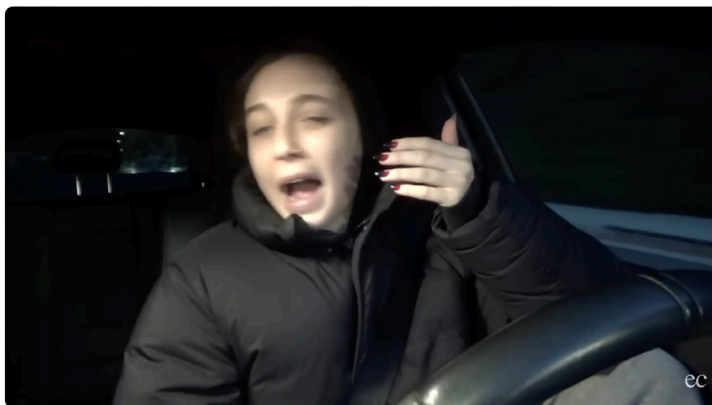


I Feel Like I Know You

Jess Rasiel



are you mad at me?



emma chamberlain 
12.1M subscribers

Subscribe



@alicemolovcakova2035 1 year ago (edited)

I can't describe what how I feel watching this, you make me feel like a normal human being, like you're just as real as people I truly know. The way you capture details and ordinary stuff is some true talent. I don't think I have anyone who makes me feel like you do



Reply

Introduction

This zine is a compact version for peers, tutors, and anyone encountering the project at our showcase. It defines key terms, details my research methods, and summarises my evidence. It also expands on three case studies that I chose to focus on for the purpose of this publication.

Definitions



parasocial relationships



anything goes with emma chamberlain
330K subscribers

Subscribe

74



Share



Download



Clip



1. Emma Chamberlain YouTube thumbnail, 2025

Parasocial interaction (PSI):

PSI refers to the exchange between a creator and a viewer that only exists while you're watching: addressing the camera directly, conversational rhythm, etc. Horton and Wohl coined the term for the "simulacrum of conversational give and take" (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Liebers and Schramm's clarification is useful here: PSI "can therefore only take place during media reception" (Liebers & Schramm, 2019), which means that momentary interest in influencers is distinct from longer attachments.

Parasocial relationship (PSR):

PSR is the longer arc: a strong, one-way bond that continues between posts by influencers. Horton and Wohl describe a "seeming face-to-face relationship" between spectator and performer (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Adding to that, Liebers and Schramm note that PSR "can...endure beyond a single reception," developing into a cross-situational attachment (Liebers & Schramm, 2019).

Relational Labour:

I think of relational labour as the ongoing work of making closeness feel real: tone that reads warm, gentle disclosure, constantly "being there". Baym defines it as "regular, ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work" (Baym, 2015).

Definitions


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Proximity seeking:


When viewers start to feel a closeness to their favourite influencer deepen, some of them try to collapse distance. This is where I feel proximity seeking is an applicable term. Bowlby defines it as: “... seeking and maintaining proximity to another individual” (Bowlby, 1969).







2. Emma Chamberlain YouTube thumbnail, 2025






The screenshot shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the YouTube logo and a search bar. The video content shows Emma Chamberlain sitting in the driver's seat of a car, wearing a light blue hoodie and a seatbelt. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. Below the video, the title "ROADTRIP TO SF *i cried*" is displayed. Underneath the title, there is a channel name "emma chamberlain" with a verified badge and "12.1M subscribers", followed by a "Subscribe" button. To the right of the channel information are icons for "Like" (252K), "Comment", "Share", "Download", "Clip", and a menu icon. Below this, a comment from user "@isabel9744" is visible, dated "4 years ago". The comment text reads: "Emma doesn't feel like a youtuber to me, she's more a friend who just tells us about our day and hangs out with us. I really appreciate that". The comment has "13K" likes and a "Reply" button. At the bottom of the comment, it says "38 replies".


ROADTRIP TO SF *i cried*

emma chamberlain  12.1M subscribers [Subscribe](#)

 252K   Share  Download  Clip 

 @isabel9744 4 years ago
Emma doesn't feel like a youtuber to me, she's more a friend who just tells us about our day and hangs out with us. I really appreciate that

 13K  Reply

 38 replies

Parasocial Survey

Responses

In order to get a more personal look at how parasocial relationships work, I ran an anonymous online survey via Reddit and Instagram (16 July–24 September 2025). I received 76 usable responses, ages 16–65 (median 28). Respondents identified as 38 female, 28 male, 9 non-binary, and 1 preferred not to say.

The most cited platforms were YouTube (49), Reddit (43), Twitch (35), Instagram (28), TikTok (25), and Twitter (22). When asked where they most often felt connected to someone they didn't know personally, Twitch led clearly with 39 mentions, followed by YouTube with 10, and smaller counts across TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. 59 of 76 respondents said they have felt emotionally connected to a creator they don't know.

At the end of the survey, 36 people volunteered contact details for follow-up; from those volunteers I selected a small group for extended interviews to capture a range of experiences (long-term viewers, and people who described their attention intensifying over time).

Parasocial interaction (PSI): In the survey, people described feeling a “call” without speech: a steady rhythm, and routine check-ins that create company. “Almost like chatting to a friend on FaceTime” (S-26). “When they speak directly to me or use my name” (S-03). On live streams, “they acknowledge you when you enter the stream and announce your departure” (S-62). In “Always On” we translated that into nonverbal cues: Glen settles before a video starts, his gaze tracks as if listening, micro-nods as though he's replying to Violet.

Parasocial relationship (PSR): Respondents talked about routine: small touches that accumulate between posts. “It almost feels like you know them personally, as you see so much of their life” (S-26). “Yes, I would miss them if they were away for some time” (S-63). Others said that watching content felt like an escape: “watching regularly let me ‘escape’ for a set amount of hours per day” (S-61). That guided Glen's daily architecture: fixed watch times, the same cup and chair. When Violet doesn't post, Glen replays old clips and revisits posts. PSR shows up as a domestic habit.

Relational labour: Interviewees described being kept company. Warm tone, dependable cadence, and small self-disclosures were felt as ongoing care. One person reached for night company, something to engage with “when insomnia keeps me awake when no one else is” (S-39). We let Glen read that steadiness as reliability, then mirror it silently: lamps dimmed to her evening uploads, phone placed screen-up as if saving a seat, his phone in his hand as he falls asleep.

Parasocial Survey

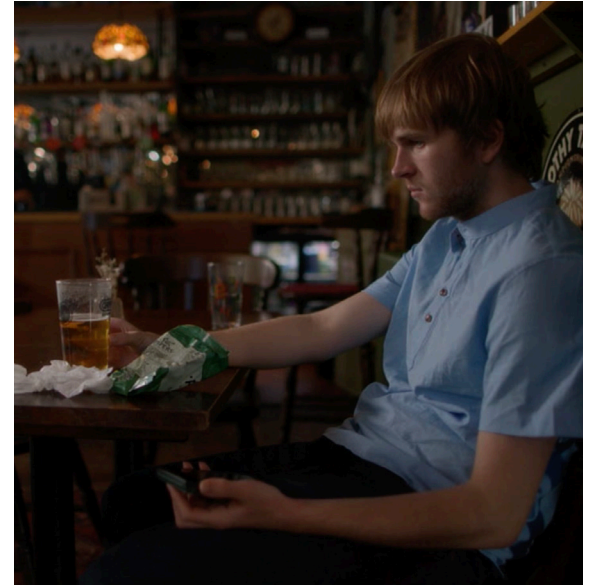
Responses

Proximity seeking: Most people surveyed didn't describe their parasocial relationships as going immediately full tilt; it happened slowly over time: "It did affect my emotions and daily life... I'd spend far too long in stream. I wished to do a good job and earn their praise" (S-61). For some, thoughts crowded out the rest: "They are on my mind most of the time. I struggle to sleep" (S-29). Others felt relationships strain: "He became my number one thought... my fiancé was creeped out by this and tried to make me stop" (S-23). Glen reflects this quite obviously: slacking off at work because he's watching Violet's posts, leaving social situations because he knows Violet will be going live, not bothering to care for himself if it means he can afford to care for Violet.

3. Film still, Looking Glass (Author's own, 2025)



4. Film still, Looking Glass (Author's own, 2025)



Parasocial Survey

Responses

Survey respondents consistently described an ongoing company that set the day's rhythm more than it produced big emotional spikes. For some, the bond was affected by absence as much as presence: "Yes, I would miss them if they were away for some time." S-63; or mirrored influencers physically: "...repeat things they say verbally out loud even though they can't hear me." S-51.

People project routine posting schedules from influencers into everyday rituals: morning setups, evening wind-downs, background companionship. When the consistency changes, it makes people feel worry or emptiness.

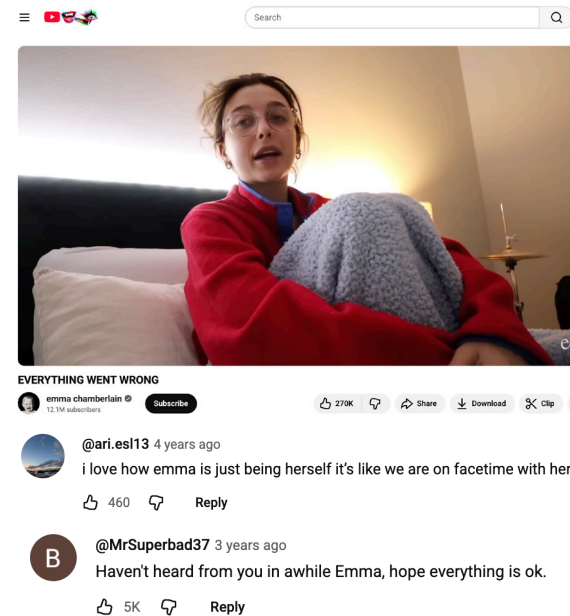
Light acknowledgements from influencers were often felt as care, which nudged some viewers toward obligation. "If I sent a message and if they responded I felt even more strongly." — S-06. Others recognised that access didn't mean anything serious: "Yes... they would

respond directly to me, but never on a deeper emotional level." — S-63.

A few described chasing recognition despite knowing it was unrequited: "I knew rationally he wasn't speaking directly to me but it felt... like a drug because I was chasing the delusion that he saw me." — S-22. Small cues change expectations; a name-check, a heart, or a single reply can be taken as proof of being seen. Without clear limits, this easily becomes 'I owe back / they owe me'. When responses became intermittent, some people started checking in on their influencers more, taking silence as withdrawal, and carrying that tension into their day.

When closeness felt real, many people surveyed produced "proofs" of that feeling. "I'd spend far too long in stream... I wished to do a good job and earn their praise." — S-61. Financial participation was framed as both

5. Emma Chamberlain YouTube thumbnail, 2025



support and signal: "It makes me happy to donate subs/bits." — S-76. Taking on semi-staff roles blurred the line between audience and team: "I'm their moderator... it makes me feel useful in the community and to them in general." — S-61. From the inside, these acts feel supportive, from the outside, they can cause escalation; especially when feedback is uncertain. More time, more spend, more watchfulness can slide into monitoring and boundary testing ("did they see me?" / "will they respond?").

Case Studies

I'm using Emma Chamberlain as a recurring example because her channel uses authenticity in ways that noticeably cause PSI and then PSR: mundane tasks narrated in a confessional tone, extreme close-ups that feel like face-to-face, and "behind-the-scenes" videos that make exclusive spaces feel personal. Viewers find friendship and comfort in her videos: "emma is literally my best friend and she doesn't even know it" (DiGirolamo, 2022),

which is a perfect example of what I'm looking at. DiGirolamo's article ties her framing to para-proxemics (intimate camera distance; direct address), and to the posting schedule that lets routine become attachment (DiGirolamo, 2022). This makes her a clean, well-documented case for how small, repeatable choices lead to parasociality.

6. Emma Chamberlain YouTube thumbnail, 2025



HOT GIRL SUMMER MAKEOVER *i cried*



emma chamberlain ✓
12.1M subscribers

Subscribe

👍 362K



🔗 Share

⬇️ Download

✂️ Clip



@huiakepa1676 4 years ago

Anyone else put their forehead up to their phone when she gives a forehead kiss and immediately feel better? 🥺🥹

👍 5



Reply



@oliviasepter 4 years ago

when emma was eating her burrito- i kept yelling at my screen saying "EMMA- DECLAN IS LITERALLY CRAWLING IN THE SINK."

👍 76



Reply



@johnnymolina4281 4 years ago

when she told us to pause and shower, i actually paused, showered and now i'm back

👍 1.8K



Reply

Case Studies

Amouranth is a well-known livestreamer. Her way of engaging with her audience is a great example of how personal connections are formed online. Known for her ASMR videos and her 'Just Chatting' podcast, she's attracted about 6.1 million followers on Twitch. Her style is all about talking directly to her viewers for long periods, making the connection feel more personal. According to streaming charts, Amouranth has around 269 hours streamed in a 30-day window, nearly 9–10 hours per day, which shows how routine and repetition add to the connection her audience experiences.



7. Amouranth stream still, (Amouranth, 2025)

In June of 2022, she reported that someone stalked her. They traveled from Estonia and camped out in a hotel with a line of sight to her PO box, leading to weeks of harassment and an attempted break-in that resulted in police action (TheGamer, 2022). In March 2023, reports from gaming media mentioned that the same individual was taken into custody after visiting her house five times in one week.

This case shows how scale, routine, and direct address can add to perceived access: warmth from influencers on their streams becomes PSR entitlement from the viewers, which then further

turns into monitoring and approach when expectations go unchecked.

The lesson here emphasises the importance of boundary clarity and early escalation, which includes maintaining public reply windows, avoiding off-platform contact, establishing explicit gift and visit policies, meticulously logging incidents, and coordinating with platforms and police when necessary.

Case Studies

Logan Paul is a well known American YouTuber, podcaster, boxer, and pro wrestler. He's built a huge following over the years with his vlogs, live events, and his show Impulsive. He also co-founded the Prime beverage brand and has worked part-time with WWE (Wikipedia, 2025).

Austin Wallace, a 22-year-old welder, TikTok creator, and long time Logan Paul follower, saw Paul's openness as a chance to approach him in person to ask for a job. In September 2021, he recorded himself quitting his \$100k a year welding job, driving 12 hours to Cleveland, and sneaking backstage at Jake Paul's media day to ask Logan for a job.

"I quit my job, like, two days ago ... I came up here and took a risk", he told Paul on camera (Newsweek, 2021). Paul declines saying: "Go make content, make stuff with your friends... I'm glad you quit your job, it takes balls to do that,

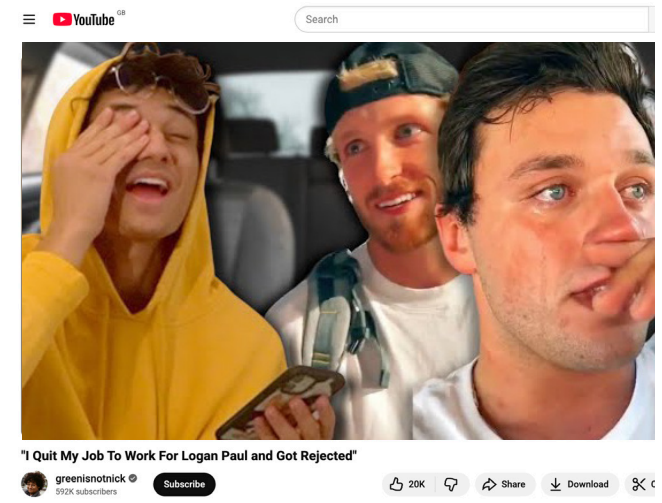
but now you gotta activate. I'm not the guy directly... my team is small, we're locked." (Newsweek, 2021). The end of the video shows Wallace sobbing in his car, unsure of what to do next.

When we look at this case through a PSI/PSR perspective, being a long-time follower made the PSR feel real. Wallace showed loyalty by quitting. Paul set a clear boundary by refusing and redirecting to others, which caused Wallace to break down and essentially shatter the PSR that Wallace had created in his mind.

The lesson in this case is about preventing a sense of familiarity from becoming a claim to access, whether for mentorship, collaboration, or private conversation. Through a PSI/PSR lens, Wallace's actions show how admiration can slide into loyalty proofs

and a proximity bid when cues of openness are over-read. Boundary clarity on both sides matters: creators can publicise where requests belong (forms, email, open calls), audiences can separate inspiration from entitlement and resist turning devotion into proximity.

8. Logan Paul x Austin Wallace YouTube thumbnail



Conclusion

When it comes to responsibility, I think the blame is shared. Creators enjoy the closeness they create and understand that their posts influence how fans respond. Fans benefit from access and community and still choose how far they go. There are steps that can be taken and rules that can be put in place in order to make the creator/fan relationship safer.

On the creator's side, make boundaries plain and keep to them. State reply windows and stick to them. Keep contact on business channels only; don't shift into DMs. Don't reward fans spending money on creators (turn off gifts, hide "top donor" leaderboards); gratitude rituals like these set false expectations. Use trained moderators and make the rules accessible. Avoid location hints and real-time posting near home or routine spots. Skip late-night "therapy" content that invites emotional overreach.

On the audience side, keep parasocial literacy in mind: this is entertainment, not a mutual tie. Use official channels, not DMs. If you're worried about a creator, report through the platform or venue rather than intervening yourself. Do quick

self-checks: am I checking more or planning my day around their posts? If yes, step back. Mute for a while, diversify your feed, and talk to someone offline.

Structurally, platforms need better defaults. DM rate-limits and "DM off by default" for large accounts. Slow-mode and verified-only messaging for high-risk moments. Clear gift/address blocks and better anti-doxxing enforcement. Stronger moderation tools and visible safety toggles on profiles ("office hours," "no DMs," "business email only").

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Image Refereces

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