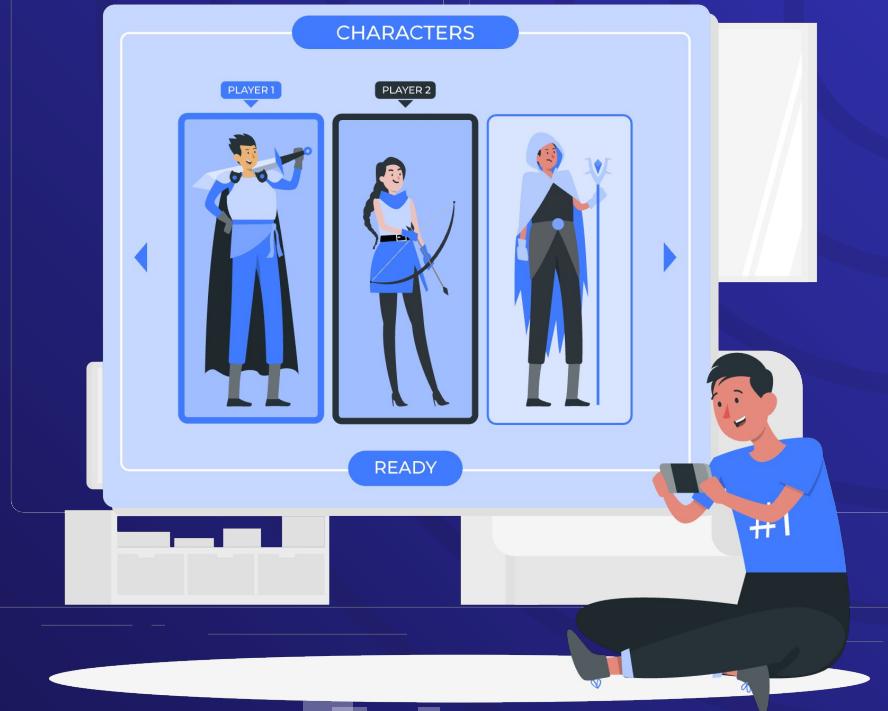
## Justification

These measures relate to factors of a parasocial relationship and together can determine how “parasocial” a streamer may feel

# Novelty of Study

## Video Games

This study will approach data collection in the form of an EMA video game with hypothetical scenarios



# Novelty of Study

## Parasocial Relations

This study will explore on a type of parasocial relation where streamers interact with viewers





# Potential Impact



It has the potential to show how a celebrity's influence can impact a social sphere. It can provide more attention to an emerging concern of content creator mental health & wellness.

# 04.

# Concerns



**Streamers' schedules are different. How will they be able to handle an EMA study?**

**EMA will not be time based (ex: only during mornings). It will be based on when streamer starts streaming.**



How will we know a  
streamer is doing their EMA  
study?

They're streaming.



# What if a streamer misses a submission for their EMA study?

This is common, and we will have notifications in place and a flexible submission window. We can allow catch-up EMA entries.



# Thank you QUESTIONS?



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# Additional Info

**Parasocial Relationships on Twitch: A Psychiatrist's Perspective**



**Dr. Alok Kanojia is a psychiatrist streamer that talks about streamer mental health and parasocial relations**

**Twitch Username: HealthyGamerGG**