

Parasocial Relationships and You

- Definition
 - Oxford- a kind of psychological relationship experienced by members of an audience in their mediated encounters with certain performers in the mass media
 - One-sided relationships: one individual will extend their time, energy, and emotional interest while the other individual is usually unaware of the other's existence
- Beginnings
 - Coined in 1956 by social scientists Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl
 - The main focus was the afternoon talk shows at the time that reinforced audience participation and the acting of the hosts that made the viewers engaged.
 - This created a sense that the performer on stage was connecting directly to the viewer
 - This concept extended out to long running TV shows as well. The viewers at home saw the characters as friends or something close to it.
- Celebrity Worship Syndrome
 - Dating back to the 19th century, celebrity worship has been observed.
 - People wanting to live vicariously through said celebrities
 - Fans holding the celebrities accountable if they don't agree with them
 - The murders: Most known being Selena and John Lennon
- Tabloid Journalism
 - Mostly sensationalized stories about celebrities
 - The start of popularity for celebrity obsession with constant "rumors"
- Stan Culture
 - An obsessive fan/ overly devoted fan

- Eminem song
 - Mainly seen across social media
 - Twitter/Insta specifically
 - Fans having more windows into celebrities lives than ever before
 - Every word from them are put under a microscope by their fans
 - Backlash for not being the person the fans believe they are in their minds
- K-Pop
 - Sasaeng (p. sa-sang) fans are the Korean term for obsessive fans
 - K-Pop stans are seen as one of the most vocal and outrageous ones
 - TVXQ's Yunho w/ OJ poisoning by rival Sasaeng fans
 - EXO's Chanyeol followed by 20 fan cars
 - Seo Taiji house break in by fan
 - EXO's D.O. w/ victim mentality due to sasaeng
 - Many more things (letters in blood, attempted kidnapping, ect)
- Japanese Idol Culture
 - Japan has an extreme obsession with idols and idol culture
 - Idol
 - Young men and women (more women) who are performers that are known for their looks, image and personality
 - Put through constant training to sing, dance and model
 - Can start as junior idols (3-15)
 - Talent agencies put them together to be both profitable and to create parasocial relationships with fans to keep them coming back
 - Meant to be pure in the eyes of the fans w/ no relationships, smoking, and drinking

- Once the idols get too old (W:25, M:30s-40s), they “graduate” from the group and are replaced with a new idol
 - ~\$1 billion a year industry (as of 2019)
- Social Impact
 - Idols are used for commercials and most advertisements
 - They are used for TV dramas, variety shows, and as hosts
 - Used as voice actors and having at least 40 anime series since 2010
 - Some VA can become idols in and of themselves by having several high profile shows or making bands afterward
- Fan Interaction
 - There are plenty of fans, but passionate (mostly male) fans are called Wato
 - The Wato attend shows and create elaborate dances for the show
 - The idols are incentivized to build an emotional connection with these wato
 - Wato willing dumps tons of cash into buying merch and endorsed products to support their Bias/Favorite
 - Some agencies even hold Meet-a-Greets/ handshaking events to even more enhance the “closeness” with the fans to make the parasocial relationship even stronger
 - Wato are willing to quit their jobs and empty their savings to support their Bias
 - One company willing gives paid time off if their Bias graduates
 - This connect causes the fans to feel betrayed/ hurt if their Bias ever breaks their image
- Scary Side of Idols

- The people who follow idols can be very dangerous
- NGT48's Maho Yamaguchi House break in and Assault
- Enoha Girls' Honoka Omoto- 16yo suicide due to over work and power harrassment
 - Assertions of authority to intimidate and control lower rank employees
- Stabbing of Mayu Tomita- Stabbed 27 times and lived
- Idol found through the reflection in her eyes
- Youtubers/Streamers/Influencers as New Celebrities
 - Influencers/Streamer are the modern day celebrities
 - Everyday people as celebrities
 - Social Media being the vehicle to push these celebrities
 - YT, Twitch, Insta, TikTok, Twitter, Onlyfans, ect
 - Idol Streamer called Vtubers who also have concerts
 - Fans have the ability to pay these celebrities directly through donations/viewership
 - Brings a level of entitlement to the people they support
 - Fans believe they have the right to have a say in the lives of the ones they support
 - Get upset if what they care about isn't addressed by the influencers
 - The dangers
 - Doxxing (extra scary for VTubers who don't show their real face)
 - Swatting
 - Viewers who call in threats to police near the streamer in order for SWAT teams to break into the house
 - Using fan bases to attack others

- Online Personalities using fans to attack others that they don't like
- Hatred and Disgusting Comments
 - The faceless mob attacking people they don't like
 - Hana Kimura's suicide and Terrence House
 - Frankie and DOTA 2 Harassment
 - Fans pay into Dota's TI
- Why Is Any of This Important Now?
 - Still getting out of the pandemic
 - People latching onto the things that gave them comfort during the lockdown
 - The massive boom of the digital space
 - Helping young people realize the difference
 - 72% of 13-38 year olds follow influencers (as of 2019)
 - 54% of children would be influencers if given the chance (as of 2019)
 - Be better

Links

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