

May 5, 2023

# GEN Z & PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

WITH MUSICIANS ON TIKTOK

M.A. PROJECT DEFENSE  
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# TODAY'S AGENDA



**1** BACKGROUND

**2** THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

**3** METHODOLOGY:  
Q-SORT

**4** SOCIAL MEDIA  
CAMPAIGN

**5** DISCUSSION



# WHAT ARE PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS?

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Perceived one-sided  
relationships between audiences  
and media figures





## PHYSICAL ATTRACTION

Physical appeal or  
romantic/sexual  
attraction



## SOCIAL ATTRACTION

Perceived similarity,  
likes/dislikes and  
identification



## TASK ATTRACTION

Perceived credibility  
and validating  
emotions



## ● **PERCEIVED FRIENDSHIP**

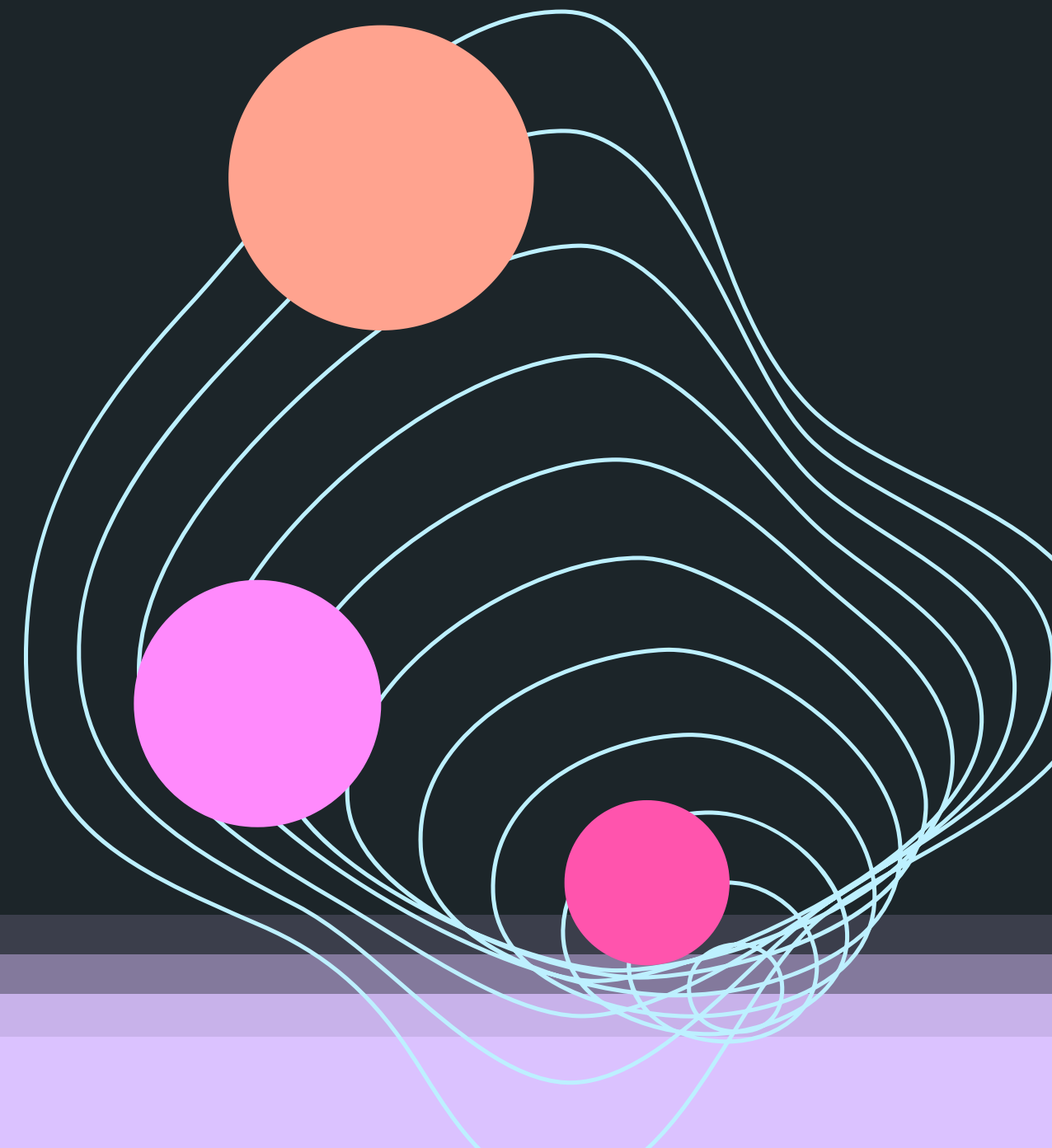
One-sided, defined through intimacy and liking, and necessitates frequent viewing

## ● **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Created a shift from a one-to-many dynamic to a one-to-one dynamic, creating a perception of authenticity and less illusory

## ● **ILLUSION OF INTIMACY**

Performers can blur the line between intimacy and reality



# APPLICABLE THEORIES

## SOCIAL EXCHANGE

Relationships create a Cost/Reward analysis  
PSR cost little for the viewer

Close vs. Superficial relationships - music and PSR both aid in creating a close relationship between the viewer and the musician

## UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION

The less uncertain about a relationship, the stronger the relationship  
The more an audience passively interacts, the less uncertainty they experience, allowing for a stronger emotional connection through their PSR

## PERSONAL CONSTRUCT

Individuals learn to better interact with the world through personal constructs.

The more audiences view a media figure, the stronger the constructs become, which is linked to stronger PSR.

Music is also linked to the development of personal constructs.

# CLIENT

## TRIP THE FAN

A music management organization in Oklahoma City, specializing in Electronic Press Kits among other marketing needs for local artists.

## STEPMOM

An orchestral dream punk band from Oklahoma City, with dreamy three-part harmonies, ambient cello and synth contrasted with angsty guitar riffs and powerful lead vocals. Their music represents the disillusionment of many who are trying to find meaning and purpose in a society that distorts reality.

# METHODOLOGY

## Q-METHOD

A Q-Sort would help sort participants into publics/like-minded groups, based on their attitudes toward and perceptions of parasocial relationships.

Participants were asked to rank 36 statements on a forced bell curve. The statements were divided into 3 subthemes (**physical, social and task attraction**), with 12 in each category.

Included 30 participants, all Gen Z (born 1996 or later) and identifying as female, who were recruited through word-of-mouth and social media.



# ADMIRING AUDIENCES

6 participants

Mostly Gen Z, single white females

**PHYSICAL ATTRACTION**

**SOCIAL ATTRACTION**

**TASK ATTRACTION**

View their favorite  
artists as **capable** and  
**companionable**

"When I listen to  
music, I feel like the  
artist is opening up  
to me" (+4,  $z=1.681$ )

83% of participants  
strongly agree that  
they like following and  
watching their favorite  
artists on social media.

"I want to have a  
sexual relationship  
with my favorite  
artists" (+4,  $z=1.314$ ).

# UNAROUSED & UNAFFECTED

7 participants

Mostly Gen Z white females in a relationship

**ANTI-PHYSICAL ATTRACTION**

**SOCIAL ATTRACTION**

**TASK ATTRACTION**

Strongly against sexualizing their favorite artists, prefers strong musical talent and identification

“I want to have a sexual relationship with my favorite artists” ( $-5, z=-2.101$ )

“I care more about the music than the artists. Other than if the artist does something controversial, I typically do not pay attention to them. If I like their music I like their music.”

“I enjoy seeing artists I like posting snippets of songs that are unfinished and seeing the evolution of the song” ( $+2, z=0.798$ ).

# DIENCES ADMIRING AUDIENCES ADMIRI



## NAME

Ivy Jackson

## AGE

21

## RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Single

## OCCUPATION

Student (film major) and part-time waitress

## CORE DESIRES

- Looking for new artists that they can feel connected to or make them feel heard

## PAIN POINTS

- As a creative individual, they tend to feel isolated and just want to feel heard by the art they're consuming

## LOOKING FOR IN MUSICIANS

- Musicians take a stance on the issues important to them
- Bands that make them feel cool/have 'cool' music taste
- Music that makes them feel like the artist is opening up to them

## ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Loves seeing artists partake in the same silly trends they partake in

“THERE'S NO WORLD WHERE I'M NOT BESTIES WITH MY FAVORITE ARTISTS.”



# CTED UNAROUSSED & UNAFFECTED UNAI



## NAME

Lora Freeman

## AGE

22

## RELATIONSHIP STATUS

In a long-term relationships

## OCCUPATION

Graduate Student (psychology major)  
and interning at a research center

## CORE DESIRES

- Looking for new music to keep them company while working and studying

## PAIN POINTS

- As they are entering the 'real world,' they are realizing more issues get swept away – and they want someone to talk about

## LOOKING FOR IN NEW MUSIC

- Loves strong musical talent
- Don't care about sexualizing musicians (in fact, hate doing that)
- Music that validates their emotions and vulnerabilities

## ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Loves seeing the development of songs

“ I CARE ABOUT MY FAVORITE ARTISTS AS PEOPLE AND ADMIRE THEIR TALENTS. ”

# POSITIONING

ADMIRING AUDIENCES

**Capable & Daydream  
Material**

UNAROUSED &  
UNAFFECTED

**Talented &  
Companionable**



# OBJECTIVES

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### AWARENESS

The objective for both target publics is to have an effect on awareness. Specifically, to generate increased viewership by 50% of stepmom's Instagram and TikTok within the next 3 months,

### ACCEPTANCE

The objective for both target publics is to have an effect on acceptance. Specifically, to gain their interest and positive attitude toward stepmom through an increase in engagement by 25% with stepmom's Instagram and TikTok within the next 3 months.

### ACTION

The objective for target publics is to have an effect on action. Specifically, to obtain an increase in following on stepmom's Instagram and TikTok by 10% within the next 3 months.



# BIG IDEA

The big idea for this campaign is to engage with audiences through social attraction, task attraction and physical attraction.

This campaign will be reaching out to audiences through social attraction by showcasing **stepmom's music and relatability** for audiences to identify with; through task attraction by highlighting **stepmom's musical talent and emotional validation** through their music; finally, through physical attraction by promoting content from **live events for audiences to daydream about attending**.

# RECOMMENDED PLATFORMS



# CONTENT INVENTORY

MAY 15



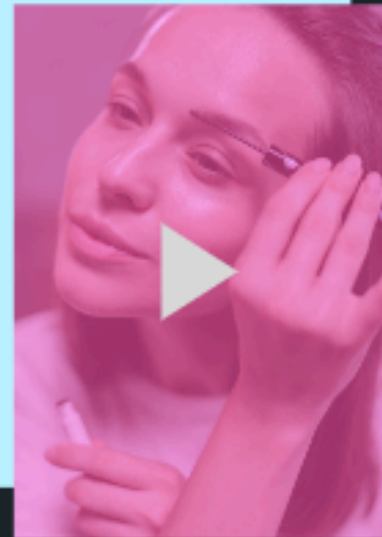
Behind-the-scenes candid footage with the band from a recent show.

MAY 17



A day-in-the-life with stepmom at rehearsals.

MAY 19



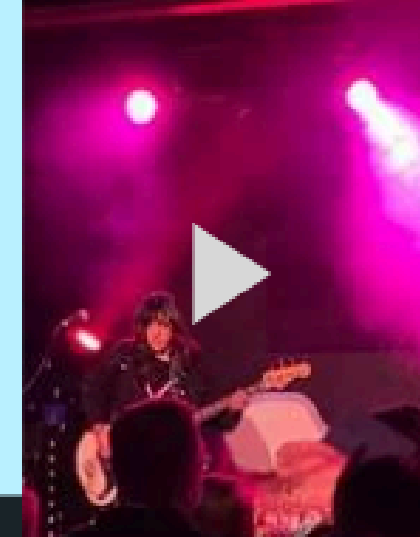
A get-ready-with-me for the Factory Obscura concert.

MAY 22



A TikTok with footage from the Factory Obscura concert.

MAY 25



Choose a current trend on TikTok for the band to adapt.

MAY 26



Show more concert footage or a song that hasn't been promoted recently.



# THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

**Helps to guide future parasocial relationship research  
in respect to Gen Z and other digital natives**

Created specific groups and personas to reflect their attitudes toward parasocial relationship dimensions

**Directs and increases potential strength of future  
campaigns in the music industry**

Sets a potential precedent for utilizing parasocial relationships as a way to efficiently grow and strengthen fanbases with up-and-coming artists

**Future research could use quantitative research to  
expand these findings**

Quantitative research would expand the participant sample and allow the findings to become even more generalizable

THANK YOU

THANK YOU

THANK YOU

THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS?